

Sign Wars

Hollywood Documentaries Branding Politics

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Sign Wars: Hollywood Documentaries Branding Politics

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Abstract:

This paper analyses one influential Hollywood documentary, Edward Zwick’s movie *Blood Diamond* as if it were an advertising campaign. Drawing on a business school textbook: *Sign Wars: The Cluttered Landscape of Advertising*, it poses the kinds of question an advertiser would: namely how the brand image is established, how it is made superior to other images and how good it is at capturing would-be-consumers. The paper suggests that *Blood Diamond* fares well on all three accounts and it traces why this is so. Specifically, it emphasizes the extent to which the film has contributed to establish and solidify the link between blood and diamonds in a process of “cultural cannibalism”. Second, it underlines role of “Hollywood authenticity” in establishing its very particular picture of politics as superior to alternatives. This certainly is more an unintended “collateral damage” than a part the producers’/directors’ intention. Finally, the last section suggests that *Blood Diamond* effectively captures the spectator by the reassuring, but illusive, plurality of images and by its visual fetichism.

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Introduction

The question to ask of pictures from the standpoint of a poetics is not just what they mean or do but what they *want*—what claims they make upon us, and how we are to respond. Obviously, this question also requires us to ask what we want from pictures. (Mitchell 2005: xv)

This paper analyses the processes by which a specific genre of Hollywood movies—Hollywood Documentaries—shape politics. Hollywood documentaries are socially and politically engaged, integrating extensive documentary research. But they are conventional blockbusters as well; with conventional drama plots, Hollywood stars, special effects and computer graphics. Recently, Hollywood Documentaries have focused on Africa. Films such as *The Constant Gardner*, *Black Hawk Dawn*, *Hotel Rwanda*, *Sometime in April*, *Shooting Dogs*, *Lord of War*, or *Blood Diamonds*—staged in wars, refugee camps, slums and hospitals rather than out on safari—have introduced large audiences to a range of specific conflicts and problems on the continent (AFP 2007a). They have pictured these conflicts and problems, given them meaning and asked for reactions. They *want* things from their audiences; in particular they want to shape the way we understand the problem they are dealing with.

This is an inquiry into the processes making it more or less likely that the movies will get what they want. A priori, the point of departure is not bad. Far more people are exposed to Hollywood documentaries than to academic treaties or political reports. They may also find them more entertaining and memorable. The Hollywood documentaries are part of the popular cultural baggage stored in the Foucauldian *archive* which shapes how lay people, but also professionals, think about politics (Neumann 2006; Dunn 2008). Pictures and movies are a central but underrated part of this archive (Mitchell 1995: 11-34; 2005: 348-9). But could we be more elaborate about how they become part of the archive; about why some pictures become more central and permanent presences than others? The answer is yes; but a yes that takes some elaboration.

To provide that elaboration, the paper analyses one influential Hollywood documentary, Edward Zwick's movie *Blood Diamond* as if it were an advertising campaign.¹ Drawing on a business school textbook: *Sign Wars: The Cluttered Landscape of Advertising* (Goldman and Papson 1996), it poses the kinds of question an advertiser would namely how the brand image is established, how it is made superior to other images and how good it is at capturing would-be-consumers. The paper suggests that *Blood Diamond* fares well on all three accounts and it traces why this is so. The overarching claim is (obviously) not that all Hollywood documentaries (let alone images from popular visual culture) matter exactly in the same way as *Blood Diamond*. Rather

¹ This choice is less distant than it sounds from work done for example in geography (Power and Crampton 2005), sociology (Darré 2006), political economy (Hozic 2002) or (why not?) IR (Der Derian 2001; Weber 2001) as the theoretical literature underlying analysis in the diverse disciplines converge. The rationale is simply that advertisers (as business schools generally) are forced to actively engage with the question of impact.

the aim is to bring attention to the mechanisms and processes by which Hollywood documentaries such as *Blood Diamonds* become part of the Foucauldian archive and of how we picture politics.

Cultural Cannibalism

“The image consumes the event insofar as it absorbs the event and gives it to the consumer. Of course, the image gives the consumer an impact heretofore unimaginable, but as an event-image.”
(Baudrillard 2006: 413)

Baudrillard’s lesson is integral to the advertising textbook. It presents advertising as being about waging “sign wars” in which advertisers try “to position their sign (the summation of their image) as superior to the sign of their opposition” (Goldman and Papson 1996: 31). Sign values in turn “depend on a system of cultural cannibalism” (Goldman and Papson 1996: 10). Because signs exist in context, changes in their value depend on the capacity to appropriate and transform existing cultural meanings so as to alter the value of a specific sign’s relation to others. *Blood Diamond* is a very successful attempt to change the image of diamonds by linking them explicitly to blood and depriving them by the same stroke of their innocence. A characteristic assessment of the film is that it “succeeds in two things: it entertains as an action movie, carried by a seductive hero and beautiful intrigues while at the same time denouncing the plagues of Africa, the conflicts, the trafficking, the massacres, the exploitation of child soldiers... “ (AFP 2007a). However, the shift in sign value has not passed uncontested. Rather, the sign continues to be part of a “cluttered landscape” where it has nonetheless taken on a life of its own. This section traces this process of cultural cannibalism.

Appropriating Signs

Blood Diamonds is set in Sierra Leone during the civil war in 1999.² As its title indicates it is a very explicit attempt to link blood and diamonds. The film was not the first to establish this link. It draws on a context where the term Blood Diamonds was already in use. NGOs and in particular by Global Witness and Amnesty International had been active in promoting it and it was well known to those interested in African politics and conflict. The film in other words drew on a variety of texts and images to give support to a linking and an understanding of politics that was already present when the movie was made. It contributes to an ongoing sign appropriation and transformation.

BOX 1 here

It does so by systematically linking diamonds to blood and more generally to the violence in new wars. The film pictures diamonds as driving the war which is in fact a resource war. In the film an old man in a destroyed village even says he prays they will not find oil there; an explicit reference to the resource war logic. The trade in rough diamonds, the film suggests, allows the RUF to finance its war effort. It is actually presented as the key motivation for its rebellion. But also on the government side

² For those who have not seen the movie a quick reading of box 1 will be very useful for following the account that follows.

diamonds play a key role. The South African colonel Coetze in the movie agrees to work for “the government” in exchange for mining concessions. Through a visual language the film also ties diamonds to particular exercises of physical violence in the war. Diamonds are directly associated with the amputation of limbs, the use of child soldiers, the enslavement of men for work in the diamond mines and the massive displacement of the civilian population. Not surprisingly, the first diamonds shown in the film are blood stained. They are briefly shown when Archer gets them from RUF commander Zero, but we get a close up when a boarder guard shows them, sullied with blood, as he has just cut them out of the goat Archer is using to smuggle them into Liberia.

To ensure that the message does not remain fiction, *Blood Diamond* operates a constant back and forth between objective facts and the fictional story. Sometimes the actors give factual accounts linking blood and diamonds. In her first encounter with Archer for example, Bowen gives an overview of the diamond smuggling from Sierra Leone to Liberia. Similarly, Benjamin Kapay who runs an orphanage in the movie, places amputation in historical context explaining that the Belgians used it systematically on every hundredth slave to instill fear and obedience. At other times facts are cut into the movie. The film starts with black fact sheets locating Sierra Leone and tying its civil war to diamonds. Similarly, a fictional rendering of a factual presentation at the 2000 G8 ministerial summit on trade in rough diamonds is inserted / juxtaposed to the attack on the Mende village disrupting the Vandy family’s life. Finally, when Archer decides to reveal the nature of the Blood Diamond trade to Bowen, the fictional and factual aspects are completely merged. Archer’s account is accompanied by a film sequence in a yellow tone—recalling old documentary photography—based on an assemblage of fictional and documentary filming, some of which the cameraman went to India to do (Zwick 2007).

The message of the film to its audience is that they have just seen a good action movie with a romantic plot, but also a film that should make them think differently about diamonds and wars. Diamonds are no longer unproblematically “for ever” nor are they “a girl’s best friend” as DeBeers and its advertising company JWT had struggled so hard to make them.³ The movie has conveyed its message that “what is bought in one place affects life in another” (Zwick 2007). It has visualized the link between diamonds and blood. It has also informed movie goers that that they have a way of making informed choices. The message of the NGOs—particularly Global Witness⁴—and the activists who launched the *Blood Diamond* idea has received strong and explicit backing.

Cluttered Landscapes

Both advertisers and film makers have to conquer a place in a “cluttered landscape” of meanings which is complicated by the fact that what a picture tells depends on who looks at it. Art-historians, anthropologists, and sociologists have shown beyond doubt that the meaning of pictures does not reside in the picture itself. It shifts in time, space, with

³ Diamond advertising and its success is fascinating in its own right. It was one of the first industries to realise the significance of branding in film, hence Marilyn Monroe’s song. A full 80% of American marriages are celebrated with a diamond ring. JWT has held an exclusive contract with DeBeers for its advertising campaigns.

⁴ See www.globalwitness.org/pages/en/conflict_diamonds.html for their ongoing campaign.

culture and social group.⁵ What pictures want from us “obviously” depends on what we want from them as Mitchell states in the epitaph of this paper. Hence, images can hardly count on monopolizing meaning. In fact, the success of an image in imposing itself may be visible as much in the (counter) reactions it provokes as it can in the positive approval it receives. In that sense the strong reactions to *Blood Diamond* from those engaged in the diamond trade is an indication of its success in imposing itself.

The professionals promoted other linkages they claimed were more pertinent and in particular the positive link between diamonds, the diamond traders, development, education and African livelihoods. Before the film was out, the World Diamond Council initiated an awareness campaign worth somewhere in the order of \$10 and 15 million (AFP 2006b). A central part of this campaign was a website (diamondfacts.org) where the WDC tried to counter the image of diamonds as linked to resources wars, conflicts and death by promoting an understanding of “23 facts about diamonds” (reproduced in box 2). Peggy Jo Donahue, spokesperson for the Jewelers of America trade association, summarizes the messages when she explains that: “It is important to highlight how important a resource diamonds are for the poorest African countries. Diamonds are one of the few products they have” (Williams 2007). To ensure that the message got across, the WDC handed out “Conflict Diamond Confidence Packs” to retailers. These contained “pocket confidence cards” for tricky questions they expected the film to generate (Doulton 2006).

Box 2 here

Second, the diamond business suggested that the linkages operated by the film has been outdated by the Kimberly.⁶ Characteristically, De Beers spokeswoman Lynette Hori said that while the film was “emotive” it was “set in the past” and the diamond trade had since undergone a sea change (AFP 2006a). Similarly, Avi Paz, president of the Israeli diamond exchange explained that the “film presents a reality that is no longer pertains. The measures necessary to avoid that diamonds can be used to finance terrorism and war have been taken.” (La Tribune 2006). Also governments with a stake in the Kimberley process presented similar arguments. Paul Simons, a deputy assistant secretary of state overseeing the process for the US government for example suggested in a press conference that “the film is very good, but it does present a picture of what was going on in 1999. Kimberly has fundamentally reformed the rules of the game in trade in rough diamonds. We think it is useful to bring the public up to speed on what we have been doing since then”(AFP 2006c).

Finally, the link became a welcome excuse to launch a more general campaign restoring (or strengthening) the image of Diamonds. The film offered “an excellent opportunity” to show that jewellers have cleaned up and can act as “models in the fight against all forms of whitewashing dirty money” (Avi Paz quoted in AFP 2006b). To convey this idea, the industry launched a an “emergency PR campaign”, in which Hollywood stars were offered \$10,000—to be paid to an African charity of their choice—if they would wear large diamond rings on their right hands at public events such as the 2007 Golden Globes, the Annual Grammy Awards or Academy Awards. Launching its

⁵ Consider for example the classical statements by (Panofsky 1955) or (Bourdieu, Darbel, and Schnapper 1990).

⁶ See for example, (Wachthausen 2007) or the webpage run by the Belgian Business Association www.conflictdiamonds.com.

campaign, the diamond industry explained that it hoped “Hollywood's leading ladies will help generate up to US \$100,000 for key projects in Southern Africa” (Pendlebury 2007). The campaign slogan, “Raise Your Right Hand” visualized both the proud display of jewelry and the de-linking of diamonds from amputated limbs.

The Event-Image

In the struggle over sign value, the ultimate success is that the sign can stand alone and no longer needs to be tied to a specific product but is transferable and can move alone. A “brand” that is recognizable beyond a specific product is strong. *Blood Diamond* has to some extent managed this feat. It detached itself from the civil war in Sierra Leone and taken on a life of its own. It has “consumed the event” as Baudrillard puts it. Two examples of this underscore the point.

First, the *Blood Diamond* sign has been integrated and mobilized as a symbol in struggles against the diamond industry that have nothing to do with diamonds bloodied by war. In Ontario, the indigenous population has mobilized it to garner support for their efforts to prevent a mining project by De Beers. Their concerns are with environmental destruction. Yet, they present their position with explicit reference to the imagery of the movie and demand of Leonardo DiCaprio that he should assist them in making their case (Puxley 2006). Alvin Fiddler, deputy chief of the Nishnawbe Aski Nation argues in an article entitled “Canada’s Blood Diamonds?” that “Unfortunately many Canadian Diamonds are anything but conflict free” (media.knet.ca/node/2403). Also Bushmen in Botswana have tried to mobilize support for their protest against measures they see as driving them off their traditional land in the Central Kalahari Game Reserve to clear the way for a Canadian diamond-drilling co-venture with the De Beers Group. Also the Bushmen refer to the image *Blood Diamonds* when they criticize the company and request DiCaprio’s support (Patterson 2006). In both of these struggles, *blood diamond* is used as a symbol in its own right to defend a variety of environmental factors, to indigenous rights and human rights in general (Thompson 2006).

Second, *Blood Diamond* has been transposed and transformed into a general backdrop of marketing. This is the role the *Blood Diamond* takes on in “hip hop entrepreneur turned jewelry designer” Russell Simmons marketing strategies. In 2007 Simmons established a “Diamond Empowerment Fund” with the general mission to use the diamond jewelry business to support development initiatives empowering countries in Africa “where diamonds are a natural resource” (Hultman 2006, and www.diamondempowerment.org). The fund is to be financed through donations but also through the sales of a Simmons jewelry series “the Green Initiative”.⁷ The backdrop of these formulations is a blood diamond context, where diamonds are a resource curse hindering development. *Blood Diamond* has conquered the imaginary, the understanding of diamonds to an extent where they do no longer have to be explicitly mentioned. They can be assumed as general negative reference one can market to overcome.

This emancipation of the sign from the specific events and its transformation into an event in its own right completes the cultural cannibalism this section set out to trace. *Blood Diamond* contributed to a re-branding of diamonds and also of politics. It has

⁷ The Green jewelry is made from “native African materials” and sold at prices ranging from \$150 to \$80,000, a quarter of which goes back to Africa through the diamond empowerment fund (Derakhshani 2007, and www.simmonsjewelryco.com).

visualized a resource war world, a world where luxury consumption fuels violence and wars that cost people their homes, their limbs and their lives. This rebranding is not only the work of *Blood Diamond* of course. It takes a place in a broader context. However, the film has contributed as shown by the targeted counter-reactions it provoked as well as by its status as a symbol in its own right. This is what DiCaprio reflects when he says he “is happy that a large audience Hollywood film has had this impact. It carries a social, political message that creates collective awareness”(quoted in Frois 2007). However, evoking the contested cannibalistic success of the film *Blood Diamond* merely raises the next question: namely what this success does to other understandings of diamonds and new wars.

Collateral Damage

To conquer a market share brands need not only to be recognized, but to establish themselves as superior than competitors. Ultimate superiority is reached when competitors are no longer recognized, when they have become invisible. By way of collateral (unintended) damage *Blood Diamond* establishes this kind of superiority. A recurring comment by reviewers of *Blood Diamond* is that the film is unabashedly faithful to reality in its presentation of Africa and African conflicts. “Child soldiers, the trafficking of blood diamonds, the difficulties of Africa, racism, and exploitation made in the US are treated with unrelenting gravity” (Tapissier 2007). “Accustomed to war films, Edward Zwick has managed to convey the full horror of the conflict, with sequences that are hardly bearable including the carnage in Vandy’s village, the arrival of RUF in Freetown or the refugee camp in Tassin Guinea (AFP 2007a). This creation of a Hollywood authenticity is effective, so effective that it obscures the extent to which the story is replete with exclusions, marginalizations and biases. Alternative ways of picturing the links between diamonds, violence and war are not made inferior. They are simply rendered invisible.

Hollywood Authenticity

Authenticity is “an obsession” in advertising reflecting the concerns of a social world in which “concerns about the self, identity, and personhood have become paramount” (Goldman and Papson 1996: 141). It is central also to Hollywood Documentaries. The authenticity in advertisements is construed, pieced together by the advertiser. The same is true in Hollywood documentaries. “Real people somehow come across as fake”, that is why *Lord of War* is cast with actors (Niccols 2005). Similarly, *Blood Diamond* is marked by the extreme care to ensure that the film appears real, possibly more real than the reality it recounts.

Most of *Blood Diamonds* was shot outside Free Town and Sierra Leone, mostly in Mozambique and South Africa.⁸ To prevent differences in the physical surroundings from undermining the authenticity of the film, a Sierra Leonean environment was artificially created. To film the Mende village and mining camp in the film for example landscapes had to be constructed. The filming site in Mozambique lacked the hills, the palm trees and the greenery of Sierra Leone. These therefore had to be constructed. The river used

⁸The following is drawn from (Zwick 2007).

for filming the diamond mining had muddy water and a soft ground that made necessary the construction of underwater ramps on which the actors could stand and walk. Along similar lines, Free Town authenticity had to be fabricated. To do this, shootings from Free Town was merged and blended with parts filmed in Mozambique and South Africa. Finally, the role of computer graphics in picturing the refugee camp in Tessin is carefully obscured by a slight blurring of the picture (Zwick 2007).

Similarly, authentic people were artificially made. Considerable iconographic care is visible in the presentation of people in *Blood Diamond*. Dress codes and physical appearance, and languages are brought as close as possible to the Sierra Leonean original. The film shifts between Mende, Krio, South African accents and American English. But it is entirely artificial. Hounsou (originally from Benin) is no more a Mende speaker than DiCaprio a Rhodesian who can speak Krio. Moreover, to produce two clear cut sides in the conflict Zwick knowingly glosses over the complexity of the situation and opposes “government troops” and “RUF”.⁹ Authentic people are also produced through careful iconography. People are individualised and given a personality. Therefore the Kamajors, the RUF commanders, the child soldiers, but also the white participants are both iconographic representations of specific groups of people whose authenticity is enhanced and individual characters. This is true also of those on whom little time is spent. The Kamajors appear briefly, in one scene only, in which they let themselves be flattered by Bowen’s wish to photograph them. Child soldiers, omnipresent in the film, are personalized both through the story of Dia Vandy and through a sequence in which child soldiers appear one by one, in portrait fashion, saying their names while receiving their weapons. Finally, RUF commander Zero is individualized as he asks Archer to bring him a satellite TV so that he can look at *Baywatch*.

Finally, the artificial authenticity of the story production is enhanced by pasting together references that look and ring right. On the one hand, lines in the film are directly drawn from the experience of the film team while filming. Archer’s comment to Bowen e.g. that with her “laptop computer, malaria medicine and hand sanitizer” she does not know much about Africa was made to Zwick. On the other hand, Hollywood self-referentiality is drawn upon to enhance the authenticity of the film. The film quotes from Hollywood classics. The scene where Archer is dying, alone, on the hill side recalls Gary Cooper in *For whom the Bell Tolls*. It ties into more contemporary Hollywood themes: Colonel Coetze’s attack on the RUF controlled mine in Kono recalls contemporary war movies such *Apocalypse Now* or *Black Hawk Dawn*. Finally, the film soundtrack draws on music produced by Hollywood to capture Africa. This is particularly true of the central musical theme joining Solomon and Archer.

The “Hollywood authenticity” resulting from this pastiche of documentary effort, iconographic care, quotations, soundtrack and filming techniques is simplifying. It stylizes and fixes identities to make a clear and transparent story. It is also transparent to audiences with first hand knowledge. DiCaprio’s Krio or Hounsou’s Mende are unlikely to convince many West Africans. This said, however flawed, the authenticity of the film makes it easier to gloss over the extent to which the film is an account, replete with bias

⁹ At the time the situation was more complicated, in addition to the RUF and the Sierra Leone Army, the ECOMOG, Sandline, Executive Outcomes as well as the West Side Boys and other militias were all involved in the fighting.

and unspoken positions that does considerable collateral damage to the visualization of Black lives and African politics.

Black Lives

In *Shooting Dogs*, a film about the Rwandan genocide, the BBC journalist explains that “when in Bosnia I cried everyday. Whenever I saw a woman’s body I thought: this could be my mother. Here it is different [...] here it is just another Black body”. This kind of explicit reflection on racism and the devaluation of Black lives is common to Hollywood documentaries about Africa including *Blood Diamond*. When Archer tries to convince Solomon to exchange his hidden pink diamond for Archer’s help to find his family, he tells him “listen, I know people—*white* people. Without me you are just another Black man in Africa”. Yet, *Blood Diamond*—as other Hollywood documentaries—are prone to reproduce the devaluing of Black life they point at.

A key reason is that story lines focused on white main characters almost inevitably background Black lives.¹⁰ White lives become thick and more personalized while Black lives figure in the background giving the context and support. In *Blood Diamond* this is certainly the case. Bowen and Archer are strongly personalized. This is not mainly because we hear and see more of them. It is the way we see them. Their feelings and their thoughts about the unraveling war are spelled out in considerable detail as are their backgrounds, conflicts and disagreements. By contrast, the Vandy family remains anonymous and unarticulated. We do not hear them discuss Sierra Leone’s civil war at anytime, nor do we hear them reflect on their feelings. We see the (mute) suffering of the son, the love of the father, anonymous life in the refugee camp and an abstractly happy family in the Mende fisher village before the RUF arrival. But the characters remain generic representations.

The devaluing of Black lives is reinforced by their function as a background tableau, a backdrop for white action and heroism, rather than lives in their own right. Anonymous Black suffering and dying, dead, mutilated Black bodies, anonymous perpetrators of violence, often gangs or groups, child soldiers, militias, interahamwe and the RUF are the backdrop of all Hollywood documentaries about Africa and new wars. Even personalized life—such as that of the Vandy family—seems recounted as much as a backdrop as in its own right. In *Blood Diamond* the absurdity of the obsession with the diamond (Archer’s, Captain Poison’s, van de Kaap’s) is highlighted by contrasting it to Solomon’s love for his son. The warm, human, compassionate feelings of Solomon expose the cold, dead stone and the cruelty tied to it. In the scene where Solomon receives his family at the airport in London, the camera moves back and forth between Solomon who welcomes his family with passion while handing over the diamond without looking and Simmons who only fixes the diamond, scrutinizes it coldly and pays no attention to the family reunion taking place. But at the end of the day we know much more about the diamond and the misery it has caused than we do about the Vandy’s. “The child is the diamond” Zwick writes on the top of his working folder (Zwick 2007). The diamond is almost more alive than is the child.

Third, the devaluation of Black lives is strengthened by the films’ affirmation of white superiority. The treatment of soldiering in *Blood Diamond* is a case in point. The

¹⁰Exceptions to this generalizing statement are *Sometime in April* and *Hotel Rwanda* where there are no white main characters and consequently such a hierarchization is impossible.

competent soldiers are the whites in general. They have the material gear but also the know-how. Colonel Coetze is brought in to support the government incapable of winning against the RUF on its own. Archer is shown as an intuitive and inventive professional “soldier of fortune”. Alone he gets out of Freetown under RUF attack, escapes the RUF attack on the journalist convoy he travels with, sneaks into the RUF camp when Solomon has gone in to find his son and finally blocks the South African troops trying to stop Solomon from escaping with the diamond. Contrast this with the picture of Black soldiers in the film. They are ineffective, rather primitive and above all brutal. This is true of the RUF and their child soldiers. The film opens with captain Poison asking villagers if they want to be amputated “long sleeve or short sleeve”, shooting those escaping. But it is also true of the “government troops”. In most violent scenes these are just absent underscoring their failure to uphold law and order and the absence of the state. When they are visible their role is not particularly glorious. In the defense of Freetown, they mow down civilians caught in the cross fire, surrender and are shot.¹¹ The exception confirming the general rule is the border patrol that locates Archer when he tries to smuggle diamonds into Liberia, finds the diamonds, refuse to be corrupted and get him into a Freetown jail.

Finally, the devaluation of Black life is reinforced by the neglect of central Black concerns; by what the films do not tell us and do not pay attention to. Black women are for example remarkably absent in *Blood Diamond*. Solomon’s wife and daughter make three appearances in total. Black prostitutes appear as background noise in Freetown. Black civilian women are running, shot and scared in some of the violence the film depicts. But there are no Black women with a character anywhere in sight. Women are also insulated from the violence. They do not exist in the RUF forces encountered, in the diamond mines and no sexual violence in the many violent scenes of the film. The only rape we hear of is that of Archer’s mother in Rhodesia. This contrasts starkly with reports about the actual situation of women in Sierra Leone at the time. Black women and their grievances in the civil war are not significant enough to warrant a place on the canvas. The film—politely put—“spares us the stories of young girls, made sex slaves as well as killers, bearing children while still children themselves” (Hultman 2006). They do not even figure in the background.

One can of course justify this specific visualization of Black life. There is enough violence without picturing women as well. The RUF was ruthless and Executive Outcomes were called into Sierra Leone by the government. Black people did die in massive numbers. However, one could also have imagined a different story that foregrounded Black people, gave them personality, showed their individual efficiency and focused on their concerns. If of *Blood Diamond* obscures that such stories are possible and exist, the film reinforces the devaluation of Black life it so clearly sets out to criticize.

African Politics

A similar tension can be found in *Blood Diamond*’s treatment of African politics. Its message: “the Third World is not a world apart. Let’s listen to its voice and ignore it no more” (the film’s closing lines) jars with the visualization of this world. In his first

¹¹ A Mogadishu showing of *Black Hawk Dawn* in which the audience found the film excellent because showed “that our soldiers are also brave” somewhat perversely illustrates the resentment against being the eternal inferior .

meeting with Bowen, Archer introduces her to the expression “TIA” (This Is Africa). The expression is repeated throughout the film and comes to stand for the roughness of life in Africa but also its engulfing, treacherous nature. When Colonel Coetze fires the bullet that kills Archer in film he says TIA. TIA comes to stand for the Africa as a world apart; a world where there is no public sphere, no politics, no state and hence no obvious “voice” that could possibly be heard.

In *Blood Diamond* there is no single example of an effectively working political initiative or political community. Nor is there any African individual political initiative worth noting. Most political reflection is done by Bowen (an American journalist) in the movie. She is also the source of the one and only negotiation that prevents violence: her initiative to use the camera, suggesting to take pictures, to distract the Kamajors threatening to shoot Solomon, and possibly Archer and her self. The one exception to this rule is Benjamin Kapay’s orphanage. When Archer and Bowen arrive at the orphanage they both admire the work done there and “imagine doing all this”. But the fragility of this initiative is strongly underscored in the movie. Kapay—who has just explained to Archer and Bowen that he has known most soldiers in the area since they were children—is shot at a road block by a child soldier. His life is saved only because of Archer first-aid knowledge and skills as a driver.

This framing of African politics as an impossible undertaking is reinforced by the emphasis placed on the wish to escape. To the extent they reflect on the future, escape seems to be the only possible route for all African characters (with the exception of South African colonel Coetze). Archer wants the diamond to escape Africa, “do you really think I would still be on this continent if I had a diamond like that” he tells Coetze. To Bowen he says: “this diamond is my ticket out of this God forsaken continent”. Similarly, captain Poison wants the diamond in order to escape: “You think I am a devil only because I have lived in hell. I want to get out” he shouts at Solomon. More than a wish, escape is the only real route the film has for its characters. The stories carrying the film end in escapes. Bowen goes home. Solomon and his family are reunited in the UK (thanks to Bowen and Archer’s work). Archer and captain Poison die, the ultimate form of escape.

Finally, the sense that African politics as a close nay impossible undertaking is perhaps most starkly brought across by the impossibility everyone seems to share when it comes imaging it. In one of the first scenes in the movie Dia (Solomon’s son) recounts his teacher telling the class that “this country is a utopia; when the war is over it will be paradise.” But in *Blood Diamond* there is no visible, local, initiative that could bring that paradise closer. There simply is no positive reference point. Commenting the situation, Corbould, a journalist who takes Bowen, Solomon and Archer in his car and is shot by the RUF, sums it up when he says “The government is bad, the rebels worse. No one knows what to do”. The one only positive political imagination takes the form of colonial nostalgia. In his only articulated political reflection, Solomon says to Archer that “we were better off when the white ones ruled”.

The picture of African politics left by *Blood Diamond* is discouraging and far from the image of a world with voices that could be listened to and of which the films audience could be part. As so often in the African context “people are portrayed as passive and pitiable” (Campbell 2007: 369). What is left is a “politics of pity” (Chouliaraki 2006). We can pity the Sierra Leoneans and possibly try to help them. We can become part of the “commodity community” (Goldman and Papson 1996: 289)

buying certified diamonds and ensuring that “that in addition to the four classic C's of carat, colour, clarity and cut, any diamond purchased qualifies for the fifth C conflict-free” (Hughes 2007). What the film (and Hollywood documentaries) does induce us to do is to imagine that Sierra Leoneans (or Africans more generally) might have their own way of framing their political problems, that commodity communities may be criticizable, and that the problems are still unraveling. So what? Is it not the case that this is simply one treatment of Sierra Leone, New Wars and Blood Diamond trade? It has marginalized some issues, but then any account would have to. We are intelligent spectators and can complete the picture. As *All Africa* puts it, “even if the scenario can be faulted for its commercially and cinematographically driven superficial treatment of human drama (population displacements, child soldiers, famine), it has attained its key objective: to place a stone in the garden of the diamond traders vampirizing Africa” (All Africa 2007). The remaining section of this paper looks at the costs of placing that stone.

Capturing the Spectator

Advertisers are aware that a key part of the challenge they have is to capture the spectator; for their signs position in the cluttered sign war landscape to improve it has to be inscribed in the spectators' imagination. For Hollywood documentaries an analogous logic pertains. If their picture captures the spectator, it leaves an imprint. There are good reasons to think that *Blood Diamond* may. It is surrounded by a reassuring plurality of images and pictures that mask the extent to which its voice is dominating. The global corporate strategy of companies such as Warner Bros. Pictures that produced *Blood Diamond* are difficult to counter and their resources impossible to match. But more than this, the medium is the message (Goff 2006). The magical attraction of the visual fetishism in films such as *Blood Diamond* is hard to resist. The cost of placing “a stone in the garden of the diamond traders” may be an impoverishment of public debate. As suggested by a reviewer of *Jeune Afrique* “this film is so edifying and moralizing that it does not trigger any debate at all” (De Rochebrune 2007).

Reassuring Plurality

One of the most effective ways liberalism obscures its power and its construction of a universalizing logic, is through the illusion that there is always a plurality of voices to be heard (Bauman 1988-9). If anyone disagrees with an argument they can just come out and say so. There is freedom of expressions and information. This is certainly also true when thinking about the impact of Hollywood Documentaries such as *Blood Diamond*. There is a reassuring and real existing plurality of views that can be pointed at for those who find the *Blood Diamond* overly simplifying and its marginalization of African politics and Black lives disturbing.

Because the issue of blood diamonds, the civil war in Sierra Leone and that of new wars in general are central in West Africa, *Blood Diamond* 's picture is obviously not the only one. A number of other films address an international audience to create awareness about Sierra Leone. One of the earliest films and probably the film that has attracted most international attention is Sorious Samura's *Cry Freetown* (www.cryfreetown.org) that was produced as a documentary, partly broadcasted on the BBC in 1999 and then in its own right. The movie shows the violence of the war and focuses on a childsoldier (Moses). Samura made the movie because “seeing is believing.

No matter what amount of explanation. The people of Sierra Leone have to make outsiders understand the amount of brutality and barbarism that was going on in Sierra Leone.” The film is easily available through the internet, it has won international awards and internationally marketed including through Samura’s role as a technical adviser and authority in the production of *Blood Diamond*.¹² There are also less well known films, difficult to get a hold of with the same ambition of picturing the situation to the outside world. Sam Kargbo for example produced a Nollywood movie called *Blood Diamonds* in 2005. His aim was “to tell the world what Charles Taylor had done to Sierra Leone. It was like saying I know what you did in Sierra Leone before coming to Calabar” (Ejinkeonye 2005).

More than this, in the wake of *Blood Diamond* a number of films tried to break its totalizing impression and to underline the extent to which the problem can be framed differently. Newton Aduaka has won awards for his film about the child soldier *Ezra* at the Panafrican Film and Television Festival of Ouagadougou (FESPACO) as well as at the Sundance Festival. He sees his film as an alternative framing to that of the *Blood Diamond*. He reverses the order of importance upgrading Black lives and politics. As he explains commenting on Zwick’s film: “his major characters are my minor characters, and my minor characters are his major characters”. Commenting on DiCaprio’s role he adds, “he’s like James Bond. I’m not interested in him. He’ll survive, just like Bond”(AFP 2007b). To the frustration of many reviewers Aduaka does compromise and simplify the conflict into two clearly distinguished opposing sides which make it easy to follow and pass judgment. Aduaka is more interested in keeping politics open and especially in indicating the extent to which the politics surrounding child soldiers is still unraveling. His film is “not about who’s good and who’s bad, it’s about the effects of war” (AFP 2007b).

The concern with politics as unraveling and open is central also in Sorious Samura’s documentary called *Blood on the Diamond* (Knight 2007). The key message in the movie is that that the story is not ended with the Kimberley process, contrary to what is suggested by the last Black fact sheet in *Blood Diamond*. To show this Samura smuggles false diamonds (really stones) into Guinea. He goes to New York and sells actual diamonds without Kimberley certificates to buyers who mention the Kimberley process only to say they don’t care about it. He also shows that in Sierra Leone the average diamond-digger has never heard of the Kimberley process and doesn’t really care what happens to the stones they find, as long as they are paid. “A starving stomach doesn’t have ears” one miner says in the film. The politics of diamond is bloody in other ways than through the new wars as another miner in Samoura’s film underlines saying that “diamonds are something you die for. You die searching.”

This plurality is reassuring. *Blood Diamond* is not the only cinematographing of the link between diamonds, violence and new wars. There are other pictures, opening up the closures of the film, contesting the exclusions, focusing on different framings. If we look beyond cinematographing the plurality expands further. The visual construction of the social and political, of the link between diamonds, new wars and violence includes also the pictures and films broadcasted in the media including in that made for the

¹² In one interview Zwick explains that “Sorious was a Godsend... He became much more than a technical advisor... He was a friend, a consultant, an authority” (Hultman 2006)

audiences in Sierra Leone and West Africa. This awareness of alternatives may be very helpful in capturing the spectators. It dismantles the sense that this particular picturing matters. It becomes merely one among many. The question is how real the alternatives are. To what spectators are Samoura's, Aduaka's or Kargbo's movies accessible and who has seen them? Who follows the news from West Africa?

The Medium / Message

“Advertising intentionally encodes the metacommunicative level to steer viewer questions about the agenda of the message away from questions about power, control, and inequality” (Goldman and Papson 1996: 251). A similar intentionality can not be attributed to Hollywood Documentary producers, to Edward Zwick who made *Blood Diamond*, or to Warner Bros. Pictures distributing it. They did not intend to marginalize questions about how *Blood Diamond* relates to alternative images of new blood diamonds and new wars. But even if the intentionality is not there, the effect may be. As suggested by Goff's analysis of Harry Potter, the medium may be the message (Goff 2006: 46). Becoming part of the commercial strategy of the international media giant Warner Bros. Pictures guarantees resources and diffusion that dwarfs would be alternative framings, even on their home terrain.

Although less strongly commercialized than Harry Potter, *Blood Diamond* is a commercial venture for Warner Bros. Commenting on *Blood Diamond* a company spokesperson explained that “we choose to make films because of their compelling story lines and high entertainment value. However, it has done more than produce another potential blockbuster: it has opened up a wound the diamond industry has long been trying to heal” (Doulton 2006). The political message is an unintended side effect which the company has nonetheless tried to use to bolster its corporate image. It launched the “Blood Diamond Charity Fund” matching charitable donations—originally by the film crew and actors—but intended also to be broader (Frois 2007; Levy 2006).¹³ Being produced by the Warner Bros. Picture has strong implications for how *Blood Diamond* is positioned in relation to alternative framings of the problem; it is determining for the resources available to the production. The film had a budget of \$100 million. It was disturbed and advertised through Warner Bros network. The producers had access to the technical expertise and CG facilities of the company. And the film could count on a casting with Hollywood stars (symbolic resources in their own right!). Indeed, these would not have joined the film if it had not been a commercial venture of Warner Bros. as DiCaprio makes clear when he explains his own motivations: “I wasn't personally going out seeking films with social or political messages just to do it for the sake of doing it. There has to have entertainment value. It has to be a good movie..”(quoted by Silverman 2006).

These are symbolic, technical, marketing and financial resources most filmmakers outside Warner Bros. and the Hollywood circuit can only dream of. Even inside, it is sometimes difficult. Niccols begins his commentary on *Shooting Dogs* with the financial difficulties of producing the film, the sponsors involved and insists throughout on compromises and technical shortcomings made as a consequence (Niccols 2005). Moving

¹³ The fund seems either to have disappeared or to lead a very quite existence. It certainly is not part of any immediately visible Warner Bros. self advertising at present. I tried to find information about its current activities without success.

to the African context the difficulties are incomparably greater. Kargbo's comparison of his own version of *Blood Diamonds* with the Hollywood production is instructive in this regard.¹⁴ According to Kargbo, Nollywood "has talents and artists but lacks finance. The Teco Bensons of Nigeria can give you Oscar winning movies if they get the necessary funds." However, the technical and financial resources necessary to "give you the larger than life performances that you credit Hollywood artists with" are simply not available. "The industry is still in the analogue stage". Kargbo suggests that this is because, unlike "America, India and other nations with successful film industries" Nigeria lacks the "patriotic nationals that patronise what is theirs. Our elite class do not patronise the industry here. They are content with watching cheap and pirated Western films. The immediate effect is that the standards are set by the lower class that are patronising the industry. So, until we have our middle and upper class people buying made in Nigeria movies, do not expect the standards to improve overnight."

Kargbo neatly captures the workings of the visual economy (Poole 1997). He underlines that it is about budgets and finance, but also about symbolic resources. Ultimately the problem is that the "unpatriotic" middle and upper classes prefer to watch the Western pirated films that speak a visual language they have grown accustomed to, the kinds of plots they appreciate and the actors they admire. Ultimately Kargbo is telling us that what is lacking is not only finance but the also the symbolic resources necessary for the of production of any work of art (Bourdieu 1983: 318). The Nigerian and American or French spectators are tied into the same visual economy even if they may not be part of the same culture. In the struggle to capture the spectator Hollywood outcompetes Nollywood. Only "the poor", who cannot chose differently, will pay for Nollywood movies.

This image of the visual economy surrounding films is disquieting for those placing their faith in the availability of numerous alternative images that can counterbalance and complement the exclusions, marginalizations, and closures of *Blood Diamond*. If Kargbo is right, the alternatives are likely to be relatively few and far between. Consider for example that *The Last King of Scotland* was the only fiction film made about Idi Amin's reign in Uganda at the time of its making (MacDonald 2006). It probably still is. But more significantly, even when produced, they are unlikely to fare well in the competition for spectator attention. They do not master the requisite sign language that allow them to produce the greater than life performance expected. They either will not reach or will not capture the spectators. The plurality of images that could stand along side the one provided by *Blood Diamond* has proven largely illusive.

Visual Fetishism

Precisely because of the visual economy Kargbo describes, it may prove difficult to escape the simplified abbreviated accounts of complex realities that Hollywood documentaries (including *Blood Diamond*) provide. The short cuts may be necessary to capture an audience that has become accustomed to that form of visual communication. In *Sign Wars* the authors suggest that the "fetichism of vision practiced by advertising" is

¹⁴ The following quotes are from (Ejinkeonye 2005).

essential to capture and fix the spectators' imagination, (Goldman and Papson 1996: 251). *Blood Diamond* certainly seems to capture its spectators through a similar logic. It encodes the message in recognizable, simplified terms and at the same time it leaves the audience wide scope for individual interpretation.

Fetichism may be a necessity to produce any work of art as Bourdieu implies when he suggests that any "rigorous science of art must assert the possibility and necessity of understanding the work in its reality as a fetish; it has to take into account everything which helps to constitute the work as such, not least the discourses of direct or disguised celebration which are among the social conditions of production of the work of art *qua* object of belief" (Bourdieu 1983: 317). For the Hollywood Documentary genre it is a necessity of a more banal and immediate kind. To convey a social and political message to heterogeneous "global" audience through entertainment requires framing the message so that it becomes accessible, graspable and attractive. Hence the recourse to the magic of familiar discourses and cliché visualizations that people can easily de-code: the hierarchization of lives with the foregrounding of the white and devaluing of the Black and gendered is the conventional code. Similarly, the invisibility and impossibility of African politics and the dependence on outside solutions draws on the familiar continues repertoire combining "the white man's burden" with his "civilizing mission". Finally, the neo-liberal element whereby states and public action is replaced by consumer choices and commodity communities reflects the current orthodoxy. As Zwick comments, it would be "disingenuous" to pretend that he could have obtained the same financial backing and publicity if he had tried to make a film with a Black storyline and a Black star instead of one centering on a white mercenary and a (pretty) white female journalist (The Economist 2007). Viewed from this perspective the choices, exclusions and biases made in *Blood Diamond* lose their innocence. They do not reflect cuts that had to be made somewhere, anywhere. They are specific choices forming a (necessary?) part of a stylized communication.

This fetichism enhances the grip of Hollywood documentaries on the audiences in three fairly straightforward ways: 1) It makes them comprehensible: *Blood Diamond* (and Hollywood documentaries), rescue problems from the impenetrable complexity of political, academic and local understandings. 2) It presents hope. It promises painless and easy solutions: buy Kimberley certified diamonds, prevent war and help development. Don't worry, there is no fundamental contradiction between present consumption, life patterns and diamonds, new wars, or underdevelopment provided consumption is intelligently done. Relatively small shifts in behavior can make for grand changes in development. 3) It draws on the magical attraction of power, and more specifically on the symbolic power imbued in classical hierarchies where white men and women save poor and helpless Blacks.¹⁵ Simplification in Hollywood documentaries—just as in "Brand Aid" (Richey and Ponte 2006)—makes a comforting, conservative reaffirmation/restoration of established power hierarchies possible.

Visual fetichism also works its magic on the spectators in a slightly less forward manner, by responsabilizing them and inviting them to reflect. Hollywood documentaries do not offer us propaganda in a classic sense. Transparency is at the heart of the

¹⁵ The extent to which this symbolism is efficacious also on the African continent itself is an important and long subject of study and discussion (Bayart 2004).

endeavor.¹⁶ They are openly reflexive and critical of their own simplifications and about the role of mediation. In *Blood Diamond*, Bowen is repeatedly critical of the media's (her own included) simplifications, racism and abbreviations. The film itself does not go beyond them though. It simply points at them. It is up to the spectator to improve on the picture. The audience is no gullible mass. It is a critically engaged, differentiated and thinking composite of individuals contributing interpretation, analysis and critique. That the audience may have little but their own fantasy at hand to when they engage this interpretation and analysis is conveniently their responsibility.¹⁷ This fits well into an environment where there emphasis is on empowerment and individual responsibility. It is certainly a way of making the *Blood Diamond* attractive. It also comfortably relieves the film from having to take responsibility for its own form of communication.

The truncations and abbreviations made in *Blood Diamond* and in Hollywood Documentaries more generally are important in ensuring that they capture their audience and can effectively contribute to the visual construction of social and political realities. Together with the reassuring illusion of a plurality of images, and the powerful visual economy of the "Hollyworld" distribution network (Hozic 2002), it captures the spectators' imagination and also closes it. With the end of film the story of *Blood Diamond* also ends. The black fact sheet has told us that the Sierra Leone is at peace, the Kimberley process is working and that less than 1% of all diamonds are now blood diamonds. This explains the ambiguous and hesitant reactions to the film of those politically engaging the blood diamond trade. As two activists write:

"Hollywood's efforts to cultivate a social conscience; a global industry proclaiming a commitment to corporate responsibility; and political activists flexing muscles in international politics. We laud these efforts, but we warn that their collective successes can perpetuate, not solve, the grievous ills that they all aim to address (Richman and Paulwelyn 2007).

Conclusion

This paper has argued that Hollywood documentaries hold a powerful sway over political imagination and representations. Analyzing the film *Blood Diamond* through the lenses of advertising theories, the paper pinpointed three inter-related processes through which Hollywood documentaries frame (or perhaps more appropriately market) politics and create political issues. The first is a process which one might call "sign cannibalism" in which the movies transform and rearrange the hierarchies of signs. In the case of *Blood Diamond* the film ties diamonds to violence and war. The second is a process by which

¹⁶ This may be a more general characteristic in the post-cold war period. If the key theme during the cold war was how to de-code propaganda and sort out hidden intentions, the key question at present is what "to make of an era when the persuaders are not hidden, the messages are overt, and ideology is both everywhere and nowhere" (Mitchell 1995: 366).

¹⁷ It may well be that this "fantasy" element of Hollywood documentaries about Africa is a crucial part of what makes them capture spectators. Just as film makers, the spectator and critics can create their own version of the Dark Continent and the audience can freely put their fantasy to play. If one compares the reception of *Blood Diamond* with that of e.g. Oliver Stone's JFK the difference between the way the former was (generally) approved of as "awareness creating" while the later was torn apart for its historical inaccuracies and "fascist" intentions this certainly seems to be the case. For a discussion of JFK see the essay from CNN to JFK in (Mitchell 1995).

they establish hierarchies of signs. In the case of *Blood Diamond* one might think of this process as one of causing obliterating “collateral damage” to alternative framings (that might encapsulate for example sexual violence, efficient black soldiering, ongoing political struggles or African political initiatives). The final process discussed was that through which Hollywood documentaries capture and close the visual imaginations of the spectator. It was suggested that *Blood Diamond*’s combination of a reassuring, but illusive, plurality of images and the powerful impact of simplification or visual fetishism helped it work its magic on the spectator.

If the current trend holds, an increasing number of politically engaged Hollywood documentaries will be produced. The question is whether or not they necessarily produce the obliterating collateral damage and conservative political restoration of majority culture discussed here or whether they can be used to enrich political imagination. Perhaps characteristically for our times we are facing “both the threat of a kind of soft form of global corporate fascism and the hope for new and critical pictures” (Mitchell 1995: 369). Which is realized depends on reception works. To return to the epitaph of this paper pictures want things from us, but what they want depends on what we want from them. Meaning does not reside in the image alone. Beauty is also in the eye of the beholder. As the preceding account clearly shows “the eye of the beholder” is situated. A power imbued—and producing—visual economy is at work in determining what we see. The conclusion to draw I think, is that if images, including those provided by Hollywood documentaries such as *Blood Diamond* are to enrich rather than impoverish our political conceptions and repertoires for action we have to be more critically aware of how visual images construct our social and political world. We need pay more attention to “showing seeing” (Mitchell 2002) and to remembering that power works through art (Bourdieu 1993: 234-5).¹⁸ Concretely we need to pay even more attention than currently done to visual communication and visual theories within IR.

¹⁸ To spell out Bourdieu’s notion of remembering in full it is necessary: “to remember that culture is not what one is but what one has, or rather, what one has become; to remember the social conditions which render possible aesthetic experience and the existence of those beings—art lovers or ‘people of taste’—for whom it is possible; to remember that the work of art is given to those who have received the means to acquire the means to appropriate it and who could not seek to possess it if they did not already possess it, in and through the possession of means of possession as an actual possibility of effecting the taking of possession; to remember finally, that only a few have the real possibility of benefiting from the theoretical possibility, generously offered to all, of taking advantage of the works exhibited in museums—all of this is to bring to light the hidden force of the effects of the majority of culture’s social uses” (Bourdieu 1993: 234-5).

Boxes

BOX1

Blood Diamond: The Movie

The Basics:

Directed by Edward Zwick

Written by Charles Leavitt

Distributed by Warner Bros. Pictures

Release date (US) Dec. 8 2006

Budget: \$100 mn

Gross Revenue: \$ 175 mn

Nominated for academy awards

The Plot :

Blood Diamonds recounts the story of a Mende fisherman (Solomon) who is enslaved to work for the RUF in the diamond mines when his village is attacked. He finds a large pink diamond which he hides at the risk of his life but which the RUF commander, captain Poison sees. Solomon's path crosses that of a Rhodesian mercenary, turned diamond smuggler (Archer). Archer works for a South African colonel (Coetze) who is engaged in arms trafficking and tied to the diamond industry. Archer manages to convince Solomon that he will help him find his family in exchange for a share of the diamond. To do this Archer draws on his contact to a journalist (Bowen) who wants to use him for information about the Blood Diamond trade. They locate the family in a refugee camp but the son has been captured and turned into a child soldier by captain Poison, who sees him as a bait for Solomon. Solomon and Archer sets off to find the diamond. On the way they are captured by a Kamajor militia and taken to Kapay's orphanage. Eventually they make the way to the diamond mine where Solomon had hidden his diamond and also find his son there. They escape with the diamond. Archer dies on the way. But Solomon is reunited with the rest of his family in London with the help of Bowen who uses his sale of the diamond to van de Kaap as the basis for her story.

The Cast

Actor	Role
Djimou Hounsou	Solomon Vandy
Leonardo DiCaprio	Danny Archer
Jennifer Connelly	Maddy Bowen
Kagiso Kuypers	Dia Vandy
Arnold Vosloo	Col. Coetzee
Basil Wallace	Benjamin Kapay

Box 2

The World Diamond Council Diamond Facts

- Fact #1:** An estimated 5 million people have access to appropriate healthcare globally thanks to revenues from diamonds. ([read more](#))
- Fact #2:** Conflict diamonds have been reduced from approximately 4% to considerably less than 1% since the implementation of the Kimberley Process in 2003. ([read more](#))
- Fact #3:** An estimated 10 million people globally are directly or indirectly supported by the diamond industry. ([read more](#))
- Fact #4:** The diamond mining industry generates over 40% of Namibia's annual export earnings. ([read more](#))
- Fact #5:** Diamond revenues enable every child in Botswana to receive free education up to the age of 13. ([read more](#))
- Fact #6:** In July 2000, the global diamond industry announced its zero-tolerance policy towards conflict diamonds and continues to drive this policy. ([read more](#))
- Fact #7:** Sierra Leone is now at peace and exported approximately \$142 million diamonds in 2005. ([read more](#))
- Fact #8:** Approximately one million people are employed by the diamond industry in India. ([read more](#))
- Fact #9:** Approximately \$8.4 billion worth of diamonds a year come from African countries. ([read more](#))
- Fact #10:** More than 99% of diamonds are now from conflict free sources and traded under the UN-mandated Kimberley Process. ([read more](#))
- Fact #11:** The Diamond Development Initiative was established to improve the working conditions of artisanal miners. ([read more](#))
- Fact #12:** The revenue from diamonds is instrumental in the fight against the HIV/AIDS pandemic. ([read more](#))
- Fact #13:** Under the Kimberley Process, rough diamonds can only be exported and imported when accompanied by a certificate from the exporting country. ([read more](#))
- Fact #14:** The charity Jewelers for Children funds a community based care program for orphaned children in South Africa. ([read more](#))
- Fact #15:** An estimated 65% of the world's diamonds come from African countries. ([read more](#))
- Fact #16:** Today, 71 governments and the legitimate diamond industry are all committed and legally bound to eradicating conflict diamonds. ([read more](#))
- Fact #17:** The diamond industry has introduced a system to help give greater assurances to retailers and to provide consumers with the reassurance that their diamond is from a conflict free source. ([read more](#))
- Fact #18:** Diamonds account for 33% of the GDP (approximately \$3 billion) of Botswana. Since diamonds were discovered in Botswana, GDP annual growth rate has averaged 7%. ([read more](#))
- Fact #19:** Major world leaders - including Nelson Mandela - have cited the importance of diamonds to the lives of African people. ([read more](#))
- Fact #20:** It is estimated that one million people work in the informal (artisanal) alluvial diamond digging sector. ([read more](#))
- Fact #21:** Some diamond producing countries are not Kimberley Process compliant. ([read more](#))
- Fact #22:** In November, 2006, 71 Governments, leading NGOs, and the World Diamond Council agreed on measures to further strengthen the Kimberley Process. ([read more](#))
- Fact #23:** At the 2006 Kimberley Process Plenary, the industry committed funds and resources to address challenges faced by countries with a high prevalence of artisanal alluvial mining. ([read more](#))

Source: www.blooddiamonds.org

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