

An Imperative Cultural Trend?: International Film Co-production Policy in Japan

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Introduction

In May 2018, the governments of Japan and China signed the Film Co-production Agreement, the first film-related agreement in Japanese history. By its very existence, the agreement implied that the industrial practices of Japanese film co-production with China would thereafter be emphasized in the Japanese film industry. Subsequent to this governmental activity, the Tokyo International Film Festival in October that year introduced several Japan-China co-productions.

Prior to the end of 2019, media scholars, film insiders, movie-goers, and even television viewers around the world were in little doubt about the existence of media globalization, and accepted it as an ongoing trend in digitalized societies, irrespective of how substantive or abstract (Castells, 2007). Since then, East Asian states, which had banked on globalization as a necessary element in their national branding and commercial expansion, have closed their borders in the face of the coronavirus pandemic. One thing to have emerged is a genuinely digitalized world, at least in terms of distribution of television and film content (Appadurai, 1990), where media exchanges are feasible only through Internet technology. At a time when this global pandemic has led to the closure of borders and human resources can no longer interact directly, media scholarship pays tenacious attention to globalization and new forms of television such as OTT (over-the-top) services, ⁽¹⁾ although these are not necessarily unrestricted

⁽¹⁾ OTT service refers to a service that provides various media content such as broadcasting shows, movies, and education programs through the Internet. OTT is an abbreviation of over the top (television set-top box), which means beyond the existing scope. Here, top means a terminal unit like a television set-top box (of cable television). *Advanced Television*, June 26th, 2020, <https://advanced-television.com/2020/06/26/research-pandemic-drives-spike-in-us-ott-engagement/>

given geo-blocking and territory-by-territory regulatory regimes.

At this moment, when globalization in every realm other than digital technology is on pause, this article reexplores the impetus behind Japanese film policy. Given that film as both media and art form has been converging with cultural industries since the 1990s, in the 2000s film finally came to be recognized as a suitable object of Japanese public policy. In other words, Japanese film policy has been selected to promote the state. Particularly, the international co-production policy encapsulates a cultural imperative imposed by an external element, globalization, which is the key criterion for Japanese policymakers establishing cultural and motion picture policies. The most acute point of discourses on cultural policy is where the Japanese film industry is placed in terms of the object of the policymaking: how to postulate film in cultural policy between the tensions of culture vs. industry, public vs. private, high vs. low, popular culture vs. art (Hill & Kawashima, 2016). Indispensable here is the tension between nationalism vs. globalization in Japan, since the two imply a fundamental contradiction; cultural policy, basically advocating nationalism (national branding), ought to be made in response to the impacts of neoliberal globalization.

In this respect, it is necessary to scrutinize the international co-production policy in Japan, and the industry's responses to that policy. An important aim of this research is to analyze governmental initiatives and rhetoric that formulate international co-production practices in the industry. Japan's film policymaking process is driven by national branding (Iwabuchi, 2019). Japanese film policy has been built up as a national and cultural agenda item by the government in the wake of the globalization of film production in regional nations, even though the co-production strategy was initially exploited by a handful of directors who already had a track record of co-productions. Thus, a different type of inquiry is raised here; is the international film policy a necessary agenda for the Japanese film industry? Most of the discourse on Japanese cultural policy unconditionally underlies criticism of the Cool Japan strategy, which also entails criticism of Japanese film policy that is based on the strategy (Masuda 2020); for instance, criticism of how the Japanese film industry has been ignored. However, this article's research question begins with whether the Cool Japan strategy intends to involve fundamental concerns about the film industry and whether it wants to include the entire film industry in its scope in terms of cultural policy. In

addition, does the strategy include the international film policy because it is an imperative cultural trend in this globalized world?

In this article, I first review cultural policy research to legitimate cultural policy and film industry research in the field of sociology. Next, I analyze the archival documents of cultural policy and strategy surrounding the Japanese film policy which is concomitant or unrelated with the Japanese cultural strategy 'Cool Japan.' Here, I articulate the agencies and their ideas regarding Japanese film policy by analyzing related documents on international film co-production. Cultural policy literature analysis reveals who the agencies and stakeholders are in terms of cultural and film policymaking, and makes it possible to understand the agencies' hegemony. Analysis of sociological structure in trade journals also makes it possible to understand who is responsible for formulating and implementing policies, who are the beneficiaries and the persons concerned, and how they relate to and respond to policies. Finally, I also explore the relationship between globalization and Japanese film policy, charting their current interplay and providing implications for global trends in different national film industries. Yet, cultural policy discourse cannot be understood without recourse to the industry situation. It is necessary to investigate empirical cases of international co-productions in Japan. I therefore elucidate that international film co-production in Japan is policy-driven based on the Cool Japan strategy, and at the same time, is intertwined with media globalization.

1. Theorizing cultural policy research in sociology

Many scholars have focused on cultural policy research in tandem with cultural studies, long before globalization became part of cultural studies (Scullion and Garcia, 2007). Particularly as media expansion in East Asia would be inexplicable if one were not to scrutinize national policies, academia pays attention to information society, cultural policy, creative industries and technology (Curtin, 2003; Flew & Cunningham, 2010). When looking into a policy as one of the "regularizing aspects of politics" that constitute a "direction of activities," and as "a line, project, plan, program, or doctrine" (Palonen, 2003) with "a teleological connotation, an orientation toward the future," an agency(ies) of the act of policymaking and implementing is missing, something that

Foucault's analysis on governmentality in neoliberal society penetrates. The theoretical foundation for cultural policy research, first of all, stems from Foucault's governmentality.

Foucault's Governmentality ⁽²⁾ is "an activity that undertakes to conduct individuals throughout their lives by placing them under the authority of a guide responsible for what they do and for what happens to them" (Foucault, 1997:68). In the summary to his 1979–80 lectures "On the Government of the Living," Foucault mentions that governmentality refers to the "techniques and procedures for directing human behaviour. Government of children, government of souls and consciences, government of a household, of a state, or of oneself" (Foucault, 1997:82). Not like sovereignty, modern individuals are "elements existing within a field of relations between people, events, and things." ⁽³⁾ Therefore, the modern art of governing increasingly sets out to govern the future, including all those risks and opportunities that could impact upon the state and its population. This comes to be related to the development of "new knowledges relating to the population," and "innovative techniques for governmental intervention" (Hutchinson, 2014). This is exactly connected with the role of cultural policy established and implemented by modern states. Foucault's notion is highly effective when we analyze cultural policymaking among people living in post-industrial states in the early 21st century. Innovations and development are not only driven by private sectors, but also supported by governmentality in highly globalized societies as the aim of every single economic policy. Here, Austin's performativity is also interrelated with Foucault's governmentality. Performativity conceives of people's actions, behaviors, and gestures as the results of an individual's identity which is constantly redefined through speech acts and symbolic communication. Through the policies that proclaim and envision future developments of Japanese cultural industries, the government foretells a new world of "self-fulfilling prophecies" (Merton, 1948), hoping that actors adhere to visions

⁽²⁾ The notion of governmentality appeared in the lectures presented by Michel Foucault at a seminar in France in the late 1970s. Foucault M. 1997. *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth. Essential Works of Michel Foucault, 1954--1984*. Vol. 1. New York: New Press

⁽³⁾ Steven Hutchinson and Pat O'Malley, Discipline and Governmentality. Available from: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/330336091_Discipline_and_Governmentality [accessed Sep 07 2020]. Deflem, Mathieu ed. (2019). Hutchinson, Steven and O'Malley Pat. "Discipline and Governmentality." *The Handbook of Social Control*. John Wiley & Sons Ltd.

of promoting the state of Japan and then give shape to (im)probable futures. However, in reality, rather than determining the future through present policies, agendas tend to reshape the present by invoking future visions. Those who shape the agendas determine the actors' behaviors and milieux. I analyze and demonstrate forms of resistance against the agenda, as the Japanese government builds the linguistic agenda to change the present situation of the industry.

One of the scholars in the Birmingham school, Raymond Williams in his books *Culture and Society* (1958) and *The Long Revolution* (1961) discusses the important relationship between the cultural and the political. He defines culture with three terms; ideal, documentary, and finally a social definition of culture as "a description of a particular way of life which expresses certain meanings and values not only in art and learning but also in institutions and ordinary behavior" (Williams, 1958). These two volumes appeared when there was increased interest in political and economic intervention in culture and the arts in Britain. His profound thoughts are again revealed in McGuigan's research on cultural policy. According to McGuigan, cultural policy means "the politics of culture in the most general sense: it is about the clash of ideas, institutional struggles and power relations in the production and circulation of symbolic meanings..." (McGuigan, 1996:1). In the same vein, Lewis and Miller see cultural policy as "a site for the production of cultural citizens, with the cultural industries providing not only a realm of representations about oneself and others, but a series of rationales for particular types of conduct" (Lewis and Miller 2003: 1). Although they were influenced largely by cultural studies and critical sociology, e.g., that of Pierre Bourdieu, McGuigan's book *Rethinking Cultural Policy* resonates with complexity of cultural policy research and evokes self-reflective questions about culture and its role in neoliberal society. He also develops the five axes of state and culture relations defined by Williams and drew Williams' distinction between "cultural policy proper" and "cultural policy as display." McGuigan articulates "cultural policy as display" as "national aggrandizement and economic reductionism" and "cultural policy proper" as "public patronage of the arts, media regulation and negotiated construction of cultural identity." "Cultural policy proper" implies more traditional role of cultural policy, while "the general purpose of cultural policy as display is to embellish the prevailing social order" (McGuigan, 2004:62). This framework is highly appropriate and

effective at elucidating cultural strategy in Japan.

Iwabuchi Koichi also criticizes Japanese cultural policy according to Williams's theory of "cultural policy as display." At this point, in the absence of scorching and practical criticism of Japan's cultural policy, Iwabuchi's criticism is irreplaceably penetrating in that it can reset the direction of Japanese film policy. He also argues that the Japanese cultural policy regime catches up with the market-oriented US model based on content businesses and industries (creative industries). In other words, media content is both product and commodity and requires various channels for distribution. However, he blisteringly criticizes Japan's cultural policy as a policy that exists merely for nation-branding, and has no concern about the "cultural quality" of media culture; that is, no intention to cultivate cultural content as a public good.

Based on past sociological research, this study seeks to approach critical cultural policy research by supplementing more perceptive archival research methods.

2. Archival research methods

To investigate cultural policy shifts in Japan after 2000, it is necessary to enter the archives. Archival research methods refer to "the investigation of documents and textual materials produced by and about organizations" (Ventresca and Mohr, 2001). They involve the study of historical documents which were created in the relatively distant past, and which are also employed by researchers "engaged in non - historical investigations of documents and texts produced by and about contemporary organizations" (Ventresca and Mohr, 2001). Therefore, archival methods can also be applied to the analysis of digitalized documents including governmental databases, web pages and emails.

This article describes and analyzes the archival documents about the Japanese cultural and film policy since 2000, by employing the documents of the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (hereafter METI), the Agency of Cultural Affairs Government of Japan (hereafter ACA), and of other film-related institutions which have been involved with policymaking and implementing, and trade journals covering the Japanese film industry. Policy-related documents, for instance meeting notes, reports, outcome reports, program plans, budgets, etc. raised by Japanese government

agencies in the course of film policymaking after 2000 are subject to analysis. These documents disclose agencies and stakeholders of policymaking and related institutions. However, they do not show the global milieu surrounding cultural industries and policies. Literatures from outside of Japan are therefore helpful for this archival research method, as they make it possible to give an overview and peer into the nexus of policymaking and implementation, and its mechanisms.

It is necessary to take an archival approach to Japan's post-2000 cultural policy as the Japanese government's discussion of its film policy commenced in earnest in line with the Cool Japan policy in the wake of globalization. The study of critical cultural policy provides an effective sociological approach to break down negotiations and contests between agencies and stakeholders in the policy-making process. Where the direct opinions of film producers, directors and the film industry insiders are reflected in policy, this article will look into how they are implemented.

3. Actors of policymaking and implementing Japan's film policy

In terms of domestic economic policy.....the role and utility of culture for international trade, that (for Japan) to be accepted as a member of the international community, and cultural friendliness and respect that we should not omit from the diplomatic aspects....I suggest that Japan should implement "cultural policy for prosperity of our nation (立国, rikkoku) in order to complete our economic prosperity from now on" (Kimindo Kusaka, 1978: 203).⁽⁴⁾

Kusaka's suggestion reveals that figures in positions to propose and establish policies have a tendency to consider culture as an economic means. Mainly, Japan's cultural policy emerged as a measure to protect national interests (Iwabuchi, 2002: 26) by facilitating the economic activities of Japanese corporations. Although such "cultural policy for prosperity of the nation" was asserted in the 1970s and again in the late 1980s, no active and systematic support was provided for Japanese cultural and media

⁽⁴⁾ Kimindo Kusaka (日下公人), *New Theory on Cultural Industry* (新・文化産業論 shin bunkasangyoron), 1978, Tokyo: Tokeisensho Publications

industries such as television, film, animation and publishing industries. These industries, which achieved worldwide success in the 1980s and 90s under their own steam, accepted the absence of state support relatively naturally. There were some shifts related to cultural policy in the 1990s, when the Association for Corporate Support of the Arts was established, and the Japan Art Council was founded. But because these organizations supported merely 'pure art or traditional cultural assets,' it was difficult to find institutional support for media content.

Support for media content or industries did not initiate properly until 2001, when the Basic Act for the Promotion of Culture and the Arts (hereafter, BAPCA) was enacted. The BAPCA was established, promulgated and enforced on December 7th, 2001. As Kawamura (2018) points out, however, the content of "culture" in this act is obscure, and the norms and measures of cultural policy envisioned in BAPCA were not clarified ⁽⁵⁾; for instance, what kind of cultural form was to be covered by the act. According to the 4th Basic Policy outline (2015 to 2020), the act was made to promote any form of Japanese culture or art, including the delayed 2020 Tokyo Summer Olympic Games, but does not specify which genre of culture or arts should be promoted under the law. Yet, in a way this act became the foundation for supporting Japanese film in general. According to this act, "the state should devise other necessary measures to support the production and screening of media art in order to promote art using movies, cartoons, animations, computers, and other electronic devices." ⁽⁶⁾ It can be assumed that film is a part of "media art using movies" as defined here.

Strongly impressing Japanese policymakers, the notion of 'soft power,' a term coined by Joseph Nye, ⁽⁷⁾ led them in 2001 to draw up cultural policy supporting cultural industries in terms of intellectual property. The importance of soft power became the underlying assumption of Japanese film policy, as revealed at thirteen meetings for

⁽⁵⁾ See details in http://repository.seikei.ac.jp/dspace/bitstream/10928/1006/1/bungaku-53_47-62.pdf and <https://www.mext.go.jp/en/policy/culture/lawandplan/title01/detail01/1379343.htm>

⁽⁶⁾ The Basic Act for the Promotion of Culture and the Arts, http://www.bunka.go.jp/seisaku/bunka_gyosei/shokan_horei/kibon/geijutsu_shinko/kihonho.html

⁽⁷⁾ According to Nye, soft power is a kind of cultural value or brand value, and unlike hard power based on military or economic power, it is a force that gains what one wants through the charm that one gives off. The source of soft power is the attraction of a nation's culture, political ideals and policies, and if the policy is seen as justifiable in the eyes of others, its soft power increases. In other words, soft power functions in the form of persuading others to follow their positions or agreeing to norms and institutions that can lead to desirable behaviors. (Nye, 1998)

international and cultural exchange hosted by the ACA, Government of Japan from May 2002 to April 2003.⁽⁸⁾ These meetings were held throughout 2002, suggesting promotional plans for international exchanges of Japanese art in general, and film was regarded as a means of cultural exchanges and also as a Japanese art form. The support plans for film included “subsidies for producing films, support for Japanese film distribution to international film festivals in the world, support for domestic screenings and film festivals, training projects of human resource development in film-related organizations, training of young filmmakers by supporting short film productions, building an information system and nationwide database for film locations, and Japanese film preservation.”⁽⁹⁾ The participants included executive producers, lawyers, the director of the Japan Film Makers Association, members of the Japan Writers Guild, the editor of the monthly magazine *Kinema Junpo*, actors and actresses, film directors, film professors, and the director of the Directors Guild of Japan. They argued that the institution should review and revise the structure of the film industry to provide a better workplace for filmmakers and to help it develop independently and productively in a renewed industrial environment in the 2000s. This was before the Cool Japan strategy was proclaimed in 2010.

Contrary to the opinions of these film insiders, public opinion as to the economic value of culture argued that cultural policies ought to be designed for economic prosperity, which led to governmental documents. A monthly magazine *Chuokoron* dealt with the issue of ‘Cultural Prosperity of the State’ in June 2003, and a cultural anthropologist named Aoki Tamotsu devoted a chapter to discussing the importance of soft power and Japan’s future in his publication *Multicultural World* (2003). Their opinions became much more powerful after the big nomenclature of ‘Cool Japan’ was deployed. This nomenclature and the discourse of national charm began in 2002 when McGray published an article entitled “Japan’s Gross National Cool” in *Foreign Policy*.⁽¹⁰⁾ He describes an index measuring how attractive a state is not only an economic value like gross national product (GNP), but also an index of gross national cool (GNC) that

⁽⁸⁾ The minutes of the meetings on international cultural exchange by the Agency of Cultural Affairs, https://www.bunka.go.jp/seisaku/bunkashingikai/kondankaito/bunka_hasshin_senryaku/01/pdf/shiryo_5.pdf

⁽⁹⁾ Ibid.

⁽¹⁰⁾ Douglas McGray, “Japan’s Gross National Cool,” *Foreign Policy*, 2002

represents cultural values such as people's lifestyles and aesthetic sense, and praises Japan's cultural industries such as animation and manga. After his article, the terminology 'Cool Japan' was selected as the national slogan of 'Cool Japan' and the cultural policy strategy of the state. Riding with the prevailing atmosphere, an international affairs magazine named *Gaiko Forum* planned special editions featuring 'Cool Japan,' 'Cultural Japan,' and 'Culture' as keywords; "Focusing on the Foundation of National Power" (June 2004) and "Looking at Economic Cooperation from a Culture Point of View" (October 2004). Even though they focused on culture, the film industry in the discourse was treated as an economic element for promoting Japan's branding and power.

This precipitous focus on culture and related strategy constructs policy implementation in a top-down manner; it goes from institutions out to the public (Kawamura 2018; 56). Besides METI, the Intellectual Property Strategy Headquarters (hereafter IPSH) established by the Cabinet Office promoted the "Cool Japan" concept of Japanese soft power in terms of development of its content industries, aiming at international expansion of cultural industries and intending to foster them.⁽¹¹⁾ The Cool Japan policy became the key term of the Abe government; a policy for products, not for filmmakers below-the-line. The definition of Cool Japan in this strategy is "a term used collectively to refer to Japanese products, contents, and cultures that are considered cool for foreigners." That is, the policy should only involve those matters of cultural (media) content that attract foreign consumers. Therefore, the aims of the policy are as follows; 1) To obtain more than five pieces of visual content to which Japan has the intellectual property right with annual worldwide sales of more than 5 billion yen (47 million dollars); 2) To secure more than 50 foreign investments in Japanese cultural contents (international co-production of films and film locations for foreign blockbuster films) per year; and 3) Japanese contents to earn an income of one trillion yen from the Asian market every year.⁽¹²⁾ In other words, economic value is placed as the priority in METI policymaking, disregarding the aims of the BAPCA, which are very "harmonious, opportunistic and nationalistic" (Tani, 2003: 120-121).

⁽¹¹⁾ <https://www.kantei.go.jp/jp/singi/titeki2/2010keikaku.pdf>, and https://www.mext.go.jp/a_menu/hyouda/kekka/1297442.htm

⁽¹²⁾ <https://www.kantei.go.jp/jp/singi/titeki2/2010keikaku.pdf>

One complicating factor here is that a range of state actors is involved in this Cool Japan strategy, ranging from METI and MOFA to the IPSH established by the Cabinet Office of Japan and the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications (hereafter MIC) (Garvizu, 2017). Regarding the film industry, agencies include the Agency for Cultural Affairs which is the affiliated institute of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT), the VIPO (Visual Industry Promotion Organization), and the Cool Japan Fund which were created as part of the Cool Japan policy. The IPSH under the Cabinet Office issued *The Action Plan to Promote Cool Japan* in 2011. It formulates two goals for the strategy: reinvigoration of the Japanese economy through ripple effects as a result of the dissemination of Cool Japan products; increase of Japan's soft power overseas (IPSH, 2011: 1). In addition, the state of Japan aims to raise the market size of the cultural industries related to the strategy including video games, manga, anime, fashion, Japanese food, craft, design, robots and high-tech products from ¥4.5 trillion (US\$ 43.2 billion) in 2009 to ¥17 trillion (US\$163 billion) in 2020 (IPSH, 2011: 2). Aforementioned, this demonstrates that filmmakers, film producers or any film-related insiders have no room to meddle in the process of policymaking and implementing, even though there were meetings for industry insiders organized by the ACA in the 2000s, and from the *ab initio* outset, there was no plan for the film industry in the Cool Japan strategy, as seen in Figure 1.

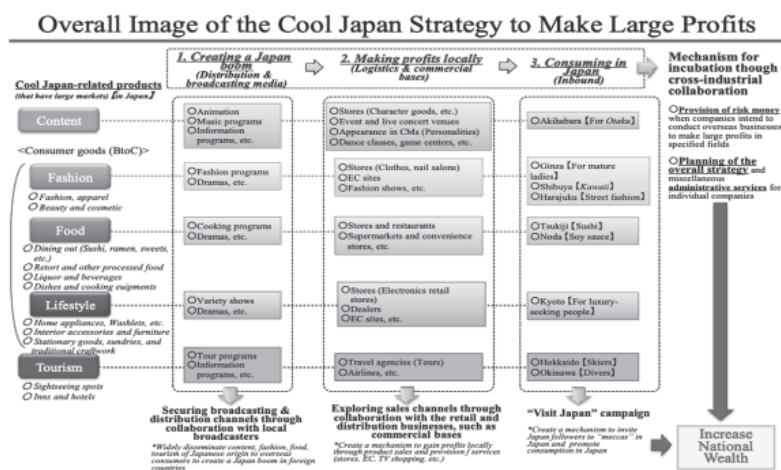


Fig. 1 Cool Japan strategy without the film industry

Source: METI ⁽¹³⁾

⁽¹³⁾ https://www.meti.go.jp/english/policy/mono_info_service/creative_industries/pdf/121016_01a.pdf

4. A dark side of Cool Japan

Some cases prove that the policymaking of Cool Japan set the value of the Japanese film industry at naught. Quality of film production and creativity, labor issues for film staff (the workers below-the-line ⁽¹⁴⁾) and innovation of the industrial structure ⁽¹⁵⁾ have never been active agendas in the process of cultural policy-building and implementation. Therefore, the public funds set up to support the policy were not implemented for the film industry.

Among plans for the Cool Japan strategy, there was a plan to establish a government-run company called All Nippon Entertainment Works (ANEW). ANEW was once a key component in the METI Cool Japan initiative, which aimed to promote Japanese media and visual content and to develop Japanese IP (Intellectual Properties) around the world. ⁽¹⁶⁾ ANEW developed some Japanese titles in Hollywood, including a remake of Takashi Miike's 2013 cop thriller *Shield of Straw*, a remake of 2006 horror *Otoshimono* titled *Ghost Train* and a live-action adaptation of hit anime series *Tiger & Bunny*. INCJ invested a total \$21 million (¥2.2 billion yen) into ANEW from 2011 to 2017, including fees to Sandy Climan for incubating Japanese projects in the United States, but not a single film resulted from it. ⁽¹⁷⁾ The company was sold in 2017. When METI planned the company, the Innovation Network Corporation of Japan (INCJ) ⁽¹⁸⁾ under its jurisdiction made an investment decision of ¥6 billion yen in 2011

⁽¹⁴⁾ Below-the-line is a term derived from the top sheet of a film budget for motion pictures, industrial films, independent films and etc. The line refers to the separation of production costs between script and story writers, producers, directors, actors, and casting (above-the-line) and the rest of the crew, or production team (below-the-line).

⁽¹⁵⁾ There are several issues in the Japanese film industry since 2000s; 1) lack of investment in original screenplays; 2) apprenticeship in the filmmaking hierarchy and low wage; 3) production based only on animations or Japanese cartoons; 4) that television broadcasters as main investors prefer only stable investments in animations; and 5) the production committee system that no one is accountable with a film production and profit. These issues are completely related to creativity in the industry. <https://japantoday.com/category/entertainment/3-reasons-japanese-movies-today-suck-according-to-distributor-and-producer-adam-torel>

⁽¹⁶⁾ <https://variety.com/2018/film/asia/japan-tiger-and-bunny-1202828601/>

⁽¹⁷⁾ <https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/news/japanese-government-backed-company-focused-hollywood-remakes-sold-venture-capital-firm-1009263>

⁽¹⁸⁾ INCJ was created as a public-private investment fund to financially support industries "next-generation businesses" in 2009. According to the INCJ website, "the fund has an investment capacity of up to \$20 billion. Although characterized as a public-private partnership, in fact only 0.1 billion of the 2.6 billion USD invested in the fund was provided by the private sector. The rest came from the

with the appointment of Climan as CEO and Kenny Kurokawa as COO, but sold the company to Future Venture Capital in 2017, and the public monies vanished.

According to the INCJ website, INCJ was also involved in joint public-private ventures to promote the international dissemination of Japanese content products. A digital content firm, Gloczus, for instance, received a total investment of ¥2 billion yen; ¥1.2 billion yen (\$11.5 million) from INCJ and ¥800 million (\$7.6 million) from Nifty Corp in 2012,⁽¹⁹⁾ targeting Southeast Asia for the distribution of Japanese mobile content. Gloczus, however, could not survive in a competitive industrial environment among existing rivals with rich application platforms including Docomo and the Apple iPhone, and was jettisoned in 2016 by INCJ. The public monies for the Cool Japan policy were directed to support a rearguard action for the state's belated intervention in the digital technology business, without considering the current situations of the content (film) and technology industries.

As such, in the process of bringing film into the realm of cultural policy, two divergent perspectives on film can be found; the view of institutions and that of audiences. METI and the IPSH co-opt film into the policy realm from the private economic sector, and into the field under cultural policy, making it one of the content industries. But the public, as national cinema discourse has revealed, has already consumed film as a cultural domain and is aware of it in the artistic sense. Despite this, Japan's film policymakers engage only with the industrial and economic aspects of film to promote Japan. As Merton mentions, the Japanese government's "self-fulfilling prophecy" is successful promotion of the brand Japan, expecting that the industry would fit into the policy without considering pending issues in the industry. Therefore, Hiro Masuda, a producer, filmmaker and writer, in his book entitled *The Manner of Cool Japan that Kills the Japanese Film Industry*, accuses the government of misspending public funds on ANEW and the Cool Japan policy. Although he, as CEO of a production services company, strongly argues that the government should introduce the Location Incentives program for foreign films in Japan, his criticism

Japanese government. Of the \$0.1 billion said to be contributed by the private sector, \$13.6 million was in fact provided by the Development Bank of Japan, a state-owned bank." <https://www.globaltradealert.org/intervention/69251/capital-injection-and-equity-stakes-including-bailouts/japan-incj-capital-investment-in-publishing-digital-corporation-pubridge>

⁽¹⁹⁾ *Nihon Keizai Shinbun*, May 10, 2012

steers policy toward film production issues.

It is also significant that in a September 2012 ⁽²⁰⁾ document, the Cool Japan strategy does not take existing industries into account when policy-building. This document highlights the bottlenecks of the strategy at the moment, commenting that most players in cultural industries are small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) that have difficulties appealing to consumers, as if they found out the fact at long last in 2012. It suggests that under such circumstances, “the Japanese government (we) should promote a strategy to transform the appeal of Japanese culture and lifestyle (food, fashion, lifestyle, and various contents such as animation, dramas, games, films and music and tourism) into added value” in order to convert “culture into industry” and “create new growth industries, thereby preparing employment and opportunities for SMEs and young people.” ⁽²¹⁾ In a sense, the film, animation, publication, game, popular music and television industries already existed in Japan, and have converted culture into industry of their own accord, creating new growth in each industry since the 19th century. The document forsakes the presence of the existing industries, each of which successfully led Japanese popular culture in the 1970s and 80s.

In addition, according to the document, the actions of the agents of the strategy are to “promote” it, not implement it. Therefore, the agents build the agenda but do not execute the plan. The Cool Japan Fund managed under the METI, for instance, invested \$10 million dollars in Clozette Pte. Ltd., a Singaporean online lifestyle portal with regional social media influencers, aiming at linking up Japanese small and medium-sized enterprises and local governments with the Singaporean marketing company to improve the visibility of Japanese food culture and sightseeing spots. ⁽²²⁾ The Fund does not support the Japanese SMEs or their manufactures, but merely uses public money to bribe foreign firms “to boost the development of overseas demand for Japanese products and services.” ⁽²³⁾ The strategy does not illuminate what the policy actors have done to existing industries that form part of the cultural sector. This obscure and ambiguous direction without specifying the implementing actors could not

⁽²⁰⁾ Modified version of the Interim Report submitted to the Cool Japan Advisory Council, https://www.meti.go.jp/english/policy/mono_info_service/creative_industries/pdf/121016_01a.pdf

⁽²¹⁾ Ibid.

⁽²²⁾ NNA Business New, April 11, 2019. <https://english.nna.jp/articles/648>

⁽²³⁾ Ibid.

suggest substantial and concrete support for the film industry.

Again, the only aims of the policy made by METI are oriented to international expansion in terms of economic value, while practical film policy based on the BAPCA has the tendency to look inward. Accordingly, the ACA was making specifics for each section of the cultural industries even before the Cool Japan makers built the specific direction of the policy.⁽²⁴⁾ According to the document “Cultural Policy of Our Country,”⁽²⁵⁾ the basic film policy for supporting film production and younger filmmakers began in 2004. According to a document of the ACA in 2013, the Advisory Committee of Economy and Finance determined the Strategy of Japan Instauration in compliance with the Cool Japan policy.⁽²⁶⁾ The denotation of film, however, never appears in the action plan or vision of the Strategy regarding cultural industries. The cultural contents mentioned in the document include traditional artifacts, manga, animation, arts, music, fashion, food and games. Although international festivals promoting Japanese contents are one of the objects of the policy, there is no explicit nomenclature of film as a form of cultural content. The rationale why film was not included in this document is assumed to be the stagnation of the Japanese film industry, as seen in Figure 1, which implies that the agency of policymaking did not select the film industry to promote the national brand of Japan. The film industry scale of the People’s Republic of China (hereafter PRC) exceeded that of Japan after 2012, and the actors of the Cool Japan strategy paid less attention to the film industry because it was not thought to be appropriate to fulfil the goal of branding the state of Japan and expanding into global markets. In other words, the film industry was not sufficient to be the object of “cultural policy as display,” as Williams put it (McGuigan, 2014:62).

Resultingly, it was only in 2012 that the document argued that they should prepare more opportunities for SMEs and the employment of younger generations, but the film industry barely saw any transformation of some profound industrial drawbacks, such as the production committee system, absence of original screenplays, and low wages as of 2020.⁽²⁷⁾

⁽²⁴⁾ https://www.bunka.go.jp/seisaku/bunka_gyosei/yosan/pdf/r1_yosan.pdf

⁽²⁵⁾ https://www.bunka.go.jp/tokei_hakusho_shuppan/hakusho_nenjihokokusho/r01_bunka_seisaku/pdf/r1421859_00.pdf

⁽²⁶⁾ https://www.bunka.go.jp/seisaku/bunkashingikai/seisaku/11/02/pdf/shiryo_5.pdf

⁽²⁷⁾ See details in <https://www.meti.go.jp/press/2020/07/20200717002/20200717002-1.pdf>. In this

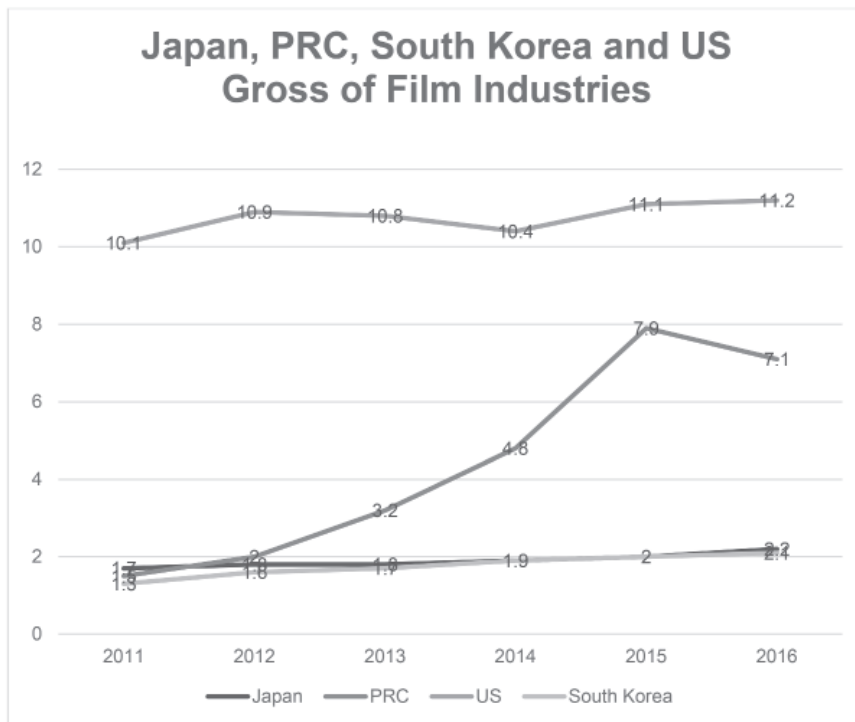


Fig 2. Sales of Film Industries in Japan, PRC and US

(unit: billion dollars)

Source: <https://www.the-numbers.com/market/> and METI

The budget of the ACA increased, as the budget ¥43.2 billion yen (\$40 million) in 1990 increased to ¥101.6 billion yen (\$85.5 million) in 2004. In 2005, it announced the promotion plan for Japanese film and video in order to support the film industry, with the budget set at about ¥2.5 billion yen (\$2.1 million), which is 2.4 percent of the total budget. The promotion plan encompassed subsidies for producing “attractive and excellent Japanese films,” training young filmmakers and producers, and promotion of Japanese films in international market and preservation of Japanese films. ⁽²⁸⁾ In 2013, institutions for implementing the film policy got divided into two according to the Cool Japan strategy; the ACA and the Videos Promotion Organization (hereafter VIPO). The VIPO was selected to operate the fund for the project of Japanese Contents Localize and Promotion (J-LOP, ¥155 billion yen (\$1.4 billion)). Subsidies for international

report, there is no mention of cool Japan and any connection of the strategy.

⁽²⁸⁾ In 2016, the subsidies for younger filmmakers were ¥161,000,000 yen.

promotion (¥6,000,000,000 yen in 2016) were greater than the ones for film production support (¥465,000,000 yen for 42 films in 2016), which indicates that the Cool Japan policy concentrated more on the promotion than the production side of the industry. In 2019, the total budget of the ACA for supporting the film industry included ¥1,164 million yen (\$11 million), a decline to 0.9 percent of the total ACA budget (¥116,709 million yen), while that for support the performing arts was set at ¥3,287 million yen. As the agencies providing subsidies for the film industry are divided into two different institutes, the implementing system is not unitary.

In this sense, policies regarding the Cool Japan strategy and soft power pursued by METI are significantly different from those pursued by the film industry, and the direction in which the policies are built and implemented is also different. METI focuses heavily on the international film co-production policy (budget of ¥210,000,000 yen for 5 projects) for market expansion. Currently, Japan's film industry does not satisfy the 'cool' criterion required by the strategy. Nevertheless, the shifting global media environment provides a rationale for the Japanese government to make the film policy an imperative under conditions of Japanese globalization.

5. Media globalization and policy competition in East Asia

The significant shifts in Japanese cultural policy that took place in the 2000s were also responses to the global transformation and global mobility of media content since the 2000s. It is not difficult to find the phenomena of media globalization in tandem with the development of digital technology (Straubhaar, 2007; Jin, 2019; Curtin, 2012). Global viewers have shared Japanese animations, telenovela from South American nations, Turkey's television shows and South Korean soap operas, and their linguistic, cultural, and geographical proximity amplify transnational interrelationships (Straubhaar, Castro, Duarte and Spence, 2019).

Although globalization in neoliberal economic systems is usually considered to be a process of deregulation, reduced state intervention, and trade liberalization, a polar opposite mode of globalization is observed in the East Asian media industry, as the positions of agencies for globalization shift. East Asian states have become agencies for globalization in the world, particularly since the 2000s. In other words, globalization in

East Asian media industries is deeply relevant to state policies and national branding (Iwabuchi, 2010). Transnational proliferation of media contents in the PRC and South Korea have been driven by the respective state cultural policies. Japanese film policy after 2010, somewhat belatedly implemented, has run alongside those of both the Chinese and South Korean media industries as a way to expand its cultural hegemony, driving for spillover effects by its top-down politic-making process. It appears that the state relies heavily on METI to promote its image and brand abroad. In this sense, it is notable that Japanese media globalization is led by state policy which attempts to create national branding and to address national identity in tandem with global agencies.

As this paper seeks to explore the relationship between globalization and Japanese film policy, I here chart the interplay of the cultural policies of the PRC and South Korea so as to discover the implications for film policy at the global level. The PRC has had its sights set on Hollywood since it set up the “Going-out Policy (走出去)” (see Table 1). Its film industry has increased formidably over the last two decades, and this has influenced various parts of South Korean film policy. The PRC apparently claimed globalization with international co-productions, which was a strategy to compete with Hollywood. Yet, the Korean Film Council (hereafter KOFIC, antecedent: Korean Film Corporation) made international film co-production subsidies particularly for China, which provided free offices for producers in Beijing. KOFIC also provided free translation services for screenplays, meetings, and contracts. In addition, it offered free mentoring and legal consultation services for South Korean producers in English and Chinese. South Korean filmmakers and film insiders consider the PRC to be a huge film market in which to sell their stories regardless of nationality,⁽²⁹⁾ and film policy aligned with this trend; South Korea signed a Co-Production Agreement with the PRC in 2015.

⁽²⁹⁾ <https://digital.hbs.edu/platform-rctom/submission/exporting-entertainment-can-cj-em-rely-on-the-chinese-market/>

Table 1. Film policies for globalization in East Asia

(source: *History of Korean Motion Picture Policy* (Kim, 2005) and *Film Policy, the Chinese Government and Soft Power* (Yang, 2016))

	Japan	South Korea	PRC
1990s	- Tokyo International Film Festival funded by the Japan Arts Fund - TIFFCOM hosted by METI - UNIJAPAN's film research activities supported by the government	- Establishment of the Korean Film Council - Liberalization of film production: emergence of independent and individual filmmakers - Subsidies for project development, production, distribution programmed and operated by KOFIC - KOFIC initiating the public and private funds for film production by the government and private entities - National branding: beginning of Korean Wave (Hallyu), supporting Korean films to international film festival circuit - Establishment of Busan International Film Festival supported by the local and central government - Support programs: independent films, arthouse films and supporting local theaters and film festivals	- Building new film theaters and industrial infrastructure - Increase of internet platforms - Film import quota: 20 revenue films + 30 flat fee films - Going-out Policy

2000s	- National branding: Initiative of Cool Japan - Film production subsidies by the Japan Arts Council began in 2003 - Film policy-building based on global research - Workshop for young film auteurs: 57 participants from 2006 to 2016	- Continued the subsidies, production funds, and programs above. - Supporting the domestic film market and expansion of domestic viewers - 2006: Ko-France Film Coproduction Treaty	- The Stipulation of Administration on Chinese- Foreign Film Co-production (2004) proclaimed by the State Administration of Radio, Film and Television (SARFT) - 'Interim Provisions on Operation Qualification Access for Movie Enterprises' – foreign investors granted permission to Chinese film production less than 49% of the ownership. - The 11th (2006-2010) Five-Year Plan - 2009, the 'Plan for Promotion of the Cultural Industries - Embarking on film co-production with Hollywood, Hong Kong, Korea, Japan - Film import quota: 34 revenue films + 40 flat fee films
2010s	- Continued the subsidies and programs above. - Cool Japan Strategy 2012, 2016 - Promoting international coproduction: 1.9 million dollars for less than five projects - Subsidies for distribution of Japanese films to international film festivals	- Continued the subsidies, production funds and programs above. - Support for International Coproduction: KOFIC Provided offices for producers in Beijing, PRC. Mentoring and consultation service for producers in the U.S. and PRC. - Incentives for foreign films shoot in Korea (US\$ 265,000) - 2010: Korea-EU Protocol on Cultural Cooperation	- Film co-production with South Korea for post-production - The 12th Five-Year Plan (2011- 2015) - The 13th Five-Year Plan (2016- 2020) on cultural development and reform - The state's goal to be no. 1 in the world film market

- Subsidies for Tokyo International Film Festival and Japan Content Showcase - Special screenings of Japanese films in Asia - 2018: Japan-China Coproduction Agreement	- 2014: Agreement on Audiovisual Co-production between Korea and Australia - 2015: Agreement between Korea and New Zealand Concerning Audio-Visual Co-production, Agreement between Korea and India, Agreement between Korea and PRC
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As can be seen in Table 1, the South Korean government embarked on the film policy implemented by the Korean Film Council in the 1990s, immediately after the country's democratization. The basic concept of its film policy was "the state supports but no intervention" (Ryoo and Jin 2020). The PRC also began to build film-related infrastructure in the 1990s. Japan's media industry, which was relatively prosperous compared to the two contiguous states, took less notice of globalization and the film policy. It was not until 2010 that the Japanese government took note of film co-production with foreign entities, just as the Chinese film industry was growing 43 percent year-on-year (Su, 2016) as seen in Figure 2. Although METI initiated research on soft power, cultural industries and national branding in 2000, it was a long haul to the implementation of film policy; although there is a website for film location information in Japan, there are no Location Incentive subsidies as of 2020.

Meanwhile, the South Korean media industry has developed, and its soap operas fill a growing number of Chinese and South East Asian channels and platforms. The popularity of Korean stars has risen with the development of digital technology, and the globalization of Korean media content has become a phenomenon throughout Asia, Europe and the Americas. The PRC in 2012 prohibited legacy television channels from airing South Korean soap operas during prime time between 7 pm and 10 pm as a way to protect domestic media content. Although Japanese manga and animation also continue to gain global recognition having ridden this trend of digital globalization for more than four decades, Japanese film has not matched the trend. Film support policies did not start in Japan until the 2010s; meanwhile, the PRC created a

50-million-dollar Chinese Blockbuster, *Wandering Earth* (2019), and the South Korea film industry produced an Academy Award Winner, *Parasite* (2019).

Here, the question arises again; Is this international film co-production policy an imperative cultural trend?

6. International film co-production in Japan

In this chapter, I scrutinize Japan's international film co-production policy of the 2010s and its practical implementation process. Recognizing the gravity and challenges of the Japanese film industry in the global market, the Japanese government adopted its support policy for international co-production in 2011. In 2011 when the ACA provided the incentive, the amount was ¥300 million yen (\$2.9 million) for feature films and animations. In 2012, a world recognized filmmaker Abbas Kiarostami's *Like Someone in Love*, a co-produced film with France, received ¥31.24 million yen (\$294,286), and a Japan-Korea project by director Kim Sung-soo also received ¥50 million yen. Recently it has provided up to ¥50 million yen (\$471,000) per project every year, targeting feature film and animation projects with a scale of more than ¥100 million yen.

To apply for the incentive, film projects should meet the following criteria: 1) Japanese producer(s) should invest 20 percent or more of the total production cost; 2) the amount of investment from overseas producers (investors) is expected to be greater than or equal to ten million yen (\$95,000) or five percent of the total production budget; 3) Japanese producer(s) should hold a part of the copyright to the film; 4) Japanese producer(s) should receive a share of profits commensurate with the contribution, such as the investment ratio; and 5) distribution should be scheduled in both Japan and overseas. To apply for this incentive, the minimum budget for a project should be larger than \$900,000 (¥100 million yen), which still limits international co-productions in Japan. The minimum budget is a steep wall for many independent filmmakers who have already done co-produced filmmaking.

According to statistics, about 50 films are co-produced by Japanese producers in collaboration with overseas producers annually. However, not all of these films are eligible for international co-production support, because only a film project with a

minimum production cost of more than \$900,000 may receive the incentive. Also, the application procedure is quite complicated, and the incentive can be received only after producers have exhausted production costs. Therefore, as seen in Table 2, many projects have withdrawn from the incentive, and the ACA has been unable to spend the budget for the incentive in a given year. Five films out of 50 films are available to receive the incentives ⁽³⁰⁾ and the budget is 42 percent of the total production support according to Table 2.

Table 2. No. of International Co-production Projects with subsidies

	No. of Applicants	No. of Selected Projects	Total amount of subsidies
2016	7 (5 feature films, 2 animations)	4 (3 features, 1 animation)	¥141,200,000 yen (\$ 1,330,130) 1 project withdrawn
2017	6 (5 feature films, 1 animation)	4 (4 feature films)	¥307,350,000 yen (\$ 2,895,294) 2 projects withdrawn
2018	10 (10 feature films)	9 (9 feature films)	¥313,980,000 yen (\$ 2,957,750) 4 projects withdrawn

Source: Prime Minister's Office of Japan ⁽³¹⁾

Omotenashi (2018) is a co-produced film by the Japanese Shochiku Studios and a Taiwanese production company called Epic Entertainment. Shochiku invited a Taiwanese director, Jay Chern to shoot the film, which was the opening film at the Hong Kong International Film Festival in 2018 and was partly funded by the Festival, but did not receive the international co-production incentive in Japan. Koreeda Hirokazu's European co-production project *The Truth* also opened at prestigious film festivals in 2019 but did not receive the incentive. *Vision* by the world recognized filmmaker Naomi Kawase is a film about a French journalist who journeys to Nara Province to research a mysterious herb. The film is also a co-production between Kumie Production and a Paris-based company called Slot Machine. Kiyoshi Kurosawa's 2016 film *The Woman in the Silver Plate* is also a co-production by French and Japanese

⁽³⁰⁾ https://www.bunka.go.jp/seisaku/bunka_gyosei/yosan/pdf/r1_yosan.pdf

⁽³¹⁾ https://www.kantei.go.jp/jp/singi/titeki2/tyousakai/kensho_hyoka_kikaku/2019/contents/dai3/siryou4.pdf

producers. Besides these, there are numerous co-produced films including Koji Fukada's *The Man from the Sea* (Indonesia); Katsuya Tomita's *Bangkok Nites* (Thailand); Daishi Matsunaga's *Hanalei Bay* (Hawaii, U.S.); Wash Westmoreland's *Earthquake Bird*, produced by Scott Free Productions and Japan's Twenty First City; Tezuka's *Barbara*, a co-production between Japan, the UK and Germany; Kiyoshi Kurosawa's *To The Ends Of The Earth* with Uzbekistan; and *The Horse Thieves. Roads Of Time*, with Kazakhstan. ⁽³²⁾ These films, however, cannot apply for the incentive because of the low budgetary threshold of the projects. Film productions and independent filmmakers have small and medium-sized companies, and these small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) sporadically engage in the film industry. Therefore, it is not clear how these loosely structured networks can become key sources of innovation in art and media culture, and how the framework of policy can support these smaller networks, unlike large media conglomerates (Flew and Cunningham, 2010).

As previously noted, the international co-production policy in Japan was designed and set up by METI in tandem with the Cool Japan strategy, and each Ministry and subordinate agency enforces sporadic film-related policies. In 2016, the Intellectual Property Strategy Headquarters of Japan's Cabinet Office distributed a document on film promotion initiatives. ⁽³³⁾ According to the document, the review meeting focused on the Intellectual Property Promotion Plan 2016 and discussed the current status and challenges of the film industry, and how the Headquarters would reinforce film promotion policies. In addition, different institutions implement sporadic film-related policies; the ACA is involved with support for training young filmmakers and building the database for film locations; Japan Arts Council for film production; UNIJAPAN with international co-production ⁽³⁴⁾ now ACA takes the responsibility for the program; the METI with training producers; VIPO with localization promotion for international

⁽³²⁾ <https://www.screendaily.com/features/why-the-tokyo-international-film-festival-is-shifting-its-focus-from-hollywood-to-asia/5144656.article>

⁽³³⁾ "Report on Reviewing Meeting for Film Promotional Policy: Aiming at Development of Our Films" (映画の振興施策に関する検討会議 報告書: 我が国映画の更なる発展に向けて), March 2017, written by Taskforce Team in the Intellectual Property Strategy Headquarters.

⁽³⁴⁾ This co-production policy is implemented by the ACA, but it also conducts document screening in conjunction with UNIJAPAN. <https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/news/filmart-2012-japanese-government-fund-302061>

distribution of Japanese films; the Ministry of Foreign Affairs with Asian Film Screenings; and the Japan Tourism Agency with the location map.

In this globalized world, cultural policies and the expansive approaches of contiguous states are a challenge for Japan, which has always enjoyed economic hegemony in East Asia. But the ostensible Cool Japan strategy is to implement the incentive to support international co-productions without resolving the problems of creating films with original screenplays and without reformation of the film industry structure. As policy-makers promote Japan as a brand, the film industry cannot but follow the rules of the policy for the purposes of expansion into overseas markets and drawing tourists through film. ⁽³⁵⁾ The international co-production policy, however, is not sufficient to attain the purposes of Cool Japan if it only attracts big budget films for the express purpose of economic expansion, rather than enhancing the qualities of filmmaking and production.

Conclusion

This article examines how film policy in Japan is built and implemented. It does so by analyzing archival documents of cultural policy that are concomitant with or unrelated to the Cool Japan strategy of the last decade. First of all, the article articulates the underlying ideas of the strategy regarding the Japanese film policy in governmental documents on international film co-production. As the Japanese government initiated the strategy by declaring that it is to promote and publicize the brand of Japan, its implementation does not rebuild or restructure existing industries and seek to solve their problems. The strategy concentrates merely on promoting Japan by exploiting its cultural products with animations, cartoons, and television shows that have already been made. The strategy is implemented by way of exploiting existing popular forms of cultural products such as animations and television shows, but not film, which is not included in the category of 'hotshot' products.

The film policy which the ACA implements has not changed a lot due to the Cool Japan strategy; it provides subsidies for producing attractive and excellent Japanese

⁽³⁵⁾ Intellectual property promotion plan 2010 (知的財産推進計画 2010 (抜粋))

films, training young filmmakers and producers, and protecting and preserving Japanese films. The Cool Japan strategy, however, came to build new sporadic agencies to implement film-related policy including the VIPO, the Cool Japan Fund, and the Innovation Network Corporation of Japan (INCJ) and ANEW, a state-run company. However, the state-run company failed to make a single movie and was sold off into private hands. Although ACA built the website of the location database in Japan, the location incentive program has yet to be implemented. This demonstrates how the film industry is treated in the process of implementing the Cool Japan strategy. Finally, this article explores the relationship between globalization and the Japanese film policy by charting the interplay between East Asian states and observing the implications for global trends. The incentive for international film co-production in Japan is policy-driven based on the Cool Japan strategy, and at the same time, is intertwined with media globalization in a competitive circumambience. Policymakers, however, do not make attempts to solve chronic problems in the industry, and existing film policy does not come up with any sort of relationship with the incentive. The cultural policy agendas proclaimed by the government redirect actors' toward promotion of Japan. Here the question is again raised: Is this a cultural imperative? Is it really necessary for the Japanese film industry?

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