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Cinematography – A Medium for International Studies: Applying Film to Advocacy & Social Change

La cinematografía - un medio para los estudios internacionales: Aplicación del cine a la defensa y el cambio social

Abstract:

Mutation and adaptation of an idea and its appropriation by distinct cultures, whether national or imagined, is at the core of this article. It explores discourse generated by the documentary BROKEN and leans on the previous articles in the Trilogy. Here, discourse gets re-constructed by local circumstances.

This applied research takes its cues from two distinct groups of interviewees, those creating discourse and those absorbing and mutating it. It aims at defining to what degree global culture is absorbed, reflected upon and recreated locally.

The documentary targets audiences concerned with International Law at the example of the 2004 International Court of Justice's Advisory Opinion on Israel's Wall in the West Bank. Here the film's journey and its metamorphosed meanings are documented while on tour to a different country in conflict, Armenia. The discourse around BROKEN witnesses' transformation being exposed, for the first time, to an audience other than that for which it had been conceived. The article highlights the universality of law, a film's potential for advocacy and social change.

Keywords: Armenia; culture; conflict; discourse theory and analysis; documentary film

Resumen:

La mutación y adaptación de una idea y su apropiación por parte de distintas culturas ya sean nacionales o imaginarias, es el núcleo de este artículo. Se explora el discurso generado por el documental BROKEN y se apoya en los artículos anteriores de la Trilogía. En este caso, el discurso es reconstruido por las circunstancias locales.

Esta investigación aplicada se basa en dos grupos distintos de entrevistados, los que crean el discurso y los que lo absorben y mutan. Su objetivo es definir hasta qué punto la cultura global es absorbida, reflexionada y recreada localmente.

El documental se dirige a un público preocupado por el Derecho Internacional con el ejemplo de la Opinión Consultiva de la Corte Internacional de Justicia de 2004 sobre el Muro de Israel en Cisjordania. En este caso, el viaje de la película y sus significados metamorfoseados se documentan durante una gira por otro país en conflicto, Armenia. El discurso en torno a BROKEN es testigo de la transformación que se expone, por primera vez, a un público distinto de aquel para el que había sido concebido. El artículo destaca la universalidad del derecho, el potencial de una película para la defensa y el cambio social.

Palabras claves:

Armenia; cultura; conflicto; teoría y análisis del discurso; película documental

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1. Introduction

This is the final article of the Trilogy entitled: "Cinematography, A Medium in International Studies". Its role is to see through the mutation of a film's original intent. It follows the analysis of how a film is born and put into reality (in the first article), how film and particularly documentary films can take on a much broader role than was anticipated (second article). Here, the onus is on showing how a different culture appropriates, adjusts and induces new meaning in a context for which it may not have been destined.

BROKEN-the-film and how it has been depicted and received in Armenia, a crossroad of cultures and civilizations. The film explores echoes of Palestine and their relevance to Armenia, both countries facing fundamental humanitarian issues. Either are exposed to rapid social change due to conflict or imminent conflict. This research advances the idea that humanitarian causes can be laid bare through documentary film and inherent storytelling. This is happening at a crucial time as more citizens realize the importance of engaging in advocacy to effect large scale change and being made aware that they can spur that change. BROKEN's mission is to raise awareness on issues on the implementation of international law. The showcasing of "BROKEN" at the 18th Golden Apricot Film Festival in Armenia is deemed to help educate, create awareness and to inform the viewer and, by extension, the reader of this article to be aware of the injustices impacting the world not only in Armenia, but around the world. In a world crammed with indifference BROKEN is a film that concentrates on pressing issues that need to be addressed, namely, the protection of human lives, their dignity, and advance of humanitarian causes to ensure it. This article attempts to illustrate, at the showcase of the Golden Apricot Film Festival, the most prestigious and biggest film festival in Armenia, and the catalyst of film's impact on social discourse, obviously together with the media and nowadays social media.

At the ten-day film screening and debating tour, co-organized by the author, it shall be illustrated that meaningful bridges can be built to the future impacting society in the years ahead, if filmmaking can indeed be a leverage to such an ambitious goal.

Besides screening and debating Stefan's film at the Golden Apricot, there are a number of venues and a plethora of audiences to be reached. This study tries to exemplify how the idea of a film in article one of the Trilogy and turning into a product of change and advocacy is appropriated by the organizers and turned into distinctly different, and potentially unintended outcomes.

The research at the bottom of this inquiry carries out distinctly distilled interviews with stakeholders and actors during the ten-day tour of the film in order to better understand the intentions and possible appropriations or misappropriations, of the film's vision, intentions and targets.

Besides the declared analysis of the study this article attempts to discover the film's awareness-raising, educational and learning capacities and potentials at the same time as documenting, and compiling respondents' personal accounts and impressions or declared learning.

2. Theoretical Premises

2.1 Discourse Theory & Action Research

Discourse Theory lends itself to this study because it seeks to uncover forces at work behind the creation of a documentary film, its intention to create awareness, learning and debate. To this degree this study employs Action Research theory to its end of pinning down understanding. The theory or theories applied in this article are a continuation of the discussion in the first article of the Trilogy: Action Research and Discourse Theory. Discourse theory was useful for our project in Armenia as it involves a documentary film with BROKEN and as we are traveling and covering numerous stations in the country, discovering elements of stories, the local people and the country itself, we are creating our own awareness to this paramount topic whilst educating those willing to take part. The expressions we are given and the impressions we are receiving, shapes to knowledge and our relations. With the interactive approach of interviewing our participants, we can understand the thoughts and communication about BROKEN in Armenia of in the context of international law.

Foucault states:

discourse is defined by ways of constituting knowledge with the social practices, forms of subjectivity and power relations which exist in knowledge and relations between them telling us that discourse is more than thinking and producing meaning. Societies depend on information power as knowledge for decision making, influence, credibility, and control.

Foucault's theories, address the relationship between power and knowledge, and how this relationship is used as a form of social control through societal institutions, explored in "The Archaeology of Knowledge" (Foucault, 1969). Here we find the traces of discourse being "a certain way of speaking". This study aims to break down walls, mental, as well as metaphysical, and by injecting Action Research theory and methodology we will opt not only to describe walls but actively contribute to rendering them less divisive. In Foucault's words: "I'm no prophet. My job is making windows where there were once walls."

One important feature in Foucault is his view of mechanisms of power which produce and reproduce different types of knowledge or discourses. Collecting data and information on people's activities and life-worlds is one way of opening up windows on either side to try and gain deeper and better understanding of the other. Potentially new discourses evolve out of meaningful conversations and dialogue which interviews with motivated people can be. Information power is a form of personal or collective power that is based on controlling information needed by others to reach an important goal. Power shifts with every new injection of new knowledge and awareness. This does not mean that new discourses are inherently positive and lead to opening windows, some get closed rapidly again.

2.2 Theory exemplified at the film *BROKEN*

Applying discourse analysis interpretatively to the film *BROKEN* needs to be interpreted in its social and political context emphasizing the contextual meaning of language. In *BROKEN*, sociology and linguistics and ethics (law) fuse and cultural and social contexts need to be considered. *BROKEN* is a documentary follow up of the International Court of Justice's 2004 Advisory Opinion (see website) 14 years after its pronouncement. This film is now going on tour in Armenia, another country deeply troubled by conflict and lacking future vision and hope in the remedies of International Law. And if we want to improve our understanding of aspects of communication, Participatory Action Research does not fail us as we observe and become part of our observations.

BROKEN was born when the expertise and experience of the former Head of the UN Barrier Monitoring Unit proposed to Mohammed Alatar, the American-Palestinian film maker, to make a documentary film about the decision of the International Court of Justice (ICJ). In *BROKEN*, many voices come together, the ones of Palestinians, Israelis, lawyers, judges, experts, diplomats, and the ones of United Nations officials. *BROKEN* is showing us why no action has been undertaken to stop Israel from completing the construction of the Wall and why the Wall has never been taken down ever since the International Court of Justice declared it illegal.

BROKEN reflects humanitarian advocacy, the story of Israel's Wall in Palestine and how this Wall affects Palestinian lives on a daily basis. Much has been said and written about the Wall, its story in the chapters of Palestinian lives, the impact it has on people's lives and in *BROKEN*'s case, the story of the Wall and its broken promise of international law and the broken commitment of the international community, the silence. *BROKEN* is taking a different

perspective and is picking up the pieces to tell us the story of how international law does not work in the case of the Wall. In 2002, the Israeli government started with the construction of a 700km long Wall in the West Bank. It was in 2004 that the International Court of Justice in the Hague pronounced the Wall on Palestinian territory illegal. There was a glimpse of hope in Palestine at that time in the ongoing conflict. Even though States, which have an obligation to comply, have been requested to support the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice and international representatives vowed that their respective governments support the two resolutions of the UN General Assembly, no real results have been achieved. The Wall is still standing today. *BROKEN* is taking its viewers on a journey through the broken promise of international law on Palestinian territory. *BROKEN* is a captivating documentary film of the events of the decision of the construction of the Wall, the International Court of Justice's decision, international power politics and the international community as a spectator. The film shows us the reality of the humanitarian living situation in Palestine. Watching *BROKEN*, some questions will have been answered but many more questions will come to the surface but *BROKEN* clearly mirrors the complexity of international law, politics and power altogether.

Stefan Ziegler felt compelled to address the issue of the illegal Wall in Palestine and to document the humanitarian impact and to give a voice to the crucial role international law plays in conflict and thus a new mission in his life started. BROKEN is a good example of the importance of international law in conflict, its coherence, its promises and broken promises, the ignorance of the international community members and raising awareness of the potential of international law in resolving international conflict. BROKEN has been extensively researched and it enables viewers to understand the functioning of the international system and also the potential of international law.

2.3 BROKEN in Armenia

In the context of Armenia, BROKEN has the potential to increase awareness of the potential of international law and how it can be a tool for positive change and peaceful transition. It is believed that giving a voice to the voiceless through education and documentary films will bring about chances for positive change. Armenia can benefit from BROKEN and paired with the right educational tools and projects, BROKEN could contribute to the development of international law in Armenia. The idea is for universities to incorporate BROKEN into their teaching as educational content by directly using BROKEN in teaching or for film screenings followed by debates and Q&A sessions. Students worldwide are encouraged to take up BROKEN as an international law case study in their writing and dissertations and to explore such questions as there has been no effective implementation of the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice or why the international community has so far ignored the Wall case. To use the case study of BROKEN challenges other current affairs in the world of which there are many. It is the wish of the film producer that BROKEN provokes thoughts, debates and reflection on this issue and the way BROKEN is being awaited and perceived in Armenia is a proof that there is need for change in this field. Whilst in Armenia we will be applying discourse theory and analysis as our tools to communicate with our beneficiaries and persons of interest to have the most beneficial experience for the benefit of all parties involved.

As the BROKEN team is using discourse theory and analysis, as well as critical theory in general helps understand why BROKEN does not only speak to one, but many peoples in the world. Armenia is the first foreign tour of the film since its 2018 simultaneous premiere in Geneva and at the UN headquarters there. Although the extended subtitle of the film is: "A Palestinian Journey Through International law", the Israel-Palestine conflict is not the main subject of it, but rather constitutes a very profound case study explaining why International Law (conflict specific) is seen as breaking promises of that law, hence the title BROKEN.

With that understanding, BROKEN is an educational and advocacy tool that is being presented in Armenia for the first time in the fall of 2021. BROKEN displays the events of broken promises that can easily be seen in the international community. Armenia can itself serve as a case study in this undertaking as we are learning how BROKEN is perceived in Armenia which has its own conflicts and experience with international law. We will be observing how one nation is being exposed to

another conflict in Palestine and which discussion, emotions, influences, implications arise from this experience. *BROKEN* will be serving as our messenger between different cultures.

In the film it becomes clear, underpinned by an understanding of discourse theory, how one audience, Armenian, is now appropriating the experience of another, Palestinian, in its wish to showcase the film on a national level at the time of writing. Because societies are defined, among others, by struggle and conflict discourses are at the same time reflexive and creative. Discourse analysis unveils deeply rooted attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions. The audience and participants in Armenia will become a part of the journey of *BROKEN* and in an aspect of action research, we are all becoming active participants in our own research.

3. Methodological Underpinnings

3.1 Background

Action Research forms an integral part of the discourse theory above. However, in allowing the research for this study to be participative in the sense that the findings are clearly recognized as being at the same time the source of analysis as well as reinforcing learning both the researcher and the researched. Thus, the methodology induced into this discursive research is not only qualitative, but foremost participatory and comes in the form of interviews. Participatory Action Research, according to the Sage Handbook of (Participatory) Action Research creates a scientific space for analysis in multiple domains as illustrated later at the case study.

*3.2 Action Research of *BROKEN* in Armenia*

The case study is based on the experience of people inducing meaning to the film *BROKEN*, either by the organizers of the tour's events or the audience to be interviewed before and after the screenings with debate. Of utmost interest to this research is the mutation which the film undergoes when arriving in different countries, political contexts, and cultural settings. The mutation of meaning, which was previously discussed in the first article, *The Germination of a Documentary*, of this Trilogy.

The following case study was written based on a series of filmed interviews, which were conducted both via video conference and face to face on location in Armenia, both in a rural and an urban setting. In addition to the verbal answers of each interviewee, the researchers also observed their non-verbal communication including body language and forms of hesitation, such as pauses. This is connected with Action Research as it allows for a deeper meaning to be observed and is linked to the concept of *verstehen* which was covered in the first article. Of the twenty interlocutors, two were internal sources who know Stefan and work with him on projects related to the film. One is Dr Emma Temrazyan, professor at Yerevan State University whom Stefan met in Armenia while he was an election observer in the Tavush region. The second one is a student at the Yerevan State University called Astghik Aslanyan who is also from Armenia and who majors in Marketing. To provide balance to the choice of informants, (...) Eight informants were external sources who were interviewed during the film festival

in Armenia. Some included viewers of the film who attended the festival as well those who took part in the post-screening debate. Those who agreed to be published will be filmed and seen on a YouTube video. The following four semi-structured questions were asked:

Question ONE: Why did you choose this film for your institution and how will *BROKEN* be perceived in Armenia?

Question TWO: What do you think about the film *BROKEN*? Does this film matter?

Question THREE: What is the educational value of *BROKEN* in the context of Armenian society?

Question FOUR: Do you believe that Armenians in the diaspora could be interested in *BROKEN*?

4. A Mutating Idea and New Visions

4.1 Introduction to the Case Study

This study chose in-depth interviews and conversations, asking open-ended questions with the first sampling group, those applying for the screening of the film in their institutions or organizations. They all readily answered the research questions indicating confidence with their decision. Employing a method of unimpeded freedom of expression of speech on the side of the researched gave the researcher ample opportunity to gather firsthand accounts. Interlocutors were answering readily and explicitly about their motivations and aspirations, perceptions and experiences. Crucially, they were open for critical reflection and the potential for learning on their side. A number of interviews were carried out via Zoom in advance of the events, and some were done in written format, see list of interlocutors at the bottom of heading 4.5, Reflections of Key Cultural Influencers.

The second set of interviews targeted individuals attending the film in various settings, including rural and urban. One event was organized in the conflict zone in the south of the country bordering Azerbaijan and during heightened tensions between the two countries. Two screenings with debate were held at major universities in the capital Yerevan and another two with local NGOs, one of them focusing on the rights of children. Finally, the most popular cultural event around which the Armenian film tour has been organized took place among considerable media presence in advance of the largest film festival in Armenia, the Golden Apricot.

All these events took place not only with the backdrop of the deteriorating security situation, but also in light of society's deep reflections. This constituted the primary reason for the production company to strive and get to show their film and to test whether their vision would prove to be useful for a better understanding of international law as a tool and a language for non-violent conversation and level-headed discourse, the main aim of the company.

Keeping in mind this noble, but ambitious cause, my article tries to derive deep understanding in keeping with discourse analysis and accompanying methodological concerns as outlined above. The onus of the primary research was to target how those people in the decision-making layer of

society, the organizers, influencers and “creators” of cultural discourse in a country deeply troubled appreciate a rather “novel” approach to appeasing geopolitical tensions through a return to the rule of international law. The fact that they stepped in more than readily to organize their happenings constitutes a precondition to my research. The softer notes and anecdotes stem from conversations through fleeting interviews of individuals in the audience. It is noteworthy that formal interviews were captured by the documentary film crew on camera while accompanying the producer and attending all occasions during the one-week tour of Armenia in October 2021.

4.2 Considerations of the Researcher

All people interviewed via a semi-structured interview technique, on or off camera, consented to recording their views either directly on film or via microphone. Their interviews were held in certain privacy, and they were thus able to express themselves freely in their native language or the questions were translated back into English, mostly by the film team’s interpreter. The film team, endeavored to capture interviewees representing different age groups, paying attention to gender representation. The film team had been trained by me to apply such a conscientious approach prior to their departure. This ensured the minimization of bias and the maximization of analytical value.

I was conscious at all times that my taking part in the overall execution of the research process was only partial. To interview the cultural influencers with whom I had contact throughout as part of the organizing committee was a given and I gleaned a lot of insights through that contact over the two or more months. It was the parting with my research idea and leaving it to others to carry it out which caused me some anguish. With hindsight however, I must admit that my worries were not justified and the fact that the production team was able to film the interviews under my supervision actually turned out to be of greater value than anticipated. To be able to consult interview material at liberty and to go over that material at will probably made for a better analysis of the entry and exit interviews and added to having vital documentation for future research in this area.

4.3 Armenian Perceptions of BROKEN

The Armenian perception of BROKEN is one of high anticipation, due to the nature of the documentary, maybe holding a promise or a ray of hope for Armenia’s future. Or maybe pointing a way of partially influencing the future of the country, although facing distinctly different issues than Palestine, but sharing similar challenges on the road to peace. To the people involved in my interviews or conversations, exposure to the subject matter of BROKEN appeared to be a first time but they shared the belief that BROKEN is and can be of educational value to Armenian institutions and individuals. Citizens, the cultural influencers unanimously stated, are aware of their own ignorance toward international law. This was seen as a key indicator for the necessity to screen BROKEN, especially flanked by debate. Having just witnessed the 44-day war in Nagorno-Karabakh, Armenians feel the silence of the international community and absence of the rule of international law, thus one can understand the vested interest in BROKEN. BROKEN, according to the organizers of events,

tempts concerned people to be interested, engaged, committed to making change in their society. They said that next step would be to try and involve the Armenian diaspora worldwide.

Armenian discourse was ready to embrace BROKEN for the first time during election times in summer 2021, when producer Stefan Ziegler was on mission as election observer realized that the Palestinian distrust of international law was squarely shared with Armenian citizens. From that moment the idea to bring and promote BROKEN in Armenia grew steadily.

BROKEN challenges the values and authority of international law. The inaction and non-implementation and absence of international law is comparable to situations Armenia faced in the past and harmful to mankind. Expectations toward international law are high but were constantly shattered. The silence of the international community in the 44-day war in Nagorno-Karabakh made Armenian citizens lose hope in international law. Could BROKEN provide some answers to help build a type of knowledge for a more promising future? BROKEN provides highly stimulating conversations and discussions potentially useful for Armenians in Armenia as well as those in the diaspora and the Armenian Church, as will be unfolding in the below two subheadings.

Being a foreigner, I have the privilege of being allowed to be listening to what people have to say and learn from them. Throughout this writing experience and whilst researching, I interviewed all main stakeholders, the organizers, and cultural decision-makers. I gathered and compiled the testimonies for the research, its analysis and to keep records for further documentation. To take a humanistic approach was at the heart of my endeavor not least because of the heightened tensions in the region, the fear of the population to go into yet another war. I could not but engage in this research as a human being and I trust this research will render me a more aware being and hopefully be able to apply my learning to causes greater than myself in the future.

BROKEN deals with cultural representations, the importance of keeping culture and memory alive, whether in Palestine, Armenia or in other countries. How they vary from one context to another is of course at the heart of this study. Having networked for over two decades in the Armenian community, these contacts created the starting point of communication leading to this article. Primary research was deemed the best option applicable. Like the research itself, BROKEN is an amalgamation of humanitarian diplomacy, advocacy, communication, research, relationships and development for peace. The objective was to include as much participatory action research as possible to mirror the film's own methodology.

During the research process the participants and I were exposed to awareness creation communication techniques. Over the course of two months, I was in contact with a designated group of participants from Armenia with whom the interviews were to be conducted. My impressions before the interviews were feelings of high anticipation and an eagerness to gain as much information and knowledge from these exchanges to reflect on the subject. I was interested to see how the interviewees would respond and how they feel about BROKEN's message. By applying the technique of open-ended

interview questions and the awareness of both the researcher and the researched to apply and re-integrate gained knowledge through the communicative action research process was by far my most intricate experience in this study. Nothing was or got stale and everything was constantly in flux in cyclical waves of communication, discourse renewing itself perpetually.

4.4 The Armenian Journey of BROKEN

The BROKEN project has its roots in a personal and emotional journey by its initiator, producer, and educator, Stefan Ziegler, as captured in the first articles of the Trilogy. He strongly believes that BROKEN is and should be of universal interest and particular to societies troubled by lack of development or war. He and his film crew travelled to Armenia in an attempt to gather different experiences and viewpoints about BROKEN and to showcase the film at the Armenian premiere on 7th October 2021 at the 18th Golden Apricot Film Festival. Not only was the team gathering crucial data and information for this research, but also, they intended to produce a documentary about the Armenian experience together with the national TV station, Armenpress, to continue the discourse surrounding International Law.

The case study at hand is a synopsis of the shared experience of the film producer, Stefan Ziegler, during his travel in Armenia, and his conversations, interviews and encounters as well as his involvement in the interview process for my study itself. The research-based analysis and the resultant answers to the interview questions reveal how individuals in Armenia perceived BROKEN. The case study is a result of field-based participatory research and a collection of interviews and conversations with interlocutors of the film producer and his Armenian travel experience co-organizers. The exploratory type of the research and the challenging nature of BROKEN combined both the participatory action approach and exposed the essence of advocacy put to use in an iterative sense.

BROKEN has its roots in a personal and emotional journey and so has it has been for me. The project is about the current perception of change in Armenia. It is a depiction of how the people of the region feel reflect upon their own situation when being exposed to BROKEN. The story of the film is at times emblematic with the story the people in the South Caucasus are confronted with.

Swiss film producer, Stefan Ziegler, together with his team travel Armenia in an attempt to gather different experiences and viewpoints about BROKEN through live debates. The film showcases at the Armenian language premiere on 7th October 2021 at the 18th Golden Apricot Film Festival. Around that event a whole tour with the film and the producer was set up inspiring not only many audiences, but also this study and its aims.

4.5 Reflections of Key Cultural Influencers

Generally, the impression I got from my interactions with key informants, but with each interviewee, there were heightened expectations of BROKEN all around and an uncertain hopefulness for the future of Armenia mixed in. The overall atmosphere of the discourse surrounding the Armenian

tour was a blend of curiosity and keen interest in the subject matter. One crucial example was that of a restaurant/music bar owner in Kapan who told Stefan “Nobody has visited us in Kapan since the outbreak of the war last year. Your arrival here could not be timelier, it brings with it hope for us”.

The team behind this journey was full of strong determination and dedication, not shying away from hours and days of hard work. As one of the direct beneficiaries of this extraordinary project, I am full of gratitude for all its supporters and those assisting me to view BROKEN’s potential through an Armenian lens. Equally, I wish to express my gratitude to the Armenian voices who took part in the interviews and whom I never met, regretfully. This “journey” through Armenia has proven us right in our anticipation of Armenians’ keen interest in the messages and discourse of BROKEN. Taking into consideration the difficult time the country is going through, the observations that were made, the perceptions that were expressed and the impressions garnered by the film team and on camera, are witness and reflect the current state of the soul of Armenians.

According to the applied methodology, a group of organizers/cultural influencers organizing the events in Armenia were at the core of the first part of my inquiry. The goal was to capture the perception of this particular group of insiders to see if the meaning of BROKEN transported to the “marketplace” of this country and whether the topic was indeed one of interest. In collaboration with an Armenian political scientist now based in Warsaw we were able to get a whole program of various types of events off the ground, successfully, and in very short few weeks. We were joined by a Professor in Yerevan and numerous others whose contacts I have made over the past two decades or whom I just met recently and who proved willing to assist.

Prior to traveling to Armenia, Stefan was introduced on camera by a well-known political scientist and historian at the University of Geneva, Professor Vicken Cheterian. This filmed introduction to Armenians which was subsequently distributed to the media in Yerevan, was the first public activity opening the tour. Prior to Stefan’s journey to Armenia, its Ambassador to Switzerland and the UN, Mr. Hovhannisyan, marked a support for the project from a very valuable source.

Secondly, media and press were contacted to organize a press conference and podcast with the Director of Armenpress, Aram Ananyan, and an interview with Emilio Cricchio of CivilNet in Yerevan. Via these two outlets BROKEN successfully reached a good portion of potential audiences across the country. The televised nature of the interviews helped transport the messages of BROKEN to countless people in Armenia, and to the diaspora.

Stefan proposed a zoom call so that I and the two ladies Emma and Astghik could meet online for the first time and introduce each other. It was during this zoom call that Stefan shared the news about his upcoming trip to Armenia with us. He asked if the three of us would want to be part of the organizing committee to which we immediately agreed. Now I had two roles to fill; help organize Stefan’s trip to Armenia and research and write this article. When I told Emma and Astghik that I needed to interview them as part of my research, both agreed instantly. Emma is an English literature

and language Professor and Astghik a marketing student. They preferred to answer my questions in written form. Their answers are detailed here:

Emma's perception of *BROKEN* is one of high anticipation, due to the nature of the documentary. She mentioned that "*BROKEN* maybe holds a promise or a ray of hope for Armenia's future or a way of being able to influence a part of the future of the country facing different issues than Palestine but sharing challenges on the road to peace." To the people involved, such as Emma, exposure to ideas as portrayed in *BROKEN*, were a first. Emma was not alone among the people I consulted for my study, but they were intrigued at the prospect of taking part in something new. Emma was certainly also motivated by the use the film makes of education. The next logical step for Emma would be to "involve the worldwide Armenian diaspora, probably starting in France."

Astghik was exposed and got interested in *BROKEN* during election times in summer 2021. From that time the idea to bring *BROKEN* to and to promote it in Armenia grew steadily in her. She expressed that "*BROKEN* challenges the value and authority of international law." To her the inaction, the non-implementation and the perceived absence of international law is nothing new, Armenia has faced them for a long time. She said this problem is perceived as disrespectful to mankind. "Expectations of international law are high but shattered", she said. She explained that "the silence of the international community in the 44-day war in Nagorno-Karabakh made Armenian citizens lose hope in international law." She told me that "*BROKEN* could be highly interesting for the Armenian diaspora also as the territorial question and territorial loss ever since the Ottoman Empire emerge. *BROKEN* provides highly stimulating and useful information and knowledge for Armenians in Armenia as well as in the diaspora and the Armenian Church".

Tatevik Hovhannisyan, my co-organizer, tirelessly helped me to put the program of the *BROKEN* tour together and she reached out to her contacts so that the meetings with Stefan and key stakeholders could be set up. For about three weeks we were in daily contact several times a day. Tatevik was very keen to help me with this project especially because she knew that with her contacts, she could make a great difference. Tatevik helped me because she was eager to support me as she believes in the messages of *BROKEN* and that the film has a distinct message for Armenia.

My friend of many years, Karen Gasparyan, offered his help in Kapan and Yerevan. One evening via Telegram Karen told me "The reason I do it, is to help you". I had the impression that being a foreigner organizing a project in Armenia touched my Armenian friends.

I also asked my friend, Lilit Ghazaryan in Yerevan, if she would be ready to assist me in contacting universities and other institutions. She and her brother, Samvel Ghazaryan, who was a student at the American University of Armenia, explained to the faculty the *BROKEN*-on-tour concept. The university was very interested and rallied behind the idea from the first moment. Samvel went to see and talk to the Coordinator of Co-curricular Programs in person and was motivated by the enthusiasm of AUA. Even after their successful introduction to the American University, they were keen on learning about the progress of the *BROKEN* tour.

It was all these conversations in and around the organizing work which generally enthused me. To see so many professional people pulling at the same end of the string and believing in the project made me, of course, proud of my involvement and also very conscious of my role as a researcher.

Meline Stepanian, hired as personal assistant and interpreter by Stefan for the duration of the tour, immediately turned into a great source of information to the research. Meline's immediacy with the people surrounding the film team and organizing all last-minute details and meetings meant a deep understanding of the people's understanding could be gleaned. For Meline it was the first time she worked in this capacity and naturally her enthusiasm was great. Her enthusiasm probably also had an effect on interlocutors which is very difficult to quantify. Meline's eager communication with all people in and around the Armenia tour gave her a good position from which I could better access the perceptions and expectations of our interlocutors. Needless to say, that from Meline's discussions I learned much about the flexibility of the organizers when things would not run entirely to schedule. She said that the success from her part was that "no one lost faith or trust in the project despite last minute changes and adaptations."

Two contacts which were established for future events are here added for completeness's sake. One, a meeting with the Human Rights Defender and Ombudsman and former Minister of Justice of Armenia, Mr. Arman Tatoyan, was held in order to better understand how international law is seen by one of its greatest experts in the country. The discussion as recounted by Stefan to me was one of great openness and welcome. There was a shared sense of how international law can be of assistance in better understanding positions for future potential strategic plans for reconciliation. Mr.

Tatoyan was open to attend a debate at the screening of *BROKEN* in the future as he was, unfortunately, not available during this tour.

Stefan also met with the Director of the Genocide Museum (Tsitsernakaberd, Armenian Genocide Memorial Complex), Mr. Harutyun Marutyan to discuss *BROKEN* the film. The interlocutor was greatly interested and shared the view that *BROKEN* came to Armenia at a crucial moment. A future screening of the film could be envisaged during a follow up tour. Mr. Marutyan impressed Stefan with his great enthusiasm, he asked to join a screening with debate with a youth NGO the very same evening. This "show of force" did not go unnoticed at the NGO event and made for some very interesting discussions.

In conclusion, the warm welcome and enthusiastic response to *BROKEN* in Armenia was evidenced by the number of screenings/local organisations staging screenings as well as other expressions of support. Qualitatively, the film was also evidenced by the lively and engaged debates that followed. The author regards this as confirmation that the study's first hypothesis is indeed correct.

Table 1. List of formal and informal interviews, and work-related conversations held for the analysis on the cultural influencers organizing the events to which BROKEN had been invited. (Wettengel, 2021)

Name	Title/description	Type of exchange	Date or dates of interviews/ conversations
Tatevik Hovhannisyan	Political scientist, Hannah Arendt Promotion at the College of Europe in Natolin, Poland. Based in Warsaw (from Kapan).	By phone	11.10.2021
Lilit Ghazaryan	Business Development Manager at Cosmopolis LLC, Yerevan.	By phone	2.10.2021
Samvel Ghazaryan	Export Sales Manager at AWI, Yerevan.	By phone	2.10.2021
Karen Gasparyan	Financier, Kapan	By phone	8.10.2021
Emma Tamrazyan	Professor for English Literature, State University, Yerevan	In writing	28.09.2021
Astghik Aslanyan	Research and Marketing Assistant, AdvocacyProductions, based in Yerevan	In writing	26.09.2021
Meline Stepanian	Personal Assistant to Mr. Ziegler during the entire tour of Armenia	Working conversations	Ongoing from 2.10.2021

4.6 Entry & Exit Interviews at Screening Events

Under the previous subheading the article focused on direct stakeholders in the process of preparing their venues or helping with those preparations for the screening of *BROKEN* for its Armenian tour.

Here the onus is on the individuals who choose, out of their own free will, to attend the film's screenings. The interviews were carried out on a random approach in front of the respective venue by the film crew. Not everyone agreed to be interviewed with the camera rolling, but surprisingly, most people had no objections to talk and be translated to and for the camera. It is only after the tour was over and I received the filmed documents that I realized how valuable a source for further investigation these were.

Here are the interviews captured at four of the venues where the film crew as able to work freely. At one venue, consent by the organizers was not ready by the time my study concluded. Their guests were predominantly human rights affiliated persons and it was not possible to film individuals without having other attendees in the picture. It is a pity we could not include their material for fear of breaching individual privacy law.

American University of Armenia

The first university where *BROKEN* was screened and debated was the American University of Armenia on 4th October. One male Business Administration student was interviewed outside the American University of Armenia, and he told us that

BROKEN shows how simple decisions affect countries and lives. *BROKEN* is a great example of how meaningless international courts and institutions are. [...] People should take action to make it work so that there can be a different solution to the Wall in Palestine. Governments should take specific actions in a peaceful way to resolve these issues.

My observation was that he was shocked that the lawyers seen in *BROKEN* mention that they are fully aware that no meaningful change will happen which, according to him effectively renders international law meaningless. A further three female students and two male students of AUA were interviewed. They were asked "Why did you come to watch *BROKEN* today? One of the male interviewees responded "BROKEN, the name is interesting! International law is broken. And us Armenians? We have our own issues, so I am interested to see the Israeli Palestinian side". His colleague added that the documentary is a good opportunity for him to improve and practice his English skills, but that he was naturally interested in such film projects".

During that evening at AUA, the three ladies explained that they were interested in conflict resolution. One graduate political scientist, currently studying Human Rights, mentioned that "it is good that this film is not only shown at the Golden Apricot Film Festival but made available to us to learn from. *BROKEN* is telling a story that needs to be heard as it comes from the untold". Another

interviewee contributed that “this film is also teaching me about the Armenian conflict as I compare the two conflicts, this is my main aim”. AUA students interviewed shared a common interest in the Israel-Palestine conflict and pointed out that “it is a highly mediatized conflict with wide-ranging consequences, and it shows that many other civilians are impacted by conflict, too”. One student felt it important that the screening showed how it “connects the Armenian conflict to the Israel-Palestine conflict”. In her own studies she was primarily interested in international politics and peace building measures.

Cultural Center Kapan interviews

In the evening of the 5th of October 2021, the screening with debate took place at the Cultural Palace in Kapan. The audience was made up of local persons invited by the director of the Cultural Palace. From the video I made out that the air was filled with expectations. Inside the theater, 2 elderly ladies and a middle-aged man were asked about their expectations of *BROKEN*. The man complained that he had not been able to attend any cultural or entertainment activities because of the recent war in Nagorno-Karabakh and local tensions with Azerbaijan coupled with restrictions in conjunction with the Covid-19 pandemic. He expected to receive some answers for Armenia’s current situation. One lady was hopeful to hear a message for Armenia. The other Armenian lady from St. Petersburg was pleased to be present to watch an international documentary film and found it to be a good opportunity for learning new things. She said that she had not been able to come to public events for the same reason as the man mentioned earlier. Outside the Cultural Palace in the rain, a group of ten young people just about to enter the theater pointed out that they expected to watch an interesting, informative and serious film.

After the film screening, inside the theater, a middle aged Armenian American man from Glendale, California, was interviewed about his thoughts on *BROKEN*. The first point he raised with Stefan was:

try to work in the Armenian perspective of what is happening here. Israel creates tension by not recognizing the Armenian Genocide which is hypocritical of them. By not recognizing, the Israelis are placating towards Erdogan so that he does not need to pay reparations to the Armenians. The Israelis are not making one step towards a solution. Palestinians have the right to survive and live on their land. No one is listening to the Palestinians. Hollywood is demonizing Palestine and as we know, perception triumphs reality. The governments are creating this divide. I am sure that there are good Turkish people and that Azerbaijani mothers do not want to send their sons off to war but what is going on in Armenia is killing me because we have already lost so much. If I see one more Armenian die by the hands of a Turk with a Jewish weapon, it hurts me even more. I am a third generation Armenian American. My four great parents were orphaned during the Armenian Genocide in 1915 committed by the hands of the Ottoman Empire. This film enlightened me tonight because I learned more about what Palestine is going through and how Israel is not a good world partner. Watching this film was very important. Palestinians have the right to survive and live their lives in Palestine. Armenians have the right to survive in Armenia; in Van, Kars, Ani and Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh). It is our land that Turkey and Azerbaijan occupy. The world has to stand up. For all atrocities. In Africa, Lebanon, Cyprus with the Greeks. We have to stop. Humanity has lost its way.

All religions should come together. We have to stop hurting each other and correct problems. This film is important in educational ways.

In our video recordings the gentleman can be seen getting overwhelmed by emotions and the senselessness of war, yet he appears to not quite give up the idea of armed resistance. He is deeply pensive about his own numbness of the situation once he stops talking into the camera. A while later, Stefan recounts this man calmly engaging in a conversation about BROKEN and its producer's discourse. He offered to promote BROKEN through his work in education in California. Very clearly his agitation during the debate had given way to reflection and openness for real debate.

Yerevan State University

On the same day as the Armenian film premiere, a screening and debate was organized at Yerevan State University. Four female International Relations students and two male students of Oriental Studies and Public Administration were interviewed. For all interviewees, their interests were based on the way the nature of their future careers or future professions in the field of the social sciences and was also their primary reason for their attendance. The student of Public Administration wondered if there could be a new way for Palestine to go forward. Two of the female students had a general interest in Conflict Studies and saw in the film a distinct link to Armenia drawing the parallel it being directly impacted by conflict at this moment in time.

All the YSU students interviewed were keen on taking the opportunity to ask questions and expressed hope in receiving answers about international law, international relations, and the Palestine Israel conflict prior to the screening.

After the debate those students expressed hope “to have many more events like this in the future” as they equally share an interest in the Palestine Israel conflict. One female student brought up “the humanitarian problems created by conflicts” and was disappointed by BROKEN's expressed weakness of international law, which she clearly saw as a major problem of the international community. All exiting students at Yerevan State University event clearly expressed their eagerness to learn more about the Palestine-Israel conflict and international law.

Golden Apricot Film Festival Yerevan

On 7th October at the Golden Apricot Film Festival, BROKEN had its first adverse experience in the series of events. During the afternoon screening it was not allowed to film entry and exit interviews. As there was no debate the feedback from the audience was hard to gauge. However, the attendance was relatively speaking good in one of the biggest venues of the film festival. During the main screening of BROKEN, and due mainly to insufficient advertising, and a wrong address given by the organizers, the audience was limited to only two dozen people, among them the Swiss Ambassador, a film maker, some artists and a number of academics. The ensuing debate was of great depth despite the limited number of attendees. However, filming documentary evidence was almost impossible due to the

vastness of the venue, the number of entry and exit points did not help to capture more than two interviewees, a male Lebanese-Armenian film maker and a female Armenian-American lady originally from Lebanon were interviewed.

The filmmaker was personally touched as he lives with conflict and the impacts of conflict on a daily basis in Lebanon. As a film maker he felt the film's quality and its messaging were of very high standard. He felt touched by the film because, as he said, "the sadness which comes with the realization that international law does not seem helpful to victims of conflict."

The lady had experienced the Israel-Palestine issue throughout childhood growing up in Syria and Lebanon. After having lived for two decades in Armenia, she is disappointed that international law does not offer conclusions nor resolutions in these long-lasting situations. Armenia is in the same situation as Azerbaijan, being occupied in parts but there are no changes in sight from an international law perspective. She said, "the law looks good from the outside, but you must look at it from within". She sees no fairness and is scared for the future of Armenia as she believes nothing can be done through international courts, neither.

The above excerpts from the numerous documented interviews are of course not entirely conclusive but give a sampled and still representative insight into the reaction of the diverse audiences the film was met by.

Thus, the second hypothesis of this study has also been verified significantly. It can be summed up as follows: a film conceived of in the specific, singular context of the Wall between Palestine and Israel can, in addition, be a catalyst for reflecting on and understanding other, nominally different conflictual contexts. This is because BROKEN uses International Law as the lens through which the film examines the reality on the ground (and not the other way around) and, thus, International Law becomes the common denominator through which to consider other conflictual contexts.

Many films, especially documentaries, are made every year with the focus on the Palestine-Israel conflict, although their narratives are framed and perhaps limited by the unique social, economic and political factors of the Palestine-Israel conflict itself. BROKEN's message is not limited in the same way and transcends its original context. It has meaning for different audiences because of its foundation in International Law and in the universal concept of justice.

5. Conclusion

Whilst watching BROKEN one realizes that many scenes speak for themselves. I conclude this study and the article by hoping that people share empathy everywhere and that this experience of BROKEN does not just go down memory lane. Films like these need to be seen and debated! People need exposure to projects which promote human rights and dignity and can potentially help ordinary people understand why international law is so important.

This study attempts to extract perceptions of influencers of culture, as I chose to call them here, and organizers of events as well as numerous individuals attending them. Working alongside those people while carrying out my academic work from the inception through to the execution of the Armenian tour of BROKEN was a unique experience.

To have helped instigate the plethora of events with screenings and debates, as well as meetings at the highest level of society, with audiences as varied as possible, deliberately chosen to be holistic, I see as a distinct note of success. This success, if you wish, is outside the realm of my academic study, but the study cannot stand on its own given the magnitude of the project including the given constraints in time and by remote organization.

Discourse theory mixed with Action Research methodological considerations proofed to be the most helpful theoretical approach to attempting this action-driven research project. Not only was I part of the overall project, but I was also its greatest critique. Only Action Research Theory was able to let me wear both hats at the same time and without doubt as to the “scientific” approach of my study. I have no doubt in my mind that one can be researcher and researched at the same time. However, this is only possible if the researcher is vigorous at all times, aware of the position he or she is in at any given moment.

The two main research hypotheses, inherent, even if not overtly stated in the introductory parts of my article, have been validated conclusively. The fact that the film had been so openly embraced by the communities targeted for the ten-day tour is sufficient confirmation that BROKEN is not only appreciated in relation to the Palestine-Israel conflict but applies also to other such contexts.

The second hypothesis was no less convincingly verified by a great number of sampled attendees to the tour’s events. Entry and Exit interviews paint a broad picture of interest from those varied audiences in Armenia, appropriating and mutating some of the key inspirations of the BROKEN, making up new messages and meaning as necessitated by the Armenian conflict, a conflict also with International Law.

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Image: Stefan Ziegler