

Institution: University of Leeds		
Unit of Assessment: 26		
Title of case study: Creating a National 'Youth Leadership' Framework for the 'Isibindi Safe Park' model in South Africa		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: Since 2014		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s): Professor Paul Cooke	Role(s) (e.g. job title): Chair of World Cinemas	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI: since August 2002
Period when the claimed impact occurred: Since 2016		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N		
1. Summary of the impact <p>Cooke's work on film as a soft-power asset across the BRICS economies (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) became the impetus for a youth-leadership programme designed to build the resilience of some of the most vulnerable young people in South Africa. Developed in partnership with Bishop Simeon Trust to support the network of out-of-school clubs it oversees – known as Isibindi Safe Parks (ISPs) – and the approximately 2,000 young people they help daily, the programme has influenced their organisational practices and those of the much larger INGO Hope and Homes for Children (HHC). It was subsequently taken up nationally by South Africa's National Association of Childcare Workers and is currently being adopted by the Department of Social Development. It is now also supporting the shaping of international policy at the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting.</p>		
2. Underpinning research <p>From 2013 to 2015, Cooke led a project exploring film as a soft-power asset across the BRICS: from China's efforts to mobilise the cultural and economic power of Hollywood to increase its international standing, to how Bollywood is used to generate inward investment from non-resident Indians [1].</p> <p>Its focus was on how policy and cultural practice intersect to create national 'strategic narratives' used by political and cultural elites to increase their country's visibility internationally and, at home, to support national cohesion. In South Africa, Cooke's work uncovered how international co-productions frequently amplify the national strategic narrative of democratic transition, the legacy of Mandela and the myth of the Rainbow Nation. It also demonstrated, for the first time, how this plays into attempts by South Africa's main film-funding council to build a domestic audience for local film productions [2].</p> <p>In 2016, this led to an AHRC-GCRF project (Cooke PI, Dennison and Gould Co-Is), investigating the domestic dimension of soft power creation in South Africa, Brazil and India. The project revealed the gap between how these nations present themselves nationally and internationally via nation branding and other soft power tools, and the extent to which certain marginalised communities in these countries see themselves excluded from these same narratives.</p> <p>In South Africa, Cooke worked with Bishop Simeon Trust (BST), an NGO that supports groups of vulnerable young people living in townships in Gauteng. The project revealed the failure of the national strategic soft power narrative to speak to the realities of their everyday</p>		

lives, frequently rooted in exploitation, abuse and exclusion from key health and educational services.

This was a participatory action research project that used participatory video (PV) to explore the attitudes of the young people involved. Utilising the national soft power strategic narrative, as it appears on cinema screens, as their creative stimulus, young people were supported to make short films presenting their community from their own perspective. In so doing, the project sought to raise awareness of issues important to the young people involved that they felt are ignored in the mainstream media.

PV is a well-established research and advocacy methodology. Innovative in Cooke's approach is the value he places on the communicative potential of the films produced in such projects, rather than focussing solely on filmmaking as *process* (a common trend in the literature). Cooke's work draws on the situated approach to film culture which is at the heart of the work of the Leeds Centre for World Cinemas and Digital Cultures (led by Cooke), and which understands film culture to be rooted in the unique context of its production [3]. Particular emphasis was placed on how the South African participants engaged with the socio-political context of film in their township, and how this can be instrumentalised to effect meaningful change in their communities [4, 5].

This has led to further RCUK-funded projects on how PV, as a methodology, can be used to engage young people globally, from shaping civil society in post-conflict settings [5], to uncovering community-led solutions to antibiotic resistance [6].

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

Publications:

1. Cooke, P (2016) 'Soft Power, Film Culture and the BRICS'. *New Cinemas*, 14 (1): 3-15. DOI: 10.1386/ncin.14.1.3_2
2. Cooke, P (2016) 'Soft Power and South African Film: Negotiating Mutually Incompatible Agendas?' *New Cinemas*, 14 (1): 93-109. DOI: 10.1386/ncin.14.1.93_1
3. Cooke, P. ed. (2007) *World Cinema's 'Dialogues' With Hollywood*. Basingstoke: Palgrave.
4. Cooke, P., Dennison, S. and Gould, W. (2019) 'The Voicing Hidden Histories Project: Participatory Video in Development'. *Soft Power and Film Language. Media Practice and Education*, 19 (1). 270-282.
5. Cooke, P. and Soria-Donlan, I. eds (2019) *Participatory Art in International Development*. London: Routledge.
6. Cooke, P. Shrestha, A., Arjyal, A., Giri, R. Jones, N. King, R. Mitchell, M. Tait, C. Soria Turner, I., Baral, S. (2020) 'What is Antimicrobial Resistance and why should people make films about it?', *New Cinemas*, 17 (1): 85-107. DOI: 10.1386/ncin.00006_1

Grants:

- *Soft Power, Film Culture and the BRICS, Worldwide Universities Network*, 01/10/2013—1/10/2015: £10000 (Cooke, PI)
- *Troubling the National Brand and Voicing Hidden Histories: Historical Drama as a tool for International Development and Community Empowerment*, AHRC, 01/11/2016-01/08/2017: £99,990.81 (Cooke, PI)

- *Supporting Vulnerable Children to become Youth Leaders in South Africa: Shaping the Future of the Isibindi Safe Park Model Nationally*, AHRC, 28/01/2019-27/01/2020: £99,849.10 (Cooke PI)
- *Changing the Story- Building Inclusive Civil Societies with, and for, Young People in 5 Post-Conflict Countries*, AHRC/GCRF, 01/09/2017-01/09/2021: £1,999,997.56 (Cooke, PI).
- *Sourcing Community Solutions to Antibiotic Resistance in Nepal*, AHRC/MRC/GCRF £199,700.96 (Cooke, PI)

4. Details of the impact

(i) Building the resilience of the young safe park users

The CEO of Bishop Simeon Trust (BST) saw a particular applicability of Cooke's research into the role of soft power in internal nation-building strategies in South Africa for the young people his organisation supports: 'Whether soft or hard, the young people we work with generally feel entirely power/less. The filmmaking project seemed to be [a] great way of helping them take power for themselves' [A, 1, 2]. Cooke worked with BST on a series of PV projects designed to help build the resilience of users of the ISPs the organisation oversees [B, 1, 2]. ISPs provide psychosocial support for vulnerable children and young people before and after school. This is a crucial service in Gauteng (the region BST operates in), where 1 million children only have one parent at home, 400,000 have no parents, 13,000 live in child-led households and 1.3 million go hungry every day [A]. BST supports around 2,000 vulnerable young people every day across 8 ISPs.

Through Cooke's work, 229 young people were directly trained in filmmaking, advocacy and leadership. This group engaged with a much larger number of ISP users (1,405) to produce a series of films that they showcased to the wider community to raise awareness of issues important to them, including xenophobia, undocumented children, gender-based violence and the scourge of 'blessers' - predatory older men who prey on school-age girls [A, B, C, D]. Participants emphasised the value of taking part in the project and the strong sense of personal achievement it gave them [1]. A particularly notable achievement for them was the way their films facilitated intergenerational dialogue with parents and guardians, helping them to articulate their concerns in a society with a strongly ingrained generational hierarchy and thus enabling meaningful and constructive dialogue about difficult topics [A, E]. Early project evaluation data saw an increase in resilience levels in participants of 23% in one of the safe parks over the course of the project. This was measured by an increase in 'strongly agree' response to the statement 'I am confident that I could deal with unexpected events' [C].

(ii) Influencing organisational practice of BST and ISP staff and Hope and Homes for Children, as well as ensuring the future sustainability of the ISPs themselves

Working with Cooke allowed BST to find new ways of actively engaging young people in shaping their own development pathways [E]. This was also a strong theme in comments by the managers of the individual safe parks with whom BST works. They invariably felt they learnt a great deal from their engagement with this programme. As one manager put it: 'Through this programme [young people] are able to make their own decisions.' Central to this, for the managers, was the importance of storytelling: 'Storytelling is very important for Africans. The programme gives the young people the opportunity to record their stories,' and through this gain a stronger sense of identity [F].

The project was also a vehicle for the organisational development of the safe parks themselves, supporting their future sustainability [C, D]. Specifically, it was used to support

the establishment of functioning youth committees in each ISP, which are a statutory obligation if ISPs wish to access regional and national funding and thus ensure sustainability. Young people trained in the original PV project used their new skills and confidence to take on leadership roles in their ISP youth committee [A, C, D, I].

Over the course of the project, BST also developed a new strategic partnership with the much larger INGO Hope and Homes for Children (HHC), which works globally to deinstitutionalise childcare by embedding it more firmly within communities. HHC also saw specific value in the programme developed by Cooke and BST for their work, as their CEO makes clear: 'The work you've been doing with BST has had a huge impact on our organisational thinking, helping to ensure that our policy work in South Africa is firmly rooted in the relevant community infrastructure, not only reflecting the need that has been identified by young people themselves, but in ensuring they are able to powerfully represent their own interests too' [G].

(iii) Helping to shape the national policy framework of the Isibindi Safe Park model and influencing national, and international, childcare policy

During 2018, the Deputy Director of the National Association of Childcare Workers in South Africa (NACCW) commissioned Cooke and BST to 'develop national guidelines' for 'our [NACCW's] delivery framework for providing child and youth care' [I]. The NACCW is the national accreditation organisation for ISPs, of which there are currently 360, providing support to about 1.4 million vulnerable young people across South Africa. Their Deputy Director was 'particularly impressed' with the way the programme was helping to develop high-level life skills that 'can significantly raise the aspiration of the young people who use these services in a sustainable way' [I], and wished to extend its benefits across the ISPs nationally. This programme was launched at the 22nd NACCW Biennial conference in Durban 4 July 2019 [J].

The programme is now also being adopted by the Department of Social Development (DoSD) to support the delivery of 'YOLO' (You Only Live Once), a youth empowerment programme designed to support national youth leadership [A, G, H]. The Director General of DoSD and the CEO of HHC also used materials drawn from Cooke's programme for their submission to the Commonwealth Heads of Government (currently chaired by Rwanda). Here, HHC reported that Cooke's work gave them 'the means of including the voices of children and young people' [G], allowing them to secure a declaration on community childcare reform which reflects children's needs. Their CEO specified: 'The insights that we've gained from your [Cooke's] work on youth empowerment have been central to this success' [G].

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

- A.** Testimonial from the CEO of Bishop Simeon Trust, March 2020
- B.** AHRC Global Challenges Report on Voicing Hidden Histories, 2018
- C.** Report on Bishop Simeon Trust Leadership Project, February to July 2018
- D.** Report on Bishop Simeon Trust Leadership Project, February 2019 to January 2020
- E.** Bishop Simeon Trust staff focus group film, July 2019
- F.** Safe Park managers focus group film, July 2019
- G.** Email report from the CEO of Hope and Homes for Children, March 2020

- H.** Deputy Minister of the Department of Social Development addresses YOLO Jam Session, 9 Feb 2019
- I.** Letter of support from the Deputy Director of the NACCW, July 2018
- J.** Programme of 22nd NACCW Biennial conference in Durban, July 2019