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Decision-making in film production: Applying paradox theory and cognitive science to Finnish film production

Abstract

The success of a film depends on producers and creative teams making correct decisions during the production process. Decisions in film production create tension that arises from the internal organization of the companies, the nature of the film product and the type of decision-making processes before and during filming. Our aim is to focus on decision-making as a critical issue for production research. Furthermore, we highlight the distinctive features of the Finnish film context that may influence the way decisions are made. To this end, we combine our theoretical review with comments and reflections from an in-depth interview with the Finnish producer Jussi Rauntamäki about his multiple works. Our conceptual framework combines paradox theory with insights from film studies and cognitive science that can be used in studies aimed at unravelling paradoxes in the context of Finnish film production that are brought to light in the interview.

Keywords

filmmaking; paradoxical tensions; implicit and explicit decisions; dual reasoning theories; Aamufilm; production processes

Decision-making is a critical process during film production. Producers, art directors, scriptwriters and other project members need to make difficult decisions at every stage of the production process. Early production planning involves deciding on locations, cast and music, to name a few specifics; later, during the actual shooting, numerous aspects must be planned, decided and executed. Many of these decisions are made on the spot in the face of unexpected events. Despite this critical role in production, empirical research devoted to unravelling decision-making processes in film production is still scarce, and even more so in the context of national film production. In this article, we focus on decision-making as a critical issue for production research. Furthermore, we highlight distinctive features of the Finnish film context that may influence the way decisions are made.

The Scandinavian film and television industries, including Finland's, have been steadily expanding thanks to genres such as Nordic noir and the increasing popularity of high-quality local productions (Kääpä and Hjort 2020: 90; Moshe and Moshe-Cohen 2023: 175). This expansion has had the effect of weakening the previously strong tendency of European film in general to prioritize artistic expression, storytelling and auteur-driven cinema over commercial considerations (Spicer 2019: 2). Despite the continued importance of auteur films, the traditional idea of European 'art cinema' has been replaced by the concept of 'quality' films, which exist in a space between serious art films and popular mainstream films where the distinction between arthouse and mainstream is blurred (Bergfelder 2015; Spicer 2019: 2). These changes have been fuelled by digital technologies and access to global markets, leading Finnish producers to adapt their strategies to include streaming services, produce popular series and target international markets (Grundström et al. 2020; Vermilä and Keinonen 2021). Changes have also been facilitated by robust public funding systems to support the film industry. Organizations such as the Finnish Film Foundation, France's Centre National du Cinéma (CNC) and Germany's Filmförderungsanstalt (FFA) provide grants and subsidies (Jäckel 2019). In Finland, the Finnish Film Foundation plays an important role, providing significant funding for film production and development. Despite this, the Finnish film industry is known for its inherent uncertainty, tight deadlines and the need to deal with unexpected problems, all of which can stifle creativity and success (Grundström et al. 2020). As the industry has become more financially successful, research on how these new conditions affect the creative process has increased (Redvall 2012; Spicer 2017). However, specific analyses of how the new conditions affect the decision-making process and the tensions and paradoxes they create during production are still lacking.

The present analysis is based on an overview of literature on cognitive decision-making and paradox theories in the cultural industries as they apply to film production within the Finnish context. We combine our review with comments and reflections from an in-depth, in-person interview with the internationally recognized Finnish producer Jussi Rauntamäki, known for his work on critically acclaimed films such as *Taulukauppiaat* (*The Painting Sellers*) (Kousmanen 2010), *Hymyilevä mies* (*The Happiest Day in the Life of Olli Mäki*) (Kousmanen 2016), *Hytti nro 6* (*Compartment Number 6*) (Kousmanen 2021) and *Mykkätrilogia* (*Silent Trilogy*) (Kousmanen 2024). He is the owner and CEO of Aamu Film Company, based in Helsinki, and has established himself as one of Finland's most respected film producers, known for his dedication to crafting character-driven dramas that resonate

with audiences and critics. Films produced by Rauntamäki often explore themes of human relationships, personal growth and the complexities of life and have consistently received praise for their strong storytelling, compelling characters and masterful use of the Finnish setting. His films have been recognized at prestigious film festivals like Cannes and the Berlinale; he has also received several nominations for the Jussi Award, Finland's equivalent of the Oscars. Rauntamäki's company focuses on building lasting relationships with dedicated directors, customizing each production to the director's personal vision and unique artistic voice.

In our interview, we asked Rauntamäki, as a prominent representative of Finnish film, to reflect on some paradoxes based on his own experience and to highlight them by providing concrete examples from his career. In addition, as a conceptual framework, we incorporated two theoretical approaches to decision-making, paradox theory from management research (Smith and Lewis 2011) and dual process decision theories from cognitive science (Kahneman 2003).

Paradox and dual process theories

Paradox theory emerged as a response to the increasing complexity of organizations and their continuous need to confront competing demands and make decisions in uncertain and changing contexts. A paradox is defined as a set of contradictory elements that coexist over time (Smith and Lewis 2011: 382). In human organizations, paradoxes are experienced as tensions when contra-dictions emerge; they are faced by engaging in decisions and actions involving interactions between team members. Importantly, decision-making has been analysed under the lens of paradox theory for specific creative industries such as music (Tilson et al. 2021) and innovation in general (Miron-Spektor and Erez 2017). A recent systematic review provides a detailed analysis of the tensions arising from continuous demands for innovation in creative enterprises and their effect on managerial relations and the creative nature of the enterprise (Strøm et al. 2020). Although decisions in film production are in many cases subject to uncertainty and prone to contradictions and tensions, the paradox approach has not been used systematically to study decision-making during actual film production.

Similarly, the dual process reasoning framework has been useful in other domains dealing with managerial decisions (Keller and Sadler-Smith 2019). Dual process theories distinguish between System 1, whose operations are fast, automatic, nonverbal and associated with emotion and feeling (intuition), and System 2, whose operations are slow, intentional, primarily verbal, relatively emotion-free and characterized by careful rational analysis. Rationality and intuition are assumed to coexist and interact during decision-making, with their relative weights depending on contextual conditions, individual dispositions and expertise (Kahneman 2003: 1451). The dual process framework has been useful in providing theoretical analyses of decision-making in managerial and creative contexts (Keller and Sadler-Smith 2019) and has also been instrumental in providing concepts and methodologies for assessing rational and intuitive decisions in organizational contexts (e.g. Akinci 2014), and consequently it is also a useful tool for analysing film production. In our discussion below, we borrow ideas and approaches from paradox and dual processes decision theories and apply them to the film context. Integrating cognitive and managerial concepts and methods into the context

of film production may help guide further research into decision-making in film production.

Our approach is grounded in the idea that the very nature of the film product and the organization of the industry determine the paradoxes and decision-making processes that take place during production. First, the fact that film production can be considered both a commercial enterprise and a form of art and the inherent ambiguity and subjectivity of defining 'film quality' (Lampel et al. 2000: 264) influence every aspect of decision-making. Second, the means and tools to achieve high quality *and* marketable products are challenging, since they involve many different actors in complex work relationships (entrepreneurial issues). Third, understanding the complexity of decision-making in film production requires the consideration of implicit (intuitive) and explicit (rational) criteria. Hence, we consider these three aspects in our interview with Rauntamäki and in our theoretical discussion. Finally, we argue that even though many of the decision-making processes and the paradoxes arising from them are common to most film production companies, the context in which the company operates may influence collaborative relations and the type of leadership on decision-making. Therefore, we frame our discussion in the context of a particular Finnish production company (Aamu Films), introducing comments and reflections from our interview with Finnish producer Rauntamäki. We do not consider this single case as empirical data to validate the approach but rather as an in-context example of the usefulness of the approach to identify specific research questions that take contextual factors into account.

Paradoxes related to the nature of the film product

Cultural products typically involve tensions between the competing demands of art and commerce and a characteristic drive for novelty and innovation (Caves 2000; Lampel et al. 2000: 266), and the film industry is no exception. Like many fields of art and culture, the film industry is sometimes considered to be creating 'art for art's sake', and this can determine the nature of commercial relationships, attitudes, work styles and decision criteria, sometimes relegating the economic dimension to a lesser role. However, to survive, production companies need to carefully consider the commercial value of their products, including their market shares, in a highly competitive field. Balancing artistic/ creative and economic criteria, or aesthetic novelty and adaptation to 'market needs', generates a high degree of uncertainty and tension in film production, since the evaluation of the final film product becomes a very complex and subjective exercise (see Antal et al. 2015 for an in-depth discussion of this issue).

The paradox between creative and economic criteria in film production originates from the fact that the market value of a film does not always coincide with its artistic value. Thus, an artistically high-quality film might not be appreciated by the market. This clearly introduces strong tensions in film projects in which the desired balance between market and non-market values must be defined when the project starts. Films, like other cultural products, are experiential in the sense that their value comes from the subjective experiences (perception and emotions) that they generate in the audience, critics and other evaluative agents (Lampel et al. 2000: 264). Many features of the film – photography, music, script and so on – affect these experiences, sometimes altering them in unpredictable ways, making it difficult for producers to

envision the value of the film and how it will be received by the audience or critics. Balancing the desire for artistic values with the necessity of obtaining resources from the industry requires achieving an optimal balance and considering both art and business, since quality is often linked to the availability of monetary resources (Alvarez et al. 2005).

While empirical studies on the paradoxical nature of film production and the consequences for decision-making are scarce, the few studies on the topic have been specifically designed to address the tensions between art, innovation and business as central for entrepreneurs in the film industry (Pisotska and Gurses 2023). Obviously, the economic and social context in which the industry operates plays an important role in the strategies used to address these tensions.

In the Finnish context, this paradox is especially relevant, given the push to conquer new global markets to increase revenues with productions that maintain a Finnish style and artistic seal (Grundström et al. 2020). Rauntamäki commented in the interview that paradoxes involving art, financing and innovation are very central when planning many aspects of a film and usually require hard negotiations with investors. As an exception to this rule, Rauntamäki referred to his recent production, *Compartment Number 6*, directed by Juho Kuosmanen. The film was co-produced by Finland, Germany, Estonia and Russia and contains many scenes contrasting culturally determined behaviours of the protagonists, a female Finnish student and a Russian miner who share a train compartment. Rauntamäki described the filmmakers' efforts to balance creative and economic criteria in decision processes and the elements that facilitated this balance:

> It was clear that we could make the artistic film that we wanted without any economic pressure. […] We had artistic freedom from the financiers because we never really needed to depend that much on money from the market, since we were making the movie with subsidies. Of course that makes quite a difference. […] If you get 500,000€ from distributors, you also have to listen and negotiate decisions about the cast and many artistic aspects, but with this film we were not dependent that way.[1]

As an example of hard negotiations illustrating the tension between quality and market demands, Rauntamäki mentioned the case of *The Happiest Day in the Life of Olli Mäki*, a film about a Finnish boxer in the 1960s whose life changes dramatically as he achieves national fame while preparing for a world championship bout:

> Two months before the shooting, we, the director Juho Kuosmanen and I, made the decision that it would be black-and-white. However, we had financed the film as a colour film. I mean, [our decision] was never discussed with the financiers […]. When we went to post-production we tested different film materials […]. We really felt that this was the film we wanted because this already felt like the '60s, and we would also save a lot of money on production design. But still, we had the previous financial decision that the film would be in colour. Hence, I was the one who had to talk and negotiate with everyone. […] The position was that the market value of the film as a colour film was not great [and] we did not have great expectations, considering that it was Finnish, [the director's] first-time feature film, and there were no well-known names

1. Unless otherwise stated, all of Rauntamäki's quotes are taken from an in-person interview with the author (2021).

> involved. We felt so strongly that it had to be like that, […] in keeping with Juho's flexible style of filmmaking. […] Of course, there was a happy ending when it went to Cannes and won the Un Certain Regard prize. […] But, thinking about conflicts or paradoxes, here there was one. […] Should we make this kind of decision two months before the shooting? Of course, the answer is no, but we talked with the financiers, they agreed, and we did it.

Similarly, Rauntamäki reported hard negotiations about casting: investors often preferred well-known actors, whereas directors sometimes preferred lesser-known names to make the roles more realistic. He nevertheless emphasized that decisions can be made through discussion and negotiation. Importantly, as Rauntamäki mentioned in the case of *Compartment Number 6*, subsidies could facilitate a solution to the paradox (2021).

Public subsidies to films are common in Finland and other Nordic countries. The Finnish film industry is organized around key institutions such as the Finnish Film Foundation that provide support to film production, distribution and exhibition. This support is complemented by regional film commissions that facilitate local productions and attract international projects (Finnish Film Foundation 2019: 8). This type of organization is also frequent in other European countries that use public subsidies to promote local film production, foster diversity and communicate social and cultural values. Hence, subsidies can be based not only on economic principles but also on sociocultural frames and public interest (Bondebjerg et al. 2016: 215). Moreover, they may give directors creative freedom, the opportunity to innovate and imprint their own style on their films. In Rauntamäki's words:

> We are director-driven […] and clearly it is difficult to do something that is 50/50 driven by artistic and economic criteria. If your aim is to reach a big audience in Finland, if you do a commercially driven film, […] all the decisions in the film have to be weighed against that goal. But subsidies give directors creative freedom to make their own artistic decisions, which they would not have if they depended only on private money from investors or audiences. […] We always have artistic freedom from the financiers.

However, creative freedom may bias the desired balance between art and commerce in favour of art, but it might weaken the effort to promote monetary value and find global audiences (Parc et al. 2022: 12). Recent research on the value of subsidies urges caution and calls for careful analysis of public programmes, since the effectiveness of subsidies in enhancing film quantity and quality is not ensured. Paul-Clemens Murschetz et al. suggest that rather than simply increasing the amount, state aid might better achieve its goals if it is carefully planned through transparent and effective subsidy schemes, directed not only to production but also to ensure that the films reach audiences through effective distribution (2018: 23–36).

Beyond subsidies, another factor that may reduce the tension between art and commerce is reputation. Although art films do not usually produce revenue on the level of blockbuster films, their artistic value may also translate into monetary value by means of reputation (Delmestri et al. 2005: 978). Because of the difficulty of defining quality and identifying clear standards for it, perceived success in the creative economy is very much based on the overall

reputation of the partners behind the film. Thus, some films may not succeed in reaching large audiences, but a positive critical reception, prizes and awards may increase the reputation of the production company and the director and lead to future commercial value for them. Directors and/or producers associated with quality usually attract larger audiences, as is the case with producer Rauntamäki and well-known film directors such as Ari Kaurismäki or Juho Kuosmanen.

Innovation vs. familiarity is a related paradox, also based on the nature of the cinematic product. While creative products are defined by their innovative features and novelty, people tend to prefer familiar products that can more easily be understood and enjoyed (Desai and Basuroy 2005). In this sense, novelty and familiarity are two contrasting forces that must be balanced in creative products such as films (Jones et al. 2016: 755; Miron-Spektor and Erez 2017: 10–11; Peltoniemi 2015: 42).

Rauntamäki commented that this is a particularly difficult paradox in the decision-making process. While directors want the audience to understand the narrative, they often try to surprise the viewer. He used his latest film, *Compartment Number 6*, as an example:

> The script was based (although it was altered quite a bit) on a popular book by Finnish author Rosa Liksom, about two strangers on a train, Finnish and Russian, who despite experiencing cultural clashes end up falling in love. Even though the story embraces a universal theme – love – the director used many post-production resources to eliminate predictable scenes and explore other sides of love, far from what you'd expect from a love story. This strategy produced very good results and received excellent feedback from audiences and film experts.

On a wider level, Viktoriya Pisotska and Kerem Gurses suggest that artistic innovation is sometimes achieved through social networks and contacts with cultural gatekeepers that help to boost a reputation and create market opportunities (2023: 225). Because the tension between innovation and familiarity is difficult to resolve, accepting this paradox and using it as an opportunity to fulfil the competing demands between novelty and public acceptance (Miron-Spektor et al. 2018: 30) might be a good strategy to follow. Accordingly, Rauntamäki's comments illustrate the strategy of balancing conflicting ideas by approaching a familiar topic such as love from a new cultural angle to convey novelty (2021).

Paradoxes related to the organizational nature of the film industry

A different source of paradoxes and tensions is the organizational structure of film companies and the industry as a whole. The first paradox concerns individual vs. collective identity during creative decisions. The success of a film project requires team interdependence and a high level of coordination among different teams representing distinct roles, and in particular, strong leadership to facilitate coordination and effective utilization of the individuals on the teams (Murphy 2016). However, artists in creative industries also strive for recognition of their individual identities and reputations and desire sufficient control over their own creative products (Caves 2000).

Paradox theory identifies several strategies to manage tensions effectively (see Gaim 2018; Waldman et al. 2019). For example, some people cope with paradoxes by providing either/or responses, selecting one extreme over the other. For film projects these either/or strategies might be represented by the adoption of hierarchical leadership where most decisions are made by directors and producers. The work of many independent film directors represents an either/or strategy in which the individuality and identity of the director is stressed over the collective role of the team. The directors' quest for optimal distinctiveness (Alvarez et al. 2005) and for imprinting their own style sometimes leads them to establish their own production companies or to form close and well-established relationship with committed producers to closely control every aspect of the entire film production process. In a more nuanced manner, Rauntamäki described his company as director-driven:

> The director and producers always listen to other creatives, but they have the final word in all filming decisions. Although this sometimes generates tensions, this structure is usually well accepted if properly explained and discussed with the creative teams from the start.

This strategy is successful at creating specific styles and imprinting the personality of the director. However, according to Rauntamäki, it does not always succeed in totally avoiding tensions. The case of screenwriters is always difficult and creates some director–writer tensions. In Rauntamäki's words:

> To be a good screenwriter it's important to feel the project as [one's] own; it's harder to write something that's based on another person's preferences. Good scripts cannot arise from guessing what the director might be thinking. […] This always causes some friction, because to produce a good script the screenwriters themselves really have to engage and […] feel. At the same time the director is still the person who has the last word on what elements are working or not working. This is where friction usually arises. I feel that almost always when the writing process ends, the screenwriters are left with a little [sense] of disappointment. […] Even so, we like to talk openly about this from a very early stage, but when you have good professionals who really engage in the process there is always some friction.

Hence, director-driven approaches with clear leadership, if openly discussed, are useful in solving tensions but may frustrate creatives and, according to Rauntamäki, lead to less commitment to the project. This argument is supported by theoretical proposals stressing 'paradox mindsets' where tensions are accepted and confronted through dialogue (e.g. Miron-Spektor et al. 2018: 28). Medhanie Gaim proposes the use of blended-active strategies creating environments where divergent thinking is encouraged and team goals are supported, even in conditions of strong leadership (2018: 511–12). These strategies can be carried out in ways that also allow for effective work environments for individual creators, providing them with clear and meaningful goals, autonomy, freedom, time, resources, an open flow of ideas as well as ways of learning from problems and achievements and showing recognition, encouragement and emotional support (Amabile and Kramer 2011). Thus, the work environment should enable reaching a good balance between

the director and producer's leadership and the creative potential of individuals and the objectives of the teams (Černevičiūtė and Strazdas 2018: 505–06).

In contrast to the director-driven approach, other organizations trust the efficiency of the collective over individual talent. For instance, the strategy of Pixar is based on the support of every member of the company, organized through 'brain trust units' (Catmull 2008: 64–72). These units are established to help creatives cope with difficulties encountered during the production process. For example, the film director can organize a meeting with the brain trust unit where eight other film directors give feedback and brainstorm about any specific question the director may have. The units are not authorities but brainstorming platforms, and the creatives are never forced to follow the suggestions of the unit (Catmull 2008: 64–72). This responsibility-shared type of decision-making, although successful in the case of Pixar, is difficult to implement and does not guarantee that creative professionals develop and imprint their own ideas and produce more innovative projects. These examples of generic strategies with their pros and cons represent different approaches to the individualism–collectivism paradox. However, there might be several other approaches representing an array of different integrative strategies that should be analysed and investigated in specific geographical and political contexts.

A related paradox also arising from the type of organization in the industry is self-sufficiency vs. interdependence. This tension is very clear when strong artistic personalities do not suffice for success: a good actor would not receive good reviews and awards without a good director or a good script. The final form of a film is the result of collaborative processes where the competence and knowledge of the team members are fundamental to the movie's success. Interestingly, films that win an Academy Award in the Best Picture category are usually also awarded Oscars in other categories, such as Best Original or Adapted Screenplay, indicating that 'best' pictures are acknowledged in terms of many quality features, all of which involve complex teamwork. However, tensions between individual creatives and teams produce grounds for the paradox in which self-sufficiency is opposed to dependence on collaboration and the expertise of other specialized workers (Wong et al. 2010). As with the individualism/collectivism paradox, directors have sometimes resolved interdependence issues through strong and stable relations with producers where the terms of their relation and collaboration are well established (Alvarez and Svejenova 2002). Along these lines Rauntamäki also suggested that:

> The best strategy for facing the interdependency paradox is to have close discussions with all team members to make their roles and the vision of the project clear prior to the production agreements and to get all team members engaged and committed to the project.

This approach exemplifies the use of what has been termed 'paradox mindset', which implies working to understand contradictions, tensions and inconsistencies as a natural condition of work (Miron-Spektor et al. 2018: 28).

A special feature of the film industry that is a source of tensions is that the industry many times involves temporary organizations embedded in permanent organizations. Film companies often engage new creative teams for specific film projects. This raises the question of how temporary and permanent structures are integrated and interact in the decision-making process (Akkerman and Bakker 2011: 150–51). For example, in Rauntamäki's company, there is a small group of permanent workers who are in charge of coordinating

the production work; a second intermediate group of long-term collaborators (directors and heads of departments) who are also considered a core part of the organization even though they are technically hired by the project, and a third group formed by freelancers who are hired for each project on a temporary basis (approximately half of a project team). Although freelancers are not as deeply committed to the project as permanent members and there are some tensions regarding salaries and work, Rauntamäki's company tries to regulate and reach agreements prior to filming:

> The core people are much more attached to the content and to the actual film and to the end product. People in the core team are paid a fixed amount for the whole film, whereas the people who are the crew get paid hourly, and this sometimes generates problems with salaries and overtime. […] Usually the heads of departments (HoDs) know what each crew member is getting paid. We talk [about] this openly, […] about who is the most important after the director, who is most involved and devotes the most time to the film. For the actors, we usually tell everyone, all actors and actresses, what each one will be paid. […] We have some budget meetings with the HoDs where we sit down together and decide how to use the money we have, and when we run into problems with differences in salary […] we try to solve them during budgeting.

Timing and overtime are also a source of tension between permanent and temporary workers, as Rauntamäki outlines:

> The secret wish of the director is that everyone who works in the crew is there because they really want to work on this film, on this particular script, and of course […] there's always a little bit of friction between the director's secret desire that everyone has chosen this film and wants to work on it and the reality that for the crew it's just a job. […] This also leads to some decisions and tensions. […] From the director's point of view, there's the desire to finish a scene once it's underway, but in many cases the scene has to continue the following day. […] Directors may feel their film is not important enough for the people working on it, but of course that isn't the case. […] The core team is enthusiastic and supportive, but you have to recognize that for other people it's only a job. […] I also think the film industry has changed quite a lot in the last five years, in a good direction. Now the crew and the director know that workdays should not be too long and that if you want them to work overtime you really have to talk with the crew. My experience is that after an explanation, most people in the crew agree.

A recent study on the impact of COVID-19 on the Finnish film industry (Cañas-Bajo et al. 2023) revealed that Finnish producers also identified this paradox as a critical challenge during the pandemic. In interviews, producers noted that to maintain project continuity, it was crucial to establish a pool of substitutes, particularly for key creative roles. However, they observed that these temporary replacements, lacking permanent organizational ties, did not exhibit the same level of commitment as regular team members. Many of these producers followed the strategy of incorporating substitutes within the permanent organization and engaging them in other tasks while they were not performing as substitutes. Overall, hiring or increasing the permanent

crew was perceived as a better strategy than hiring temporary workers. As mentioned, an interesting aspect is that in interviews, the producers were able to verbalize the paradox and the tensions and establish decision criteria for the future.

Overall, however, the paradox of temporary vs. permanent organization and the interaction between temporary and permanent workers within a specific production have not been the focus of much film production research. Nevertheless, the very nature of film projects that encourage mixed (temporary and permanent) types of organization makes it critical to investigate the tensions and conflicts that this paradox produces and possible ways to overcome boundaries and reduce tension.

According to Rauntamäki (2021), an additional source of tension exemplifying a mixture of the interdependence paradox and temporary vs. permanent paradox arises in international co-productions. Much research on co-productions has examined transnational culture, industrial and policy mechanisms, negotiations and so on (see Hammett-Jamart et al. [2019] for a review and Steen and Brandsen [2020] for online co-productions). In accordance with previous research (e.g. Hammet-Jamart et al. 2019), Rauntamäki commented that in his experience, co-productions are usually sought to fulfil two important functions: to enhance the storytelling context of the script and/or to provide additional funding sources for specific projects. In this sense, tensions may be created at two levels. For example, according to Rauntamäki, co-production for *Compartment Number 6* was mainly sought to enhance storytelling, since the script called for a Russian context and funding was not a major issue:

> With *Compartment Number 6*, we didn't have problems with the commercial side of the production […]. This is mainly a Finnish film, but it takes place in Russia and we had a Russian co-producer. There were few issues with the Russian financiers, but we encountered some tension about certain words in the script. In Russia, cursing is not allowed in films, and the language in our film is quite explicit. This was solved by masking some words with background noise. In a way, we decided this would not affect the actual film production.

However, for the film *Ensilumi* (*Any Day Now*) (Ramezan 2020), about an Iranian refugee family living in Finland and their constant fear of being denied asylum, Rauntamäki observed that there were some issues regarding both management and content:

> We also made a Finnish film with an Iranian cast. Originally, we also had an Iranian co-producer on board, and the financing was supposed to be the equipment, because he had an equipment manager who could get all the camera equipment and lighting equipment from Iran […], but then there were new restrictions from the US, and it was impossible for him to deliver any equipment to Europe. As for financing, it was only about a month before the shooting, and we had to find other ways to do that.
>
> Also, in that film we were cooperating with Iran and we had a cast from Iran. We had to shape the story and the script so that it respected Islamic law regarding, for example, women. […] One of the characters in the film was female, and we had to adapt to the way she dressed and

> how much [husband and wife] could touch each other. […] They were married in real life, so according to [Islamic] law […] they could touch, but there couldn't be anything erotic about [it]. […] But, in this case […] we also had the director, Hamy Ramezan; he's Finnish-Iranian and grew up with this type of Iranian cinema, so it wasn't a problem for him. I think these examples show the mixture of financial and cultural tension involved in co-productions.

These examples illustrate that successful co-productions require joint collaborative efforts among the various film companies involved. These collaborative efforts should aim to enhance both financial and creative aspects of production and to face the conflicts and tensions created by different cultural and political backgrounds.

The nature of the decision-making process

The preceding discussion stressed the important role of identifying organization-related and product-specific paradoxes and tensions during decision-making at all stages of the production process. In this section, we argue that the creative and entrepreneurial nature of the film industry and the context in which decisions occur (ad hoc planning and flexible on-the-spot decisions) makes decision-making during production a complex and dynamic mixture of intuition and rationality.

Our emphasis in this complex combination is relevant, since most decision models in managerial and commercial activities in film production have focused on analytical, step-by-step processes in which various pros and cons are considered when planning particular aspects of pre-production, distribution and marketing (e.g. Eliashberg et al. 2008). However, optimal decision-making, especially during the production phase, also involves creative factors that are sometimes addressed by way of intuitive criteria. Research on decision-making in other cultural contexts suggests that people are likeliest to engage with intuitive decisions in situations of time pressure, unforeseen crisis or when the decisions are complex and based on uncertain factors (Dane and Pratt 2007). Decision-making by film directors and producers meets many of these conditions. The ambiguity and uncertainty of the decision-making processes forces them to adopt dynamic and flexible approaches in order to change criteria and decisions when required as production progresses (Barcelona Film Commission 2020: n.pag.). In this context, Rauntamäki suggests that both ad hoc planning and flexibility are typical of any film project (2021). Although the balance between them depends on the director's working style and degree of perfectionism, flexibility and intuition are always needed to incorporate new positive elements arising during production.

It is important to note that intuition does not equal lack of rationality, but rather fast and subconscious knowledge-based decisions typically made by experts in a field (Evans 2003; Kahneman 2003). Cognitive research on reasoning suggests that one of the main features of expertise is the speed and ease with which experts recognize the most relevant features of a situation and decide on a course of action based on extensive knowledge and experience (De Groot and Gobet 1996). In fact, a few studies on intuition in film production (Coget et al. 2011; Meziani and Cabantous 2020) indicate that intuition can play a key role during film shooting, depending on the expertise

and emotional state of the director. In this sense, production may capitalize on this type of decision-making, and research should be directed towards uncovering the role of intuitive decisions.

In conversation with us, Rauntamäki reflected a certain bias against the possible role of intuition when making decisions, suggesting that intuition plays a smaller role in decision-making than rational planning. His company's strategy is to make all the major decisions about each film project before the shooting starts. At this early point, approximately 85 per cent of the decisions are already made and agreed on. In Rauntamäki's view, 'Good directors make all their decisions rationally instead of being carried away by their intuition'. For example, he continued, 'When they're shooting, they test a shot and evaluate it on the monitor, make changes if necessary and repeat this until they feel that what they see on the monitor is the way it should be'. However, Rauntamäki also noted that once the major decisions are in place, 'I try to follow the director's intuition to some degree. […] Having people around that you can trust helps you support their intuition'.

Rauntamäki also recognizes that 'unforeseen events often occur, and this is where intuition comes into play'. As an example, he commented on changes in plans due to an unpredicted snowstorm during the filming of the last scene of *Compartment Number 6*:

> We had made all the decisions on when to shoot it and with whom, but the weather is something you can't control. […] Suddenly we had a snowstorm, and we were about to cancel the shooting – the borders were already closed and COVID was coming. Juho [the director] and the actors decided on improvising some shots in the storm and they had the intuition that this might work well and fit the mood. And they did, and it was quite different than in the script, but it worked beautifully.

Thus, the intuitive quick decision was to include the snowstorm in the film, but management and the creative team pondered the pros and cons before making the decision to shoot the scene. Decision-making was rational and thoughtful, but the crew nevertheless had to improvise and implement a new unwritten scene where the content followed the intuition of both the actors and the creative team.

These reflections clearly indicate the dynamic interplay between thoughtful planning and intuition. Although Rauntamäki emphasized that rational decision-making plays a major role, his comments also suggest that many details during shooting are also based on fast intuitive thinking. It is possible that the bias to consider intuition a less important process for decision-making during the production process might be tied to the idea that intuition equals lack of knowledge and expertise, whereas as discussed above, cognitive research suggests that intuition is often used by experts, based on fast use of implicit knowledge driven by experience.

The fact that many decisions in film production involve creative and artistic choices based on abstract and subjective criteria usually associated with intuitive decision-making (Lubart and Getz 1997) strengthens the claim that intuition may play an important role in filmmaking and that there is a need for new methods and approaches in production research to uncover these processes.

Conclusion

The use of paradox theory in combination with cognitive reasoning theories may provide novel tools for identifying different types of paradoxes and different ways of approaching them (Gaim 2018; Waldman et al. 2019), since the types of paradoxes emerging during film production and the possible strategies for balancing their contradictory demands are largely unknown. Integrating these cognitive and managerial concepts will provide an overall framework according to which contradictions involving both intuitive and rational criteria can be investigated with new tools and approaches.

Our theoretical analyses and the examples provided by Rauntamäki have allowed us to identify and classify paradoxes according to their fundamental sources, depending on whether they are based on the nature of the film product, the nature of the organization of the film company or the very nature of the decision-making process. Several features of the organization create points of tension; the fact that a film is a collective project gives rise to tensions between the individual identity of the creative individual and dependence on other team members. We identified different approaches to resolving this paradox at high levels in the company. There, the decision-making power might be in the hands of producers and directors (a director-driven approach), or it may involve a collective process with creative individuals at different levels (a company-driven approach).

Most importantly, for this article's purposes, we have identified points where paradoxes, tensions and strategies depend on the specific sociocultural context where film production takes place. Many of the comments by the Finnish producer Rauntamäki suggest that although there are some common themes in the paradoxes production companies confront, strategies for resolving them may differ depending on the social and political position of the production company. Identifying points of tension and approaches for conflict resolution within these contexts should be the subject of future research.

Focus on the nature of the product and the paradoxes created by tensions between creative and economic criteria also open the possibility for new strands of research. There appears to be a strong need to define quality beyond audience preferences and ticket sales, for instance, by investigating the role of reputation in decision-making and assessing the use of subsidies to achieve independence from investors. Many of these topics are already the subject of research. For example, the role of subsidies and the best way of implementing them have been a central topic of discussion in the last few years (Murschetz et al. 2018), but it is still relevant to investigate how directors and producers perceive specific programmes in different national contexts and how subsidies may interact with the type of organizational structure of the production company. Studying these approaches through the lens of paradox may suggest further ways of finding effective strategies to resolve tensions.

Similarly, further studies could identify tensions created by temporary workers within the structure of a company and strategies to resolve the interdependence between teams within the company and across companies in different countries and cultural/economic contexts. In fact, the interdependence problem has given rise to research on co-productions in which the level of interdependence has to be agreed upon and many managerial and cultural tensions must be resolved (Parc 2020). This research might provide answers to ways of approaching the interdependence paradox, but co-production also facilitates the balance between art and commerce by augmenting the budget,

increasing the quality of the technical and creative staff and facilitating the opening of international markets.

Finally, the very nature of decision-making processes – and the fact that some studies identify the use of intuition as an effective strategy during decision processes in creative industries – drives the need to investigate these processes and to use empirical methods to unravel intuitive criteria during film production. While research on the management of creative industries is flourishing (Knight and Harvey 2015; Miron-Spektor and Erez 2017; Oktavio et al. 2024; Peltoniemi 2015), we expect the framework provided here to encourage research on decision-making in film production.

Ethical statement

This article was researched and written to the standards of Intellect's Ethical Guidelines: https://www.intellectbooks.com/ethical-guidelines. No approvals or subject consent was required.

Conflict of interest statement

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