



**How to make
films cheaper
and better?**

The new Film Production Model – an outline of the concept that we are implementing at the Film Spring Open Workshop.

The film production system established over the years, has not changed or changed slightly in relation to the radically transformed technology. The world is shaken by crises, industrial production is steered by cost optimisation, governments are introducing budget cuts. Meanwhile, the world of film does not change much. Technological revolution has had little or no impact on the film production system, even though it should have increased its efficiency.

In modern industry, there are three rules that are absent or near-absent in film production:

- Risk control (Risk management)
- Flexible production (Agile Manufacturing)
- Management and Production (Lean Manufacturing)

It is worth considering why this happens, what are the reasons for the lack of modernization and what should change.



At Film Spring Open Workshop we discuss this, analyse the reasons for the lack of change and look for new solutions. We will not limit ourselves only to theoretical considerations, but we are also building tools (Cinebus¹) to make changes in practice. We started the tests and this year we invited

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1. It allows to produce small, intimate movies in turnkey mode (Production and Postproduction). It can be used to handle the cinematography, including directorial "preview" and actors' makeup, to edit, archive, perform basic manipulations of the image and color correction, as well as to sound the finished film. Cinebus allows transport of all the equipment needed to make small films. In the tent, which is an integral part of it, there is a screening and lecture room (replaceable with a small bluescreen studio) which allows for the presentation and promotion of the emerging film.

representatives of the audiovisual industry to attend the Symposium (21–22.10.2017 in Krakow) devoted to the New Production Model to join their efforts and implement these changes in practice together with us².

In short, the new system will have the following features:

- Quality – risk management - in addition to the scenario of creating a previsualisation (rough draft version)
- Savings – a successful 'Microwave' funding model in London
- Organization – Time management in film production - more efficient use of production time through new organisation of work on plan, new tools and reduction of means of transport (Cinebus)
- Technology – modernised infrastructure (Cinebus) and adaptation of working methods by rejecting old habits related to previous techniques

We want to apply the proposed model to contemporary small-scale films and films made by young debuting directors. The new model is aimed at producing more films for less money, and will therefore offer more debutants the opportunity to start a career, and institutions that are appointed to fund film creation will propose and test a model of economic use of available resources.

We believe that more films can be made as part of the same measures, allowing more newcomers to start a career.

Why is it as it is?

We should start the analysis of the state of affairs from the origins.

2. The symposium was hosted by:

Marcin Lech (Krakow Technology Park)

Speakers:

Piotr Adamiec (MovieBirds), Camera cranes

Sławomir Wyszyński (Adicam), camera dollies

Filip Kovcin (FilmPro)

Krzysztof Semeniuk (Akurat Lighting) LED lighting

Magdalena Kamińska (Balapolis) producer

Piotr Ługowski (MBS)

Jakub Jakubczyk (UAV Robotics) head

Our guests were the representatives of the following companies: Przemysław Gralak (CamSat), Marcin Tkaczyk (Sony), Izabela Pikus (Panasonic) Catherine Łabędzka, Damian Borejko, Dariusz Ciesielski (Axiom)

The leader on the global movie market is the film industry in the United States. It completely dominates the world markets, generating the highest profits. Every student at the film school dreams of making a career in Hollywood. The copying of American films is widespread worldwide. At the same time, we are copying American production standards. Using studio production supporting software we forget that it was developed on the basis of a specific system, the changes to which are blocked by very strong American trade unions. Moreover, studio cinematography is still very profitable, and therefore the urge for change is weak. This is not entirely true, because American producers have long been looking for savings by simply moving away from Hollywood (run-away productions) and, for example, more films, where action takes place in New York City are actually made in Toronto, because it is cheaper there. It is an open secret that an American studio film made in Europe would consume 40% less funds than in Los Angeles. I can assure you that this not a hoax, because I have done a couple of productions with over USD 100 million budget, and I know exactly what I am talking about. In this text, I will not bother you with their problems, because the rich have other problems than the poor and often the credits for American film cost more than a decent budget for the European film. It does not mean that the situation is better in Europe, and it does not just to American films only:

- In the „1920 Battle of Warsaw” we had more than sixty shooting days. A historical, military film, with a lot of extras, 300 horses, battle scenes, cost about eight million euros.
- One year later, together with my colleagues from Film Spring Open, I made a German film, a small-scale one, also historical, also set in the nineteenth century, with two actors (not stars), few extras. Only thirty-one days of cinematography, or 50% less, and the film cost one million euros **more** than the „Battle of Warsaw”.

The conclusion is not that in Poland filmmakers earn drastically less money. It does not mean either **that the system of production and spending money on films in Poland is good**. This is simply a lege artis (because the legislation in these countries is different) exercise in throwing money out of the window.

Unfortunately, talking about this is aloud is a subject of concern to many people who accept this state of affairs in Europe and around the world, as it puts at risk the beneficial status quo beneficiaries. And since the subject of this essay is the future of audiovisual production, I will limit my analysis to the following commentary.

The film production system has developed over the years and has been preserved for years without cleansing itself, being immune to necessary organizational changes, which should be forced by the technological change. Another reason lies also in our common vice. We simply do not want to change our comfortable and proven habits when embracing new products, especially if such habits seem to benefit us. We do not notice that the changing world demands a revision of our (often profound) patterns and behaviours.

The new system is not only worth discussing and writing about. It has to be tested in practice, and it is not just about economics and savings.

The system, built over the years, is increasingly burdened by the lack of significant changes and works against future films and their producers. A young director, starting the film, is told that the budget is, let's say, two million, but he does not know that 40% to 50% is not the money for the film. We will not see this money on the screen. This is money that will melt into a badly functioning system. If the developer wanted to check how these funds are spent, it would collide with the iceberg of the existing system, which is convenient for individual professionals, but uneconomical habits and their interpretation.

A drastic example is the fact that digital technology has caused new professionals to appear on the film set, but this has not resulted in the disappearance of those who are not really useful in the new system. The redefinition of film professions, the redesigning of the film production system can have an extremely positive impact on the quality of films and the cost of making them.

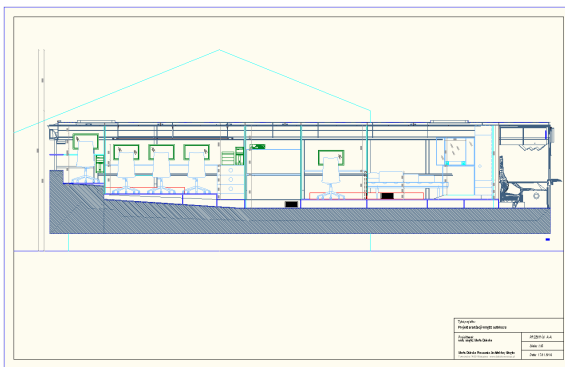
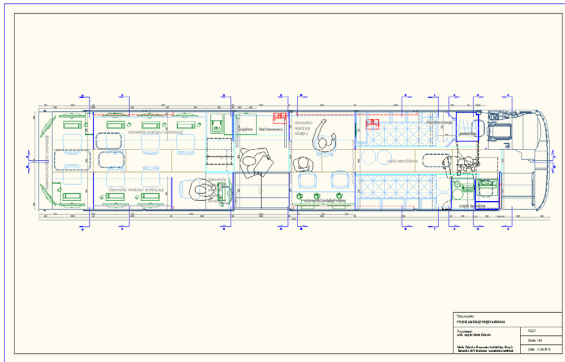
I have no doubt that in case of a young director, who after a few years of efforts makes their first film and this film turns out to be unsuccessful, it is very often not because the debutant is incapable (great ones also sometimes produce rubbish films). The reason often lies in the system that works against them.

It is worth changing that if we want the film industry to develop.

For eight years we have been talking about the future of cinema at Film Spring Open workshops. Our future depends on whether we are competitive and whether we find a way to produce films for less money. Above all, however, whether we can find control mechanisms that control the quality of the film already during its production.

At FSO Workshop we are building a production model that will not only take full advantage of the latest technological tools, but will also change our (often harmful) film-making habits.

New is born from the death of the old



Film production – what it is and what could it be like?

The current production system boils down to a very simple rule:

Film production within a predetermined budget creates technical and financial conditions for the director to transfer the screenplay to the screen in the shortest possible time.

This principle and the associated film production system have not changed for years. Films made with analogue cameras and the current digital ones are produced in an almost identical way. At the same time:

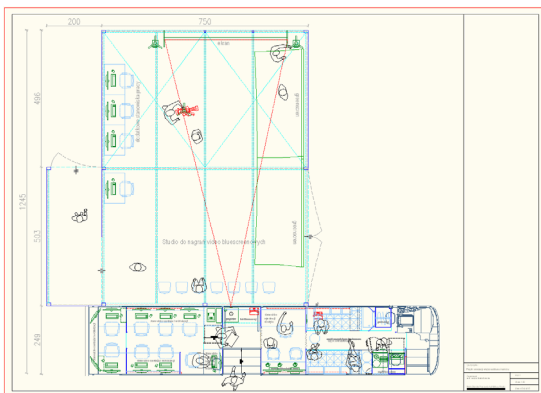
Good and bad films are made all over the world and this is the subject of evaluation and analysis. **Nobody deals with the analysis of how films are produced in different countries, and it is often very different.**

Why is this not happening? One of the reasons is very simple. An educated Polish or German film producer or production manager will be making films in their own country throughout their career and is unlikely to appear in another production system, because **this is a local profession.** The producer has practically no chance to compare different production models. They will not be able to personally track the Icelandic model of making films, and films are produced there in a completely different way. Undoubtedly a more economical one.

When thinking about the future of film production, we do not need to invent everything from scratch, just to reach for the existing well-functioning solutions from other film industries similar to ours, and not necessarily the leading American one.

Examples:

- In Iceland, one vehicle on set is often Cinebus, which carries (of course, this applies to small-scale movies), all the equipment needed for production, including a small generator and a social room. Luggage carrier on the roof of this bus is often a convenient platform for photos, but most of all a place with rails for riding a ladder, large tripods and lighting towers.
- We have more and more trucks on the contemporary plan with the same tools often stored in many of them. In addition, and I will write about it later, the equipment that is stored in them often does not



leave these trucks during the photographs. Not to mention that the load space in these vehicles is never used to 100%.

- Another, Mexican, example. Traditionally on the set we have a division into technical professional groups: illuminators, electricians, grips and prams etc. in Mexico they constitute a single group under the supervision of the Lighting Master. And it's not the same as in here, that when you ride in the open air, the electricians are standing or sunbathing while the dolly operators are working hard and nobody will help them. The same situation reversed by 180 degrees is in the interiors (especially small ones) where electricians work and dolly guys have nothing to do. Moreover, due to technological changes, these professional groups will be shrinking. The cameras already have a sensitivity of 50,000 ISO and a light from Ipad is enough to illuminate them. The need for systemic change is indispensable. Material and workforce savings in the Mexican and Icelandic models are an obvious example. These are some of the many examples that are worth using on the Modern Film Plan.

Selection. Who should be entrusted with considerable funds for making a film?

I have been lecturing at film schools in Europe for thirty years and I note which of my students will make a career first as a director. Years later, these notes show that the fastest entry on the market is for those who are the loudest, who know how to incite others, that is to say, those who actually make a career are those who are - mentally - producers, organizers. A talented, sensitive, often shy man will not muster enough money for a film. We need to be able to promote ourselves visibly - that is the most effective way.

Moreover, a young European director must have a complex accounting knowledge, knows all the subsidies, knows which conditions apply to spending money from funds. Without this knowledge they will never start, because there will never be a producer who would risk his time for a newcomer. The rule is that a debutant has to arrange the money themselves and then there he might stand a chance to find a patron or a producer.

In addition, a young director is often also the author of the script, because it puts him in a better position in relation to his colleagues who do not have such a talent.

Today, the director must not only be a scriptwriter, not only a director, but also a producer, a specialist in finance and promotion. Such a situation often leads to negative selection, because it is often not those who have talent and deserve it.

Risk Management – a system of control over what is being created

Let's look at what a young director's path to making a film looks like today. In order to make the film, he spends between eighteen months and five years running among lots of people, telling the same story, promoting the script to potential investors. And when the „zero hour“ finally strikes, the shooting starts - this young director often does not know what he is doing. His attitude towards the text is the one of a man who endlessly had to repeat the same joke. His sensitivity to his own screenplay is already dulled, because it got worn out long time ago. He's on auto-repeat. It is not a new wife anymore, no fascination, it is a state shortly before divorce. And in such a state the young director usually starts making film.... In addition, the production system prevents him from having control over what he does. I would like to remind you of the rule mentioned above:

Film production within a predetermined budget creates technical and financial conditions for the director to transfer the screenplay to the screen in the shortest possible time.

This „shortest possible time“ for many projects (meaning also: directors) is deadly.

Krzysztof Kieślowski was not a man of poor health. After 12–14 hours of work on the set he went to the editing room and worked at night another 3–4 hours. He did this because he was aware that a true work of art had „his own life“ and that what the director had „in his head“ are two different visions. He knew that the only way to check what film he was doing was by parallel editing (at that time technologically impossible) and a working overview of the editing of what was already filmed. Unfortunately, no human can withstand many years of work without sleep.

Great artists control what they do, listen to their partners, are critical of their own vision and ready to change it at any time. I know good directors who, after three or four days of shooting on the set, were able to change their main actress because they came to the conclusion that she was the wrong person. A young artist is often unable to make any move because he has a „template“ in his head. And when the point of entry into production comes already, he has to make the film as quickly as possible within the

limits of limited resources. And thus, he transfers to the film all the mistakes that were made at the stage of the script or „in his head”.

One young director of an award-winning film told me how, after 3 weeks of film, the shooting was interrupted for financial reasons. He had a shock, became suicidal. With nothing better to do, he sat down in the editing room and started to work on the filmed material. And then he realized that the film was going in the wrong direction. He sat down and started writing the script again. When he got the funds to finish the film, it was another film altogether.

“My film is so good, because due to the lack of money they stopped my production. I was given time to analyse my mistakes,” he said. I made him aware that it was nothing new, because Woody Allen, for example, made all his films in this way: two or three weeks of shooting, then he let the whole crew go, edited, checked what he had, added dialogues, got everyone back together and finished the film. Our Oscar-winning „Ida” was also created in this manner. Because of adverse weather conditions, production was interrupted and Paweł Pawlikowski, taking advantage of the break, analyzed the material he had and changed the scenario.

One might ask why it is not clear, especially in the case of beginners’ films, there is no break planned (unpaid). That would be a tool saving many potential projects.

The score and the performance. What does it look like in the film world?

The basic document, the score of the future film, is the screenplay. The format was created and petrified many years ago. The screenplay is a base for funding films. At the same time, we all know that often a very good script results in a poor film (poor cast is enough) and a poor script can turn into a good film. In addition, there are genres or films where the literary version is misleading. It is worth mentioning „Amélie”, a film whose screenplay would not be accepted by any Hollywood producer, as the written version of such a script would have to be 300 pages long.

We also know that 100 different directors would make 100 different films based on the same good script. Some very good ones, others good enough, and many bad ones. The risk of „translating” the text into an image is enormous. The chance that the money invested in the script will be wasted is very high. And it does not have to be that way, because new technology gives new solutions. Just look at the changes that have taken place. We have tools (unavailable in the past) that allow us to make **a rough draft of**

a film. A previsualization of the future, often costly, project - reducing the risk of creating a piece of junk. I will write much more about it later, but here I will confine myself to saying that I do not think that the production of a previs would be yet another barrier on a sufficiently difficult path to fund film. Previs should be made as an internal „creation“. Filming the readings of the actors' rehearsals (btw. mandatory in the Anglo-Saxon system and absent in other countries) also, so that each of the creative members of the crew can have „their“ contribution. The composer should provide a model of the score, operator the cinematographic ideas etc.

In making a previs, the director and the producer of the film will achieve something that is certainly not a finished film, but it is also no longer just a piece of paper with a text on it. It is not without reason that in the studio system in all high budget productions, the film is previsualized in 100% in animatics are made, and the companies specializing in such productions spring up like mushrooms.

The availability of ever cheaper digital cameras and cheap storage media makes us shoot more material. The material selection process becomes more important than it used to be in the past, in the era of film stock-based cinema. Thus, the role of the script, from which the ready film usually deviates in many places, is weakened. From my own experience, I can say that in European cinema, it varies between 20% and 30% from the original text. Working in the current system, the director has little chance of controlling what has been filmed. An incredible number of takes are made, more and more often in a multi-camera system. Due to lack of time, the material selection falls on the shoulders of the film editor. An editor who works in a traditional model in an assembly room away from the set and often starts to work after the shooting is finished. And yet today's technology makes it possible to edit directly on the set - when the shooting is still in progress. All you have to do is move the editing onto the set, and the director and other filmmakers will have a chance to control what is being created, and also to select the material on a daily basis. Thanks to this, you would avoid taking so-called „just in case shots“, just because they may be useful. Each director is nagged by creative anxiety: will I not run short of editing material? Everyone tends to take lots of unnecessary shots. Editing on the set will undoubtedly reduce the tendency to film large quantities of material just in case. The saving of time and money is evident, not to mention that a talented and sensitive director will be able to distance himself from the original vision that has petrified in his or her head, as I described above. Why is nobody doing this?

Because that is the tradition!

Chaos, or how the cinematography is done in the film

I will begin my call for profound changes in the process of film production with what is closest to me, i. e. with my own profession (cinematographer). Because in this example we can see clearly how film professions and their role in the production process change over time. Technological changes, new technologies are crucial for the cinematographer and it is possible to observe on the grounds of this job how many of them were there – and what a mess reigns in the production departments of the film responsible for its visual side.

In the beginnings of the film industry, the cinematographer was a technician, but in fact a crank-turning person. In the silent movie era, the filmmaker number one was the director, who was first of all the author of the film's vision, was the cameraman was only filming what he was told. With the advent of sound the director was burdened with additional responsibilities, but the cinematographer remained only a technical visual specialist. Despite the fact that in the following years many prominent artists of cinematographers appeared in the USA, this profession did not regain its rightful place in the film studio system, but continued the heritage of technical profession.

It should be remembered that the way films are made in the United States and Europe varies considerably, which is often forgotten. In European cinema, the cooperation between the director and cinematographer looks completely different. Poland is a special case in this respect.

A specific, partner relationship between director and cinematographer evolved in the Polish cinematography as a kind of idiosyncrasy, because it is difficult to find sources from before the World War II of such a model in Polish cinema. It is mainly a legacy of the Łódź Film School, where for years there were only two faculties: cinematography and directing³. The kind of cooperation that was established there had an impact on Polish cinematography. The difference of Polish cinema was also determined by the fact that over the years it had a patronage of the state, which, of course, was a negative phenomenon in political terms, but despite the pressure exerted on its creators, few propaganda films were made. The Polish film could not honestly describe the reality and looked for new ways. In general, films were made in Poland more for festivals than for the public. Meanwhile, creators all over the world, especially in America, defined cinema as show

3. In the past, the acting department was at Gdańska Street.

business that, like any other business, has to bring a return on invested money.

This specificity of Polish film production meant that the experiment (an excommunicated term in Hollywood) of searching for a new form was very welcome. Especially in the visual layer. This resulted in the fact that the cinematographer during the Polish Film School era was usually a co-author of the screenplay. Of course not the screenplay in the meaning of the initial literary material, but subsequent versions of the screenplay. He was expected to find an original vision for a particular text. As a result he had his creative contribution.

It was only by making his first films abroad that Krzysztof Kieślowski realised that things are different in Poland and Europe, that the Polish cinematographer, unlike his foreign colleagues, is someone who has worked on the text much earlier, that he brings ideas and often not only visual ones, that it belongs to his duties. And Kieślowski was probably the first to include this in the subtitles of the film: cinematographers appeared as co-authors of the screenplay.

Marek Żydowicz understood this when establishing his festival, where cinematographers are treated as true artists. Unfortunately, this situation is an exception, because, as I wrote above, the cinematographer himself is treated as a technician, especially in the USA – and to add to that as a technician whose influence on the final shape of the piece is decreasing, due to the development of digital image recording and processing. Unfortunately, this American model is becoming established in world cinematography. The cinematographer's position is shrinking dramatically.

The existing post-production tools cause that what American cinematographers pride themselves on as their creative contribution, i. e. film lighting, ceases to be their sole domain. I will give you an example from my own work. Harry Potter's plan was created in the studio to decorate the forest. I planned to make this image more dimensional by introducing streaks of sunlight, which would give it a more „gothic” character. Thus, very strong lighting units were pulled in, which (in my opinion) were interestingly illuminating this forest. After the shooting one of the producers, whose task was to make sure that the filmmakers didn't get too far from the „truth” about Harry Potter, or from the world described in the books, came up to me and said that according to his calculations the scene we had just realized could have taken place at 3 p. m. at the latest, while the direction of sunlight in the film suggests that things are already happening around evening. It was completely absurd, because in this very place time did not

play any dramatic role! I defended my vision, but unfortunately, during the editing of the copy, I found with surprise that all these streaks of light were painstakingly removed, frame by frame.

Colour or lighting applied by the operator can be converted during the post-production period, not only in Hollywood, into completely different ones. This is just how films are currently made. One has an unimaginable number of currently available digital tools and different kinds of professionals who have an impact on the final image. The authorship of the vision has long been a group effort, not individual one.

That is why, as I have already written above, American cinematography, copied all over the world, has an even more drastic, industrial model of risk control. The producers realised that the document which is the basis for thinking about future film production, i. e. the script, is not enough in any way to assess the value of what really is being created. And producers first and foremost seek the security of their investment. One of such security measures is the ability to see the film before it is made.

It is therefore obligatory to create a storyboard, and at this moment animatics - a film made by additional artists, people who are familiar with CGI, concept artists who have some kind of narrative talent. The result is that the director, a cinematographer on set, is practically forced to do exactly what has already been drawn or presented in the animatic for. In a typical production, the cinematographer does not participate in the previsualisation stage or, for financial reasons, he is invited very late to the process.

Coming back to the example of „Harry Potter”: there was a corridor in the production hall, some sixty meters long, covered on both sides with storyboards: from the beginning to the end of the film. In addition, these storyboards were not made by one person, because it would not have been physically possible. Three or four concept artists were involved. On top of that there were animatics, prepared by a completely different department, managed by the visual effects supervisor. Looking carefully at the visualizations, one can easily see that the form of this film is amorphous already at this stage, that it changes depending on who draws a given segment of the storyboard or prepares the animatic.

What kind of vision does the director or cinematographer pursue in such a film? It is worth noting that the idea of previsualization is a good idea, and I will delve deeper into that later, only its implementation (animatics) has its drawbacks and, above all, deprives the creators of their right to authorship.

The examples of studio production mentioned above may be too extreme from a European point of view, but we in Europe are copying this system. If anything changes in the production of European films, it is due to American film production software, applications that have been created for a completely different industrial system burdened with a different legal system, but above all for a very rich film industry.

Distributed authorship and money

In an ideal situation (which is not the case) the director is someone who is responsible for the whole project. But he doesn't compose the music score himself. Most often, and this was the case with the Polish model, he is responsible for the dramaturgy of the whole, for guiding and motivating actors, while the cinematographer's domain was the visual setting. His task was to filter the script through some specific visual style to support the dramaturgy of the film. At least that was expected from the operator in the Polish model. The director decided, of course, but he always expected visual proposals from the cinematographer⁴.

Unfortunately, this simple system is not implemented due to financial reasons. The person who gets involved in the film first is the set designer. This is seemingly logical, because decorations must be created before the process of filming begins. But leads to the situation where the set designer often has a greater influence on the film's visual shape than the cinematographer.

The operator is often employed when most of the set is already built. Anyway, even if they he happens to appear earlier, the decisions what and how to build are not in his competence. The artistic freedom of the cinematographer is limited to lighting the finished objects and actors! To be fair towards my set designer colleagues – it must not be forgotten that there are many outstanding artists among them. But it is also worth remembering that they are not there on the set. They just pop in to consult with the director the future decorations. This is simply their mode of operation and they don't have time for more. They often don't know whether the decorations they create are used dramaturgically in a given story or whether they are technologically efficient, i. e. whether they make filming easier or more difficult for the film crew.

4. It would not be a mistake were it not for the way the job of the set designer is performed. The set designer is not physically present on the set during the filming.

I don't want to criticize this group of great artists, but the tendency is that the set design is often made „for life” rather than for the dramaturgy of a particular film. I have the impression that this is sometimes due to a lack of drama education - set designers often forget that a given decoration is about only one angle, about one bathroom, and so on. Instead, whole rooms are built. A lot of money is spent on something that will be invisible on the screen. This arises indirectly from the professional habits of stage design designers, who get in the profession after graduating from schools of fine arts or architecture. These are universities that certainly do not educate students in the visual dramaturgy of a film.

Often, decorations are built that are inadequate to the needs, but on a budget **that is still substantial at the beginning of production**. The operator appears in production when the avalanche of money has built up momentum and the producer wants to stop it. At this moment, the money game starts between the heads of individual departments and production. The cinematographers and other heads of departments participate in this game in a similar way - they protect themselves just in case and the level of security depends on the size of the film budget.

The sometimes dirty money game

The head of any of the departments is aware that he cannot allow himself to be surprised by any unexpected need of the director. He doesn't organize equipment, furnishings and decorations exclusively for the needs of the film, but secures himself with an excess that will allow him to sleep well in the night. He spends as much as he can. If the movie budget is increased due to the participation of a star, for example, this automatically translates into further funds for additional equipment. However, this has nothing to do with whether these measures are really needed. This is the same old song all over again: the producer, who decides about the money, is really not fully familiar with the technology. He is not aware of collusion between post-production companies⁵. His knowledge is based on a comparative analysis of other films of a similar scale. The operator, but also heads of other departments know the system well and often “bleed” the producer, claiming that they need a lot of light, cranes or other equipment. Often the number of costumes is exceeded by 20% or too many make-up materials

5. For example, the software market grows and software is becoming easier in use, but the prices of services remain unchanged

are ordered. The set designer builds four walls of a room mock-up instead of one corner that is really needed. Money is being spent, and you do not see that on the screen!

In relation to the principle that I am writing about from the outset,
film production within a predetermined budget creates technical and financial conditions for the director to transfer the script to the screen in the shortest possible time.

Every Head of Unit secure themselves as much as they can, because during the implementation there is no time to replenish the resources, and they are not able to assess what may be really needed, because the screenplay does not provide this information. They did not work with the director before, so they do not know his way of working. So as they can, they try to protect themselves by excess. As a result, a significant percentage of the equipment does not leave trucks. It remains stored there, just in case.

The principle of parallelism of individual production departments makes it necessary to turn to the director to decide on every trifle on the film set. This has particularly bad impact on the decisions related to the visual dimension of the film. So what if the cinematographer came to the conclusion that the whole film is to be made in subdued colours, if the film's costume designer made a bright red dress for the actress, the set designer additionally painted the walls of the interiors in yellow. The director is always the decision-monger, and he's always right.

The director responsible for the viewer's emotions in the cinema must additionally answer thousands of questions like in the example above, and it is obvious that he often does not focus on certain topics, because it is perhaps important, but secondary in the most important sphere, i. e. the dramaturgy of the work and shaping the characters. Moreover, the director knows that many mistakes made on the set can be corrected later in the post-production process. He believes that he can allow himself to treat visual dilemmas as secondary ones, because he can change this later.

The architecture of filmmaking has always been complicated, but nowadays it is even more complex. Technicians and CGI specialists are needed. We need a whole group of new specialists who also influence the image in the film. In positive, but also but also negative way....

To sum up, the conviction that the cinematographer decides about the visual layer has long since ceased to be true. But it's not just about the position of the cinematographer in the team! In fact, nobody is fully responsible for the film's visual side. On a typical commercial film set, if we are not dealing with a „visually thinking” director, the authorship of the film's vision is

distributed, individual departments responsible for this part of the film's architecture struggle for greater influence on the final outcome of this work. Obviously, this has a negative impact on the artistic and financial side of the film. Can this be changed? I believe that I have a detailed description of these changes in the second part of this essay.

Previs-activity, or how to control the quality of an emerging work

This essay has been provocatively entitled „How to make cheaper and better films“, but maybe it is worthwhile to think independently of the necessary changes in production, if there are any tools that will enable us to control the quality of the resulting film better than before?

I think so. Provided that the final document constituting a foundation for the making of a film will not only be solely the script. I start from a deliberately exaggerated assumption that ‘no one reads scripts’. Their huge number and small production capacity, which we have in our country, but also in the whole of Europe, causes that very few valuable screenplays make it through the sieve of editors and project selection groups. Moreover, with a large number of scripts, texts by well-known authors have the upper hand.

In the past the script, as the final document before the film was made, was a necessity, because filming was expensive and complicated. Today everyone has a camera in their pocket and can use it to create a sketch of the future film. Shoot the rough draft, hiring actors from the acting school or naturals. Such a sketch – the actor previs – of a film that is to take place on a ship on a rough sea, for example, the future director can make in his apartment. In short, we propose a system in which the documents on which the film production is based is not only a screenplay, but the rough draft version – a previs. Something that can be displayed on the screen to distance oneself from a fixed idea, to test your narration. It is a model similar to Hollywood storyboards or animatics, but it was produced for a penny by future film makers, not by hiring extra professionals. The previs is made with the help of actors, not animated characters.

Thanks to the production of the film sketch, sponsors will know much more about the history we find ourselves in. The director will be able to assess its emotional impact. On its basis, the cinematographer will be able to deduce where the camera plays a dramatic role and where it is only an ornament. He will know where to keep distance from the actor's face and where to be closer. Such a way of film production would, of course, result in savings. The draft film will provide you with information on which parts of the room

in a given decoration are needed and which parts of the room will simply not perform. The set designer will not build „for life“. And the operator will calculate exactly what amount of light will be needed for a specific scene. He won't order an extra light that will lie uselessly in the truck. **A draft film is, therefore, also a form of a financial sketch.**

Previs of a film will also allow to better evaluate the film's screen time, because we often make films that are too long. The directors prepare themselves for the project for a long time - they write consecutive versions of the script. And on the set they often add additional scenes and episodes, because new and fresh ideas come to their minds. They usually make too much additional material that will be rejected anyway, because the backbone of the film is fixed, the film is bound by the main storyline and cannot be packed with too many additional threads, and the length of the film may not exceed 1 hour and 55 minutes.

In addition, the rough sketch will give us control over what we do, even if we do not shoot the film chronologically. During the shooting of the movie we will be able to put the already "seriously" filmed scenes into the existing previs, which will give us a chance to evaluate the whole film and not individual scenes already during its production. The evaluation of individual scenes is often confusing especially for young film makers.

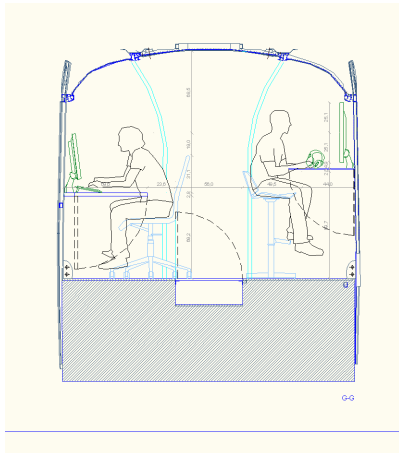
We want a system in which every young person, who comes with a text: script, short story, novel, could realize their first film version for no money at all. They can do it using the simplest technology, even a mobile phone, with the help of relatives, unless any of the actors would want to „train“ the role.

Previs is a film sketch of the future movie.... The foundation of the new system. It is not only the script and all its supplements such as folders of objects and other iconographic materials (mood boards) that will become the basic „document“ of the future film.

We are convinced that such a system will not only make it easier to produce the future work, but will also help future directors, already at the previs (rough sketch) stage, to notice the mistakes and dramatic shallows of the future work, which is already being realized professionally and for considerable funds. We are deeply convinced that in this way we will protect many young filmmakers from making weak or even misconceived films.

The fear of the new, the unknown will hinder the implementation of these tools and the changes we are postulating. These concerns are partly justified. Many professionals will have to change their old habits. But I do not think that there is an alternative. In addition, I do not believe that

previses should be used for external evaluation. Nor should they in any way replace scenarios.



How to make a previs

Previs is a record of a feature film story made with any kind of unprofessional camera. The shooting does not have to be connected with shooting locations envisaged in the script. A movie at sea or in the desert can be made in any room. It is enough to write a text that informs the viewers where the action is taking place. It would be advisable to have the actors scheduled by the director, but in lack thereof (i.e., the lack of money for them) they may be played by substitutes in Previs. The editing denseness of the scenes does not need to match the final product, either. It is usually sufficient to have mastershots arranged in order. Complicated action scenes (accidents, chases) can be replaced by a relevant board with a description, or an appropriate piece of storyboard included in the previs. On the basis of the right to quote one will be able to use scenes from already made, well-known films as references to the scene that we are going to make (with the information where the video comes from.). The condition is only the internal presentation within the group making the film.

Advantages of Previs

Previs is a plan, or vision, of the future film much more precise than the script – it is the film's roadmap.

Every reader of the script in a way builds their own vision of the future film. And surely everyone on its basis would have directed a different film. Often these visions (interpretations of the text) distort the message of the script, are immature, shallow or ignore the rules of dramaturgy. We know that good scenarios can make bad films and vice versa. That's why screenplays assigned to well-known and respected directors get a better treatment. Good screenplay + Good Director = certainty of a good, perhaps decent film

Good screenplay + Unknown Director = a lottery - a good work can be obtained, but equally often a misguided one

Thanks to previses (rough draft versions), a young director is able to prove and defend his vision of their (debut) film.

This tool will help you to better evaluate:

- The attractiveness of the future film from a distributor's (viewer's) perspective
- The structure of the future work
- Its length
- The attractiveness of characters and their development associated with the film's events
- Quality of dialogues
- Assess the proportions between the main and secondary themes - the dramatic power of the film

Moreover, rough draft films will make it easier to:

- find resources for future production (Distributors, Television and Film Finance Institutes, sponsors, etc.)
- assess the real financing needs for the project
- find and communicate with future creative collaborators (actor, set designer, cinematographer, composer) who may at this stage present the models of their future work, e.g. the composer might provide a sample of his music, the cinematographer in one of the scenes might present his idea for visual narration etc.
- Thoroughly assess the proportions between what is live and what has to be generated or added with the use of CGI.
- In the course of shooting the final movie, the possibility of replacing

scenes performed on the set for those made in the previs will make it easier to control the quality of the emerging film. “The flow of emotions” between the emerging film and its future audience. It is always a problem in the psychological drama, shot not in a chronological order, to assess on what emotional level the actors (their characters) end or start the scene in relation to the whole chain of dramatic events – and the films are not realized in accordance with the the story’s chronology. Previs will make it easier to control this process.

Previs’s drawbacks?

The script has to be written anyway, so previs becomes an additional obstacle on this difficult path to making the film.

- **We do not propose a system to replace the script-based selection system.** Previs’s aim is to be an internal film outline that helps filmmakers to build and control a shared vision and makes a good planning tool, also in the financial scope, of a future film. It is no different from the American animatics. It has their presentation advantages, but it undoubtedly outperforms these tools in sketching the emotional impact of a future film⁶.
- In 99%, typical scripts do not describe the visual side of a future film. As previses are not a finished works and are not created for public showings, it will be possible to use scenes from famous films based on the right to quote, as a reference to scenes that the future filmmaker plans to perform. Such a possibility will make it easier to evaluate the direction of the search and interpretation of a future work.
- We believe that with previs, directors will be able to find creative collaborators or funds for the production of their films, e. g. by product placement

Like any new element of the system in operation, it will undoubtedly face opposition from those who function well in the current system.

- The rough draft film system is not intended for them, it is intended

6. Animatics are made almost solely as computer animations, in specialized software. There are several companies specializing such services on the American market.

to facilitate the start for young people and the quality control of the film that is being made.

- We believe that our proposal will be accepted especially well by the young generation of filmmakers if they understand that there it does not create another barrier on the way to their desired debut.

For many artists, making an semi-finished product may be viewed as an attempt to strip the creative process of the natural element of every creative endeavor, i.e. the tension and mystery related to the act of creation.

- Unlike other art disciplines, making a film is an expensive undertaking. Money wasted in a bad project is a loss not only for the producer and the patron, but also a “kiss of death” for the debuting director. Films cannot be kept in the sock drawer , as is often the case with books.
- The so-called „creative mystery” often leads to the fact that the whole creative team does not fully know what the director is all about. Everyone merely follow the director’s instructions. Previses clearly outline the director’s interpretation of the script.

Making a Previs might kill the project instead of helping it. Nobody publishes their notes to the future novel.

- Yes, I am aware of that. That is why it should not be mandatory.
- Previs production should not abolish the traditional (scenario-based) method of accepting the film for realization.
- Previs should not be shown publicly. They are to be used for consultation, agreement with other staff and more precise budgeting.

Another utopian idea with no chance for implementation?

- For many years now, we have been carrying out utopian (from the point of view of mainstream cinema) projects at our Workshops and so far this has been successful (3D, Interactivity in cinema, Game Developers’ meetings with filmmakers, VR - expanded reality, modern digital post-production).
- As a Film Spring Open, we want to persuade young filmmakers (and many of them are our participants) to make such drafts. We want to produce films in the new system and this may be a sufficient

incentive for young filmmakers to respond positively. That's why we have built the Cinebus, a mobile film studio to support Modern Film Production. In this way, we will be able to test the value of risk control with a previs in practice. We have no doubt that potential young film producers may like the idea of a previs as a test case before investing substantial funds. We believe that for many producers, a „penny” investment in the realization of a previs may turn out to be a practical tool for testing the chances of a given project in distribution, its advantages, but also disadvantages, which - thanks to the rough draft version - could be removed during the realization process.

Previs – New Workflow.

The script of course still exists and follows, as always, the selection path. We assume that a previs is an additional phase of internal development. That is, we propose to make films in the traditional order, that is:

- Directing it to production and obtaining funds on the basis of a script, and only then the director together with their closest employees prepares the previs. Thus, the previs is created in the internal working mode only for the crew executing a given project.
- As in the case of scenarios, a previs may (should) be modified during the preparation period until the ready-for-production version which is satisfying for everyone.
- Budgeting, the filming, selection of objects for the film, set design and construction - all this is done also on the basis of a previs, not only the screenplay.

The period of preparation for the film and all its elements should also be connected with the rough draft version.

If the actors playing in the previs were not the final choice of the director, the test filming is made with the help of substitutes. The operator could also try his visual ideas.

We include the outline of the musical score proposed by the composer.

We make the previs editing versions (trials of an alternative structure of a future work), determining the proportion between the main and secondary motifs.

The filming

- The film's editing takes place directly on set and each time we exchange pre-assembled scenes for those working with Pre-vis.
- The so called screening of materials is always a screening of a whole previs „updated“ with newly filmed scenes. That is, each time we watch the whole film - a patchwork consisting of new scenes and scenes from previs + any ready VFX - visual effects, or their mock-ups.
- Scheduled break after 30%-40% of the planned shooting time. During this period, confrontation of the initial version of the infinite film with the test audience (or a potential distributor). Discussions about the direction in which the film is going. Implementation of corrections to the remaining schedule of shooting. In addition, a preliminary colour correction. Preliminary music editing.
- Finishing the filming above before a break.

Final editing and post-production of audio and visual equipment

- As traditional, but with a re-designed scope of responsibilities of individual professionals (as described below in the chapter „Film Professions“).

The drawbacks of a new work plan?

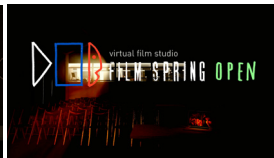
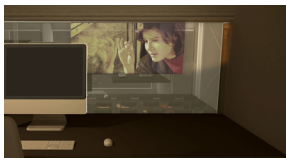
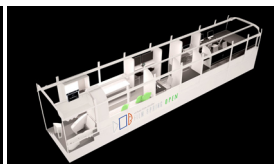
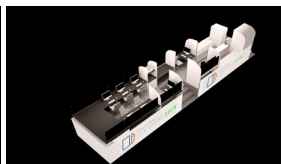
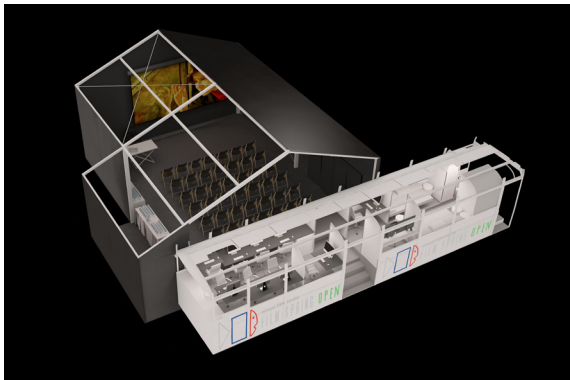
The system was supposed to be economical, and there are new elements adding cost from the production point of view – making a previs, a scheduled break in the filming.

- Our calculations show that the money spent on previs production will result in savings. Previs will be a much more accurate „document“ of the film than a script, thus facilitating planning. It will ensure more precise calculations of what will really be needed to make a particular film.
- A break in filming is an idea to make it easier to control and improve the quality of a future film. This is another element of managing the risk connected with film production. The industry has a saying, 'Risk

management costs money, but lack of management costs even more'. We believe that if the interruption is well planned, it will not increase production costs. Please note that the break does not increase the number of filming days. During this period the team returns the equipment to the rental company, so we do not pay for it. The technical team has a planned and unpaid (or barely paid) break. In addition, the interruption automatically shortens the postproduction period. In addition, the filmmakers will be spared from shooting additional "just in case" scenes at the end of the filming period, which is a standard behavior of almost every beginning director.

Like any new system, this one will too drown in our habits. Even if there is something valuable here, nobody will want to implement it.

- We are aware of this and that is why the Film Spring Open Foundation, in the form of a „case study“, wants to test this model in practice. This document is also a working document for discussion and will be amended.
- Practical and documented actions (production of the film) will be an test of this theory, and will also allow for its modification.
- Please note that our model of change is much deeper than the structure described above. We also want to redefine the system at the level of all film professions, as described below.



The organisation of the new model

We have to think what can be done at the crossroads of responsibilities of different departments on the set, because this is where conflicts often arise, leading to the waste of time and therefore money. At the beginning of this essay, I described the mess that reigns in the departments related to the visual side of the film. But the chaos is not only the scourge of cinematography-related departments. We would like to propose a slightly different division of responsibilities on a professional film set, suggest

changes in the way individual members of the creative and technical team perform their work. This redefinition of film professions must be based on a different system of work. Part of this new system is described above. The following comments will relate to professions and transport.

Film competitions. How is it and how could it be?

We want to use a system that is adapted to the current momentum of technology development. This momentum often leads to the fact that the number of professions in film production is increasing rather than decreasing. There are professions, inscribed in the current system, which often have nothing to do on the set. For years I was making German films where the cinematographer's team consisted of two people. I did the filming and operated the camera. My assistant, Henryk Jedynak, managed the focus, loaded the cassettes and was the driver of a car in which we had all the equipment. Films made today on the same scale require, apart from the cameraman, cinematographer and his assistant, the DIT, who sometimes is also responsible for archiving (but not always) and is for the video (video assist coordinator) previewing and the second operator's assistant (clapper loader) responsible for cabling, reporting and clapping.

Another example: The role of a costume designer in contemporary film is often limited to the fact that he visits the actor's apartment before the film begins and in such actor's closet chooses their private belongings as a costume for a scene. In a small-scale contemporary film, this is the end of the costume designer's work, because all the rest of his duties connected with costumes are taken over by a wardrobe assistant. Of course, there are films in which the role of a costume designer is significant, but does this mean that we have to involve them in every film?

Gaffers, Grips, Key grips.

As it is

Everyone sees it. Some work and others do not. On the outdoor set, more work is done by dolly operators and grips. The gaffers are sunbathing. In small interiors it is exactly the opposite. Each of the lorries of these film departments holds the same tools (ladders, platforms, magic arms, T-stands, ropes, camouflage nets, shovels, etc. Itd.

As it could be

We want to use the Mexican model where there is one technical department which is responsible for all the work on the plan (lighting ,gripping - driving, cranes, construction works) This will undoubtedly influence the optimization of work especially in case when we want to use the second team (as described below). It also cuts down on the means of transport and the quantity of tools transported to the set.



Sound Operator

As it is

It is rare for the Sound Operator to be interested in the preparation work on the film. He usually appears when a large part of the preparatory work is completed. Such approach leads to the following:

Often the filming objects that have been selected prove useless due to noise coming from the outside, which do not allow to make a direct sound recording.

Lavaliers are never or hardly ever placed in an actor's costume before the filming actually starts. In this way, when everyone is ready to start filming, the Sound Operator starts to install his equipment. By the way, he often comes to the conclusion that the costume rustles and it is not possible to



install a microphone on it. Waste of time throughout the entire filming process may add up even to one full shooting day.

The Sound Operator records a lot of „sound effects” that nobody exactly listens through in the process of editing and post-production. Audio postproduction prefers to choose the effects from an archive, because it is a quick choice.

Discussions on the set (sometimes this is necessary) on which is more important in a given scene, sound or image, are often devoid of context, because the sound engineers do not study the script from the storyline and drama point of view.

As it could be

The sound in the film is just as important as the image. And the effectiveness of the Sound Operator’s work should not slow down the shooting process. We propose that one person should be responsible for the whole sound engineering process.

- To do so, the Sound Operator should start his work much earlier. His duties should not be confined to technology.
- We propose that this profession should evolve more in a creative direction (Sound Artist). The sound, like the picture in the film, should be designed and made (supervised) by one person.
 - We want him not to finish his work after the filming is done, but to personally perform or, if this is impossible, oversee the editing and sound editing process (Re-recording mixing). He has one orientation, which he recorded additionally during the shooting. What are the effects and background effects.
 - Editing on the set will make it easier to select valuable sound material on a regular basis
- We suggest that placing lavaliers in costumes takes place at the beginning of the shooting day and is the same standard operation in the daily schedule as the make-up.
- Selection of filming objects should always take place in the presence and with the approval of the sound artist,
- The sound artist should be involved in the discussion on the style of the future film. Previs should at least be discussed with him from the standpoint of the audio needs of the future film.

Editor

As it is

I have already written a lot about it, so I'll make it brief. Nowadays, the images (shots) that make it to the editing room are still semi-finished products which require further processing. The editing room becomes the decision-making place concerning the shape not only in the structural sense, but also in the visual sense. The amount of filmed material allows to collate many different editing versions of the same film. A captured image can be subject to any visual modifications and additions.

Due to the development of technology, film editing is a much more important profession than it used to be. (The amount of the material filmed)

Currently, the editor is editing the film away from the plan. Often due to the excessive responsibilities of the director, he takes over some of his functions (material selection, for example). It happens that an editor appears in a film after the cinematography is finished, which is an even worse situation.

The current model of this profession does not allow to control the quality of film production already in the course of its realization. And that is what we want to do.



As it could be

Editing on set, where scenes in previs are replaced with those edited in a working mode. You can imagine a model in which the editor continues to work off-plan, and his assistant makes a preliminary selection of the filmed material and pre-edits the scenes directly on the set. All this is done under the supervision of the director and the rest of the team, and the effects of his work (pre-edited) are available on every portable device (smartphone or tablet)



The film's eyes, i. e. the professions responsible for the image.

At the beginning of this essay I wrote about the mess that reigns in the „visual” departments of a film, and here we propose a major change. We want to replace the current system of distributed authorship with one-man responsibility. We want to create a system where one person (in agreement with the director) takes over responsibility for the whole visual side of the film. Things have become so complicated and the development of technology has brought such a significant revolution that it is not worthwhile to think about how to refresh something that has been building up for years and there is no chance of cosmetic changes anymore. A general renewal should take place.

The cinematographer – As it is



This profession is defined differently in different countries (different scope of responsibilities). In Poland, in comparison with other local industries, there is an individual model of doing this profession. The cinematographer in Poland is more of an artist, and in Europe and especially in the USA more a technician. Due to the development of technology, the reputation of this profession is deteriorating. New professionals have emerged as a result of the development of technology, whose impact on the image is often greater than that of the cameraman (design specialists in previsualization, CGI and computer graphics artists). There is even a new profession – the virtual operator, i. e. the specialist in filming in the virtual environment.

The cinematographer's influence on the image is becoming ever narrower and even the traditional cinematographer's domain, i.e. the light, can be completely transformed in the postproduction process (virtual light). To save themselves, the cinematographers flee into the world of new tools and gadgets, which are not always necessary to make a given film. If we don't get ready to revise the definition of the profession of the cinematographer, it will cease to exist the same way that the cobblers did.

As it could be

The cinematographer-artist (Visual Director) is ready to take on many more responsibilities, but at the same time to become an artist responsible for the overall visual shape of the film.

Thus, we want to create a new profession. Visual Director is the person who will be entirely responsible for the visual side of the film. It is not important whether the origin of this new specialist will be in set design or cinematography. It is important for them to redesign their approach to their previous profession so that they can face new challenges. In a sense, a Visual Director would be a continuation of the position they once held in the Polish system as the Cinematographer.

Visual Director



The scope of responsibilities of the Visual Director:

- In small movies, Visual Director will be responsible for both cinematography and set design. In other words, they will be responsible for the visual side of the film from the very beginning to the end of the post-production process.
 - Defining the film style agreed upon with the director.
 - Take or supervise photos for the previs (This is not mandatory)
 - Selection of iconographic materials (photos, videos) as visual references for the future film.

- Supervising or creating a story board, animatics (if necessary)
- Performance of visual tests of the future film (including CGI manipulations)
- Preparation of set design and selection of filming objects and locations
- Lighting in the film and deciding what part of this work will be done in postproduction
- Working with the camera
- Post-production (colour correction, other image processing)
- Supervision of CGI effects.

Set designer

The model we write about relates to small-scale films and the idea of merging the professions of cinematographer and set designer may be used only in small productions, where the filming takes place in natural objects/locations with usually no set construction. It should be remembered that at present a lot of films are made in this way and this is particularly true of first-time filmmakers.

As it is

The set designer is somebody who builds the world in which the action of the film is to take place. Nowadays, not everything is being built in the world of film and there is an increasing wave of bankruptcies among big film studios, because the funds for the production of films are getting smaller and smaller (Alwernia). More and more often the role of the set designer is limited to the selection of existing objects or locations and their possible modification. (Furnishing and repainting). In addition, a significant part of the set design is taken over by post-production CGI. What we see behind the windows of our set constructions or filmed locations is „added“ after the completions of the filming. The same is true with the multiplication of objects or their deformation, not to mention the filming of scenes in a completely virtual environment. The set designer in the current system is somebody who rarely visits a film set. Their task during the shooting process is to prepare subsequent objects for the filming. Due to their scope of duties (definition of their profession), they are educated and experienced only in stage design. There is no professional training to prepare them from the filming perspective, e. g. in the area of lighting. Having no drama education,

they often build or prepare elements of set construction that won't be of any use in the film. Their vision of the future film often differs significantly from that of the cinematographer. The reason may of course be on both sides, but this is why we encourage the use of this model **especially for small-scale films, where these two professions merge into one** – the artist responsible for the visual side, Visual Director. I would like to stress once again that it is not important whether the origin of this new specialist will be in set design or cinematography. In the current system, the sets are prepared from the stage and boiling them from the lighting side begins with the start of the photographs, which is a colossal loss of time.

As it could be

See above for Visual Director.

Interior designer

As it is

The right hand of the set designer. In small-scale films he has more work than a set designer, as the sets are rarely built from scratch. The interior designer proposes changes in the arrangement of filming objects and locations. They introduce changes in furniture and decoration of walls and floors, preparing these objects for the filming. They introduce new furniture, if necessary, by hanging paintings, lamps, carpets and other props. They are also responsible for bringing the object to its original state prior to being rented for filming.

As it could be

The interior designer in the new system should be the closest associate of the Visual Director. Their responsibilities will remain similar, but will become part of a transparent system, or at least the part of it that is responsible for the visual side of the film.

The scope of their duties will not differ significantly from those currently performed, and the system in which they will work is described below (Second Team)

Costume designer

As it is

In contemporary film their work is often limited to the choice of private clothes from among those that hang in the actor's wardrobe.

As it could be

Not every film needs a costume designer. The director, together with Visual Director, can take on this role.

1st director assistant

As it is

The profession, which used to be called „Second Director” in Poland, was awarded the number 1. First Director Assistant is a professional position which in the American system has little in common with directing. Their responsibility is in production and the person for the job is usually chosen by the film producer. Their role can be described, with little exaggeration, as the role of overseer, whose task is to whip up and enforce the speed of work on the plan. In the studio system, the First Director Assistant receives a bonus for making films on time. Their position on the set is indisputable. In fact, it is the First Assistant Director who decides what happens on the set. They are a specialist in the thicket of U. S. trade union and professional laws and are the one burdened with building the set. As we can guess, this plan often has nothing to do with the drama of the work that is being created. Often, background scenes have more time allocated than those crucial for the storyline. No wonder that this role and such „clandestine” positioning of the First Assistant Director on the set, as officially the Director’s representative, was eagerly taken over by European producers and the current production system.

As it could be

In a small film (but not only) the „First Assistant Director”, or using old terminology, the Second Director is the person who unambiguously represents the interest of the film, i.e. of the Director.

They should be elected and trusted by the Director. They should be present and active during the preparation of the film for the shooting.

The responsibilities of the Second Director in the new system:

- Aid in the implementation of the previs
- Help with casting. Screen tests.
- Preparation of the filming set together with the director, but also, of course, the producer.

- The second director in the course of filming (applies only to small-scale films) is responsible for the directing in the second team (more details below).
- Help in selection of scenes for editing
- In big scenes, where both teams work together, they are responsible for the direction of the background.

Set secretary, or: reports, reports and reports

They used to be the person registering the behavior (the gestures of actors) so that when implementing the reverse shots, the actors could repeat them exactly in the same place. Currently, this role is fulfilled by image recording. The recorded material can be viewed at any time and the actor can precisely repeat their behaviour. In addition, the film is often shot in a multi-camera system, where the necessity of repeating the same behaviours is unnecessary. The set secretary now describes what has been done on the set in special reports. However, the number of fields and descriptions to be filled in by the Plan secretary is superfluous. Nobody or almost nobody reads it. It was supposed to serve the editing team in understanding what has been done on the set, but once the editing is established on the set, it becomes redundant. The part of the description that is made by the set secretary could be used by VFX, but there are no such items in existing forms. The VFX Supervisor prefers to make the right measurements themselves, because the accuracy of such measurements shortens the working time in developing the effects.

We often film using cameras without operator (Crash cameras) these cameras are switched on much earlier and record minutes of bland material to catch something that is valuable and only takes 0.5 seconds, e. g. an explosion. The set secretary does not have the tools to select these moments. Their archiving documentation does not provide for such description, and there are no tools to make it. Nowadays, the work of the set secretary shows clearly how technological changes should force the evolution of a profession, and how we are stuck eye-deep in the old system.

Director



As it is

I have already written about the reasons why people who are often talented are defeated in this profession. So I will limit myself to saying that the European model of a film director is the military model. The director is a general on set, and is always right. If they announce to their team that, in their opinion, black is not black and that, in their opinion, "black is actually white", their team will conceal their true opinion and will concur. This model of the infallible director is fundamentally different from the film studio model, where the control of both the producer and the studio financing the film is much greater. The director is a professional rented by the studio/producer and their typical contract provides the option of releasing them from duty at any time. It is quite common for the directors to be stripped of the right to the so-called „final cut” - the final version of the film after editing. The leap from the film school and films made in the student model to the professional model is often a cause of trauma and shock. The confrontation with the professional reality of film production, so distant from the atmosphere and technique of student short forms, and most of all the lack of tools for controlling the emerging film are often the cause of personal failure of the young adepts and at the same time the failure of the project.

As it could be

The model proposed by us give the director a tool (previs) for controlling his vision of the film that would otherwise be usually inaccessible for others. The way in which the director wants to transfer the text of the script to the screen is usually "emdedded in their head" and others have no chance to see it.

Previs is a method to uncover these mechanisms and make them public. We want to build a system – not a military one, but a team-based one. The whole team after the preparation of the previs and its screening will be aware of what is expected from them. They will be more conscious of the message of the future film and its style, even if the elements will not be named explicitly. Editing on the set, in turn, is a tool allowing the director to refer at all times (by screening) to the whole of the work under preparation.

A break in filming is to serve a similar purpose. These new tools are created to make the work of director comfortable, not to control it!

Redefining of film professions has also the purpose of freeing the director from thousands of sometimes needless questions when working on the set. Both the hierarchy of visual professions as well as a different model of assistants (second director) are to achieve this. (I know what I am talking about – I filmed a lot of debuts).

By the way, I met with a very interesting system of showing working material when making a film in Germany. The screening did not take place each day after work, but once a week on a weekend, and were connected with a breakfast for the whole team. In such a relaxed atmosphere it was easier to distance oneself from the work done, and also to assess a slightly longer piece of the film.

In everyday work on the set, in order to have an effective control over what is being created, it is necessary to design and prepare a modern decision centre, i.e. what we call the “director’s preview”, or “video village”. Such “centre” should be well connected with other post-production divisions located in Cinebus. And it is not only about observing the cameras’ view on the set, but also the easiness of seeing “on the run” how a scene that is being filmed fits with the rest of the already made footage, or the preliminary assessment of connecting live images with CGI. Without unnecessary and time-consuming work, the director and other members of the team will have an ongoing insight in the film under preparation, not only from the point of view of the currently filmed shot, but also in the function of such shot in editing. The director will be able to assess on the run, without leaving the set, the colour correction and preliminary CGI effects or compare it with reference materials (mood boards), and also to inspect the footage of the Team B.



Producer

In the old times, before becoming a master, the apprentice had to go on a professional journey in order to see other ways or ideas for crafting with other masters in the profession. In the age of mass communication, only apparently does it seem to us that we know everything, because it is enough to google it. I believe that in the European cinema it is a mistake to use American production software, because they are built for a different production reality. One of the numerous examples I have written above is the example of the First Assistant Director. It should be remembered that studio-based filmmaking (USA) is built on the economic calculation, resulting from the position of this industry in the world. Studio films are made to earn money and this is usually the case. In Europe, the producer makes money by saving on the production of films, because very few films generate profits. Quite a glaring example is the fact that in studio films, the director almost always gets a chance to improve an already finished film in the form of additional shots, and making them takes sometimes a few days. In Europe, this tradition is almost nonexistent, and for a very simple reason, because making these extra shots eats away the producer's income. We can claim that the quality of a finished work is not entirely the aim of European film production, because the producer makes money from savings. In addition, the producer is an easy prey for price manipulation. They cannot and do not know everything, becomes a victim of price collusion (fees of post-production companies) or manipulation of managers of individual departments described above.

As it is

- An outdated, rigid process of film production
- Copying models of the rich and based on an obsolete model (negative role of trade unions) of the US film industry; it should be remembered that the Americans can afford it because it is still very profitable.
- Application of production software created for high-budget studio films. This is particularly nonsensical in small films.
- Non-transparent economic models, the goal of which is to generate maximum profit already in the production of the film, and not the revenue from future distribution. The issue of quality in the film produced in this way is secondary for the producer.

- Protection of own interest. Savings to which the producer forces the heads of individual departments are rarely implemented in their own, production division.

As it could be

This whole document contain the description of these changes.

The modern model of future film production should be transparent, a system whose ultimate goal is the quality of the produced work.

The second team – how to speed work without losing in quality control.



The American system of production of high-budget films is based on two teams. The production is based on the assumption that the most valuable time on the set is the period when the actors cast in the main roles (stars) appear on the set. Due to the star-sized fees, the crew can't afford to shoot the so-called they can't afford to make cutaways, or even countershots for "less important actors" in. The second team shoots all long shots (actors are replaced by body doubles), "plates" that are needed for VFX, close-ups or even whole scenes that are rated as less important for the finished film.

In practice, however, this system has many other advantages. In action films, where the second team usually films enemies (like the Somalis in "Black Hawk Down"), their much more important role is to „clean up”: the director with the editor, watch the already edited scene orders to make additional shots needed to edit the part.

We would like to propose a system in which the second team would be responsible for labor-intensive tasks that do not require the presence of the director, also for the above mentioned „cleaning”, but most of all, and this is a novelty in this system, for the preparation of the next set object/location for the filming. That is why it is so important in the new system to redefine film professions.



Let us follow in practical terms the nature of these changes.

As it is

In the traditional model, after selecting (or constructing) the sets, the set designer together with the interior designer and prop master prepare the location for filming on the eve of commencement of work on a given object. The set or location is decorated with furniture, repainted, furnished with necessary or decorative props.

The next day, the proper filming team appears, starting with lighting up the set, followed by (it often happens in parallel) the actors' rehearsals and the actual filming.

When the pictures are finished, the interior designer, the prop master or their assistants reappear on the location and return the object to its original state.

As it could be

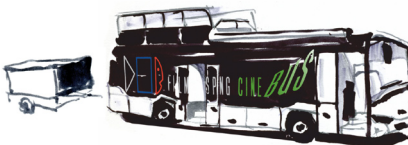
We want (and this model has already been partly tested on the set of Natalie Portman's film „A Tale of Love and Darkness“) to propose for small-scale productions (or especially for small-scale productions) a model of the second team, whereas the list of such team's duties would be much longer. We want to build a more efficient system with much fewer specialists. I mentioned one of its elements, the Visual Director. I would also like to remind you that it will not matter whether their origin will be in set design or cinematography. In the new system, the Visual Director and their Assistant (currently the 2nd Cinematographer) will be responsible for the entire visual side of the film. Likewise, the Director will have their trusted partner (2nd Director). The obligation to prepare, and later dismantle, the next set or location will fall on these two closest assistants (a novelty).

But most of all, the Second Director and Assistant Visual Director will be responsible for the filming of the second team.

Let's follow the workflow of the new system.

- Selection of the filming object/location by the Director and Visual Director
- Discussion on necessary changes in the facility (The Second Director and Assistant Visual Director should already participate in this part of the work)
- At the time when the first team is filming in the location „A“, the Visual Director assistant prepares the location „B“ for both in set design **and lighting** (a novelty and significant saving of time). So they do all of the work previously discussed with the Visual Director. Their work is much easier because they use a previs, so they know what and how will be needed for the film.
- The first team arrives at the location prepared not only from the stage design point of view, but also in the technical aspect (preliminary lighting, VFX blue screens)
- When the first team finishes shooting the scene in location „A“ and moves on to location „B“, the Director's Assistant and Assistant Visual Director continue („clean up“) with the still unmade shots in location „A“. After they have finished, they return the location to its original appearance. It was this particular model that we applied on the set of Natalie Portman's film, which resulted in the situation that on the last day of the film we didn't have anything to shoot – a situation practically unheard of on the set of a debut film.
- A new communication system will assist in synchronising and interpreting of tasks. The film set in the new system will be equipped with an Intranet (Cinebus) and a communication system (including video streaming) ensuring direct viewing of the first and second team's footage. This will allow the director to control the work of the second team.

Tools and means of transport.



It is clear that the proposed changes described above will require savings. This is particularly true of modes transport. Nowadays, every department is arriving at the set with their truck or minivan. So we have a light truck + a power generator, the grips' truck, a key grip's truck, camera operators' van and an audio van, as well as a minivan for image recording and archiving. We have a vehicle for make-up and costumes. We have vehicles for passenger traffic. The set design and production department have their individual means of transport. With big budget films, this large amount of transport is only partly justified. The problem is that it does not decrease in small productions. This is due to the habits described above. Each production department is a state within a state, and any attempt to merge individual departments, thus forcing savings, will be opposed. Lorries carry tools that are doubled between them (tools for carrying out various work on the plan, ladders, platforms, camouflage, etc.) as well as tools that are to be used for the realization of a given project but in fact never leave these vehicles in a significant proportion, because they are actually stored there „just in case“, while the problem is that you have to pay for it all. This excess of tools and means of transport puts a burden on the budget of the film, but serves the motto I mentioned already in this essay:

“Cinematographic production within a predetermined budget creates technical and financial conditions for the director to move the screenplay onto the screen in the shortest possible time.”

We want to refresh this principle and offer considerable savings.



Cinebus with a generator in a trailer and a tent packed on the roof ensures energy and transportation self-sufficiency.



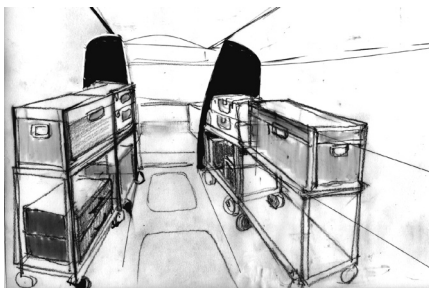
The hydraulic lift facilitates loading weights of up to 500 kg (dolly).



The Cinebus has storage space in convenient drawers hidden under the whole floor of the vehicle.



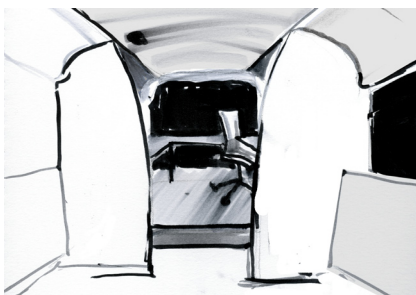
A lift with a magliner.



a system of linkable dollies with dedicated superstructures for different types of equipment (grip, light, camera)



A prototype of one of 12 transporting trolleys



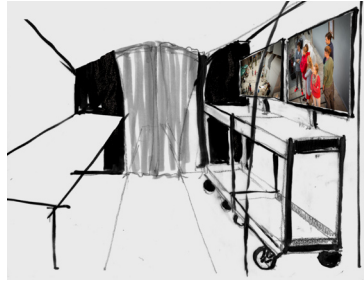
All tables in Cinebus are foldable, ensuring storage space equal to 2.5 trucks.



storage compartments in the floor



Mobile director's preview



Mobile director's preview



A storage rack on the roof, up to 1000 kg. Possibility of loading log elements (large tripods, jib arm, rails).

As it could be

Many changes in tools and means of transport will force an automatic redefining of the film professions, make a previs the basic document for the film. This is described above. However, we should try to change this systemically:

- Cinebus is the basic vehicle in a small-scale film set. A bus that meets most of the needs of small film production i.e.:



- Editing room
- Video Village, i. e. recording and archiving



- Server for the intranet
- Camera operator and audio equipment
- Basic lighting and grip equipment (dolly + rails, small crane stored on the roof rack), small generator



- For larger projects, the generator towed behind the Cinebus



- One Characteristics Position



- Coffee bar and snack bar



- The projection room in the tent, which is also to serve as a bluescreen studio.
- Create a new audio-visual communication system on set based on smartphones. Film Spring Open wants to build a system of such a communication model
 - Each member of the team will be able to communicate with each other
 - One-to-one
 - One-to-specialist group
 - One-to-all
 - Video streaming for all smartphones, tablets, laptops and workstations.
 - Visual materials
 - To-date and currently edited material + previs
 - Footage of the second team
- With previs, the planning of tools, facilities and film production equipment is much more accurate.

The role of Film Spring Open.

Every theory needs to be tested in practice. Not all elements of the new structure can be introduced immediately. Compromises are also inevitable. In order to ensure that the whole discussion on our idea does not end with a theoretical bargaining, we want to test our system in practice. We want to make a feature film (selected and in consultation with our partners), which would be a practical test of the proposed changes. Only in this way can we present our model to the film community in a responsible way. We want to properly document the whole process from both the descriptive side (a making-of) and production documents, including cost calculation and comparison with existing project cost estimates of the same scale.

Sławomir Idziak

13.12.2017

Cinebus, or an equipment transporting vehicle, but at the same time a film production studio was built thanks to the support of the Ministry of Culture and the Polish Film Institute.

Partners: PSC, Makonline, KBF, Krakow Film Commission, Legal Culture.

Interior partners: BoConcept Kraków and Katowice, Smeg, Abet Laminati, Blum, Selt, Dicson.

Technology partners: Canon, HP, Sony, CamSat, GLC, Akurat Lighting, Black Magic, Digital Republic, Kingston, Maxon, IT Service, Samyang, Benro, Graphic. pl, Adicam, Neil Corbould Special Effects.

Main contractor: Solaris



Współfinansowanie:

Ministerstwo
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Partner:



Główny wykonawca:



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Partnerzy wyposażenia:



Dofinansowano ze środków Ministra Kultury i Dziedzictwa Narodowego oraz Polskiego Instytutu Sztuki Filmowej

Description of the New Production Model was commented by the award-winning director, cinematographer Wojtek Staroń.

I was happy to read your text „How to make films...”:

I absolutely agree with your words. You are referring to things that I have been thinking about, experiencing and trying to put into practice since the beginning of my journey. Being a bit of an outsider in the film world in Poland, which repulsed me with its thoughtlessness and pompousness, I tried to look for my own ways to give me and the director creative freedom.

I'm writing to you so that you know that I feel exactly and understand your attempt to think about film making, also trying to put it into practice (of course in arthouse cinema in my case).

For years now, the word “professionalism” in Poland has been synonymous with following a straitjacket model, a cliché, in order to give a false sense of security to producers. For me, it is on the contrary: professionalism is the ability to think out of the box and to flexibly search for the best solutions with the minimum of resources needed. Over the years I learnt that from documentary filmmaking, although these films often went beyond the form of a classic documentary and became feature stories (e. g. Argentinean Lesson distributed in cinemas in the USA).

I am glad that you are writing about the need to match the crew to the equipment and subject matter of the film.

As a cinematographer and director of documentaries, I tried to transfer the experience of the ability to choose the minimum of means to achieve the maximum effect in the frame, on stage and in film, to the feature films in which I was the cinematographer and which were co-produced by our company (together with my wife Małgosia, whom you met in the UK, we set up a company after returning from England in 2007). We have worked with the Mexicans (El Premio - which was shown at your FSO workshop in 2011) and the Argentineans (Refugiado premiering in Cannes, Condor for the best Argentinean film in 2014). Both films were made by small teams (about 20 people, one/two small lorries/buses, electricians also operating the dolly, etc.) and were prepared both from the production and aesthetic point of view precisely and with full creative freedom. They cost less than 700 thousand USD, yet you did not feel the lack of funds in any division or shortage of shooting time. Diego Lerman, a director of Refugiado was editing the scenes at night, just like Kieślowski did, so that the film was almost ready and submitted to Cannes just a week after the filming was done. These co-productions have given us an extraordinary experience, which we would like to graft in films made in Poland, but it is not easy.

I recently had a negative experience in Poland with Darek Glazer's film Mur (The Wall), which was his debut, when the production was "eating away" the director, not giving him time to reflect, driving and limiting the possibilities of documenting and selection of locations to a minimum, and lobbied for the wrong actors. Added to this was the lack of inspiring artistic coaching. I worked on 4 feature debuts in Poland and three of them had the same problem.

We are thinking together with Gosia how to work differently for the good of films, but we are not the types of „loud people“, about whom you write that they are quickly make themselves known in the industry – our paths in Poland were longer, we often feel somewhat unfit for the current environment, so the process of securing the funds is long, we squeeze as much as possible from minimum grants, but our films give us a lot of satisfaction.

I also notice an extremely important matter, which is the communication betweenf the cinematographer and producer – often these two are able to impose the right momentum of work on the set and in preparation of the film, determine the number and type of crew and equipment. If, in your letter to the PSC, you are rightly warning against the weakening role of the operator, then perhaps it is here that you should look for the reinforcement of our role – as a person responsible not only for the visual side, but also for the composition and type of crew and equipment. Perhaps it may be worthwhile to insist on close cooperation in a three-part team: producer-director-cinematographer. Today, young producers often approach the film as a creative adventure, they are our friends, they keep our side; in the old model, many directors to some extent were disrespectful to producers, who were, moreover, mainly "cold-hearted" guardians of the budget.

The only thing that I find debatable (although interesting) is the 'previs' you are writing about. It seems to me that this system will be useful only for some of the projects in which dramaturgy, situation and film action is somewhat more important than atmosphere, acting or impressionism. I also know that many young directors work on the principle of creating a unique momentary energy, in which the script is only an inspiration for actors looking for the essence of characters. They often reject events in favour of registering a „spiritual state" (the concept of slow cinema) - if this happens during the previs, there is a risk that it will not be captured again in the final film. On the other hand, I certainly believe that every rehearsal with the camera and actors, or filming rough takes fr serve the cause and I am in favour of that. If you can practice the rhythm of a story that is so important for your personal creative style, it would be great. I just wanted you to know that you have the backing of friends and supporters of your ideas!

Although I don't like to write letters, I felt an impulse, because we need to fight for the better future.

*Warm regards,
Wojciech Staroń*

What inspired me in the New Production Model is the systemic change of thinking about the microbudget film making. This model is not just about trying to make a film for less money, but it is related to a series of changes which make this kind of production feasible. Feasible not only from financial perspective, but also from the point of view of well-prepared production. The process of financing is demanding - collecting the funds sometimes requires a few years of effort. In order to make good films one has to gain experience and learn in such a way as not to make the same mistakes in further productions. That is difficult to attain, when the time between projects amounts to several years. By a series of changes I understand the organization of work on a film in a system that allows a step-by-step implementation of assumptions with full awareness of capabilities and limitations of a microbudget film. The organizational and executive issues are tightly interconnected, leading to a common goal. Production is prepared in such a way as to perform the planned process, despite limited funds. Not every film has to be a masterpiece. Not all films are created with a commercial success in mind, and the success is not measured with the box office result only. There are films worth making and we should create conditions for them to be made. The appearance of such tools as Cinebus gives us the opportunity to work in professional conditions and to acquire the most important things: the hands-on experience and the skill of team working. It is worth testing and developing such tools as well as to learn new ways for achieving not only savings, but also better quality of the films.

Magdalena Kamińska (Balapolis)





