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Video on Demand, a new way for the distribution of documentaries? The example of Tënk

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Because changing the world is a very unusual task, the author-driven documentary gives itself the more modest one to change our view of the world. These fragments of life, humanity and poetry are all acts of learning about us, about our living conditions, about our relationship with others. The author's documentary appeals to the curiosity of all; it is for this reason that we invite you to take part. (Tënk, "Our project")

Introduction

Documentary cinema is today seen as the poor cousin of French cinema economy: in cinemas, it is condemned to narrow distribution windows, most often on very restricted output combinations - and therefore benefiting from limited figures at the box office. The figures for 2016 are eloquent, since 118 films were distributed during the year, representing 16.5% of all films released in theatres, they generated only 1.7% of the annual entries¹, almost half of which only by one film, a pleasing and media-friendly documentary about animals². In the television space with castrating formatting constraints, the author-driven documentary struggles to find its way towards an enlarged public. Traditionally, documentary film festivals have experimented with new formulas, based on events, to broaden the reach and audience of this specific genre³. While the success of a number of events in France attests the existence of an audience for this singular genre, the festival formula - by its geographical and calendar constraints - in fact imposes a reduction in the potential audience benefiting from the richness of the programming of these events.

¹ *Bilan 2016 du CNC*, Paris, Centre National de la cinématographie et de l'image animée, n°336, mai 2017, p. 27.

² *Les Saisons* (Jacques Perrin and Jacques Cluzaut), with 1,02 million entries.

³ We think in particular about: « Etats Généraux du film documentaire » in Lussas, « Cinéma du Réel » in Paris, « FID » in Marseille, « Ecrans documentaires » in Arcueil, « Rencontres du film documentaire », in Mellionec, etc.

Since the advent of the Internet, there have been new experiments in favour of the broad dissemination of author-driven documentaries, sometimes by actors already involved in the festival cause, who seek to improve the scope of their activities. Interrogating the VOD model, working it with the prism of the needs of the specificity of the genre, but also of the cinematographic approach inherent in its discovery, a true reflection is at work with regards to the potential of the Internet as a tool at service of this genre in trouble for a better exposure. These experiments are important insofar as, in the framework of the Internet, whose development has been largely marked by a phenomenon of disintermediation - sharing platforms, blogs, social networks, etc. - we see a return to the strength of initiatives marked by a desire to display in a strong manner a willingness to mediate, and moreover, on the basis of mediation modalities voluntarily taking back some of the proven devices tried in the cinephile field (festivals, film clubs ...).

In this text, we would like to explore the work accomplished since July 15, 2016 by the French SVOD platform TënK, which seems to us exemplary of these new voices that, on the Net, speak in favour of voicedness genres in the cinema. TënK, which means "state a thought clearly and concisely" in Wolof⁴, was born in February 2016 in the form of a SCIC (Cooperative Society of Collective Interest), thanks to the association of producers, directors, technicians, but also thanks to a participatory financing campaign which made it possible to collect nearly 34,000 Euros at the end of summer 2015⁵. The team that designed and runs the site today comes directly from the Association Ardèche Images, founded in 1979 and is based in Lussas, in the Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes region. It is worth noting that this small town of 1,000 inhabitants has become the French capital of documentaries thanks to the intense activity of this association, running a renowned festival, a resource centre specialized in documentary film, a school that teaches writing, production and production of creative documentaries, and a network of cooperation with sub-Saharan Africa around the African creative documentary⁶.

The platform has known an undeniable success - relatively of course to the potential audience of this kind of niche - since after 8 months of existence, 3,600 people had subscribed to TënK⁷, and the platform hopes to quickly reach the 10,000 subscribers. During this speech, we will look at how the Internet can participate, on broader scales, to develop niche genres through the reintroduction of a strong mediation, anchored in an assumed history, in an area initially characterized by its ability to disintermediate. Our thinking will focus essentially on the players, from a strategic point of view, even if the use as engines and improvements of these experiments will be taken into consideration.

From a methodological point of view, we will combine the analysis of the platform with the content of an interview conducted in April 2017 with Pierre Mathéus, one of the main designers and animators of the site, who is the Managing Director and editorial coordinator⁸. This fieldwork will be based on a number of scientific works related to the major themes that cross

⁴ <https://www.tenk.fr/p/faq>, consulted in September 7th, 2017

⁵ Fundraising campaign carried out from August 5th to September 12th, 2015, on Ulule. Results: 1.000 contributors, 34.993 € (<https://www.tenk.fr/p/qui-sommes-nous>, consulted on September 7th, 2017)

⁶ For more information: http://www.lussasdoc.org/ardecche_images.176.html

⁷ « TënK : "Nous voulons devenir coproducteur et ré-acheteur de documentaires d'auteurs" », in *Les Ecrans*, May 3rd, 1917.

⁸ This 40 minutes interview was done by Skype in April 26th, 2017..

our problematic, in particular the information-communication work related to the theories of attention regimes (Thomas Davenport, Michael Goldhaber and Françoise Benhamou), and what they imply at the level of new forms of editorialisation (David Boullier, Yves Citton), but also on works related to the changes in the cultural industries (Philippe Bouquillon, Pierre-Jean Benghozi, Thomas Paris, Laurent Creton and François Moreau) and the socioeconomic transformations of the cinematographic sector (Michaël Bourgatte, Alain Le Diberder, Philippe Chantepie and Françoise Paquienséguy).

An ambitious editorial positioning

The first point that we will highlight is the supported work of editorialisation witnessed by the platform, on a niche segment with reduced potential from a strictly commercial point of view. This work constitutes a strong marker of the cinephile anchoring of the company, which inscribes it at once in a militant register inherent in the process. Tënk announces, in the editorial that serves as its homepage, that it intends to give films that "*claim the subjectivity of the perspective, the diversity and the infinite complexity of experiences*" (www.tenk.fr/p/notre-projet). This subjectivity is at the heart of the understanding of the process, understood as an act of transmission, of mediation: the team of 21 programmers - characterized by "*a team of enthusiasts*" (www.tenk.fr) which works on the elaboration of the editorial choices, understands by its work to share a vision of the world, to address by the films proposed to the users to tell them things of the world which surround them, to share with them discoveries. Madeline Robert and Pascal Catheland represent this team of programmers:

"This season - let's say season because it's mostly a story of colour - that is initiated today resembles us individually and collectively. It contains the peculiarities of all and the common will that brings us together around a major project. Each of the pieces we deliver week after week, assembled, will draw a subjective image of our world. The test of a world in which we live and deploy our perspective at a precise moment" (www.tenk.fr/p/notre-projet).

The - collective - identity of this programming instance is here strongly claimed, as an enunciator (to take up the vocabulary of the basic schemes in communication). This active claim is reflected in the repeated use of the "we" in this presentation text, but also on the homepage of the site where we read "*Films WE think you'll adore*".



<https://en.tenk.fr/> (consulted on Septembre 7th, 2017)

We find the use of this personal pronoun in the communication elements intended for users: "We invite you", "We offer you", "We advise you", "We invite you", "We pursue", "We reserved" ... are among the many recurring expressions that can be found in the weekly newsletters sent by the team to the users of the site.

"We are continuing this week with our special programme "États généraux du film documentaire"⁹, a festival which is currently taking place in Lussas in the Ardèche (our cradle). (...) We invite you in this Fragment to three of his films: Am Siel, Tod und Teufel and Aufsätze. He was invited to Lussas these last few days to accompany the retrospective of which his work is the subject; it is with great pleasure that we took the time of an interview with him. We will keep you informed of the on-line version of this interview "¹⁰.

"The village is gradually populated with festival visitors: it is that the "était généraux du film documentaire" (General Conditions of the documentary film) of Lussas begin on Sunday! On this occasion, we propose you a special programme (...) You have already discovered on Tënk the work of the French director Alice Diop with La Mort de Danton and Vers la tendresse, César 2017 for the best short film (available in VoD). Today, it is her latest film, La Permanence, that we highly recommend!"¹¹

By this choice of communication, the strictly technician character of the interface that is consulted on a personal screen disappears in favour of a situation of proven communication, issued by a group of identified individuals: one can in fact know, for each programming range, who is responsible for it, while another page of the site takes care on the presentation of the names and photos of the Tënk team in full.

This strong personalization of the approach is also verified through the proposal of a specific range within the site, entitled "Highlights", which groups together, as announced by the three programmers responsible for the section¹² - and who happen to be also the three editorial coordinators of the site: *"The works that have marked our memories over the long term and impose themselves as so many lived experiences, unforgettable looks that we decided to share, in all subjectivity"*¹³.

Beyond this specific heading, however, all the films programmed are presented to the users as borrowings from this subjectivity, since besides the summary which presents the work, "the opinion of Tënk" gives account of the reasons that led the editorial team to propose this particular film. This incarnation of the editorialisation of the site is fundamental insofar as it is obviously opposed to the algorithmic, merchant - and therefore notoriously impersonal - logic, that characterizes VOD platforms which are strictly commercial, in order to approximate traditional forms of mediation that have always characterized the spaces of diffusion of author-driven cinema: the cine-club and its animator, the festival and its general delegate, the art and essay room and its director, etc. Thus, while the distribution and marketing of mainstream films requires only promotional campaigns, the renown of the cast and the media repercussions to

⁹ General Assemblies of documentary film

¹⁰ Tënk, Weekly newsletter of August 25, 2017

¹¹ Tënk, Weekly newsletter of August 18, 2017

¹² Jean-Marie Barbe, Pascal Catheland and Madeline Robert.

¹³ <https://www.tenk.fr/c/coup-de-coeur>, consulted on September 7th, 2017

ensure its distribution, Tënk is in line with the perspective of an author-driven cinema, fragile, which requires mediation work to find its audience.

Indeed, the demand for an author-driven cinema is fully part of Tënk's approach: if the "pedagogical" mission of the site is obvious, in the spirit of a "civic education" that is played through discourse, the vision conveyed by the programmed films, never precedes on strictly aesthetic demands, for, as Pierre Mathéus reminds us: *"The form is also a vision of the world. For us, the form is as important as the background. The topic is not the first criterion of choice of the film. The programmers are above all people of the cinema industry, people who work for the festival, who are directors, producers, who love to tell stories, but via cinema, through cinematographic art"*. Tënk is thus built above all on the claim of a singular niche, that of the author-driven documentary, which is conjugated with the assertion of an assumed subjectivity.

Working attention regimes through programming

This identity continues with strong work in terms of programming. Retaining the lesson of MUBI, of which Pierre Mathéus fully assumes the inheritance¹⁴, Tënk chooses the programming against the logic of a catalogue adopted by commercial VOD sites. Twelve or thirteen new movies a week were available at the start of the site, to quickly return to smaller numbers of up to 8 to 9 new movies per week - a choice close to MUBI's 7 weekly movies -; then films are being available for a period of two months.

The presentation of these "films of the week" makes it possible to work on the notion of desire, by communicating on the notion of "novelty" - in registers very close to what the cinemas do with actuality – to mobilise the users' attention¹⁵. It is also the pretext for a weekly communication with the subscribers, in order to keep them informed of the novelties that are now visible on the site. It is essentially a question of keeping the attention of the users, in a world where communication is largely hampered by the overabundance of information, as Herbert A. Simon noted in 1971: *"What information consumes is rather obvious: it consumes the attention of its recipients. Hence a wealth of information creates a poverty of attention and*

¹⁴ To the question of whether the model of MUBI had inspired the experience of Tënk, Pierre Mathéus answers: «Yes, a lot. When we started working on Tënk, we wanted to create a television because we thought that we lacked broadcasters. It's thanks to the broadcasters that films are produced, and thanks to them the funds of the CNS are disbursed, and then the other funding. So we wanted to create a local television. However, we did not have the funds, but then we thought that the Internet was accessible to us, and would allow us to create something non-linear, which could be interesting. At that time, several studies were published, including a very interesting student dissertation that used the example of MUBI: it was very interesting to us as in we were the opposite of politics of the VOD sites - one film, a day - and it inspired us immensely".

¹⁵ Pierre Mathéus thus explained the positioning of Tënk: "We really started on an idea of programming and editorialisation saying that today VOD does not work because we are on a logic of catalogues. It's a bit of a race – and we will come back to that - the race for the catalogue: "I have 4000, 5000, 6000 films ...". It was a bit like it belonged to the one that had the biggest catalogue, and people are lost ... In addition, one has the feeling that the most fragile films - which are not the least interesting - are never consulted. When you have a huge catalogue, you will instead put a blockbuster, which will be seen to attract people. The bottom of the catalogue will never be looked at. In fact, that was what we realized with the production boxes putting on the VOD. They noticed that no one was watching VOD movies. So we started on a programming logic saying that we were going to put forward only few films, to allow a place to fragile films.

a need to allocate that attention efficiently among the overabundance of information sources that might consume it"¹⁶.

His work on desire that communication plays, combines a game of frustration and urgency, since films are destined to disappear from the site - knowing that most of them are not visible anywhere elsewhere. The reflection on the attention regimes developed by Thomas H. Davenport and John C. Beck, takes on a particular importance here in that it involves taking into consideration two phenomena which are reinforced in their encounter: on the one hand the cinema industry, whose economic logics are largely based on the promotion of standardized, industrial products, supported by extensive communication campaigns which tend to mobilize public attention to the detriment of products that are atypical and therefore more fragile and which have difficulty in getting attention; and on the other hand the Internet, where, as Françoise Benhamou writes, ¹⁷"the number of Internet users and the wealth of information offered go hand in hand with the scarcity and fragmentation of attentions in this astonishing reversal where the offer is infinite and attention becomes a rare resource"¹⁸.

At the crossroads of these two perspectives, a proposal targeting a niche cinema that constitutes in substance the author-driven documentary is found drowned in a plethoric image on the Internet, scattering the attention of those who eventually would be interested. The choice of the SVOD is of course a first answer to this problem, by increasing user loyalty by a financial contract that raises the envy, to "make profitable" by a symbolic acquisition, the investment occasioned. The programming work comes second, in reinforcement, to mobilize the subscribers' attention on the activity of the site, by an appropriate communication work.

In this perspective, this opposition to the programming logic is intimately connected to that of events, insofar as it is a matter of creating an event, week after week, with the arrival of new titles on the platform. This concept of events is precisely worked out by Tënk programmers in that they seek to create bridges with the news in order to give even more relief to the programmatic proposal - and thus to capture the user's interest. This was the case, for example, when, in the middle of the presidential campaign, the Tënk team programmed *Les deux marseillaises* by Jean-Louis Comolli and André S. Labarthe, a 1968 film, noting "*how curious it was to compare the pragmatic nature of the political debate of the past with that of today*"¹⁹. In the aftermath of the election, when Édouard Philippe's name began to circulate in the media as a probable Prime Minister, Tënk programmed the documentary *Édouard, my right-hand buddy*, made in 2014 by Laurent Cibien, his former schoolmate. Far from the propaganda film, this film, according to Tënk programmers, translated the "*vacuum of contemporary political construction*", the discussions between the two men revealing "*the mismatch between the daily life of the politician and the vision of the world view he translates*"²⁰.

Without going deeper into these processes, this commitment to the idea of programming witnesses once again the importance of the legacy of traditional mechanisms of

¹⁶ Simon, Herbert A. "Designing Organizations for an Information-Rich World", in Greenberger, Martin (ed.) *Computers, Communication, and the Public Interest*, Baltimore, The Johns Hopkins Press, 1971, pp. 40-41.

¹⁷ Davenport, Thomas H. ; Beck, John C. *The Attention Economy: Understanding the New Currency of Business*. Boston, Harvard Business School Press, 2001.

¹⁸ Benhamou, Françoise. « La rareté et les flux numériques. La valeur de l'attention », *Esprit*, janvier 2014, p. 44.

¹⁹ Tënk, Weekly newsletter of April 7, 2017

²⁰ Tënk, Weekly newsletter of May 12, 2017.

cinematographic mediation in on-line cinematic projects. The programming is very closely linked to the theatre as an emblematic place for the discovery of films. But also at the cine-club, at the festival, whose programming crystallizes the audience's expectations, its desires, as much as it tests, each time, the contract of trust that binds the said audience to the mediators who aim to guide them.

Broadening the public: democratizing a demanding cinematographic genre

Working on attention systems presupposes, of course, building loyalty among users of the site, seeking to increase their frequent connection and viewing, but also seeking out new audiences and broaden the potential of the platform, the primary ambition of online cinematographic initiatives. As Pierre Mathéus notes, Tënk's first audience is made up of professionals and students from major audiovisual and film schools. For the sake of cultural democratization, the Platform works of course towards a broadening of this base particularly by relying on the militant networks that carry out popular education work on the ground - social centres, neighbourhood houses, rural homes, associations, etc. It is a question of proposing to them themes - illustrated by documentary films - by which they can extend the basic work. Pierre Mathéus, like most of his collaborators in Lussas, comes from this background, and he knows that if he wants to motivate them, it is necessary to pass through their centre of interest, the thematic that joins their own preoccupation. The result is obvious: *"It has been realized that by working with networks, we could perhaps lead audiences to go to other subjects, to other forms, to discover more widely the documentary on subjects that are less in their interests. It is not because someone belongs to a network linked to ecology, the environment, that he is not interested in anything else!"* The other strategy developed to broaden audiences is to rely on media partnerships (Médiapart, Télérama, France Culture, Arrêt sur images ...), to reach categories of audiences of already constituted communities interested in information and culture to lead them towards the documentary.

Educating the public - the cinephile missionary character

The Tënk team tries to get in touch with this new audience to rally its cause for the author-driven documentary however this does not concluded necessarily by an adhesion to the form. Pierre Mathéus stresses the fact that, although the provision of films can be self-sufficient, this support would be useful, especially to address the younger ones. Acknowledging that the documentary form can be complex, arid, even disturbing, there is space for education - in keeping with the cinephile project as it was historically defined in the post-World War II era - to allow these more difficult movies, less attractive at first for the uninitiated than mainstream films easily accessible online, to win new audiences by education.

The question of image education, of a more precise support to discovery, is something that enthusiasts the animators of Tënk. The most obvious approach is an encyclopaedical temptation, which is reflected in the organization of the programming according to thematic ranges, in which the new films are distributed, in addition to those of the weeks before, and in that way articulating around the same thematic perspectives and singular visions, designed to upset the dominant visions.

TĒNK CATEGORIES

DISCOVER ALL THE THEMATIC PROGRAMS OF THE EDITORIAL
TEAM



<https://en.tenk.fr/>

Thus, when one speaks of history, it is in order to "*draw the dreamed card of films which in their purpose, in their form and in their poetics make politics and 'stand against the too shiny coat of the history' to use the formula of Walter Benjamin*"²¹. In the same way, in the place devoted to ecology, there are "*films that denounce, shift, deconstruct our view that places man in the centre of life. Exercises of complex thought, cries of rage, experiments of new forms of collaboration, scandals of enormous energy, exploitation of animals, so many scenes where to deploy its intelligence and its sensibility to better know, to fight better and thus deepen our humanity*"²².

The same can be said of the ranges devoted to sociology, interculturalism [Cité], cultural diversity [Docmonde], contemporary thought [Great interviews], the arts [Arts], the sciences [Science], music [Music]... Other ranges also adopt a clearly pedagogical perspective, but in the spirit of a more artistic, aesthetic education, which tends to participate in the construction of a true cinematographic education. This is the case of the range "Listening (à l'écoute)", which "*invites us to shift our cinematic attention from the visual to the listening*"²³, highlighting the sound dimension of the cinematographic expression of "Fragments d'un oeuvre" (Filmmaker in Focus), which is an exploration of the variety of writings, approaches and forms of the

²¹ <https://www.tenk.fr/c/histoire-et-politique>, consulted on September 8th, 2017

²² <https://www.tenk.fr/c/ecologie>, consulted on September 8th, 2017

²³ <https://www.tenk.fr/c/ecoute>, consulted on September 8th, 2017

documentary, through the works of major filmmakers or emerging filmmakers²⁴, from the range "Cinema de cinema "[id.], devoted to experimental cinema, etc.

Thus, in accordance with the history of the encounter between cinema and education, Tënk's work voluntarily articulates a desire for *education through image* to that of an *education to the image*; a claim that the choice of ranges of encyclopaedic inspiration clearly shows. The specific qualification of the programmers responsible for each of these ranges, mentioned at the user's interface address, reinforces this idea of mediation, from top to bottom, carried out by competent individuals, professionals - beyond the passion that animates them. The choice of this internal organization does not, however, satisfy the supporting requirements as they can be experimented in face-to-face sessions. Even if a small summary, a presentation by the author himself, and a small article accompanies the presentation of each of the films, this documentation remains rudimentary and fragmentary. To go beyond this, Pierre Mathéus declared himself helpless with regards to these new stakes posed by Internet: "*When someone is not accustomed someone can quickly let go and say 'These films are not for me!' I think there is a need for education, but how to do, I don't know ...* "

Among the tracks that tame Pierre Mathéus, in order to work this educational dimension, there is the question of the transposition on the Net of the "sharing of experiential knowledge" as it is commonly practiced in the traditional devices of cinema viewing: art cinemas, festivals and movie theatres in former times, commonly organize post-session debates, in order to maximize the benefit of these interactions made possible by the collective nature of cinematic viewing; contrary to the development of individual viewing practices (television, DVD, and of course the Internet). This need for debate and exchange will probably prompt the creation of a Tënk specific social network - already tested by several other VOD platforms, but impossible to the platform for financial reasons. "*We pursue this project,*" declared Pierre Mathéus, "*we can not yet do it, but we would like to. We are convinced that when we see a film, it provokes reactions, a desire to share, a desire to comment, to discuss with the author, to understand better, not to be alone with the film. We also plan to create a substitution network via the Internet: even if viewing is individual, we have the possibility to go further, to share our experience with as many people as possible*". A project to set up discussion spaces with the authors of the films is also being considered by the platform.

Aware that digital communication will never replace the face-to-face exchange, Tënk also intends to promote around its films the organization of collective face-to-face sessions for all demanding organizations and associations, in order to make sharing possible. The numerous partnerships that the platform is already developing with festivals are also a way of encouraging its users to frequent the events concerned. A range entitled "Festivals", proposes to view the works resulting from the concomitant programming of nearly thirty major francophone documentary film festivals, concretising this broad support of the methods of self-representation of cinematographic initiatives on-line on traditional devices.

It should be added that partnerships are also established with magazines "on paper", in this case the magazine *Images Documentaires*, confirming both: the need to work in connection with

²⁴ <https://www.tenk.fr/c/fragments-dune-oeuvre>, consulted on September 8th, 2017

traditional actors of cinephile mediation, and the concern for education that goes through the implementation in exhibition of these films *voicedness*.

SVOD actors: co-producers and broadcasters?

For the activists of Lussas who have embarked on the Tënk adventure, this work on the distribution of author-driven documentary is totally inseparable from a commitment in favour of the production of this specific genre. Indeed, we mentioned the fact that in Lussas, beside Tënk, there were teams developing directors 'and producers' trainings, both in France and in French-speaking Africa. This globalizing view of the ecosystem of the author-driven documentary explains that the beneficiaries are at the centre of the system of raising the revenue as wanted by the designers of Tënk: refusing the idea of a remuneration proportional to the number of views, which by their very nature are the most accessible films, they have opted for a flat rate - in this case between 150 and 400 Euros - in exchange for the rights for two months of broadcasting, regardless the number of views. "*Our wish was to operate on the basis of a fair remuneration, even if the beneficiaries are not going to make a fortune thanks to us,*" Pierre Mathéus reports. "*We are cooperative in sharing; we have about thirty producers among our partners. Our struggle is also to tell ourselves that films are not made gratuitously, there is work behind, we must also pay for this work*".

This issue of production is thus very closely linked to the issue of dissemination in the work developed by the platform, so much so that the latter wishes to engage in co-production and pre-purchase work. The project is ambitious, since it would involve yearly co-producing or purchasing about thirty documentaries from the DocMonde network, as well as some thirty other projects. The financial projections show that this project will be feasible as soon as the site reaches 10,000 subscribers, expected for the end of 2017 (the site having 5,027 subscribers on 8th September 2017²⁵). The money collected would also be used to equip post-production studios as well as a film set at the service of the films supported financially by the platform. A major communication operation was undertaken during the summer 2017 to reach this critical threshold.

At the same time, steps have been taken with the National Centre for Cinematography and Animated Images (CNC) to ensure that Tënk is recognized as a broadcaster – like a television channel. This will greatly change the situation in the French system, since once the platform is entered into a co-production agreement, access to the different aids managed by the CNC - including the automatic support fund, the Support Account to the Program Industries (COSIP), ... it can be unblocked. This strong involvement of the Tënk team in favour of production reflects the desire to act on the whole of the economic sector specific to the author-driven documentary: symbolically on its valorization, its knowledge and its recognition, but also a very pragmatic way on the economic links represented by its production, its distribution and its diffusion.

²⁵ <https://www.tenk.fr/p/objectif10000>, consulted on September 8th, 2017

Conclusion: give a voice to *voicedness*, a political gesture?

To conclude this reflection on the use of the Internet to promote cinematographic less represented and less-audible voices, we will examine the political dimension that seems to us to be consubstantial with the militant core values of this engagement, which essentially are not lucrative.

As we have seen - and I will not go back on this point - the political dimension of Tënk's approach is primarily the view of the world, reflected in the choice of films proposed for viewing: a shifted look, pointing the weaknesses, the inequalities, the injustices of our contemporary societies, that the filmmakers show in its reality. The author-driven documentary cannot give birth to formatted images: once it fully assumes the view of its author, it is essentially a political gesture. Madeline Robert and Pascal Catheland wrote nicely about this: "*Tënk is in motion, it vibrates and it moves and it is there, in this permanent oscillation, at the confluence of all the eyes, that shows us the fairest and most living image of our world*"²⁶.

Showing these films is, in itself, a political gesture, deeply rooted in the tradition of popular education as it was enunciated at the time of the French Revolution, and reinforced by the policies of the Third Republic. Education becomes an invitation to citizenship within the center of a social project. Documentaries offer, by the diversity of their approaches and their languages, wonderful tools to pursue such ambitions.

The animators of Tënk, tell us that these films "*instruct us (...) by appealing to our intelligence of the sensible, the very one that we mobilize in regard to art works. These films invite us to think.*"²⁷

But beyond this central issue, Tënk's approach appears to us to be deeply political in its encounter with the major issues on which the French state has based its cultural policies for decades.

This is particularly true with regards to cultural diversity, which, following the evolution in the last 20 years, is the subject of the cultural exception, is now the core of national cultural policies, degrees that vary with political alternations. For Pierre Mathéus, "*to build oneself, to build one's history, someone must also be able to talk about himself: the image and the documentary can participate in this challenge*". This assertion is the foundation of the question of cultural diversity, the need to have access to the tools of self-representation to exist in a world where the image is omnipresent. As the UNESCO Convention on the Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions reminds us: "*The processes of globalization, facilitated by the rapid evolution of information and communication technologies, represents a challenge for cultural diversity*"²⁸. This is the challenge that Tënk attempts to address: while being aware of the small amount of weight they represent to the giants of cultural industries, the action of a site of this type tends to give a voice AND an economy to these minority films because, as the same

²⁶ <https://www.tenk.fr/p/notre-projet>, consulted on September 8th, 2017

²⁷ <https://www.tenk.fr/p/notre-projet>, consulted on September 8th, 2017

²⁸ UNESCO. *Convention sur la protection et la promotion de la diversité des expressions culturelles*, Paris, UNESCO, October 20th, 2005, p. 2 [en ligne] consulted on September 8th, 2017 http://portal.unesco.org/fr/ev.php-URL_ID=31038&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html

convention again mentions, "*cultural activities, goods and services have a dual nature, economic and cultural, [and] because they carry identities, values and meanings [they] should not be treated as exclusively of commercial value*"²⁹. The actors of Tënk comply perfectly with these assertions. Pierre Mathéus thus recalled the nature of the work developed with francophone Africa, to enable them to make films, and then show them. But he also mentions that for him, "*to make these films, to meet the other, to meet other cultures is a bit like doing his Humanities*".

Again, Tënk's deeply political anchor tends to forge links between its action and the powerful and very present heritage of film history, marked by a strong activism, that one refers to the cine-clubs - very largely dominated by the Federations of Popular Education - as well as to festivals. It is also interesting to note that the Tënk animators do not hesitate to use this militant fibre specific to cinéphiles to encourage them to subscribe to the platform. In the newsletter of 26th July 2017 was stated: "By subscribing to Tënk today, you are doing a militant act: you commit yourself to our side to give a future to the author-driven documentary, a context of great economic fragility ". The various initiatives that are emerging on the Internet, in favour of a better exposure of the most fragile films, most distant from the general standards of wide audience entertainment, continue, by taking advantage of the new information and communication technologies, a work started a long time ago by film-loving activists fighting since the distant history of silent film.

²⁹ Ibid.