

*Projekty***Lights! Kamera! Azione! Practices, Sites and Careers
in European Film Production.***(A Book Project)*

In recent years, Production Studies has developed into a new and interdisciplinary field of inquiry surpassing traditional examinations of authorship, industry structure or active audiences. Production Studies explores media as production cultures. Studying production as a culture involves gathering empirical data about the lived realities of people involved in media production: their careers and contracts, collaboration and conflicts, routines and rituals. Production Studies likewise involves analytical work with texts and practices readily available: trade stories and practitioner interviews, the films themselves, biographies and even promotional materials disclosing the “behind the scenes” of filmmaking.

Yet explorations of this new field of research have so far almost exclusively been led by American scholars. John Thornton Caldwell, for instance, is to be credited for merging cultural-anthropological analysis, political economy and textual hermeneutics into a neat research framework with his *Production Culture: Industrial Reflexivity and Critical Practice in Film and Television* (2008), a seminal book that suggested “reading” production cultures as texts, offering a detailed analytical grid for coping with industrial self-theorizing and the “double speak” often going with it. In spite of its many accomplishments, Caldwell’s study remained focused on contemporary Hollywood and downplayed differences between the media, sites and histories of production.

Lights! Kamera! Azione! opens up the field for a new interdisciplinary discussion of traditional concepts, sources and questions pertaining to film and media studies with a focus on the European context. Rather than claiming to integrate the diverse disciplines engaged in doing Production Studies by building a new coherent framework on top of them, this volume invites them to reconsider — using their own methodologies and concepts — some crucial questions that film and media scholars have been asking for decades. How does one connect, for instance, the idea of authorship to career choices, histories of style to changes in divisions of labor, imagination to institutionalized routines, artistic improvisation and experimentation to alternative modes of practice, schools and waves to communities of practice, or genres to central planning of production in former socialist countries? Instigating an interdisciplinary discussion about issues like these might serve to appropriate sociological and economical knowledge on production within film and media studies research without downplaying their constitutive differences. It also might help to give new meaning to some of the traditional sources used by film and media scholars such as movie scripts, (auto)biographies, manifestos and interviews, and to discover hitherto hidden aspects of traditional cornerstones of European film cultures, be they festivals and awards, international contracts and co-productions, film schools and public funding or state-owned studios and political propaganda.

Therefore, this volume offers a collection of fresh European research into this lively yet previously barely explored territory of media studies scholarship. It suggests broadening the scope of Production Studies by analyzing alternatives to Hollywood production systems and to the U.S.-based globalization of film production. Presenting historically and geographically alternative cases related to issues such as national production systems, the politics of runaway production, the formation of styles and studio histories, the volume outlines a European contribution to the field in three distinctive ways. First, it highlights both the artistic legacies and the rich histories of theorizing production within European industries. Second, it points to important differences between national markets and cultures and the role of language in the perception of differences. Third, it investigates the role of the state and geopolitics in film-making and re-integrates questions of de/regulation or censorship in the study of production.

Recent contributions to the field within European research contexts have either been confined to individual projects emanating from disciplines not specializing in film and media, such as organizational sociology, management studies, cultural economics, labor studies and cultural anthropology, or they have been narrowing the focus on particular fields such as screenwriting or animation. The wealth of current European and American research on production thus remains unconnected, if not mutually ignorant in its diverse disciplinary and media cultural affiliations. How does one use notions such as “division of labor” and “producer-unit system,” “below/above-the-line work,” “three-tiered mode of production,” “transmedia storytelling” or “empires of entertainment” in a European context, for instance, given the way they have been specified by American scholars such as Janet Staiger, John Caldwell, Thomas Schatz, Henry Jenkins and Jennifer Holt, respectively? Taking its cue from these and related interests, our book will contain a mixture of conceptual papers and case studies exploring both the aesthetics and practices of production. It lays focus on empirical research into the dynamically changing field of production today while remaining sensitive to historically diversified backgrounds and issues such as media specificity. For instance, regarding the aesthetics of production, what can be learned by studying the socio-material practices of below-the-line craftsmen in film and the associated specific time regimes? How can the contemporary aesthetics of realism, location-shooting and transculturalism be understood via EU support schemes and the key position of public television as a prominent film producer in Europe? Regarding the comparative history of media production, how can we define and understand “basic units of practice” (i.e. the changing role of “national” studios and production companies, crews, semi-permanent work groups or so-called creative units in former Socialist countries) in various national contexts and historical periods? What is the role of World War II and the Cold War in various historical versions of international production and migratory cultural labor, coming both from the West and the East? Or, how can we conceptualize the role of studio executives and producers within production systems where it was often the state itself that held the decision-making responsibilities attributable to producers in Hollywood? In addition to re-conceptualizing Production Studies from a European perspective, and in accordance with the ambition to do so, the book also aims to re-evaluate the history of European thought on production: theories of practice; the “languages,” “grammar” and “poetics” of film; implicit practical theories of European production systems such as so-called dramaturgy, the most politicized and reflexive “science” of filmmaking, taught at film schools and institutionalized in professional roles and studio departments; and not least the self-theorizing of European auteurs and professionals such as Tarkovskij, Bergman, Alekan and Carrière.

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Ročník 22, 2010, č. 4 (80)

Preceding the conceptualization of this volume, a European Production Studies Work Group was founded in May 2010 during an international workshop at the Department of Cinema Studies, Stockholm's University. The group developed out of our perennial engagement within NECS (European Network for Cinema and Media Studies) and the SCMS (Society for Cinema and Media Studies) and from discussions with a number of colleagues working in Europe and the United States on issues of production. This volume consequently relates to a lively international debate, but also to the growing interest among students to study production both within practice-related and academic courses.

All contributions are limited to a maximum of 5,000 words and are due by November, 30, 2011. The book will be published in 2012.

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