Seed 6. Meshdia, An Invitation

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Still from Notes on Circus by Jonas Mekas

As introduced in Seed #0, Meshdia researches, designs, and prototypes new circulations for cultural work(s). In this first Research and Design Arc, we attempt to formalize and scaffold decades of practice and research, filmmaking, and distributing, joys and delusions into a new techno-social system.

Possible Cinema Protocol is a counter-infrastructural proposition that accepts the challenges posed by the shortcomings of the film world and embraces the role of artists as toolmakers. Our imagination escapes both the colonial framing of imperial cinema as well as the monocultural approach of the techno-solutionist. Meshdia reverberates a plural approach, inspired by the different cinematic realities active, across the globe.

Laura Kloeckner, one of the two initiators of UNITED SCREENS, maps these realities in Seed #1 putting Meshdia in a dialogue with "NAAS - the Network of Arab Alternative Screens" as well as the radical access and open and inclusive reinterpretation of practitioners like Dijay Black in Tanzania. Laura also reminds us that we are not the first to recognize and engage with the systematic issues of the movie industry. Our lineages are rooted in the Third Cinema Movement and through its lenses we understand movies as vehicles of emancipation and means of resistance. To liberate this potential the movement understood the importance of instantiating material networks diverting from the Hollywood industry. They took over the means of distribution by birthing initiatives like the FESPACI (African Federation of Cinephiles) or the Tunisian Federation of Cine Clubs (FTCC).

More recent experiments in alternative distributions are the subject of Seed #2, coming as a generous gift from our co-conspirators from Bogotà. Valentina Medina and Jonathan Hurtado guide us through a series of initiatives organized in their hometown in coordination with SAVVY Contemporary in Berlin. Their text echoes again the subverting possibilities of the moving image and the role that unannounced screening played in the recent Colombian uprising against the local government. By hacking screens in unexpected locations and squatting the public visual space, the cacharreo-inspired practice of Valentina, Jonathan, and, their network paves the way for understanding the subterranean nature of alternative circuits of distribution.

Seed #3 moves in this direction by analyzing the most criminalized activity in media distribution: piracy. By challenging the pretentious assumption that deems illegal every attempt at challenging the fenced zone of licensing that regulates cinema distribution, Alessandro Y. Longo highlights the generative aspects of these online communities. From Karagarga's precious labor of archiving and preserving rare movies to the radically participatory practice of danmaku subtitles, the interstices opened in these digital spaces help us rethink our relationships with movies. Moreover, it is in this Seed that we start to focus on the structural role that licenses play in organizing the cinema industry.

A common thread along the first three Seeds is the conceptualization of what our friends called Social Cinephilia[1]. What if the often-individualized love for movies could become a vector of conviviality and generosity? The different cases we discussed offer some examples of cinephilia as a shape-forming force capable of intertwining communities around moving images. Meshdia wants to channel the cinephile's labor of love in a protocol form to allow for easier dissemination of such cases. But how can we do that?

This is what we focused on in Seed #4. Pekko Koskinen offers Meshdia a unique understanding of licenses, that treat them as more than just economic formalizations, but as proper tools to foster artistic communities. In this relational perspective, licenses shape interactions with works, reflecting society's collective conversation

[1] The Social Cinephilia Manifesto has been produced during Think Well 4 and it stil to be released. Authors: Aditya Yuki, Zikri Manshur, Al Adawy Ali, Revolt Yonri, Sibawaihi Muhammad, DJ Black, Jonneva Volta, Melisa Alifah, Purnama Afrian

and regulating cultural production. Their normative power that strangles the communities described in Seed #3 is what we have to challenge to design and project alternative circuits of distribution. Outside the traditional zones of licensing, the story of the Open Game License (OGL) and its social ramifications provide a sizable use case of a license as an organizer of shared cultural content. According to Pekko, the economic structures of media distribution are often dependent on underlying organizational patterns, even at smaller scales like associations or games. Consequently, the path for protocolizing an alternative cinema circuit that includes different economic interactions passes through novel organizational designs. However, if to prototype organizational design we would need to formally release a new license the process would be costly and laborious. A viable alternative is certainly constituted by Distributed Ledger Technologies like blockchain and so-called “smart " contracts” on platforms like Ethereum. But even before this stage, we decided to navigate this space through a simple yet transformational technology: a game.

In Seed #5, the vessel of our exploration is finally revealed. Possible Cinema is a game of games that treats established interactions with movies as a palette of new forms to play with. Pekko guides us into a world where we can summon A Possible Cinema according to our desires and some intuitive game rules. Maybe this is what magic is.

The arc is completed: the game involves interactive play with films, especially in public events, which leads to complex legal situations. A license is useful here for clarity and organizational stability, making it easier to manage and grow the game's potential. It allows players to share rights and resources, fostering a collective identity and collaboration. A shared licensing framework, similar to the OGL in gaming, promotes integration and collaborative contributions. Licensing also opens new channels for films outside dominant ones, supporting those excluded from mainstream circulation. Independent filmmakers could license their films for specific

game interactions, allowing them to curate the audience's experience, and find unusual channels of distribution.

Licensing films for distribution through A Possible Cinema helps address legal issues, particularly for public events. Films can be licensed for either commercial or non-commercial purposes, impacting whether tickets or other items can be sold during screenings. The Possible Cinema offers films as catalysts for social and cultural engagement, redefining traditional film-watching as an interactive game. Movies become common bonfires and junctures for convivial organizations. Illuminated by their fire, we conjure together an alternative system against the deadly boredom of the present.