

Gendered aspects of team formation in the Soviet newsreel production industry

Vejune Zemaityte¹², Mila Oiva¹³, Ksenia Mukhina¹⁴, Aaron Schecter⁵, Noshir S Contractor⁶, Maximilian Schich¹²

1. ERA Chair for Cultural Data Analytics, Tallinn University 2. Baltic Film, Media and Arts School, Tallinn University 3. School of Humanities, Tallinn University 4. School of Digital Technologies, Tallinn University 5. Department of Management Information Systems, Terry College of Business, University of Georgia 6. McCormick School of Engineering & Applied Science, the School of Communication and the Kellogg School of Management, Northwestern University

Gender inequality prevails in labour relationships of the global screen industries. Studies have repeatedly shown most creative occupations in today’s audio-visual production to be men-dominated. The historical accounts of the gendered creative labour beyond Western countries have, however, received little scholarly attention. This paper shifts the focus to the Soviet Union’s newsreel production industry to examine the gendered aspects of team formation. Newsreels were short news clips displayed in cinemas before films as means of communicating news to the wider public during the Soviet period. The chosen setting is interesting because the Soviet doctrine proclaimed gender differences to be socially irrelevant, and the USSR featured high female labour force participation across different industry sectors compared to other countries at the time. We analyse detailed metadata on 1,747 clips produced as part of the Daily News series during 1945–1992, including information about 1,623 individuals listed as directors, cinematographers, text editors, and other crew. Labour relationships are analysed via unipartite directed director-to-crew hiring networks with the added gender dimension of all crew members (Figure 1). The network approach enables us to explore the relational structures underlying the historical organisation of creative labour. In contrast to the stark gender inequality prevalent in the contemporary setting, preliminary results indicate directorial work in the USSR to be split equitably between women and men, and women directors to be very well-embedded within the production network structures as characterised by high degree centrality, especially during the 1960s. We further examine the aspect of gender in team formation using relational hyperevent models (RHEM), where a team’s collaboration on a newsreel is treated as a hyperevent. We use RHEM because collaboration on creative products such as newsreels is intrinsically polyadic, involving teams rather than couples working together. Our approach combines the perspectives of communication and creative industry disciplines with network science and cultural history.

Figure 1. Unipartite directed director–crew hiring networks of the newsreel production industry in the Soviet Union separated by decade, coloured by gender (men are green, women are purple, gender unknown are grey), curved edges drawn clockwise from director to other crew.

