# a study of feature film development in the czech republic

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# A Study of Feature Film Development in the Czech Republic (an Introduction)


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# Summary

# I Introduction



This project was commissioned to the Masaryk University team by the Czech Film Fund (CFF, Státní fond kinematografie) with the goal to examine aspects of screenplay and film project development with regard to economic and cultural perspectives and to thereby provide an empirical foundation for better understanding of film development's actual practice and to optimize the effectiveness of the public funding system in this area of film production. The CFF operated on the assumption that development is the least researched stage in the creation of film works, despite its profound impacts on the resulting quality of the works.

This introduction summarizes key findings and methodology of the study, whose complete version of 292 pages in total is available in Czech language.

The preliminary investigation into *the development of a screenplay idea and film project* (hereinafter referred to simply as *development*) produced the following working thesis, which we have re-examined on the basis of qualitative analysis and quantitative data: insufficient standards in the stage of script and project development can be considered as one of the key causes of the unsatisfactory quality and competitiveness of Czech films. This thesis was based on a comparison of the situation in the Czech Republic with the situation abroad, which showed that: (1) independent Czech producers do not invest sufficient capital into development, (2) they do not make use of professional script editors, and (3) they lack both a long-term strategy and a sufficient pool of projects in development, from which they could greenlight only the best ones for production. Consequently, (4) screenwriters lack stable conditions for a systematic cooperation with producers and directors that would allow for long-term, focused work on screenplay ideas, quality feedback, as well as opportunities for further education and professional growth.

The following analysis of creative and producer development practice in the Czech screen industry seeks to verify these postulates from three perspectives: from the point of view of the screenwriter, from that of the producer, and from that of the director. In addition, we also considered the perspectives of script editors, public funding institutions, and public service television.

Methodologically, we were inspired by reports on development created upon commission by public institutions in Great Britain, Denmark, and Australia. Unlike them, however, we placed more emphasis on detailed descriptions of real-life practices and on qualitative data obtained from detailed interviews with agents involved in development. The reason for this is that, in the Czech environment, there is no standardized, wide-range collection of data concerning development or production that would allow for a meaningful analysis of a strictly quantitative type. Furthermore, a qualitative (exploratory) approach proved unavoidable since until now there have been only quite unclear ideas about development practice that were distorted by the subjective experiences of both laymen and the professional community. Therefore, we compensated for the lack of existing data and systematic mapping of the area concerned by conducting detailed interviews with as diverse a sample of participants as possible, as is the habit in comparable surveys.

The product types marked as A1, A2, C1, and C2, which serve as the key organizational units of this report, are described in greater detail in the section “The Product Typology of Czech Films.” To facilitate the reader’s orientation in the paper, their brief definitions are as follows:

A1 – Mainstream Arthouse
Producers counterbalance their orientation on authorial films with the effort to attract mainstream audiences; their strategic goal is to succeed at international film festivals and on international markets; relatively high budgets reaching CZK 25–100 million (EUR 1–4 million) are supported not only from public finances (CFF, Czech Television [Česká televize, CT], MEDIA, Eurimages) but also by the pre-sales of distribution and broadcasting rights; this category engages more frequently in international co-productions and literary adaptations than in A2; there is a mixture of writer-director projects and producer-initiated projects where the producer is the initial co-creator of the project; there is a tendency toward dramatic topics from the recent national history with relatively high production values.

A2 – Marginal Arthouse
Producers deliberately operate on the margins of the film production field, they do not strive to attract mainstream audiences; they work with low to extremely low expenses (budgets from CZK 5 to 25 million, EUR 200,000–1 million); they are entirely dependent on public funding and they refuse to measure their success according to market criteria; their business model counts on very low ticket sales in cinemas; international co-productions and literary adaptations are rare (apart from Slovakia); the producers have ambitions to enter domestic and foreign festivals but not foreign markets; they aim to reach art/festival viewers; films are overwhelmingly writer-director projects where the producer only provides services to the author and her/his independent vision; typical films are those that engage in social criticism (e.g. about the life of Roma people) and debut films with low production values.

C1 – Mainstream Commercial
Producers are oriented toward the domestic mainstream audience and do not have primary ambitions to enter foreign festivals and markets, or, they do have these ambition to a limited extent, but only rarely succeed in achieving them; medium-range budgets (CZK 25–55 million, EUR 1–2 million) are financed by private television companies and distributors with contributions from private business partners (product placement); international co-productions are rare, while adaptations of successful literary works are relatively frequent; typically producer-driven projects where the producer initiates the project, sometimes in cooperation with a long-term partner-director; films are frequently lifestyle comedies for the middle and older generation.

C2 – Marginal Commercial
Producers are oriented exclusively on domestic audiences (simply put: tabloid readers and TV soap opera viewers); they are forced to operate on the margins of the film production field as outsiders by necessity, who aspire to step up to the C1 sector; low to medium budgets (CZK 4–10 million / EUR 150,000–400,000 in the case of exclusively "outsider" C2 directors and CZK 20–30 million / EUR 800,000–1.2 million for "established" C2 directors) are financed by private television companies and, to larger extent than in C1, by private business partners (product placement may cover 20–50% of the budget); there is a strong prevalence of director-initiated projects, perhaps created upon commission from the financier, whereby the producer's work is reduced to production management and marketing; frequently these films are popular comedies or crime thrillers with controversial social topics and low production values.

The main text (which is not part of this translated introduction) presents a "catalogue" of key problems structured according to product types and professional roles, and is complemented by illustrative statements of interviewees. These quotes are anonymized and designated by codes that indicate product type, profession, and interviewee number (e.g. C1/P3 = producer of C1 type, number 3; A1/S = A1-type screenwriter, number 0). The quotes selectively illustrate the respondents' way of thinking and their formulations about the individual topics of the given sub-chapters; they are not intended as a substitution for analytical conclusions. We recommend that the text be read according to thematic or professional axes rather than in a linear manner as with a common academic study.

# 1 A Brief Summary of the Key Results of the Study

# The Film Production Field[1]

A thorough analysis of the meetings and interviews with respondents conducted during the data collection stage of the study (which was unprecedented in its scope and complexity) provided us with a broad picture of the structures and value orientations in the world of Czech film production.

### The Current Producer System

In the current system, independent production companies govern film development and production. The field they constitute is extremely fragmented and undercapitalized: in the Czech film industry, there are no economically strong production companies, which would be comparable to small studios in other European countries that develop and produce a differentiated portfolio of projects and employ in-house staff dealing with systematic development. The sector is made up of dozens of very small companies as well as individual persons (i.e. producers) employing one or two assistants, which produce a very small number of titles in a highly irregular rhythm. According to local conditions, a company may be considered productive if it releases at least one feature film per year.

There are virtually no cases of vertical or horizontal integration in the field (i.e. linking production with distribution and cinematic exhibition, or linking cinema with related media industries), except in rare cases where a television company or a dominant Czech film distributor produces their own feature films aimed at cinematic release. Some production companies co-finance their feature titles with revenue from the production of commercials and from production services. A new trend is to combine feature-length fiction production with commissions for and co-productions with public service television or private television companies, occasionally involving the development of original serial projects by the production company.

In the Czech Republic, the largest volume of investment into film production is concentrated in the sector of foreign location and service production, i.e. providing production services for incoming foreign producers, rather than producing Czech films. Such service production companies, which profit from the so-called rebates provided by the Czech Film Fund (CFF), only rarely invest in Czech films. The only influence these service providers have on the local industry is the general

1 The term “field of film production” is employed here in reference to sociological field theory (Pierre Bourdieu) that understands the field of cultural production as a system of hierarchical relationships between positions, to which various degrees of symbolic and economic capital correspond even though this field is to a certain extent independent from economic and political power.

development of infrastructure and the hiring lower- and medium-level crew workers, who bring experience with foreign work methods into Czech film. However, this sector has hardly any influence on screenwriting and project development.

The biggest players among domestic producers are primarily reliant on three dominant sources of funding: The CFF (whose prime recipients are producers of arthouse projects), Czech Television (companies more closely tied to CT are those who develop television series as well as films), and private television companies (whose strongest partners are the producers of commercial projects).

In terms of development practice, the producer system described here is marked by a lack of continuity with regard to a long-term production strategy. Respondents, especially those in producer positions, recognize this fact as a crucial deficit for which public institutions have yet to find an efficient tool to overcome. Small production companies are only able to fully concentrate on one or two films at the same time – they lack the capacity to develop a wider and more differentiated portfolio of projects or to cultivate a "pool" of core writers a and writer-directors.

**The "Creative Triangle"**

There are three professions primarily involved in film development, which together form – as Peter Bloore puts it – a "creative triangle": the producer, the screenwriter, and the director.[2] According to Bloore, the key to successful development is the creative triangle's consensus on the common "shared vision" of the planned film. The producer's job is to direct the group's creativity such that each member of the team feels engaged to the maximum extent and thus brings their best possible performance to the creative process, and to make sure the frequently quite divergent personalities agree about what kind of film is actually being developed. Conflict among creators frequently occurs when they discover that they each have their own vision of the film and that the respective visions differ significantly.

The notion of the creative triangle works differently for each product type. Although examples of directors writing their own scripts prevail in the overall sample of examined films, the marginal sectors A2 and C2 differ from the mainstream sectors A1 and C1 in that there are virtually no professional non-directing screenwriters in them. In sector A1, the producer frequently participates

2 See Bloore's study, the most complex existing text on development practice in European production companies: Peter Bloore, *The Screenplay Business: Managing Creativity and Script Development in the Film Industry*. London – New York: Routledge 2013.

in the development from the very beginning (initial screen idea, source material, etc.) and the director and the screenwriter often perceive her or him as a co-creator. By contrast, in types A2 and C2 the producer serves primarily as the provider of financial and production (or also marketing) services.

However, film development is influenced more or less directly by a wider range of participants. The creative triangle model is linked to other affiliated occupations that our data selection was able to cover to only a very limited extent: script editors, employees of Czech Television and private broadcasters, acquisition executives at distribution companies, film crews' heads of department, etc. We also need to take into account that the allocation of financial resources for development is predominantly decided by the public funding providers (the CFF, MEDIA) and public service television (CT) who influence development practice indirectly but very significantly by setting the selection rules for which projects should be supported.

**The Professional Community and Its Value Orientation**

The Czech professional community is generally closed off against foreign influences from the outside while also fragmented on the inside. In the interviews, we were surprised by the respondents' low level of interest in the work of their peers and ignorance of their peers' modus operandi. Usually, interviewees shared a brief camaraderie with their peers during their studies at FAMU[3] but subsequently holed up within a fairly limited network of regular co-workers, where they have remained for the rest of their career. (It is also well possible that the very process of building a contact network that helps graduates transition from the school environment into the practical field may, ironically, be one of the reasons the professional environment is so fragmented). In the areas of screenwriting and script editing, this situation began to change after the center of gravity for artistically ambitious works partially shifted to television, which helped to weaken the aforementioned closed-off position and fragmentation.

Creators'[4] ideas about script and project development have been shaped by their specialized study programs (i.e. the departments of directing and screenwriting at FAMU) and by their continuous cooperation with producers and script editors. With producers, however, experience with grant programs and international co-productions plays a greater role.

3 Film and Television School of the Academy of Performing Arts in Prague.

4 We use the term "creator" as a general term that encompasses screenwriters, directors, and writer-directors.

Creators evaluate the screenwriting education at FAMU as inconsistent and far removed from contemporary professional practice (both in film and television). The respondents commented that the curriculum lacks training in detailed screenplay analysis and in the rules of dramatic structure. It also lacks detailed feedback from experienced authors and script editors. According to the respondents, one of the causes of conservatism at FAMU in terms of screenwriting and script editing seems to be its traditional tendency to focus exclusively on authorial works (while ignoring genre works) and its outspoken adherence to the New Wave aesthetics of the 1960s. In addition to other consequences, this puts non-directing screenwriters and script editors in a disadvantageous position vis-à-vis writer-directors. It seems that the second cause lies in an insufficient instruction in script-editing practice that would take into account contemporary conditions in the European screen industries and "what it means to be a script editor." In practice, this results in a general sense of ambiguity regarding the methods and goals of script editing and in script editors assuming a quite narrow personal view of the material. Subsequently, this creates a situation, in which the script editor is incapable of guiding the author constructively. One respondent involved in teaching at FAMU also points to a third cause, namely that arts education is severely underfunded and thus the possibilities of hiring active filmmakers and foreign experts as teachers are very limited.[5]

However, most creators do not even attempt to compensate for the observed lack of screenwriting craft with ongoing self-education. Unlike foreign creators, they hardly read screenwriting manuals (apart from a few translated works – mainly Syd Field), they do not participate in international workshops, and they are not members of international organizations (unlike producers from A1, especially). It is little wonder then that Czech creators feel excluded from EU policy making, while at the same time international organizations intervene and influence policy making fairly vigorously and efficiently. It is even more surprising that most creators we interviewed do not follow international trends in contemporary filmmaking to any degree of detail: they are not enthusiastic about film festivals and do not feel the need to make references to foreign standards or to engage with them. Therefore, the ideas of our respondent-creators on writing standards and screenplay development are usually limited to a rather intuitive knowledge obtained during local practice. However, this knowledge is of a predominantly individual nature, because the respondents, as we stated earlier, usually do not even follow the work of their own Czech colleagues. The older and middle generations are also limited by their lack of language abilities, which the respondents themselves admit to.

5 These evaluations of FAMU refer to the time when the respondents attended the school. FAMU has launched numerous initiatives to develop TV screenwriting and script editing skills of its students in recent years.

The knowledge and value orientations of producers (as opposed to creators) display an even greater degree of variation. Producers of C1 and A2 have strong opinions about the Czech public funding system (and occasionally they express opinions that are outright radical and they demand systemic reform) and comparatively evaluate various methods of development (their own and those of their colleagues), but otherwise they share similar characteristics with creators: they lack insight into international trends and the will to educate themselves through international workshops. They, as well, rely mainly on intuitive knowledge obtained through practical experience. They share with Czech creators a prevailing sense of provincialism in their focus on the home environment and absence of ambitions to "break through" at European festivals or markets (although they are indeed grateful for their rare success at festivals).

Producers of the A1 type, mainly younger respondents (under 45 years of age) differ significantly from the rest of the field in this particular area. Young mainstream arthouse producers are the group with the deepest international insight; they observe trends in European and American arthouse films, take part in international workshops, and cultivate contacts with foreign partners. Their ideas about development practice combine an ability for complex critical analysis of domestic production with the ability to competently evaluate it against foreign production, and with progressive visions of its modernization. It is they who occasionally voice requests for coordination and solidarity in the professional community, or develop plans to benefit from the know-how of foreign professionals (e.g., by means of a co-production cooperation or getting involved with foreign script editors). Their production strategies naturally count on foreign partners, festivals and markets, although according to the respondents there are various objective obstacles in utilizing them.

## The Definition of "Development"

There are two levels of implied meaning in how the term "development" is defined in both Czech and foreign professional literature and film practice. Firstly, there is a broader definition, which includes the entire project preparation process (including preliminary production preparation, sometimes called *soft preproduction*). The second, narrower definition only involves screenplay development. This difference is well put, for example, in the entry for "Development" in *the Dictionary of Film Finance and Distribution*:

> *In the broader sense, the initial stage in the preparation of a film. In this sense, development includes formulating and organizing the idea or concept of the movie, the acquisition of rights to the underlying literary*

> *work or screenplay, preparing an outline, synopsis and/or treatment and writing, polishing and revising the various drafts of the script, attaching elements to the script, and seeking production financing. In the more narrow sense, this same term means those activities relating specifically to taking an idea or concept and turning it into a finished screenplay. (...) In the broadest sense, [the development expenses comprise] the costs associated with the earliest stage in the preparation of a motion picture project, [e.g.] optioning or acquiring the screenplay or an underlying property, attorney and/or accounting fees, screenwriter compensation, research costs, preliminary budget preparation, packaging costs and expenses associated with seeking production financing. In the more narrow sense, development costs are those directly associated with the development of the script.*[6]

The definition of *film screenplay development* is discussed in greater detail in the aforementioned influential monograph *The Screenplay Business* by Peter Bloore, who emphasizes both the coordination of creative and industrial interest and the cooperation between key agents involved in development:

> *Screenplay development is the creative and industrial collaborative process in which a story idea (either an original idea or an adaptation of an existing idea, such as a play, novel, or real life event) is turned into a script; and is then repeatedly rewritten to reach a stage when it is attractive to a suitable director, actors and relevant film production funders; so that enough money can be raised to get the film made.*[7]

There is a rather low level of standardization in how the term "development" is used and understood in the Czech professional community. It seems that most respondents are familiar with the term, albeit only superficially; however, they see it as a relatively new concept that is being forced upon them externally by grant programs (with the exception of producers and creators of A1 and partially also C1, mainly those who apply for the so-called *slate funding* in the MEDIA program). At the same time, some respondents admit that the grant programs' contemporary emphasis on development leads to a greater level of professionalization in the script and project preparation phase, which they regard as underdeveloped in the Czech film environment. Some C1 producers even fully reject the term development and only want to talk about writing a script and preparing it for production. On the other hand, producers and creators in A2 and C2 openly admit

6 John W. Cones, *Dictionary of Film Finance and Distribution: A Guide for Independent Filmmakers*. New York: Algora Publishing 2013, pp. 109–110.

7 Peter Bloore, *The Screenplay Business*, p. 9.

that actual development is rendered practically impossible in their case due to the short period of transition from screenplay to shooting. Despite these differences, there are several identifiable levels and meanings of the term development which can be distinguished according to how individual professional groups and product types incline toward them:

- limited script development: development covers only the period from the first version of the screenplay through its further working drafts all the way to the final text ready for production, i.e. from the moment the screenwriter enters into an agreement with a producer to write further versions (producers of creative projects C1, A2);
- complete script development: there is complex script development from the initial story idea through the preparatory treatment and individual versions of the screenplay up to the text ready for production (creators A1 and C1, producer projects A1 and C1);
- limited project development: involves developing a script and financing (producers C1, C2, A2);
- complete project development: there is comprehensive preparation of a project for production, involving not only complete script development and financing, but also preliminary preparations for shooting (location scouting, casting of lead roles, pre-visualization, design sketches, etc.) and presenting the project at pitching forums, workshops, and festival markets (producers A1).

Therefore, each profession and type (and we may also partially observe generational distinctions) understands development as referring to different aspects of pre-production. For example, C2 and A2 producers and some C1 producers do not include screenwriting as part of development (from the initial story idea to the first draft of the screenplay), because they usually do not take any part in it. By contrast, A1 producers focused on international co-productions consider as key parts of development any activities that are beneficial for acquiring foreign partners (e.g., visiting festivals, translations, etc.).

## Critical Issues in Development

Each profession and each product type identifies different problems with the contemporary practices of development in Czech cinema; however, the majority agrees that development is a key factor for quality (i.e. commercial and artistic success) and for the international competitiveness of Czech films. Nevertheless, it is still the most neglected and underfunded stage of the production process, according to the respondents (mainly from categories A1 and C1). Producers and

creators do not approach development systematically and they lack the ability to analyze the script in proper detail. Furthermore, producers are unwilling to pay screenwriters prior to having a completed screenplay and they do not hire or are unable to find capable script editors. In interviews, our respondents repeated several specific reasons for this state.

### Financial Resources for Development

Czech producers estimate that the percentage of costs for "complete development" (including not only script development but also preliminary preparations) amounts to 3–5% out of the total budget; however, some indications (e.g., problems with remuneration payments postponed until after the production starts or until the film is finished) show, that the actual percentage is even lower, in some cases as low as about 1.5%. This is significantly less than what is invested into development in the USA (5–10%) and in Western Europe (here, the estimates vary: professional literature states 4–5%, while some estimates that calculate the soft pre-production into the budget speak of up to 7%; in any case, their costs of development comprise a significantly higher portion of total budgets than in the Czech Republic).[8]

These costs cover some or all of the following items (according to the nature of the project and the producer's approach):

- the optioning or licensing of the original source material, remuneration payments for screenwriter, script editors (possibly remuneration for other members of the teams working on script development);
- casting, location scouting, research, design sketches, script read-throughs with actors, test shooting, preparatory work towards a marketing and promotion campaign;
- a preliminary budget and shooting plan development, legal services, translations, trips for meetings with foreign collaborators and partners, the work of the actual producer (writing screenplay notes and grant applications, financing negotiation, etc.);
- operation costs for the company, etc.

The financing of development is generally more difficult and risky than the financing of production. A financier's investment is tied up for a very long time

8 Professional literature indicates 4–5 % of the budget for script development, not including incidental expenses for soft pre-production – see Peter Bloore, *The Screenplay Business*, p. 22; Angus Finney, *The International Film Business: A Market Guide Beyond Hollywood*. London – New York: Routledge 2010, p. 25; David Rolfe et al., *A Study of Feature Film Development and Screenwriter and Development Training in the UK. A Final Report for the UK Film Council and Skillset.* London 2007, p. 19. Industry sources related to the public funding program MEDIA indicate a portion of approximately 7%.

without any clear date of completion and there is no guarantee the film will in fact be completed. Financiers do not want to invest into uncertain projects, and in particular they do not want to pay money toward the producer's salary or operation costs for the production company. In practice, the producer's remuneration and the investor's profit from actual development are zero, or they are very low and bound to the transitioning the film into the production stage. This is why a large part of financial resources for development comes from public sources in Europe – and increasingly in the Czech Republic in recent years as well – and that is why grants for development are extremely important for the vitality of European film industries. Nevertheless, producers often need to invest their own resources into development and the development costs for an unproduced project may easily result in a clear loss. Therefore, producers logically strive to avoid halting such projects in the development stage at all costs.

Costs for the development of unproduced films cause financial trouble for producers. In contrast to Hollywood studios (which are integrated and make up the costs for unproduced projects from distribution income), European producers are not able to calculate costs for unproduced films into the budgets of produced projects. Private financiers and public funding providers would not agree to having their contributions used to cover losses for other, unproduced projects.[9]

### Low Selectivity, Dependence on Production, and Pressure for Fast Production

In Europe, 16–20% of developed films get produced, compared to an average of only 10–20% in the USA (and as low as 5% in larger studios).[10] The research literature cites the small proportion of films that are ultimately produced from all films that enter development as a key cause of US cinema's greater competitiveness. Practice has verified that this seemingly irrational process of selectivity yields maximum quality from quantity (if "quality" is measured solely in terms of commercial success) and limits the risk of loss in high production investments and distribution.[11] In the Czech Republic, almost every film into which a producer has invested more than several tens of thousands CZK gets produced. Even movies that other producers think should have never gotten into the cinemas – because they discredit the Czech industry in the eyes of domestic audience – get produced and distributed. When asked about unproduced projects, producers – even very experienced ones – can only recall a few rare cases in ten or more years of their career. As to the reasons for stopping a project or "putting it

9 Furthermore, this practice would not be allowed by the contemporary budget law.

10 P. Bloore, *The Screenplay Business*, pp. 22–23.

11 *Ibid*

to sleep," arthouse producers cite screenplay problems (plot structure, characters, etc.) and creative conflicts within the team; on the other hand, commercial producers cite a lack of funding. We need to examine the business models of Czech producers to determine what factors, apart from the high-risk investment in development, result in such a low level of selectivity.

A Czech A2 producer (and to a large extent even an A1 producer) is economically dependent on the so-called *production fee* and on the producer's remuneration.[12] Since the production costs are more than what the film makes back on the market (even after deducting non-refundable funding resources), the producer and her/his company rely on production for profit, not film exploitation. The producer deducts a production fee of up to 7% from the production budget and uses this resource to finance her/his company. Economic logic thus compels the producer to push the project from development to production as fast as possible (with the risk of insufficient development) and to produce all films that enter the development stage and cost the producer some money (with the risk that some of them are not actually of high enough quality to enter cinemas).

Producers of C1 and C2 type are in a rather different situation. Their business model is not founded on production itself (i.e. on the *production fee*), but on profits from distribution, sale of broadcasting rights to private networks, and product placement. However, there are also strong pressures influencing them and forcing them to rush projects into production and to not halt projects already in development: the key source of this pressure stems from the dependence on business partners. The producer has the chance to cover the expenses she/he put into the project during development from the pre-sales of broadcasting rights to private television companies and from the distributor's minimum guarantee. Nevertheless, the contributions of both private television companies and distributors are conditional firstly upon approval of the screenplay and casting and secondly upon a contractual agreement with fairly rigid production timeline. Therefore, a vicious circle ensues: the investment of partners into projects depends on a finished script and its rapid production, yet it is not possible to fund the script development without this investment.

12 This is comprised of items included in the production budget that cover the producer's work on development and production as well as the operational costs of the producer's company; at the same time, they are paid upon the start of filming and are thus entirely independent of the film's commercial success on the market.

**"Dramaturgy"[13]**

Most creators and producers agree that the craft of "dramaturgy", which significantly contributed to great success of Czech films in the past (in the era of so-called "dramaturgical" or "creative units" of the 1960s), has been on the decline over the last 25 years, that cinematic "dramaturgs" "disappeared" after the Film Studio Barrandov was privatized, and that the "dramaturgy" of Czech Television was not able to fill that void. However, this does not mean that the respondents have a clear idea of what characterizes quality script editing. The interviewees offer several concepts of "dramaturgy":

- "producer dramaturgy": a strategy for selecting materials and creators, determining the conception of projects', and directing the process of development and production; the dramaturgy determines the identity and nature of the production company; the producer contributes to the formation of genre, theme, and visual work conceptions, but their dramaturgy differs from more detailed dramaturgical work with a text in terms of its broader perspective;
- page-by-page or line-by-line dramaturgy (script editing): detailed work with texts focused on structure, building characters, dialogues, accuracy of cultural and historical references, etc.
- "television dramaturgy": represents public service television's interests in a co-production project and it also has a supervisory nature; it may sometimes manifest itself on a large scale only in post-production, during the discussion of rough cuts;
- "distribution dramaturgy": a minimum guarantee deposit gives the distributor the right to comment on the project during the development stage: on the generic conception, production values, casting, etc.

The respondents have a tendency to confuse producer and television dramaturgy with dramaturgy (script editing) as a craft, that is, as detailed work with a text. Some interviewees indicate that the reason for this might be the heritage of "dramaturgical units" in the state-controlled film industry when the unit heads effectively took the place of the non-existent creative producer. In the contemporary European production system, dramaturgs of this kind (assuming a producer's authority, but without the producer's responsibility) do not exist.[14] Dramaturgical work on script development is divided between the *creative*

13 In the Czech film and television production culture, "dramaturgy" traditionally refers to script editing, advising and supervising, and sometimes (mainly in TV or in relation to pre-1990 film industry) also screenplay development management, commissioning and acquisition.

14 See "The Development Executive and the Script Editor" in P. Bloore, *The Screenplay Business*, pp. 115–128.

*producer*[15] (who may be aided by an in-house head of development, who is employed by the production company to oversee all projects' development, while the final decision-making powers remain with the producer), and a freelance *script editor*, hired for a short-term assignment to analyze and adjust a specific script. It is the Czech industry's lack of *professional script editors*, who are properly trained, adequately paid, and proficient in European trends that some producers (mainly the younger generation of A1 producers) consider a key problem of contemporary dramaturgical practice.

The insufficient level of human resources in development is linked, among things, with the absence of so-called *development executives* or *heads of development* – i.e. a profession which, in Western Europe, takes on part of the management responsibility for development from producers. The Czech development system actually lacks this entire professional layer that typically stands between producer and screenwriter. However, most producers perceive this gap as an unsolvable problem, since economically stronger production companies would be required to establish these jobs and the Czech market is unable to sustain such companies given the current conditions.

**The Precarity of Screenwriters**

Although there would be no development at all without screenwriters in the first place, they are the weakest element in the contemporary Czech production system. The conditions of a screenwriter's work can be characterized by the sociological term "precarious," which connotes a fundamental uncertainty: uncertainty in the sense of the unpredictability of work prospects and the course of work, as well as in the sense of a loss of control over the results of the work in legal, economic, and psychological respects.

This condition concerns mainly non-directing professional screenwriters. Of all the creative team members and staff, it is the screenwriter's payment that is most threatened by problematic development funding, as described above. It takes screenwriters whole months or years to work up their material; they start long before the producers have the production budget prepared. The duration of the screenwriter's work, the total amount of remuneration, and the terms of gradual payments are all uncertain and they shift according to external circumstances that are beyond control of the screenwriter (for example, getting a development grant). The producer relies on the screenwriters' desire to make their dream film come to life and on their resulting willingness to work for free (which concerns primarily first-time writer-directors, in whom some A2 producers specialize to save

15 For the distinction between "creative" and "financial" producer see P. Bloore, *The Screenplay Business*, pp. 29–31.

development finance) or for a low, or postponed payment that would not even cover the basic cost of living if converted into monthly work hours.

Screenwriters are therefore forced by these conditions to either look for additional employment, usually in television, in the theater, or at a university, but sometimes also completely outside their field of expertise, or to drastically increase their work performance and accept all kinds of writing jobs, which may decrease their work quality in the long run as well as their reputation within the professional community. It is therefore small wonder that professional screenwriters are very rare in Czech film. There are just a handful of individuals, who earn their livelihood exclusively from screenwriting.

Producers transfer part of their business risk onto screenwriters, making them de facto co-investors in their films. For the most part, they are aware of the issues this situation brings, but they point out the risks they need to carry themselves, which is even greater in terms of responsibility.

When a screenwriter's position becomes precarious it influences development and its quality significantly: a screenwriter that is underpaid and overtired does not have enough time and attention to work on a script for as long and as consistently as the material requires.

**The Low Degree of Standardization**

The course of a film's development is mostly random, without systematic planning or a secured budget; it is susceptible to external influences that may erode the project's potential. The low extent of standardization manifests firstly in the absence of certain key professional roles (e.g., *script editor, head of development*), and secondly by an intuitive or ad hoc approach to the script itself, including its preparatory developmental forms. Neither producers nor creators have become accustomed to using synopses or treatments as formats that help to focus the screenplay idea. They have also given up on the creation of a continuity or shooting script as a preparatory step in the production stage that would allow a more precise fulfilment of the creative vision and more efficient shooting management, mainly for demanding scenes (although it did have a fixed spot in the domestic practice prior to 1990). Unlike their counterparts in Western Europe, Czech producers hesitate to think about the script in terms of marketing; and if they do, they only do so intuitively.

The low degree of standardization is also related to other partial development problems, e.g., inconsistent storylines or the poor presentation of the project for the partners and funding institutions.

## Public Funding System

The level of satisfaction and amount of specific critical opinions or suggestions for changes to the public funding system for development differ according to product types and professional roles. Producers in the C1 category evaluate the MEDIA program positively, but they criticize the CFF for neglecting commercial works and they suggest implementing automatic bonus rewards for commercial success. Art producers and creators, however, are relatively satisfied with how the CFF works, especially with the newly established area of development funding that is divided between screenplay preparation and "complete" development. Producers in the A1 category would prefer a more selective support for larger projects; producers in A2 are satisfied with the larger number of smaller grants. The differences in these approaches are hardly surprising, because the MEDIA program is oriented not only toward arthouse films but toward commercial mainstream productions with export potential as well (strategic combinations of mainstream-arthouse and mainstream-commercial projects are supported by means of so-called *slate funding*) and aims to strengthen the European audio-visual industry against American competition. On the other hand, the CFF concentrates primarily on supporting the national cinema, and in practice grants a larger portion of its support for arthouse films, although it also supports approximately half of projects in category C1 (8 out of 15 titles in the research sample).

At present, the only domestic screenwriting contest with development funding as a prize is held by Film Foundation (Filmová nadace, founded by the companies RWE Czech Republic, Barrandov Studio, and Czech Television). The contest evaluates screenplays anonymously, and its award of CZK 800,000 allows winning authors to work in relative independence from a producer and other exterior pressure. Screenwriters themselves assess this fact positively; by contrast, producers occasionally voice criticism about the selection criteria that allegedly result in a fairly high number of scripts that gain support, but do not find a producer and end up unproduced.

# 2 Research Questions, Sample, and Methodology

## Research Questions

The analysis is governed by the main research question: What external and internal conditions determine contemporary development practice and how does this practice influence the resulting quality of Czech feature films (measured by commercial and artistic success)?

Research questions are divided into three groups of data:

A. Overall sector structure
Relationships between those who write screenplays, those who initiate and develop projects, and those who finance development

B. Quantitative parameters
The duration of project development; number of projects being developed and the ratio of greenlit versus cancelled projects; human resources; genre and theme composition; portion of the budget; financing; remunerations, etc.

C. Qualitative parameters
The process and crucial steps in development; its (dis)continuity and intensity; formats; screenwriter-producer-director cooperation; “dramaturgical” methods; approval factors; working conditions; approaches and assessments of existing practices from screenwriters, producers and directors; the balance between artistic and marketing concepts; the role of awareness of the market (on the part of producers, writers, etc.); the quality and influence of educational programs and financial support available; the roles of the Czech Film Fund (CFF), Czech Television (CT), and international co-productions.

The research questions are further divided according to the thematic categories that provided a basis for the interview questions. The semi-structured interviews aim to record testimonies about the forms of screenwriting and producer development practice as well as attitudes, motivations, and modes of conduct by key participants.

The specific interview questions were formulated in accordance with the professional specialization of the respective respondents and with respect to the flow of the interview in order to cover the themes stated below (without the necessity of following an exact order of individual questions, which is typical for the selected method of data collection).

We emphasized to the respondents that we are not representatives of the CFF but of an independent research team from the Masaryk University and that the interview transcripts will not be published as a whole. Therefore, we use only anonymized quotes in the qualitative data analysis part of this study (not included in this translation). The refined question categories that we formulated after the first testing set of interviews can be simply summed up as follows:

**Description of Actual Practice**

- The person(s), who typically initiates and develops projects, for whom and with whom (i.e. the logistics of putting together teams involved in development: who works with whom and why?); development staffing; who has got the biggest influence on the final form of the project?
- Financing: volume, the resources and forms of investment contributed to development, their deduction; the budget portion allocated for development out of the total budget.
- Project development duration: how much time is dedicated to writing the script and editing it from the first treatment to the final draft?; how much time does the producer dedicate to the financing stage?
- The number of projects being developed simultaneously in the given company or by a single producer / writer / director.
- The ratio of greenlit to cancelled projects.
- The development process and decisive steps, the sequence of stages (number of screenplay drafts), its (dis)continuity and intensity (was the development intermittent or coherent?); at what stage do individual participants enter and how long they participate in the process?; did the development result in the project being approved for production or did it continue into the pre-production or shooting itself?
- Formats of screenplays in development (synopsis, treatment, etc.), the manner of their use, the degree of standardization.
- "Dramaturgical" methods and practices: the manner of selection and (non-)involvement of a "dramaturg" (script editor); "producer dramaturgy"; intensity on a scale from formal and passive script editing to active co-creation and detailed page-by-page dramaturgy.
- Reasons for the cancellation or postponement of projects in development: financial vs. creative.
- Work conditions: contractual, financial, social-psychological.
- Cooperation with television companies: pre-sale of broadcasting rights, co-productions, co-development.
- Applications for public funding with an emphasis on development grants: CFF, MEDIA.

- The influence of international co-productions on development: majority vs. minority co-production, options of knowledge transfer.

**Attitudes toward and assessment of contemporary practice on the part of screenwriters, producers, and directors**

- Perceptions of their own position in the field, their own ideas on the typology of producers and creators according to project types and social categories (age, gender, reputation, and position in the professional community or on the market, etc.).
- Consequences of (in)adequate funding, development duration, and staffing; would a higher development budget help the film? What are the obstacles for higher investments and the engagement of development specialists?
- Cooperation between writer, producer, and director; evaluation of their mutual collaborative approach; producer-driven vs. author-driven projects; the "shared vision" factor.
- Balance between artistic and marketing concepts; the role of awareness of the market, of target groups, and of brands; marketing activities in the development stage.
- Opinion of the relationship between development intensity/duration and commercial/artistic success from the producers' point of view.
- Quality and influence of the available educational and support programs: workshops, pitching forums, industry events, etc.; what influence do these programs have on development? What are the reasons for their refusal?
- Evaluation of public funding schemes related to development and suggestions for their improvement.
- Evaluation of the cooperation with Czech public service television (CT) and suggestions for its improvement.
- Best practices in development according to producers/writers/directors; possibilities of compensation for domestic market limits and professional environment by means of innovative methods of development.
- Options of knowledge transfer from abroad and from international co-productions into domestic practice; what are the obstacles to such transfer?

## Data: Collection Method and Use within the Study

The sources of quantitative data were: the databases and the archive of the CFF; the database of the Czech office of the MEDIA program; data published by

the National Film Archive (NFA), Czech Film Center, and the Union of Film Distributors; and interviews with researched participants. The sources of qualitative data were primarily interviews with researched participants – additionally also files of supported projects in the CFF archive and the films themselves.

We carried out the interviews in the form of personally conducted, semi-structured conversations (i.e. interviews with open questions and an open structure, allowing for flexibility in the course of the interviews and adjusting them according to the specifics of each respondent). This type of questioning is more suitable than questionnaires with closed questions for research in the cultural environment and when confronting issues that have yet to be mapped out, because there is no danger of a low return rate of questionnaires; at the same time, it allowed us to thoroughly capture and analyze the course of the processes examined as well as their contexts. After the main stage of data collection was completed, the first set of interviews was supplemented by more interviews with additional respondents, so as to cover all the key parts of the examined field, wherever possible.

We confronted the results of the qualitative analysis of interviews with the results of the quantitative parameter analysis. The results provide a complex picture of development for the projects researched, taking into consideration their (creative, financial, and organizational) production parameters as well as the motives, attitudes, and relationships of their individual participants.

## Description of the Methodology Used in the Individual Parts of the Study

The survey takes advantage of a so-called “mixed design” that combines quantitative (i.e. working with numerical parameters such as finances and other phenomena measurable in numbers, etc.) and qualitative analysis (which allows an examination of attitudes, motivations, and forms of behavior). As stated above, the research was based primarily on the analysis of two types of material: qualitative interviews and quantitative parameters of the projects examined. The greater value – with regard to the nature of the problem at hand – was attached to qualitative data.

### The Research Sample

We defined the basic research unit as a feature film produced in the years 2009–2013. We used available data on film production and cinema attendance

during these five years to put together a sample of 50 films (10 films for each year) that are the most representative of various genres, producer intentions, and the level of attendance in cinematic distribution. A related research unit were the key agents of development (screenwriters, producers, and directors; secondarily also script editors, Czech Television employees, support program coordinators, etc.).

The sample of 50 films generated the names of representatives of the three key occupations and the secondary professions. Following this, we searched for contact information and addressed the participants in three stages. The result is 67 interviews with 62 respondents that can be divided into following professional groups:

- 24 producers
- 20 directors
- 12 screenwriters and script editors
- 2 television producers (one on behalf of a private television company, and the other one on behalf of Czech Television)
- 2 coordinators of international support funds (MEDIA, Eurimages)
- 1 employee at a distribution company, who is entering production
- 1 entertainment lawyer (in the form of a consultation, not an interview)

We put together the sample gradually so as to reflect the sector structure and its power distribution in the most accurate manner. We achieved this by means of a preparatory study that used a test set of interviews to map out the field and allowed us to formulate a preliminary typology of product types (for more details, see Section 3 below) that subsequently served to select the remaining parts of the sample. The final typology of product types and corresponding types of practice came into being as a result of the interview analysis.

The sample analysis is supplemented with a case study of contractual relationships between producers and creators (not included in this translation).

## Analysis and Results

The analysis process began with repeated and careful readings of the first five interview transcripts (the test set). We used these to determine seven analytical categories (key problems; see below) that appeared as relevant with regard to the research goals and questions.

We further divided the full interview set into 10 groups, firstly according to product types and secondly according to development agent types: producers A1/A2, producers C1/C2, directors A1/A2, directors C1/C2, screenwriters and script

editors A/C (the latter's division into categories A1/2 and C1/2 proved not functional in certain analytical categories: firstly because of their small number and narrow interconnectedness with the group of directors who are screenwriters as well, and secondly because of their tendency to fluctuate between product types.) Each member of the five-person research team was then assigned two groups of the interviews which they coded according to the seven categories. Interviews with television workers and support program coordinators functioned as supplementary data sources.

After getting acquainted with the entire research material more thoroughly, we extended the number of analytical categories to 12: this was in response to the specifics of the individual participant groups and to the unforeseeable complexity and amount of data in certain categories. At the same time, we also covered some topics that were not initially reflected but that proved to be significant only in the course of analysis.

The twelve categories are the following:

1. Initiation of the project and composition of the development team
2. Definition and content of the development
3. Development process, strategies and financing
4. Production company's business model
5. "Dramaturgy" and "dramaturgs"
6. International co-productions
7. Public funding: Czech Film Fund and European support schemes (MEDIA, Eurimages)
8. Television: co-production and co-development (CT, Slovak television, HBO)
9. Standard or best practice
10. Screenwriters and precarity of the creative work during the development stage
11. Position in the field of film production
12. History of the field: nostalgia after state centralized film production

The subsequent inter-coder triangulation, i.e. the mutual systematic annotation of partial analyses, allowed us to further refine the resulting analysis (to determine, for example, dominant tendencies, system variations, and characteristic exceptions within the framework of individual analytical categories and participant types) and to compare the participant groups with each other. The comparison also revealed further discoveries concerning the structure of the researched field, positions, and mutual participant relationships.

The result of the analysis is a characterization of development practice divided according to 12 analytical categories, 4 product types, and 3 professional roles.

It is comprised of interpretative descriptions[16] illustrated with the most eloquent passages from the interviews. We have, therefore, created a catalogue of development practices that should serve as a report on actual development practice in Czech film during the years 2009–2013, as key participants implement and understand it. It should also serve as an orientation aid for a critical evaluation of projects in public funding institutions and in public service television. It offers an overview of basic value frameworks, standards, procedures, and attitudes that correspond to the individual product types and professional roles.

This overview should also serve as a guide to adequately classify projects according to their type of practice. The overview provides evaluators a context for more competent project assessment: they will be able to consider the specific conditions under which a project is initiated, emphasize its key aspects, and prevent it from having inadequate criteria applied to it. In other words: it will enable and facilitate assessment and differentiation according to specific development parameters between such varied films as, for example, a commercial comedy taking place in the present and designed for the mainstream domestic audience (where producers emphasize an adaptation of successful source material and an experienced writer-director, who needs to concentrate fully on honing the script), a mainstream arthouse drama reflecting recent national history (where expensive negotiations on international co-production, location scouting, design sketches, research, etc. also play a significant role in addition to the script), and an experimental auteur debut (where a foreign screenwriting workshop and script editor can help significantly).

16 With elements of "thick description" (Clifford Geertz). For the methodology of thick description, see e.g. Clifford Geertz, "Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture." In: *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays*. New York: Basic Books 1973, pp. 3–30.

# 3 The Product Typology of Czech Films (in Terms of Development Practice)

This typology of films and projects on the Czech market stems primarily from interviews with producers, and secondarily from interviews with creators, as well as from the study of actual films made in years 2009–2015. The typology is not based on pre-determined categories or categories stemming from professional literature, but on qualitative data analysis, i.e. from interviews and films that were subsequently compared to available quantitative data.[17] The data collected showed that projects and participants fall into two primary categories that are defined against each other according to a well-known criterion, namely their orientation toward commercial success or, by contrast, toward cultural prestige, i.e. orientation on economic capital or, by contrast, on symbolic capital.[18] These two categories are usually labelled "commercial" and "art" (or "arthouse") film. The middle ground between these two poles (which can be simply called "commerce" and "art") is usually labelled as "mainstream." Consequently, this simple assumption shows that we can divide film production as a whole into marginal titles that are closer to one of the poles (marked with "2" in the typology) and into titles closer to the middle, either in the zone of art or commerce (marked as "1" in the typology). The result is four product types: C1, C2, A1, and A2. Simply put, the lower type number indicates higher prestige and budget.

The typology does not differentiate or assess the final artistic qualities of the films, but rather the producer's intentions and the intended position of the products on the domestic market: the financing strategy and budget in relation to the genre, style, and production values; the target audience; co-producers and business partners; the level of the desired cultural prestige (ambitions for awards, international sales, etc.); and the project initiator and the creative team. The resulting product types in this study serve as orientational coordinates for the identification and analysis of typical procedures and approaches of producers and creators involved in development. The typology therefore does not aim to classify individuals or films, but to distinguish and describe in the most specific way the practices of and attitudes toward project development that correspond to the individual product types.

The pitfall of the typology C(2,1) x A(1,2) lies in the broad range of criteria that defines each category, which hardly any film can meet entirely. It is therefore necessary to imagine the typology as a continuum, whereby many cases fall into the borderline areas between the categories. For example, a film's budget amount

17 These are primarily ideal types, created by the researchers on the basis of the dimensions of the producers' intentions. These types simplify the empirical experience by eliminating peripheral aspects, thus facilitating the subsequent interpretation of empirical data and identification of aberrations; however, at the same time these types also carry features of the participants themselves, i.e. they stem from their own conceptualizations. For methodology on creating typologies for the purposes of sorting and interpreting qualitative data see e.g. Jan Hendl, *Kvalitativní výzkum. Základní metody a aplikace*, Praha: Portal 2005, pp. 212–213. The specific dimensions of our typology are loosely inspired by the typology of films and development practice from P. Bloore, *The Screenplay Business*, pp. 52–64.

18 Here we loosely borrow from the field theory of cultural production and capital by Pierre Bourdieu – see Pierre Bourdieu, *Rules of Art. Genesis and Structure of the Literary Fields*. Stanford: Stanford University Press 1995.

does not have to correspond with its position in the production field (e.g., Zdeněk Troška's C2 films may have a higher budget than some films in C1 and A1); conversely, strong authorship tendencies do not have to be accompanied by limited cinema distribution.

The careers of producers or creators may migrate between the categories. For example, over the course of his career, Jan Hřebejk's work in terms of producer intentions vacillates between C1 and A1: *Big Beat* (*Šakalí léta*), *Cosy Dens* (*Pelíšky*), *Pupendo*, *Teddy Bear* (*Medvídek*), *I'm All Good* (*U mě dobrý*), and his Michal Viewegh adaptations fall within C1; while *Divided We Fall* (*Musíme si pomáhat*), *Kawasaki's Rose* (*Kawasakiho růže*), *Innocence* (*Nevinnost*), and *Honeymoon* (*Líbánky*) fall rather within A1. Projects by the triad Ondřej Trojan (producer) – Petr Jarchovský (screenwriter) – Jan Hřebejk (director) from years 1999–2008 are mostly in the nature of C1, but the mode of their mutual cooperation (sharing the creative vision, creative producer as a close and equal co-worker of the creators) matches type A1.

Hypothetically, each of the categories could be further divided internally: e.g. A1 into a) the more prestigious core: high-budget, internationally co-produced, visually attractive dramas, mostly set in the recent past, with the ambition to tell something disquieting about the history of Central European nations that transcends established stereotypes and taboos (*Habermann's Mill* [*Habermannův mlýn*], *3 Seasons in Hell [3 sezóny v pekle*], *Burning Bush* [*Hořící keř*], *Colette*, *Alois Nebel*, *In the Shadow* [*Ve stínu*], *Protector* [*Protektor*], *Lidice*); and b) more intimate projects set in the present, with lower budgets, with a message of morality or social criticism but still a relatively high viewership potential (*Four Suns* [*Čtyři slunce*], *Kawasaki's Rose*, *Innocence*, *Identity Card* [*Občanský průkaz*], *To See the Sea* [*Pojedeme k moři*]). Internally, the category C2 is very colorful and it can be divided into: a) popular comedies by reliable writer-directors, well-made in terms of craft, with relatively high budgets and dense distribution (*Babovřesky 1–3*, *Bad Joke* [*Kameňák 4*]); b) semi-amateur projects with ambitions toward social reflection and with low budgets (*Bastards 1–3* [*Bastardi 1–3*], *Edgemen* [*Hranaři*], *Dealers* [*Obchodníci*], *Retraining* [*Rekvalifikace*]); c) thrillers and exploitation films (*One Way Ticket* [*Piko*], *Raluca*, *Unknown Hour* [*Hodinu nevíš*], *Ghoul*, *Abused* [*Zneužívaný*]); and d) special-interest films focused on the promotion of a specific community or hobby *(Rumbling* [*Burácení*], *Tacho*, *WesternStory*, *Saint Helena Island* [*Ostrov svaté Heleny*]). Despite these and many other differentiations, we decided to leave the whole typology uncluttered and not to divide the categories C1/2 and A1/2 any further for the sake of clarity.

To achieve a more unambiguous classification, our criteria had to be subject to a hierarchy. For example, we attribute larger significance to the production budget than to the actual distribution release, which is usually influenced by factors that

are well beyond the horizon of production strategies (negotiations with distributors and cinema representatives, and subsequently also viewer interest).

Product types could be further specified ideologically as well. Types A1 and C1 are close to one another in terms of shared liberal values, among other things; these films correspond to the dominant stream of opinion in the society. By contrast, types A2 and C2 create a space for political non-conformity: A2 rather towards the left wing, C2 towards the right wing.

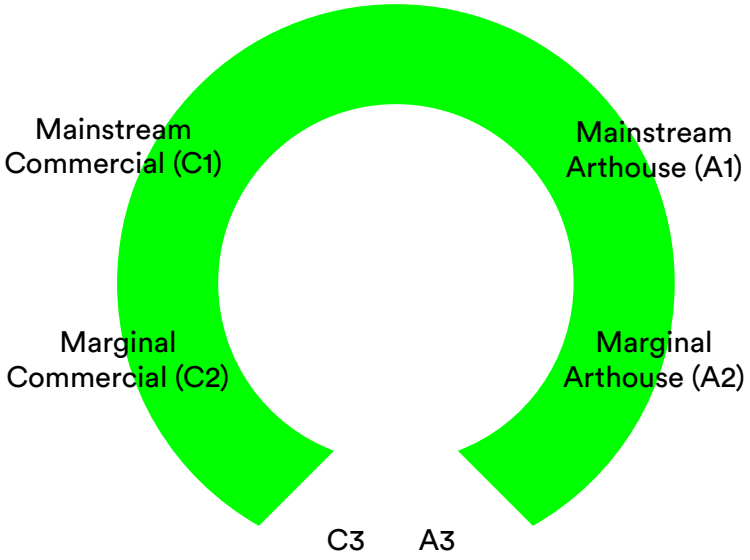
We could also further specify the classification of the whole of contemporary Czech production by, for example, expanding the group of categories from four to six: by creating groups C3 and A3, which would entail non-professional projects by students and random amateurs. The group C3 would comprise genre-oriented attempts;[19] while A3 would comprise attempts at a personal or artistic statement.[20] With respect to the fact that the categories A3 and C3 are both peripheral and rather close to each other, we could finally merge them together into one category Z, dedicated to non-professional projects. However, we have chosen to leave this category outside the range of this study, which is primarily dedicated to professional productions designed for cinematic distribution.

Visually, the product typology can be represented by a "horseshoe" diagram, derived from the political-science theory of Jean-Pierre Faye.[21] Faye wanted to demonstrate that extreme left wing and extreme right wing – typically situated into opposing poles of a linear ideological scale – have more in common than usually surmised. In our case, the Marginal Commercial C2 and Marginal Arthouse A2 types are approaching each other. However, this is primarily due to the closeness of product types, or more specifically of the types of practice corresponding to them; the ideological or aesthetic closeness is only secondary.

19 For example, *Isabel* (2013) or *The Last Scream* (*Poslední výkřik*, 2012).

20 Ambitious attempts in terms of artistry that did not achieve a professional level and in some cases not even feature-film length include: *A Tale from the Periphery* (*Příběh z periferie*, 2012), *An Almost Made Up Film* (*Skoro úplně vymyšlený film*, 2013), and *Tambylles* (2012).

21 See Jean-Pierre Faye, *Le Siècle des idéologie*s. Paris: Armand Colin 1996.




The diagram demonstrates (on the vertical axis)
Moving upwards:

- proximity to the mainstream [at the top of the diagram] (the core of the professional community, mainstream audiences, and dominant social values)
- the degree of standardization and professionalization of development as a specific part of the production process
- higher average budget

Moving downwards:

- the degree of outsiderness
- the degree of professional and ideological non-conformism
- lower average budget

There are also various types of "non-system" works, which would fall outside of this established typology. These can be, for example, debuts (or first features), which can be divided into three groups: debuting amateurs, young graduates of secondary film schools and film colleges (i.e. non-FAMU), and "celebrity films." The term "celebrity" here indicates films made not by professional filmmakers, rather by creators, who achieved their fame in another field (thus establishing a symbolic capital that attracts producers and financiers to their project) and in the decline or peak of this different career, sometimes in advanced age, decided to make their dream come true by making a film, but without anchoring themselves in this new profession permanently e.g., *Leaving* (*Odcházení*, Václav Havel) or *Nowhere in Moravia* (*Díra u Hanušovic*, Miroslav Krobot).

More production trends can also be distinguished among the categories, e.g., according to "internationalization" strategies: shooting in English (*Close to Heaven* [*Blízko nebe*], *Colette*, *Ghoul*) or the engagement of a foreign creator (director, cameraman) or actor. In terms of casting, we can also distinguish films with (domestic) stars, non-actors, and emeritus stars. Films from categories C2 and C3 typically strive to cast a star at least in a minor role or as a cameo e.g., Jan Tříska in *Bastards 3* (*Bastardi 3*), Iveta Bartošová in *The Last Scream* (*Poslední výkřik*). In the period researched, traditional Czech family comedies "of the living room and kitchen" were supplanted by lifestyle comedies of upscale restaurants, luxury living rooms, and exotic destinations, where romantic relationships are woven across generations as well as sexual orientations.

| | **Commercial 2 (C2)** | **Commercial 1 (C1)** | **Arthouse 1 (A1)** | **Arthouse 2 (A2)** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Financing sources** | Private television companies, a distributor (only of well-proven C2 directors); private investors, product placement (up to 50 % of budget); CFF incentives | Private television companies (incl. Slovakian), Czech TV to a minor extent; a distributor; private investors or sponsors (e.g. RWE); product placement; CFF grants and incentives; MEDIA; exceptionally international co-production (and the related foreign public support sources) | Czech TV; CFF grants and incentives; MEDIA; a distributor; international co-production (and the related foreign public support sources); sponsors (RWE) | Czech TV; CFF grants; MEDIA as an exception (used by Cineart production company) |
| **Co-producers and partners** | Private business partners in the CR, private television companies | Private television companies and distributors in the CR; private business partners | Czech TV, distributors, foreign co-producers (Slovak Republic, Germany, Poland), foreign sales agents | Czech TV |
| **Budget** | CZK 4–10 million for "outsider" C2 creators, CZK 20–30 million in cases of "proven" C2 creators | CZK 25–55 million | CZK 25–100 million | CZK 5–25 million |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Dominant genres and production trends** | Comedies; summer comedies; crime thrillers | Lifestyle comedies for middle-aged and older viewers; teen and college comedies; classic fairy-tales; movies for kids; crime exploitation thrillers; romantic movies; musicals | Dramas from the recent national history; relatively high-budget animated movies, developing the tradition of Czech animation; bitter modern comedies; psychological and social dramas; historical and biographical films | Socially critical movies, often portraying lives of the Roma people; contemporary-set, controversial comedies; small art projects without higher expectations of viewer success; ambitious first works of mostly young authors; ecologically-focused or alternative films; experimental films with high artistic ambitions |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Themes, styles and production values (with an emphasis on the "core" of the given category)** | 2 cores:<br>a) professional popular (folk) comedies by Zdeněk Troška;<br><br>b) cheap, semi-amateur movies with higher ambitions for social criticism and/or exploitation and lower quality of craftsmanship by Tomáš Magnusek and co.; low production values, current themes and locations, original themes and occasionally adaptations | Lifestyle comedies for middle-aged and older viewers, concerning the life of the middle and upper class, containing a theme of a romantic relationship across permanent bonds and generations; including bestseller adaptations; average budgets and production values; contemporary set, original stories as well as adaptations of contemporary Czech literature | 2 cores:<br>a) the most prestigious product type: high-budget international co-productions with international and historical themes and a revisionist message about recent national history, involving the engagement of foreign cast and crew;<br><br>b) intimate, contemporary set films with small to average budgets; original stories and occasionally adaptations of Czech literature (foreign literature as an exception); average to large budgets; if we include non-fiction production, a significant part consists of mainstream documentaries | This category does not have a clear core; it is characterized by low budgets and low production values, ideological opposition to dominant social practices and systems, an aversion to commerce, abundant debuts; original, contemporary set stories; literary or theatrical adaptations only as an exception; if we include non-fiction production, a significant part consists of critical and activist documentaries |
| **Distribution channels (excluding DVD / bluray and online sources) and festivals** | Multiplexes and single-screen cinemas (in the case of subtype b, cinematic distribution might be limited or non-existent), private broadcasters | Multiplexes and single-screen cinemas, private broadcasters | Multiplexes, single-screen and art cinemas, domestic and foreign festivals, Czech Television | Limited distribution in art cinemas or no cinematic distribution at all, domestic festivals, Czech TV, alternative distribution channels |

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| **Target audience (based on an abstraction of the producers' perspective according to the interviews, and on the study of the films themselves)** | Tabloid readers and soap opera viewers; mainstream audiences interested in Czech genre movies | Mainstream audiences enjoying domestic genre movies, including family and kids' movies, more expensive projects try to attract occasional cinema-goers | Mainstream audiences interested in quality, arthouse films of domestic provenance; these viewers do not shy away from difficult movies; art/ festival viewers | Specialized and art / festival viewers |
| **Ambitions for cultural prestige (film awards and festivals, international recognition: 0–3)** | 0 | 1–2 | 3 | 2–3 |
| **Creative team** | Creator-driven projects, sometimes custom-made for a financier; producer's work is reduced to production management and marketing | Producer-driven projects, the producer is the initiator of the project, sometimes in cooperation with a long-time partner-director | A combination of a writer-director and a producer-driven projects; the producer is a co-author of the project | Writer-director projects; the producer provides services to the author and her/his distinctive vision |

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| **The producer's position in the production field and in the professional community** | Forced to remain on the margins of the field; outsiders by necessity, not quite recognized by leading authorities in the field (decision-makers, good taste arbiters, etc.); they sometimes work in a semi-amateur way; they want to get into C1 | Recognized professionals with reputations as competent and self-sufficient businessmen, in some cases with a distinctive producer style oriented toward the domestic market and aware of the trend of decreasing viewer rate; they don't have the primary ambitions of getting to foreign festivals and markets, or they do have these ambitions, but on a limited scale and they manage to fulfil them only as an exception; critical towards A1 and A2 | Recognized professionals with their own producer style and vision, with reputations as experienced applicants for public support, they combine fiction films and documentaries and TV series production, they balance their orientation towards auteur cinema with a knowledge of changing market demand; ambitions to get to foreign festivals and markets, critical towards C1 and A2 | Knowingly on the margins of the field, in the opposition; they combine fiction films with documentaries, they work with extremely low budgets, sometimes even in a semi-amateur way; completely dependent upon public support, they refuse market criteria of success; they expect an extremely low attendance in cinemas, they have ambitions to get to smaller and domestic festivals, but not to foreign markets; they are critical towards A1, which they aspire to enter (to professionalize themselves), yet without losing their creative courage and distinction |

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| **Examples** | Production of Nogup, Pegasfilm, MagnusFilm and Jan Lengyel; *Babovřesky 1–3*, *Bad Joke 1–4*, *Bastards 1–3*, *Edgemen, Tacho* | most works of Rudolf Biermann (In Film) and of Tomáš Hoffman (Infinity); movies directed by Jiří Vejdělek, Alice Nellis, and Marie Poledňáková; most works of Jan Hřebejk; *You Kiss Like God* (*Líbáš jako bůh*), *The Godfather's Story* (*Příběh kmotra*), *Oldies but Goldies* (*Vrásky z lásky*), *Saxana* (*Saxana a Lexikon kouzel*) | Production of Negativ, Fog'n'Desire, Lucky Man Films, and Evolution; films directed by Bohdan Sláma and Marek Najbrt; *Three Seasons in Hell*, *Fair play*, *Colette*, *Clownwise* (*Klauni*), *Lidice*, *Habermann's Mill*, *Burning Bush*, *In the Shadow*, *Kawasaki's Rose* | Production of Radim Procházka, Cineart, and Čestmír Kopecký; films directed by David Jařab, Petr Marek, Mira Fornay, and Jitka Rudolfová; *Places* (*Místa*), *The Greatest Czechs* (*Největší z Čechů*), *Nothing against Nothing* (*Nic proti ničemu*), *Surviving Life* (*Přežít svůj život*) |

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