Political economists and network theorists offer different assessments of the global relations of motion picture production. While spatially extended webs of productive labor are central to such approaches, neither explains specifically how these webs are constituted or how they operate in peripheral production ecologies. What is more, they do not consider the implications of the knowledge transfers and power hierarchies emerging from such transnational production contexts. By contrast, this chapter offers a concrete analysis of these issues in Prague's postsocialist film and television industries. It focuses on the segregation of the local work world and on barriers inhibiting transsectoral knowledge transfers, which originate from a two-tier production system split between international and domestic production, and characterized by different business models, gatekeepers, career prospects, and precariousness.

The state-socialist past of the Czech Republic still affects its screen industries. In 1991, Prague's once-monopolistic Barrandov Studios laid off most of its 2,700 staff, including all creative personnel. This step helped transform the Czech capital into a regional hub of international media production, attracting Hollywood on the prospect of a large, skilled, nonunion labor pool and, later on, a 20 percent rebate program. During the city's peak year of 2003, international operations attracted $178 million in investment, roughly twenty times more than wholly indigenous productions, which comprised some fifteen to forty feature films annually. There are three main gravity centers in this labor market: international productions, television broadcasting (with the public-service broadcaster holding a privileged position), and wholly local film productions. These represent three semipermeable economies, work cultures, and instances of globalization. Furthermore, each is
characterized by a distinctive structure and hosts distinct career patterns. Questions about their development crystallize around the extent to which they will sustain themselves, collaborate, transfer knowledge, offset risk, and increase their competitiveness in the region.

This chapter concentrates on international productions, especially “service production” in film and television. This is the strongest sector economically, yet the most vulnerable. It is also the sector about which scholars have said the least. This chapter considers how the globalization of media production might be understood from the perspectives of the transnational crews working on international productions. Despite being among the best-paid members of the labor market, Czech personnel are afforded less creative control, job security, and professional upward mobility than their colleagues in other sectors. Interviews with prominent members of this production culture, along with ethnographic data gathered by student interns, suggest that inequality in working conditions has contributed to the dynamics of this professional community. The chapter therefore focuses on multidirectional local and translocal processes of mediation taking place within the global production networks connecting major East-Central European cities to other parts of the world. In so doing, it reconsiders globalization in the sphere of film production in a manner that counters prevailing U.S.-centric perspectives.

**LOCALIZED LEARNING IN GLOBAL PRODUCTION NETWORKS**

Recent discussion of international production is dominated by neo-Marxist criticism of the New International Division of Cultural Labor (NICL). This approach sees the globalization of film production as a means for Hollywood to strengthen its international hegemony. It is said that Hollywood achieved this powerful position in several ways, including sidestepping U.S. labor unions, disempowering and deskilling the global workforce, and fostering levels of uncertainty that destabilize local producers. NICL, it is argued, transforms locations into industrial sites for service providers, making them prone to dependency, underdevelopment, and disinvestment.

Although it has broadened our understanding of the global political economy, neo-Marxist analysis of this kind can be criticized for its U.S.-centricism. By largely duplicating positions advanced by American screen unions, this approach arguably paints a somewhat unbalanced picture of power relations between U.S. companies and their overseas suppliers. Such an approach could also be accused, on the one hand, of focusing on the short-term project-based thinking of incoming producers, such as choosing between different levels of incentives, labor costs, and production services offered in competing locations. On the other hand, it could be accused of disregarding the long-term “location interests” that have led
local companies and policymakers to embrace international production, including development of studios and film services, branding, and knowledge transfer. My interview subjects tended to demand a more measured perspective on the effects of international production on creative labor. They did not lament the exploitation spotlighted by neo-Marxists. Rather than denounce overseas producers when confronted with the precariousness of their working lives, these workers spotlighted difficulties caused by local policies, coworkers, and intermediary service companies. They also compared their working lives to schooling, inasmuch as their work afforded opportunities to learn American-style practices without leaving their hometowns. They invoked a postsocialist imaginary derived from their mediated experiences of foreign production practices, restricted mobility, and limited career prospects.

From the perspective of a regional postsocialist production center, these location interests can be illuminated by the work of the Manchester School of Economic Geography. Its theory of global production networks (GPNs) considers how opportunities for knowledge diffusion are opened by two parallel processes: the dispersion of the value chain across corporations and national boundaries, and integration across hierarchical layers of network participants. In contrast to neo-Marxism, this position considers local workers to be social actors rather than victims. It emphasizes the multiactor and multiscalar characteristics of transnational production, alongside societal and territorial embeddedness. Within GPNs, “global network flagships” source specialized capabilities from outside the company itself; however, knowledge transfer does not guarantee effective knowledge diffusion. Rather, knowledge must be internalized and translated into capabilities, because local suppliers learn by converting explicit into tacit knowledge. Qualitative data garnered from my interviewees suggests that mutual learning, social networks, and cultural mediators play key roles in the lives of Prague’s filmmakers.

In contrast to the permanent positions, standardized careers, and formalized training procedures that were central to the pre-1991 Czech production scene, today’s interfirm, “boundaryless” careers demand that workers adapt rapidly to complex new tasks and a shared industrial culture, which helps them rapidly form new teams with strangers. Central to the formation of these informal, variable social networks are horizontal flows of information and tacit organizational knowledge. American heads of departments, line producers, and above-the-line talent work directly with local crews, integrating them into production teams and exposing them to tacit knowledge.

Processes of externalization and internalization are particularly intense when lengthy location shoots expose crews to foreign working practices. Economic geography has shown us that learning through offshoring depends on face-to-face contact between incoming and local actors. Malmberg and Maskell identified
three dimensions of “localized learning.” First, a “vertical” dimension involves interaction between business partners, input/output relations, and their distinct yet complementary activities. Second, the “horizontal” dimension involves observation, benchmarking, and imitating similar activities. A third, “social” dimension involves everyday exposure to shared industry “buzz” or interpretative schemes. The long-term success of these processes is dependent on additional factors, including the degree of trust or quality of network relations that exists among interacting sites and between the initial local knowledge base and its institutional setup.8

Accordingly, I would like to propose three provisional hypotheses linking globalization of production with creative labor and localized learning in the postsocialist work world of Prague. First, the city’s position in global production networks suggests a multidirectional version of globalization, wherein local agents react to global forces, and “location interests” and “localized learning” are preconditioned by historical and environmental specificities. Intermediaries play a key role in translocal transactions—in Prague’s case, usually production services. Second, the “postsocialist precarity” of creative workers results more from an internal than international division of labor. Prague is compartmentalized due to a fragmented production sector, a lack of strong workers’ organizations, and the selective involvement of the state. Politicians have focused on separating the constituent sectors of the screen media industry into an indigenously produced “national culture,” which it feels needs state support, production services (perceived as a pure business), and the traditionally strong public service media that typically attracts their attention. Third, although it has improved the local infrastructure, the globalization of media production has failed to improve the quality of locally produced screen media due to barriers continuing to hamper transnational learning and career development. Innovative, internationally successful, and critically applauded works are more likely to come either from smaller production companies deeply rooted in the local environment, who are able to combine original content with smaller-scale international services, or from multinational companies like HBO, who nurture long-term relationships with local talent and understand the local market, than directly from workers and companies servicing Hollywood’s big-budget runaway productions.

GLOBALIZING A POSTSOCIALIST PRODUCTION WORLD: PRODUCERS AND PRODUCTION MANAGEMENT AS CULTURAL INTERFACE

Providing services to overseas companies is nothing new for Prague’s Barrandov Studios. The studio first engaged in this practice in the 1930s, and continued doing so during the Nazi occupation of Czechoslovakia and state-socialist rule. Under
state socialism, Barrandov participated in myriad coproductions with, and provided production services to, partners from socialist and Western nations. Unlike coproductions, its services to Western producers were valued in economic, rather than ideological, terms, because they were lucrative ventures bringing much-needed hard currency into the country. After the studio privatized following the fall of state socialism in 1989, international production was still dominated by former executives of communist-era Barrandov’s Foreign Commissions Department. At this time, Prague was underdeveloped, with most overseas producers using their own crews and sending rushes to cities like London. Moreover, overseas producers required local intermediaries to help deal with local accounting and legal systems, as well as providing access to essential resources like labor, sets, and locations. The state-socialist-era production managers who pursued these roles encountered significant difficulties in adapting to the new flexible regime. Many spoke little English, and their working habits and organizational culture were different from those of their new American partners. As former secret police agents, some struggled to come to terms with transparent negotiations and business practices.

By the late 1990s, this older cohort who had focused on West European productions was being replaced by younger players. Some of this new generation came from the United States, the United Kingdom, and Germany, with Briton Matthew Stillman’s company Stillking the most successful of the new setups. The thirty-year-old Californian David Minkowski came to Prague in 1995 to work on low-budget international productions. He teamed with Stillman, marking the start of a twenty-year process that made him the most influential figure in the Czech production services industry. Minkowski’s career advanced at a rate impossible in Los Angeles, a city in which, by his own admission, he would have been unable to secure high-ranking executive positions on prominent projects like Casino Royale (2006).

Prague’s foreign services boom started in 1998. Foreign commissions required flexible, English-speaking workers. This development coincided with an estimated thirty thousand young Americans relocating to Prague. Having formed social networks, some of these “YAPS”—Young Americans in Prague—were hired by production service companies as managers to work alongside Czechs, most of whom had been employed by Barrandov during the communist period. The latter were reluctant to work the long hours common for Hollywood productions, and so Minkowski sourced bright, eager youngsters working in the city’s hotels and restaurants. According to one account, “He would strike up conversations to test their English, and if they seemed smart enough to quickly learn a new, demanding job, he would ask if they wanted to work at Stillking. ‘They always said, yes,’ recalls Minkowski. ‘I mean who would choose to be a waiter or receptionist instead of doing movies?’” Ten years later, most Stillking employees were under forty, and the Barrandov generation was gone.
In 1998, Stillking expanded into big-budget productions, acting as a regional mediator for Hollywood studios wanting to shoot in countries like Hungary, Poland, and the Czech Republic. In a marketing campaign dubbed “Shoot Europe,” Stillking invited foreign studios to “show us the scripts, we’ll budget them for you, find the right locations and crew—and if you work with us you’ll save between 30% and 50% compared to equivalent costs in the US.” By the late 1990s, Prague was earning a reputation for quality and not just inexpensive film production services. Bigger projects were drawn to the city by experienced crews, Barrandov’s fourteen soundstages, and locations that could stand in for any European city or historical period. Consequently, a disproportionally large filmmaking community of five thousand professionals developed.

This boom period ended in 2004, when governments in countries like Hungary started to implement new initiatives to bring overseas producers to their cities. Poised to soar in Hungary, foreign film investment fell 70 percent in Prague. A second slump saw foreign spending drop another 66 percent in 2008. For the first time since 1992, income from international productions was less than from domestic productions. In the city’s postboom years, production service professionals suggested that the domestic film industry was dying. They insisted crews and the surrounding infrastructure could not survive in a small country like the Czech Republic without the support of overseas producers.

To bring the country into line with its competitors, the Czech government belatedly implemented a 20 percent cost rebate program in 2010. This step fueled a new wave of international productions, as income rose to $140 million by 2013. Yet the program was still characterized by short-term thinking, such as attracting international projects individually, rather than a long-term strategy designed to complement and develop local skills. Since then, a relatively low rebate cap of $25 million has threatened such investments. Combined with the proportional allotment principle, this cap has caused the rebate to drop from 20 percent to 6–8 percent. By contrast, Budapest has enjoyed considerable prosperity since introducing a cap-free rebate program. In 2014, the Czech cap was finally raised by $14 million; Hungary responded by raising its limit from 20 percent to 30 percent, pushing competition to a new level.

Since 1990, around 140 foreign feature films and TV series have been shot at Barrandov. Of these, 60 were Hollywood productions, including Mission: Impossible (1996), Van Helsing (2004), and The Chronicles of Narnia: Prince Caspian (2008). A typical international production involves numerous crews shooting both at local studios and on location. Below-the-line personnel are mostly Czech, heads of departments American or British, and above-the-line talent from the United States. For several months, talent and support personnel work for twelve hours plus, six days a week. Their face-to-face interaction can lead to misunderstandings and conflicts but permits them to observe others, imitate their practices, and learn by doing.
As studios and producers operate on an increasingly global scale, they must collaborate with personnel in a variety of locations. The key players in a Hollywood runaway production are typically the head of physical production (or vice president of production) at the studio, the producer, the line producer, the local production manager, the local studio manager, the production designer, the location scout, and the director. During shooting, the line producer is the studio’s principal representative: s/he oversees the production on location. Line producers may hold little decision-making power, but American producers see them as specialists on locations and local crews, whose opinions influence whether to shoot at a particular overseas site. Local production service companies and production managers are the main partners of incoming line producers. Together they form a cultural interface between the United States and local production centers, as they pursue maximum efficiency by engineering Hollywood-style working conditions.21

Incoming line producers and local production managers are therefore key channels of knowledge transfer, enabling both parties to learn from each other. However, by achieving this mutually beneficial symbiosis and assigning other agents distinct positions within the structure of the transnational team, they obstruct local personnel’s access to higher-level positions.

As a profession, the film producer did not exist in Eastern Europe under state socialism, which instead used centralized production systems.22 In the early 1990s, the role of the producer needed to be created from scratch. The old-style production managers previously employed by state-owned studios attempted to upgrade their skills and reinvent themselves either as independent producers or as production service companies catering to overseas clients. Adapting to Western production cultures and learning from foreign partners were particularly important skills for the owners of production service companies. Foreign producers became conduits of tacit, embedded organizational knowledge, which local players attempted to internalize through direct observation and imitation.

Later in the decade, the labor market hosted the first generation of postsocialist producers, consisting primarily of students from the relaunched production program at Prague’s FAMU film school. These newcomers distinguished themselves from the older managers-turned-producers, embracing European norms of competing at international film festivals and coproducing films with Western partners.23

My interviews suggest that overseas producers and Czech personnel mainly transferred organizational knowledge relating to the division of labor, pacing, problem solving, work ethics, and communication. Even below-the-line talent contended they learned more managerial than technical skills. If technical knowledge was in fact mentioned, it did not concern filmmaking or technology but rather budgeting and accounting. This type of embedded organizational knowledge can be externalized during on-set interaction and internalized by local
suppliers through observation and imitation. Production managers serve as cultural mediators during this kind of transfer. Minkowski identified the need to train new production managers as the greatest challenge to the current system, estimating that financial and organizational services represent 80 percent of Stillking’s operations. Rather than reeducating veteran professionals, he picked young, English-speaking outsiders: “In the areas of accounting, production management, coordination, assistant directors, . . . locations, you can train people who don’t have any experience and you can put them in positions of authority, and if they are the right personality and have the right internal skills, they can learn it quickly.” By the late 2000s, Czech production managers were self-sufficient, with Hollywood-style organizational skills firmly integrated into their daily routines.

Minkowski could not simply throw young English speakers into skilled technical fields like camera operation and lighting. Yet even in these areas, technical expertise was an important but inessential aspect of recruitment, as newcomers were assigned mentors from the older generation. He recalled the case of a gaffer who, although talented, “drank a lot [and] didn’t work more than twelve hours, even if he was getting paid overtime.” Although this gaffer’s work ethic did not meet American standards, Minkowski felt apprentices might learn much from him: “They didn’t have his cultural history, so they weren’t running into the same problems,” he explained. Today, Minkowski added, these apprentices are the top technicians in Prague.

Rather than simply involving Czechs picking up Hollywood methods, these learning processes are bilateral. The importance of locational knowledge and mutual learning is spelled out by Tom Karnowski, a prominent line producer involved in international productions such as Shanghai Knights (2003) and Everything Is Illuminated (2005). He explained that before deciding to travel to a foreign location, Los Angeles producers look at who has completed projects of similar size or type in the location in question. They also take local production practices into account. Karnowski recalled that while working on Everything Is Illuminated with an American director and cast, he became convinced that they should utilize the skills of as much local personnel as possible and “make it like you would have a Czech film, . . . especially if we have a very low budget to work with.” He therefore posited Czech production culture as well suited to the improvisational techniques often used when shooting low-budget American films on location.

MULTIPLE GLOBALIZATIONS

We should avoid the pitfall of misrepresenting knowledge transfer (and spillover) enabled by spatial proximity, interaction, and monitoring as entirely positive or innocent. Contrary to some journalistic accounts, it doesn’t come as an automatic, mechanistic, and unidirectional process. Rather, it is important to recognize that
effective knowledge absorption happens only when locals develop their own capabilities, that learning is usually a mutual process, even though it may be perceived in negative terms due to the adverse effects it is seen to have on the local culture. We might also recognize that unlearning can be just as important as learning, especially in a postsocialist working environment. Most of my Czech interview subjects talked about learning. An analysis of their revelations allows us to identify four potential paths of globalizing knowledge transfer as well as the barriers to such a transfer. These are centered respectively on incoming producers, production service providers, local independent producers, and the regional strategy of a multinational corporation (where offshoring and direct foreign investment can transform local production norms and practices). Given the limited scope of this chapter, I will restrict my focus to cases in which significant face-to-face interaction took place between Czech and overseas personnel. Before doing so, however, I offer a brief overview of local production practice and its limitations.

Czech film production is strongly influenced by a small, fragmented marketplace, television aesthetics, and the public broadcaster’s long-standing position as the country’s leading producer-distributor of indigenous feature films and documentaries over the last twenty years. In this period, Czech cinema held a strong market share of up to 30 percent; however, this has started to drop as newly digitized theaters express a preference for Hollywood fare. Czech films rely on location shooting, contemporary topics or nostalgia for the country’s recent state-socialist past, and a bittersweet tone, and they are squarely aimed at families. Many of these low-budget films are considered part of the mainstream locally but travel badly. What is more, bigger-budget films and art-house pictures both tend to fare poorly at the international box office or on the festival circuit, even by the modest standards of other East-Central European nations, such as Hungary and Poland. Czech television programs have also struggled internationally, not least because broadcasters have been reticent to alienate their prime mature, conservative domestic audience with unsettling subject matter or radical aesthetics.

Outside observers and policymakers concluded that knowledge transfer would lead incoming producers to gradually transform the practices and styles of the domestic industry. Such a change would come from sharing a labor pool and infrastructure, and from interaction, observation, and imitation. This being said, overseas producers appear to have little interest in reshaping local production—by, for example, hiring local above-the-line talent or hiring Czechs as department heads. In short, there is no clear evidence of any transformation resulting from their presence. Even the BBC—which practices runaway production via its international branches, BBC Worldwide and BBC America—has not promoted its public service ethics or aesthetics during production. As the experience of Czech crews working on The Musketeers (2014–) suggests, the presence of the BBC is felt in its division of British and Czech workers and its safety regulations. Czech
personnel did not even recognize the corporation as the producer of this series, noting no significant differences between working on a BBC venture or other Anglo-American projects.28

Second, it was anticipated that service providers would eventually diversify into producing Czech-language films. However, despite their claims to the contrary, none of the production service heavyweights—Stillking, Czech Anglo Productions, and Etic Films—has branched out into original feature productions. One of the few exceptions is the former Lucasfilm producer Rick McCallum, whose company Film United provides production services for projects like Canal+’s series *Borgia* (2011–), while developing its own fully local and coproduced projects, such as a story of Czech anticommunist resistance fighters, *So Far So Good* (in development). It remains to be seen whether Film United can support high-end Czech genre products.

More typical is the approach of Stillking, a company with solid knowledge of the Czech filmmaking community but evidently little interest in producing or coproducing Czech films. Minkowski, its production head, has met numerous Czech producers but never found a reason to work with them: “We know them and they know us, . . . but we just didn’t find something that makes sense. I don’t think we are the first stop for them to come and produce Czech movies, because we are not really Czech producers.” He admits that the number of American films shot in Prague did not increase the importance of Czech films because “there is no connection there.”29 On the other hand, Minkowski claims that Stillking trains local crews who can then improve the technical quality of the local product. However, this claim relates only to certain aspects of the production process—primarily art direction, special and visual effects, stunts, and to a lesser extent, makeup, costumes, and camera operation. Stillking-affiliated production managers usually do not work on Czech productions, and Czech above-the-line talent does not work for Stillking.

The rate at which Czech personnel enjoy professional upward mobility within transnational crews differs from case to case, partially determined by the nationality, size, and organizational structure of the coproducer. The smaller and more flexible the company, the more Czechs hold positions close to first-line decision makers, and vice versa. Specializing in bigger-budget projects, Stillking employs a large workforce but typically only one Czech head of department (in production design). In these large crews with their military-like organization, locals usually work under second-line decision makers while operating in a segregated labor sphere. They are largely unaware of the creative effects of their roles. According to Minkowski, this type of segregation is typical of Barrandov’s costume department, where a staff of mainly non-English-speaking women operates in a socially and spatially isolated workspace.30

Local independent producers represent a third potential path for globalizing knowledge transfer. They work on wholly Czech projects, coproductions, and
minority coproductions with European partners, and some provide production services. Often independent producers specialize in partnerships with given countries or regions, as was the case with the Indian film Rockstar (2011).\textsuperscript{31} Irregular, limited to practical services and dependent on narrow networks of contacts, such collaborations do not induce long-lasting knowledge transfers that would affect the quality of local products.

A fourth pathway involves a multinational corporation operating on the local market. In 1991, HBO Europe established central offices in the Hungarian capital of Budapest. Soon after, it set up an additional fourteen branches across Europe, all but one in postsocialist countries. Four of these—Budapest, Prague, Warsaw, and Bucharest—opened an original programming department. These were responsible for providing culturally local quality content for the company’s subscription television and HBO GO online services, thus emulating its approach to the U.S. market.\textsuperscript{32} A new two-tiered production strategy has come to the fore since HBO Europe recruited the experienced producer Antony Root as its new executive vice president for original programming and production. On the one hand, the company broadcasts low-budget licensed series to test local responses to a property. For instance, it produced adaptations of two Israeli series, In Treatment and When Shall We Kiss, helmed by renowned local directors and featuring established actors, for each of the four national markets noted above. On the other hand, it produces big-budget event miniseries, which, in Root’s words, “put a stake in the ground for a certain kind of quality and values in a show and differentiate ourselves [sic] in the market.”\textsuperscript{33} One example of this approach is The Burning Bush (2013), an award-winning three-part drama about the Czech national hero and martyr Jan Palach, who immolated himself to protest the 1968 Soviet occupation of the country.

The screenplay for The Burning Bush was rejected by the Czech public service broadcaster before being acquired by HBO. The series was directed by Polish FAMU graduate Agnieszka Holland, who had previously worked for HBO in the United States. It was written by then-unknown Czech screenwriter Štěpán Hulík, and coproduced by newcomer Tomáš Hrubý. When The Burning Bush received fourteen awards from the national film academy after being released as a theatrical feature, it was apparent that a new approach, based on HBO’s meticulous development process, was emerging.\textsuperscript{34} As the company’s Budapest-based head of development suggested, HBO’s gradual development of local talent and adaptation of American-style project development practices were crucial albeit challenging steps to striking a good balance between maintaining the cultural specificities of local fare and increasing its general quality.\textsuperscript{35} The success of The Burning Bush generated intense buzz across the Czech production sector, nowhere more than among public service television producers. Embarrassed about passing up this project, they singled out The Burning Bush as a new benchmark to which their own quality serial drama ought to aspire.
International production has shaped the career trajectories of film professionals in specific ways. Organizational concepts such as boundaryless careers and semipermanent work groups go some way to explaining how this phenomenon has taken shape; however, these are limited as explanatory frameworks because they do not take into account the transnational processes that accelerate some workers’ careers while restricting others to low-level positions, particularly those specializing in major Anglo-American productions. The latter find themselves in the paradoxical position of being well-paid mobile workers, thanks in part to a lack of union regulations, but with little chance of professional upward mobility. They remain trapped in a segregated work world, deprived of either the financial incentive to work on local productions or any realistic chance of the type of career development enjoyed by the foreigners running the international productions on which they work.

American-born production managers are often fast-tracked. They typically skip arguably the two most challenging career steps: being given access to the industry and being socialized in aspects of it. Instead, they acquire prized locational knowledge and develop marketable specializations at a rate impossible in Western media hubs like London and Los Angeles. As Minkowski put it, “I could have gone back to LA and become one of thousands fighting to work on films, or I could stay here and strike out on my own.” By contrast, for local production management, the collapse of the old hierarchical state-owned studios brought uncertainty and unemployment, but a rapid generational change granted some in their ranks swift access to the industry. The fortunate ones developed hybrid professional identities, claiming to “behave like Americans” without leaving their homeland.

To gain insight into the differences and mediating mechanisms that underpin communities of cultural workers, we can benefit from the self-reflexive comments of Czech personnel. Even those struggling to progress in the industry highlight the experience of learning rather than the feeling of being exploited. This sentiment is bound up with their construction of hybrid cultural identities. Thus the Czech soundman Petr Forejt describes himself as becoming an American film-maker in Prague, distanced from the trivialities of a local industry in which wages and standards are low and improvisation and multitasking high. Similarly, Milan Chadima, a camera operator who has worked on such projects as *The Brothers Grimm* (2005), spoke of American producers helping him escape the frustrations of shooting low-budget Czech films and commercials.

These cases notwithstanding, it is clear that the careers of even the most successful Czech service production workers are characterized by striking limitations. Such individuals are not promoted to higher creative positions like department
heads. They work in other international media hubs only when their employers move a project overseas and rarely take part in prestigious domestic projects. Coming closest to the privileged position of the department head were several Czech art directors, yet only one, Ondřej Nekvasil, has built what could reasonably be considered a career of international standing. Nekvasil switches between working on Czech art-house fare, teaching production design, and working as a production designer on international productions like *The Illusionist* (2006) and *Snowpiercer* (2013). Two factors underwrite Nekvasil’s distinctive transnational career trajectory. A reputation-making Emmy for *Anne Frank: The Whole Story* (2001) brought him to the attention of American producers such as David R. Kappes, who hired him for the Sci-Fi Channel miniseries *Children of Dune* (2003). He is also fortunate to specialize in the aspect of local production services most valued by American producers—set design and construction, which, in spite of its high standards of craftsmanship, can be obtained 50 percent cheaper in Prague compared to Los Angeles. I asked Nekvasil what he felt sets him apart from those art directors who also work on medium-to-big-budget productions but have failed to match his level of professional success. Nekvasil said nothing of differences in skill, but instead suggested that they may prefer the relative calm of the art department over the greater responsibility of face-to-face interaction with foreign producers.

**CONCLUSION: A TWO-TIER, DEPARTMENTALIZED WORK WORLD**

To gain a better understanding of the contemporary production world of Prague, we require a more balanced approach than those focusing primarily on the supposed exploitation of the global labor force, as neo-Marxism does, or on city development strategies, as creative industries and cluster theories do. Cultural intermediaries, knowledge transfers, and learning effects play major roles in a postsocialist, non-English-speaking country like the Czech Republic. As a result of historically specific experiences—communists discrediting labor unions, the interventionist yet selective cultural politics of the state—local film workers tend to contradict conclusions derived from studies of cultural imperialism or NICL. They criticize local policymakers rather than Hollywood producers and focus on learning and mobility barriers rather than exploitative working conditions. This is true even of individuals whose livelihood is threatened by Hollywood moving runaway productions to neighboring countries like Hungary. A new model of globalization is clearly needed if we are to gain deeper insight into the interplay between global forces “from above” like GPN’s “flagships” and those from below, such as local workers. As economic geography has shown, we also need to understand the relationships between local and translocal transactions, whose interaction allows for extralocal knowledge flows. In the case of the Prague screen
industries, such an approach might involve examining mediating mechanisms and agencies like the service production sector in terms of their interaction with local and international partners and competitors. The production culture of Prague is effectively a two-tier system split between production services and domestic productions, which are characterized by different salaries, career patterns, and work practices. Recognizing it as such opens up new avenues of investigation. We might, for example, consider the extent to which this instance of multitrack globalization precipitates “departmentalized” thinking, especially in service productions. We might also wish to consider the implications of the “glass ceilings” that have prevented many local workers from moving into original projects and securing high-level creative jobs.

NOTES

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1. The interviews were conducted in two phases: in 2009 and 2010 in Prague and Los Angeles, and in 2013 and 2014 in Brno, Prague, and Budapest. The questions solicited responses about the involvement of specific personnel in international productions and how working on these projects affects career trajectories. The interview subjects were: Ludmila Claussová (film commissioner, Prague); Radomir Dočekal (Barrandov studio’s former president, Prague); Petr Forejt (sound recordist, Prague), Daniel Frisch (production manager, head of a production-service firm, Prague/Los Angeles), Thomas Hammel (producer, executive producer, Los Angeles); Michael Hausman (executive producer, first assistant director, New York); Tom Karnowski (production manager, producer, Los Angeles), Aleš Komárek (production manager, head of a production-service firm, Prague); Tomáš Křejčí (head of a production-service firm, Prague/Los Angeles); Cathy Meils (former Variety correspondent in Prague); David Minkowski (production manager, head of a production-service firm, Prague/Los Angeles); Ondřej Nekvasil (production designer, art director, Prague); Steven North (producer, executive producer, Los Angeles); Rusty Lemonande (producer, Los Angeles); Cathy Schulman (producer, Los Angeles); Steven Lane (producer, Los Angeles); William Stuart (Barrandov Studios representative in Los Angeles); Jaromír Švarc (art director, Prague); Michelle Weller (former production manager in Prague, currently out of film business in Texas); Tomáš Hrubý (producer, Prague); Gábor Krügler (head of development, HBO, Budapest); Viktória Petrányi (producer, head of a production-service firm, Budapest); Pavel Strnad (independent producer, Prague); Petr Bilek (head of a production-service firm, Prague); Viktor Taus (director, Prague).

2. From mid 2012 to mid 2014, the EU-funded FIND Project (www.projectfind.cz) organized over one hundred student internships. As assistants for international film and television productions, interns conducted participant observations and kept field diaries.

3. See Toby Miller, Nitin Govil, John McMurria, Richard Maxwell, and Ting Wang, Global Hollywood 2 (London: British Film Institute, 2008).

4. See Ben Goldsmith and Tom O’Regan, The Film Studio: Film Production in the Global Economy (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2005).
5. Neil M. Coe, Peter Dicken, and Martin Hess, “Global Production Networks: Realizing the Potential,” *Journal of Economic Geography* 8 (2008): 271–295. For examples of applying GPN theory to global media industries, see Neil M. Coe and Jennifer Johns, “Beyond Production Clusters: Towards a Critical Political Economy of Networks in the Film and Television Industries,” in *The Cultural Industries and the Production of Culture*, ed. Dominic Power and Allen J. Scott (London: Routledge, 2004), 188–204; Hyejin Yoon and Edward J. Malecki, “Cartoon Planet: Worlds of Production and Global Production Networks in the Animation Industry,” *Industrial and Corporate Change* 19.1 (2010): 239–271; Terry Flew, *Understanding Global Media* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

6. Dieter Ernst and Linsu Kim, “Global Production Networks, Knowledge Diffusion, and Local Capability Formation,” *Research Policy* 31.8–9 (2002): 1417–1429.

7. See Candace Jones, “Careers in Project Networks: The Case of the Film Industry,” in *Boundaryless Career: A New Employment Principle for a New Organizational Era*, ed. Michael Bernard Arthur and Denise M. Rousseau (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 58–75.

8. Anders Malmberg and Peter Maskell, “Localized Learning Revisited,” *Growth and Change* 37.1 (March 2006): 1–18.

9. This claim is based on information gleaned from files at Barrandov Studios archive, the National Film Archive in Prague, a register of secret police agents, and interviews with current production managers.

10. Jonathan Kandell, “Americans in Prague: A Second Wave of Expatriates Is Now Playing a Vital Role in the Renaissance of the Czech Capital,” *Smithsonian Magazine*, August 2007, www.smithsonianmag.com/people-places/americans-in-prague-160121860/?no-ist=&story=fullstory&page=1.

11. Ibid.

12. Daniel Rosenthal, “Czech Out Hollywood’s New Euro Options,” *Weekly Variety*, March 9, 1998.

13. See Olsberg SPI, “Economic Impact Study of the Film Industry in the Czech Republic” (London, 2006).

14. “The Hungarian Tax Credit System and the 20% Rebate Scheme,” *Studies in Eastern European Cinema* 1.1 (2010): 127–130.

15. See government-sponsored reports on audiovisual industry: Olsberg SPI, “Economic Impact Study of the Film Industry in the Czech Republic”; “Strategie konkurenceschopnosti českého filmového průmyslu 2011–2016” (MK ČR, 2010).

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21. Based on interviews with Cathy Schulman, October 23, 2009; Tom Karnowski, December 4, 2009; Radomír Dočekal, June 5, 2009.

22. See Petr Szczepanik, “The State-Socialist Mode of Production and the Political History of Production Culture,” in *Behind the Screen: Inside European Production Cultures*, ed. P. Szczepanik and Patrick Vonderau (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 113–134.

23. Interview with Pavel Strnad, December 7, 2012.

24. Interview with David Minkowski, May 19, 2009.
25. Ibid.
26. Interview with Tom Karnowski, December 4, 2009.
27. Spillover effects are highlighted by reports on the potential effects of the Czech incentive program commissioned by the government. See, for example, an industry report, EEIP, “Hodnocení dopadů regulace (velká RIA) k části návrhu zákona o kinematografii vztahující se k úpravě pobídek filmovému průmyslu (fiskálním stimulům)” (Prague, 2009).
28. Project FIND student intern field diaries.
29. Interview with David Minkowski, May 19, 2009.
30. Petr Szczepanik, “Globalization through the Eyes of Runners: Student Interns as Ethnographers on Runaway Productions in Prague,” Media Industries Journal 1.1 (2013), www.mediaindustriesjournal.org/index.php/mij/article/view/23/67.
31. Q&As with producers Karla Stojáková (Axman), Ondřej Beránek (Punk Film), and Pavel Berčík (Evolution), 2012 and 2013.
32. See Gary R. Edgerton and Jeffrey P. Jones, The Essential HBO Reader (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2008).
33. Antony Root, quoted in Gary Smitherman, “The HBO Treatment,” C21Media, June 19, 2012, www.c21media.net/the-hbo-treatment/.
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38. See Jones, “Careers in Project Networks.”
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40. Interview with Petr Forejt, June 17, 2009.
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