**Title:**

Hollywood: a model or a countermodel for French film professionals?

**Names & institutional affiliation:**

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**Brief overview of the project (300-500 words):**

In the PICS program, our work deals with “how Hollywood is constructed as a model and/or a countermodel by French film professionals” (1), but also “how Hollywood operates as a model and/or a countermodel for Frenchdirectors who have crossed to Hollywood at one point in their careers” (2).

1) Our idea is to question the ordinary opposition between “independent” and “non-independent” sectors in the French film industry and to confront speeches (how the American film production system is perceived in France) and practices (how it is a model or not for French producers and distributors). Indeed, in the interviews we have done with professionals who claim to belong to “independent cinema,” Hollywood often works as a countermodel. At the same time, our studies point out the fact that “independent” producers or distributors do not constitute a homogenous group (we can distinguish three kinds of independent entities and actors – the small, the midsize and the big ones). The American system may, for some of them, constitute a model, something they refer to when they mention what their activity “should be.” For instance, some French producers put the situation of their American counterparts forward to express their ambition to initiate projects (in the French system, it appears very difficult for a producer to initiate a project: the director is supposed to be the one who defines and has authority on the project).

Moreover it appears that, despite their speeches, some of the working methods of French producers and distributors are not so distant from those of the majors (at least for the big independent companies). To elaborate on this idea, we will conduct interviews with people working in big production companies (especially those affiliated with majors) – they are more rarely investigated than the independent ones by social scientists in France. We will also focus on companies that are close to the major system, such as Europacorp (created and managed by Luc Besson): Hollywood seems here to be a very explicit model as well as a business partner.

2) The second guideline of our project is linked to the question of individual circulations: we propose to examine the cases of French directors who have crossed to Hollywood at one point in their careers. Who are the directors who are going to Hollywood to make a film? What are the characteristics of the films they made in France before or after leaving? Are they necessarily working with big producers and distributors in France? Were their previous French movies box-office successes? How did their Hollywood experience influence their career and the characteristics of their next films? Without claiming to be exhaustive, our idea is to study the careers of a group of filmmakers from a database we are working on (this database does not provide us with the data about their movies made in US, but we will collect some complementary information about them – for more details about our database, see below).

**Progress with the research (1-2 sentences):**

We have identified 13 directors in our database who have crossed to Hollywood: all are men and they seem to belong to a “small world”.

**Ties to other work we are doing:**

We are involved in a research team called *Travelling* with Nicolas Robette (CREST-LSQ, ENSAE, Université Paris Saclay) et Karim Hammou (CRESPPA-CSU, CNRS). *Travelling* analyzes the careers of French filmmakers in the 2000s and the role played by intermediaries (producers and distributors in the first place) in these career paths. We are working on a database that includes 2,392 French movies produced between 2000 and 2010. Besides this collective and quantitative survey, Laure de Verdalle has investigated the French producers and Audrey Mariette the French distributors who define themselves as “independent” from a field survey based on interviews.

References:

Audrey Mariette, « Vendre du cinéma d’auteur » *in* Laurent Jeanpierre et Olivier Roueff (dir.), *La culture et ses intermédiaires. Dans les arts, le numérique et les industries créatives*, Paris, Éditions des archives contemporaines, 2014, p. 71-81.

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Laure de Verdalle, « Overlapping Temporalities in Project-Based Work : The Case of Independent Producers in the French Movie Industry », in Denise Bielby et Violaine Roussel (dir.), *Invisible Hands in Cultural Markets*, Lexington Books, 2015, p. 189-204.

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Laure de Verdalle et Gwenaële Rot (dir.), *Le cinéma. Travail et organisation*, Paris, La Dispute, 2013.

Laure de Verdalle, « Une analyse lexicale des mondes de la production cinématographique et audiovisuelle française »*, Sociologie*, n. 2, vol. 3, 2012, pp. 179-196.