

# **Cinematic Careers in and of Shadows**

## **Career-Making among Cinematographers and Film Editors in the Danish Film Industry**

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Creativity at Work:

**Cinematic careers in and of shadows:  
career-making among  
cinematographers and film editors in  
the Danish film industry**

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## Abstract

This chapter analyzes subjective and objective dimensions of developing a career to a large extent based on one or several strong dyadic relationships to directors who invariably overshadow editors and cinematographers, and the personal and professional advantages (maybe even necessity) and dilemmas encountered in this process. We focus on processes of reputation, but above all, association. With regard to association we examine its two-fold dimensions. On the one hand we look at dynamics inherent in the dyadic relationship (relationship-internal dynamics) as these are central to both subjective experience of one's career (i.e. meaningfulness, quality of working life, ambitions, and accomplishments), as well as its more objective trajectories.

## Keywords

Career coupling, professional collaboration, subjective career, job satisfaction

# Cinematic careers in and of shadows: career-making among cinematographers and film editors in the Danish film industry

Chris Mathieu & Iben Sandal Stjerne

## Introduction

Only true film enthusiasts would say 'Tonight I'm going to see the new Roger Deakins or Pietro Scalia film' or 'I wish my local arthouse theatre would do a Sven Nykvist, Vittorio Storaro, Dede Allen or Thelma Schoonmaker retrospective so I could see his or her best camera or editing work on the big screen all in one evening.'<sup>1</sup> Though cinematographers and editors can win Oscars and other prestigious prizes, these occupational categories rank definitely behind directors and actors and actresses, and probably behind producers, screenwriters and composers as well, in public name recognition. Despite the lack of public recognition, these occupations are absolutely central to the 'visual cluster'<sup>2</sup> in film production, and their incumbents work intimately with the director on (cinematographers) and off (editors) set.

This chapter analyzes subjective and objective dimensions of developing a career to a large extent based on one or several strong dyadic relationships to directors who invariably overshadow editors and cinematographers, and the personal and professional advantages (maybe even necessity) and dilemmas encountered in this process. We focus on processes of reputation, but above all, association. With regard to association we examine its two-fold dimensions. On the one hand we look at dynamics inherent in the dyadic relationship (relationship-internal dynamics) as these are central to both

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<sup>1</sup> To make the point about the relative anonymity of these major cinematographers and editors in film history, and the point made later that the careers of cinematographers and editors are largely associated with well-known directors, Deakins (cinematographer) is primarily known for his work with Joel and Ethan Coen, Scalia's editing with Oliver Stone and Ridley Scott; Storaro with Bertolucci, Beatty and Coppola; Nykvist with Bergman; Schoonmaker with Scorsese; and Allen with Arthur Penn.

<sup>2</sup> Editors also edit and sync the audio dialogue.

subjective experience of one's career (i.e. meaningfulness, quality of working life, ambitions, and accomplishments), as well as its more objective trajectories. On the other hand we look at how the perceptions and actions of actors external to the dyadic relationship are informed by the existence of the given dyadic association (relationship-external dynamics). Reputation in this study is dealt with as assessments focused primarily on characteristics of the individual editor or cinematographer. The characteristics usually weighed by externals as we will see below have to do with three parameters: artistic capacity; ease of collaboration (is the person easy or difficult to work with); and whether the individual helps keep time and financial budgets. While these evaluations are of individuals, they are based on assessments of the work done in collaboration with the directors who are party to the dyadic relationships. Thus individual reputation and dyadic association are intertwined. Despite this we retain a restricted, individual-based definition of reputation in order to allow us to isolate and focus on the dynamics of association.

Both structural and individual-based factors play into the processes we examine. On the structural side, the cinematographer, director and editor are distinct roles in the production process (though one person can assume more than one role), distinct artistic aesthetic and knowledge spheres, areas of distinct technical competence, distinct leadership roles in the production process, but also mutually interdependent and close enough that full autonomy is rarely granted or experienced, and bi-directional exchange of ideas and judgments is the rule. Though producers do the ultimate hiring, directors are often given a large role in choosing these key collaboration partners. Thus directors often make these hiring decisions (though producers and the Danish Film Institute [DFI]<sup>3</sup> might also have suggestions or demands). This hiring dimension further exacerbates asymmetric power and dependence relations, in addition to the structural and cultural privileging of the director in relation to cinematographers and editors.

A final structural factor is the one we opened this paper with. The director role is more central to the filmmaking process, as the formal title – director, and informal nickname ‘helmsman’ for the role connote. This role, especially in most European productions means that directors are often either originators or founders of the project, or brought in early in the development of the project, and thus are invited, expected and able to form the project in accordance with their wishes and visions. In general, the director role entails the prerogative to make the ultimate creative and artistic decisions in film projects. Based on this structurally central role in the production process as well as the cultural privilege associated with the role, directors are almost

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<sup>3</sup> The Danish Film Institute co-finances selected film productions in Denmark and its consultants take a co-producer role, which can include personnel decisions.

invariably more well-known within and outside the branch. Auteur theory encapsulates the most extreme form of cultural and structural privileging of the director (Caughie 1996; Hicks & Petrova 2006; Staiger 2003). Though auteur theory still exists as a privileging discourse and operative ideology in several contexts, there is also wide recognition that filmmaking is a complex team process requiring specialist contributions from a myriad of technical, managerial and artistic persons and occupations.

Though the group or team nature of filmmaking is both recognized and has received a great degree of attention in film production research, the orientation of this chapter is different and more elementary. Focus here is on the dyadic dimension of collaboration, which is more intimate, immediately interpersonal, and face-to-face of a more intensive nature (Turner 2002). This focus recognizes the general and particular hierarchies and dependence between occupational roles and artistic professions, as well as the role that personal resources, whether personality or socially based (such as esteem, reputation, authority) play in informing the on-going interaction and specific events in dyadic interaction. Naturally, dyadic relations do not play out in social and cultural vacuums; the focus on the dyadic relation is thus a focus on primary interaction and/or consideration that always has a wider social base. The specifics of the variation between occupational dyadic relationship between directors and cinematographers and editors respectively will be elaborated below.

This study is based in-depth career history interviews with 8 Danish cinematographers and 10 film editors. All 18 could be considered among the elite in their profession, in terms of longevity (remaining in work over a long period of time), frequency (working regularly – at least two films a year) and the prestige of the projects that they work on (major production of an artistic and/or commercial nature), with the primary part of their career based in feature filmmaking. The interviews lasted between one and a half to four hours, with most between two to three hours. The sample comprises filmworkers who have been engaged in at least 5 productions, though some have been engaged in over 100 projects and have nearly 50 years of industry experience. The sample comprises of largely the elite in these occupations over the past 20 years, and were purposely selected on this basis as they were assumed to have the most to say about career and changes in the industry. Thus, the interviewees by and large are some of those most successful in fashioning a career and remaining employed in the branch over an extended period of time. As the Danish film industry is quite small and intimate, protecting the anonymity of the participants is difficult. In order to do so, we use only the terms ‘an editor’ or ‘a cinematographer’ throughout the paper, as giving them fictitious names or designations such as ‘editor A’ would quickly lead to building profiles of the individual respondents which would make

them easy to identify. Likewise, we use the terms s/he and her/his in order to mask the sex of the respondent for the same reasons.

#### Career coupling and repeat collaboration

Terms such as coat-tailing and piggybacking are used in academic and everyday discourses to connote processes whereby one individual or groups 'rides' its association with another individual or group, for better or for worse.<sup>4</sup> In studies of creative industries, the phenomenon is primarily explored in terms of 'career coupling' (Wagner 2006), as well as repeat collaboration. The former has a socially aware dyadic focus, the latter more of a team or group focus.

Wagner's (2006) concept of career coupling is helpful for our purposes as it explores how careers are made among elite musicians (and research scientists) through collaboration and the coupling of reputation in asymmetric dyads. Wagner analyzes the process whereby violin and scientific-research students form formal associations with 'masters'- violin teachers or established research scientists. She then examines the processes of both formal 'content training' - violin and performance technique, and the scientific craft - and what she calls elite socialization and the building of social capital and reputation coupling. In the career coupling process she identifies three phases: 1) the selection and matching process wherein masters and students find each other, usually based on the reputation of the master and the evidenced ability and character of the student, and initiate enduring dyadic relations; 2) active collaboration in which the master and student engage in active work together, and their cooperation becomes known for the wider environment; and 3) passive collaboration wherein the names and reputations of the master and student continue to be linked though they no longer actively collaborate and have moved on, though relationships are often maintained. In sum, Wagner's career coupling concept focuses on long-term dyadic relationships, the long shadow of collaborative relationships even after active collaboration ceases, the inseparability of private emotions in professional work, and intertwined professional fates.

There are however some very significant differences between the context that Wagner (2006) explores and that examined in this chapter. The most significant difference is that Wagner examined 'master-apprentice' relationships in the same occupation or discipline, whereas we look at collaboration and career coupling between professionals in different occupations or professional spheres at the same rank within their respective professions. In other words, we look at collaboration and coupling across occupational boundaries among 'equals' each collaborator is formally a 'head of department' and has risen to the highest rank within their respective

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<sup>4</sup> As one may be closely associated with a group or individual that has fallen out of favor.

occupation, though as noted above there is an asymmetry in the ranking of these roles, occupations or professions. Thus, in our case there is not the intergenerational, intra-occupational, teacher-student dimension, but rather a situation of inter-occupational peer-collaboration.

Repeat collaboration is dealt with from several perspectives in film industry research. Some studies focus on the economic performance of films produced by a stable core (Delmestri et al 2005; Simonton 2004), others on building protective cocoons around talented, idiosyncratic maverick filmmakers (Alvarez et al 2005) but is also seen from a career perspective in terms of serial re-employment entailing a central theoretical challenge in what is supposed to be an open external labour market (Faulkner & Anderson 1987; Jones & DeFillippi 1997; O'Mahoney & Bechky 2006; Zuckerman 2005).<sup>5</sup> In a series of articles Helen Blair and collaborators (Blair 2001; 2003; Blair & Rainnie 2000; Blair et al 2001; Blair et al 2003) look at labour market processes in primarily the British but also Hollywood film industries and note the prevalence of what they call 'semi-permanent work-groups.' These groups comprise what could be called 'work-gangs' that are hierarchically organized within a single occupation or department, in which the leader, often a head of department secures work from one project to the next for his or her 'crew.' Blair explains this in terms of a logical response on part of workers to the chronic insecurity and vagaries of sequentially being challenged to find one's next job (also Menger 1999), and the convenience and security offered to producers by reducing the number of hiring activities and knowing that a crew has previously successfully collaborated, eliminating the need for even 'swift trust' (Meyerson, Weick & Kramer 1996). Blair's work focuses on collaboration within occupations. Others have looked at how repeat collaboration occurs across professional or occupational boundaries.

Bielby & Bielby's (1999) work focuses on how talent agencies (as brokerage organizations) impact career outcomes, or in more general terms, 'how mediating organizations segment the labor market for a professionalized contingent workforce' (1999: 65). Bielby & Bielby (1999) examine how in the Hollywood case, agencies 'package' whole groups of the individuals they represent - writers, producers, directors and actors - into a team or unit that is then presented to a studio (p.67). Thus, repeat collaboration in the regime Bielby & Bielby study is a function of the same personnel often being at the disposal of a talent agency, and the talent agency creating packages that group its clients into creative, cost, and status coherent packages. Faulkner &

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<sup>5</sup> Alvarez et al. (2005) also look at repeat collaboration, but the primary emphasis in their study is how maverick directors create formal structures, firms, with a key collaborator (producer) or business partner to facilitate their projects. Only slight mention (Almodóvar's 'families') is made of other non-formalized collaborative activities. Delmestri, et al (2005) also look at repeat collaboration, but primarily from the perspective of performance effects rather than the mechanisms that generate repeat collaboration.



Anderson (1987) also argue that repeat collaboration in Hollywood is due to labor market segmentation, but their explanation is primarily in terms of cumulative advantage accruing to the already successful; a feature of a narrowing market at the top of the industry for elite talent creating a small pool to select from, rather the active agency of individuals such as agents.

Zuckerman (2005) argues based on quantitative, historical data on paired collaboration in Hollywood feature film production from 1935-1995 (comprising both the height of the studio system era and the contemporary 'flexible specialization' [Christopherson & Storper 1989] era) that collaboration patterns during the 'market' flexible specialization era belie what we would expect for outcomes from a classical market. But perplexing collaboration was also found under the studio system (2005: 31), when one controls for such factors as more opportunities to repeat collaboration due to more individuals participating in more films. Zuckerman (2005: 32) thus concludes that "little seems to change" with regard to repeat collaboration despite the transition from a firm to market based system. Zuckerman explains this in terms of markets being more structured than previously or widely conceived<sup>6</sup> due primarily to restricted search processes based on beliefs that few or no better collaboration partners exist, leading to "(over) commitment" (Zuckerman 2005: 33) to one's former collaboration partners. However, Zuckerman notes that this is only a reasoned hypothesis and that "there is much room for future research that helps to identify the mechanisms that produce repeat collaboration through the market" (2005: 33).

Ebbers & Wijnberg (2009), building on Starkey et al (2000), highlight the role of the 'latent organization' and its capacity to promote and hold sufficient trust to facilitate delayed rewards as a central mechanism in repeat collaboration. In examining the relationships between producers and directors in the Dutch film industry they find that full rewards for contributions are not paid for each transaction, or at least not up front, and that rewarding takes several forms and is temporally extended into the future, frequently in terms of implicit promises of re-employment, and often in terms of promotions in terms of wage levels, to higher status ranks, on bigger budget or more prestigious projects, or on projects of the director's own initiation or choosing, or at least with greater artistic and hiring discretion. Thus, Ebbers & Wijnberg (2009) question the reality of the open, external labour market assumption in the (Dutch) film industry: 'We show that latent organizations allow for flexible contracting and rewarding practices, that create possibilities for 'semi' internal labor markets and career paths.' (p.1006)

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<sup>6</sup> While Zuckerman believes we have reason to rethink our conception of the market, he also argues that we have reason to rethink how and what outcomes we expect from firms regarding the use of their human resources, especially with regard to experimentation and shuffling (2004:33-34).

In general, film industries have been understood, portrayed and investigated as prototypical external labor market based industries as if this was synonymous with being a project based industry where projects are carried out in project-specific temporary organizations or inter-firm collaboration and where careers “move across rather than within firms” (Jones & Walsh 1997: 59). The basic assumption in the repeat collaboration literature is that re-engagement, as opposed to dis-engagement is the basic process. This image is probably given by the physical, economic and legal, but not social, emotional or cognitive disbanding of concrete project groups. Though some of the studies noted above have begun to question the accuracy of the atomistic, individual, open, skill or human capital-driven external labor market career process, the more fundamental question raised above emerges. Thus, at the basis of both this chapter and our understanding of the basic process are two rival possibilities. The current formulation of the issue is why repeat collaboration takes place in an open market setting. The alternative formulation is why repeat collaboration breaks down in a context of intense, intimate social relations. Film industries are thick with dyadic and multi-actor constellations that are more resilient and result in living collaboration than the mere ‘network’ concept acknowledges. Blair (2001) shows the operation of durable work groups, Ebbers & Wijnberg (2009) display some of the mechanisms for recurrent collaboration, and Zuckerman (2005) declares ‘over-commitment’ between collaborators in a market setting. In the following, we show both the fact of and basis for enduring collaboration and their dissolutions. We do so by borrowing from Wagner (2006) the temporal charting of phases and concept of career coupling, though modifying its details to fit our situation, and then taking up thematically central aspects of collaboration.

#### Cinematography, directing and film-editing

Before going into the analysis of collaboration and career coupling, a brief presentation of these three roles is probably helpful.

The cinematographer does or plans the actual camerawork. When the cinematographer doesn’t do the camerawork but rather designs and oversees the actual camerawork the title ‘director of photography’ (DP) is usually applied. The cinematographer/DP heads the ‘camera department’ which includes clapper/loaders, focus pullers, other camera operators, and grips. The cinematographer/DP works closely with the head of the lighting department in directing how the lighting should be set and the scenographer/set decorator and even with the wardrobe, make-up, and sound (keeping booms out of the shot and radio microphones out of visibility [also the job of wardrobe]) departments. As the camera is the central apparatus in the filming process it, and the crew around it are the hub of the filming process, the cinematographer is a central figure on set. One

cinematographer we interviewed explained the central role of their job, 'the cinematographer is the practical work leader for everything that takes time,' and another cinematographer says, 'there isn't anything worse than a cinematographer who doesn't know what to do. They totally panic over that.' In summary, everything that impacts the visual composition of the image - color, pace, composition, background, interaction, angles, etc is relevant to the cinematographer. Usually after each shot the director and the cinematographer/DP will confer on their satisfaction with the shot, and modifications to be made before possibly reshooting.

The director has the overarching authority and responsibility for the artistic direction and choices in the production process. The director heads the 'director's unit' including assistant directors, script supervision/continuity, and the digital video monitor. He or she does the instruction of the actors and actresses and her or his focus is on the story (including dialogue and sound), as well as the visual impression. The director is the 'general' on set who may devolve tasks in a mainstream or modified manner to the 'lieutenants' at his or her disposal. The 'commander-in-chief' role above the director may be held by one or several (executive) producers.

The editor puts sound and images together then cuts the segments into a coherent and effective story. Previously editors worked in editing rooms with long segments of celluloid film and assistants aiding in the process of physically handling the film. Today, most editing is done on computer, with digitalization entailing radical changes in the timing, location and physical and social setting of the editing process. Whereas the director and cinematographer/DP work on-set during principal photography (shooting the film), the editor works off set, sometimes in a trailer near the set, sometimes at an editing room thousands of kilometers away, possibly in close proximity to other editors or sound engineers or composers, or in isolation - or even at home. The editing process can take place almost in real time as the film is shot, or begin once the shooting is over. According to the editors we interviewed, the editing process usually begins while the film is still being shot and may extend months after the principal photography is concluded. Though the editor does the actual cutting and sequencing of the film, the director and/or producer(s) usually monitor or engage themselves deeply in the process and discuss or make choices.

Cinematographers, editors and directors often physically meet each other collectively in development/pre-production meetings, cast and crew parties and at premiers, but usually the director works dyadically and sequentially with the cinematographer and editor, first intensively with the cinematographer on set, and then with the editor during the editing process. By most accounts, and preference, it is rare that the editor visits the set, and virtually unheard of that the cinematographer visits the editing room (except

possibly during the grading process). As one editor says, 'They [the editing room and on-set shooting] are two different worlds ... I don't want to know how much bother they've had [with the filming] ... What is the picture and what does it say? That is what I need to know.' Another editor says that his/her primary director calls from the set and says 'now I'm sitting here and going through hell so that you can have fun later.' Cinematographers on the other hand frequently comment that editors sit in dark rooms and miss all the action and adventure on set. In general, there is a great degree of respect over the three functions and they recognize their mutual dependence and 'obligations.' In the words of a cinematographer, 'Editors are intelligent, reflecting people. My job is to make sure that in the editing process there are enough pictures/shots so that the editor both for the film in general and within scenes can do things differently than in the script – so that flexibility is available.' Cinematographers and editors may have direct contact with each other if a need for this arises, but usually it goes via the director.

One cinematographer describes the essence of being a good cinematographer as being able 'to capture the visions of the director, both technically and artistically and be able to convey that vision through practical work that on the screen is the expression that the director wanted. While at the same time one can heighten that expression, so as a collaborative partner the expression can be even better than what the director wanted.'

In describing the filmmaking process one cinematographer puts it this way 'A film is made three times, it's made as a script, then in the filming a new process starts where we come in as cinematographers [along with] the world of reality because the sun is to shine and it doesn't that day so there is a redefinition of the story, actors suddenly have opinions, etc, etc. And then when it comes to the editing process it doesn't matter what's in the script because the only thing that exists is the material that is shot, and then a whole new process begins that's called make a film out of the material that is shot.'

Though the director is the privileged role, age and experience may play a role in both relations in general and in adjudicating specific situations. The fact that the director role is a more comprehensive role leads both to more and less authority in particular circumstances. As one cinematographer explains,

in general directors make fewer films than we do as cinematographers and that means that we have a greater experience base to draw upon when we talk about things standing there during filming, so there are many directors, especially those making their first film, who rely enormously on us, 'God can it be edited together in this way, what do you think', they call the editor and talk to their cinematographers. And there it's important to have the ability to see into a scene and it can be insanely complicated, you have so many people walking around in a room and moving, which angle are you going to shoot it

from so that the geography in the room isn't voided or if you want to void the geography of the room how do you do that?

#### Phases in the collaboration process

As noted above, Wagner (2006) identifies three phases in the career coupling process. Initiating contact, active collaboration, and passive collaboration. In this section we will schematically examine three junctures in the overall collaboration process - 1) commencing or initiating collaboration; 2) renewing collaboration; and 3) ending active collaboration. In later sections we will look more in more detail thematically at the active collaboration process and its perceived implications on career and personal matters.

As will become apparent below, collaboration is most accurately conceived as relationships rather than transactions. The terms used in several interviews drew more on marriage and domestic partnership analogies than employer-employee or workplace task collaboration descriptions. In other words, as noted above, the work between cinematographers and editors and the director is highly intense, temporally extended, personal, and emotionally charged in contrast to a depersonalized exchange of qualified services for (economic) compensation. In such a situation, termination or disengagement becomes the primary and interesting question, rather than renewal. This is the case for collaborations that have been initiated. Where 'market circumstances' can be taken to prevail is in the process of finding and initiating collaboration, which is the first process we will look at below.

#### Initiating collaboration

Structurally we see different patterns in initiating collaboration based on a couple of parameters. One parameter has to do with collaboration within or over age/experience cohorts, and the other parameter has to do with whether contact between the collaborators was significantly socially mediated by a third party or more or less direct contact. These parameters can be combined in all fashions, but certain combinations are more prevalent due to biases among central actors in the film financing and greenlighting process. The following possibilities are available:

Collaboration within a cohort (older/experienced-older/experienced;  
younger/inexperienced-younger/inexperienced)

Collaboration across cohorts (younger/inexperienced cinematographer or editor-older experienced director; younger/inexperienced director -older experienced cinematographer or editor)

To each one of these possibilities one could add whether their initial contact was mediated or direct.

In practice certain combinations are more prevalent than others for understandable reasons. One of the more frequent means by which a

collaborative relationship is initiated is mediated contact between experienced cinematographers/editors and inexperienced directors. As feature films are generally expensive and risky endeavors (even normal Danish features can cost between USD 2-5 million) both private and institutional producers seek to limit risks by making sure that experienced and reliable individuals are in key roles, especially with a debuting or less experienced director. In the words of one editor, 'with feature films, they cost so much money and are such a big machine that one often says to a debuting director that one wants the director to be accompanied by more seasoned people to be on the safe side. They want some people to have experience with making features. ... Its still the case that the DFI can well go in and say, which is crazy in itself, that we cannot have that editor on the project, they've done that a few times, or that cinematographer because they don't feel secure, and they need to feel secure.' As stated here, though directors are usually given the right to choose those they work closely with in 'A' functions, i.e. their editors and cinematographers, producers can and do go in and veto and make decisions if they feel there isn't the right balance of experience in a constellation. This is why one finds a preponderance of inter-generational collaborative constellations or constellations with only experienced core personnel. In some cases, young talented directors may actively seek out a particular experienced editor or cinematographer for a number of reasons. In one case, an experienced cinematographer who had worked with one of Denmark's most important directors in the post-War period, [director YY], explained that he was chosen by a young emerging director specifically because he had worked with YY and the young director used the cinematographer to establish a living lineage to YY. Likewise, an editor explained how s/he initiated his collaboration with one of his/her primary partners, 'S/He was an admirer of NN and I was his/her editor, so I think that it was that way around that I came to know him/her, and s/he came to know me as NN's editor.' Another editor was chosen by an inexperienced director due to her/his artistic reputation, 'I think its so that people have a conception of about what one is good at. I don't think [the inexperienced director] would have asked me if s/he was to do an action comedy, but s/he was going to do a film on sorrow and dealing with sorrow. So that is the reputation I have. The sensitive one.'

One also finds situations in which an experienced director searches for younger collaborators. Sometimes this is done via recommendations, viewing work, or promoting someone who had a junior role. A cinematographer states that a renowned director, after early in his/her directorial career making films with an iconic cinematographer, 'was looking for young cinematographers' and initially asked another cinematographer who couldn't do it, so the director chose the young cinematographer who was a couple years out of film school and 'was out as an assistant every summer' adding, 'We were only six [cinematographers] who come out [of the National Film School of Denmark]

every other year so there weren't that many of us to choose from.' This cinematographer called this initial collaboration 'a revolution for me, both career-wise and expression-wise.' This quote exemplifies the central role of the national film school in Denmark as an elite educational institution both in terms of restricting the numbers of entrants in the Danish film industry with this prestigious training which, as implied in the quote, makes only its graduates legitimate candidates for topflight positions. The other thing worth noting is the manner in which such collaboration literally sweeps the young entrants into the film industry both artistically and career-wise up to another level. This can be done when a previously established collaboration partnership breaks down (either due to a falling out, or a desire to try a new path, or the partner retires or begins directing, etc) and an opportunity for renewal or change presents itself. Several interviewees state that some directors feel a need to 'reinvent' themselves on occasion, either out of boredom, artistic stagnation, or a series of flops, and choosing a younger editor or cinematographer can be a means of revitalizing one's work. In other cases the reasons can even have primarily to do with physical conditioning. One cinematographer explained that after working as an assistant for a director who liked to film running chase scenes and be highly mobile, he was hired as the 'A' photographer in part because he could literally keep up with the pace of the filming.

Here one also finds examples of situations where an agreement is made between an experienced director and an experienced editor and the latter cannot do the job so his or her assistant or protégé is given the primary responsibility, sometimes with the promise of supervision or consultation from the experienced editor. If the inexperienced editor proves capable, then the collaborative relationship can continue. One editor began her/his collaboration with director who has been the cornerstone of his/her professional career by being hired by the primary editor as s/he could see that there was too much work to be completed by him/herself, and noted that '[director XX] and I really got on well from the very beginning. Since then I've done just about all her/his stuff, with the exception of [film YY] because I had a child then ...'.

Where relatively inexperienced crews are found is in low budget, talent-development oriented novella films, or 'outsider' projects. Sometimes these projects become hits either at the box-office or with critics, and then these young cohort constellations are sanctified (\*ref to Anne's paper in this volume) and given the opportunity to continue with greater budgets next time, despite limited experience in terms of numbers of films done. One editor describes his/her career trajectory as an effect of being put in contact with a young director through a mediator on a film school project. The 'outsider' project that the young director and editor collaborated on turned out to be a great success, 'I said yes to that film without really being asked and that has

paved the way for everything I've done since.' This in terms of both a long and intimate professional relationship with that director, but also coming out of film school on the wave of a success, 'When you come out with such a big film as it became, then you end up somewhere other than if I'd edited something else. I became visible in that way.' So here we see multiple associations for this young editor – to an innovative young director, to a successful film, to a path-breaking style. This has allowed the editor be very selective in subsequent projects undertaken, as well as granted direct admission to editing feature films directly out of film school, which is quite rare. In summing up career opportunities, this editor remarks, 'I don't know what is me and what is a result of having done [film XX].' In such situations one sees a same-generation cohort team emerge and usually remain intact over a prolonged period. Here we often see collaborations between classmates from the Danish Film School as classmates have experience in working with each other, strong social bonds and these low-stakes projects, often funded to give emerging talents a opportunity to try out their ideas and gain practical experience in an industry setting. As one editor explained how s/he started working with a former classmate at this level, 'I did XX's novella film because we went to school together and its normal to ring each other.' Thus some cohort collaborations are already established prior to entering into the commercial realm of the industry but are usually only permitted on low-cost, low risk projects in this realm.

The mediators are industry actors, as opposed to professional mediators – i.e. agents. Agents are apparently used by to gain entry into foreign feature film industries and advertising films, but not in feature films in Denmark. Notions of worth and integrity are close to hand on this issue. When talking about brokered contact, formal agents and all too active proselytizing for work are seen as degrading. One example comes from a cinematographer 'I've always had difficulty selling myself, I find it abhorrent, standing and begging for work, I've always had that philosophy that I do a good job and hope someone sees it and always see to it that what I do was good, I've never written around or mailed around or called around.' An editor echoes these sentiments, 'Maybe I should be more active in the arenas where the branch meets – like the Robert festival [the Danish Oscars] – and more active lobbying' but goes on to state that he doesn't do this even in periods where he doesn't get much work, 'They can find me if they are interested. ... There has been a period where I couldn't understand that the telephone hasn't rung. I still don't know why.'

At one level, accepting work is merely gaining employment, 'to put butter on bread' as many said. However, taking work on feature films is also seen as a first step towards a more durable relationship, and weighed seriously. One editor states that working with young directors on interesting projects that may not be high in wages or prestige is 'also an investment' as it may lead to



an ongoing and rewarding partnership, while another editor explains the process of choosing projects with a new director as very deliberate and personal:

I choose [the projects I work on] based on joy. It doesn't have to be for the script. It can be for the person. 'Who could it be exciting to sit in a room with for a half year?' You get very close to someone when you work with them. Closer than with your [domestic] partner. One can choose based on seeing someone's film that's interesting, but I still wouldn't do it if when we meet the personal chemistry isn't right. You have to feel that there is a spark or something. If you don't know each other you have to meet. I'd never say yes to do something because its just interesting in form or because there is prestige in it. If I don't really fancy sitting with that person.

Thus we see that initiating collaboration is not taken lightly, and often viewed in terms of not just the given project, but in terms of a potential extended relationship.

#### Renewing collaboration

Renewing collaboration on the next project can be everything from an active decision to a non-question. In this section we will look at affirmative answers to this question, that is to say how and why collaboration gets renewed; in the section below, we will look at how and why collaboration is broken. In many cases renewing collaboration illustrates a central point of this study - that while we usually think of the film industry as a project based industry and take the project as the tone-setting and steering unit of analysis, at least the Danish film industry, or significant dimensions of it, are relationship based, and thus continued collaboration across projects is only questioned if the relationship is questioned. This suspicion is not entirely new, as it in part lies at the basis of Starkey, et al. (2000), Ebbers & Wijnberg (2009), and Bauman (2002), but the perspectives of these studies has been on the way in which organizational resources and more or less rational talent and reliability evaluations play out, rather than interpersonal and aesthetic bonds and long term investments in a common development and working relationship.

The following explanation was offered by an editor in explaining how s/he was asked to work with an experienced director who had an established relationship with another editor, 'These relationships are so solid. Something violent has to happen if you are to change [an editor]. With [this director] it was because her/his editor was going to start directing films.'

Another editor explains the freedom to choose in this way, 'I get to try lots of different directors. I'm not obliged to only use one director, so I cannot oblige a director to use one editor. ... I get challenged by working with different directors, why shouldn't they get it by working with different editors. With the exception of [director XX - this editors long-time collaboration partner]

because s/he's satisfied [with me].' Here a general disposition towards change and artistic challenge is offered, but the importance and vitality of a special relationship is also usually affirmed. One editor stated s/he would be 'very surprised if [a specific director] did not work with him/her on the next film.' Most other editors and cinematographers state likewise that at least with specific collaboration partners, whether or not one is going to work on their next film isn't even a question. In one long-term relationship between an editor and director, renewed collaboration was never doubted, and a tinge of exclusivity pervaded the relationship when the editor states that 'It was just that I always checked with her/him when I was agreeing to edit something [for someone else].'

Despite the general understanding stated above and below about free choices and looking for newness, when specific collaborations that are experienced as OK are not renewed, feelings can be hurt and questions raised. One editor states, 'I had done some films for [director's name] and at one point s/he did some films where s/he didn't ask me to edit them... and I was very sad. But I have gotten over it. ... of course one has the right to choose the editor one wants for a given project. Maybe you are making a film where the other editor is more appropriate or you just want to try something new.'

This testifies to the strong implicit expectation of being 'renewed' especially after the intense interpersonal process of working intimately on a project. In other words, the interpersonal experience of collaboration is strong enough to shift the perspective from work/employment transaction to relationship.

Why is this the case? In part its because directors, editors and cinematographers work hard on maintain good, stimulating relationships and see a value in these relationships and 'find[ing] each other and follow[ing] each other.' But we would argue that a large part of the explanation comes from the intimate, extensive and intense nature of the collaboration activities and process. Our interviewees talked of collaboration in terms of 'putting you hands in the heart blood' of the director, work in the editing room being 'as intimate as having sex,' 'coming closer to your collaborator than your domestic partner' and often in terms of marriage. In addition to the internal dynamics of the process being extremely strong, external factors, such as meeting critical, artistic or commercial success can further solidify relationships.

#### Ending collaboration - - divorce

Based one of the primary arguments put forward in this study, why collaboration, especially enduring collaborations, ends is of central interest. Interestingly, as illustrated above, both repeat collaboration and divorce are seen as natural, accepted, and understandable, though again we see a difference between 'in principle' and 'in our case - our specific or special relationship.'

Collaborations may end for several reasons – a partner may retire or change occupations (i.e. become a director his/herself) or a director may simply not get more projects, partners may feel the above mentioned need to move on and try something new, a relationship may sour, a partner may move into a different genre or type of film or geographic location, or there might be scheduling (due to work or domestic situations) conflicts that make collaboration impossible, or that a third party, usually a producer, strongly suggests or demands a change.

As attested to above, great lengths (and frequently to one's career detriment as we will see in a following section) are gone to secure that one is available on the productions of central collaborators, explanations for not continuing collaboration include falling out of sync with each other timing-wise. In other words, schedules do not match and a project has to be passed up. This often entails a risk of new collaborative relationships being established on both parts. Thus falling out of sync can occur both in 'special' or primary relationships as well as more peripheral collaborations, but greater efforts are made to make sure one is available to work on the projects of primary collaborators, even to the extent of backing out of agreements with others.

Another reason frequently given reason is that one or both parties feel that the relationship is no longer productive and its time to move on. These can take the form of dramatic bust-up usually revolving around artistic differences or problems in the work relationship of an interpersonal nature, amicable agreements, or merely moving on without a final discussion of the matter. One editor explained the termination of a very long and successful relationship in terms of artistic dissatisfaction with the type of film that the director continued to choose to make: 'I got tired of that form of film. ... I feel our Nordic films were good, but the international films ... [were not]' adding that the two of them have not had a final reckoning on the termination of their collaboration, it just stopped. Illustrating the quality of the work relationship as a basis for dissolving a collaborative relationship an editor described the director he collaborated with early in his career as 'very complicated and headstrong about what he wants and can be 'a pain in the ass.'" The manifest reason for not collaborating with him was that 'It wasn't fun to be on his films any longer. I wouldn't develop more by working with him.' It may also have factored into his decision that at this point the editor had another major and extremely successful collaboration under way. The dissolution of this active repeat collaborative relationship didn't mean that the two never worked again, as the editor was brought in at a late stage in one more project several years later.

One cinematographer describes the professional termination of her/his up to that point successful collaboration, 'this had happened to me before with [director] XX who worked with another cinematographer on the films s/he

made later not because it didn't work well between us but in this case it was so that s/he [the cinematographer who took the place of our interviewee] was an old friend, and when s/he made [film YY – that they initiated their collaboration with] s/he needed someone who had done more at that time and I had done more at that point, but when [her/his friend] had finished his/her education and done some films, then s/he could [use her/his friend]. And that's how it is. I have a great relationship with [director XX] even today, and that's how it is and it is enormously important that they also become personal relations, ... that you can also keep work out of it.' The art and emotion of maintaining, balancing and ending relationships is central to collaboration, as we will see below, but to close this section in dramatic fashion, one interviewee describes a former collaborative partnership and the insight that emerges first when the relationship is over, or at least temporarily suspended as future collaboration was not ruled out, in this manner, '...it's a very unhealthy relationship we have or have had ... we are almost symbiotic in a bad way.'

What makes collaboration work (and endure): common language, unique understandings, personal chemistry

In this section we will look at some of the central factors that lead to the solidification of dyadic ties between directors and cinematographers and editors. Not surprisingly two things stand out as of most central importance – personal chemistry and, if not a common artistic understanding, an ability or vocabulary to discuss artistic matters.

Several of the quotes above testify to the importance of the working relationship and personal chemistry issues – that 'clicking' or getting on together right from the start is important. However, this initial 'finding each other' instance needs to be followed up by a developed interpersonal relationship in which trust, respect, challenge and developing a common collaborative framework are central, as well as, 'having fun together.'

In explaining how a collaborative relationship between a novice director and an experienced editor was initiated, the editor stated:

'I insisted that [director XX] be there all the time at the beginning because I wanted to find that language together with him/her. I wanted to know what s/he like and what s/he wanted. Instead of pursuing something really nice and then the director coming in and not feeling that it is right. It is much more fun to create it together. But now it's the case that s/he's almost never here because we have [through their past collaboration] have found a language together. I [now] clip long scenes and have a long consultation and then it is in the last two intensive weeks that we make the big decisions together.'

This same editor explains how a previous, long term relationship functioned:

[name of a famous Danish director] is the one who has seen the filming and if it takes place way out in the countryside we talk on the phone during the lunch break. There has to be confidence so that when I say that its OK its based on her/his criteria that I say its OK. Or if I say the acting isn't good enough in a scene, and s/he won't be satisfied with it, s/he has to trust this and go back and shoot it again. It is the partnership that is built up. We know each other so well because we made so many films together that when I say so, s/he knows what it means'

In other words, the partnership comprises of a role separation, a physical and social separation that allows the editor to focus on the 'material itself' rather than being influenced by the difficulty or bother in getting the sequence actually shot and the reactions of those on set. However, as the editor makes clear, it is the director's wishes and criteria that the editor is to make his or her evaluations upon. Thus one could say that this formulation of the editor's role is of being a second, distanced or separated 'ego' of the director as opposed to an 'alter' in this case. This editor and director worked together for over a decade, built up a trust relationship and a cinematic language, which has entailed both experimentation, gaining understanding, and refining a particular cinematic expressive or narrative form, and condensation in a cinematic language.

In this we see the bases of mutual trust and respect - the establishment of a common frame of reference and vocabulary to discuss matters, a desire to both innovate and build on what has previously been accomplished, as well as an acceptance of roles and the principle that it is the director's vision and desire that needs to be met, and the 'good of the film' that must be paramount.

This doesn't mean that subservience on part of the editor or cinematographer is what makes relationships work. One editor states, 'There is always a fight over who decides. And that's why it demands so much trust on part of the director because you are sitting alone so much. That is why it is difficult with those splinter new, fresh collaborations. It takes time to get to know each other. A long time. You really hold onto those who you find.' This is backed up by another editor, 'getting on with the people you work with is decisive for whether they come back, but this doesn't mean that I sell out a centimeter. On the contrary, its wrong. When you are the person you are and dare to stand by what you believe in people can feel that. And you get close to people when you sit in the editing room, incredibly close, its just like being married.' Tempering these exchanges is what's often termed a professional code or principle - it's the story that matters - expressed in the 'kill your darlings' cliché. This means individual accomplishment and flair has to be sublimated to the greater good, that the best shots or pictures may be beautiful and creative but they might not work in the totality, the shot might be too

beautiful, attract too much attention, and thus detract from the overall storytelling.

Sometimes its less of a common language than a work routine or principle of practice that makes the collaboration function well. One editor who works steadfastly with one of the most innovative directors in Denmark describes the hows and whys of their way of editing in the following manner:

And I also think that one of the reasons why people want to work with me is that things don't end in conflicts; you shouldn't sit there and discuss things to death, you should just try it, do it. I leaned this rather quickly and especially the new technology makes it possible. We have developed a way of working together, because its exhausting for the director to make it into a discussion club. And you never really know, often the really good solution lies directly adjacent to the really bad solution. With [the innovative director] we try it even if the other thinks it's a bad idea. And then you try it anyway and you think, yeah that was pretty bad, but just there, there was an element that was really great. And then you try something. And precisely this aspect is really essential for making the collaboration much more pleasurable. ... Its also the case that as an editor you create the space between the editor and the director where nothing is too stupid and everything can be tried. One isn't smarter than that. Often its good, even though you don't think so initially, and you just have to be open to saying its good when it is good.

Thus what is essential here is creating an openness whereby both the director and editor feel comfortable making any daft suggestion, a willingness to try it, give it an honest look, an interest in finding what is good and capable of being developed upon, even if it is just a minute aspect, and a willingness to recognize what is good despite initial skepticism.

Again, what by most accounts develops relationships is the surreptitious intense, emotional engagement that is pervasive in these dyadic work collaborations. As one editor says, 'One quickly comes to talk about private things in the film branch. And sometimes when you've worked together with people you think they are friends and then you don't see them for a half year. So it is a branch that is more based on friendship than others. And it is very intensive processes and you talk about human things when you talk about feelings in film. That is after all what you look for and have to relate to.' In other words, the strength of the relationships is integrally related to the nature of the work that these people carry out together.

(In)Dependent attention and reputation – working in the shadow of directors

Though stable partnerships play very important roles in artistic and employment contexts, they are rarely sufficient in themselves to sustain an adequate livelihood or satisfying professional worklife for cinematographers and editors. While enduring partnerships have a great deal of intrinsic value

for both parties, especially for cinematographers and editors these relationships are a form of capital that is parlayed into other opportunities. The nature of work periods (much shorter for cinematographers and editors than directors) makes it essential for editors and cinematographers to work on more projects than directors. A cinematographer puts it this way, 'One is never hired for more than four months at a time, so it is important to get lots of telephone calls for all types of things.' All types of things usually means feature films, documentaries and advertisement films.

Positive aspects for one's career of enduring relationships.

Successful collaborations bring visibility and both quality and quantity matter. Collaboration on strong, successful projects makes one visible in the film community, as such projects are more widely seen and discussed in the film community, and who is on the cast and crew becomes investigated and circulated widely. Likewise if one works with someone who does films fairly frequently, one is also at the centre of attention more often as almost all films attain a degree of exposure when released, as well as physical opportunities to meet potential employers at premiers, press events, and parties. Here, one's name and work become discussed, if only for a fleeting moment, but more fleeting moments etch one's name in the minds of industry players. These opportunities and exposure are more bi-products of collaborations and more linked to products than associative relationships per se. However, as we saw in the section on initiating collaboration above, some editors and cinematographers are sought out primarily due to their association with a given director. Likewise, once a positive collaborative relationship is established, as witnessed to above, contractual renewal, and thus further work is almost automatically guaranteed. These are the primary manners in which objective careers are supported and propelled by collaborative association. These are no doubt significant, and formally the basis of subjective career considerations, but it is probably at the subjective level that enduring collaboration is most important. It is in these long-term, intimate relationships where our respondents reported making most of their masterpieces and having the most artistically and personally satisfying work experiences. In other words, these dyadic collaborations are the primary sources of artistic and worklife satisfaction, as these are the relationships where mutual respect, trust and artistic and creative zeniths are reached.

These strong associations can also bring negative career development consequences.

Enduring, and paradoxically, successful collaborations can also have negative impacts on objective career development.

One editor with a long and successful collaboration, that also led her/him onto projects abroad, explained the negative consequences of his, at that point primary partnership:

Two things happened. First, I had a reputation ... of being a clever editor, and people wanted to [work with me] but they didn't because they thought, 's/he only makes films with [director YY], s/he doesn't have time. ... producers and people in the industry say you can forget about calling him/her because s/he won't have time or not be interested ... and this was deeply irritating because you also have to have butter on your bread. We also need to earn money. ...[and] there were periods where I turned down offers for things because I couldn't get out of them later if [the big productions with his primary collaborator] the other film started and I'd rather do that film.'

The two negative things that are described above are the establishment of a supposition that one is either too busy with one's primary collaborator or other collaborators in the same league, or that s/he wouldn't be interested in minor, less prestigious or lower budget projects, or domestic (as opposed to international) projects. Thus, a reputation gets built, due to no fault of one's own and largely beyond one's ability to impact the reputation, due to one's association with a top-flight director. The second process is that one spends time and effort creating space or 'availability,' turning down other projects and maybe even in that way exacerbating one's image of 'untouchable' in order to work on the projects of one's primary collaborator. This, as noted above, cuts into one's ability to earn a living. One strategy used by some is to say yes to a couple of projects that are slated to begin about the same time, whereas others are wary of this strategy. In the words of one editor, 'Its bad to say yes to two films that are slated for the same time. That's bad. You just don't do that. ... if you do that to a director who you work allot with you can be quite sure that you won't work together again after that.'

The air of exclusivity is also felt by several cinematographers. A couple of cinematographers and editors as well describe how they consciously keep themselves in the running for all sorts of projects by doing low budget productions as well. One cinematographer states, 'I also try to do small budget stuff. I know I have had a reputation for using allot of resources, so I consciously chose to do a small budget New Danish Screen productions [a low-budget, talent development ordinance] to show that I still could do good work on a small budget. That I could elevate the expression even on a small budget, I consciously chose to do this.' An editor has experienced the same situation, and employs the same strategy, 'It can be a disadvantage that they think s/he's so fine, s/he has done so much, s/he's so experienced that s/he surely isn't interested or s/he'd need a salary that we can't afford. I've heard that people have said that.' So this editor deliberately takes work on small, low or no budget films (with other collaborators) to correct that image.

To sum up this section on life in the shadows of directors on can ask how satisfied these editors and cinematographers are with life in the shadows. By and large, they seem quite satisfied with their station in the film production



process and hierarchy, as few express a desire to step out of the shadows and into the limelight – that is to say, move into the directors chair. A couple have tried it and returned, either due to lack of success or preference for their previous occupation. Most however are satisfied with have the opportunity to contribute with specialist artistic contribution without the broad ranging responsibilities and time commitments that directors have. Most find latitude in their professional capacities for their expressive needs – and like to be able to focus on what they have chosen, are trained for, and do well on a greater number of projects.

### Conclusion

This chapter has sought to accomplish two things. One is to explore the objective and subjective career dynamics of working across occupational lines in 'A' functions on film projects, but in the shadow of film directors, especially focusing on the implications of more enduring collaborative relationships. The second purpose has been, on the basis of some of the central findings of this study to contribute to the debate about changing how we should look at the employment process in the film industry (at least in Denmark and similar contexts). How fluid or durable are the bases for collaboration, that is to say the underlying social relations? Are they transactional in the economic sense – one off exchange relationships or transactional in Emirbayer's (1997) sense – they transcend and span specific actions and episodes and comprise an enduring relationship where termination is the critical question not repetition?

Repeat collaboration among these central figures in the film production process is underpinned by several factors. The most significant of these appear to be the nature of the production process itself, which entails, intimate, temporally extensive and intensive interaction and work. The nature of the content of, at least a great deal of the films made in Denmark, necessitates a high degree of discussion and debate of topics of very personal, human, and heartfelt natures. On a purely interpersonal level, this kind of contact can be expected to build close bonds that result in both interpersonal identification and respect, and thereby also frequently renewed collaboration. While our sample is small and this question was not the focus of our investigation, based on our interview material, we would venture to say that the nature of the content, as well as the production process, of film probably plays a role in enduring partnerships, which apparently are based on strong, confiding, personal professional role relationships. We probably need a new denominator for the relationships we see here, which are not personal friendship relationships, as many of the people we have talked to state that they do not socially see their enduring partners outside of work, but neither do they have what usually is thought of as a professional relationship which is characterized by depersonalized detachment from the other on an

emotional level. These relationships are characterized by their intensity of mutual affirmation and occasionally disagreement, respect and trust, and deeply personal confiding and exchange. So in order to fully understand the nature of this feature of career making in film, we need to appreciate the unique character of the relations that collaboration between these functions entails.

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