

What are key cultural and economic dimensions of international co-productions, and how do they manifest themselves and shape co-productions in the Norwegian film industry?

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Abstract

This study examines the cultural and economic dimensions of international co-productions in the Norwegian film industry. By conducting semi-structured qualitative interviews with Norwegian film producers and directors who have participated in international co-productions throughout their careers, either as the majority or the minority producers (or both), the research aims to uncover how the cultural and economic dimensions manifest and shape such partnerships. The study seeks to understand the benefits and challenges of international co-productions from the perspectives of the stakeholders involved. This investigation provides insight into the factors that influence successful co-productions and their impact on the Norwegian film industry. Through these direct conversations with key players in the field, the research contributes to a deeper understanding of the dynamics of international collaboration in film production in relation to the Norwegian film industry.

Foreword

I have fallen in love with the creative aspects of filmmaking for a long time now. It is only recently that I have come to like the administrative sides of filmmaking as well. As a person with a multicultural background, the intersection of cultures deeply intrigues me. This thesis is my study of cross-cultural partnerships of films looked at through both the creative and administrative sides of filmmaking.

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1. Introduction

During my conversation with Guri Neby, one of the producers for the 2024 Sundance selected Norwegian film 'Håndtering av udøde', when asked about the feasibility of making a purely independent Norwegian film with Norwegian financing, she simply said that it was not just hard but impossible to do so. But she pointed out to the fact that it is international co-productions that make it possible to make films like 'Håndtering av udøde' (*Handling the undead*). As a media student with a multicultural background, my personal and professional interest lies in understanding multiculturalism and identities in film and various other forms of media. Having been involved in a few short films production myself, co-production deeply inspires me from a professional as well as personal standpoint.

Therefore, in this thesis I am to explore the research question, **'What are key cultural and economic dimensions of international co-productions, and how do they manifest themselves and shape co-productions in the Norwegian film industry?'** To be able to explore this question, I will interview key persons and stakeholders in the Norwegian film industry to talk about their experiences in the film industry, particularly within the area of international co-production. For this, I will be in contact with advisers for international co-production and financing at NFI (Norwegian Film Institute) and the regional film centers around the country. And I will have in-depth interviews with filmmakers from around the country and talk about their experiences in international co-productions.

In the first chapter of this thesis, I will introduce co-production as a phenomenon and the Norwegian case as sub-sections in order to contextualize the research in relation to the Norwegian film industry. In the second chapter, I will look into the theoretical frameworks and analytical perspectives from economic and cultural stand points while also presenting relevant literature to contextualize the research in terms of the available relevant literature. In the cultural part, I will use the dimensions of cultural proximity and multiculturalism, representation and hybridity, and cultural dominance whereas I will use risk sharing and aversion, incentives, and cost reduction and market expansion in the economic part. In the third chapter, I will present the methodology used, its advantages, challenges, and limitations. I will then in the fourth chapter, analyze the interviews in relation to each of economic and cultural theoretical perspectives and

analytical frameworks. In the fifth chapter, I will discuss and present the findings and will have the conclusion in the sixth chapter.

Through this thesis, I aim to find out how key cultural and economic dimensions of international co-productions manifest to shape the co-production process in the Norwegian film industry. I aim to evaluate whether co-productions reinforce cultural dominance or empower marginalized voices while examining how international collaborations shape the cultural and economic landscape of the Norwegian film industry and society, enriching artistic output and fostering global dialogue.

Additionally, this research will investigate how and if international co-productions mitigate financial uncertainty and provide access to larger production budgets, enhancing the quality and scale of cinematic projects. Insights into the economic benefits and challenges of these collaborations will inform strategies to optimize financial outcomes and sustain the competitiveness of the Norwegian film industry in the global market. Since, the increasing prominence of international co-productions in the film industry has undergone a radical shift in the global cinematic landscape, I believe it requires an examination and since there has not been many such works done in Norway in regard to the film industry taking both culture and economy into consideration to look at co-productions, I believe that this research can help shed light towards international co-productions in relation to the Norwegian film industry and fill the gaps.

1.1 Co-production as a phenomena

According to Morawetz (2008), co-production is defined as “temporary inter-firm networks over a distance, cross-border collaborations pursued by producers for the duration of a film project” (Morawetz, 2008, p. 51). However, once this ‘temporary inter-firm networks’ is created, it may extend well beyond its initial intended phase. The Norwegian Film Institute (NFI) characterizes a co-production as a collaborative effort where producers from different nations unite to create a film (NFI, 2023). “Co-production is a joint (ad)venture, but it is certainly one that requires strict legal security. This security is achieved through a co-production contract” (Cabrera Blázquez et al., 2018, p.47). Cabrera Blázquez et al. further point out that the contract usually contains the agreement on collaboration to pool goods and services, the division of ownerships and sharing the profits (or losses) in agreed proportions. (Cabrera Blázquez et al., 2018, p.47).

Regardless of the many definitions, this collaborative process entails a division of production responsibilities, with a primary emphasis on funding and decision-making authorities. Typically, the facilitation of such collaborations is governed by co-production agreements between the countries represented by these producers (NFI, 2023). In accordance with Baltruschat (2019), it can thus be deduced that co-productions often operate under official treaties established between countries for the joint creation of film programs (Baltruschat, 2019, p. 2). These agreements and treaties are formulated with the understanding that both parties stand to benefit economically and culturally. An example of this principle in Norway is underscored in the agreement signed between the Norwegian Film Institute (NFI) and the Netherlands Film Fund (NFF) on December 17, 2015 (NFI & NIFF, 2015).

Viewed through an economic geography perspective, co-productions are often labeled as ‘extra-local linkages,’ ‘global pipelines,’ or ‘temporary trans-local interfirm networks,’ linking diverse production clusters (Grabher, 2002a; Bathelt et al., 2004b as cited in Morawetz, 2008, p.55). According to Morawetz (2008), companies in these clusters engage in external collaborations to access superior rents, particularly when the process of identifying and interacting with new partners across different spaces becomes intricate and costly (Maskel et al., 2006, as cited in Morawetz, 2008, p.56). Despite the concerns about profitability raised by Hoskins et al. (1997) and Jaeckel (2001), co-productions persist (Hoskins et al., 1997; Jaeckel, 2001 as cited in Baltruschat, 2002; Morawetz, 2008).

There are two categories of co-productions: ‘official co-productions’ if they adhere to established rules by certain countries, and ‘unofficial’ if they don't meet these criteria (Roger, 2021). In the realm of co-productions, a contractual agreement sees two or more film producers coming together to collaborate and pool resources, aiming to achieve a project that would be challenging for either co-producer alone (Enrich, 2005, as cited in Morawetz, 2008, p.63).

There are various other terms within the world of co-productions which is why it becomes important to define and set my parameters. Countries with larger film industries like the United States often engage in collaborations with other countries through unofficial agreements known as co-ventures (Baltruschat, 2019, p. 2). Technically speaking, these are international co-productions since they are being conducted by producers from two different countries. But I will focus on the type of international co-productions which are conducted as a means of cultural

protectionism and the growth of film industries of the participating countries. Since, it is not the case with the American film industry because of their global dominance, I will therefore focus on official international co-productions and not co-ventures as highlighted by Roger (2021).

Co-productions have played a pivotal role in shaping the global film landscape, accounting for over 30 percent of overall film production activity in most European countries over the 15 years leading up to 2008 (Morawetz, 2008, p. 13). These numbers have only gone up thereafter.

According to the European Audiovisual Observatory's report 'IRIS Plus 2018-3: The legal framework for international co-productions' (2018), European co-productions tend to circulate almost twice as much as purely national productions. France and Italy alone have made over 2000 films from when they signed the agreement in 1946 until now (Roger, 2021, p.10). These collaborations offer a myriad of advantages, including increased funding, shared expertise, wider distribution networks, and the potential for international success. The impact of such collaborations extends beyond the economic realm, profoundly influencing the cultural representation and economic vitality of cinema on a global scale (Morawetz, 2008, pp. 10-14).

In this evolving cinematic landscape, Norway emerges as a compelling case study. Its picturesque fjords and pristine landscapes provide the backdrop for narratives that resonate far beyond its borders. Films like 'Kon-Tiki', 'The Wave,' 'Max Manus,' 'The Worst Person in the World,' and 'Reprise' among others have not only garnered critical acclaim but have also resonated with audiences worldwide, contributing to the recognition and visibility of Norwegian film production on the global stage. While at the same time, the Norwegian market is dominated by Hollywood blockbusters. According to the Norwegian film institute, the market share of Norwegian films for theatrical admissions was 23.9% which increased to 25% in 2018. (Norwegian Film Institute, Facts and Figures). Thus, like other countries with co-productions treaties aimed at cultural protectionism, Norway engages in two primary types of co-productions, differentiating between scenarios where the Norwegian producer assumes the role of the minority co-producer and cases where they act as the majority co-producer (NFI, 2023).

This meteoric rise of international co-productions has not been without its critics. Concerns have been raised about the potential homogenization of film production, dilution of distinctiveness, and compromise of national and cultural identity. Questions emerge regarding the preservation of cultural authenticity in the face of globalized filmmaking, with debates on whether commercial

viability might take precedence over artistic expression. For example, ‘What Remains’, a Swedish serial killer film, produced in English despite its Swedish setting, as Hong Kong, the UK and Finland as co-producing partners, reflects a global trend in cinema collaboration across countries. The director is Chinese, the production designer is American with the film in English and the setting as well as the actors either from Sweden and/or Finland. (Bista’s observation, Black Nights Tallin International Film Festival, 2023). This shift towards English raises concerns about linguistic diversity while also acknowledging the benefits of cross-cultural collaboration.

In many ways, the benefits and challenges of these international co-productions are very debatable. It thus becomes imperative to also set the context for the study so that the discussions become relevant to the scenario which is why I will dedicate a section ‘*The Norwegian Case*’ to set the context for the study. Beyond the surface of economic benefits and commercial success, I aim to venture into the realm of cultural representation and identity. It contemplates the influence of collaborations with international partners on the thematic and narrative choices made in Norwegian films. Does the pursuit of an international audience shape storytelling in a way that presents a specific image of Norwegian culture and society? How do filmmakers navigate the delicate balance between global appeal and the preservation of the distinctiveness and authenticity of Norwegian storytelling and cultural heritage? These questions call for a nuanced exploration of the complex interplay between artistic expression, cultural identity, and global collaboration.

1.2 Setting the Context: The Norwegian case

The cinema halls in Norway are municipally owned, yet most of the films shown in them are American blockbusters. Without national subsidies, many cinema halls would not have the resources to run if not for the American blockbuster movies that tends to draw in most of the audience (“Hvem skal eie norske kinoer?”, 2011). The case is such that commercial Norwegian films cannot compete with these huge international blockbusters coming from the American corporate giant, Hollywood. For example, the most expensive Norwegian film ever made is ‘Krigsseileren’ with a budget of 110 million NOK (Lundegård, 2020). The marketing budget alone of the Hollywood film Dune is about 5 times more. And on the other end, independent

Norwegian films seen primarily through artistic and not commercial value do not have viable financing models. Thus, many producers say that making an independent Norwegian film without a co-production is not just difficult but impossible.

Numerous people are familiar with Norway's economic history, marked by a transition from aquaculture and fisheries being its primary export until the 1970s, when the discovery of oil catapulted the country into one of the world's wealthiest nations. Simultaneously, the cultural history of Norway bears the imprint of historical unions with Denmark and Sweden, contributing significantly to the development of national identity and patriotism.

Henlin-Stromme presents the government White Papers of 1991/1992 that express concern about the potential weakening of Norwegian national culture due to the growing influence of international media, emphasizing the need for cultural policies to preserve Norway's cultural identity while acknowledging the impact of globalization (Henlin-Stromme, 2012). Henlin-Stromme presents, the government White Papers entitled “Culture Policy towards 2014” presented in 2002:

“The market is dominated by international productions, especially Anglo-American ones. As a rule, they are produced in an international and global market. It is a public duty to secure that, in a small land like Norway, there is an offer of films and other audiovisual productions that reflect our history, our culture and our language” (as cited in Henlin-Stromme, 2012).

Similarly, Henlin-Stromme presents the 2008 government White Papers issued by the Ministry of Culture, which reads, “Film is a medium that reflects both history and our present time,” suggesting that Norwegian cinema is an important mediator of the Norwegian culture and national identity. The statement also deals with how film is also about identity, community and belonging. These concepts define both films, the nation, and the relationship between those two (as cited in Henlin-Stromme, 2012).

Just like the Franco-Italian co-production agreement signed in 1946 after the wake of the second world war, other European countries had their own strategies to build or re-build their film industries. In case of Norway, the Norwegian Film Institute (NFI) was setup during the post-World War II era when various government initiatives were established to bolster the country's

film sector. The Norwegian Mobile Cinema, National Film Board of Norway, National Newsreel, and a state support system for feature film production were introduced between 1945 and 1955. Initially conceived as a film archive, the NFI became a pivotal player in Norwegian cinema, hosting the Videogramme Register and merging with the National Film Board in 1993. Over the years, NFI underwent several transformations, with changes in responsibilities, mergers, and a cultural shift in its role, eventually leading to its incorporation into the Norwegian Film Fund in 2001. In 2008, the Norwegian Film Institute emerged as a unified entity, encompassing various film-related bodies. Subsequent developments in 2015 included updates to the national film policy, focusing on restructuring funding schemes, promoting diversity, and platform neutrality. NFI's role expanded to include funding for distribution and exhibition initiatives in Norway, and in 2016, the introduction of the Incentive Scheme aimed at encouraging film production in Norway and fostering international collaboration. (NFI, 2023). More regional film funds and centers were established later that give production and development support for feature films, documentaries, series, and interactive games. As of today, there are seven regional film centers in Norway. They are: Nordnorsk filmsenter based in Tromsø, Midtnorsk filmsenter based in Trondheim, Vestnorsk filmsenter based in Bergen, Filmkraft Rogaland based in Stavanger, Sørnorsk filmsenter based in Kristiansand, Viken Filmsenter based in Drammen and Østnorsk filmsenter based in Lillehammer. In addition to this there are also other financing bodies like Mediefondet Zefyr, Filminvest, Filmfond Nord etc. that deal both with private equities and public fundings. (NFI, 2023).

Henlin-Stromme argues about the concept of nation-state and the Norwegian cinema being a 'minor' one. Further argument is about how in the 19th century Norway, an elite chose a concept to which the mass identified with, the idea of Norwegian nature. Henlin further goes on to explore more about the creation of the Norwegian nation-state, the period of romantic nationalism in Norway, Nynorsk, the folk peasant culture, and the general Norwegian mythmaking. In essence, Henlin works towards showing how more than just a symbol and the context for mythmaking, nature is the strongest cultural category and foundational for any study of the Norwegian nation and culture. Henlin argues that it is primarily the representation of the sea, fjords and the mountains, or Norwegian nature- in other word, along with the lifestyle that surround it is what makes a film Norwegian. (Henlin-Stromme, 2012).

Norwegian cinema falls within the realm of 'minor cinema' as defined by three key criteria: the size of the population, the language spoken, and the prevalent influx of US films dominating the screens (Henlin-Stromme, 2012, p.1). Despite its geographical proximity to Sweden and Denmark, globally recognized for their contributions to art cinema, Norway has historically remained in the shadows. While Denmark experienced the Dogme 95 era led by filmmakers Lars Von Trier and Thomas Vinterberg (Walters, 2004), Norwegian cinema had its own distinctive phase known as 'Norwave' spanning from 1997 to 2006, marked by influential films like 'Budbringeren' and 'Insomnia' (Rees, 2010). Henlin-Stromme highlights how Gunnar Iversen underscores the significance of the New Norwegian Film Policy established in 2001, attributing it as a pivotal factor contributing to the recent success of the Norwegian film industry. This perspective renders the Norwegian film industry an intriguing case study (Henlin-Stromme, 2012, p.69).

2. Theoretical frameworks and analytical perspectives

In this section, I will present the theoretical frameworks and the analytical perspectives for the research. Under the overarching theme of cultural industries, this study will delve into the question, **‘What are key cultural and economic dimensions of international co-productions, and how do they manifest themselves and shape co-productions in the Norwegian film industry?’** For a comprehensive understanding of the cultural and economic impact of these collaborations, the study explores two main areas: Culture and Economy. Since each film not only is a narrative and a cultural artifact reflecting its place of origin but also an industry with significant investment implications, it is important to lay focus both on the cultural and economic aspects in a film production.

From the cultural standpoint, I will therefore look at the research question with the theoretical frameworks and analytical perspectives from cultural proximity and multiculturalism, representation and hybridity, and cultural dominance. On the economic side, I will look at the dimensions of risk sharing and aversion, incentives, and market expansion and cost reduction. Examining international co-productions through the lens of cultural proximity, multiculturalism, hybridity, representation, cultural dominance will allow me to understand the intricate dynamics of cultural exchange within the Norwegian film industry in relation to international co-production. By employing these perspectives, I aim to uncover how collaborative ventures between Norwegian filmmakers and international partners facilitate the exchange of artistic techniques, storytelling traditions, and cultural narratives. This approach will enable me to explore how co-productions contribute to cultural diversity, challenge stereotypes, and promote cross-cultural understanding. Moreover, by critically examining power dynamics and the influence of dominant cultural narratives, I aim to assess whether co-productions reinforce cultural dominance or empower marginalized voices. Through these cultural lenses, I gain insights into how international co-productions shape the cultural landscape of the Norwegian film industry and society in return, enriching its artistic output while helping foster global dialogue.

By viewing international co-productions through the economics of risk sharing, incentives, and market expansion, I aim to be provided with a comprehensive understanding of the financial side

of the Norwegian film industry and its relationship to international co-production and vice-versa. By analyzing risk-sharing mechanisms, I aim to assess how international co-productions mitigate financial uncertainty and enable access to larger production budgets, thereby enhancing the quality and scale of cinematic projects. Moreover, examining the incentives offered by governments and industry bodies will shed light on the motivations for engaging in co-productions and their role in attracting both foreign and domestic (*private equity*) investment to the Norwegian film sector. This economic analysis will also delve into how international co-productions facilitate market expansion by accessing global distribution networks, opening up new revenue streams and opportunities for growth. Through these economic lenses, I aim to gain insights into the economic benefits and challenges of international co-productions, informing strategies to optimize financial outcomes and sustain the competitiveness of the Norwegian film industry in the global market.

The overarching theme of Cultural Industries and co-productions

First and foremost, it is extremely important to define what I mean by culture in this research since culture is such a broad topic. McCollom asserts that it has been difficult for sociologists and anthropologists to define culture for a long time (McCollom, 1987, p.7). In an attempt at defining culture, McCollom synthesizes definitions from Malinowski and Peterson, concluding that culture encompasses both conscious and unconscious beliefs and values held by a group, alongside the behaviors, language, and symbols that express these beliefs, thereby providing identity and a framework of meaning (McCollom, 1987, p. 8). In his work, Appiah (1994) defines culture as “The totality of socially transmitted behavior, patterns, arts, beliefs, institutions, and all other products of human work and thought” (Appiah, 1994, p.3). It can then be argued that culture is everything, from the clothes we wear to the food we eat to the music we listen to. And almost all these things are industrially produced these days. So, in simple words, cultural industries are those industries that deal with creating, producing, and consuming cultural goods such as film, TV etc.

This then calls for redefining cultural industries to be able to contextualize the term for this research. David Hesmondhalgh, the English sociologist highlights cultural industries as those industries that emphasize in managing and selling specific types of work, encompassing artistic,

managerial, and business aspects (Hesmondhalgh, 2019, pp.8-11). These industries require a blend of creativity, cultural understanding, and business acumen. Hence the film industry falls under this category as follows from the definitions above. In addition, the ascendance of media industries underscores the growing significance of cultural industries in mediated communication.

Hesmondhalgh argues beyond the conventional views, de-fetishizing art, and artists within cultural industries as normal capital-labor-product processes (Hesmondhalgh, 2019, pp. 30-32). This perspective reframes the perception of film as something more than the traditionally accepted form of muse, an artistic achievement, and frames it also as a commodity rooted in the generation of surplus value. That surplus value can be generated by various factors like market expansion, talent and resource pooling and transnational collaboration among others (Hesmondhalgh, 2019, pp. 8-9).

Roger (2021) argues that the European film industry has grappled with the absence of a commercially viable financing model since the aftermath of the First World War. This challenge stems from market fragmentation across different countries and languages, making it difficult to sustain budgets that can compete with the economies of scale enjoyed by US firms. He highlights that both Italian and French cinemas were threatened during World War II and from the growing American cinema and cultural dominance, against which they managed to find a way to survive this multifront threat: with a bilateral co-production agreement established in 1946 (Roger, 2021). To address these kinds of cultural threats, state intervention grounded in cultural protectionism has been a longstanding feature of the European film landscape since the interwar years. This intervention finds contemporary justification and legal support in UNESCO's (2005) Convention on Cultural Diversity, a global agreement signed by 148 countries. The convention asserts the notion that cultural domains should be safeguarded from 'free trade' accords such as the WTO, a position that has been censured as a subtle attempt to protect against the impact of American culture, particularly emanating from Hollywood movies (Pawley, 2005). And by the 1960s, co-productions became essential for countries with modest film industries and limited market potential, evolving into a strategic approach for national cinema industries throughout the history of European sound cinema (Jaekel, 2001; Betz, 2001 as cited in Morawetz, 2008).

According to the European Audiovisual Observatory's report 'IRIS Plus 2018-3: The legal framework for international co-productions' (2018), co-productions falling under international conventions or bilateral agreements are considered 'national' in each participating country, contingent upon approval by the respective competent authorities. This designation makes them eligible for public funding and obliges them to adhere to promotion requirements for both European and national productions (IRIS Plus 2018-3: The legal framework for international co-productions, European Audiovisual Observatory, 2018). In such collaborations, a majority co-producer, contributing the highest share of the budget, retains a proportional share of the copyrights, while minority co-producers contribute the remaining financing and retain corresponding copyrights, with a few exceptions for parity co-productions (IRIS Plus, 2018, p. 3).

Cultural dimensions of co-productions

In the realm of film co-productions, cultural dynamics play a pivotal role in shaping narratives, aesthetics, and audience reception. In this section, I will present the theoretical frameworks and analytical perspectives of the cultural dimensions of international co-productions and their relation to the Norwegian film industry. I will present the dimensions of cultural proximity and multiculturalism, representation and hybridity, and cultural dominance.

Cultural proximity dimension highlights the significance of shared cultural backgrounds in fostering successful collaborations, emphasizing common linguistic, historical, and aesthetic affinities. Conversely, the lens of multiculturalism celebrates the diversity inherent in co-productions, emphasizing the fusion of multiple cultural elements and perspectives. Within this context, representation becomes a critical concern, as filmmakers navigate the complexities of portraying diverse cultural identities authentically while avoiding stereotypes. The notion of hybridity underscores the transformative nature of cultural exchanges, leading to the emergence of new, hybrid cultural forms in co-produced films. However, amid this celebration of diversity, the specter of cultural dominance looms large, as hegemonic cultural forces shape narratives and distribution channels, privileges of certain perspectives while marginalizing others. Thus, understanding and critically engaging with diverse cultural perspectives are essential for

unraveling the complex interplay of cultural influences that define contemporary film co-productions.

2.1 Cultural proximity and multi-culturalism

The dimension of cultural proximity suggests that collaborations between countries with similar cultural backgrounds are more likely to result in successful co-productions due to shared linguistic, historical, and aesthetic affinities. Miriam Berg (2017) states that according to Straubhaar (1991), audiences tend to prefer their own local or national productions because of different contributing factors like language, local knowledge on topics, environment, ethnicity of the people in the media etc. This also leads to the aspect of media representation within similar cultures (Straubhaar 1991, as cited in Berg, 2017, p.3416). Soto-Sanfiel and Igartua's study on the relationship between cultural proximity and narrative reception also confirms that cultural proximity can be a factor that can affect the processes associated to the reception of audiovisual narratives (Soto-Sanfiel & Igartua, 2016, p.102).

Applied to the Norwegian film industry, this framework underscores the significance of cultural proximity in shaping partner selection, thematic content, and artistic sensibilities in co-produced films. Collaborations with culturally proximate countries, such as other Nordic nations or European counterparts, may facilitate smoother communication, alignment of creative visions, and resonance with target audiences. This could also explain why the Nordic countries co-produce the most with each other. Moreover, cultural proximity theory highlights the role of cultural homophily in mitigating cultural differences and enhancing the cohesion of co-production teams, thereby fostering a conducive environment for creative collaboration and cross-cultural exchange (Berg, 2017).

Appiah connects multiculturalism with subcultures in the article 'Identity Against Culture: Understandings of Multiculturalism'. Appiah's definition of subculture as "the shared beliefs, values, and practices of a socially recognized sub-group" highlights the diversity within a nation. He suggests that a state with subcultures wider than the family is considered multicultural. This implies that multiculturalism is characterized by the presence of various subcultures within a larger national or societal framework, each with its own distinct set of beliefs, values, and practices. Therefore, multiculturalism encompasses the recognition and coexistence of diverse

cultural identities within a broader social context, as opposed to the assumption of a single, homogenous national culture shared by all (Appiah, 1994, p. 6). McCollom contends that within organizations, each group cultivates its own culture shaped by interdependence, resulting in an organizational culture reflecting diverse beliefs (McCollom, 1987, p. 17).

In the context of the Norwegian film industry and international co-productions, McCollom's observation about the formation of distinct cultures within organizations, influenced by interdependence and reflecting diverse beliefs, resonates with Appiah's notion of multiculturalism. Just as organizations cultivate unique cultures shaped by internal dynamics and interactions with the external environment, the Norwegian film industry, through international co-productions can do the same by navigating diverse cultural influences and perspectives. This intersection underscores the importance of understanding and respecting cultural differences while fostering collaboration and creativity in global filmmaking endeavors. Appiah's concept of multiculturalism provides a framework for appreciating the complexity of cultural interactions and the richness they bring to collaborative efforts within the film industry.

Oxford bibliographies states multiculturalism as:

a branch of political philosophy that explores the relationship between cultural diversity and human freedom and well-being, while offering justifications for accommodating the claims of cultural minorities in legal and political institutions and public policies (Murphy, 2023).

Many argue that Norway is not a multi-cultural country but a homogeneous country with tolerance towards other cultures. According to queen's university in Canada, Norway is not a multi-cultural country but has been taking steps towards inclusion through various funding as well as policy schemes. In the fields of media industries, the paper presents that it is even more dire. According to the paper, the 2008 Nordic council reported that Norwegian media is culturally homogenous (Queen's University, n.d.).

In case of Europe, (*which Norway is a part of, not the union per say but in different trade deals and policy frameworks*), through initiatives such as funding support, cultural exchange programs, and policy frameworks that prioritize diversity and inclusion, the European Commission and the Norwegian film institute empower Norwegian filmmakers to explore and celebrate the diverse

tapestry of European heritage. This commitment extends to nurturing emerging talents from underrepresented communities, ensuring that voices that have traditionally been marginalized or overlooked are given the platform they deserve. Furthermore, the Commission's efforts to promote cultural diversity in co-productions serve as a bridge between nations, fostering dialogue, understanding, and mutual respect across borders. In an increasingly interconnected world, where cultural exchanges occur at an unprecedented pace, the role of film as a vehicle for cross-cultural understanding has never been more crucial. By championing diversity within the audiovisual industry, the Commission not only enriches the cultural landscape of Europe but also contributes to the broader project of building a more harmonious and inclusive global community (European Commission, 2022).

2.2. Hybridity and representation

Cultural hybridity perspective contends that cultural identities are fluid, dynamic, and continuously negotiated through processes of hybridization, adaptation, and exchange. In the context of international co-productions, this framework elucidates how collaborative filmmaking ventures serve as sites of cultural encounter, dialogue, and transformation. Co-produced films often blend diverse cultural influences, perspectives, and storytelling traditions, resulting in hybrid cinematic texts that reflect the complexities of interconnected global cultures. In the context of Bhabha's concept of hybridity, a 'third space' emerges, where elements intersect and undergo transformation (Papastergiadis, 2000; Young, 1995, as cited in Wang & Yeh, 2005). This space simultaneously functions as both a battleground and a site of resistance against imperialist powers (Kraidy, 2002, as cited in Wang & Yeh, 2005, p.176). However, such collaborations present its own set of difficulties. According to Grelland et al. (2014), individuals may have their own perspectives, which can make collaboration extremely challenging. These perspectives, described as 'glasses', can stem from both professional and ideological backgrounds, serving as partly implicit and unspoken blinders that influence the questions being asked. (Grelland et. al, 2014, p.83). These glasses can be influenced by the different cultural upbringings of the different parties, the cultures can be influenced by the geography, the available food and the tiniest of the details. But the intersection of local and international

elements in filmmaking creates a rich tapestry of narratives. Despite the challenges, filmmakers often draw inspiration from local cultures and traditions, infusing their work with authenticity and uniqueness. Simultaneously, the global appeal of cinema allows these local stories to transcend borders, providing audiences worldwide with a window into different cultures. This interplay between the local and international contributes to a dynamic and inclusive global film landscape.

Stuart Hall calls representation “*an essential part of the process by which meaning is produced and exchanged between members of a culture. It does involve the use of language, of signs and images which stand for or represent things.*” (Hall, 1997, p. 15). The representative dimension in international co-production advocates producing counter-hegemonic narratives that challenge dominant ideologies and disrupt traditional power structures. In the context of co-productions, counter-hegemonic narratives offer alternative perspectives, subvert stereotypes, and amplify marginalized voices within collaborative filmmaking ventures. This can be prevalent in the representation of sub-cultures in cinema. Norwegian filmmakers engaging in co-productions can collaborate with international partners to produce films that resist dominant cultural norms, challenge Eurocentric perspectives, and foreground the experiences of underrepresented communities. By fostering a diversity of voices and narratives, representation theory promotes greater inclusivity, social justice, and cultural democracy in co-produced films, thereby enriching the cultural landscape and fostering a more equitable and inclusive global media environment.

Pia Majbritt Jensen’s analysis of DR Drama exemplifies the concept of hybridity in cultural production. By adopting ‘dogmas’ that blend globally appealing styles with distinct Nordic characteristics, DR Drama creates hybrid cultural products that resonate both locally and internationally. This approach, known as ‘subtle internationalization from within,’ allows Danish TV producers to maintain cultural authenticity while catering to global tastes. The success of Nordic Noir series highlights how hybridity can enhance cultural representation on the international stage, bridging local and global influences. Jensen’s work underscores the importance of hybridity in fostering cross-cultural understanding and showcasing the dynamic interplay between different cultural identities in media (Jensen, 2014).

2.3 Cultural Dominance

Mohamed Hagi refers to cultural dominance to the unequal relationship between the cultures of the powerful and the less powerful nations. He presents that cultural dominance is the perception that the powerful countries are imposing their culture and civilization to the less powerful countries which can result in the dominant culture being the standard homogeneous civilization of the world (Salwen 1991, as cited in Hagi, 2021, p.3). He further argues that in the current state of the globalized world, the media from the powerful nations penetrate the process of cultural dominance as a result of the mainstream media itself being penetrated by commercialization (Schiller 1976, as cited in Hagi, 2021, p.3). Ksiazek and Webster (2008) also highlight the theories of cultural imperialism and economic models predicting cultural dominance by richer countries because of what they call the ‘home market advantage’, as outlined by Schiller (1969), Waterman (2005), and Wildman & Siwek (1988), while presenting the evolving landscape of global media, where ‘home market advantage’ refers to the competitive edge companies enjoy in their domestic market which can lead to cultural dominance when companies expand internationally, exporting products and values that can overshadow local expressions.

In the context of films in the international context, Mohamoud Hagi presents that Hollywood utilized the interconnectedness of international trade and that half of its profits were outside the USA after the second world war. In addition, he presents that the technological advancements and the English as the language also played a big role in its success (De Zoysa & Newman 2002, as cited in Hagi 2021, p.4). In the context of media consumption, Hagi presents that the national identity of smaller nations has lessened due to globalization and the homogeneity of media from larger nations, a concept originally discussed by Boyd-Barrett (Boyd-Barrett, 1977, as cited in Hagi, 2021, p.6).

Cultural dominance involves the dominance of one culture over others, potentially undermining local identities, and traditions. Cultural dominance can manifest in various forms, including:

- **Economic Dependency:** In seeking international co-productions, Norwegian filmmakers may become economically dependent on foreign funding and distribution networks. In addition, the cinema halls may also depend on foreign

films for audience attendance. As an example, Nordisk Film & TV fond presents the case that the post COVID cinema attendance in the Nordics is finally back to normal all because of US blockbusters, meaning that Nordic films in themselves are not enough to run the cinemas. (Pham, 2022).

- **Limited Market Access:** While international co-productions offer opportunities for broader distribution, they also present barriers to entry for Norwegian films in foreign markets. Dominant cultural industries, such as Hollywood, often control global distribution channels, making it challenging for Norwegian films to compete on an equal footing and reach international audiences without compromising their cultural integrity.

Summary of the cultural dimensions

The cultural dimensions of international co-productions in the film industry, presented above draw on various theoretical frameworks and perspectives. By discussing cultural proximity dimension from Berg (2017), which suggests that collaborations between countries with similar cultural backgrounds are more likely to result in successful co-productions due to shared linguistic, historical, and aesthetic affinities, I conversely presented the section dealing with multiculturalism which highlights the importance of accommodating the claims of cultural minorities and promoting diversity in co-productions. This section also examined the dimension of hybridity, which views cultural identities as fluid and dynamic, emphasizing the blending of diverse cultural influences in co-produced films. Moving on to representation theory, I discussed how co-productions offer opportunities to produce counter-hegemonic narratives that challenge dominant ideologies and amplify marginalized voices. I presented Stuart Hall's (1997) representation theory and how its relevance to this thesis. I also presented Bhabha's concept of hybridity along with Kraidy, Papastergiadis and Young as presented by Wang and Yeh (2005). However, I also acknowledge the challenges of navigating cultural differences and avoiding stereotypes in collaborative filmmaking ventures. Additionally, I explored the concept of cultural dominance, which refers to the unequal relationship between powerful and less powerful nations

in the global media landscape as presented by Hagi (2021). I highlight the risk of cultural dominance in international co-productions, where dominant cultures may prioritize marketability over cultural authenticity, leading to the marginalization of local identities and traditions. Overall, I emphasized the complex interplay of cultural influences in international co-productions, underscoring the importance of fostering diversity, inclusivity, and authenticity in collaborative filmmaking ventures.

Economic dimensions of co-productions

In film co-productions, economic considerations intertwine with cultural dynamics to shape narratives, aesthetics, and audience reception. This section elucidates the theoretical frameworks and analytical perspectives regarding the economic dimensions of international co-productions and their implications for the Norwegian film industry. Within this context, the dimensions of risk sharing and risk aversion, incentives, and cost reduction, as well as market expansion, are paramount.

Economic analyses emphasize the importance of risk-sharing mechanisms among co-producing entities to mitigate financial uncertainties and optimize resource allocation. Incentives, ranging from tax incentives to subsidies, play a pivotal role in attracting co-production ventures and fostering industry growth. Cost reduction strategies, such as leveraging co-production partnerships to pool resources and access economies of scale, contribute to enhanced cost efficiency and competitiveness in the global market. Moreover, co-productions facilitate market expansion by tapping into diverse audience demographics and distribution networks, thereby enhancing revenue streams and market reach. However, economic considerations must be carefully balanced with cultural imperatives to ensure that co-production ventures remain culturally authentic and socially relevant. Thus, a comprehensive understanding of the economic dynamics of co-productions is essential for navigating the complexities of international collaboration and maximizing the economic benefits for the Norwegian film industry.

2.4 Risk sharing and risk aversion

Morawetz et al. present the financial uncertainty and risks in film production very meticulously (Morawetz et al., 2007). The colossal capital requirements inherent in filmmaking often surpass what individual producers can muster, amplifying the stakes for investors. This climate of uncertainty, compounded by a history of failed investments, as Hesmondhalgh puts it, breeds caution among risk-averse investors, who perceive film financing as inherently risky (Hesmondhalgh, 2019, p.32). To navigate this precarious landscape, filmmakers are compelled to seek out innovative and less risk-averse investors willing to venture into uncharted territory. Collaboration becomes paramount, as investors engage in risk-sharing arrangements outlined in project-specific contracts. The intricate web of financial arrangements dictates the recoupment position, shaping the hierarchy of profit participation and the likelihood of recovery from box office returns.

In the Norwegian context, the challenges of securing financing are further compounded by the reluctance of the local financial sector to invest in high-risk ventures. This aversion to risk leads to a dearth of corporate or equity financing options, constraining the growth and innovation potential of the Norwegian film industry (Henlin-Stromme, 2012, p.64). According to Gaustad, a government white paper noted the lack of private financing in the Norwegian film industry even though the films could show a healthy return of more than 50% of the investment (St. meld. Nr. 25, 2003-2004, as cited in Gaustad, 2008, p.6).

Considering these challenges, international co-productions emerge as a strategic response to mitigate risk and foster cross-cultural collaboration. By spreading risk across multiple entities and facilitating collaboration across borders, co-productions offer a pathway to navigate the uncertainties of the global market.

2.5 Incentives

“An incentive is something that induces a person to act. Because rational people make decisions by comparing costs and benefits, they respond to incentives.” (Mankiw, 2017, p.9) Co-production tax incentives stand as a cornerstone of government policy aimed at fostering collaboration and innovation in the vibrant realm of the creative industry, with a particular focus

on film and television. These strategic measures are carefully crafted to alleviate financial burdens and incentivize cross-border partnerships, offering a range of benefits such as tax credits, rebates, or deductions to projects involving multiple entities from diverse regions.

McKenzie asserts that incentives are a cornerstone of discussions regarding public support for the film industry. Advocates emphasize their importance in fostering national culture and safeguarding it against external influences. They argue that such incentives are necessary for sustaining domestic production. These incentives commonly take the form of subsidies, including direct grants, loans, as well as indirect methods such as tax credits or rebates. Additionally, the industry may benefit from taxes and domestic production quotas imposed on television stations and increasingly on Video on Demand (VoD) services (McKenzie, 2022, pp. 14-15).

In essence, these incentives serve as a catalyst for sparking collaborative endeavors that transcend geographical boundaries and cultural barriers. At their core, co-production tax incentives serve as a powerful magnet for attracting foreign investments, drawing in resources and expertise from around the globe. By offering financial incentives, governments can not only bolster the economic viability of creative projects but also stimulate the exchange of creative insights, cultural perspectives, and technological innovations.

“The film production incentive grants return on costs spent in Norway to international films and series produced entirely or partly in Norway. The incentive is aimed at Norwegian and foreign productions.” (Norwegian film commission, 2023) These *regulations on financial incentives to produce international films and high-end series in Norway* outlines regulations governing financial incentives for the production of international films and high-end series in Norway. (Norwegian film commission, 2023). The incentive scheme aims to bolster Norwegian culture, history, and nature through large-scale productions while enhancing the skills of the local film industry and fostering international collaboration. Eligibility criteria include a production company's previous work, and grants are contingent on factors like a minimum budget, international financing, and distribution agreements.

The Norwegian Film Institute administers the scheme, and decisions are subject to appeal. The document details application requirements, grant conditions, and the calculation of grant amounts, emphasizing the importance of crediting the Norwegian Film Institute in completed

productions. Overall, these regulations, effective from January 1, 2016, provide a comprehensive framework to incentivize and regulate international film and series production in Norway, promoting cultural enrichment and industry growth (NFI, 2023).

2.6 Cost reductions and market expansion

Economics, as explained by Gregory Mankiw, “is the study of how society manages its scarce resources” (Mankiw, 2017, p. 4). In the economic context of European cinema, where American blockbusters dominate, collaborative agreements among European countries have emerged as a strategy to bolster national film industries, thus managing their scarce resources. These co-productions offer various benefits, notably cost reduction, and expanded market reach, crucial for European film sectors grappling with constraints in both consumption and production. Mankiw's assertion that “people respond to incentives” applies aptly here, as production companies actively engage with co-production incentives provided by entities like the European Commission and respective governments (Mankiw, 2017, p. 7).

The Norwegian film industry provides an insightful case study for exploring the dynamic relationship between economic principles and creative pursuits in cultural production. Analyzing this scenario through theoretical lenses enables a deeper understanding of how co-production initiatives drive cost efficiencies and facilitate access to funding, thereby shaping the economic dynamics within the industry.

According to a neoclassical theory of economics, the pursuit of utility maximization under the conditions of scarcity is what drives the rational decision-making process by economic agents (Mankiw, 2017, pp. 4-8). In the context of international co-production, this theory elucidates how cost reductions are achieved through the efficient allocation of scarce resources across participating countries. By leveraging comparative advantages, such as lower labor costs or favorable tax incentives in partner nations, Norwegian filmmakers can optimize production inputs while minimizing expenses. Neoclassical economics highlights how economic incentives drive filmmakers to pursue co-production ventures for cost-effectiveness and higher returns. But

this comes with its own cost as well. These have their own transaction costs which can include foreign audits, travel and living expenses, higher insurances among others.

The frameworks of transaction cost economics come from the New Institutional Economics school of thought. According to this school of thought 'transaction costs exist and are taken into account when taking a decision about making an investment or starting a business.' (Wink Junior et. al, 2011, p.1). Transaction cost economics offers insights into the transactional dynamics inherent in co-production arrangements, particularly regarding the coordination and governance of interorganizational relationships. Co-production initiatives entail complex negotiations and contractual agreements among multiple stakeholders, including production companies, financiers, and governmental agencies. For instance, by establishing clear guidelines for profit sharing, risk management, and intellectual property rights, co-production contracts reduce transaction costs and enhance the efficiency of collaborative filmmaking ventures.

The resource dependency perspective posits that organizations seek to mitigate uncertainties and vulnerabilities by diversifying their resource base and establishing strategic interdependencies with external actors (Archibald & Greener, n.d.). This also takes us back to utility maximization from the neoclassical economic perspective that points out scarcity and the need for maximum use of available sources (Mankiw, 2017, p. 4). Applied to the context of international co-production, this framework elucidates how filmmakers leverage collaborative partnerships to access diverse funding sources and talent pools. By forging alliances with international production companies, financiers, and governmental agencies, Norwegian filmmakers reduce their dependence on domestic resources and enhance their capacity to secure financing for ambitious projects. Organizations face potential dependencies in transactions, leading to disparities in power and access to resources. Strategies like diversification aim to mitigate such dependencies, enhancing bargaining power and resilience (Archibald & Greener, n.d.).

Summary of economic perspectives

In conclusion, the economic perspectives on international co-productions within the Norwegian film industry reveal a nuanced interplay of theoretical frameworks and practical considerations. Through the lens of economic perspectives derived from neoclassical economics, transaction cost economics, and the resource dependency perspective, it is possible to gain insights into the underlying dynamics driving collaborative filmmaking ventures. Mankiw's (2017) presentation of utility maximization and scarcity as well as incentives help to understand how the funding can be allocated in the Norwegian film industry. However, Wink Junior et. al's (2011) perspectives on transaction cost economics deals with the inherent complexities and transactional dynamics involved in co-production arrangements and how they could also be a potential hindrance.

Additionally, the resource dependency perspective presented by Archibald & Greener underscores the strategic importance of diversifying resource bases and forging alliances with international partners to access diverse funding sources and talent pools. Morawetz et al's (2008) presentation of the uncertainty in the film industry also helps to understand the risky nature of the film making business. Together, these theoretical perspectives and analytical frameworks provide a comprehensive understanding of how international co-productions contribute to the economic viability, resilience, and innovation within the Norwegian film industry. As filmmakers navigate the challenges and opportunities presented by globalized markets, collaborative ventures continue to play a pivotal role in shaping the future landscape of cinema, both locally and internationally.

3. Research methods

In this chapter, I will dive into detail, the research methodology employed to investigate the economic and cultural dimensions of international co-productions in the Norwegian film industry around the question, *'What are key cultural and economic dimensions of international co-productions, and how do they manifest themselves and shape co-productions in the Norwegian film industry?'* I will outline the approach taken for conducting semi-structured qualitative interviews, including the rationale behind informant selection, the procedures employed during the interviews, and the subsequent steps that follow.

Weiss (1994) opens the first chapter in his book, 'Learning from strangers' with the sentence, *'Interviewing gives us access to the observations of others. Through interviewing we can learn about places we have not been and could not go to and about settings in which we have not lived.'* (Weiss, 1994, p. 1). To undertake a comprehensive exploration of the research question, *'What are key cultural and economic dimensions of international co-productions, and how do they manifest themselves and shape co-productions in the Norwegian film industry?'*, a methodological approach centered around engaging in dialogues with key stakeholders within the industry emerges as the most viable strategy. The essence of this approach lies in the recognition that the Norwegian film industry is distinctively characterized by its relatively modest scale, relying significantly on state subsidies and various forms of support (Henlin-Stromme, 2012).

Rather than solely relying on the interpretation of TV and newspaper interviews and film analyses, engaging in direct conversations with individuals actively involved in the filmmaking process allows for a more nuanced understanding of the economic and cultural dynamics at play. This in-depth conversation on a topic fall under qualitative research method where the idea is to get detailed insight into a topic and the aim is not to generalize or quantify but to get a deeper understanding. Barbara Gentikow argues that in many ways, qualitative method is the only way to gain knowledge and insight into the dimension of experience which she points out as a definite strength (Gentikow, 2019, p. 67).

Østbye et al. assert that with a qualitative method, one can get information which would not be possible otherwise and this can include for example the informants way of talking and their use

and interpretation of concepts (Østbye. et al, 2023, p. 137). Weiss (1994) also explains that qualitative interviews prioritize gathering comprehensive information over using standardized questions, leading to qualitative interview studies. According to Weiss, these studies rely on smaller samples compared to survey studies due to the depth of information gathered from each respondent. Unlike quantitative studies, qualitative analysis focuses less on counting and correlating and more on interpretation, summary, and integration. In addition, qualitative findings are supported by quotations and case descriptions rather than statistical measures or tables (Weiss, 1994, p. 3).

Hence, by immersing oneself in the perspectives of filmmakers who have availed themselves of state support, be it as producers or directors, and have been part of international co-productions, I aim to gain access to firsthand insights into the intricacies of international co-production and its impact on the Norwegian cinematic landscape. The choice to focus on individuals who have benefitted from state support aligns with the intrinsic nature of the Norwegian film industry, which operates within a framework heavily dependent on governmental backing (Henlin-Stromme, 2012). These individuals, acting as major or minor co-producers, offer unique vantage points from which to explore the challenges and advantages associated with collaborative film production endeavors.

Furthermore, by engaging with both majority and minority co-producers, a comprehensive understanding of the spectrum of experiences within the Norwegian film industry can be attained. Majority co-producers, with potentially larger-scale projects, may encounter distinct challenges and benefits compared to their counterparts engaged in smaller-scale collaborations. This differentiation allows for a nuanced analysis that acknowledges the diverse landscape within the Norwegian film industry. In summary, the dialogical approach with individuals involved in the Norwegian film industry, particularly those supported by state subsidies, serves as a methodologically robust means to unearth the intricate economic and cultural facets of co-production. Through these conversations, a more authentic and contextually grounded exploration of the subject matter can be achieved, contributing to a richer understanding of the dynamics shaping the Norwegian film industry.

For the data collection, I will conduct a semi-structured qualitative interview with the people working in the Norwegian film industry viz. producers, directors and the advisors and

commissioners for international co-productions the Norwegian Film Institute (NFI). I have chosen the semi-structured qualitative interview approach because as Weiss puts it, “*quantitative studies pay a price for their standardized precision. Because they ask the same questions in the same order of every respondent, they do not obtain full reports.*” (Weiss, 1994, p. 2). Østbye et al. have also extensively written about where they argue that semi-structured interviews involve predefined themes and an interview guide, offering flexibility for unexpected insights and follow-up questions, often combined with observation. They further point out that researchers may prepare a list of questions for potential interviews during observation, serving both unstructured and semi-structured formats (Østbye et al., 2023, p. 139).

Gentikow mentions that in qualitative research, phenomena are primarily accessed through language, emphasizing the importance of enabling informants to articulate themselves effectively. Data ideally comprises individuals’ authentic expressions, conveyed in a rich and detailed manner. Qualitative research interviews or conversations are effective methods for eliciting firsthand experiences in participants’ own words (Gentikow, 2019, p. 45).

The flexibility inherent in semi-structured interviews allows for the exploration of emergent themes, ensuring that the research captures a broad spectrum of perspectives. Integrating a dual methodological approach by combining semi-structured qualitative interviews with immersive field observations represents a strategic initiative aimed at enriching the study of the Norwegian film industry. The symbiotic nature of these two methods is poised to offer a comprehensive and multifaceted exploration, blending the explicit insights derived from interviews with the subtleties observed during practical, real-world engagements. The synergy between interviews and field observations strengthens the validity and reliability of the research findings. It fosters triangulation, allowing for cross-verification of data obtained through different methods, thus enhancing the overall robustness of the study. Additionally, this dual approach aligns with the complex and dynamic nature of the film industry, recognizing that the multifaceted realities of co-production extend beyond what can be solely captured through interviews or observations in isolation.

3.1. The informants

1. Axel Helgeland (Mer Film, Oslo/Bergen) - Former CFO and CEO for Norsk Film AS, Helgeland film AS. Executive producer for *Krigsseileren*, *La elva leve*, *De uskyldige*. Co-producer for *Breaking the waves* by Lars Von Trier. Producer for 'Zwei Leben' (Two Lives).
2. Benedikte Danielsen (NFI, Oslo) – Advisor for international co-production and financing at NFI (Norwegian film institute).
3. Kristian Landmark (Sørnorsk filmsenter) – Director and producer at Landmark film. Director for 'Tønes'. Director for the upcoming feature film 'K-town'.
4. Dag Mykland (Viken Filmsenter) – Managing director at Hacienda Film AS, Tønsberg.
5. Nicholas Sando (Østnorsk filmsenter) – Producer at Filmbin AS, former location coordinator for the series 'Lilyhammer', 'Kon-Tiki'. Production manager for 'De Tøffeste Gutta'. Producer for 'Los Bandos', 'My Grandpa Is an Alien'.
6. Vincent Saunders (Vestnorsk filmsenter) – Producer at Goodtime pictures. Producer for 'Si Ingenting', Co-producer for 'Food Markets- In the belly of the city.'
7. Elisabeth Kleppe (Vestnorsk filmsenter) – Managing director at Aldeles AS, Writer and director for 'Predikanten', 'Bergen - i alle beskjedenhet' 'The last Norwegian cowboy'.
8. Alan R. Milligan and Deepak Rauniyaar (Sørfond) – One of the 9 recipients of 2023 Sørfond grant from NFI for the Nepali film 'The Sky is Mine'.
9. Guri Neby (Oslo) – Producer for the Norwegian film 'Håndtering av Udøde'. *Film selected at the 2023 Sundance film festival in USA, Opening film at Goteborg film festival, premieres 9th February 2024 in Norway.*

3.2 The approach and recruitment

As discussed above in 'The Norwegian Case' section, the de-centralization of the Norwegian film industry with the establishments of regional film centers, film funds, municipal owned cinema halls and the establishment of Cinematekets calls for the recruitment of the stakeholders and the film makers who represent these regional film centers. This decentralization is by

essence helpful to my research into what Weiss calls '*Samples that attempt to maximize range*'. (Weiss, 1994) There is of course also the possibility to come into contact with only the filmmakers from Oslo area who represent most of the Norwegian film industry and the market, but I would personally like to shy away from that approach because in a country with so many dialects, spread through multiple geographical terrains, and the governments approach to incorporate the local cultures and de-centralization, I wanted to follow the same approach of starting local. In embracing the geographical and linguistic vastness of Norway and its ongoing decentralized nature, the interview sample that I have thus maximizes its range.

3.2.1 Through film centers and film funds

I started reaching out to all the regional film centers in Norway from where I got the information on local producers and directors who have been supported by these film centers. Since they are experts on their field and have had experience within the field of international co-production, this led me to recruit a panel of knowledgeable informants who also happened to be a sample of representatives because of their demography, since they also represent the different area of the country and the various film centers. After that, I reached out to these filmmakers through these film centers, while pointing out the fact that I got their information from the film centers that supported them and that I was looking to interview them about their experiences with international co-productions.

In addition, I reached out Sigmund Elias Holm who is the head of the Western Norwegian Film Commission and I also reached out to Benedikte Danielsen who is the production advisor for feature films, co-production, and international financing at the Norwegian Film Institute (NFI, 2023) This constituted the informants that I recruited through the Norwegian regional film centers and NFI.

3.2.2 Through film festivals

In addition to the recruitment through these regional film centers, I also recruited a few other informants relevant to my research through film festivals both at home in Norway and

international. I visited the Bergen International Film Festival in Bergen-Norway, Tallinn Black Nights Film Festival, Tallinn-Estonia, and Gøteborg International Film Festival in Gøteborg-Sweden. As a participating observer in Gøteborg film festival, I recruited Guri Neby from Einarfilm, the producer of the 2023 Sundance selected Norwegian film 'Håndtering av Udøde', *'Handling the Undead'* a co-production between Norway, Sweden, and Greece. As a participating observer in Black Nights International Film in Tallinn, I recruited Sanjay Gulati and his Norwegian co-producer for the 2023 Sundance selected Indian film 'Girls will be Girls', a recipient of the Norwegian Sørfond grant represented in Norway by Hummelfilm.

To better understand the European co-production market which helps to contextualize the Norwegian film industry and the co-productions, I recruited Jaap Van Heusden, the co-writer and director of the Dutch film *'The Man from Rome'* and Rogier De Blok, the co-writer for the same film. Rogier is also one of the film consultants at the Netherlands Film fonds. Through Jaap and Rogier, I also had conversations with their German and Belgian co-producers. I also attended masterclasses around international co-productions while I was attending these film festivals that greatly helped contextualize my research in the modern European film context.

3.2.3 Through personal contacts

While I was in Nepal, I was actively involved in the film and theatre scene of the country and thus had a few friends and connections that work in the film industry there. I read in the news about how a Nepali film maker, Deepak Rauniyar, whose works I have admired for a long time had won the 2023 Sørfond grant from the Norwegian Film Institute (NFI, 2023). To be able to apply for the grant, he would need to have a Norwegian minority co-producer which is why I recruited Deepak Rauniyar, a Nepali film maker and his Norwegian co-producer, Alan R. Milligan at White Rabitt for the film *'The Sky Is Mine'* (NFI, 2023). The recruitment of Mr. Rauniyar and Mr. Milligan happened through personal connections.

3.3 The interview

Qualitative interviews offer a means to develop detailed descriptions, integrate multiple perspectives, and describe processes comprehensively, as outlined by the reasons provided (Weiss, 1994, pp. 9-10). They facilitate the creation of holistic descriptions and allow researchers to understand how events are interpreted by participants. Additionally, qualitative interviews serve to bridge intersubjectivities and can aid in identifying variables and framing hypotheses for subsequent research. Thus, upon the conclusion of the meticulous informant recruitment process, the subsequent phase involved conducting semi-structured qualitative interviews to delve into the multifaceted realm of international co-productions within the Norwegian film industry.

Given the geographical disparities between myself and the informants, most of these conversations happened in the digital sphere through the utilization of Zoom, a video conferencing tool. With the informed consent of the informants, I recorded the interview through the built-in *record* function available in Zoom. Prioritizing professionalism, I opted for the official university-endorsed version of the application, considering it a fundamental step in establishing a conducive environment for the interviews. The interviews were conducted synchronously (in real-time) whereas the recruitment process was done asynchronously (in non-real time).

However, acknowledging the significance of face-to-face interactions, a subset of interviews was conducted in person, skillfully captured using my mobile phone and later seamlessly transferred to my computer for comprehensive processing and analysis. Each interview, spanning a duration of 30 to 45 minutes, emerged as a vital conduit for unraveling the rich tapestry of experiences within the realm of international co-productions.

The commencement of each interview involved securing informed consent from the participants, affirming their willingness for the shared information to be utilized for this study and potentially in future publications. I did not use the traditional paper-based consent form but rather sent an e-mail before the interview explaining what the research was about and how they could contribute. Before the interview began, I asked them if it was okay to record the interview and with their informed consent, I recorded the interview with them saying once again (on record) that they consent to me recording the interview and that the material can be used for my thesis and future

publications. I think this helped me to keep the flow of the conversation and create a safe environment for the environment to take place, with a bit of informal nature which made the interview more of a conversation which is a plus point in a qualitative interview as Østbye et al. point out (Østbye et al., 2023, p.141). The initial phase of the interviews unfolded with informants introducing themselves, explaining their roles within the Norwegian film industry, and their connections to international co-productions. Subsequently, the conversations delved into more intricate inquiries related to the topics of this thesis, co-productions, culture, and economy.

Østbye et. al point out that if an interviewer manages to keep the flow of the conversation naturally, it makes the environment safe for both the researcher and the informants (Østbye et al., 2023, p.141). For the interviews, I managed to maintain the flow of the conversation through active listening which Østbye et al. point out helps to maintain the flow of the conversation. Active listening in this case was me asking them follow up questions, providing feedback, paraphrasing, and summarizing, and asking new questions based on their answers. This approach helps in confirming if what has been said is understood while also checking how it should be interpreted. It can also confirm that what is said is understood while also providing room for potential follow-up questions (Østbye et al. 2023, p.142).

I used both a standard interview guide and tailored one for my research purpose because each of the filmmakers I interviewed are represented by different regional film centers. The standard guide covered the topics such as Culture and co-production, and Economics and co-production while the tailored guide covered their personal subjective experiences. The interviews navigated through an exploration of the informants' involvement in international co-productions, discerning whether they played a role as a minority or majority co-producer. Motivations and the perceived necessity for engaging in such collaborative endeavors were probed, leading to tailored questions that bespoke the nuances of each informant's unique experiences. As the dialogues progressed, a deliberate effort was made to refrain from direct inquiries about challenges and benefits of such international co-productions and I also refrained from using complex academic terms. Instead, informants were not only encouraged to share anecdotes and recount specific instances but were also prompted to delve into the multifaceted dimensions of their involvement in co-productions. The interviews meticulously navigated the intricate terrain of cultural clashes that might have

arisen between the co-producing parties, probing the informants about their experiences in managing and mitigating such challenges. Cultural differences were a focal point of discussion, as participants were invited to reflect on how diverse cultural backgrounds influenced the collaborative process. This exploration extended beyond the cultural aspects, incorporating a keen examination of the economic dimensions inherent in international co-productions.

As a result, the interviews took on a comprehensive nature, allowing informants to narrate their experiences holistically. By fostering a dialogue that seamlessly integrated cultural, economic, and collaborative aspects, the research aimed to extract a richer tapestry of insights. This methodological approach sought to transcend surface-level analysis, providing a deeper understanding of the intricate connections between cultural differences, economic considerations, and the collaborative dynamics inherent in international co-productions within the Norwegian film industry.

In the latter part of each interview, informants were prompted to contemplate the road ahead for the Norwegian film industry. This forward-looking perspective provided a platform for them to share their insights on potential trends, challenges, and opportunities that could shape the industry's trajectory in the coming years. The amalgamation of their retrospective reflections and prospective considerations offers a comprehensive narrative that contributes to a holistic understanding of the current state and future possibilities of international co-productions within the Norwegian film landscape.

Throughout this qualitative inquiry, the methodology prioritized depth over brevity, aiming to unravel the layers of complexity inherent in the informants' experiences. Thus, by delving into the intricacies of culture and economy within the context of co-productions, the research aspires to offer a nuanced portrayal of the Norwegian film industry, capturing the essence of its collaborative ventures and shedding light on the transformative potential of international engagement.

3.4 Field Observations

By recognizing the inherent limitations of relying solely on verbal accounts, the incorporation of field observations becomes paramount. Immersing oneself in the actual environment provides an opportunity to observe the day-to-day operations, interpersonal dynamics, and unspoken

intricacies that may not be fully captured in interviews alone. The observational component adds a layer of depth to the research, allowing for the identification of patterns, behaviors, and contextual nuances that might not be explicitly expressed in verbal communication.

For the field observations, I chose 3 film festivals that were the most relevant in terms of co-production and the available time frame for this research. I chose Bergen International Film Festival (Norway), Tallinn Black Nights International Film Festival (Estonia), and Göteborg Film Festival (Sweden). I attended film festivals as ‘observer as participant’, as discussed by Østbye et al. In these film festivals, along with being an audience in the presentations of the co-produced Norwegian and other European films, I was able to immerse myself in the environment of the film festivals. I attended various seminars, lectures about the challenges of international co-productions and how the filmmakers achieved those co-productions. I was able to see for myself how co-production markets function and got a sneak peek into the institutionalization of films through these film festivals and co-production markets.

The semi structured qualitative interviews will be the primary source of data collection which will be complemented by field observation. As Østbye et al. point out, that treating qualitative interviews and field observation together has been a long tradition in the Norwegian social research, I think my approach follows this tradition (Østbye et. al, 2023, p.125).

In the same way that Weiss moves away from quantitative interviews because of their standardized precision and towards qualitative studies to obtain full reports, I move slightly away from Weiss towards Norwegian social research methods as Østbye et al. pointed out. This helped me to complement qualitative interviews to establish connections with professionals, capture the broader industry context and gain insights into emerging trends by immersing myself in film festivals and the events around them.

3.5 Validity and reliability

Ensuring the validity and reliability of research findings is essential to uphold the credibility and trustworthiness of the study outcomes. Østbye et al. point out that, Validity pertains to whether the design and execution of the project yield appropriate or valid answers to the project's

research question (Østbye et. al, 2023, p. 128). Barbara Gentikow defines validity as confirmability, correctness, or truth. She further argues that the use of the concept should be expanded for further application in qualitative studies. The term ‘validity’, according to Gentikow should also refer *‘to the interpretative approach that characterizes qualitative methods’* since these methods aim to produce valid knowledge and if not truth, then at least truths (Gentikow, 2019, p. 59).

Reliability, on the other hand, involves confidence in the data management process; ensuring that the data processing is trustworthy. Therefore, reliability considerations focus on the precision and consistency in how the data is handled (Østbye et. al, 2023, p.128). Gentikow defines reliability as dependability and credibility. She argues that both the data and the result of the analysis must be trustworthy and that there must be no errors in the investigation of the issue in question (Gentikow, 2019, p. 57). As Gentikow points out that many like Kvale have argued that qualitative methods are not reliable because of leading questions, low number of informants, manipulative interview techniques (Kvale 1996:230, as cited by Gentikow 2019, p. 56). But Gentikow further points out that, in contrast to others like Kvale, that leading questions do not necessarily weaken the reliability of the data but that it can be used on purpose to test an informants’ statements thereby strengthening the overall validity and reliability of the study. She also points out that provocative statements from the researcher can elicit protests from the informants which can be fruitful (Gentikow, 2019, p. 95).

Gentikow argues that the boundaries between reliability and validity are not clear but the validity requirement to her is superior to the reliability requirement because it can indicate whether that what is being investigated has relevance to the issue at hand (Gentikow, 2019, p. 59). In this study, meticulous steps were taken to enhance both validity and reliability. The utilization of semi-structured qualitative interviews served as a cornerstone for data collection, allowing for in-depth exploration of the research questions while enabling participants to express their experiences and perspectives in their own words. As Gentikow points out, qualitative methods rely heavily on words to access phenomena. Thus, it is essential that the research design allows informants to articulate their thoughts effectively. Ideally, the data should be rich and detailed, capturing people’s own words. Qualitative research interview or conversation is an effective method for gathering such verbal expressions of personal experiences (Gentikow, 2019, p. 45)

The interview protocol was carefully designed to align with the research objectives, ensuring that the questions posed were relevant and comprehensive in eliciting rich and nuanced responses. Furthermore, efforts were made to establish rapport with the informants, creating a comfortable and conducive environment for open and honest dialogue, thus enhancing the validity of the data collected. To further bolster validity, a diverse range of informants from various personal as well as geographical backgrounds within the Norwegian film industry was included in the study. This diversity ensured the representation of multiple viewpoints and perspectives, enriching the depth and breadth of the research findings.

3.6 Reflexivity and Flexibility

In addition, reflexivity played a pivotal role throughout the study, ensuring a critical self-awareness of my role, biases, and influence on the research process. Gentikow points out that interaction between the researcher and informant requires self-reflection because of the significance of researcher's role. She argues that the analysis of the data can be more subjective in qualitative methods than quantitative methods (Gentikow, 2019, p.55) Thus potentially affecting the interpretation of the collected data with subjective biases.

Gentikow further points out that self-reflexivity allows researchers to compensate for the formalized nature of qualitative research method which is why continuous evaluation of the choices made by the researcher and emphasizing the justification of such conclusions can help a researcher achieve the validity and reliability that critics argue the qualitative method lacks (Gentikow, 2019, p. 37) I engaged in ongoing reflection and self-examination, recognizing the potential impact of their own perspectives, assumptions, and preconceptions on the research process and outcomes. This involved a conscientious effort to acknowledge and address any personal biases or predispositions that could have influenced the interpretation of data or the framing of research questions.

Flexibility on the other hand as described by Gentikow is about being flexible regarding the steps taken when using an exploratory approach and conversation-based interview form (Gentikow, 2019, p. 52). In this research, being flexible meant using online video conferencing tool to conduct the interviews in some cases while rescheduling in other cases since the informants are working people in the Norwegian film industry. Being flexible also meant for me to ask

questions that were not originally thought of. While at times the interviews ended in about half an hour while sometimes they lasted for an hour. In some cases, the interviews were more formal with the informants while at times the informants were in their garden smoking a cigarette during the interview. This adjustment of the unexpected informal nature was also in my part being flexible regarding the interview process.

In conclusion, the methodological rigor employed in this study underscores its credibility, trustworthiness, and potential contributions to the field of research. Through the conscientious implementation of validity checks, reliability measures, and triangulation techniques, the study has sought to ensure the integrity and robustness of its findings. By systematically ensuring the validity, reliability, and credibility of its findings, the study has provided valuable insights into the research phenomenon and laid the groundwork for future research in the field. Ultimately, the study endeavors to contribute to a deeper understanding of the topic and inform theory, practice, and policy in the relevant domain.

3.7 Limitations of the research method

Qualitative method has been criticized by many for not producing exact, clear results (Gentikow, 2019, p. 37) This study relies on a small sample size of 10 informants who have been involved in international co-productions. As a result, it cannot be representative of the entire industry or producers with different levels of experience and their backgrounds. Since qualitative interviews are subjective in nature, this may have introduced bias in the data, as the informants may interpret their experiences differently or may also be influenced by what is known as recall bias where the informants might recall past events or experiences erroneously because of various factors like inaccurate memory, selective recall, social desirability bias etc. It can also be influenced by who is interviewing them. The research can have traces of my own biases on the topic. So, the context can also influence the interviews and the obtained data.

Gentikow (2019) addresses several limitations inherent in qualitative research. She highlights concerns regarding the representativeness of informants, the small sample sizes utilized, and the flexibility in research methods, which may result in data that is difficult to compare. Moreover, she acknowledges the subjective nature of the researcher-informant relationship and the potential for leading questions to affect the reliability of qualitative studies. Criticisms also extend to the

perceived lack of validity due to the subjective interpretations inherent in qualitative analysis. Gentikow points that qualitative studies often lack reliability due to leading questions, lack validity because they are based on subjective interpretations, and fail to meet the requirement of generalizability since the data comes from too few individuals who do not meet the criteria for representativeness (Gentikow, 2019, p. 56).

In addition, the lack of quantitative data such as statistical analysis to support or contradict the qualitative findings might limit the generalizability of the obtained results. The European research is focused primarily in the Norwegian film industry, this may affect in contextualizing the research in a broader framework of the European film industry, for example.

4. Analysis: Cultural and Economic Dimensions of International Co-productions

Analyzing international co-productions in the Norwegian film industry requires a multifaceted approach encompassing cultural and economic considerations. In this section, I will examine the manifestation of key cultural and economic dimensions of international co-productions in the Norwegian film industry with the research question, *‘What are key cultural and economic dimensions of international co-productions, and how do they manifest themselves and shape co-productions in the Norwegian film industry?’* I will answer this question based on the semi-structured qualitative interviews with industry professionals in conjunction with the theoretical frameworks and analytical perspectives presented in chapter 2. The first part of the analysis will be presented from a cultural perspective while the second part of the analysis will be presented from an economic perspective.

In the cultural analysis, I will explore how the cultural factors: cultural proximity and multiculturalism, representation and hybridity, and cultural dominance influence the nature and outcomes of international co-productions in the Norwegian film industry. This will include examining how cultural differences and similarities between co-producing countries impact the creative process, narrative content, and audience reception. Additionally, I will consider how Norwegian cultural policies and international cultural trends play a role in shaping these co-productions.

In the economic analysis, I will focus on financial aspects such as funding, budget allocation, and revenue generation. This will involve analyzing how co-productions are financed through various sources including government grants, private investments, and international funding bodies. I will look into the dimensions of risk sharing and aversion, incentives, and cost reduction and market expansion. I will also look into the economic benefits and challenges of co-productions, such as cost-sharing, access to new markets, and financial risks. Furthermore, I will assess the impact of economic incentives and regulations on the viability and sustainability of international co-productions within the Norwegian film industry.

By addressing both cultural and economic dimensions, this chapter aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how international co-productions function and thrive in the context of the Norwegian film industry.

Analysis of the cultural dimensions of international co-production

Culturally, co-productions offer the potential to enrich Norwegian cinema by introducing diverse cultural perspectives and storytelling techniques from collaborating countries. However, there's a delicate balance to strike, as there's a risk of overshadowing or diluting the distinctiveness of Norwegian cultural identity in the pursuit of international appeal, be it cultural or economic.

In this chapter, I will delve into the cultural dimensions of co-productions, examining how they navigate issues of cultural proximity, multiculturalism, representation, hybridity, and cultural dominance. Through this exploration, I aim to gain a deeper understanding of how co-productions contribute to the cultural landscape of Norwegian cinema while simultaneously shaping its global presence.

4.1 Cultural Proximity

Benedikte Danielsen, one of the film consultants at NFI for international financing and co-production argues that it is very natural and relevant for the Norwegian audience to watch a Swedish and a Danish film because of the linguistic and cultural similarities. She puts it as:

We have of course a lot of Nordic collaborations. And that is because we have similar languages. It's easy to work with because the industries are similar. Our systems are similar, we know each other, and we are used to working together. So that's maybe the reason that we co-produced the most within the Nordics. And also, it's relevant for the Norwegian audience to watch a Swedish or a Danish film. It makes sense on a lot of levels. And we as Norwegians, the Nordics are also a part of Europe. So, there is also the European cultural heritage (B. Danielsen, personal communication, 16 Oct 2023)

Danielsen argues that the preservation of the cultural heritage of both Nordic and European ones contribute to the belonging factor. This is in direct relation to Berg's (2017) assertion about the audience's tendencies to prefer their own productions with ethnicity, knowledge on local topics, language etc. being the contributing factors for that ownness.

Similarly, Dag Mykland, the managing director at Hacienda Film AS underscores the significance of cultural proximity in co-productions. He highlights the importance of trust and shared vision in international partnerships, stating, *'It's all about trust. You really need to trust your partner, so you need to get to know them.'* (D. Mykland, personal communication, 20 Oct 2023). And cultural proximity can be a very important factor that establishes trust among the partners since this emphasis on trust reflects the need for alignment in creative endeavors, where cultural understanding plays a pivotal role in fostering productive collaborations. As Danielsen puts it before, the pre-existing condition that *'we know each other, and we are used to working together'* contributes also to the trust factor as Mykland highlights the necessity for (D. Mykland, personal communication, 20 Oct 2023).

Nicholas Sando, the managing director at Filmbin AS, has had very similar experiences like other informants. He argues that the Nordics are about cultural and linguistic preservations. In his words:

We are in a strange position in the Nordics because we are small countries. We have few inhabitants, but we have our own languages, and they are quite similar, except Finnish. And luckily our policies have been about the preservation of the Nordic languages and cultures. I think co-productions help in this preservation because we can make our own high-quality content and offer it to the public (N. Sando, personal communication, 6 Oct 2023)

Sando's experiences offer valuable insights into navigating cultural differences in co-productions. He acknowledges the cultural challenges encountered, such as differing expectations in creative interpretations, stating:

Our first co-production was with Croatia, with a Norwegian composer for a Croatian film. The Norwegian and Croatian culture is quite different. When the director wanted a 'fairy-tale' like music from our Norwegian composer, that 'fairy-tale-like' meant

something completely different to the Norwegian than to the Croatian. Then we had to sit again and work. It took us more time because of the cultural distance, not so much difference but distance. It would have been easier if it was culturally close like Sweden or Denmark. I think it helps to be culturally close in that regard. (N. Sando, personal communication, 6 Oct 2023).

Despite these challenges, Sando emphasizes the value of creative discussions in shaping hybrid outcomes, noting, *'The best thing in filmmaking is those creative discussions where you can discuss and create something together which is bigger than the partnership.'* (N. Sando, personal communication, 6 Oct 2023). The cultural proximity dimension from Berg (2017) in accordance with Straubhaar deals with the idea that collaborations between countries with similar cultural backgrounds are more likely to result in successful co-productions due to their shared linguistic, historical, and aesthetic similarities which is present here. The 'cultural distance', as Sando puts it makes the co-productions less smooth in compared to the co-productions with other culturally proximate countries. In addition, Grelland et al. (2014) suggest that collaboration can be hindered by individuals' unique perspectives, often likened to 'glasses', shaped by their professional and ideological backgrounds. This is also prevalent here in Sando's case where the different 'cultural glasses' between the individuals from Croatia and Norway made the collaboration challenging. These perspectives act as implicit blinders, influencing the questions asked during collaboration.

Furthermore, Kristian Landmark's reflections on international collaborations shed light on the economic and cultural dimensions of co-productions. He highlights the limitations of the Norwegian market and the necessity of seeking international partnerships to reach broader audiences, stating, *'Most films do not make money... the state kind of gets their money back... but it takes so much time to get the money.'* (K. Landmark, personal communication, 22 Oct 2023). He however recognizes the possibility of international co-production within the Nordics because of the common history and the language. This common history comes from among many things, the historical political unions with Denmark and Sweden as discussed earlier in the sub section, *'The Norwegian Case'*. Moreover, Landmark's emphasis on cultural awareness and subject matter relevance underscores the role of cultural proximity in shaping collaborative endeavors. He notes:

I am interested in specific subject matters... green films or environmental films... and this is a subject matter that makes it easy to have international partners. And I think we in the Nordics have a very similar approach towards environmentalism as well. We are drawn towards common themes and a movement or a trend in one of the Nordic countries has a much bigger power to influence another Nordic country than if it was from outside the Nordics (K. Landmark, personal communication, 22 Oct 2023).

This acknowledgment of shared thematic interests highlights the potential for cultural alignment to facilitate fruitful collaborations. In his co-production experiences, Landmark mentions that he hasn't had problems within Scandinavia and the British Isles while conducting projects and that next year when he is in Rwanda for a project, that would completely be different and challenging in multiple levels because of both the cultural and linguistic differences (K. Landmark, personal communication, 22 Oct 2023). This highlights an important benefit of cultural proximity for smooth co-production both in terms of the logistics, administrative, and the creative sides of a film production.

Elisabeth Kleppe is another important figure in documentary filmmaking in the contemporary Norwegian filmmaking landscape. She is the managing director of the Bergen based film production company called 'Aldeles'. In Kleppe's experience with international co-productions, she emphasizes the importance of addressing social and cultural issues that resonate with audiences across different cultural contexts. While certain topics, such as violence against women, may appear universal, Kleppe suggests that their reception and manifestation can be particularly poignant and relatable within cultures that share similar values and norms. Kleppe firmly believes that effective storytelling transcends mere universality; it requires a deep dive into the cultural fabric of the societies depicted. This philosophy was exemplified in her involvement with the film '*Dying to Divorce*', a co-production where she was the minority co-producer, that sheds light on the plight of three women in Turkey facing life-threatening situations when they asked for divorces from their husbands. Through this project, Kleppe underscored the universal relevance of such narratives, arguing that they serve as poignant reflections of broader societal issues. Yet, she is quick to emphasize that the impact of these stories often reverberates most profoundly within cultures that share similar norms and values (E. Kleppe, personal communication, 15 Jan 2024).

Drawing parallels closer to home, she notes that Norway, despite its reputation for gender equality and social progressiveness, is not immune to the scourge of domestic violence. As she observes, “*Even though it may not be as prominently visible, similar events occur here in Norway, where when women are tragically harmed or killed, it tends to be by their spouses or former partners.*” While such issues may not always occupy the forefront of public consciousness, Kleppe contends that they remain insidious forces shaping the lived experiences of many Norwegian women. ‘*Dying to Divorce*’ had LOCs (*Letter of commitment*) from prominent TV channels like Arte, NRK, SVT among others which she believes highlights the cultural similarities between these European countries. She argues that the film echoes similarly in the Nordics, rest of Europe including the British Isles because of their cultural proximity and similarities (E. Kleppe, personal communication, 15 Jan 2024). So, cultural proximity in this case contributes not only to the origin of the film but also its reception. This is in direct relation with the study conducted by Soto-Sanfiel and Igartua where they confirmed that cultural proximity can be a factor affecting the processes associated with the reception of audiovisual narratives (Soto-Sanfiel & Igartua, 2016).

Alan R. Milligan is a Dragon award winner from Göteborg film festival, Un certain regard award winner from Cannes film festival and critics award winner from Venice film festival among other 50+ nominations in different film festivals around the world. His films have been nominated to various other prestigious film festivals like the Berlin film festival, and Toronto film festival to name a few. Talking about cultural proximity, Milligan firmly believes that some stories naturally belong to two countries because of the geography, culture, and language and hence he would participate in an international co-production for cultural reasons, specifically if the cultural similarities are based out of cultural proximity. And he believes that co-production within the Nordics stems both from cultural and economic reasons unlike other co-productions that stem primarily for economic reasons (A. R. Milligan, personal communication, 5 Mar 2024).

Guri Neby is another prominent contemporary Norwegian film producer in the fiction genre. She is a film producer at *Einar Film og Fortellinger* at present. With the film ‘*Håndtering av udøde*’ being selected at the 2024 Sundance film festival, she has great insights to share within the realm of international co-productions. The film is a co-production between Norway, Sweden, and Greece. Talking about cultural proximity, Neby pointed out that it was a very important factor in

partner selection because they could shoot parts of the film in Sweden while pretending to be in Norway since the geography of Oslo area and Gøteborg area are quite similar. Neby believes that geography affects culture in a very strong way. (*For example, big bodies of water tend to have fishing cultures around them*) The film has a character of Swedish origin speaking Swedish and when asked about the approach and method of this partner selection, Neby said that a Swedish speaking person in a Norwegian film is merely the representation of reality happening in society since there are many Swedes living and working in Norway and this has also been possible because of the cultural and geographical similarities between the two countries (G. Neby, personal communication, 26 Feb 2024).

In Neby's words:

We shot all the sequences from the cabin in Sweden and not Norway. It was in the Gøteborg area. Because we got the money from a couple of partners in Sweden one of the partners, *Film i Väst* is in Gøteborg. Because of that we had to spend a certain amount of money in Sweden. And since Norway and Sweden, especially the Gøteborg and Oslo area are quite similar, it was a very pragmatic decision that we made. We also did the post-production in Sweden (G. Neby, personal communication, 26 Feb 2024).

Neby thus elaborates on the logistical advantages of this approach, detailing how the collaboration facilitated by *Film i Väst*, based in Gøteborg area, allowed for seamless production and post-production processes. With financial incentives and logistical support readily available in Sweden, including requirements to spend a portion of the film's budget there, the decision to shoot in Gøteborg was both practical and economically sound. Moreover, Neby underscores the inherent similarities between Norway and Sweden, particularly in the Oslo and Gøteborg areas both in terms of culture and geography, which facilitated a smooth transition between filming locations without sacrificing authenticity. This approach not only ensured a seamless production experience but also enriched the film's narrative by capturing the essence of both Norwegian and Swedish cultural landscapes. Her notion about "*you have to be creative as a producer to make the best of available resource*" is backed by her approach towards Sweden as a co-production partner (G. Neby, personal communication, 26 Feb 2024)

In conclusion, the insights gained from cultural proximity analysis, as demonstrated through the interviews conducted, highlight the intricate dynamics inherent in transnational cinema. This

approach reveals the indispensable role of trust, shared vision, and cultural understanding in fostering successful collaborations across borders. By recognizing and valuing cultural proximity, filmmakers can navigate the complexities of transnational cinema with sensitivity and authenticity. The cultural proximity analysis offers a guiding framework for bridging cultural divides and creating compelling cinematic experiences that resonate universally. As the film industry continues to evolve in an increasingly interconnected world, embracing and harnessing cultural proximity will undoubtedly remain a cornerstone for transcending boundaries and fostering meaningful cinematic exchanges.

4.2 Multiculturalism:

Multiculturalism in Norway is a multifaceted concept that permeates various aspects of society, including the film industry. According to the queen's university of Canada, while Norway lacks explicit legislative affirmation of multiculturalism, there are notable efforts towards recognition and integration across different sectors (Queen's University, n.d.). This has also been highlighted and supported by the informants in the interview which I will now discuss in this section. Oxford bibliographies state that multiculturalism explores the relationship between cultural diversity and human freedom while accommodating the claims of the minorities in the public sphere (Murphy, 2023).

Within the Norwegian film industry and the media landscape, there's a need for greater ethnic representation and sensitivity of the people having other cultural backgrounds than Norwegian, as noted by the informants. Nicholas Sando argues that this ethnic representation and sensitivity in the domestic market can be influenced positively by international co-productions. In his words:

The representation issue that we have today can also be addressed through these international co-productions. When we realize that the most local is the most international, then maybe we tell local stories better. And I think international co-production can take us there (N. Sando, personal communication, 6 Oct 2023).

Dag Mykland believes that international attention creates a buzz and that it can be helpful. This buzz could be manipulated or exploited towards specific sectors including multi-culturalism and representation (D. Mykland, personal communication, 20 Oct 2023). Alan R. Milligan believes

that our societies have developed together with cultural exchanges and cinema is a very powerful means to do so. In his words:

Our societies have developed together with these cultural exchanges, and this is one of the beautiful cultural exchanges we could do because cinema, to me, incorporates all the arts. It also has moral values, social values, discussions that we all need to consider (A. R. Milligan, personal communication, 5 Mar, 2023).

Milligan was recently awarded the Sørfond with a Nepali director Deepak Rauniyar for the Nepali film *'The sky is mine'* with women rights issue at the forefront. Rauniyar also believes that this collaboration between him and Milligan would provide Norway with a much better cultural awareness that can result in small positive steps towards multi-culturalism for the country (D. Rauniyar, personal communication, 1st Mar, 2024).

The influence of multiculturalism has been huge in the world cinema. In Norway, filmmakers like Kleppe are at the forefront of advocating for diverse representation in the film industry through both fiction and documentary films. Kleppe passionately emphasizes the need for films to reflect the diverse tapestry of society, stating, *"Our films should mirror the people who live here."* (E. Kleppe, personal communication, 15 Jan 2024). This assertion underscores the importance of inclusivity and representation in storytelling, echoing the sentiments of many filmmakers striving to amplify marginalized voices. For Kleppe, multiculturalism extends beyond mere representation; it embodies a broader commitment to inclusivity and social cohesion and acceptance of the differences between the people who live in a particular space. She actively integrates diverse narratives into her work, recognizing the transformative potential of cinema in fostering the understanding across cultural boundaries. As she aptly puts it, *"Film is a powerful medium to bridge cultural gaps and promote empathy."* (E. Kleppe, personal communication, 15 Jan 2024). In her exploration of multicultural themes, Kleppe navigates ethical considerations and seeks to strike a balance between authenticity and sensitivity. Drawing from her own experiences and observations, she endeavors to create authentic portrayals that resonate with audiences while honoring the complexities of cultural diversity. As she eloquently expresses:

It's about finding humanity in each character, regardless of their background. And when you ask me, what multiculturalism means to me or how I define it, I think it is just the

differences between people in their relationship to their culture and geography. The way they look at those and are influenced in return. And I think a diverse society that has these populations can be considered multicultural, perhaps? (E. Kleppe, personal communication, 15 Jan 2024).

McCullom's assertion regarding organizational culture's reflection of diverse beliefs parallels the emphasis on multiculturalism evident in Norway's film industry and society. Both underscore the necessity and significance of accommodating diverse perspectives. Just as organizations can cultivate empathy and inclusivity through acknowledging these beliefs, international collaborations in filmmaking facilitate understanding. Within organizations, intergroup interactions provide avenues for bridging cultural gaps and promoting smoother cross-cultural collaborations (McCullom, 1987).

To Kleppe, apart from the mainstream definition of multiculturalism, she has found her own definition in relation to her work and the society she lives in. She is passionate about telling stories about what she calls sub-cultures, when referring to oppressed and marginalized voices since she believes that they are not represented in mainstream pop culture and possess their own sub-strata. She believes that the representation of these vast 'sub-cultures' within mainstream culture can also be another way of defining multi-culturalism. She believes that these sub-cultures and the conflicts with the mainstream are not documented because they are not a part of pop culture which is why she makes films about these sub-cultures/marginalized voices. In her words:

These sub-cultures are not documented because they are not a part of pop culture. And my starting point for making a film is normally something that really intrigues me, maybe a person or an underrepresented sub-culture. For example, I am working on a film now about kids who do not fit into the school system or that are not seen equally by the others. I have seen up close how people have lost faith in themselves that they can contribute and that they are valuable during those years in school. Even though this isn't multiculturalism directly per say, but it represents the perception of the differences in our society because what is multiculturalism if not living in harmony in spite of the differences, that could for example, come from culture, beliefs, languages and so on? (E. Kleppe, personal communication, 15 Jan 2024).

This is in the same area of Appiah's definitions of sub-culture and how they contribute towards a multicultural society. Appiah's assertion that multiculturalism encompasses diverse cultural identities as opposed to single, homogeneous national culture is visible here (Appiah, 1994). Kleppe also believes that Norway has a responsibility towards the filmmakers in other parts of the globe as well since the country has the resources. In her words:

I have seen how filmmakers and journalists in other countries struggle to fight for the truth in the stories they tell. By the means of the international co-productions that also works as foreign assistance, we can help them make those films, help tell those stories. And there certainly is the cultural element to it. I think that is also helping, preserving, or taking a positive step towards multiculturalism through international co-production. Don't you think so? And that will find its way back to Norway in one or other form I believe (E. Kleppe, personal communication, 15 Jan 2024).

Benedikte Danielsen at NFI mentioned that when Norway co-produces even as the minority co-producer, parts of the rights to the film are owned by Norway and the film becomes a Norwegian cultural artifact and thus a heritage. In a dystopian future even when Norway is cut off from the rest of the world, these cultural artifacts where Norway was internationalized, collaborated in transnational efforts and all that, would represent a colorful time period in the Norwegian history. But the many governments white papers addressing the Norwegian language, culture and the takeover from foreign elements come in conflict with the idea of multiculturalism and co-productions. Like from this statement from 1992, "*We receive great diversity, but this diversity can end up endangering an important part of the culture that is to be our common heritage and give us our identity.*" (as cited in Henlin-Stromme, 2012). But the Norwegian position is such that, without these international co-productions, films with good artistic qualities might not be made in the numbers as they are being made now, as argued by the informants. Another government white paper from 2002 mentions that the market is dominated mostly by the Anglo-American productions and that they are produced in an international and global market, as a rule. The white paper mentions that it becomes thus a public duty to secure that there is an offer of films and other audiovisual productions that reflect the history, culture, and the language (as cited in Henlin-Stromme, 2012).

To be able to offer films and audiovisual productions beyond the dominant Anglo-American ones, it becomes imperative that Norway produces its own high-quality films. The informants point out that without international support and co-productions, it is impossible to offer quality cinema to the Norwegian public. Thus, the only viable option is to partner with other countries that share a similar commitment to cultural preservation and protectionism. These partnerships enable the creation of films that cater to audiences in the participating countries while adhering to cultural preservation policies. As a result, there is an influx of certain foreign cultural elements into the country through these co-produced films. However, this influx is more controlled, as these films are not dominated by Anglo-American influences but include a Norwegian perspective through the direct participation of the Norwegian workforce, story elements, and shooting locations. This approach allows Norway to offer films that reflect its culture, history, and language, thus realizing the idea of culturally representative cinema.

This approach is in harmony with the ideals of multiculturalism, which advocate for the coexistence of diverse cultural components, enhancing the national culture without overshadowing it. This is in direct conjunction with Appiah's work where he argues that multiculturalism involves acknowledging and embracing various cultural identities within a wider societal framework, rejecting the notion of a singular, uniform national culture shared by all (Appiah, 1994, p. 6). By co-producing films, Norway can protect and promote its cultural identity while embracing a multicultural perspective. This diplomatic solution supports cultural protectionism and the availability of diverse films, contributing to a more inclusive and representative cultural landscape.

Hence, the relationship between multiculturalism and international co-productions is visible, it is mired but visible. Benedikte Danielsen for example strongly believes that in an international co-production:

You get to co-operate with other producers from other countries and you also get to bring some of your Norwegian culture with you in into, into the cooperation and I think it is important to learn how other people's work, because it's really different in different types of the world how they actually work with films and how they do it and how they fund and how they produce and how they promote films. So, I think it's important to have that

knowledge to become a professional. (B. Danielsen, personal communication, 16 Oct 2023).

I will discuss in the later section as to how these co-operations and collaborations can help the Norwegian producers and filmmakers to become more professional and better equipped for both the domestic and international markets.

4.3 Representation and Hybridity

Hybridity and representation intersect vibrantly in Norwegian cinema, propelled by the collaborative spirit of international co-productions. Filmmakers such as Landmark, Sando, Mykland, Helgeland, Milligan, Kleppe, and Neby intricately weave cultural tapestries, transcending borders to enrich the global cinematic mosaic. Through their deft manipulation of hybrid forms and diverse perspectives, these filmmakers navigate the complex terrain of identity, offering nuanced narratives that resonate universally. In their hands, storytelling becomes a bridge connecting disparate worlds, fostering a deeper understanding of humanity's multifaceted richness. In the context of international co-productions, collaborative filmmaking ventures serve as sites of cultural encounter, dialogue, and transformation, often blending diverse cultural influences and storytelling traditions into hybrid cinematic texts that reflect the complexities of interconnected global cultures (Papastergiadis, 2000; Young, 1995, as cited in Wang & Yeh, 2005). This dynamic tension between convergence and divergence contributes to the rich mosaic of global cinema, with the convergence blending diverse cultural elements into innovative expressions and divergence celebrating the distinctiveness of individual cultures (Kraidy, 2002, as cited in Wang & Yeh, 2005). This section will explore the hybridity and representative dimension of international co-productions for the Norwegian film industry from a cultural perspective.

In Landmark's experiences from international co-productions, hybridity emerges as a cornerstone of his creative process. He has worked extensively both in live action and animation movies. Even though it is not usual for live action movies to be dubbed into Norwegian, which is a norm in Germany, there are few children films (mostly animated ones) that are dubbed into Norwegian. Landmark believes that it will be normal in the near future to have animated films

with their main language as English or their native language and dub the film into multiple languages. He believes that animated films are much more co-production friendly since the workload is huge and has to be divided or shared among multiple partners. Landmark argues that these dubbed films lose their originality and hence become something new because of the language of the dub but not as something completely different since it carries the trace to the original film. This argument fits into the concept of hybridity presented in chapter 2 with the emergence of a 'third space' wherein elements intersect and undergo transformations (Kraidy, 2002, as cited in Wang & Yeh, 2005). Landmark mentions that the dubbing into the Norwegian language in those films are also capable of representing the Norwegian culture and language. He argues:

for example, when dubbing from any other language to Norwegian, you want to dub them to fit the Norwegian cultural context. If they are talking about food, then they would have to talk about Norwegian food, same with places. Linguistically speaking, Norwegian quotes or sayings can be used instead of the original one since it is a dubbing, literary references and you know, it all points towards the Norwegian identity. For example, you could always use Ibsen instead of Shakespeare in the dubbing if it has references to the theatre world. So, this kind of international co-productions when done right can be a good way of Norwegian representation within Norway. It might also be nicer to be able to watch these films in Norwegian language than other languages especially if its animated movies where lip sync aren't a huge issue as live action film. And it's a plus point that a Norwegian kid or a youth gets to watch their representation on the screen, I think (K. Landmark, personal communication, 22 Oct 2023).

In Sando's experience as well, in his Croatian co-production, he felt like the story was important to be told to the Norwegian children audience as well. The Norwegian part of the film was, therefore, a Norwegian actor. A part of the master version of the film had a Norwegian speaking actor and this version was shown in Norway while the version shown in Croatia was dubbed into Croatian from the master version that originally had Norwegian language. Sando also believes that the collaborative nature in this particular film made it into a hybrid one, one that along with being received differently according to the different cultural context, has been modified to fit the different cultural contexts it is to be received. He also mentions that universal themes can be

interpreted and adapted differently to fit different cultural contexts and that these films serve as a really good vessel for representation (N. Sando, personal communication, 6 Oct 2023).

Guri Neby mentions that representation and diversity can be marketed (G. Neby, personal communication, 26 Feb 2024).

I argue, based on Sando's and Neby's ideas, that the different cultural contexts affect the interpretation and the reception of a film. Sando and Neby complement each other in the sense that representation and diversity can be marketed and exploited in a responsible and reasonable manner, if the themes are of universal nature that are open to adaptations. These themes could be about the feeling of not belonging, like Sando's project or, the themes of women rights, like Milligan's project, or violence against women, like Kleppe's projects.

Stuart Hall calls representation an essential part of the process of exchanging and producing meanings between members of a culture through different means of communication (Hall, 1997). Marginalized and oppressed groups are universal in nature, but they have different cultural contexts (E. Kleppe, personal communication, 15 Jan 2024). Kleppe's work as a co-producer for the film *'Dying to Divorce'* that deals with 3 Turkish women who faced death threats from their husbands is representative of the plight of women in various parts of the world including. She argued that *"Even though it may not be as prominently visible, similar dynamics occur here in Norway, when women are killed it tends to be their partner or former spouse."* (E. Kleppe, personal communication, 15 Jan 2024). The internationally co-produced film worked as a representation of oppression of women Kleppe believes.

As discussed in the previous section dealing with 'Multiculturalism', Kleppe's work in documenting the stories of sub-cultures and oppressed voices that are not a part of the pop culture is also an important step towards representation since the representation of a particular oppressed group in Norway is also representing a very similar group outside of Norway. Talking about the solidarity and representation stance of her works Kleppe believes that these kind of works even though they seem remote at first glance can be relevant on a deeper look. In her words,

The film *'Dying to Divorce'* is relevant to Norway even though at a first glance it is a totally different culture. But the impulse to hurt women if they go against the patriarchal

societies is universal. I mean, think about how we cut the hair of the women who were wives and girlfriends of German soldier after the second world war. And if we were in war now, I do not think a lot of things would have changed (E. Kleppe, personal communication, 15 Jan 2024).

Similarly, her next work about kids not fitting into the school system is also a representation of a phenomenon not just in Norway but around the globe, Kleppe believes. In addition, her work as a co-producer in the film *'The Happy Worker'* deals with the issues of modern work life about what happens when people do not see the point in the work they are doing. She believes that the film would be relevant to a lot of Norwegians. Hall's concept of representation as a crucial process in which meaning is created and shared through images, language, and culture is evident here. The film being relevant to a lot of Norwegians as Kleppe points out is the creation of common meaning and the screening of the film is the exchange of that produced meaning with cinema (audio-visual) being the means of communication (E. Kleppe, personal communication, 15 Jan 2024).

Hence it can be deduced that representation and cultural proximity are connected to each other. For example, an event with a Nordic theme is a representation of the Nordic countries because of their cultural proximities or the presentation of the Swedish lifestyle around fjords and mountains is also a representation of the Norwegian lifestyle of the same setting because of the cultural and geographical proximity and similarities. But the goal is to find universal representation or to find the themes that need representation.

Another project, a co-production between Norway and Nepal with Alan R. Milligan as the producer and Deepak Rauniyaar as the director *'The sky is mine'* deals with a woman police officer in Nepal who has to navigate her way through the male dominated police force. Milligan believes that the film can be a vassal of representation of women rights not just in Nepal but everywhere in the world and that it is a universal theme. In his words:

Women equality is a universal and not a Nordic value. But it is not practiced in the same way around the world. But we can find women fighting for this equality in every single country in the world. The story of our film is based on a true story of a female police superintendent in Nepal, her struggles in a very male dominated police force and also society. But I do acknowledge that sometimes there are countries that are like shining

beacons for us all. Once upon a time, France and the USA were those beacons for Norway to want to become a democracy. You could say that we are pushing an agenda since women rights are better addressed in Norway than Nepal. But that agenda did not come from us. It came from the Nepalese film maker, and it came from a real woman's life story in Nepal (A. R. Milligan, personal communication, 5 Mar 2024).

Benedikte Danielsen and Elisabeth Kleppe believe that without these international co-productions, it would be almost impossible to make these sorts of films in countries like Nepal who depend heavily on foreign assistance. As Guri Neby pointed out that it would already be impossible to make independent Norwegian films without international co-production, the plight of storytellers in Nepal and similar countries is even worse. Moreover, international co-productions offer a unique opportunity to bring underrepresented and oppressed communities to the forefront through the means of storytelling and filmmaking. By collaborating with international partners, local filmmakers can tell stories from diverse cultural and social backgrounds that may have otherwise gone unheard. This fosters greater inclusivity and representation both in the film world and our societies, allowing audiences worldwide to gain new perspectives and a deeper understanding of different ways of life.

Through these co-productions, films from underrepresented communities can reach a broader audience and generate global appreciation for the rich and varied narratives these regions have to offer. In turn, this exposure can lead to further opportunities for local filmmakers and a more vibrant and dynamic international film landscape. Collectively, the insights from the informants in relation to hybridity and representation converge to form a mosaic of perspectives in international co-productions. Through their collaborative endeavors, these filmmakers navigate the complexities of cultural borders to craft narratives that resonate with global audiences. As Kleppe aptly puts it, *'Film is a powerful medium to bridge cultural gaps and promote empathy,'* highlighting the transformative potential of international co-productions in fostering cross-cultural dialogue and understanding (E. Kleppe, personal communication, 15 Jan 2024).

4.4 Cultural dominance:

When taking part in an international co-production, 'Sweatshop' Dag Mykland had a peculiar experience. It was a co-production between Norway and Sweden viz. *Aftenposten Norway* and *Aftonbladet Sverige*. The film was not doing that well after it was finished but then Ashton Kutcher tweeted about the film and in Mykland's words, "*suddenly, Ashton Kutcher tweeted about our series, and we ended up taking down the Aftenposten Newspaper website because there were too many streams at the same time and the site could not cope with it.*" (D. Mykland, personal communication, 20 Oct 2023). This is in direct conjunction with Salwen's notion as presented by Mahamoud about how the media and or media personalities from the powerful nations influence the culture of other nations or the process of cultural dominance (Salwen, 1991, as cited by Hagi, 2021).

Kleppe's experiences in international co-productions provide valuable insights into the struggle against cultural hegemony. The gaps left by major studios have increasingly been filled by independent filmmakers who often take innovative approaches to making their films. With the democratization of filmmaking tools and digital technology, these creatives have more opportunities to explore unconventional storytelling techniques and address diverse narratives that are not typically found in mainstream movies (Gear, 2023) (SAE Blog, n.d.). Works done by Elisabeth Kleppe in the area of representation as a means to fight the prevalent cultural dominance is very relevant to this section. In the same way, Mykland believes that international co-productions can be a means of fighting cultural dominance and hegemony as a consequence, since it involves multicultural parties in collaborations (D. Mykland, personal communication, 20 Oct 2023). Nicholas Sando believes that from his experience with a co-production with Croatia that these sort of bi-lateral co-productions helps fight cultural dominance by pooling resources from multiple countries. He believes that two small countries coming together to tell a common story invites multiculturalism and peaceful co-existence dialogue. This he believes can be a consequence of international co-production contributing to fighting the status quo of cultural dominances (N. Sando, personal communication, 6 Oct 2023).

Milligan believes that an empire tries to overshadow smaller entities through dominance, through prevention and also through extravagance. He believes that Hollywood blockbusters have more resources to be able to do this. He puts it as:

Hollywood blockbusters have a lot of money to show that we are not visual, and our major problem is the lack of availability of our films. We are covered by the Filmbib library, but we do not have enough members. You could try to find steaming service but then again, it's yet another subscription and the hassle. To fight this, I am all in for social commerce. Because a platform is telling you about a film in one place and asking it to go see it in another where you find hundreds of other films you do not want to see. My approach is that it needs to be more straightforward to become more visual. We have to work harder. My idea of fighting this dominance is by being creative, by being more visual and more available and when we have multiple partners co-producing a film, our presence only grows for the better (A. R. Milligan, personal communication, 5 Mar 2024).

This is also in direct conjunction with Schiller's notion as presented by Hagi about how the media from the powerful nations influence the process of cultural dominance. In this particular case, this happens as a result of the mainstream media itself being influenced by commercialization. (Schiller 1976, as cited by Hagi, 2021). In addition, these powerful and richer countries have what was presented in chapter 2 as the 'home market advantage', which refers to the competitive edge enjoyed by companies in their domestic markets. This advantage can contribute to cultural dominance when companies leverage their strong positions in their domestic markets to expand internationally, exporting their cultural products, norms, and values. This can lead to the global spread of dominant cultural narratives and ideologies, potentially overshadowing or marginalizing local cultural expressions in favor of those originating from the dominant market. This is in accordance with the theoretical frameworks and analytical perspectives presented from Ksiazek and Webster in chapter 2 under the sub-section, Cultural dominance. It can be deduced thus that cultural dominance here is influenced by economic reasons as well which takes me back to the intricate relationship between culture and economy and hence the choice of cultural industries as the overarching framework for this thesis.

Milligan further believes that the way international co-productions open up the international market and audience, one could use the traditional word-of-mouth for advertisement among other means. His statement on how Hollywood blockbusters use money to show that other industry is not visual can be supported by the fact that the marketing budget alone of the

Hollywood film *'Dune'* was about 5 times more in comparison to the entire budget of the most expensive Norwegian film ever made, *Krigsseileren* with a mere budget of 110 million NOK. (Lundegård, 2020). Milligan believes that since newer markets and possibly bigger audiences open up with international co-productions, producers and distributors need to come up with creative solutions to exploit that availability (A. R. Milligan, personal communication, 5 Mar 2024). This idea of fighting back cultural dominance through various means has been successful before as presented by Ksiazek and Webster in relation to the rise of regional film centers in countries like Brazil, Mexico, and South Korea (Ksiazek and Webster, 2008). This rise supports the indication of a more competitive global media landscape.

Milligan's upcoming film *'The Sky is Mine'* deals on a real-life story of a female police superintendent in Nepal which is a very male dominated profession. As Norway is known for its practices of women rights, he hopes that this Nordic practice can find its way into and towards patriarchal societies like the one in Nepal. It can be argued that this is also another instance where Mahamoud's notion of cultural dominance comes into play where, a powerful country, Norway is imposing its culture and civilizational value to the less powerful country, i.e. Nepal. In this particular instance, it actually exports a positive cultural value of gender equality and support of women rights (Salwen, 1991, as cited by Hagi 2021). Milligan believes this is also a way of fighting the patriarchal cultural dominance and hegemony that tends to be the universal theme in most societies. Milligan also asserts that our societies have flourished together with co-existence, cultural exchanges and not through dominance. He strongly points out that cinema is a very powerful medium since it incorporates all the arts and thus, is capable of reflecting human experiences. These cross-border collaborations can help us to understand each other better and find common stories within our different countries and cultures and live in harmony, Milligan mentions (A. R. Milligan, personal communication, 5 Mar 2024).

Bendikte Danielsen at NFI points out that in these co-productions, one takes ones cultural values and upbringing and has a direct involvement instead of just consumption. She believes that even as a minority co-producer, the Norwegian producer has a voice and can influence decisions in the film making process. She also mentions that part of the rights of the film will be owned by Norway and thus the film can be a Norwegian cultural artifact. I argue that this creation of artifacts that has its roots in different countries and cultures pushes us towards a hybrid society in

the far future and that our hate based on differences will be much less (B. Danielsen, personal communication, 16 Oct 2023). Landmark's journey in international co-productions serves as a testament to the challenges posed by unequal power dynamics. He reflects on the inherent limitations of Norway's small market, lamenting, *"We are often relegated to the sidelines in international collaborations, overshadowed by the dominant cultural narratives of larger production partners."* (K. Landmark, personal communication, 22 Oct 2023). Landmark's critique highlights the need for greater equity and representation within cross-cultural filmmaking ventures, where diverse voices and perspectives are accorded their rightful place on the global stage. Sando's experiences shed light on the intricate negotiations required to navigate power imbalances in international co-productions. He articulates the delicate balance between creative autonomy and economic incentives, stating, *"Trust is paramount in our collaborations, but we must also agree with the economic realities that often dictate the terms of engagement."* (N. Sando, personal communication, 6 Oct 2023). Sando's insights underscore the nuanced interplay between artistic vision and commercial imperatives, highlighting the complexities of forging meaningful partnerships in the face of cultural hegemony.

Collectively, the insights from the informants offer a compelling narrative of resistance against cultural dominance and imperialism through international co-productions. These filmmakers confront the pervasive influence of dominant cultural narratives, advocating for greater equity, representation, and authenticity in storytelling.

Analysis of the economic dimensions of international co-productions

Economically, international co-productions in the Norwegian film industry offer substantial benefits, including risk sharing, cost reduction, and market expansion. By partnering with international entities, Norwegian filmmakers can mitigate financial risks through shared production costs and diversified funding sources, enabling more ambitious projects. Co-

productions also attract various incentives, such as government grants and tax breaks, making these ventures more economically feasible. Additionally, pooling resources reduces overall production costs, while tapping into international markets enhances distribution and revenue potential. These economic dimensions collectively strengthen the viability and global reach of Norwegian films.

In this section, I will discuss these economic benefits and challenges of international co-productions in relation to the Norwegian film industry. I will take into use the economic dimensions in the form of risk sharing and aversion, incentives, and cost reduction and market expansion. I will then analyze the interviews in relation to these dimensions and discuss how these economic dimensions manifest and shape international co-productions in the Norwegian film industry.

4.5 Risk Sharing and aversion:

Kristian Landmark, in the interview, articulates the struggles faced by filmmakers in Norway due to the limited market size:

Because we are a small country, it's not many films that have a lot of box office. So, for like a feature film which is not a family or a war film, then you would have to be happy with 10,000 audiences. And the money made from the 10,000 tickets in comparison to the investment is not a lot. It maybe takes about 10-15 million kroners to make that film and the ticket sales give you about 400,000 NOK. And that is not a lot of return of investment (K. Landmark, personal communication, 22 Oct 2023).

Landmark further acknowledges the challenges of securing private capital in Norway due to the risk-averse nature of the local financial sector. In his words, "*Perhaps this is why we have no culture for private equity towards film investment.*" (K. Landmark, personal communication, 22 Oct 2023). This sentiment underscores the inherent reluctance among investors to engage in high-risk ventures, especially in a small market like Norway. This is in direct conjunction with Henlin-Stromme's mentioning of the Norwegian case where it is presented that the private sector is wary and very cautious about investing in the film business (Henlin-Stromme, 2012).

Landmark further argues that the public funding is what keeps the film industry running. He also believes that pre-sales are important for films which could come in different forms like distribution guarantees, LOCs (*letter of commitment*) among other schemes and incentives. Helgeland complements Landmark by pointing out the fact that “*Creative Europe gives money for both development and production through some kind of distribution support scheme*”, which kind of works like pre-sales (Helgeland, personal communication, 11 Oct 2023). So, this is another way in which these kinds of international co-productions help reduce the inherent risks associated with filmmaking through pre-sales and distribution support schemes. Mykland like Landmark believes that the Norwegian public funding works as a ‘*rescue trick*’ in the sense that it keeps the industry running, with the bare minimum. So, filmmakers have had to turn towards international co-productions for this risk sharing and sometimes aversion. He also believes that sometimes the right co-production partner might already come with their own distribution networks, which also reduces the risk associated with the film since the sales and distribution can potentially be guaranteed (D. Mykland, personal communication, 20 Oct 2023). This is a way to share and minimize the associated risks among multiple parties across borders.

In Neby's experience, the essence of risk sharing, and aversion emerges as a central theme underlying the decision-making process in international co-production of her film ‘*Håndtering av udøde*’. Her assertion that ‘*the only reason was money*’ encapsulates the pragmatic approach taken by filmmakers like her to mitigate financial risks inherent in independent film productions (G. Neby, personal communication, 26 Feb 2024). (*Independent as in not affiliated to studios and usually what would be categorized as ‘arthouse’ films*). By seeking out co-production opportunities, filmmakers like Neby effectively distribute financial risks across multiple partners and jurisdictions, thereby enhancing the project's resilience to market uncertainties while lowering the individual risk associated to the partners. In the case of her film, ‘*Håndtering av udøde*’, Neby and Einarfilm, the production company got funding of 12.5 million NOK in total from NFI for the development and production while the total budget of the film was about 45.5 million NOK (G. Neby, personal communication, 26 Feb 2024). So, the rest of the money was to be obtained from other sources. Neby and her partners at Einarfilm got additional funding from SFI (Swedish film institute) and *Film i Väst* from the Göteborg area in Sweden and in addition, they shot the interior scenes of the film in Greece which has a 35% tax incentive which meant that they could also reduce their tax liability. This cost reduction is also a way of saving money

thus, necessarily obtaining money in this case. Greece is also cheaper than Norway and 10 million NOK in Greece is worth more than 10 million NOK in Norway. (G. Neby, personal communication, 26 Feb 2024). Hence, this meant that the inherent risk in the film was shared among producers from 3 partner countries: Norway, Sweden, and Greece. This also pushed them towards averting the risk since it opened international markets both in terms of screenings, distributions, and networking possibilities.

Speaking about funding models specially, supranational fundings and co-productions, Axel Helgeland puts it as:

I would say that it increases the possibilities for financing each project and thus it increases total production. It's not like $1+1=2$ here. It's more like $1+1=2$ and $\frac{1}{2}$ or something because there are supranational financial possibilities- you can apply for funding from Eurimages after you have a co-production partner, under the EU council, Creative Europe. So, the total amount of available money increases for each country (A. Helgeland, personal communication, 11 Oct 2023).

Helgeland further acknowledges that collaboration is one of the most important ways in which this inherent risk can be shared and minimized. In his words, "*Even Disney and Pixar, two of the biggest competitors in the film business do come together in instances to make films.*" (A. Helgeland, personal communication, 11 Oct 2023). Alan R. Milligan complements Helgeland as he puts co-productions as:

definitely a better investment than investing in the script. It is almost impossible to know what you are going to get out of a movie in terms of money. Unless it is a commercial movie with a clear market, it is a low-risk investment in that regard since you are putting your bet in a moving train (A. R. Milligan, personal communication, 5 Mar 2024).

This I believe is in direct relation with the film industry being an uncertain venture and filled with challenges as pointed out by Morawetz et al. (2008), Henlin-Stromme (2012), and Hesmondhalgh (2019).

Based on the above excerpts, I argue that since the supranational fundings like Eurimage incentivize filmmakers to share the risks among multiple parties, which is the only way they are qualified for the Eurimage funding, this could then potentially open the doors towards the *risk-*

averse private since the sector is now putting their *'bet in a moving train'* because the film has now higher probability of being made with the possibility of international screenings and distributions with the increased available national, transnational and supranational fundings. Thus, co-productions can be considered a low-risk investment in the sense (among others) that the inherent risk is lowered or shared among multiple partners.

Benedikte Danielsen at NFI also believes that these sorts of co-productions both as a majority and minority co-producers give the filmmaker *"an opportunity to be part of a usually bigger production while not taking all the risks. It is a small risk compared to the benefits."* (B. Danielsen, personal communication, 16 Oct 2023). This risk sharing phenomenon also takes me back to the *'Cultural proximity'* section where the filmmakers argue that trust is very important for an international co-production and that this trust is easy to establish in culturally and geographically proximate countries like the Nordics. Taking the trust factor into consideration, I also argue that cultural proximity is also an important factor in terms of better risk management and risk sharing.

Neby's candid acknowledgment of the challenges in securing funding underscores the risk aversion prevalent in the industry, where investors are cautious about financing high-risk ventures. Through co-productions, filmmakers can navigate these challenges by leveraging the incentives offered by partner countries, as evidenced by Neby's strategic choice to shoot in Sweden and Greece to capitalize on tax incentives. Furthermore, Neby's emphasis on the collaborative nature of co-productions highlights how partnerships facilitate risk sharing not only in terms of financing but also in creative and logistical aspects. By pooling resources, expertise, and networks, co-producers collectively bear the burden of uncertainty, allowing for a more robust and sustainable approach to filmmaking. In essence, Neby's insights underscore how risk sharing and aversion are intrinsic to the fabric of international co-productions, enabling filmmakers to navigate the precarious terrain of the film industry with greater confidence and resilience (G. Neby, personal communication, 26 Feb 2024).

Overall, the interviews underscore the importance of risk sharing and aversion in international co-productions, emphasizing the pragmatic approach of diversifying funding sources and leveraging incentives to mitigate financial risks and optimize returns. By collaborating with partners from different countries, filmmakers can not only spread the risk associated with film

production but also gain access to new markets and audiences, ultimately enhancing the viability and sustainability of their projects.

4.6 Incentives:

The granting of supranational fundings from Eurimage after having a co-production partner incentivizes filmmakers to pursue co-productions because of the increase in the available money. Mankiw's (2017) assertion that rational people make decisions based on costs and benefits is relevant here. The Norwegian government for example incentivizes filmmakers to apply for these international co-productions and thus be eligible for supranational fundings. I argue that incentives in this scenario are not that subtle but multilayered. I will discuss how schemes and policies incentivize filmmakers to opt for these international co-productions along with direct incentive schemes like tax returns and return on costs and investments. *"The film production incentive grants return on costs spent in Norway to international films and series produced entirely or partly in Norway. The incentive is aimed at Norwegian and foreign productions."* (Norwegian film commission, 2023.) These *regulations 'on financial incentives to produce international films and high-end series in Norway'* outlines regulations governing financial incentives for the production of international films and high-end series in Norway (NFI, 2023).

Kristian Landmark believes that the conditions which push him to look for international funding create an incentive for him that works as his backup. He believes that the guarantee from the state on public funding gives him the strength and hence incentivizes him to look for partners elsewhere while already putting him in a much stronger position than his potential counterparts. In his words:

My strength as a co-producer is the Norwegian public funding. Because I could pretend to be like this big fish while I am only spending. I have the possibility to raise Norwegian public funding and bring to the table as an investment in the project. The UK producer for example, on the other hand would have to raise this capital with their own money or that they do not have similar possibilities with public funding (K. Landmark, personal communication, 22 Oct 2023).

This statement highlights that this backing from the state with public funding puts filmmakers in a better negotiating position by giving them the upper hand as Landmark puts it.

Milligan believes that in a minority co-production where the Norwegian film maker is the minority co-producer, NFI (*Norwegian Film Institute*) in a way incentivizes filmmakers towards low-risk high return ventures because it takes much more to develop a film from scratch. But in a minority co-production, it is about putting ones bed on a moving train, Milligan argues. When asked about an example of this low-risk high return scenario, Milligan replied that it is an incentive towards building one's cultural capital and awareness, that the audiences' need or desire to explore diverse films of good artistic qualities incentivizes the intercultural exchanges while the availability of these international films in return creates incentives for the audience to enrich their cultural awareness and capital. Milligan's perspective provides valuable insights into the economic dynamics of international co-productions and the role of incentives in mitigating financial risks. He observes:

Co-production tax incentives stand as a cornerstone of government policy aimed at fostering collaboration and innovation in the creative industry. Because the government is incentivizing both foreign and domestic filmmakers and companies to collaborate, we get access to international talents and up to date knowledge of the field. We get to know the international audience, the market and other things attached (A. R. Milligan, personal communication, 5 Mar 2024).

Benedikte Danielsen from NFI also mentioned that in addition to making Norwegian producers more professional from these international co-productions, it gives them bigger networks and possibilities of fundings and distribution outside of the country. And that gives them an opportunity to be a part of much bigger production with very little risk. She believes that this factor is incentivizing Norwegian producers to work internationally. (B. Danielsen, personal communication, 16 Oct 2023).

Neby's perspective on incentives provides valuable insights into the pragmatic considerations driving filmmakers' decisions to engage in international co-productions. She emphasizes the critical role of financial incentives in shaping filmmakers' choices and strategies, stating, "*It always has something to do with money in some way.*" (G. Neby, personal communication, 26 Feb 2024). Neby's candid acknowledgment underscores the pivotal role of incentives in mitigating financial risks and enabling filmmakers to realize ambitious projects that would otherwise be financially unfeasible. When asked about if there was a cultural reason that she

could think of while co-producing the film *'Håndtering av udøde'*, she simply replied that there was none, and it was for the money. In addition, Neby's discussion of the tax incentives in Greece and the strategic decision to shoot there exemplifies how financial considerations drive location choices and production strategies. She explains:

Greece has a 35% tax incentive, and the studio build is shot there. The interiors were shot in Greece. Nothing to do with the exterior weather. But we did need a certain warmth because in the book, on which the film is based on, it is supposed to be a very warm day with people sweating. Greece helped in that regard. But the primary reason was the tax incentive and the prices since it is cheaper there than in Norway (G. Neby, personal communication, 26 Feb 2024).

This pragmatic approach highlights the importance of maximizing financial incentives to optimize production budgets and enhance project viability. Moreover, Neby's insights into the challenges of securing funding and the importance of government support underscore the critical role of incentives in facilitating industry growth. She reflects on the difficulty of making independent films without co-productions, stating, *"It would be impossible... Even Joachim Trier struggles to get enough money."* (G. Neby, personal communication, 26 Feb 2024). (*Joachim Trier is a famous Norwegian film maker with multiple Cannes and Oscar nominations among others*) This assessment highlights the pervasive financial challenges faced by filmmakers and the essential role of incentives in mitigating these challenges. Neby's perspective underscores the pragmatic considerations driving filmmakers' decisions to engage in international co-productions and the pivotal role of incentives in enabling these collaborations.

In the case of Elisabeth Kleppe, the multifaceted roles of incentives and their appeal is clearly visible. She believes that the current state of affairs within the Norwegian film industry pushes the filmmakers to look for alternate sources of fundings and the many bilateral treaties signed with partner nations and Norway being a member of the 'Cinematographic convention' incentivizes filmmakers to apply for these transnational and eventually supranational fundings. In her words:

I have done a few majority and minority co-productions. The incentives have mostly been money but sometimes it is also about the access that we get because of these international co-productions. For example, we did this film called 'Democracy Road', a co-production

with Sweden which came about when our director moved to Sweden. Laika films in Sweden were strong in journalistic documentaries and a good track record both at home and internationally. So, I would say that the possibility to work with them, or in a way, access to or being part of their track record incentivized us to collaborate with them. And this exists only because of the international co-productions. And generally, it has to be good and worth it because it takes a lot of time and effort in finding a partner, so a partner with good track record is already an incentive for wanting to engage in a collaboration or co-production with them (E. Kleppe, personal communication, 15 Jan 2024).

But at the same time, Kleppe is very critical of both the direct incentives and schemes that incentivizes filmmakers to look for co-productions. She believes that it is not wise from climate perspectives, moneywise and sometime even from artistic perspectives. *'Just because there is the incentive does not mean that you should go for it. It can be an easy miscalculation sometimes.'*, says Kleppe. In her experience, sometimes these incentives are overdone and that defies common logic. In her words:

The problem with NFI at the moment is that they try heavily by saying that we are making films for an international audience and that you will be rewarded if you do so. For instance, they have this funding scheme called 'Ramme Tilskudd' (Translation) which means that one can apply for a certain amount of money and use the money in 2-3 projects that one chooses. And it is a point-based system. If you had a film during the last year that premiered in Copenhagen Docs, you get, I think, 20 points. If you have had a film in Norwegian cinemas with 30,000 tickets sold, which is quite a lot for documentary, you get about 2 points (E. Kleppe, personal communication, 15 Jan 2024).

Kleppe further argues that it is obvious that a company is rewarded or is incentivized in turning one's company towards an international market and audience. But what defies common logic here from her perspective is the fact that, Kleppe and her contemporaries have made films for the Norwegian audience and that they know the Norwegian audience, what is lacking in the market and that they know the culture. And she believes that NFI fails to recognize that the most local and personal can be the most international (E. Kleppe, personal communication, 15 Jan 2024).

In conjunction to Mankiw's assertion that incentives are something that induces people to act, and that rational people make decisions by comparing costs and benefits, it can be deduced here

that there exist incentives every step of the way in the modern Norwegian context for the filmmakers to pursue these international co-productions (Mankiw, 2017). Hesmondhalgh's assertion that cultural industries require a blend of creativity and business acumen calls both for creativity and rational pragmatic approach towards film production and the informants have done so by pursuing international co-productions, weighing on their costs and benefits and the state and other entities aimed at cultural protectionism have incentives in place for these filmmakers (Hesmondhalgh, 2019).

In summary, the collective insights of Kleppe, Milligan, Danielsen, Landmark, and Neby underscore the pivotal role of incentives in shaping the landscape of international co-productions. From driving economic growth and fostering innovation to mitigating financial risks and promoting cross-cultural exchange, incentives serve as a catalyst for realizing ambitious projects and expanding the global reach of the film industry. By leveraging incentives effectively, filmmakers can navigate the complexities of international collaborations and create compelling content that resonates with audiences worldwide.

4.7 Market expansion and cost reduction:

Neby's interview offers valuable insights into the economic rationale behind international co-productions and their role in expanding market reach. She emphasizes the importance of diversifying funding sources and accessing international markets, stating, "*We need to look abroad to find money, we have to do it.*" (G. Neby, personal communication, 26 Feb 2024). Her decision to co-produce with Greece stems from the cost reduction and market expansion standpoints. Because 1 million Euros is worth a lot more in Greece than Norway, this cost reduction opportunity helped them to better utilize the production budget. In addition, Neby believes that this might have opened the Greek and the neighboring markets to the film. However, Neby believes that the Swedish counterpart in the co-production did not necessarily contribute to the market expansion part because of the geographical proximity between Norway and Sweden. Her next film will be shot in England because they have a co-producer who has a studio, incentives and access to other possibilities that significantly reduce the costs and potentially open up the Anglo-American markets through network building. Her pragmatic approach underscores the economic imperatives driving filmmakers to seek co-production

opportunities beyond domestic borders to maximize revenue streams and increase project viability. Additionally, Neby provides insights into the strategic advantages of international collaborations in reducing production costs and enhancing market potential. She reflects on the challenges of financing independent films and the critical role of co-productions in mitigating financial risks, stating, *“It's hard to make independent movies... Co-productions sort of help.”* When asked if making a purely Norwegian film without international funding was feasible, Neby simply said, *‘it would be impossible.’* (G. Neby, personal communication, 26 Feb 2024). Her film, ‘Håndtering av udøde’, a co-production between Norway, Sweden and Greece had a budget of about 46 million, with about 14 million coming from NFI. The film has now sold to over 42 countries and has garnered both critical acclaim and commercial success.

Talking about her process of why she chose Greece, Neby replied that even though Germany was a viable option for the co-production, she replied that Germany was too high a cost compared to Greece and to be able to get European money, the company needed 2 European partners and needed to sell the film elsewhere. Neby repeatedly said during the interview that Greece would not have been the first choice if it was not for the 35% tax incentives. Neby's assessment highlights the economic realities faced by filmmakers and the essential role of collaborative ventures in overcoming financial constraints and expanding market opportunities. Moreover, Neby's perspective underscores the importance of leveraging tax incentives and cost-effective strategies to optimize production budgets and compete effectively in global markets. She discusses the decision-making process behind selecting shooting locations and production partners based on financial incentives and logistical considerations, stating, *“Every time I go abroad, there needs to be a reason... Of course, you would go for diversity because film is a popular culture, so you want to reach different audiences.”* (G. Neby, personal communication, 26 Feb 2024). This is an excellent instance when a filmmaker makes use of the available scarce resources to pursue the utility maximization through deliberate pragmatic decisions which is in conjunction with the neoclassical theory of economics about the pursuit of utility maximization.

Milligan believes that international co-productions in themselves create a larger interest for the film. In the case of his Norway-Nepal co-production, he believes that it would create an interest for the whole of the Indian sub-continent in the film because of the cultural proximity in the sub-continent. He was introduced to the Nepalese director through a Thai producer from a company

that was facilitating productions and development of Southeast Asian projects. Milligan believes that this already opens up the southeast Asian market as well because of the co-production market. This interest he believes can be exploited to sell the film to these countries, to establish future partnerships, understand the audience and the culture there so that, the Norwegian film market can eventually expand outside of the Nordics and continental Europe (A. R. Milligan, personal communication, 5 Mar 2024).

Kleppe's work with sub-cultures has already touched upon representation and multi culturalism, but I think it is also relevant to this section. Since representation and diversity can be marketed as pointed out by Neby and others and since Kleppe's works carry universal representation, the possibility of market expansion is huge. The films that Kleppe has co-produced like 'The Happy Worker', 'Dying to Divorce', have had LOCs (*Letter of commitment*) from multiple distribution companies and TV channels like Arte, NRK, SVT to name a few. These films that she co-produced as a minority producer came to her and thus opened up the international market for her and her company, Aldeles AS.

Helgeland believes that even though Norwegian is a small language, there have been recent developments from distribution and streaming companies like Netflix that are trying to bridge the gap and are:

very much into promoting films in different languages for different and all markets. They are breaking through that language barrier. But you need a film of a certain caliber for Netflix and the way to make that happen is a bigger production budget. This is where these international co-productions come into play (A. Helgeland, personal communication, 11 Oct 2023).

Helgeland also believes that diversity can be marketed, and that international involvement takes the film further than just domestic involvement. Helgeland also pointed out that young European producers have networking opportunities in film festivals and meeting events which helps them to expand their market, networking reach and future contacts. Helgeland believes that for ambitious projects, one has to apply for international co-productions and supranational funding which provides market reach. I presented him with an example of a Norwegian co-production with Lithuania where the Norwegians parties got overtime paid after 8 hours while the Lithuanians did not since the industry there worked on the 12-hour workday then. Touching on

this and the ethics of cost reduction, Helgeland said that as long as one follows the rules of the countries one shoots in, it is all fine. He also pointed out that the reason for that co-production might be those unpaid overtime hours since one looks for to minimize the cost under scarcity (A. Helgeland, personal communication, 11 Oct 2023).

This is where the pursuit of utility maximization under the conditions of scarcity is done in terms of international co-productions. But at the same time, there exists transaction cost economics. I was once told at the Tallin Black Nights Film Festival in Estonia during my field observation by a Dutch film maker Jaap Van Heusden that while co-producing with Germany, the accounting fees of the German part of the co-production was worth the money of 1 shooting day which is very troublesome because cost reduction is one of the reasons one co-produce (Bista's observation, Tallinn Black Nights Film Festival, 2023). In Kleppe's experience, the time spent trying to find the right partners and applying through their financial system is a hectic process which adds to the transaction costs, audits, travels and so on. At the end, she believes that one might not save a lot of money in some projects.

In analyzing the insights from the interviews, Nicholas Gregory Mankiw's assertion that economics revolves around managing scarce resources resonates deeply. Neby's strategic decision to co-produce with Greece, citing the significant cost reduction opportunities stemming from favorable tax incentives, exemplifies the pursuit of utility maximization under conditions of scarcity. As she states, "We need to look abroad to find money, we have to do it," underscoring the necessity of diversifying funding sources to optimize production budgets (G. Neby, personal communication, 26 Feb 2024). Furthermore, the challenges and transaction costs associated with international co-productions, as illuminated by Kleppe and the Dutch filmmaker, align with Wink Junior et. al's presentation of transaction cost economics. Kleppe's experience highlights the time-intensive process of finding suitable partners and navigating different financial systems, adding to the transaction costs inherent in such ventures. Additionally, the resource dependency theory's emphasis on diversifying resource bases finds resonance in Neby's deliberate selection of shooting locations and production partners based on financial incentives and logistical considerations, as she notes, "Every time I go abroad, there needs to be a reason." (G. Neby, personal communication, 26 Feb 2024). Through this lens, the interviews underscore the strategic imperative for filmmakers to manage scarce resources effectively, mitigate transaction

costs, and establish strategic interdependencies to maximize the success of international co-productions in expanding market reach and optimizing production budgets.

The market expansion and cost reduction dimension of the analysis reveals how economic theories inform strategic decisions in the Norwegian film industry's international co-productions. Filmmakers like Neby seek cost-effective partnerships abroad to optimize budgets, resonating with Mankiw's notion of managing scarce resources. Transaction cost economics underscores the complexities and costs involved, while the resource dependency theory emphasizes the need for diversification to navigate uncertainties. These theories provide a framework for understanding filmmakers' efforts to expand market reach while managing resources efficiently.

Summary of the analysis

As a summary of the analysis, culturally, co-productions often bring together artists, filmmakers and creatives from different cultural backgrounds and these diverse perspectives can lead to the creation of culturally rich narratives. However, cultural proximity and shared values between collaborating countries/parties may also influence the themes, character, and the storytelling approaches of co-produced films. International co-productions can also either reinforce existing cultural dominance by favoring the existing dominant cultures or empower marginalized voices by providing them with a platform to share their stories on a bigger international stage. In the Norwegian context, collaborations with countries that have similar cultural backgrounds may amplify the Norwegian cultural influence, while partnerships with countries from diverse cultural backgrounds may facilitate the representation of marginalized voices. In addition, co-productions offer opportunities to represent diverse cultural identities and experiences fostering greater inclusivity and this can also result hybrid cinematic styles, storytelling techniques thus enriching the artistic landscape of the Norwegian cinema.

Economically, co-productions allow for the pooling of financial resources, enabling access to larger production budgets than would be possible for individual productions. Also, by sharing production costs, co-productions mitigate financial risks and facilitate the creation of high-quality cinematic projects. The collaboration with international partners spreads financial risks

across multiple stakeholders reducing the individual burden and co-productions may also involve risk aversion strategies such as securing pre-sales, co-financing agreements or accessing public funding schemes from multiple countries to ensure project viability. Governments often offer incentives and support mechanisms to encourage international co-productions, such as tax breaks, grants and co-production treaties.

Thus, recognizing the diversity within the Norwegian film industry, it is important to acknowledge that co-producers engaged in larger-scale projects may face different challenges and benefits compared to producers involved in smaller projects. Overall, the perspectives of Kleppe, Helgeland, Landmark, Milligan and, Neby provide valuable insights into the economic imperatives driving filmmakers to pursue international co-productions as a means of reducing production costs, accessing new markets, and enhancing project viability. By leveraging collaborative partnerships and maximizing financial incentives, filmmakers can optimize resources, mitigate risks, and create compelling content that resonates with diverse audiences worldwide.

5. Discussions: Protectionist Cultural Idealism Through Financial Pragmatism in the Norwegian Cinema

In this section, I will delve into the discussion of the findings from the analysis section, exploring the interdependent relationship between the cultural and economic dimensions of international co-productions as presented in chapter 2 to answer for the research question, **‘What are key cultural and economic dimensions of international co-productions, and how do they manifest themselves and shape co-productions in the Norwegian film industry?’** The theoretical perspectives and analytical frameworks presented in chapter 2 are inherently interdependent and complex in practice. This complexity necessitates a thorough examination of how these dimensions both complement and challenge each other, to provide a clear and holistic understanding of international co-productions within the context of the Norwegian film industry. International co-productions are influenced by a myriad of cultural and economic factors that interact in multifaceted ways. Cultural dimensions such as identity, representation, and hybridity intersect with economic considerations like risk sharing, incentives, and market expansion. This interplay creates a dynamic environment where cultural and economic imperatives can either align or conflict, shaping the outcomes and viability of co-productions.

Since the treatment of international co-productions under the overarching theme of cultural industries considers both cultural and economic perspectives, I will also present the complexities of this merging and how one influences the other and vice versa. For example, incentivizing filmmakers to look for international fundings while making a film with a universal theme and appeal can help in market expansion and representation of marginalized voices. Instances like this will be touched upon frequently in the sub-section below where I will present the relationship between these multiple perspectives and frameworks and how they complement or hurdle each other. I will present a comprehensive that integrates cultural and economic perspectives. By combining insights from various areas, I aim to provide a holistic view of international co-production as it relates to the Norwegian film industry.

Central to this discussion is the deliberate pursuit of cultural protectionism, which emerges as a guiding principle derived from the pragmatic considerations of various stakeholders, including governmental bodies, filmmakers, and the general public. This commitment to safeguarding

cultural identity and heritage is intricately intertwined with economic imperatives, reflecting a nuanced understanding of the industry's landscape. Importantly, the discussion underscores the symbiotic relationship between economic and cultural factors, illustrating how they synergistically reinforce each other in the pursuit of overarching goals. By embracing the interconnectedness of cultural and economic considerations, the industry demonstrates a forward-thinking approach that prioritizes both artistic integrity and financial sustainability. In essence, the discussion offers a nuanced exploration of the Norwegian film industry's evolving landscape, shedding light on the intricate interplay of cultural and economic forces that shape its trajectory.

Based on the analysis section, it can be asserted that in the realm of Norwegian and European cinema, a dynamic interplay between protectionist cultural idealism and financial pragmatism shapes the landscape of film production, funding, and distribution. The informants all point out to the fact that the Norwegian film industry is primarily supported by state subsidies and grants. The state does so from a cultural preservation and protectionist stance. I call this stance 'cultural idealism' because culture is something that is constantly evolving and changing. It is getting harder to define by the day what belongs to which part of the world. For example, Taco has not always been a part of the Norwegian food culture, but *Store Norske Leksikon* presents the example of 'Taco Friday' in Norway with the figure that about 13% of the Norwegian population had Taco every Friday while 84% of Norwegians had Taco on their kitchen table at least once a month during 2023 (Øyvind Holen, 2024). *Store Norske Leksikon* also presents that many believe or say that Grandiosa pizza from Stranda municipality is one of the national foods of Norway (Arnt Steffensen, 2024). Taco belonging to Mexico while pizza having its roots in Italy have now become inseparable part of the modern-day Norwegian culture. This is why I use the word '*cultural idealism*' to present how in spite of this constant evolution of culture, many see it from an idealistic perspective which has a positive impact in this case.

This follows that in the case of the European nations, each with distinct cultural identities and artistic traditions, often seek to safeguard their cinematic heritage through policies and initiatives aimed at promoting local talent and preserving national languages and cultures. This protectionist stance reflects a deep-seated commitment to nurturing indigenous filmmaking industries amidst the pervasive influence of Hollywood and globalized media. This protectionist stance gets

amplified when they are co-producing with each other. It creates a resistance to the US blockbusters by the combination and pooling of resources from multiple countries with similar film industries aiming at cultural protectionism and provides a selection of high-quality audio-visual content competing with the US films.

While economic motivations predominantly drive decision-making processes, they tend to strongly stem from the cultural protectionism stance. Even though done primarily for economic reasons, Neby's co-production with countries like Sweden and Greece also facilitate cultural exchange and diversity in storytelling, reflecting a commitment to both cultural protectionism and multiculturalism. This hybridity of narratives challenges traditional cultural boundaries and enriches the Norwegian cinematic landscape. As argued before, it is difficult by the day to say what belongs to where now and even if one were to be able to point that out, the resulting product from the collaboration between these two or more different parties would create something entirely new that is at all times bigger than what each of them would represent alone. In connection with hybridity, when Norway and even the most culturally proximate countries like Sweden co-produce with each other, they ultimately end up influencing the product which then becomes neither purely Norwegian nor Swedish but something that belongs partly to both.

The cultural protectionist stance that leads to co-productions ultimately ends up influencing each other's culture. The ideal view of culture as "this is us" is constantly shaped by international co-productions, which themselves become part of that identity. But now, because of international co-productions, this import of foreign cultural elements is much more controlled, since in an international co-production, in the case of Norway, there exists the Norwegian side. This is particularly visible in the film, *'Zwei Leben'* in German or *'Two Lives'* in English. The film is about the so called 'war children' who were born in Norway and raised in Germany with the story being about *"Katrine, the daughter of a Norwegian woman and a German soldier, faces upheaval as she refuses to testify in a trial against the Norwegian state, disrupting her peaceful life amid the crumbling of the Berlin Wall."* Norway was one of the co-producers of the film and Axel Helgeland, one of the informants for this thesis, was the Norwegian co-producer (IMDb, *Two Lives*). This film has a Norwegian side to it, as Axel Helgeland puts it, a sort of a belonging (A. Helgeland, personal communication, 11 Oct 2023) and as Bendikte Danielsen calls it, a 'Norwegian cultural heritage' (B. Danielsen, personal communication, 16 Oct 2023). But in the

case of the consumption of Hollywood movies, there is no Norwegian side guaranteed because it tends to be American narrative and even if the location is in Norway, it could ultimately serve the American narrative like in the movie 'Mission Impossible: Dead Reckoning' where a Norwegian location is used but presented as Austria. When this film was shown in Norway, it was promoted as having some scenes filmed in Norway which is true. However, much to the audience's disappointment, those scenes were actually depicted as taking place in Austria.

The frameworks of cultural proximity and multiculturalism, hybridity and representation, cultural dominance, risk sharing, and risk aversion, incentives, and cost reductions and market expansion intersect and interact within the landscape of international co-productions in the Norwegian film industry. Cultural frameworks emphasize the importance of diversity and intercultural exchange, highlighting the richness of narratives that emerge from collaborations between countries. Economic frameworks, on the other hand, shed light on the practical considerations and financial incentives driving these collaborations, such as shared production expenses and access to larger markets. Together, they offer insights into the dynamic interplay between cultural and economic dimensions, shaping the outcomes and viability of international co-productions. However, these frameworks also present challenges and tensions within the co-production landscape. Cultural dominance may pose a hurdle to the promotion of diversity and cultural exchange, as dominant cultures may exert influence over decision-making processes and storytelling.

These tensions underscore the delicate balance that international co-productions in the Norwegian film industry must navigate. While cultural proximity and multiculturalism advocate for inclusivity and respect for diverse voices, they can sometimes clash with economic imperatives focused on cost reduction and market expansion. For instance, in the pursuit of larger audiences, there might be pressure to homogenize narratives or favor certain cultural elements over others, potentially diluting the authenticity of the final product. Hybridity and representation offer a potential solution by encouraging the blending of cultural influences and ensuring that diverse perspectives are accurately portrayed on screen. By embracing hybrid identities and narratives, co-productions can appeal to a wider range of audiences while still maintaining cultural integrity. However, achieving authentic representation requires careful collaboration and dialogue between creators from different cultural backgrounds to avoid falling

into stereotypes or tokenism. Moreover, risk sharing and risk aversion play a significant role in shaping the willingness of stakeholders to engage in co-productions. While sharing production expenses can mitigate financial risks, concerns about potential cultural or creative conflicts may deter some parties from participating in addition to the unclear target audience. Clear communication, transparency, and trust-building measures are essential for overcoming these barriers and fostering successful collaborations.

According to the definitions of culture from Appiah, Hesmondhalgh and McCollom from chapter under cultural industries, it can be deduced that cultural industries can communicate and perpetuate societal norms beyond the economic functions. This idea has been put forth by many including Williams (as cited in Hesmondhalgh, 2019, p.14) who focuses on maintaining of the artists' symbolic creation or their imprint in the reproduced products, thus suggesting that artists' symbolic creation shapes their imprint. Hesmondhalgh's (2019, pp.8-11) incorporation of a Marxist perspective in terms of looking at cultural industries as a day-to-day capital-labor-product processes de-fetishizes this cultural idealism with the financial pragmatism by emphasizing the nature of their transformations into global enterprises with the capacity to shape cultural narratives with their economic impact.

Hence, my choice of the cultural industries frameworks aligns directly with the findings that cultural idealism needs a pragmatic financial strategy. They have a symbiotic relationship in the sense that without that idealism certain financial considerations need not be made and without financial pragmatism, the idealistic view of culture would not exist. For example, co-productions and state subsidies are not the main financial decisions made in the US film industry while it is the case here in Europe, meaning the context calls for different prioritizations.

Hesmondhalgh further argues that cultural industries emphasize managing and selling specific types of work that encompasses artistic, managerial, and business aspects and that it requires a blend of creativity, cultural understanding, and business acumen. (Hesmondhalgh, 2019, pp.8-9). Elisabeth Kleppe, a film producer and the manager and CEO of Bergen based production company, Aldeles, reflects her nuanced pragmatism in life that transfers to her work. In her own words:

I work with films because I love meeting people and I love telling and hearing stories but it's not my life's mission to work with them. Some people have this really strong drive

from within, that that is the only thing they want to do in life, but I have never had such convictions. Because I am aware that I need to earn some money in order to hire people we need and to run the company. I do not think there needs to be a strong gap or a canyon to say, film as art of film as a commerce. There are always ways to bridge those gaps. I think it's a dead end to put these against one another. I am a very pragmatic person (E. Kleppe, personal communication, 15 Jan 2024).

Elisabeth Kleppe acknowledges the importance of financial sustainability in the film industry, recognizing that making money is necessary to support and keep her company running that helps to execute projects effectively. This pragmatic mindset reflects her understanding of the business side of the industry, where profitability and effective resource management are necessary for long term success. Kleppe emphasizes that there doesn't need to be a stark divide between film as art and film as commerce. This sentiment aligns with Hesmondhalgh's argument about the blend of creativity and business acumen required in cultural industries. Kleppe's approach suggests that successful filmmaking involves bridging the gap between artistic vision and commercial viability, finding ways to integrate creative expression with practical considerations such as funding, distribution, and audience engagement. Kleppe's pragmatism stemming from the reality of the Norwegian film industry is a way in which the economic dimensions manifest themselves. Elisabeth Kleppe's approach exemplifies how artistic vision can be aligned with financial pragmatism to sustain a production company. International co-productions allow Norwegian filmmakers to bring their cultural narratives to a broader audience while also benefiting from financial incentives such as funding and resource sharing from other countries. This economic reciprocity enhances the cultural richness of the films while also ensuring economic viability.

In her interview, Benedikte Danielsen, a film consultant at the Norwegian Film Institute, highlights the cultural significance of preserving Norwegian language and heritage, emphasizing the importance of cultural protectionism. She argues that public funding prioritizes the preservation of language, history, and culture over *immediate financial gains*, underscoring a cultural idealism in funding decisions. She also argues that profits are not always economic in nature. Danielsen notes that international co-productions contribute to cultural exchange by involving creative and technical collaboration with producers from other countries. To secure

funding, projects must meet cultural criteria, such as being in the Norwegian language or having ties to Norwegian history. She stresses the necessity of co-productions for reaching a wider audience outside of Norway, acknowledging the challenges of attracting domestic audiences due to Norway's small population. Despite these challenges, Danielsen recognizes the financial benefits and growth opportunities of co-productions, reflecting a pragmatic approach to sustaining the Norwegian film industry on a broader scale (B. Danielsen, personal communication, 16 Oct 2023).

Danielsen's discussion of the necessity and opportunity of co-productions reflects the interconnectedness of cultural and economic imperatives. It demonstrates how Norwegian filmmakers navigate this complex interplay, integrating creative expression with practical considerations to achieve long-term success. This aligns with theoretical perspectives that emphasize the dynamic relationship between cultural and economic dimensions in cultural industries. Her acknowledgement reflects the financial benefits and growth opportunities through co-productions reflects a pragmatic mindset aimed at sustaining the Norwegian film industry in the broader European and global context.

Nicholas Sando at Film Bin AS says that in the Nordics, and particularly in Norway, there's a unique challenge due to being small countries with related language and a particularly homogenous society. He says that there's a strong desire to preserve Nordic culture and language, reflected in government support for film funding despite having few inhabitants. He also pointed out that achieving full Norwegian funding can however be difficult especially without national funding from organizations like the NFI (N. Sando, personal communication, 6 Oct 2023). Kristian Landmark at Landmark film based in Kristiansand went on to highlight his dependency on public funding and his hope to get himself to a position where he could have more private capital. He acknowledges the present condition as being dire and that the private sector needs to be more active in film investing. Dag Mykland at Hacienda film based in Tønsberg says that the main reason that he would want to co-produce is to look for a funding partner usually for economic reasons (D. Mykland, personal communication, 20 Oct 2023). It can be deduced that in Mykland's case, economic dimensions of the international co-production manifest by shaping the production phase of his film based on the co-production partners.

Asked about if he would change the story for funding, Vincent Saunders at Goodtime Pictures based in Bergen had to say that it is a pragmatic decision to make changes to the story to be able to apply for funding. He gave an example of a production where it was done. In his words:

I am currently involved in this project where the lead actor moves away from Denmark in the beginning of the film. But we didn't get money from Denmark when we applied. So, we got a German co-producer, moved that Danish part of the story to Germany and then got the funding from there. So, if you don't have the money then changes have to be made to the scripts and stories (V. Saunders, personal communication, 10 Jan 2024).

Saunders thus, elucidates the prevailing reality within the industry, where securing funding often necessitates compromises. His account underscores the intricate play between artistic vision and fiscal viability, where alterations to narrative elements become pragmatic decisions in pursuit of financial support. The example of rewriting a story to appeal to a German co-producer highlights the extent to which financial imperatives can influence decision-making. In this paradigm, the imperative to secure funding reflects a prevailing ethos of adaptability and compromise in the face of economic constraints. When asked about if there might be cultural reasons, Saunders said that he makes cultural changes for economic reasons and not the other way around.

This means that the current scenario in Saunderson's case is such that economic prioritization might lead to weaker cultural presence since he argues that he does not make economic changes for cultural reasons. For his film with the Danish actor which was then moved later to Germany, if Saunders and his team had enough resources, Denmark would perhaps end up as being a partner country instead of Germany. This takes me back to cultural proximity and relevance. As Danielsen argues that it makes sense on many levels for a Norwegian or a Dane to watch each other's films because of the cultural similarities, if the partner country was Danish, the film would perhaps be more relevant to both the Danish and Norwegian societies because of their cultural, linguistic, and geographic proximities. It can then be concluded that making cultural changes for economic reasons shapes co-production from the partner selection, countries to involve, the languages and the other related logistics.

This reveals a complex interdependence between cultural and economic dimensions in international co-productions within the Norwegian film industry. Guri Neby's emphasis on economic motivations for co-producing the film 'Håndtering av udøde' underscores the

significance of financial incentives in driving international collaborations. Her insights not only shed light on the economic imperative but also suggest a nuanced consideration of cultural factors in partner selection, emphasizing the importance of cultural exchange and diversity in storytelling. Neby's assertion that filmmaking in Norway without international funding would be impossible serves as a poignant reminder of the industry's heavy reliance on external financing sources, thereby highlighting the paramount economic dimension of international co-productions. The pursuit of international co-productions is driven by economic incentives, such as accessing funding from countries where the currency holds greater value. This economic imperative complements the collaborative nature of international co-productions, where multiple countries pool resources to finance a project. While the primary motivation for co-producing 'Håndtering av udøde' was economic, the collaboration between Norway, Sweden, and Greece also facilitates cultural exchange. The film's production involves creative input from multiple cultural perspectives, enriching the storytelling and potentially widening the film's appeal to diverse audiences. The acknowledgment that filmmaking in Norway without international funding would be impossible highlights the industry's dependency on external financing sources. While international funding enables ambitious projects, it also poses challenges in terms of aligning creative vision with the expectations of funding partners.

Furthermore, Alan R. Milligan's observation regarding the necessity of multiple investment partners further underscores the collaborative nature of international co-productions, emphasizing the intricate interplay between economic factors. Also, Milligan's assertion that some films naturally belong to two cultures connects the two cultures through films when a co-production is conducted (A. R. Milligan, personal communication, 5 Mar 2024). This is also another way in which the cultural dimension manifests itself in relation to the Norwegian film industry and international co-production. Yet, amidst these economic imperatives, the acknowledgment of the importance of preserving Norwegian language, history, and culture by Neby and others points to the enduring cultural dimension of filmmaking, thus necessitating a delicate balance between economic viability and cultural identity. This tension between economic pragmatism and cultural preservation underscores the complex interplay between cultural and economic dimensions in international co-productions, profoundly shaping the landscape of filmmaking in Norway.

The preceding section underscores the nuanced interplay between pragmatic economic considerations and idealistic pursuits of cultural preservation in international co-productions. This tension between pragmatism and idealism imbues decision-making processes with complexity, requiring filmmakers to navigate the intricate terrain between economic imperatives and cultural values. The cultural and economic frameworks elucidated in Chapter 2, including cultural proximity, multiculturalism, and hybridity, play pivotal roles in shaping international co-productions within the Norwegian film industry.

Notably, cultural proximity often intertwines with cultural protectionism, exerting influence on financial pragmatism by facilitating co-productions between culturally similar nations. While economic factors like cost reduction and market expansion may not always be primary considerations, they nonetheless form integral components of filmmakers' pragmatic financial strategies. Thus, both cultural and economic factors converge to shape international co-productions, reflecting the intricate dance between cultural aspirations and financial exigencies in the modern Norwegian and European context. These collaborations serve as conduits for the cross-border exchange of creative visions, leveraging diverse resources to realize shared cultural aspirations. While the pursuit of cultural idealism remains a driving force, the exigencies of financing necessitate a pragmatic approach, compelling filmmakers to navigate complex funding structures while upholding their artistic integrity.

Thus, if I were to answer the manifestation of the key cultural and economic dimensions in a few sentences, it would be that they shape the Norwegian film industry through the deliberate aim of cultural protectionism derived from the financial pragmatism by the various parties including the state, the filmmakers, and the public. The economic and cultural dimensions are interdependent to each other in this regard, and they thus complement each other to reach this aim of protectionism through pragmatism by the means of international co-productions. This symbiotic relationship between economic and cultural dimensions reflects a concerted effort by stakeholders, including the state, filmmakers, and the public, to safeguard Norwegian cultural identity while leveraging the benefits of global collaboration. In addition, the financial pragmatism opted by the stakeholders helps maintain the idealistic view of culture possible while at the same time this existing and maintained ideal view of culture makes it necessary to conduct international co-productions as a means of financial pragmatism. Ironically, this pragmatism

through international co-productions influences the ideal view of culture through hybridity, multi-culturalism, expansion of markets that might lead to homogeneous narratives and a rise in a different storytelling technique and perspectives based on the incentives to make films primarily for international audiences. At the same time, cultural proximity somewhat helps maintain the cultural status quo. Thus, the manifestation of cultural and economic dimensions of co-productions in the Norwegian film industry calls for a delicate balancing act between financial pragmatism and cultural protectionism. By embracing international co-productions as a means to protect and promote their cultural heritage, Norway's film industry navigates the complexities of globalization while remaining rooted in its unique identity and values.

Ultimately, the intersection of cultural and economic frameworks in international co-productions presents both opportunities and challenges for the Norwegian film industry. By embracing diversity, fostering genuine collaboration, and prioritizing cultural authenticity, stakeholders can navigate these complexities and create impactful cinematic experiences that resonate with audiences beyond the participating countries.

In conclusion, the study illuminates the intricate interplay between cultural and economic dimensions within international co-productions, offering insights into their manifestation and impact on the Norwegian film industry. Through interviews and analysis, it becomes evident that cultural imperatives, such as the preservation of national identity and language, intersect with economic motivations, driving decisions and shaping the collaborative landscape of co-production endeavors. While economic considerations underscore the pragmatic strategies employed by filmmakers to secure funding and expand market reach, cultural values remain paramount, guiding the industry's overarching goals of preserving heritage and fostering intercultural exchange. The dynamic synthesis of these dimensions reflects the complexity of contemporary filmmaking, where creative expression intertwines with financial sustainability to realize diverse cinematic visions. Moving forward, understanding the nuanced relationship between cultural and economic factors will be crucial in navigating the evolving landscape of international co-productions, ensuring the continued growth and vibrancy of the Norwegian film industry in the global context.

6. Conclusion

International co-productions have been necessary in the context of the Norwegian film industry to incentivize filmmakers to look for transnational funding to help expand the Norwegian film market and in return to train the professionals working in the field. A strong means of cultural exchange and representation, the economic side also plays an important role. Through the semi-structured qualitative interviews with the industry professionals about international co-productions and the Norwegian film industry viz. **‘What are key cultural and economic dimensions of international co-productions, and how do they manifest themselves and shape co-productions in the Norwegian film industry?’** I have provided above, in detail about how these elements and dimensions manifest themselves in shaping these international co-productions from partner selection, market expansion, cost reduction to representation.

These co-productions within the Norwegian film industry represent a dynamic intersection of cultural exchange, artistic collaboration, and economic cooperation. Through these partnerships, filmmakers from Norway and around the world come together to create cinematic narratives that transcend geographical boundaries and resonate with diverse audiences. Cultural proximity and multiculturalism serve as catalysts for creative synergy, enabling the fusion of storytelling traditions, thematic explorations, and aesthetic sensibilities from different cultural backgrounds. Whether collaborating with neighboring Nordic countries or distant international partners, Norwegian filmmakers have the opportunity to broaden their perspectives, challenge conventional narratives, and enrich the cultural tapestry of their cinematic creations. Moreover, international co-productions offer a platform for marginalized voices to be heard, empowering underrepresented communities, and fostering greater inclusivity within the Norwegian film industry. By amplifying diverse narratives and showcasing a multiplicity of cultural identities, these collaborations contribute to a more vibrant and inclusive cultural landscape, both domestically and on the global stage.

On the economic front, co-productions mitigate financial risks, enhance production values, and expand market opportunities for Norwegian filmmakers. By pooling resources and leveraging incentives, producers can access larger budgets, navigate complex production challenges, and reach wider audiences both at home and abroad. Co-productions in the Norwegian film industry

often serve as strategic endeavors to optimize financial outcomes and sustain competitiveness in the global market. The economic dimensions of these collaborations encompass various aspects such as cost reduction, market expansion, risk management, and incentives utilization. Co-productions thus enable cost-sharing among participating countries, leading to more efficient utilization of resources and enhanced production values. By pooling financial resources, producers can access larger budgets, allowing for the creation of high-quality cinematic projects that appeal to both domestic and international audiences. Additionally, co-productions facilitate market expansion by diversifying distribution channels and tapping into new audience demographics. Through international partnerships, Norwegian filmmakers can access foreign markets and leverage their cultural capital to attract a broader spectrum of viewers.

Mitigating financial risks is a central aspect of international co-productions. By spreading financial liabilities across multiple stakeholders, producers can minimize the impact of unforeseen challenges such as budget overruns, production delays, or market fluctuations. Moreover, co-productions provide avenues for risk aversion through strategies such as securing pre-sales agreements, accessing completion bonds, or participating in co-financing arrangements. These risk management mechanisms enhance the financial viability of cinematic projects and increase investor confidence in the sustainability of the Norwegian film industry. Governments often incentivize international co-productions through tax rebates, grants, subsidies, or co-production treaties. These incentives aim to stimulate cross-border collaborations, promote cultural exchange, and attract foreign investment in the local film industry. Producers must navigate complex regulatory frameworks and ensure compliance with co-production treaties to access incentives effectively. Understanding the intricacies of incentive schemes and leveraging them strategically can significantly impact the financial success of co-produced projects and strengthen the competitiveness of the Norwegian film industry in the global marketplace.

To summarize, the key cultural and economic dimensions of international co-productions significantly shape and influence the Norwegian film industry, providing multifaceted benefits and fostering growth and innovation. These collaborations enable filmmakers to engage with global narratives and audiences while leveraging cultural proximity and multiculturalism to enrich the storytelling landscape at home meanwhile by working closely with international counterparts, Norwegian filmmakers access a diverse array of perspectives, leading to hybrid

narratives that blend elements from different traditions and backgrounds. This intercultural exchange not only promotes the celebration of diverse voices but also allows filmmakers to produce content that resonates with both domestic and international audiences. This international co-production can also be a resistance towards cultural dominance from countries with bigger cultural exports like the USA. When smaller countries unite to make films, it can present both countries with cultural elements within the film that are representative of both countries thus helping in cost reduction as well as market expansion. This co-produced film can also be potentially of higher production value and could (*in theory*) be able to compete with the foreign cultural exports.

The current study sheds light on the complexities of international co-productions in relation to the Norwegian film industry, offering insights into the various cultural and economic factors at play and how they shape these international co-productions. However, I find that there are several areas for future research that could extend and deepen the understanding of this subject. I believe that a cross-industry comparison will expand the scope of the study to include other film industries beyond Norway which would help also in better setting the context. This could also highlight how cultural and economic factors vary across different regions and can provide better practices in international co-productions. I also think that quantitative research could enhance the generalizability of the findings and hence, in the future, research might include surveys of a larger pool of film producers, as well as data on the economic performance of international co-productions. I would also suggest having a diverse stakeholder since this research only has producers. I would suggest including directors, writers, financiers, and distributors as well since this broader view could provide a more comprehensive understanding of the collaborative process. Further steps also can be taken in terms of the analysis of the policies around international co-productions, culture, and economics about how the policies, the funding mechanisms and treaties influence in shaping international co-productions. By pursuing these future directions, scholars can continue to unravel the nuances of international co-productions and their impact on the Norwegian film industry and beyond. These efforts will contribute to a richer, better, and more nuanced understanding of how cultural and economic factors interact in global film production.

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