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**WOMEN BEHIND THE CAMERA:  
AN ANALYSIS ON THE ROLES OF WOMEN  
IN THE CINEMATOGRAFIC INDUSTRY**

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ANNO ACCADEMICO 2020/2021

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## INTRODUCTION

The invention of film dates back to 1885 by George Eastman, while the first motion picture film shoot is believed to be “Man Walking Around a Corner”, a 3-second short film, made on August 18, 1887, by Louis Aimé Augustin Le Prince, in which is represented a man walking near a street corner.

However, the art of cinematography, understood as the theatrical projection of a printed film, in front of a paying public, was born on December 28, 1895, thanks to an invention of the brothers Louis and Auguste Lumière, who showed for the first time, to the public of the *Gran Cafe on the Boulevard de Capucines* in Paris, a device they patented, called *Cinématographe*.

This revolutionary machine was capable of projecting on a white screen a sequence of distinct images, printed on a film using a photographic process, in order to create the effect of movement.

Therefore, the first movie to be shown to a real public was *L'Arrivée d'un train en gare de La Ciotat*, realized by the Lumière brothers.

Their film was groundbreaking: people had never seen such a show before, in fact, it caused viewers to flee their seats as the screen slowly filled with an oncoming steam engine heading towards them.<sup>1</sup>

For instance, it is from this precise historic point in time that the long history of cinema begins.

Cinema is not a simple representation of reality, but a set of visual techniques that have given rise throughout history to different forms of political, cultural, social and artistic expressions.

Cinema is a tool of great complexity because it is able to convey culture and art, but at the same time also new forms of entertainment with great social impact on cultures around the world.

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<sup>1</sup> Giddens, A., Sutton, P. W., (2017) *Sociology*. 8th edition. Polity Press.

For this reason, since its very beginning cinema developed into a mass media tool, much faster than any other media.

It soon formed a gigantic, worldwide mass audience.<sup>2</sup>

So, from the twentieth century until today, cinema has experienced remarkable industrial development.

The cinematographic industry soon became one of the most flourishing and profitable industries. It was established first in France, then in Italy and the rest of Europe, and finally moved to the United States with the foundation of Hollywood, where the success quickly brought to a dominance of the American film production and to a “cultural imperialism” of the American values promoted all over the world.

Since then, and for all the decades to come, Hollywood cinema and by reflection the international cinema, developed along the road of an increasingly attractive spectacularism, using all the technical and artistic means at its disposal. So much that, for at least forty years, and then again in more recent times, Hollywood production has been identified with spectacular cinema by definition.

Along this path, numerous international films have become true colossal, becoming icons in the collective imagination of society.

Among these iconic movies and the artists who realized them, there have been women who have revolutionized the film industry, not only from an acting point of view but also from a creative and managerial point of view.

Among the most important women in the history of cinema, it is important to remember Alice Guy, the first woman director and absolutely the first person to make a narrative film: *La Fée aux Choux*, in 1896.

Then there was Helen Gardner, one of the first *femme fatales* in film history.

She was the first among actors, both male, and female, to establish her own production company, in 1912.

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<sup>2</sup> treccani.it (2005) cinema [Online]. Available on: [https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/cinema\\_%28Enciclopedia-dei-ragazzi%29/](https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/cinema_%28Enciclopedia-dei-ragazzi%29/)

Gardner, who was considered a vamp, played roles of women with a strong and determined character but did not limit herself to this: she was a costume designer, producer, screenwriter, editor.

She decided to found her own production company in order to realize an avant-garde idea for the time: making feature films, when almost all the films produced were short movies.

Later, Julia Crawford Ivers was one of the pioneers of the California film industry as Los Angeles, her hometown, began to transform from an exotic outpost to a movie mecca.

Julia was one of Hollywood's first screenwriters, as well as a director and producer.

Then there was Cleo Madison, who in 1915 became part of the group of women in Hollywood who were hired by the Universal Studios as directors, to shoot their own short movies and films.

To her must be credited the courage to have gone against the tide, showing in her films issues related to oppression and sexual discrimination, always seen from a female point of view.

In spite of the presence of these great women who changed the history of cinema, as Hollywood and the entire film industry turned into a huge multi-million dollar business, the presence and influence of women in key roles declined, perhaps because a job as lucrative as it is prestigious was considered almost the exclusive prerogative of the male gender.

Thus, the cinematographic industry became a male-dominated working field, and to this day, there is still a great presence of gender inequality issues, in the film industry around the world.<sup>3</sup>

Therefore, in this study we will focus on the role of women working in the film industry, mainly from a European perspective, followed by a deeper look at the Italian film industry.

We will also focus on the main trends coming from Hollywood, that influence the market dynamics of the European cinematic industry.

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<sup>3</sup> vanillamagazine.it . Le 5 Donne che Cambiarono la Storia del Cinema [Online]. Available on: <https://www.vanillamagazine.it/le-5-donne-che-cambiarono-la-storia-del-cinema/>

We will analyze the distribution of women in key creative roles in movie productions in the European Union, and try to understand the reasons for their underrepresentation in the film industry and how gender bias is present in every area, even in the international film festival industry.

Furthermore, we will see if the current COVID-19 pandemic situation has worsened women's conditions in the movie industry.

We will discuss the different kinds of inherent gender inequalities that are systematic of this working field, such as the problem of the depiction of gender stereotypes in relation to on-screen women's representation. This topic will be analyzed in relation to the issue of cinema used as a tool in shaping society's cultural hegemony, and how could be resolved with the introduction of the Bechdel test.

Consequently, we will stress the long-term inequalities present in the film industry, like the gender pay gap and the sexual harassment issue.

In addition to this topic, we will also take a look at the recent “#Metoo movement” and how is changing women's conditions in cinema.

Lastly, talking about the revolutions to improve gender equality, we will discuss the measures and the proactive solutions adopted by the European entities, the single European countries, and the new global streaming companies, in order to support and encourage female filmmakers in pursuing a career in cinema, and to stop gender inequalities.

I chose to analyze this topic because it has a great personal meaning to me.

I have always nurtured a strong passion for cinema, which has never been limited to being a mere hobby but has always been a strongly present element in my life.

From my love for the seventh art, I have always tried to deepen my studies on cinema and on the techniques of visual narration.

I have had the opportunity to meet first hand with great film artists, and these encounters, alongside my studies, have helped me to understand what kind of path I want to take in life.

I intend to pursue a career in cinema, not only to be able to bring to the big screen the stories and tales I feel the need to tell, but to personally modify and improve this industry, that in Italy is still strongly backward from the point of view of social norms.

I realized that if I want to see improvements for the situation of women in the current entertainment industry, I personally must become the change I want to see reflected.



## CHAPTER 1

### What is gender inequality

As in numerous other sectors of society, there are clear disparities in the cinematographic industry in terms of representation of women.

However, before addressing all the gender inequalities related to the world of cinema, first we have to understand what gender inequality is and how it works in the global arena.

Until the second half of the 20th Century, paid work in the developed countries was predominantly the sphere of men.

This situation has changed as more and more women have moved into the labor force in what has been described by scholars as “feminization” of work. This multifaceted progress not only transformed the experience of paid work but has also transformed gender relations in every area of society.

Thus, the rise of feminist scholarship in the 1970s led to the analysis of gender relations in all the main institutions of society.

Feminist researchers point to two main ways in which gender is embedded in the very structure of economic organizations.

First, these organizations are characterized by occupational gender segregation.

Second, the idea of career was a male one, in which women played supporting roles.

As a result of these two tendencies, modern corporations have developed as male-dominated preserves in which women are excluded from power, denied opportunities, and victimized based on their gender through sexual harassment and discrimination.

Women workers have traditionally been concentrated in poorly paid, routine occupations, and many of these jobs are gendered: this means that they are regarded as generally “feminine” occupations.

Occupational gender segregation is a phenomenon related to the concentration of men and women in different working sectors, that are considered by social conventions to be more suitable for "male" or "female" roles.

As we will see further in our analysis, this factor is very present in the film industry.

Occupational segregation has both vertical and horizontal components.

Vertical segregation refers to the tendency for men to occupy more powerful and influential working positions, while women tend to be concentrated in jobs with little authority and possibilities for career advancements.

Horizontal segregation refers to the tendency for men and women to occupy different categories of jobs.

For example, women dominate in domestic and routine clerical positions, while men are clustered in semi-skilled and skilled manual positions.

Feminist sociologists from the 1970s onwards, produced many empirical studies and a large body of theories which attempt to explain and address gender inequalities between men and women, such as women's unequal position in society.

Feminist sociologists argue that there are several global arenas of gender relations and that the international media, thus cinema, is one of the main influencing scenarios.

Why cinema is so important, regarding the impact that it has on the international gender order?

Because in the last century, cinema helped shaping the international social ideology about genders.

An ideology is a set of ideas that provides an account of the existing international social order, usually in the form of a "world view".

Ideology advances a model and a vision of what should be a "good society". This happens through a process of "universalization":

a creation of a common social sense.

This concept can be translated also as a social hegemony over the depiction through the media of what is gender.

Hegemony is a set of dominant ideas that permeate a society, in order to make the existing power structures appear sensible, peaceful and natural.

In this way, the dominant ideology doesn't appear as imposed, but it seems to exist under an undisputed consensus.

In fact, the media work most directly on consciousness by providing the constructed images of the world and of social life and the definitions of what the social reality should be. As movie stars became role models, they had a considerable influence on the beliefs, values, and norms of their audience.

In such framework, the media have always had a key role in teaching people how to behave in their everyday lives, that results in supporting the power structures.

In this case, the power structured supported by the media and conceived as “natural” by the society, is patriarchy.

Women in the media industry, have always been represented under fixed roles dictated by gender stereotypes.<sup>4 5 6 7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Giddens, A., Sutton, P. W., (2017) *Sociology*. 8th edition. Polity Press.

<sup>5</sup> De Pater, I. E., Judge, T. A., Scott, B. A., (2014) *Age, Gender, and Compensation: A Study of Hollywood Movie Stars*. Journal of Management Inquiry.

<sup>6</sup> Le Lab Femmes de cinema (2017) *Study of the emergence of a new generation of european female film directors: updated – 2017*.

<sup>7</sup> lefigaro.fr (2015) Cinéma, femmes et machisme : seize réalisatrices françaises se confient [Online]. Available on: <http://madame.lefigaro.fr/celebrites/le-cinema-desfemmes-060515-96487>

## **How cinema has influenced the cultural hegemony over gender inequalities, through the depiction of gender stereotypes**

Cinematic products have always borne a profound role in our lives and help shape our ideas about social and cultural issues.

Films are peppered with messages that reach audiences far and wide and filmic images have a great influence on our state of mind.

As a matter of fact, these messages influence our perception of the world and the society in which we live, and consequently our perception of the female figure.

Over the past 50 years, women have experienced significant progress in their status and living conditions within our current society as a whole, but despite this, their representation on the screen has continued to adhere to patriarchal stereotypes now considered retrograde, to which modern women no longer feel they belong to, and that in fact are very far from reality.

Gender stereotypes are still abundant in the content depicted within films, with female characters often reduced to family-related roles of wife, mother, or girlfriend, and generally being younger than their male counterparts.

This trend is nothing new, as witnessed by research based on a sample of 855 top box-office films, released from 1950 to 2006.

The results show that male characters outnumber female characters by more than two to one.

More alarming, the authors of the research also discovered that although female characters continue to be under-represented in movies, their disproportionate portrayal in more explicit sexual content has grown over time, with women being twice as likely to be explicitly exposed and involved in sexual intercourse as men.

So, as we have said women's depiction on-screen has been stuck to patriarchal stereotypes and normative ideologies that do not reflect reality, but an imposition of gender hegemony through media.

In fact, Hollywood films' depictions of women adhere to patriarchal structures, but with time, have masked these messages under the façade of female empowerment and independence.

With the use of genre films, Hollywood has increased such depictions.

Through fixed formulas and set of conventions, genre films tell familiar stories to large audiences.

Through a visual analysis of the semiotics of women within Hollywood, we can see some fixed representations, which include different female characterizations.

A genre is a type of film that shares similarities in form and style, theme and content, as well as communicative function.

Most Hollywood films conform to one, or a combination, of genres among which we can see that action, adventure, science fiction, fantasy, and gangster are hugely popular, and repeatedly top the charts for highest grossing films.

Genres have traditionally been central to preserving female and male stereotypes in classical Hollywood cinema, as well as European cinema that followed the international trends.

For example, if we look at the role of the 'hero', we can observe that there is a separate criterion to qualify a male or a female hero, mostly stemming from patriarchal stereotypes about women.

Even though the number of tough girl lead roles in action has risen in the last 20-30 years, the expectations for a female hero are vastly different.

The main quality women must have in order to qualify as female hero in a man's world is to be young, graceful and delightful.

To be beautiful means to be slim, not have body hairs, being botoxed if necessary and sexy, in most of the cases being Caucasian.

In fact most of the female heroes are sexualized at the highest level.

An example is Angelina Jolie's Lara Croft, a brave woman who is incredibly sexy.

In the movie, in reality the actress didn't have to wear the super tight top that showcased all the curves of Angelina Jolie, but when during the fitting of the clothes the producers

realized that the size was wrong, they decided it was perfect as well, sexualizing a character which should have been a real icon of "girl power".

Often the idea that movies give is that a girl can be brave and independent, but to do so she must be super seductive.

An ideal image of the heroic woman who broke man's patriarchal ideologies to an outsized extent is Xena the warrior princess, who dates back about 20 years now.

The most attractive and interesting trait about Xena as a super woman, is her inherently flawed character: she is dark, selfish, and venally bloodthirsty.

We cannot deny that she is still thin, attractive, fit and wears very little clothing, just like for Lara Croft. This is what is most interesting about female filmic representations, the dualism and contradiction in female character sketches.

The female hero combines the domesticated femininity of a girl, with the kick-ass assertiveness of the action hero. Such portrayals send mixed messages.

Women have to be strong and aggressive, but at the same time they must show beauty and sexual attractiveness.

However, this so-called tough woman is a contradictory response to women's demands for equal treatment, in a society that is still highly male-dominant.

Another important gender stereotype for women is the damsel in distress. The woman who needs to be saved by the hero, who's usually presented by a male character, generally white and straight.

Many Disney films, for example, despite featuring "strong" female protagonists, seem never to be realized if not "supported" by a love interest, which in some way also becomes their savior.

Pointing out, therefore, the idea that women need love to affirm their person.

The gender stereotype regarding women in the private sphere and in the family context, usually represents them as sweet, innocent, beautiful, and submissive to the male / patriarchal figure.

In many cases there's also an age gap between the man and the woman, where she is represented as younger than him.

Furthermore, in most of the movies, even in the ones that seem to provide a more realistic representation of a woman, there's the so called "Smurfette principle": where just one girl is present in a male group, like for example the Smurfs, but also the Justice League, the first trilogy of Star wars or the first Avengers movie.

This principle translates into less female representation in pop culture.

In discussing female gender depictions, we turn to theorist Laura Mulvey's approach to film studies via psychoanalytic and feminist film theory.

Mulvey is a contemporary feminism theorist, which has contributed to the contemporary feminism film critic and wrote the paper "Visual pleasure and narrative cinema" recommending 'a political use of psycho-analysis'.

Her research takes as its start line the way movies reflect and reveal how the heteronormativity and the socially established interpretation of sexual difference controls images, viewed through erotic ways of looking at the displayed spectacle.

Her study is helpful to understand what the cinema has been in the past and confronting it on how is currently changing.

Psycho-analytic theory is thus appropriated here as a political weapon, demonstrating the way the unconscious of patriarchal society has structured film form.

Mulvey's approach focuses on how a cinematographic product communicates dominant and sexist ideologies through an active male gaze.

The author in fact, argues that Hollywood films use the so called "scopophilia", that is to say the sexual pleasure through viewing, communicated by an imposition of the patriarchal system. In movies, female characters are constantly 'looked at and portrayed' for the male spectator's pleasure.

This is evidenced throughout countless films where women are 'undermined by lingering close-ups' of their curvy figures and tight clothes, all 'made to please the male gaze'.

In this manner, women become the images of meaning rather than the maker of meaning. Women are simultaneously looked at and displayed, with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact so that they can be said to connote "to-be-looked-at-ness".

In contrast, a male movie star's charming features are thus not those of the erotic object of the gaze, but those of the more perfect, complete, and powerful ideal ego.

Traditionally male stars do not necessarily derive their beauty from their looks or their sexuality, but from the power they are able to wield within the filmic world in which they function.

This is the empowerment of man's beauty inside a filmic image.

While women's beauty is more standardized, men have many different types of beauty represented on-screen.<sup>8 9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> White, P. (1998) *Feminism And Film*. Oxford University Press.

<sup>9</sup> Dutt, R. (2013) *Behind the curtain: women's representations in contemporary Hollywood*. Department of Media and Communications, London School of Economics and Political Science.



## **The Bechdel Test and women representation in cinema**

In order to easily address these double-standards of male and female representation in cinema, it was created the so-called 'Bechdel Test'.

The Bechdel Test was inspired by the cartoonist Alison Bechdel in 1985, with her tongue-in-cheek comic strip 'The Rule', which furtherly became a basic measure and approach for gauging the fair representation of women in film productions.

It is also referred to as the Bechdel-Wallace test, since Alison Bechdel credited the idea for the test to her friend Liz Wallace.

To pass the test, films need to feature at least two women with known names to the audience, that are talking about something else than a man.

It is an indicator measuring the active presence of women and aims to spread awareness about how women are portrayed in films.

Of the 25 top grossing movies of 2016, a measly half passed the test.

Moreover, the study conducted by The Center for the Study of Women in Television and Film found that of the 4,370 speaking named characters from the top-grossing films in 2015, only 31.4% were women.

The test is very helpful to highlight how male-dominated cinema really is, and at the same time it does not claim to be a measurement tool for evaluating how good or 'feminist' a film is.

Most iconic movies in the history of cinema fail to pass the test. Among them we can see the entire Lord of the Rings trilogy, all Star Wars movies, and all the Harry Potter movies, except for one.

Applied to the top 25 Hollywood blockbusters in 2016, the test confirmed that gender equality is still a long way off, with half of the movies failing to pass.

Even most of the films awarded at the Oscars in 93 editions, do not pass the test.

This is due to the fact that gender bias also extends to scripts.

In fact, a 2017 New York Film Academy analysis shows that in a sample

of 1000 films, male characters had over 37000 dialogues, whereas female characters had just 15000.

Men also had a wider choice of characters – some 4900 – while women had just over 2000.

Similarly, female screenwriters were only 1/7th the size of male screenwriters.

This aspect is reflected in another important topic on which we will focus in the next chapter, and it is the unequal distribution of women in the cinematographic industry.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Katsarova, I., (2019) *The place of women in European film productions: Fighting the celluloid ceiling*. European Parliamentary Research Service.

## CHAPTER 2

### **Women in the cinematographic industry**

In this chapter we will analyze the distribution of the role of women in different working positions inside the European cinematographic industry.

As we already stated in the previous chapter, the European film industry is marked by substantial gender inequalities.

To date all published studies that examine this subject show that European filmmaking is, to a large extent, a male-dominated domain and it is a fact that female film directors face numerous obstacles.

The statistics are shocking and reveal how women struggle to be legitimized in the filmmaking industry.

In fact, the majority of feature films, with both large and small budgets, are directed by men.

In order to analyze women's conditions in European cinema, we will focus on a study realized by the team of "Les Arcs European Film Festival", in partnership with the "Sisley d'Ornano Foundation", "France Télévisions", the "CNC" and the association "Le Deuxième Regard".

This Study investigated the position of female filmmakers in Europe.

If we take a look on the statistics regarding the average percentage of films directed by women in Europe, for the 2012-2016 period, the first element we will notice is that there is currently no European country in which women represent more than a third of directors of films released in cinemas.

Consequently, we can see that all the national averages of women filmmakers for that period, vary between 5% and 30%.

Countries such as Sweden, the Netherlands, Germany, and Austria exhibit the highest percentages.

Furthermore the countries with more than 20% of films directed by women are Switzerland, Hungary, France, the Czech Republic, Finland and Slovakia.

The eastern European countries like Estonia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Bulgaria, Croatia, Slovenia and Russia, together with Belgium, Ireland and Luxemburg show a rate of 15% of films directed by a woman.

Finally there are the countries where the percentage of films directed by a woman is less than 15%. These countries are Spain, Greece, Portugal, the UK, Turkey, Latvia and last but not least, Italy.

This analysis could be also understood as a figurative map of a geographically divided Europe, where the north (except for UK that with its rates can be considered as an interesting anomaly) and the central regions perform higher percentages of female filmmakers.

Eastern Europe is caught in the middle of the scale; and finally there's southern Europe with the lowest percentages.<sup>11</sup>

However, besides the role of director, if we look at the data collected by Eurimages – the cultural support fund of the Council of Europe - we can state that there is a constant under-representation of women in the main film production functions. The European fund takes a special interest in the question of gender equality in the film industry.

So since 2012, it has been collecting data on the gender of the holders of key positions in the film projects submitted to it for funding.

The study results demonstrate a clear under-representation of women in the main film production functions (producer, scriptwriter and director).

In the previous chapter we have seen how the women's representation in movies is still strongly affected by gender stereotypes.

Of course this aspect is reflected in scriptwriting, that is still a male-dominated sector.

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<sup>11</sup> Katsarova, I., (2019) *The place of women in European film productions: Fighting the celluloid ceiling*. European Parliamentary Research Service.

From 2014 to 2015, the average participation of women in these functions was just 30 %, with documentaries exhibiting the highest rate of 36 %, followed by fiction projects with 31 % and animated movies with only 13 % of women covering key creative roles.

Plus, only 27 % of eligible projects presented to the fund, had a female director. While those projects received 29% of the overall support granted, their average budget was 40 % lower than the budget of the projects with a male director.

Needless to say that low funding perpetuates the scarcity of female-directed films in circulation, affecting in turn the markets' willingness to invest and thus creating a vicious circle.

However there is to say that starting from 2012 to 2015, the participation of women in the principal creative functions has registered a small progress, passing from 23% to 29% of women in such positions.

The average salary of female directors incremented too, but it's still 23% less than their male counterparts.

So even if in Europe we are currently experiencing an improvement in the film working field, participation rates for women in key creative roles such as producer, director and writer, have never even remotely approached parity.

In addition to this, jobs in cinema appear to be associated with a particular gender. As we anticipated in the first chapter, even the film industry is strongly characterized by occupational gender segregation.

Thus, the share of women in the different functions shows that they are more present in the fields traditionally considered feminine such as costume design (84%) and editing (39%), while very little in professions classified as more technical, such as those dealing with sound (4%), music (8%) and image (10%).

Despite this distribution of women in the different working positions, data show that even though there are almost as many women (44 %) as men (56 %) directors graduating from film schools.

Thus, if the number of young men and women graduating from film schools is almost the same, why the average proportion of female directors in the industry is just under 20 %?<sup>12</sup> In order to answer this question, we will focus on Italian cinema and on the report carried out by the research unit of Directorate-General Cinema of the Italian Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Activities and Tourism. The aim of the study is to evaluate the status of women in the Italian film industry and investigate the reasons behind the alarming gender imbalance.

The trends in the key indicators examined show that the causes of scarcity of women in directing positions seem to be dual.

The first reason comes from women themselves and from a distorted self-perception which discourages them to engage in highly competitive and leading careers.

The other reason lies on the more economic and practical side of the industry and is connected to a limited trust from investors, either public or private, in financing a woman-led project.

What we are going to see is that from education to professional activities, the entry points narrow down for women leaving them marginalized in the film business, with very few female-directed works available on screen for the audience.

In the Italian National Film School (Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia - Scuola Nazionale di Cinema), the share of female applicants to all courses is on average 39%, showing then a rather balanced composition. The share of female applicants is confirmed by the share of female graduates, that is 41,5% of all graduates.

The scenario changes dramatically when focusing on film directing courses: female applicants to film directing are only 17% of all applicants, meaning that women are discouraged from engaging in directing already at a very young age.

As a matter of fact, on average, men shoot their first film at a younger age (20 years old) than women (25 years old).

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<sup>12</sup> EURIMAGES (2017) *strategy 2016-2017 for gender equality in the European film industry*.

Consequently, the enrolment in the film authors' register is the following stage in the route to directing.

During this phase, the women's proportion has already decreased compared to that of film school graduates.

In fact, registered female screenwriters and directors are only 25%.

Among the factors discouraging women from directing, there are the lack of self-esteem, insufficient role models, and competitive struggle to ensure financing, leadership related challenges, family responsibilities, lack of networks, and job uncertainties.

All these issues are consequently reflected on men and women different points of view on the weight of the director's gender on financiers.

According to what the study reported, the majority of men thinks that gender has no impact on public funders and, although in a lower percentage, it has no impact on private investors either.

Women's opinions differ, with more than half of respondents believing that gender plays a significant role in funders' decisions.

If we look at the number of films financed by Italian broadcasters such as Rai, we will see that the share of investment in films directed by women is quite lower than the share related to the number of financed films: only 11,4% of the budget is spent for women's films while men received 88,6% of the investment.

The extremely low number of female-directed films financed at the fund raising stage results in a sparse presence also in the end market.

In fact, the gender share of new national releases even shows a decreasing ratio for women: only 9.2% of films screened in theatres are directed by a woman, while 90.8% are directed by men.

The analysis of box office results follows and strengthens the trend observed in previous figures.

The market share of films directed by women is 2.7%, while male directed films' quota is 97.3%.

Finally, by looking at the data collected we can affirm that the gender gap in Italian cinema is still today very wide.<sup>13</sup>

### **Gender bias in international cinematic competitions**

In order to fully analyze the unequal gender distribution in the film industry, it is helpful and useful to take a look on how gender bias is also reflected in international cinematic competitions, taking as an example the Oscars, Cannes and the Venice Film festival, during the course of history.

In the 93-year history of the Oscars, also known as “Academy Awards”, only 5 women received a nomination as “Best Director”, and only 2 won this prize.

The very first woman to be nominated in the Best Director category at the Oscars was an Italian: Lina Wertmüller in 1977 set a real record with her movie *Pasqualino Settebellezze*. In the end she failed to win, but that nomination was perceived by people and the media as a historic event for the film industry and for the women all around the world.

After that breaking point, 17 years later with the movie “The piano” the director Jane Campion received her nomination at the Oscars in 1994.

Even if she didn’t win at the Oscars, Campion was rewarded with the Palme d'Or.

She is still the only female director in the history of the Cannes film festival to hold this record.

Following Campion’s steps at the Oscars, 10 years later came the nomination for Sofia Coppola in 2004, for the movie “Lost in Translation”.

However, no women has ever won in this category, until Kathryn Bigelow in 2010 presented the movie “The Hurt Locker”, with which she was able to win the Oscar as best director. For the first time in the history of the Oscars, a woman won this prestigious award, and it took 83 years to make it happen.

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<sup>13</sup> European Women’s Audiovisual Network (2013) *Where are the women directors?* Report on gender equality for directors in the European film industry.



After Bigelow's winning, 8 years later another woman director, Greta Gerwig, received a nomination for the movie "Lady Bird".

This year, in 2021 we could assist to the second woman in history who won the Oscar as best director, with her movie "Nomadland".

In fact, the award was conferred to Chloé Zhao, who is also the first Chinese female director to receive the prize.

Talking about another major European film festival: "La Biennale Cinema di Venezia" exhibits slightly better statistics than the 2 previous competitions. From 1980 to 2021, the Venice film festival honored five female directors.

By presenting "Nomadland", Chloé Zhao is now the fifth female director to have won the "Leone d'Oro" award. Before her, there were Margarethe Von Trotta with the movie "Die bleierne Zeit" in 1981; Agnès Varda with "Sans toit ni loi" in 1985; Mira Nair with "Monsoon Wedding" in 2001 and finally Sofia Coppola with "Somewhere" in 2010.

By analyzing this data, we can affirm that even if recently the industry of international film competitions is changing and is opening more to the participation of female directors, following the growing rates of European movies directed by women, it is still a highly male dominated sector.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Katsarova, I., (2019) *The place of women in European film productions: Fighting the celluloid ceiling*. European Parliamentary Research Service.

## **The movie industry after the COVID-19 pandemic**

As we have been able to ascertain, Cinema has always been characterized by fragile organizational structures and working practices, where women still nowadays struggle with gender inequality issues.

However, a recent event has worsened the working conditions for women in the film industry.

In fact, since the COVID-19 pandemic hit Europe in spring 2020, Cinema in general and all the different industries included in the Cultural and Creative Sectors, have been among the most negatively affected sectors.

The restraining provisions that have been enacted across the EU have led to a chain of effects, with a serious impact on the economic and social situation of the Cultural and Creative Sectors.

Furthermore, the crisis has highlighted the very vulnerable position of many non-standard workers such as artists, freelancers or temporary workers.

If we focus on the researches made by the Policy Department for Structural and Cohesion Policies of the EU Parliament, we can see that the cinematic industry has been severely impacted by the COVID-19 containment measures throughout its entire articulated value chain.

This means that the crisis has affected both the production and distribution sides of the industry.

On the production side, movie shootings and productions are generally scheduled months or years in advance.

In this case, as soon as the lockdown measures were adopted, films were stopped.

However, as soon as bans on movements and strict containment measures were lifted, productions could restart, even if limitations and restrictions were in place.

Regular coronavirus tests and distancing measures were obligatory for film teams. Cancellation or postponement of shootings and productions affected entire artistic and

technical crews, as most of the workers involved are freelancers who are temporarily hired for productions.

In March, the UK estimated that approximately 50,000 freelancers would have lost their jobs.

As we said, also the distribution side experienced a severe loss of income.

The research shows that most of cinemas across Europe were officially closed as of mid-March, with the exception of Italy (with almost 50% of movie theatres closed from 23 February), Russia (all closed from 31 March), Sweden (only partly closed) and Belarus (not closed).

Overall, less than 2% of the 42,000+ screens in Europe remained open from then until May, when cinemas could partly reopen in some countries.

The box office damage has been enormous. In Italy alone, box office revenue dropped by over 1100% between January and March.

Even after the partial reopening of economic activities, the social distancing measures forced cinemas to limit audience capacity, with major effects especially on small venues.

This of course resulted in a change in consumers' habits and behavior limiting the demand after reopening.

Since most production and distribution companies in Europe are small organizations relying on the production and distribution of a limited number of audio-visual works, now small cinemas and independent art-house movies are at risk, together with the jobs of thousands of women.

In addition to halting of productions and closure of venues, the containment measures have also led to the cancellation or postponement of European and International film festivals which, as we have already seen before, are important marketplaces for the movie industry and for female professionals who are trying to establish their careers.

Some of the festivals, such as the Cannes Film Festival, in the summer of 2020 moved digitally with 12,500 participants attending the Cannes virtual show and 4,000 movies presented from over 120 countries.

Other forms of media and digital distribution such as online streaming have been less affected by the COVID-19.

Analysts' forecasts are not reassuring, showing that it is likely in the next future that cinemas will focus on the exploitation of 'blockbuster' movies and that European art-house movies will rely more on funding from the big digital platforms, due also to decreasing investments in films by broadcasters.

The challenges related to both business and artistic perspectives are therefore pressuring the film industry.

In conclusion, what we can affirm after analyzing the data on the gender disparity in the distribution of working roles for women in European cinema, is that although there is still a strong under-representation for women in creative roles, we are witnessing a slow improvement towards a wider opening in the filmic sector.

Unfortunately, however, due to the recent pandemic that has strongly affected the world of cinema, women once again struggle not only to validate their careers in a male-dominated sector, but they are struggling against the enormous job loss that hit the European movie industry.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Policy Department for Structural and Cohesion Policies Directorate-General for Internal Policies (2021) *Cultural and creative sectors in postCOVID-19 Europe: Crisis effects and policy recommendations*. CULT Committee.

## CHAPTER 3

### Long-term inequalities in the film industry: gender pay gap

Beside women's underrepresentation in cinematographic industry, that we have analyzed in the previous chapter, another important long-term inequality regarding cinema is the substantial gender pay-gap that has affected the industry for decades.

Pay is a major aspect of gender discrimination in every working field, and we are going to examine the impact of gender and age on earnings within the movie industry.

In the previous chapter we have seen how the wage disparity between men and women is a problem strongly linked to the role of director.

While in this chapter, we are going to analyze a 2014 research on the gender differences in the earnings among Hollywood's most popular film stars.

We chose to focus on international top movie stars for a very specific reason, because they comprise an interesting and important sample for investigating the gender-wage gap.

This is due to the fact that movie acting has been one of the very first high-status, high-income occupations that achieved high levels of gender integration. So in this context, factors related to sex segregation of the labor market (that as we have seen affects key creative roles such as director, producer and writer) are excluded and can be ruled out as explanations for possible gender-wage.<sup>16</sup>

An additional reason is because stars have been essentially free agents whose salaries reflect their market value. In this scenery, gender differences in pay negotiations are highly unlikely, as movie stars usually have high-powered help from agents, managers, and other deal-making experts.

Furthermore, male and female top actors represent a homogeneous group, as they fulfill the same jobs, within the same industry, at the same time and in the same location.

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<sup>16</sup> Dean, D. (2008). *No human resource is an island: Gendered, racialized access to work as a performer*. Gender, Work & Organization.

They do not differ in human capital as they have comparable work-experiences to invest in a movie.

Plus, the time and energy that male and female actors spend on acting to shoot a film is roughly equal, which excludes the possible influence of working hours and other productivity related factors.

A final, but no less important reason to focus on Hollywood's most popular movie stars, is the relationship between film and culture and the impact of top movie stars on social ideology, as we discussed in the first chapter.

The motion picture industry relies heavily on top movie stars, and studios and investors are willing to pay them large sums of money for acting in their movies to increase the chances on making financially successful films.

Therefore, it is important to study the careers of international movie stars, and the influence of gender and age on their extrinsic career success, in order to understand how gender pay gap is perpetrated in the filmic field.

One demographic factor that may play a role in gender differences in movie stars' earnings is age, as some evidence suggests age-related gender inequalities in the careers of movie stars.<sup>17</sup>

For example, actresses are on average 6 years younger when they enter the business<sup>18</sup> and on average, they win prizes at a younger age than their male counterparts<sup>19</sup>.

Moreover, there are fewer lead roles for older actresses,<sup>20</sup> which are less appealing than roles for older male actors.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Lauzen, M. M., & Dozier, D. M. (2005). *Maintaining the double standard: Portrayals of age and gender in popular films*. Sex Roles.

<sup>18</sup> Lincoln, A. E., & Allen, M. P. (2004). *Double jeopardy in Hollywood: Age and gender in the careers of film actors, 1926- 1999*. Sociological Forum.

<sup>19</sup> Gilberg, M., & Hines, T. (2000). *Male entertainment award winners are older than female winners*. Psychological Reports.

<sup>20</sup> Treme, J., & Craig, L. A. (2013). *Celebrity star power: Do age and gender effects influence box office performance?* Applied Economics Letters.

<sup>21</sup> Simonton, D. K. (2004). *The "Best Actress" paradox: Outstanding feature films versus exceptional women's performances*. Sex Roles.

This finding is consistent with the aging literature, which suggests that there are double standards of aging for women and men, with older women being evaluated more severely than elder men.<sup>22</sup>

In the labor market, the gender-wage gap increases in the older age groups<sup>23</sup> due to productivity factors, the sex segregation of the labor market, and sex differences in the accumulation of human capital.

We argued that these factors should not apply to our sample.

Nevertheless, we do expect that the relationship between age and earnings differs for male and female actors, due to double standards of aging.

In fact, age-based perception, stereotyping, and discrimination are part and parcel of ageism. This means that age has a different social meaning for women and men.

The research has indicated that people hold different beliefs about older men and women, and that they evaluate older women more harshly than older men.

For instance, the attractiveness of both men and women decreases with age, but the decline is greater for women than for men.

Physical attractiveness has an important impact on people's life experiences, and research suggests that less attractive individuals are at a disadvantage in the cinematographic job market.<sup>24</sup>

For example, men's well-worn faces are thought to convey maturity, character, and experience. A woman's face, on the other hand, is valued for appearing young.

Thus, there is evidence that for female actors attractiveness and age play important roles, way more than they do in men's careers.

The results of this study showed that aging has a different impact on the earnings of male and female movie stars.

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<sup>22</sup>Cruikshank, M. (2003). *Learning to be old: Gender, culture, and aging*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.

<sup>23</sup>Goldberg, C. B., Finkelstein, L. M., Perry, E. L., & Konrad, A. M. (2004). *Job and industry fit: The effects of age and gender matches on career progress outcomes*. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*.

<sup>24</sup>Hosoda, M., Stone-Romero, E. F., & Coats, G. (2003). *The effects of physical attractiveness on job-related outcomes: A metaanalysis of experimental studies*. *Personnel Psychology*.

Average per-film profits for female movie stars rise until their 34th birthday, but decline rapidly thereafter. For men, average earnings per film are highest when they reach age of 51. Moreover, growing older than 51 does not negatively affect actors' average earnings per film.

So, the results of this analysis suggest that, as they grow older, male movie stars' market value increases until they reach the age of 51, after which age their value remains stable.

The market value of female movie stars decreases much earlier in their lives, around their 34th birthday.

Because the job of actors and actresses is to portray a character in the best possible manner, the gender difference in earnings of older movie stars may imply that to the work of older actresses less value is attached than to the one of older actors.

This result is in line with the widespread belief that female movie stars do not attract moviegoers and cannot successfully carry big-budget films.<sup>25</sup>

This ideology is also reflected in the relatively small number of female movie stars who acted in a movie when they were above the age of 45.

This observation reflects the fact that there are fewer roles available for older female movie stars than for male movie stars, resulting that there are less opportunities for women to lead important international films and blockbusters.

This is a devaluation of women's work: the stereotypical belief that women are not as good as men in playing leading figures and characters.

This element is strongly connected to the gender pay gap problem in the movie industry.

As we have seen, age plays an important role in gender inequality, but it's not the only factor that influences market's dynamics.

In fact, a 2018 Forbes survey found that the 10 highest-paid actors in the world, collectively made US\$748.5 million between June 2017 and June 2018. While on the other hand, the world's top 10 actresses made roughly US\$186 million over the same period.

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<sup>25</sup> Bielby, D. D., & Bielby, W. T. (1996). *Women and men in film: Gender inequality among writers in a culture industry*. Gender & Society.



The highest-paid actor among the men in the survey, George Clooney, made US\$239 million, while his female counterpart Scarlett Johansson, earned more than five times less: US\$40.5 million.

This is a relevant finding because it shows that even if Scarlett Johansson was 33 years old at the time of the survey in 2018, she still earned US\$279 million less than his male counterpart.

This is an important fact that underlies how women, even if they are younger compared to the standards of the study above, are still victims of a systematic gender pay gap that is intrinsic to the global film industry and consequently also to the European one, given that Hollywood's market dynamics are reflected in cinema at an international level.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> De Pater, I. E., Judge, T. A., Scott, B. A., (2014) *Age, Gender, and Compensation: A Study of Hollywood Movie Stars*. *Journal of Management Inquiry*.

## **Long-term inequalities in the film industry: sexual harassment**

In the previous paragraph we have seen how the gender wage gap affects the film industry. However, this element is not the only one to be part of a series of long-term inequalities. In fact, another important topic regarding women is the problem of sexual harassment in the workplace.

The "U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission" defined sexual harassment as unwanted and unsolicited sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical unwelcome behavior of a sexual nature.

The recent studies conducted on sexual assaults in the cinematic field, show a painful reality for scores of women working in the film industry around the world.

A survey was conducted in 2018 by the American daily newspaper "USA Today", in conjunction with their official partners: the "Creative Coalition", a premiere arts advocacy non-profit, "Women in Film and Television," which supports and promotes the careers of women working in the entertainment industry, and the "National Sexual Violence Resource Center".

In total there were polled 850 women working in the Hollywood film industry, of whom the vast majority reported some form of sexual misconduct.

This industry-wide survey quantified how pervasive the problem is in the entertainment industry. The results were staggering: 94% of women surveyed said that they have experienced some form of sexual harassment or assault over the course of their careers.

Moreover, the survey showed that a substantially higher number of self-selected respondents experienced harassment or abuse in the cinematographic working field than women in other kinds of industries and workplaces.

The reason could be attributed in part to the particular dynamics of the entertainment workplaces, where part of one's job may include having physical interactions between coworkers, as in the case of actors who must simulate kissing scenes when required by the script, but without having an actual romantic relationship outside of their job.

However, these particular situations do not provide explicit consent by women and should be recognized and addressed for what they are: sexual exploitations by those in positions of power.

In the USA Today query, there were listed nine types of sexual harassment, with the option to select whether respondents have never experienced it, experienced it once or experienced it more than once.

The list included the following actions: having someone make unwelcome sexual comments, jokes or gestures about you; being shown sexual pictures without your consent; witnessing others experience unwanted sexual comments, advances, physical contact or other form of sexual harassment; being touched, slapped, pinched or brushed in an unwelcome sexual way; witnessing others advance professionally as a result of personal, sexual relationships with employers/managers; being propositioned for a sexual act or relationship in an unwelcome way; having someone expose themselves to you; being forced to do something sexual; being forced to appear naked unexpectedly for auditions or otherwise in the course of professional work.

From the query, the results ranged over “unwelcome sexual comments, jokes or gestures” experienced by 87% of women; “being touched in a sexual way” by 69% of women; and “being shown sexual pictures without consent” by 39% of women.

Furthermore, 21% said they were "coerced into a sexual act", while 10% claimed they were "unexpectedly ordered to appear nude for auditions".

The age breakdown of respondents was fairly even, spanning women from 18 years old to 60-plus years old: 18- to 29-year-olds accounted for 16% of respondents; 30- to 39-year-olds, that represented the largest group, accounted for 29%; 40-49 for 21%; 50-59 for 19%; and 60-plus for 16%.

The encrypted survey was anonymous and was active from December 4, 2017, through January 14, 2018.

Results were tallied based on female responses and the professionals polled included directors, producers, executive producers, actors, writers, and editors.

The survey set out to quantify the problem that thus far has been told in harrowing anecdotes only from top movie stars such as Uma Thurman and Gwyneth Paltrow. It provides a safe forum for women without a public platform or who do not feel empowered enough in order to share their stories.

This groundbreaking survey quantifies what the Me Too movement has made clear in recent years: sexual harassment in the international cinematographic industry is not limited to isolated incidents, or to just a few abusers and populations of victims. It is a systemic problem that underlies the unbalanced power relations impacting on women's voices, careers and participation through biased working dynamics.<sup>27 28</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Katsarova, I., (2019) *The place of women in European film productions: Fighting the celluloid ceiling*. European Parliamentary Research Service.

<sup>28</sup> usatoday.com (2018) sexual harassment in Hollywood survey methodology explained [Online]. Available on: <https://eu.usatoday.com/story/life/people/2018/02/20/usa-today-sunshine-project-methodology-explained/310757002/>

## How the #MeToo movement changed women's conditions in cinema

The ongoing public conversation about sexual harassment during the last decade, has led to a torrent of stories about individual experiences, regressive workplace cultures, and the strong regulations required to change the balance of power between perpetrators and their targets.

The “#MeToo movement” is an international social movement against sexual abuse and sexual harassment where people publicize allegations of sex crimes.

It has moved firstly from word of mouth and then it expanded across the world thanks to social media.

In fact, the movement was built with a campaign launched using the context of social media, on the “Myspace” platform in 2006, by sexual harassment survivor and activist Tarana Burke.

This helped to create solidarity among survivors of sexual abuses.

The aim of this social movement, is to empower sexually assaulted individuals through empathy and solidarity through strength in numbers, especially young and vulnerable women, by visibly demonstrating how many have survived sexual assault and harassment in every field, especially in cinema as we have previously discussed.<sup>29 30 31</sup>

The movement has catapulted the discussion about the persistence and prevalence of sexual harassment in media workplace: incidents involving prominent, high-profile figures in the entertainment working field have pushed calls for decisive action.<sup>32 33 34 35</sup>

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<sup>29</sup>Ohlheiser, A. (2017) *The woman behind 'Me Too' knew the power of the phrase when she created it – 10 years ago*. The Washington Post.

<sup>30</sup>D'Zurilla, C. (2017) *In saying #MeToo, Alyssa Milano pushes awareness campaign about sexual assault and harassment*. Los Angeles Times.

<sup>31</sup>Smartt, N. (2018) *Sexual Harassment in the Workplace in A #MeToo World*. Forbes.

<sup>32</sup>Frye, J. (2018) *From Politics to Policy: Turning the Corner on Sexual Harassment*. Center for American progress.

<sup>33</sup>Strause, J. (2018) *Tarana Burke Responds to Asia Argento Report: "There Is No Model Survivor"*. The Hollywood Reporter.

<sup>34</sup>Edwards, S. Z., Dockterman, E., Sweetland, H. (2018). *TIME Person of the Year 2018: The Silence Breakers*. Time.

<sup>35</sup>Katsarova, I., (2019) *The place of women in European film productions: Fighting the celluloid ceiling*. European Parliamentary Research Service.

Subsequently, the movement had a turning point through the scandal of the widespread sexual assault allegations brought against Hollywood producer Harvey Weinstein, which exposed the painful reality for dozens of women working in the movie industry around the globe.

Thus, following the exposure of the sexual-abuse allegations against Weinstein in early October 2017,<sup>36 37</sup> the movement began to spread virally and faster than before, as a hashtag on social media.<sup>38 39</sup>

The Me Too movement has achieved a strong impact on an international scale, due to a number of high-profile posts and responses from American actresses such as Gwyneth Paltrow,<sup>40</sup> Ashley Judd,<sup>41</sup> Jennifer Lawrence,<sup>42</sup> and Uma Thurman, and after them, soon many other women followed.<sup>43</sup>

After millions of people began using the catchphrase with the hashtag in English, the expression started to spread to scores of other languages. With this quick global expansion the Me Too has become a real international movement for justice.<sup>44</sup>

In the wake of Hollywood's harassment scandals and following the American me too movement, women in the film industry from all over the world have come forward to tell their own stories and to demand for radical changes, since harassment is completely widespread and endemic in cinematic industry, and not just in Hollywood.

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<sup>36</sup> Chuck, E. (2017) *#MeToo: Alyssa Milano promotes hashtag that becomes anti-harassment rallying cry*. NBC News.

<sup>37</sup> pbs.org (2018) Weinstein [Online]. Available on: <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/film/weinstein/>

<sup>38</sup> Felsenthal, E. (2017) *Why the Silence Breakers Are TIME's Person of the Year 2017*. Time.

<sup>39</sup> Carlsen, A. (2018) *#MeToo Brought Down 201 Powerful Men. Nearly Half of Their Replacements are Women*. Retrieved.

<sup>40</sup> vogue.com (2017) Celebrities Share Stories of Sexual Assault for #MeToo Campaign [Online]. Available on: <https://www.vogue.com/article/alyssa-milano-metoo-sexual-assault-campaign>

<sup>41</sup> Bonos, L. (2017) *Analysis / Not everyone with a #MeToo is posting their story. Here's why some are refraining*. The Washington Post.

<sup>42</sup> Fernandez, M. (2017) *Jennifer Lawrence Says Producer Put Her in 'Naked Lineup,' Told Her to Lose Weight*. Variety.

<sup>43</sup> newsweek.com (2017) 'Kill Bill' Star Uma Thurman Declares #MeToo, Says Weinstein Doesn't Even Deserve A Bullet [Online]. Available on: <https://www.newsweek.com/what-happened-uma-thurman-kill-bill-actor-blasts-harvey-weinstein-declares-721303>

<sup>44</sup> Snyder, C., Lopez, L. (2017) *Tarana Burke on why she created the #MeToo movement – and where it's headed*. Business Insider.

Let's take a look on how the movement against sexual abuses had an impact on European cinema.

In UK, inspired by the #MeToo, the British producer Rebecca Long of London-based Boudica Films production, launched a new campaign called #NoPredators, that aims at changing British film culture by enacting a new ethics code for on-set conduct.

Boudica has also teamed up with Equal Justice Solicitors, the U.K.'s leading employment law firm, to provide free legal advice, for any film professional who has experienced sexual harassment, abuse or assault. A part of Boudica's social campaign, is to encourage all of its film crew members to sign their anti-harassment code of behavior and wear No Predator branded badges during shooting on set.

In Sweden, almost 600 female movie stars, including Oscar winner Alicia Vikander, have reported widespread sexual abuse in the country's film industry.

In an open letter, the group called out Swedish directors, producers and production companies for failing to protect women from sexual abuse and for profiting from the work of known abusers.

The group demanded “zero tolerance against sexual exploitation and violence”, and for employers in Swedish film companies and television networks, to “stop protecting, hiring and making money on perpetrators” of sexual violence.

Following the requests, the Swedish Film Institute has announced plans to introduce mandatory sexual conduct training for all production companies applying to the body for film subsidies.

Sweden's #MeToo movement has spawned its own, local-lingo hashtag: #tystnadtagning (#silenceaction in Swedish).

In Germany, German producer Janine Jackowski is one of many in the European film industry who believes real change can only come if more women are let into this business. She supports a quota system, which would push more state funding toward films written and directed by women.

Following the actions of these EU countries, talking about France, Twitter is awash with #BalanceTonPorc, or “expose your pig” for women, coming forward with their own tales of abuse.

While in Spain the movement is #YoTambien (Me Too in Spanish): whatever the language of the tag is, the message is the same: an end to abuse and a change to the culture that produced it.

For Italy, the message of me too has been translated in #quellavoltache (“the time that”).<sup>45</sup> In fact, by taking a closer look on Italian cinema, women posted stories of assault and harassment under the hashtag #QuellaVoltaChe, a phrase that was launched by the journalist Giulia Blasi.

However, very few women have come forward, compared to the international scenery, and the addressed men covering positions of power, have faced few consequences.

In Italy, the #QuellaVoltaChe movement generated about 20,000 tweets in the first week and a lot of discussion online.

But afterwards it was quietly buried among the topics that no one really wanted to address. As such, another Italian journalist, Simona Siri, documented in an article for The Washington Post how the initially popular movement quickly died in the Italian framework. This is related to the fact that Italy has long been regarded as being backwards when it comes to gender rights and the problem of sexual harassment.

In the Italian cinematic industry, the only two high-profile men accused by more than a dozen women of sexual misconduct, were Giuseppe Tornatore and Fausto Brizzi, who are both movie directors.

After the allegations, for Tornatore nothing happened, due to his prestigious role in the Italian cinema, while the only kind of consequence faced by Brizzi, was his name removed from the posters for his movie “Poveri ma ricchissimi”.

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<sup>45</sup> hollywoodreporter.com (2017) How the #MeToo Movement Is Changing Showbiz Culture Worldwide [Online]. Available on: <https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/news/general-news/how-metoo-movement-is-changing-showbiz-culture-worldwide-1061349/>



After one week, the controversy debate seemed to have fizzled out in the mainstream press. They did not face any significant consequences or media scrutiny, as instead it has happened in the for the accused men in the international cinematographic panorama.

All of this helps explain the different conversation we are now having on social media about this trend topic, and the different points of view on sexual harassment in the entertainment industry, changing from country to country.

Instead of having their voices amplified, Italian women supporting the #MeToo movement are still constantly mocked online by men who see them as uptight feminists.

In order to better change women's conditions in Italian cinema, the industry needs to experience a fundamental shift in terms of power dynamics between men and women in the entertainment workplace.<sup>46 47 48</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> thelocal.it (2017) 'Cinema Paradiso' director Tornatore denies 'fondling' showgirl [Online]. Available on: <https://www.thelocal.it/20171104/cinema-paradiso-director-denies-fondling-showgirl/>

<sup>47</sup> Siri, S. (2017) *Why Italy's #MeToo movement is failing*. The Washington Post.

<sup>48</sup> theconversation.com (2018) Asia Argento, Harvey Weinstein and Italy's complex relationship with feminism [Online]. Available on: <https://theconversation.com/asia-argento-harvey-weinstein-and-italys-complex-relationship-with-feminism-88496>

## CHAPTER 4

### **Policies for Change: What measures would encourage female directors to join the industry, and how to sustain their careers?**

In the previous chapters, we have discussed how gender inequalities such as gender stereotypes, women's underrepresentation in the workplace, gender wage gap and the widespread problem of sexual harassment, are serious issues that still affect women working in the film industry around the world.

In order to achieve better conditions for women in the cinematographic industry, there should be more women in key positions, and this would also help ensure diversity in stories and perspectives being portrayed on the cinema screen.

However, as previously shown, the sheer scale of gender inequalities is such that awareness-raising actions alone, like the Me too Movement, seem unlikely to bring about substantial change on an international level.

Therefore, it appears essential to propose proactive solutions, in order to start redressing the imbalances with the aim of achieving a widespread and lasting improvement.

However, before analyzing the supporting actions adopted by the different European entities such as the European Parliament and the European Commission, it would be interesting and useful to learn what kind of measures women think would be relevant introducing, in order to spread gender equality in the film industry on a more globalized level.<sup>49</sup>

If we take a look on the report on gender equality in the European film industry, made by the European Women's Audiovisual Network, we will see that one of the most preferred measures that would encourage female directors to join the industry is to exhibit more films directed by women on TV and cinema, with 91% of positive consensus by the polled people.

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<sup>49</sup> Katsarova, I., (2019) *The place of women in European film productions: Fighting the celluloid ceiling*. European Parliamentary Research Service.

The questionnaire offered a great variety of factors that could encourage women into the industry, and among those, the second top rated option picked by women was to increase support for the transition from training to employment, that obtained 87% of positive results.

Affirming the role of women directors for young people during school and establishing targeted support schemes for film development, are also considered important, with a rank of 81% of positive results.

Both factors confirm the need to give women tools to choose and pursue a film directing career, such as funding programs, incentives for producers to work with female directors and to find affirming female role models in school.

Furthermore, the questionnaire also asked what kind of policies would be better to sustain women's careers in the film industry, in order to rank the policy measures that would be more effective to back gender equality.

Women answered that support for distribution of films realized by female directors, in addition to greater equality of representation on commissioning panels are the most relevant tools.

The other important policies considered crucial by respondents are to increase support for first and second time directors, together with additional training opportunities.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> European Women's Audiovisual Network (2013) *Where are the women directors?* Report on gender equality for directors in the European film industry.

## **Support for female European filmmakers**

### **1 - Proactive solutions adopted by the European Parliament**

Once we have a clear framework of the shared thoughts of women in the European film industry, about what would be the most useful actions that would diminish gender inequality, we can analyze what are the actual solutions proposed and adopted by the different European committees.

First, we will focus on European Parliament's commitment to support European female filmmakers.

Despite EU's pledge to equality between men and women, the Parliament acknowledges that there is still a gap in the legislation on non-discrimination against women and gender equality, notably in terms of social security, employment and wages, and media.

The Parliament is in favor of intensifying the implementation of existing legislation in these areas and introducing new legislation.

However, considering the slow progress in narrowing the gender pay gap in the EU, together with ineffective enforcement of existing provisions, the Parliament has repeatedly demanded for the European Commission to submit proposals for an improved implementation and effective tools for enforcement.<sup>51</sup>

In order to do so, the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality, adopted the report drafted by Kartika Tamara Liotard, on eliminating gender stereotypes in the European Union.

Besides observing other major aspects like education and social security, the report highlights how in the European media, 60% of the roles portrayed doing housework or looking after children, are in fact covered by women.

For this reason, the members of the Committee are calling on European Commission and on Member States of the EU, in order to conduct awareness training actions with media

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<sup>51</sup> Katsarova, I., (2019) *The place of women in European film productions: Fighting the celluloid ceiling*. European Parliamentary Research Service.

professionals, based on the harmful effects of gender stereotypes and good practices in this area.

As stated by the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality, zero-tolerance awareness campaigns should be instituted across the EU for sexist insults or derogatory portrayals of women and girls in the mainstream media.

Plus, the report points out that a policy to eliminate stereotypes in the media will necessarily involve action in the digital field.

Members also call for the establishment of independent regulation bodies with the aim of controlling the media industry, together with a mandate to impose effective sanctions on companies and individuals promoting the sexualization of girls.

In addition to this, it is asked an implementation of positive action measures to ensure that more women have access to management positions in the media, including top management positions.

Lastly, it is requested a compilation of comparable data concerning women and the media.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Liotard, K. T. (2012) *Eliminating gender stereotypes in the EU*. Legislative Observatory, European Parliament.

## **2 - Proactive solutions adopted by the European Commission**

The European Commission on its hand, provides funding for the development, promotion and distribution of European works through the Media strand of Creative Europe: an EU's program supporting culture and the media and entertainment sectors.

The Media monitoring report for 2017 ascertains that the Commission is fully committed to bring gender equality to the fore.

The report draws on qualitative and quantitative evidence from a variety of sources, including beneficiaries, to show the impact that Creative Europe MEDIA has had on the European audiovisual sector.

The executive has already started gathering data and measuring women's participation in key positions in supported projects.

The results show that the presence of women in Media-supported projects is as low as in the EU film industry in general.

In specific terms, only 29 % of directors and 37 % of scriptwriters in 2017 were women.

Interestingly, women's participation in training schemes was much higher , with a result of 54 %.

However, the monitoring report argues that the success rate of projects submitted by a woman director/scriptwriter is an indicator of the absence of negative gender bias in the selection process.

Indeed, in 2017, these projects represented 36% of all projects submitted but in spite of that, they were proportionately more successful, since they accounted for 41 % of all selected projects.

However, more needs to be done and the Commission recognizes the need to bring gender balance to the fore, thus it is currently considering specific ways of ensuring a more gender-balanced provision of support.

Work on this will continue with national and international funds and institutions, notably with Eurimages and the European Audiovisual Observatory.<sup>53 54</sup>

### **3 - Proactive policies adopted by the European nations**

Consequently, other important aspects that we must take into account in our analysis, are the proactive policies approached by the different EU countries on a national level.

Most of the European countries usually start by implementing broader measures aiming to encourage a change in mentality and, at a later stage, they often introduce quotas or other quantifiable objectives.

In this scenery, Sweden is the leading EU country in terms of regulatory policies in the cinematographic industry.

In 2013, Sweden focused on the aim of attaining a fair gender distribution of 50/50 in terms of production funding.

Other countries, such as Ireland, chose to implement measures encouraging women filmmakers to apply for funding and the UK has shown a similar intent.

In fact, in its Diversity Standards program, the British Film Institute declared an intention of allocating 50% of public funding to women.

Talking about Denmark, the Danish Film Institute has appointed a working group to ensure progress and specific efforts in this area.

For Spain instead, the Spanish *Ley del Ciné* (Cinema Law, 2007) requires gender equality within selection and funding committees, among directors and screenwriters, and in the distribution of roles.

The Netherlands has also started implementing a system of selection criteria for funding, to evaluate not only the quality of the project but also its potential contribution to diversity.

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<sup>53</sup> Katsarova, I., (2019) *The place of women in European film productions: Fighting the celluloid ceiling*. European Parliamentary Research Service.

<sup>54</sup> Creative Europe Media (2017) *Media Monitoring Report 2017 Reaching Audiences Across Borders*.

Likewise, Poland with its the Polish Film Institute introduced gender equality objectives in its committees of experts.

Austria started implementing gender budgeting in 2015.

Even though this measure is not specifically aimed at the film industry, it still has a substantial indirect impact.

Moreover, there are other countries in which gender equality is part of long-term cultural policies seeking to encourage diversity in general and aiming to achieve a fundamental change in society as a whole.

These policies do not have any quantifiable objectives, but rather aim to raise awareness on the issue.

A good example in this regard is the amended German Federal Film Funding Act (2017), which contains a general paragraph on gender equality and the composition of committees. However, it does not set mandatory quantifiable objectives and in this sense is more of a long-term incentivizing policy.

The plans of two other EU countries, which are Croatia and Portugal, fall into this group, along with EU-supported gender equality policies and measures.

Finally, some countries do not have specific policies in favor of women filmmakers.

These include Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Greece, Hungary, Romania, Slovakia and Finland.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Katsarova, I., (2019) *The place of women in European film productions: Fighting the celluloid ceiling*. European Parliamentary Research Service.



## **Improving gender representation in movies**

In addition to the gender equality policies ensured by the different European entities and the singular national cinematic institutes, another important matter regarding women in the film industry, is their on-screen representation, as we have discussed about in the previous chapters.

Thus, in relation to the problem of gender stereotypes in movies, on average men and women agree that female-directed films may have an impact on society in relation to equal rights, and diversity of cultural expression on screen. Also violence against women might be affected by more films by female directors, as well as a more realistic representation on women on screen.<sup>56</sup>

In order to highlight gender bias in movies, in 2013, four Swedish cinemas and the Scandinavian cable television channel “Viasat Film” have introduced the Bechdel test into some of their ratings, a measure supported by the Swedish Film Institute.

In 2013, only 30 % of Swedish feature films passed the Bechdel test, thereby getting an A - rating.

The following year that percentage soared to 60 %, and in 2015, 80 % of films earned the new rating seal.

The test is now a feature in 30 cinemas and has also started appearing on DVD covers.

Viewers are informed of the rating by a quick trailer that runs before the screening begins. Awareness of gender issues in films is now an academic goal in 10 Swedish cities, and therefore the Bechdel test is taught in schools.

More broadly, the Bechdel test has inspired discussion about diversity in more general terms.

By adopting this national proactive policy, the Swedish Film Institute’s goal is firstly to help spread awareness among moviegoers about how women are portrayed in films, and

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<sup>56</sup> European Women’s Audiovisual Network (2013) *Where are the women directors?* Report on gender equality for directors in the European film industry.

secondly to see more realistic female stories and perspectives on cinema screens, without any gender stereotypes.<sup>57 58</sup>

## **Existing measures for gender equality in the Italian film industry**

### **1 - Rai's gender policy**

In this paragraph we will closely focus on the already existing measures for gender equality, in the Italian film industry.

It is to say, that in the audiovisual sector no measures are in place in public funding, so far, to promote gender equality, although equality is taken into account in the composition of public fund selection committees and of the public agencies' board of management.

Recently the competent authority, DG Cinema - MiBACT has carried out several research projects, on the matter and organized public conferences to promote the debate and raise awareness in the sector.

RAI, the Italian public service broadcaster, is the first PSM in Europe that has formally transposed (13th October 2013) the Recommendations of the Council of Europe to the media with regard to the prevention and combating of violence against women, to the correct representations of women's image and to gender balance.

RAI has therefore adopted a "code of practice" aimed at promoting gender policy within the company.

The purpose of RAI gender policy is to supervise respect for gender equality, guaranteeing a proper representation of human dignity, referring in particular to women's non-stereotypical image.

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<sup>57</sup> Katsarova, I. (2019) *The place of women in European film productions: Fighting the celluloid ceiling*. European Parliamentary Research Service.

<sup>58</sup> theguardian.com (2012) Swedish cinemas take aim at gender bias with Bechdel test rating [Online].

Available on: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/nov/06/swedish-cinemas-bechdel-test-films-gender-bias>

RAI also monitors women's portrayal on its show schedule, by commissioning to the Observatory of Pavia a content analysis and to Eurisko a qualitative analysis to verify the correct representation of women in its programs.

The results of the study show that women representation on RAI channels is respectful in 95% of cases.

Despite this, we have to consider that generally women don't have a key role in tv programs, though.

This happens in many contexts: the cast of tv programs are formed by 41% of women and 59% of men, while the cast of tv series are composed by 42% of women and 58% of men. The interviewed guests during information programs are composed by 32% of women and 68% of men.

The only area in which women outnumber men is in the role of active members of the audience attending tv programs.

Women, in fact, are asked to intervene with a role of ordinary people, while men intervene more as political actors and opinion leaders.

Therefore, we can affirm that, despite the fact that some small measures have been taken to prevent gender inequality within the programs of Italy's largest broadcaster, these are not sufficient to ensure a real and stereotype-free representation of the female figure.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> European Women's Audiovisual Network (2013) *Where are the women directors?* Report on gender equality for directors in the European film industry.

## 2 - What is the impact of being a parent in the Italian film industry?

Moving on, another useful element to be analyzed in order to better learn about the effectiveness of Italian policies in favor of gender equality, is the impact that the concept of motherhood and family can have on the working career for women within the Italian film industry. As a matter of fact, only 36% of polled directors in the report on gender equality in the European film industry, were also parents, with a slightly higher percentage among men represented by a 38%, compared to women that form only the 35%.

Based on these results in fact, being a director and having children is discouraging.

This is due to the inadequate family care policies in place for working parents particularly in case of film director's jobs.

In this pattern, besides all the challenges we have seen before, women have also to face maternity, that is perceived as a further obstacle within the cinematographic industry, that boosts gender inequality and women's underrepresentation in covering leadership roles, like being a director.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> European Women's Audiovisual Network (2013) *Where are the women directors?* Report on gender equality for directors in the European film industry.

### **3 - New welfare in Italian cinema**

Thus, related to the topic of maternity and new measures of parental leave that should support women, on the 20th day of May 2021, a new welfare for the Italian cinematographic industry has emerged.

This happened thanks to the new set of rules of the “decreto sostegni bis”, brought to the Council of Ministers by the Minister of Culture, Dario Franceschini, together with the Minister of Labor Andrea Orlando.

This package of new significant measures aims to strengthen the protection of workers in the show business on a general level.

As such, the new welfare system for entertainment workers finally ensures adequate welfare and social security protection, correcting the many distortions that have emerged over the last two decades and which have become unsustainable after the pandemic.

The measure redesigns protection taking into account the specific nature of the sector, in which the employment relationship is structurally discontinuous due to the objective nature of the service, not due to the choice of the employer or the worker himself.

However, discontinuity has not so far been recognized by Italian legislation as a distinctive element of work in the entertainment industry.

In fact, the regulations have prevented thousands of workers from accessing constitutionally guaranteed rights: from sick pay, to maternity pay and to pension benefits.

The new welfare system aims to recognize to the entertainment workers the protections that exist for other types of professionals, in order to ensure better conditions of equity and social dignity, encourage the development of a full recognition of the work of the sector and contribute to the emergence of undeclared work.

Talking about women in the Italian movie industry, the new welfare guarantees an adjustment and expansion of parenting protections and supports.

The forms of protection and support for parents are adapted to the discontinuous nature of work in the entertainment sector.

Thanks to the introduction of the new rules, the system for calculating maternity allowances and economic treatments for paternity and parental leave has been modified, with the daily amount being parameterized to the income received in the 12 months prior to the indemnifiable period.

The previous 4-week scheme is exceeded in order to guarantee protection and to take into account the discontinuous nature of the services provided by workers in the entertainment industry.

In fact, it is not infrequent that in the month prior to the one in which the maternity leave began, it doesn't result any working days, or in any case paid, that instead are useful for the purposes of the above calculation.

With the introduction of this new proactive solution, women who work in the Italian cinematographic industry are more economically stable, when facing maternity.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> cultura.gov.it (2021) Spettacolo, Franceschini: giornata storica, approvato nuovo sistema di Welfare [Online]. Available online: <https://cultura.gov.it/welfarespettacolo>

# **The new colossus of streaming: the gender revolution brought about by Netflix**

## **1- Netflix's first inclusion report**

In the previous paragraphs we have analyzed how European bodies and national broadcasters in different European countries, including Italy, are implementing new policies to achieve greater gender equality.

On the other hand, in the last ten years the entertainment sector has experienced great innovations thanks to the new streaming platforms that allow the fruition of cinematographic contents in a totally digital form.

One of the major companies operating the streaming of movies and TV series is the American over-the-top content platform and production company Netflix, that in 2020 officially became the largest entertainment/media company by market capitalization.

Netflix operates all over the world: the company has its headquartered in California and its offices in Canada, France, Brazil, the Netherlands, India, Japan, South Korea, the United Kingdom and recently also in Italy.

Thanks to its company culture, greatly based on values such as diversity and inclusion, Netflix has started a real social revolution in terms of gender equality.

In fact, the policies adopted by Netflix result in a better on-screen representation of women, and more inclusion in their internal working community.

Its achievements can all be analyzed through a diversity study commissioned by Netflix, regarding its movies and TV shows that showed improvement in gender representation from 2018 to 2019.

The diversity study was a first-of-its-kind, and it was conducted at Netflix's request by Stacy Smith, the founder and director of the USC Annenberg Inclusion Initiative.

The USC Annenberg Inclusion Initiative regularly yields reports on diversity in cinema and television.

Smith's team reviewed all of the films and series commissioned by Netflix between 2018 and 2019.

Of the 22 inclusion indicators used, such as racial identities, LGBTQ+ and disabilities, 19 showed improvement over the two-year period.

However, Netflix real strengths is showed in diversity are around women.

As a matter of fact, the study found gender equality in leading roles across films and TV series, a very relevant data for actresses around the world, that shows great changes towards a better representation of women in cinema.

Smith also found that Netflix is outpacing the film industry in hiring women as directors.<sup>62</sup> By exploring the data regarding women representation in the workplace, in 2020 women constituted half of the total workforce of the corporation, that is the 47.1%.

By looking at the working positions related to leadership, we can state that women directors represent the 47.8%, female vice presidents the 43.7% and senior leadership the 47.6%.

While on the other hand, women working in creative and corporate positions represent the 55% of people covering this working field.

Women working in technical roles are only 34.9%, however they represented 27% of people in 2017, so even this job area has experienced a big development towards gender equality, in just 3 years.

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<sup>62</sup> cnbc.com (2021) Netflix will spend \$100 million to improve diversity on film following equity study [Online]. Available on: <https://www.cnbc.com/2021/02/26/netflix-will-spend-100-million-to-improve-diversity-on-film-following-equity-study.html>



Women working in technical roles are only 34.9%, however they represented 27% of people in 2017, so even this job area has experienced a big development towards gender equality, in just 3 years.<sup>63</sup>

Netflix's social pledge is real, since it has committed to release an update on this study every two years, through 2026, in order to monitor and improve their gender policies.

Furthermore, the international company has announced the creation of the "Netflix Fund for Creative Equity", an organization that will invest \$100 million over the next five years, in organizations that will help underrepresented communities to train and to find jobs in the film industry.<sup>64</sup>

## **2- Eliminating gender pay gap**

While talking about equitable pays, in order to avoid the problem of the gender wage gap, the policy implemented by Netflix is to practice an "open compensation".

It means that the top 1,000 leaders (such as directors) at the company, are able to see how much any employee is paid.

This solution encourages open discussions about pay disparities.

Outside of the transparency, Netflix's talent team routinely analyzes pay across the company to look for disparities, including an annual compensation review.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> netflix.com (2021) Inclusion Takes Root at Netflix: Our First Report [Online]. Available on: <https://about.netflix.com/en/news/netflix-inclusion-report-2021>

<sup>64</sup> cnbc.com (2021) Netflix will spend \$100 million to improve diversity on film following equity study [Online]. Available on: <https://www.cnbc.com/2021/02/26/netflix-will-spend-100-million-to-improve-diversity-on-film-following-equity-study.html>

<sup>65</sup> netflix.com (2021) Inclusion Takes Root at Netflix: Our First Report [Online]. Available on: <https://about.netflix.com/en/news/netflix-inclusion-report-2021>

### 3 - Maternity in Netflix

Another important topic regarding the welfare offered by the company to its employees, is the maternity pay and family leave.

Netflix offers to its salaried employees, of any gender, unlimited paid parental leave.

The policy applies to the first year after a child is born or adopted.

Either parents can potentially take as much parental time off as they need during this timeslot. Then, they might choose to return to work part time or to come back full time for a few months and then leave again.

Netflix will continue to pay their full salaries and offer benefits anyway, and parents won't have to file for disability or other state coverage.<sup>66</sup>

However, parents generally make use of the time of the family leave from 4 to 8 months, as stated by Netflix's statistics.

Moreover, Netflix offers a global family forming benefit to support employees during their fertility, surrogacy, or adoption journey.

This benefit is available to staff members and their spouse/partner, independently from their civil status, their gender or sexual orientation.

Netflix also offers an allowance through "Carrot" (a fertility care service for companies) to support the staff in covering the costs of their family-forming journey.<sup>67</sup>

Thanks to these cutting-edge social measures implemented by Netflix in their company culture, women don't have to worry about the financial challenges of parenthood when they decide to pursue a career in cinema.

In the end, as shown by the data, we can affirm that Netflix's goal is to totally eliminate all forms of gender inequality, from on-screen representation to corporate policies, and in just a few years they are succeeding in creating an ever more innovative reality towards equality.

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<sup>66</sup> money.cnn.com (2015) Netflix to offer unlimited parental leave [Online]. Available on: <https://money.cnn.com/2015/08/04/technology/netflix-parental-leave/>

<sup>67</sup> jobs.netflix.com . Work Life Philosophy [Online]. Available on: <https://jobs.netflix.com/work-life-philosophy>

## CONCLUSION

We have now reached the end of this study on the roles of women in the cinematographic industry.

Based on the data collected from the many sources, articles and reports observed, we can affirm that currently in Europe, a change is taking place to make the film industry more open to women.

Despite the fact that this it is still today a male-dominated industry, and that women in top-leadership roles and key creative roles are still heavily outnumbered by men, there is a slow general process towards a greater awareness of the problem of gender inequality.

To effectively conclude this study, it would be appropriate to provide some solutions on how to improve the working conditions of women in the Italian film industry, which are backward when compared to those of many other European countries and to the Hollywood industry.

The first step to be taken, could be to implement a yardstick based on the Bechdel test, following the example of the Swedish Film Institute and Netflix, by Italian institutions such as Rai and Mibact.

In this way, it would be possible to monitor and improve the contents of Italian productions, so that they would offer a more inclusive representation of women, free from gender stereotypes and old, false clichés.

Moreover, always following the example of Sweden, another tool that could be useful to avoid perpetuating the representation of gender stereotypes through cinema, would be to teach within schools the awareness of how the current cultural hegemony has been imparted and shaped through the old mass media, which however does not reflect reality.

In this way, people can experience a greater awareness of the issue of gender stereotyped representation and the social problems related to it.

Of course, one way to help guarantee that stories and perspectives portrayed on the screen are more true to life and reality, would be to encourage and support the presence of women in key positions in the film industry.

In order to do so, more programs could be established through European funds, focusing on the creation of movies by female directors, who are making their first or second film. The programs could also serve as an incentive for production companies to invest more in films directed by women, which, as we have seen, currently represent a clear minority on the Italian scene.

In this way more women would be encourage to join the film industry, to pursue leadership roles and to break down the gender segregation of this working field.

Furthermore, to bring gender equality in the Italian film industry, working networks dedicated exclusively to women could be created.

This could be a useful tool to create a community of women with a strong social identity within Italian cinema. It would allow mutual aid, thanks to which women would find more work opportunities in environments that are currently male-dominated.

Additionally, these networks, together with safe online forums and active campaigns all over Italy against sexual violence, could help sensibelize the issue of sexual harassment in the cinematic industry.

However, to make women feel safe, much stricter anti-harassment codes of conduct for on-set behavior would need to be introduced on a national level.

In order to monitor such policies, it could be relevant to introduce an annual anonymous questionnaire for entertainment workers to fill out, following the example of the survey conducted by the American newspaper "USA Today".

Then, the results of the polls would be used to tell where and how change needs to be enacted.

Lastly, in order to bring about a real radical change in the Italian film industry, it would be necessary to adopt a working philosophy similar to the one proposed by Netflix.

This means creating a work environment with a social culture that is based on values of integration, diversity and inclusion.

In this way, a more positive and less toxic climate could be established for all women in every role, from actress to director, writer, producer and so on.

In the end, by adopting these solutions and by implementing cultural values that reflect the importance of diversity, the next generations of young women who are willing to follow their passions in the cinematographic industry, can hope for a better future where gender equality has been reached.

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## ABSTRACT

Il cinema o Settima Arte è uno strumento artistico e autoriale di grande complessità nato al termine dell'Ottocento. La capacità di continuare a riprodurre la realtà nel suo continuo movimento, attraverso un insieme di arti e tecniche audio-visive, rende ancora oggi il cinema e l'industria cinematografica nella sua interezza, una lente analitica privilegiata sulle trasformazioni sociali, culturali, politiche e artistiche della contemporaneità.

Parallelamente, la presente analisi sul mondo oltre la macchina da presa si propone di non svalutarne la sua componente più *pop*: è evidente, infatti, anche nella definizione più prosaica di cosa sia il cinema che il potere dell'intrattenimento proietta quest'arte tra i più importanti mezzi di comunicazione di massa.

Così, insieme alle grandi innovazioni che hanno rivoluzionato la settima arte dal ventesimo secolo ad oggi, come l'introduzione del sonoro o l'avvento dell'immagine a colori, il cinema ha conosciuto un notevole sviluppo industriale, diventando presto uno dei settori economici più fiorenti e redditizi su scala internazionale.

Molte figure femminili hanno contribuito a plasmare la storia del cinema, tra queste prime voci ricordiamo Alice Guy, la prima donna regista di Hollywood; Helen Gardner, tra le prime attrici a fondare una propria casa di produzione cinematografica; Julia Crawford Ivers, prima tra le produttrici e scrittrici di Hollywood; e Cleo Madison, la prima donna a rappresentare forti tematiche sociali all'interno dei suoi film attraverso il racconto dell'oppressione e della discriminazione sessuale.

Nonostante la rilevanza di queste grandi donne, gradualmente Hollywood e l'intera industria cinematografica si sono trasformate in un sempre maggiore business multimilionario, tale per cui la presenza e l'influenza delle donne all'interno dei settori creativi e manageriali di rilievo è andata diminuendo proporzionalmente.

Ne deriva un settore a netta prevalenza maschile, dove il dominio delle cariche di prestigio (i.e. regia, produzione, sceneggiatura) rende evidenti radicate disuguaglianze di genere.

Pertanto, questo studio sarà incentrato sul ruolo delle donne all'interno dell'attuale industria cinematografica, analizzato prima da una prospettiva europea, cui poi farà seguito una comparazione approfondita con la realtà del fenomeno nel contesto italiano.

Verranno infine osservate, le principali tendenze provenienti dal settore Hollywoodiano, che sistematicamente influenzano le dinamiche di mercato dell'industria cinematografica europea.

La prima variabile che si è scelto di analizzare è quella immediatamente prossima all'esperienza di fruizione dell'*audience*: la rappresentazione delle donne all'interno dei prodotti audiovisivi; tale narrazione per motivi socio-culturali si rivelerà difforme rispetto alla complessità della figura femminile contemporanea.

Le ragioni dietro la perpetuazione di stereotipi di genere sono riconducibili a un codice di condotta di genere, di portata internazionale, suffragato da precise modalità narrative evidenziabili nell'intento divulgativo di massa del mezzo cinematografico.

Ciò ha contribuito a plasmare una precisa ideologia sociale di stampo patriarcale.

Le rappresentazioni stereotipate infatti, sono ancora fortemente presenti nel cinema contemporaneo. Ciò è a esempio evidente nei canoni di bellezza standardizzati che portano in scena personaggi femminili: estremamente sessualizzati e spesso più giovani delle loro controparti maschili; nella maggior parte dei casi relegati a ruoli che ruotano attorno a quello che è il nucleo familiare convenzionale, ricoprendo dunque il personaggio di moglie, madre o fidanzata. Inoltre, la presenza di personaggi femminili raffigurati in maniera esplicita durante l'atto sessuale, non solo è ben maggiore se paragonata a quella degli uomini, ma negli ultimi anni è cresciuta in maniera esponenziale.

Per circoscrivere più facilmente il problema della mancanza di figure alternative degli stereotipi di genere legati alla rappresentazione delle donne nel cinema, Alison Bechdel ha creato un strumento di valutazione, il cosiddetto "Bechdel test".

Per poter superare il test, i film sottoposti devono raffigurare almeno due donne, con nomi noti al pubblico, intente a dialogare di un qualsiasi argomento, non riguardante un uomo.

Il test non è un metro di giudizio per valutare la qualità di un film o quanto esso possa essere definito "femminista", bensì evidenzia quanto il cinema sia realmente dominato da una forte prevalenza maschile. In breve, l'obiettivo dell'indicatore è quello di misurare la presenza attiva delle donne nei film, diffondendo la consapevolezza su come le attrici siano spesso ritratte nei lungometraggi.

Questa problematica legata alla forte mancanza di donne nei ruoli cinematografici più creativi, come quello di regista o scrittrice, riflette soggetti, storie e prospettive femminili, non verosimili.

Difatti, all'interno del cinema europeo la maggior parte dei lungometraggi, sovvenzionati sia da grandi che piccoli budget, sono opere dirette da uomini. Attualmente non esiste nessun paese europeo in cui le donne rappresentino più di un terzo dei registi che di anno in anno, realizzano opere filmiche che vengono poi distribuite nelle sale cinematografiche. Inoltre, gli scarsi finanziamenti devoluti alla realizzazione di film diretti da donne, accentuano la mancanza di registe, influenzando a loro volta la volontà degli investitori nel prendere parte in nuovi progetti, andando così a consolidare le posizioni maschili per mezzo di un circolo vizioso.

Un ulteriore fattore scoraggiante per le donne che hanno intenzione di intraprendere una carriera nel cinema, riguarda la segregazione di genere relativa alle differenti professioni nei vari ambiti di specializzazione.

La quota di donne presenti nelle diverse maestranze cinematografiche, mostra un netto divario occupazionale di genere nei settori tradizionalmente femminilizzati, quali i costumi e il montaggio.

Le cause della scarsità di donne nelle posizioni di regia sembrano essere duplici.

La prima ragione deriva da l'assimilazione passiva e sistematica di una distorta percezione di sé, che scoraggia le donne a confrontarsi con carriere altamente competitive e di rilievo.

La seconda, risiede in motivazioni intrinseche di natura economica caratterizzanti l'industria in esame, quali a esempio la difficoltà di realizzare campagne di sponsorship, siano esse pubbliche o private, di progetti a guida dichiaratamente femminile.

Le conseguenze del fenomeno cui sopra, sono facilmente rinvenibili nell'ambito delle competizioni cinematografiche internazionali, in cui le donne che possono vantare premi alla regia sono un numero estremamente esiguo. A esempio, nei novantatré anni di storia degli Oscar, solo cinque donne hanno ricevuto una nomination come "Miglior regista", e solamente due hanno vinto questo premio: la prima fu Kathryn Bigelow nel 2010 con il suo film "The Hurt Locker", la seconda, Chloé Zhao che nel 2021 ha diretto "Nomadland". Il secondo fattore d'analisi sul ruolo delle donne nel cinema riguarda le condizioni di lavoro, dopo l'impatto della pandemia del COVID-19; le donne si sono ritrovate a dover lottare contro l'enorme perdita di posti di lavoro che ha fortemente colpito il contesto europeo.

Sulla base dei dati raccolti, la crisi pandemica si è sommata a due problematiche sistemiche che definiscono da tempo lo sviluppo delle carriere femminili nell'ambito cinematografico: la disparità salariale e le molestie sul luogo di lavoro.

Per analizzare il primo fenomeno, è utile esaminare il settore attoriale, perché composto in maniera equa sia da uomini che donne, che eseguono lo stesso lavoro, nelle medesime tempistiche. I risultati mostrano che in media, invecchiando, il valore di mercato marginale degli attori uomini aumenta fino a raggiungere il 51° anno di età, per poi assumere un valore stabile nel tempo.

Il valore di mercato delle attrici donne invece, diminuisce molto prima nella loro vita, intorno al loro 34° anno di età.

Questo risultato è coerente con la diffusa convinzione sociale che le star donne non attraggano gli spettatori, e che di conseguenza non siano in grado di portare sufficiente successo economico ai film con grande budget.

Questa ideologia si riflette anche nel numero relativamente ridotto di star femminili che hanno recitato in un film blockbuster, una volta che hanno superato i 45 anni.

Per questa ragione, sono disponibili meno ruoli per le attrici più anziane.

Nonostante ciò, anche quando si tratta di attrici convenzionalmente giovani, quest'ultime vengono pagate meno dei loro colleghi uomini.

Basti guardare il paragone tra l'attore più pagato al mondo, George Clooney, che nel 2016 ricevette \$239 milioni, mentre la sua controparte, l'attrice più pagata al mondo Scarlett Johansson che all'epoca aveva 33 anni, venne pagata \$40.5 milioni.

L'altro fattore cruciale che riguarda la difficoltà di accesso delle donne a carriere lavorative più prestigiose, è il problema delle molestie sessuali.

Nel 2018 è stato condotto un sondaggio da parte dal quotidiano Americano "USA Today", attraverso il quale sono state intervistate in forma anonima, 850 donne che tuttora lavorano nell'industria cinematografica di Hollywood. In base ai risultati della ricerca, il 94% delle intervistate ha dichiarato di aver subito una qualche forma di molestia o aggressione sessuale, nel corso della propria carriera.

La ricerca fornisce un forum sicuro per tutte le donne che non hanno una piattaforma pubblica da poter sfruttare, o che non si sentono abbastanza potenti e privilegiate per condividere le loro storie, rispetto a stelle del cinema più famose come Uma Thurman o Gwyneth Paltrow.

Questo sondaggio innovativo quantifica ciò che il movimento sociale del "Me Too" ha reso chiaro negli ultimi anni: le molestie sessuali nell'industria cinematografica internazionale non si limitano a incidenti isolati, o a pochi molestatore; bensì si tratta di un problema sistematico che è alla base delle relazioni di potere sbilanciate e di dinamiche di lavoro distorte, con un grave impatto sistemico sulle voci di tutte le donne che fanno parte del settore.

Per poter contrastare le disuguaglianze di genere nel cinema europeo, sono state adottate o proposte differenti soluzioni da parte dei principali enti dell'UE.

Da parte del Parlamento Europeo, la *Commissione per i diritti delle donne e l'uguaglianza di genere*, ha adottato la relazione redatta da Kartika Tamara Liotard, sull'eliminazione degli stereotipi di genere nell'Unione europea. Secondo la Commissione, sarebbe necessario instaurare delle campagne di sensibilizzazione in tutta l'UE, contro la diffusione di stereotipi di genere, insulti sessisti e immagini degradanti riguardanti le donne nei media.

La Commissione Europea, da parte sua, fornisce finanziamenti per lo sviluppo, la promozione e la distribuzione di opere europee attraverso la sezione Media di *Europa Creativa*, un programma dell'UE che sostiene la cultura e i settori dei media e dello spettacolo. Il resoconto di monitoraggio della sezione media del 2017, accerta che la Commissione è pienamente impegnata a portare in primo piano la parità di genere.

In questo caso, il lavoro viene svolto attraverso l'utilizzo di fondi di istituzioni nazionali e internazionali, instaurando delle collaborazioni in particolare con *Eurimages* e *l'Osservatorio europeo dell'audiovisivo*.

Nel livello successivo, vi sono le differenti politiche adottate dai diversi paesi dell'UE a livello nazionale. In questo scenario, la Svezia è il primo paese dell'UE in termini di politiche di regolamentazione dell'industria cinematografica.

Nel 2013 infatti, la Svezia si è concentrata sull'obiettivo di raggiungere un'equa ripartizione di genere, in termini di finanziamenti alla produzione di nuovi progetti cinematografici.

Inoltre, al fine di evidenziare la presenza di stereotipi di genere mostrati nei film, sempre nel 2013, quattro cinema svedesi e il canale televisivo via cavo scandinavo "Viasat Film" hanno introdotto il Bechdel test in alcune delle loro valutazioni, una politica che ha ricevuto il sostegno anche da parte dell'Istituto cinematografico svedese.

Il test è attualmente presente in 30 cinema svedesi e ha iniziato ad apparire anche sulle copertine dei DVD.

Altri paesi, come l'Irlanda, hanno scelto di attuare misure che incoraggiano le donne registe a richiedere finanziamenti, mentre il Regno Unito attraverso il programma Diversity Standards, sostenuto dal British Film Institute, ha dichiarato l'intenzione di assegnare il 50% dei finanziamenti pubblici alle donne.

Per la Spagna invece, la "Ley del Ciné" spagnolo richiede la parità di genere all'interno dei comitati di selezione e finanziamento, tra i registi e gli sceneggiatori, e nella distribuzione dei ruoli all'interno delle produzioni.

Anche i Paesi Bassi hanno iniziato ad implementare un sistema di criteri di selezione per i finanziamenti, per valutare non solo la qualità del progetto cinematografico, ma anche il suo potenziale contributo alla diversità.



Alcuni paesi, tuttavia, come la Bulgaria o la Repubblica Ceca, non hanno adottato politiche specifiche a favore delle donne registe.

Per quanto riguarda l'industria cinematografica italiana nello specifico, non sono in atto a oggi, misure di promozione per la parità di genere nei finanziamenti pubblici, anche se la parità viene presa in considerazione all'interno della composizione delle commissioni di selezione dei fondi pubblici e dei consigli di amministrazione degli enti pubblici.

Recentemente la DG Cinema – MiBACT, ha realizzato diversi progetti di ricerca sull'argomento e ha organizzato conferenze pubbliche per promuovere il dibattito e sensibilizzare il settore.

Inoltre la RAI, il servizio pubblico radiotelevisivo italiano, ha adottato un codice di condotta volto a promuovere la politica di genere all'interno della sua azienda.

La politica di genere della RAI ha lo scopo di vigilare sul rispetto della parità di genere, garantendo una corretta rappresentazione della dignità umana, con particolare riferimento all'immagine non stereotipata della donna.

Nonostante siano state adottate alcune piccole misure per prevenire la disuguaglianza di genere all'interno dei programmi televisivi e cinematografici della maggiore emittente italiana, queste non sono sufficienti a garantire una rappresentazione reale e senza stereotipi della figura femminile.

In questo scenario, oltre alle difficoltà precedentemente osservate, le donne devono affrontare il concetto di maternità, che viene percepita come un ulteriore ostacolo all'interno dell'industria cinematografica.

Attualmente però, l'introduzione di nuovo welfare per i lavoratori dello spettacolo, garantisce un adeguamento e un ampliamento delle misure di protezione e supporto alla genitorialità.

Una forte spinta di accelerazione verso nuove politiche per la parità di genere si è realizzata grazie all'introduzione di nuove piattaforme di streaming nel corso dell'ultimo decennio; ciò ha permesso una vasta fruizione di contenuti cinematografici in forma totalmente digitale. Una delle maggiori aziende che operano nel campo dello streaming di film e serie

TV, è la piattaforma americana Netflix, che nel 2020 è diventata ufficialmente la più grande azienda di intrattenimento per capitalizzazione di mercato.

Grazie alla sua cultura aziendale, fortemente basata su valori come la diversità e l'inclusione, Netflix ha avviato una vera e propria rivoluzione sociale in termini di parità di genere. Esplorando i dati riguardanti la rappresentazione delle donne sul posto di lavoro, nel 2020 costituivano la metà della forza lavoro totale della società, cioè il 47,1%; in particolare le posizioni lavorative legate all'ambito manageriale, le donne direttrici rappresentavano il 47,8%, le vice presidenti il 43,7% e le leadership senior il 47,6%.

Inoltre, Netflix offre ai suoi dipendenti stipendiati, di qualsiasi sesso, un congedo parentale illimitato e pagato; la politica aziendale si applica al primo anno dopo la nascita o l'adozione di un bambino.

In conclusione, è dunque possibile constatare attraverso la presente analisi sul ruolo delle donne nella cinematografia europea, una maggiore consapevolezza del problema della disuguaglianza di genere. Si registra un graduale cambiamento in atto per una maggiore apertura del settore alle professionalità femminili è attualmente in atto, nonostante il contesto sia ancora oggi dominato dalla componente maschile.

Pertanto, per poter apportare un cambiamento radicale nell'industria cinematografica italiana, sarebbe necessario adottare una filosofia lavorativa simile a quella proposta da Netflix, seguita dall'istituzione di più programmi e fondi a sostegno della realizzazione di opere dirette da donne, specialmente per i film d'esordio.

In tal modo, più donne sarebbero incoraggiate ad entrare nell'industria cinematografica e a perseguire una carriera ricoprendo ruoli di leadership, andando ad abbattere la segregazione di genere presente nel cinema Italiano.