

SCREEN INDUSTRIES

IN EAST-CENTRAL EUROPE:

Online Distribution and Internet TV An ICA Pre-Conference

22-23 May 2018, National Film Archive, Prague, Czech Republic



Sponsored by the University of Economics Prague, Palacký University
Olomouc, and the Czech Society of Film Studies

The Seventh Annual Screen Industries in East-Central Europe Conference (SIECE) shifts attention to the current developments in online distribution of audiovisual content. Distribution is the least visible, but, in many ways, the most influential sphere of the ecology of today's screen industries. Powerful distributors virtually act as gatekeepers in both economic and cultural terms. They control financial flows, rights management and exploitation, marketing, and the access of audiences to audiovisual cultures, by determining what we can see, when, where, in what language, and on which platforms. In terms of business models and practices, no other sector of today's media industries is undergoing such fast and unpredictable transformations. Distributors are adapting to various aspects of digitalization and convergence, to changing consumer behavior, and to growing global competition. On one hand, distribution remains locked in a close relationship with and influenced by established practices in home video, broadcasting, and cinema exhibition, as well as established viewing habits related to them. On the other hand, a new distribution paradigm has emerged after IT companies like Google, Apple and Amazon started directly competing and collaborating with Hollywood.

With the recent boom and diversification of audiovisual online services, accompanied by the growing importance of original content production for internet, the question of what is television becomes more pressing to media scholars than ever before. Catch-up services of FTA broadcasters or nonlinear OTT additions to cable networks have become less and less distinguishable from video-on-demand platforms such as Netflix. On the other hand, Netflix, YouTube and their many local counterparts have started experimenting with curatorial strategies that resemble television scheduling, while commissioning or developing original premium content that would give them advantage over their linear competitors.

New models of online distribution create new challenges to and are limited by the existing copyright system in the EU. European Commission's Digital Single Market strategy, aiming among others at removing barriers of cross-border circulation of audiovisual content, will significantly change the existing ecosystem of European screen industries. It urges both policymakers and media scholars to ask new questions about industry practices and regulatory frameworks, such as: Who benefits from the territoriality of the copyright, who would win and who would lose if distributors are prevented from territory-by-territory licensing? What are the real obstacles for increasing cross-border circulation of European audiovisual content, and how could such barriers be removed? How would EC's regulatory initiatives affect diversity of AV content's supply on one hand and informal media economies on the other?

While most current discussions focus on the US, Asia, and the biggest multinational moguls, the SIECE 7 Conference opens a space for approaching these industry trends and policy questions from the perspective of relatively small, peripheral, and fragmented (in terms of population, languages, infrastructures, capital) media markets. This small-market perspective brings issues to the fore such as digital barriers to access, localization of content, language barriers, or national cultural policy. Potential topics for papers and panels include, but are not limited to:

- Socio-economic characteristics of small on-demand markets.
- Short-format internet television and its place between online advertisement and broadcasting.
- Public-service media and its online strategies.
- National cultural policies vis-à-vis global platforms.

- European Commission's Digital Single Market strategy and its potential impact on different stakeholders of small media systems.
- Digital curation and localization of content.
- Dis-intermediation or re-intermediation? The role of intermediaries in on-demand markets.
- Informal economy agents as distributors and cultural intermediaries.
- Marketing of online distribution platforms and their offerings; segmentation, targeting, and positioning.
- The impact of online platforms on theatrical distribution and festivals.

The *Screen Industries in East-Central Europe* pre-conference will investigate the region's audiovisual media industries from all angles – local, transnational, economic, cultural, social, and political – and through a broad range of original scholarship delivered in the form of conceptual papers and empirical case-studies. A selection of the pre-conference proceedings will be published in a special English-language issue of the Czech Film Studies journal *Illuminace* (www.iluminace.cz).

The 2018 *Screen Industries in East-Central Europe* Conference (SIECE) will take place as a pre-conference to the 68th Annual Conference of ICA – International Communication Association.

The conference will be preceded by a PhD workshop, which will be held on 22 May and conducted in Czech.

The 2018 SIECE Program Committee (consisting of the Steering Committee members of the Czech Society of Film Studies – see www.cefs.cz) invites proposals for twenty-minute conference papers and for panels of three or four speakers focusing on any topic related to prestige and East-Central European audiovisual industries. Panels of three to four papers will include a brief summarizing reflection of between five and ten minutes, which will be delivered by an assigned respondent to facilitate discussion. Proposals for conference papers should include a title, an abstract of up to 150 words, and between three and five key bibliographical references, along with the presenter's name, the presenter's institutional affiliation, and a concise academic bio. Panel proposals should include a panel title, a short description of up to 100 words on the panel's focus, and proposals of all of the papers to be delivered (including the information described above). Please submit proposals **no later than 15 January 2018** to petrszczepanik@gmail.com.

Conference attendance is free, and the conference will be conducted in English (except the PhD workshop on 22 May).

Conference Organizers: Petr Szczepanik, Jan Hanzlík, Pavel Zahrádka, Kateřina Svatoňová, and Lucie Česálková, in association with the University of Economics in Prague, Palacký University Olomouc, the Czech Society of Film Studies, the Film Studies Department, Charles University, and the National Film Archive, Prague.

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