

**Séminaire CinEcoSA 2022-2023**  
**Production Cinématographique et Transculturation**  
**Saison 2**  
**2 décembre 2022 – 15h - 17h**

**« Prior relationships, Homophily and New Collective Identities in Transcultural Idea and Script Development »**

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Film and television production rely on established networks and prior relationships (see e.g Grugulis and Stoyanova 2012, Friedman and Laurison 2019). Those embarking on a collaborative project to develop an idea for television and staff a writers' room, will tend to seek out people to work with that they know, or who know people that they know. Where this is not possible, they will tend to fall back on homophily (Wreyford 2018), that is to say, they will be drawn to work with people like them, who share a similar background, the same cultural references and so on. These interlinked networks of shared history, recommendation and common identity are the age old techniques that humans use to ensure the trust and understanding that is the foundation of collaborative work.

While the reliance on prior relationships is a recognised strategy, however, the role played by shared cultural identity tends to be under recognised and may often be seen as spontaneous “chemistry”, rather than due to identifiable factors. We should note, furthermore, that these relations operate to exclude as well as to include.

The international networks of shared history and recommendation that operate to facilitate international coproduction bear out these points in particular ways. They can, for example, work to marginalise smaller nations, who are less well established in global production. Meanwhile, in a transcultural context, the operation of homophily becomes more visible in its absence. Cultural differences between nations manifest in the different production cultures they bring to an international writers' room. Writers' values and understandings with regard to both cultural practices and storytelling conventions and approaches can differ markedly, as I have noted in my own work (and see also Cattrysse 2017, Cotta Ramosino forthcoming,). This can cause mutual incomprehension and misunderstanding, potentially leading to breakdown of communication, conflict and other damaging outcomes.

There is a need, therefore, in the absence of the common identity that is often taken for granted in a national context, to focus more consciously and explicitly on ways to establish a new collective and transcultural identity within international writers' rooms. To a certain extent, these will need to be specific each time to each project and the people involved, though there are certain approaches and parameters that are likely to be generally useful to consider (see my own work and also Cotta Ramosino forthcoming for more detailed discussion of examples).

The second point that I would make is that the cultural differences and misunderstandings that arise in international coproduction should remind us that a single nation may also be home to many different cultures and identities. Reliance on prior relationships and homophily tends to work to include those from the dominant cultural group and exclude or disadvantage others. Since all collaboration can and perhaps should be transcultural, there is a need to work more consciously and explicitly on establishing a collective transcultural identity in national as well as international idea and script development.

## References

- Cattrysse, Patrick. 2017. "Cultural Dimensions and an Intercultural Study of Screenwriting." In *Transcultural Screenwriting: Telling Stories for a Global World*, edited by Carmen Sofia Brenes, Patrick Cattrysse, and Margaret McVeigh, Kindle Edition. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- Cotta Ramosino, Luisa and Laura. Forthcoming. In *Palgrave Handbook of Screenwriting Studies*, edited by Rosamund Davies, Paolo Russo and Claus Tieber. Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan
- Friedman, Sam and Laurison, Daniel. 2019. *The Class Ceiling*. Bristol: Policy Press
- Grugulis, Irena and Dimitrinka Stoyanova. 2012. "Social Capital and Networks in Film and TV: Jobs for the Boys?" *Organisation Studies* 33 (10): 1311–31.
- Wreyford, Natalie. 2018. *Gender Inequality in Screenwriting Work*. Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan

Rosamund Davies has a background in the film and television industries as script editor and story consultant. Her current research focuses on screenwriting and collaborative practices, with a particular interest in questions of diversity and inclusion and in transcultural production. She explored the latter in two recent publications, through the case study of an Icelandic/German coproduction, which also involved English and French participants in the script development process:

"Trapped – a case study of international co-production" (2019). In *The Palgrave Handbook of Screen Production*, edited by Craig Batty et al. Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan

"Nordic noir with an Icelandic twist: Establishing a shared space for collaboration within European coproduction" (2021). In *Script Development: Critical Approaches, Creative Practices, International Perspectives*, edited by Craig Batty and Stayci Taylor. Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan

Drawing on both in-depth interviews with practitioners, textual analysis, observation and existing work in sociology, media and psychology, her research seeks to understand what factors both inhibit and contribute to successful collaborative working relationships.

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