Prop Sourcing in Europe

The Significance of Prop Hire Companies to Film Industry Productions and Professionals

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Master’s Thesis for Master of Arts

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Content

Acknowledgments 1
Abstract 2

1 Introduction 4
   1.1 Thesis Topic 4
   1.2 Research Questions and Hypotheses 5
   1.3 Personal Background on the Topic 6
   1.4 Previous Research on the Topic 7
   1.5 Importance of Study 8
   1.6 Limitations of Research 9
   1.7 Thesis Structure 10

2 Background 12
   2.1 Definition of Terms 12
   2.2 Western Film and Television Industry 14
   2.3 Finnish Film and Television Industry 20
   2.4 Production Design and the Art Department 23
   2.5 Prop Sourcing 26
   2.6 Specialist Hire Companies: Defining the Research Scope 28

3 Methodology 32
   3.1 Material collection methods 32
      3.1.1 Literature Review 33
      3.1.2 Online Research Methods 34
      3.1.3 Internet Surveys 36
      3.1.4 Qualitative Interviews 37
   3.2 Analysis methods 43
   3.3 Achieving validity 45

4 Prop Hire Companies: Context 48
   4.1 A Prop Hire Company 48
   4.2 Prop Hire Companies around Europe 52
   4.3 United Kingdom and Finland: Narrowing Down the Research Scope 55
5 Case Study: United Kingdom

5.1 Prop Hire Companies  
5.2 How Prop Hire Companies Affect Productions
  5.2.1 Art Department  
  5.2.2 Economy  
  5.2.3 Sustainability  
5.3. What if there were no prop hire companies?

6 Case Study: Finland

6.1 Prop Sourcing Without Prop Hire Companies
  6.1.1 Art Department  
  6.1.2 Economy  
  6.1.3 Sustainability  
6.2 Yleisradio

7 Discussion

7.1 Comparative Analysis of the Case Studies  
7.2 Why do costume hire companies make it but prop hires do not?  
7.3 How would a prop hire company affect Finnish productions?  
7.4 Future Research Proposals

8 Conclusion

Appendices

Personal Archive and Bibliography
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ABSTRACT

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Props are used in film industry productions to help visualise the story. Because almost all sets require some types of objects, and everything that appears on screen or on stage obtains meaning, the props should be sourced by professionals. Props can be sourced by either custom making, purchasing, borrowing or hiring them. The purpose of this study is to investigate prop sourcing practices around Europe and to contemplate the significance of prop hire companies to various productions and art department professionals.

In order to understand the similarities and differences between filmmaking practices in Europe, this study includes a review of the history and development of western film industries. To broaden the knowledge about prop sourcing practices, the study presents several views and experiences of film industry professionals collected with qualitative research methods. Through evaluation and comparison of the collected research material, a comprehension of the common filmmaking and prop sourcing practices in Europe is achieved. The practices of individual countries can then be compared with this standard.

In many European countries specialist hire companies offer large collections of props for the use of film industry productions. This thesis includes two case studies in order to understand how prop hire companies function and affect film industry productions. One examines the United Kingdom, where art department professionals have access to several specialised prop hire companies. The other investigates how props are sourced in Finland, where no commercial prop hire currently exists.

This study offers preliminary information regarding the common prop sourcing practices, and significance of prop hire companies to productions and art department professionals in Europe, as this topic has not been researched before. The study considers potential benefits and challenges of various prop sourcing methods and hire businesses for film industry productions and professionals, as well as for the environment. The research findings indicate that art department professionals regard prop hire companies as an essential part of the industry and hiring props to benefit productions economically, ecologically and visually.

Keywords  props, prop sourcing, prop hire, film industry, qualitative research, production design, film design, Europe, art department
Elokuva-alan tuotannoissa rekvisiittaa käytetään apuna visualisoimaan tarinaa. Lähes kaikki lavasteet tarvitsevat jonkinlaista rekvisiittaa. Rekvisiitan valinta tulee suorittaa ammattitaidolla, koska jokainen kuvaruudulla tai näyttämöllä näkyvä esine muuttuu merkitykselliseksi. Rekvisiittaa voidaan hankkia valmistamalla, ostamalla, lainaamaan tai vuokraamaan. Tämän tutkielman tarkoituksena on tarkastella rekvisiitin eri hankintatapoja käyttöä Euroopassa sekä selvittää rekvisiittavuokraamojen merkitystä erilaisille tuotannoille ja niiden taiteellisten osastojen (art department) ammattilaisille.


Useissa Euroopan maissa erikoistuneet vuokrausyritykset tarjoavat suuria kokoelmia rekvisiititutkielman esitteeltä tarkastellen Iso-Britannian elokuva-alaa, jossa taiteellisen osaston ammattilaisilla on käytettävissä useita kymmeniä rekvisiittavuokraamoja. Toinen tapaus tutkii rekvisiitin hankintaa Suomessa, jossa ei tällä hetkellä toimia arvioidaan kaupallista rekvisiittavuokraamoja.

Tämä tutkielma tarjoaa alustavaa tietoa Euroopan yleisesti käytettävistä rekvisiitin hankintatavoista sekä rekvisiittavuokraamoon merkityksestä elokuva-alan tuotannoille ja ammattilaisille, sillä aihetta ei ole tutkittu aiemmin. Tutkielma tarkastaa sekä rekvisiitin hankintatumenemeljen että vuokraamotoiminnan mahdollisia hyötyjä ja haasteita niin elokuva-alan tuotannoille ja ammattilaisille kuin esimerkiksi ympäristölle. Tutkimustuloksista selvää, että taiteellisen osaston ammattilaiset ajattelevat rekvisiittavuokraamojen olevan keskeisiä alan toiminnalle ja rekvisiititutkielman vyöhykytävän tuotantoja niin ekonomisesti, ekologisesti kuin visuaalisesti.

Avainsanat rekvisiitta, rekvisiitin hankinta, rekvisiittavuokraamo, elokuva-ala, kvalitatiivinen tutkimus, Eurooppa, art department
1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter defines the frame of research for this study and introduces the topic of the study and research questions to the reader. In order to set this study into context, previous research on the topic carried out by other scholars is discussed and the personal background of the author in relation to the research is presented. Furthermore, this chapter discusses the limitations on the research and the importance of this study to the field. Additionally, this chapter will introduce the structure of the entire study to the reader.

The following first section introduces the research topic and aims of the study.

1.1 Thesis Topic

Set design is an integral part of every film production, as each scene needs a set; a space for the actors or presenters to perform in. Usually a flat background is insufficient, as the script requires specific atmosphere, era and place to be conveyed on screen. A visual look is achieved by layering the set with appropriate items for the story. The process of selecting and placing objects to a set is known as ‘dressing’ the space. Items in a set are called ‘props’ and they serve different purposes depending on their use and placement. For example, props can make sets visually appear more appropriate for the story, as well as develop the narrative through interaction with actors. Sourcing the right props is crucial in order to establish an appropriate and authentic atmosphere in each scene. It is well known that props appearing on screen cannot be chosen or arranged arbitrarily, because everything visible on screen carries meaning, whether it was designed to do so or not. This has been noted by scholars, such as Barnwell (2004), discussing how each set conveys huge amounts of information in just a few frames of film about where the characters live, their wealth, occupation and leisure activities, as well as their dreams and desires for the future. The props, their composition and the way each set is dressed are essential for establishing place and character and should therefore be carefully planned in advance (Barnwell 2004, p. 27).

The purpose of this study is to explore the common prop sourcing methods and the significance of prop hire companies to film industry productions and other professionals, specifically within Europe. Props can be sourced in four different ways. They can be custom made, purchased, borrowed or hired. Through observation in the workplace, hiring a large quantity of props from a specialist prop hire company can be regarded as a popular prop sourcing practice when such service is available. This study will take a closer look at how prop hire companies operate and investigate the extent in which they are utilised in different European countries. As there are different types of prop hire companies that service the film industry, the ones included in this research are defined in section 2.6.
This study aims to achieve an overall outlook on how film industry art departments across Europe function and how Finnish practices might differ from them. From my experience working in British art departments, prop sourcing is a structured process and utilises prop hire companies to great extent. However, working in Finnish film and television productions, I have observed that sourcing props is time-consuming and demanding for the art department professionals. Unlike many other European countries, Finland has no commercial prop hire companies to source props from. This is notable specifically because several countries with similar-sized film industries do have such hire companies and this difference in prop sourcing practices between Finland and other European countries caught my interest. In addition, I observed that the art departments in Finnish film industry productions do not adhere to the European standard structure. In order to further the knowledge of prop sourcing practices within the field, I decided to investigate these topics further in this study.

With this thesis, I strive to bring to light various first-hand experiences from professionals working in film industry art departments and prop hire companies in order to identify standard practices for prop sourcing within Europe. The study presents material collected from the field through qualitative methods. Survey and interview instruments were utilised to gain information about the personal experiences of various film industry professionals. Through analysis and comparison of the collected data, the study aims to gain a better understanding of the effects a prop hire company can have on film industry practices and especially on prop sourcing methods. The practices of Finland and the United Kingdom are studied in detail as case studies, as I had to make use of my existing industry contacts within the time constraints of this study. Less of a fine-grained approach is taken to survey other European countries. The scope of countries included into the research is further outlined in section 4.3.

In the next section the research questions are set out and hypotheses are made about the research findings.

1.2 Research Questions and Hypotheses

Through research into prop sourcing methods around Europe I aim to answer the following questions:

1. How are props commonly sourced?
2. Where are props usually sourced from?
3. Who does the prop sourcing in a film industry production?
4. What happens to props after a production ends?
5. Is hiring items an ecologically sustainable practice?

This study aims to uncover current film industry art department practices specifically regarding prop sourcing. When researching prop sourcing practices around Europe, I am particularly interested in finding out how a prop hire company, or lack thereof, affects various film industry productions and art department professionals. Regarding countries that have prop hire companies, I intend to gain a better understanding of the significance of these businesses to the film industry and how one might affect the other. Additionally, I aim to understand how prop hire companies typically function; who uses their services and whether their location, either geographically or in relation to large production centres, influences the business structure.
In order to understand the differences of prop sourcing practices in Europe, this study includes two case studies. One focuses on the British film industry and explores in great detail the significance of prop hire companies to various productions and art department professionals. The other focuses on the Finnish film industry and how the art department professionals source props without access to a commercial prop hire company. Having worked in both case study countries, I have knowledge of their art department practices, as well as an understanding on how they differ from each other. Based on this personal experience, I hypothesise that the Finnish film industry would benefit from employing some of the practices commonly utilised by the more structured film industries around Europe. To seek validation for my hypothesis, I am to uncover views from other art department professionals to formulate a comprehensive description about the current requirements, resources and limitations of Finnish productions. Furthermore, I will analyse the collected research material in order to synthesise scenarios regarding the future of the Finnish film industry prop sourcing practices.

The following section discusses the personal background of the author in regard to the research and explains why the topic of prop sourcing was selected for the study.

1.3 Personal Background on the Topic
This thesis is written as an academic work, but the research is strongly grounded in the field and its current practices. The research approach of this study is practice-led, and I am writing this thesis from the point of view of a practitioner researcher. The selections of prop sourcing practices and prop hire companies in Europe as the topic for this study stems from my personal experiences working in the field. I have personal experiences working in film industry art departments in both Finland and the United Kingdom, which have influenced the selection of my research topic and its scope. To support my academic research, I have a Bachelor of Arts degree in TV and Film Set Design from University of South Wales and I am completing my Master of Arts degree in Production Design at Aalto University with the submission of this thesis.

The differences I observed between Finnish and British art department and prop sourcing practices made me inquisitive about the overall practices in Europe and how the Finnish and British practices fit into this context. Based on my experience, it is standard practice in the United Kingdom to source a large quantity of props by hiring them from various prop hire companies. These companies are an integral part of the film industry and essential for the everyday work of various art department professionals, as petty cash buyer Georgia Reece (2019) describes. However, this is not the case in Finland, since there are no prop hire companies in the country. Instead props are usually bought or borrowed from various shops and individuals. Due to these variations, this study aims to uncover the common prop sourcing practices in Europe and analyse how similar or different the practices of Finland and the United Kingdom are from the European standard.
1.4 Previous Research on the Topic

This section introduces previous research done by other scholars on the topic of props in order to set this study into academic context.

Neither European prop sourcing practices nor prop hire companies have been studied in depth before and little text is currently available regarding them. Some research touches on the subject of props but focuses on other aspects than their sourcing practices. For example, the work of scenographers and prop masters in general has been the focus of other researchers. Additionally, the meaning of props as objects and on stage setting has been researched previously. Some of these studies are briefly presented here.

Reija Hirvikoski’s (2005) doctoral thesis Where there’s a Will there’s a Way explores the artistic process of a scenographer. Her main claim is that scenography is always a directional solution and her thesis has particular emphasis on the collaboration between a director and a scenographer. According to Hirvikoski (2005) the purpose of her study is to increase the self-awareness of scenographers and to understand the most important aspects of the work. Hirvikoski and other researchers have explored these philosophical aspects of what it is to be scenographer or a production designer in depth. Although not directly related to the topic of props, previous research into the general practices of how art departments function provides a backdrop to more specific areas of study, such as prop sourcing practices in this thesis.

The meaning of props has been researched by scholars, such as Keski-Hakuni (2013) and Sprengler (2009). Pipsa Keski-Hakuni (2013) studies the meaning of props on stage in her master’s thesis The Role of Props within the performing Arts. The theoretical framework for her study is semiotics. She explores how props on stage represent a sign, produce meaning, and are involved in semiosis. Her research results suggest that objects on stage are not only significant to the performers, but also to other practitioners and spectators alike. Christine Sprengler (2009) also discusses how props generate meaning in her book Screening Nostalgia. In addition, she analyses how design history can influence the selection of props and uses a classic American car as an example of how an object might manifest history and meaning. Sprengler (2009) states that despite a prop being only one component in the visual storytelling of a film, together with other cinematic strategies they can serve distinct narrative ends and communicate place or period. As this research into the meaning of props by other researches, such as Keski-Hakuni and Sprengler, already exists, this thesis focuses on discovering the various ways the props are sourced in order to appear on stage or screen.

In her University of Applied Sciences thesis Description of property master’s job in TV-seria, Katri Nokkala (2008) explores the job responsibilities of a property master in Finnish television productions, taking her research to a more practical level. The research is based on her personal experiences working in the field and offers descriptions from the preproduction stage through to the finished production. Nokkala describes in detail the differences between location and studio-based productions from the point of view of a prop master. Her thesis focuses on describing the practical aspects of the everyday job of a prop master. This study will expand on her research by including descriptions of the jobs of multiple other art department professionals and their involvement with props in various productions. Nokkala’s thesis has a specific subtopic regarding prop sourcing, in which she describes how a prop master sources

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1 Original title Tahdon Tiellä (Hirvikoski 2005)
2 Original title Rekvisitöörin työkuva TV-sarjassa (Nokkala 2008)
props by either borrowing, hiring, buying or making them. These four sourcing methods will be discussed further in section 2.5 of this thesis. Moreover, the four prop sourcing methods will be analysed in closer detail and within a European context in order to achieve an overall understanding of the common practices in the area.

The following section discusses the importance of this study to the field and how it contributes to current knowledge on the topic of prop sourcing in Europe.

1.5 Importance of Study

This study presents preliminary research conducted into how props are sourced in different European countries. Despite many books about film industry and art departments describing prop sourcing methods in general, I was unable to find literature analysing the extent in which these practices are used around Europe. In order to speculate on the convenience of the prop sourcing practices currently used in Finland, I think it important to research the current standard of the same practices across Europe. I hypothesise that by comparing the Finnish standards to the rest of Europe, possible differences can be identified, and the collected data can be utilised to produce further hypotheses regarding the development of prop sourcing practices in Finland. Additionally, this study investigates the role of prop hires as a supplier of items and how these companies influence prop sourcing practices.

This study aims to provide the Finnish film industry with a description of common prop sourcing practices in Europe and an analysis on how the Finnish practices differ from the standard. This study is published in 2019 by Aalto University in Finland and will be available to the visitors of the university library and online database. This thesis will most likely be read by students of the Department of Design for Film, Television and Scenography, and it is mostly related to the interests of the production design major degree students. Additionally, this thesis might appeal to those film industry professionals interested in the various prop sourcing methods, European art departments and prop hire companies. In order to provide as much context and information to the readers as possible, this study includes a generous description of the history of western filmmaking and the structure of the average European art department, detailed terminology explanations and case studies investigating the current prop sourcing practices.

By providing this research for the film industry professionals, I hope to contribute my knowledge about the subject to the field and draw attention to how the Finnish film industry differs from the rest of Europe, specifically in terms of art department structure and prop sourcing methods. Based on my experience, prop sourcing in Finland is time-consuming and laborious compared to other film industries in Europe. I theorise that it might be difficult for art department professionals to realise this if they have not worked in other countries. As this study will be targeting the Finnish film industry specifically, a case study about the Finnish practices is included. Another case study regarding the United Kingdom provides an insight into a bigger, more structured film industry and its prop sourcing practices. As the industries vary in size, the research findings of these two case studies are not directly comparable. Instead they offer the readers two descriptions regarding prop sourcing practices and specifically the role of prop hire companies for the industry.

In the next section the limitations of this study and how they affect the research process are discussed.
1.6 Limitations of Research

The research was guided into a practice-led approach due to little previous material having been published regarding prop sourcing and prop hire companies in Europe, as established in the previous section 1.5. The decision to focus on the point of view of the film industry was made early on to frame and contextualise the research. I collected material directly from various practitioners working in the field of film and television in order to gain an understanding on the nature of the common practices. However, the circumstances in which practice-led research is undertaken can place limitations on it and these limitations need to be taken into consideration when evaluating the validity and applicability of the research findings. This section discusses the limitations of this particular study.

The first research limitation was language. Although fluent in Finnish and English, as well as having decent understanding of Swedish, language skills proved a limitation when I researched some European countries. English, despite being the lingua franca, is not as commonly used in central and southern Europe as it is in the northern countries. For example, TV shows are usually dubbed into the local language instead of using subtitles and many websites are only available in the local language. I consulted various colleagues who are fluent in different European languages, such as Hungarian and Danish, in order to uncover relevant information about various European countries for my research. Additionally, I utilised online translation software in certain cases. The limitations of language while undertaking online research are discussed further in section 3.1.2.

The second limitation was time. The research for this study was completed in approximately 18 months. Within this time it was not practical, given the resources, to research the prop sourcing practices of every European country in depth. Therefore, two were selected as larger case studies while a few additional ones were researched less thoroughly. In addition to Finland, the countries researched in this study include the United Kingdom, Denmark, Czech Republic, Greece and Italy in order to provide examples from different parts of Europe. More time would have allowed for more countries to be included into the research and more film industry professionals could have been consulted. Arranging interviews to suit the schedules of both the interviewer and interviewees proved to be a challenge for this study and, thus, occasionally, email correspondence had to be utilised instead. Being able to collect first-hand testimonies around Europe would provide the research with a more diverse and detailed analysis, as an individual can provide unique information not available from other sources. For example, some prop hire companies do not have websites and are therefore difficult to find through online research alone. Access to this type of additional information could offer further validation to the research findings.

The third limitation was scope of area. The research was first limited to Europe as this provides the most appropriate geographical and cultural context to set the Finnish film industry in. Prop sourcing practices worldwide, for example in Hollywood or Bollywood, are not discussed in this study due to significant cultural and industry size differences with Finland. By limiting the scope of research to the geographic area of Europe, the film industries included in this research are more comparable. Nevertheless, it is recognised that occasionally the European practices have to accommodate the needs of the larger scale international guest productions as well.
The fourth limitation regards the type of prop hire companies researched in this study. Due to the other limitations, the specific prop hire companies to be researched had to be defined, as there are different types of hire companies offering their services to the film industry. The various types of prop hires and the included scope will be discussed in section 2.6.

Due to the limitations stated in this section, the amount of research material to analyse was limited. The research findings are, for the most part, based on information available in either English or Finnish. Literature, online articles and first-hand testimonials of film industry professionals were utilised as material sources. I was inclined to consult with people I could easily contact when researching various European countries. This influenced the selection of countries that were studied in more detail. Regardless, I was able to include a varied selection of countries from Europe for analysis in order to gain an overall understanding of the common prop sourcing practices in the area.

The following section will introduce the contents of each chapter and outline how this thesis is structured.

1.7 Thesis Structure

Through research into European prop sourcing practices this study aims to uncover how prop hires, or lack thereof, affect productions and the work of art department professionals. The discussion is divided into eight parts, each of which focuses upon a different aspect relevant to the study. The starting points for the research and the aims of this study are presented in the Introduction chapter. Each study will be set into context with explanation of the terminology in the ‘Background’ section. Research material collection and analysis methods are explained in the ‘Methodology’ chapter. This is followed by a closer examination of what a prop hire company is and how they function in chapter 4: ‘Prop Hire: Context’. Two case study chapters follow this. Chapter 5 introduces the case study into the film industry and art departments of the United Kingdom. This is followed by a case study in chapter 6 into the corresponding practices in Finland. These case study chapters will focus on introducing how prop sourcing practices affect film industry productions in the two countries. Research findings will be analysed in chapter 7: ‘Discussion’. Finally, the research questions are answered, and the study will be drawn to a close in chapter 8: ‘Conclusion’.
2 BACKGROUND

This chapter offers an overview of the development of filmmaking practices and introduces terminology used in this thesis to the reader. In order to hypothesise on the future development of the Western film and television industry, it is important to acknowledge its history and analyse the development of various practices. After defining some basic terminology, this chapter will briefly introduce the history of filmmaking in Western countries with a focus on economic developments. The British and Nordic film industries are examined in closer detail in order to provide context to the research that follows. A particular emphasis is placed on the Finnish film industry, as it is the main research topic of this thesis. In addition, this chapter discusses the role of production design and the art department as part of the filmmaking practices and investigates the different prop sourcing methods used in European productions. The last section of this chapter specifies the types of hire companies included within the research scope of this thesis.

2.1 Definition of Terms

This section acquaints the reader with terminology used throughout this thesis in order to achieve a shared understanding of the meaning of each term.

In this thesis the term film industry includes all audio-visual productions, such as feature films, documentaries, commercials, music videos and television shows, which utilise the technical and commercial institutions of filmmaking. These institutions include studios, production companies, pre- and post-production units, distribution and advertising, as well as each individual professional working in the field. For the purposes of this study, theatrical performances are also placed within the film industry context. Although these performances are not usually captured on film, they may still utilise other services that cater to the film industry, such as actors and equipment rentals. As all the aforementioned productions usually utilise props, including them within one term helps to apply the findings to the entire field without the need to specify each individual production at each stage of the research.

Properties, or props as they are more commonly referred to, are items used in film and theatre productions. According to props master Eric Hart (2013), props can be of any shape or size and, for example, musical instruments, weapons, food and furniture pieces can all be props. Props can either be manipulated by actors to guide the story forward, or they can be used to make a set appear visually more appealing. Based on these two uses, Hart classifies props into two main categories: hand props and set props. These categories also include several subcategories of props depending on their use, as discussed in the following paragraphs (Hart 2013 pp. 2–4).
**Hand props** are items handled by an actor. These are frequently mentioned in the script and help tell the story. Depending on their use, hand props can have more specific titles. **Hero props** are featured in close-up shots and require accurate detail. If hero props are not accurate to the period, setting or the story, the credibility of the film is at risk. **Background props** can have less detail, as they are not seen in close up shots. **Stunt props** are used in action scenes and require specific features. For example, they might need to break safely or be made out of a soft material while appearing sturdy. Items designed to be reassembled after breaking can also be called **breakaway props**. Hand props can also be labelled as **practical props** if they are in full working condition. Their opposites are **static props**, fake items that do not function and are only used for their visual appearance. Some productions also use **rehearsal props**, which are copies used during rehearsals to avoid damage to the real props. **Consumable props** are single-use items that get eaten, cut, torn, burned, crumbled or otherwise consumed during filming. It can sometimes be difficult to distinguish between a prop and a costume, as actors can wear eyeglasses, watches, jewellery, walking sticks, masks and guns. Such hand props are known as **costume props**, and include all items and accessories worn and handled by the actor that are not garments. Additionally, garments not worn by the actors but used as set dressing become costume props instead of costumes (ibid., p. 2–3).

**Set props** are by contrast large or unmovable objects on the set, such as furniture, rugs and light fixtures. Paintings and curtains hanging on set walls are distinguished as **trim props** and smaller objects on set are known as **set dressings**. Set props are not manipulated by the actors but create the atmosphere of the set and can add visual credibility to the feature (ibid., p. 4). A collection of antique set props can be seen from Figure 1. Similar classification of both hand and set props have been used by Millerson (1989, p. 118) and LoBrutto (2002, p. 73), indicating that these are commonly used terms for different types of props.

Figure 1: Set props (Koivurinta 2019)
2.2 Western Film and Television Industry

This section will briefly introduce the history of filmmaking in Western countries with a focus on the economic developments, as the overall history of filmmaking is already a widely researched topic (see for example: Wyver 1989; Bordwell & Thompson 2010). This section will allow for a comprehensive understanding on how different film industries have developed to the size they are today. The international analysis is limited to Western countries, as their shared historical and cultural developments are reflected in the filmmaking practices. In closer analysis are the British and Nordic film industries, as they are relevant to the case studies of this thesis. It is recognised that other continents also have rich histories of cinema and, according to UNESCO Institute of Statistics (2017), China and India currently have two of the biggest film markets in the world. However, these Asian film industries are so different culturally to the main research country of Finland that a comparative analysis would not be reasonable. Hence, they will only appear as brief mentions in this thesis.

Development of technology has guided the progress of film and television productions. According to television historian John Wyver (1989), before proper cameras and projections were invented, multiple other methods and gadgets for creating moving images were developed. Such gadgets include the magic lanterns, panoramas and the *Kinetograph*. The French brothers August and Luis Lumière were first to successfully combine a camera, a processor and a projector to create the *Cinématographe* apparatus: a portable camera device that was used to shoot one-minute long actualities. First ever public screening of films was arranged on the 28\textsuperscript{th} December 1895 by the Lumière brothers in Paris as part of their *Cinematographe Lumière* cinema tour. This event is popularly considered as the birth of cinema. Films were silent until the late-1920s and colour film appeared in the 1940s. First public television programs were broadcasted in 1934 in Germany but having a television at home did not become a worldwide norm until the 1950s. This is mostly due to all television development being closed down throughout the Second World War (1939–1945). However, by 1958 approximately 26 countries were broadcasting television programmes (Wyver 1989, pp. 5–19). Bordwell and Thompson (2010) state that the latest technological leap forward has been digitalisation. Since the 1990s, popularity of new technologies, such as digital cameras, pre-visualisation with computers, motion capture and 3-Dimensional animation, has affected the development of current filmmaking practices (Bordwell & Thompson 2010, p. 713–722).

Global film industry has been heavily influenced by American filmmaking practices for decades. Wyver (1989) explains that as the world’s economic dominance shifted away from Europe and into the United States before and during the First World War (1914–1918), so did the cinema industry. The war-depleted European film industries could not produce feature films as attractive as the American exports. Thus, Hollywood achieved dominance over the world cinema by the 1920s. Already then a small number of U.S. studios were able to organise national and international distribution, a structure that has survived for decades and even assimilated television (Wyver 1989, pp. 20–21). Studio based filmmaking transformed after the Second World War, as the budgets got tighter, and material costs increased. New portable cameras and sound equipment allowed for location-based shooting and television began establishing itself as the dominant information and entertainment medium (Ibid., p. 87). Despite the post-war downturn decades with many countries establishing national quotas and

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3 *Kinetograph* is a camera devise capable of taking sequences of photographs on celluloid film. It was patented by Thomas Edison in 1897 (Wyver 1989, p. 15).
laws to protect their own industries hitting the American film and television industry hard, the major studios prevailed (Ibid., p. 138).

Bordwell and Thompson (2010) explain that Hollywood has become increasingly more reliant on exporting films and since the 1960s about half of U.S. box-office income comes from abroad. Colour films seen from a wide screen were able to compete with black and white television until colour television started becoming available worldwide in the 1960s (Bordwell & Thompson 2010 pp. 301–302). By the 1980s television programmes became the livelihood of production companies and supported feature film making (Ibid., p. 662). When globalisation kicked into high gear in the 1980s, Hollywood’s international power created a global cinema with American films reaching nearly every country on earth (Ibid., p. 695). Major production-distribution companies have merged into global media corporations by linking with broadcast and cable TV networks since the 1980s. Nowadays feature film production cannot solely support the production companies, as blockbuster films cost over $100 million to make (Ibid., pp. 664–670).

Since the introduction of sound into films in 1927, the European film industries have fought to overcome the economic dominance of Hollywood, as Bordwell and Thompson (2010) discuss. In the early 1900s, countries such as Germany, Italy and the Soviet Union resisted Hollywood’s influence due to their political control over domestic cinemas (Bordwell & Thompson 2010, p. 258). The Second World War almost destroyed many European film industries, but the United States, having suffered fewer damages in the war, was able to assist in the reconstruction efforts. As smaller nations expanded their film industries, post-war film production worldwide became more international (Ibid., 296–297). By the 1970s, Hollywood’s own industry recovered from the post-war depression decades. This meant that the productions of other nations had to again compete with the most powerful film industry in the world. Furthermore, television, now in colour, reduced cinema audiences. In Europe this led to resources being focused on international co-productions that were funded by the involved governments, the European Union (EU, then European Community) and big media corporations (Ibid., pp. 566–567). In 1996, EU shifted its focus from funding productions to training filmmakers and expanding distribution in order to protect European markets. By 2000 EU countries made 700–1000 films annually, far more than were imported from America. Nevertheless, Western Europe remains one of the most important overseas markets for Hollywood (Ibid., p. 700). According to Harper (2019), nowadays the United States entertainment industry produces around 700 feature films and 500 television series annually and spends millions of dollars on these productions.

The UNESCO Institute of Statistics (UIS) surveys the global film industry as part of their data collection about education, science, culture and communication worldwide. In their latest Feature Film Survey published in 2017, data from 93 countries was compared and an overview of the growth of the worldwide film industry over ten years (2005–2015) was generated. The data illustrated in Figure 2 shows that almost 10,000 feature films were produced worldwide in 2015, a significant growth from 2005, when just under 6,000 features were made. Most of these films are produced in developing countries (UNESCO Institute of Statistics 2017). In addition, an interactive map on the UIS website illustrates the growth of the worldwide film industry between 1995 and 2015, as well as listing the number of feature films produced per country annually. Examples of this are included in the following section 2.3. The interactive map allows for a quick comparison between countries and provides information about the current scale of each film industry.
An interdisciplinary study completed by F&L Research (1999) reveals that on an international level the film export market is dominated by films English language features representing American culture. Their competitive advantage is English being the lingua franca around the world. In addition, films from China, India and large European countries have strong film export markets due to their strong cultural background and immigration of people. They also have large domestic markets that support the film productions financially (F&L Research 1999, pp. 57–58). According to the UNESCO Institute of Statistics (2017), the three largest film markets in the world based on annual tickets sales are China, India and the United States of America, with India producing more than a thousand feature films annually. In comparison, the 37 European countries combined produce around 2000 features annually (Statista 2018). Bordwell and Thompson (2010) stated that Europe, Asia and Latin America produce a lot more films than the United States, but few of these features are distributed outside the country of origin. In general films have a wider market worldwide if they are in English, supported by a major North American production company, and feature Hollywood stars (Bordwell & Thompson 2010, pp. 699–701).
**British Film Industry**
This subsection introduces how the filmmaking practices have developed in the United Kingdom. This provides context for the current British film industry practices discussed later in this thesis.

The United Kingdom has been involved in filmmaking since the beginning of the practices. According to Wyver (1989), the British have experimented with moving pictures since the 1880s and first studios were already established before the 1900s, shortly after the Lumière brothers brought their tour to London in 1896 (Wyver 1989, p. 21). After the First World War the British film industry consisted of small companies and Hollywood films already dominated the cinemas. In 1927 *Cinematograph Film Act* was introduced by the government, which imposed a domestic quota on distributors and exhibitors of films. However, lacking the appropriate funding and filmmaking skills, a majority of the films produced in Britain were of poor quality and proved unpopular with the audiences. The Film Act together with the emerging sound technology led to American companies to establish production deals with the British and to bring foreign investments into the industry. However, production numbers dropped drastically from over 200 features annually to less than 50 during the Second World War due to rising production costs, as well as lack of materials and skilled workers. Nevertheless, the 1940s proved to be the riches filmmaking decade thus far, raising the United Kingdom as a challenger to Hollywood’s control over international distribution (Ibid., pp. 138–142).

Bordwell and Thompson (2010) explain that, despite initially being able to compete with Hollywood in the mid-1900s, the British film industry had its challenges in finding funding. The National Film Finance Corporation (NFFC) was founded in 1949 for the purpose of loaning money to independent filmmakers. This together with a new quota on domestic films and a tax on box office receipts called the *Eady Levy* aimed to protect the British industry from American competition (Bordwell & Thompson 2010, pp. 354). However, according to Wyver (1989), the decline of the film industry steepened in the 1950s, as the popularity of television increased. The British Broadcasting Company (BBC), having started regular broadcasts in 1939, dominated television broadcasting until 1955, when an advertising-financing system was introduced in the form of a competing network Independent Television (ITV) (Wyver 1989, p. 191).

British filmmaking has been largely dependent on American funding throughout its history. Wyver (1989) explains that during the 1960s, North American production companies started financing the majority of films made in Britain. By 1968, almost 90 percent of films made in the United Kingdom were at least partly financed by American money, since it was cheaper to make films in Britain. The situation changed when the U.S. stopped financing international productions almost altogether in the 1970s, due to the recovery of Hollywood’s own industry. Even so the British film

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4 *Eady Levy*: A tax concession that allowed international film companies to write off production costs by filming in the United Kingdom. It was active from 1957 to 1985.
industry was maintained by Hollywood blockbusters, such as *Star Wars* (1977), filming in London and utilising the British filmmaking expertise (Wyver 1989, pp. 239–244). Bordwell and Thompson (2010) add that the National Film Development Fund (previously NFFC) drew funds from general revenues, ticked sale taxes and television licence fees to support film productions. In the 1980s Margaret Thatcher’s Conservative Government abolished Eady Levy and the government funding became non-existent. This led to the British markets being reliant on television productions and funding from United States for production capital (Bordwell & Thompson 2010, pp. 567–568).

According to the British Film Institute (2012), the United Kingdom remains the largest film exporter in the world after United States. British studios host major productions and British films find wide international audiences. Billions are spent on film production annually, as British features are highly rated worldwide, and they remain a key cultural export. However, a study by the British Film Institute (BFI) reveals that only 7% of the 613 films produced between 2003 and 2010 made profit (Beaumont-Thomas 2013). Nevertheless, according to UNESCO Institute of Statistics (2017), around 300 features films are produced in the United Kingdom annually, making it one of the largest film producer countries in Europe.

**Nordic Film Industries**

This subsection introduces the developments of film industries in Iceland, Norway, Denmark and Sweden. This information will be used in the later parts of this thesis to set Finland in context with countries that share a similar cultural history and filmmaking practices.

Within the European context, Iceland has a relatively small cinema industry. According to the UNESCO Institute of Statistics (2017), Iceland nowadays produces around 10–15 films annually. Soila, Södenberg Widding and Iversen (1998) discuss how Icelandic filmmaking, although having started in the early 1900s, was largely amateur before the foundation of the first national television station in 1966, which allowed filmmakers to pursue their craft on a professional level. Prior to establishing the national film fund in 1978, films made in Iceland were co-productions, mostly with other Nordic countries. Regardless of the national productions funded by the film fund gaining large audiences, Iceland remains dependant on foreign film funds. Icelandic films have adapted to distribution abroad by limiting the amount of dialogue or recording an additional English language version (Soila, Södenberg Widding and Iversen 1998, pp. 96–101). Chapman (n.d.) explains that nowadays the unique nature and a significant tax rebate make Iceland a highly popular filming location for international productions.
Film production and the cinemas are a national project in Norway that aims to maintain the local film culture. According to Soila et al. (1998), Norwegian film production started slowly with some actualities and occasional features being produced in the first decades of the 20th century. Continuous and professional filmmaking started in the 1920s, when a national movement called for domestic features rather than Swedish adaptations. As elsewhere in the Nordic countries, American export dominated the Norwegian cinemas. The smallness of domestic cinema and the large amount of foreign export lead to a unique municipal regulation of cinemas and film content. The municipal cinemas operate as local institutions with profits going back to the community. Thus, the exhibition of films does not generate production capital. In 1932 the municipal cinemas financed the establishing of Norsk film A/S production company which revitalised domestic filmmaking (Soila et al. 1998, pp. 102–113). During the Second World War German occupation led to the Germans taking total control over Norwegian film production, distribution and exhibition. After the occupation American films returned and soon dominated the cinemas. In 1948 Norsk Film A/S became a joint municipal and state system. The state support in the 1950s allowed for continuous film production, but as elsewhere, also the Norwegian film industry declined after the emergence of television. Nowadays, due to the municipal control over cinemas, Norway is able to produce half as many features as Finland, despite the two countries being similar in economic and geographical size (Ibid., pp. 120–140).

The Danish cinema has become one of the most successful in Europe. Bordwell and Thompson (2010) explain that the film industry in Denmark began with an exhibitor and founder of Copenhagen’s first cinema, Ole Olsen. His production company Nordisk Films Kompagni, founded in 1906, immediately opened distribution offices abroad, even as far as USA. The high quality and acting skills present in the films of Nordisk quickly established international popularity. The Danish film industry prospered until the First World War cut off most of its international distribution (Bordwell & Thompson 2010, p. 25). By the 1940s, the Danish cinema had regained some of its popularity partly as a result of cinema ticket tax being used to fund filmmaking. Due to the Germans occupying Denmark during the Second World War and enforcing bans on film imports, the Danish domestic filmmaking increased (Ibid., pp. 351–352). The Danish Film Institute (DFI) was established in 1972 to provide public funding for feature films that contributed to the Danish film culture. Since 1980s, the Danish filmmaking has been dependent on state funding making the film industry essentially controlled by the government. The DFI controls how many films can be produced annually and the size of their budgets. The Danish cinema’s experimentalism and high quality has achieved high domestic and international popularity. The success of Danish cinema owes to the government effectively supporting domestic film and keeping Hollywood’s influence at bay (Ibid., pp. 586–587). According to UNESCO Institute of Statistics (2017), Denmark has produced anywhere between 50 and 70 films annually during the 2010s.

In the European context, Swedish film industry is on par with Denmark, as the country produces around 50 features annually (UNESCO Institute of Statistics 2017). As discussed by Bordwell and Thompson (2010), the Swedish cinema was among the first countries to create major cinema by drawing from its local culture. However, Swedish films had little popularity abroad and, thus, lacked funding from exports. Regardless, these local qualities made Swedish cinema popular after the First World War and Sweden became recognized as one of the first major alternatives to Hollywood films (Bordwell & Thompson 2010, pp. 52–55). During the Second World War Sweden remained a neutral country but shut out all foreign propaganda film imports. This lack of competition and other war circumstances boosted the domestic industry
According to McSorley (1999), director Ingmar Bergman raised Sweden to the worldwide forefront of cinema over three decades (1950s–1970s) of his career. However, the arrival of television and increase of Hollywood releases led to a decline of filmmaking. The Swedish Film Institute (SFI) was founded in 1963 to support local filmmaking and to promote it internationally. Bergman’s retirement in 1982 led to Swedish film to redefine itself and a notable number of female directors emerged into the field. Sweden has coproduction agreements with the other Nordic countries and despite Hollywood’s large share of the screen, domestic films are still popular in Sweden (1999, pp. 27–30).

Despite the Nordic countries starting their filmmaking journeys around the beginning of the 20th century, each of them has developed differently. Bordwell and Thompson (2010) state that Denmark and Sweden had the most influential Nordic cinemas by the 1940s. The rapid recovery of Scandinavia from the Second World War also benefitted film industries and good quality films were relatively cheap to produce (Bordwell & Thompson 2010, pp. 351–352). As presented in the previous paragraphs, filmmaking is largely dependent on the state provided funding in all the Nordic countries, thus giving the state control over the cinema by the means of censorship and taxation.

The next section will look at the development of the Finnish film industry more closely, to provide perspective for the practices studied later in this thesis.

2.3 Finnish Film and Television Industry

According to a Finnish film historian Kari Uusitalo (1965), filmmaking started in Finland soon after the cinema tour of the Lumière brothers, Cinematographe Lumière, visited Helsinki in June 1896. First Finnish cinema was opened in 1904 by Karl Emil Ståhlberg, who can also be considered the initiator of filmmaking in Finland. Ståhlberg produced short documentary films about Finnish nature and news events, as well as the first Finnish fiction film Salaviinanpolttajat in 1907 (Uusitalo 1965, pp. 9–13). Toiviainen (2015) states that exploring national identity through the new media delineated the early practices, as the importance and distinction of domestic productions were highlighted during the first decades of filmmaking.

Uusitalo (1965) explains that professional filmmaking skills were honed by making experimental films, and slowly the Finnish film industry started expanding through the decades. As sound became part of film in mid-1920s, the first Finnish sound film Aatamin puvussa... ja vähän Eevankin premiered in 1931. The 1930s can be seen as a beginning for professional and organised film industry in Finland (Uusitalo 1965, p. 18–34). Toiviainen (2015) adds that when the worldwide effects of the Great Depression subsided towards the end of 1930s, the Finnish film industry grew to produce approximately 20 feature films a year. This development continued during the Second World War despite the lack of materials and labour force (Toiviainen 2015).

The Finnish film industry achieved a more stable state in the mid-1900s. According to Cowie (1990, p. 14), production numbers kept soaring after the war and in the 1950s approximately 25 features were produced annually. However, a new competitor to the film industry appeared in the mid-1950s, when first public television broadcasts took place in Finland (Bondebjerg & Bono 1996, pp. 94). Cowie (1990) states that overproduction of films during previous decades led to the decline of quality in 1960s, and the need for state funding grew significantly in all of the Nordic countries. The Finnish Film Foundation was founded in 1969 to resolve the
funding crisis, as the popularity of television led to a decline in film ticket sales (Cowie 1990, pp. 106–107). The Finnish Film Foundation supports different productions, such as feature films, short films, documentaries, animation films and television dramas. Piispa and Junttila (2013a) explain that the state funding helped the film production numbers to rise again but the number of viewers stayed low.

Piispa and Junttila (2013b) argue that the popularity of Finnish features grew with the increase in film quality and investment into marketing. According to Cowie (1990, p. 21), approximately 850 feature length films were produced in Finland by 1990. Finnish economy was boosted by the country joining the European Union (EU) in 1995, and the socio-political changes are at least partially reflected by the growth and stabilisation of the film industry. As illustrated by the UNESCO Institute of Statistics (2017) data in Figures 3 and 4, the Finnish film industry doubled its annual feature film production between 1995 and 2005, going from producing on average 8 films a year to producing around 20. These production numbers have more than doubled again between 2005 and 2015, as Figures 4 and 5 illustrate. This indicates that the film industry has become more established and stable. According to Pesonen (2017), Finnish population (5.5 million people) purchased 8.7 million cinema tickets in 2016, out of which 29% were for domestic features. This puts Finland in the top five European countries regarding the viewing of domestic films (Pesonen 2017).

According to a study by F&L Research (1999), the challenges of Finnish film industry are the smallness of the domestic market and low international demand for Finnish features (1999, p. 58). According to UNESCO Institute of Statistics (2017), Finland produces 40–50 feature films annually as illustrated by Figure 5. The Finnish film industry is divided into production, distribution and cinema companies. Together they are responsible of the full process of filmmaking, from writing scripts to distributing the finished products. F&L Research (1999) states that Finnish production companies are small with limited resources and therefore productions are often periodic and reliant on public support (1999, p. 11). They suggest that in order for the Finnish film industry to grow, production companies should merge into larger units, networking with international productions and distribution companies should be increased, production companies should plan their activities for long term instead of creating incidental features and more resourced should be invested into the script writing phase (F&L Research 1999, pp. 59–60).
Figure 3: Movie production worldwide 1995 (UNESCO Institute of Statistics 2017)

Figure 4: Movie production worldwide 2005 (UNESCO Institute of Statistics 2017)

Figure 5: Movie production worldwide 2015 (UNESCO Institute of Statistics 2017)
2.4 Production Design and the Art Department

This section introduces the function and structure of an art department in film industry productions. The responsibilities of each art department member are briefly described in order to identify individuals responsible for props and prop sourcing. This information will be relevant when prop sourcing practices are discussed in later parts of this study.

Film industry productions require the work input of many different individuals. As authors Marner (1974), Rizzo (2005) and Tomaric (2008) describe in their works, each production is usually led by a director who gathers a team of *Heads of Department* (HOD) in order to bring the vision of a script to life. A *production designer* is one such HOD and is in charge of the overall design for the film. The designer gathers together different craftsmen and artists to form an *art department*. These professionals work together to bring the vision and story of each production into reality. The size of each department depends on the budget and demands of the script; largest feature film productions can employ hundreds of people in the art department alone (Marner 1974; Rizzo 2005; Tomaric 2008). Due to the size and working processes of the different individuals, the art department is usually organised in a hierarchical manner, as illustrated in Figure 6.

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**Figure 6: Art department hierarchy (Koivurinta 2019)**

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5 *A Head of Department* is a person in charge of different film production departments. These include, for example, the cinematographer, gaffer and production designer.
Technological developments of the filmmaking equipment have affected the work of designers throughout the 20th century. According to Olson (1999), at first filming took place outdoors in order to take advantage of the free sunlight. However, constant exposure to elements proved challenging and filming soon moved inside glass-roof stages (Olson 1999, pp. 4–6). Barnwell (2004) explains that the early stationary cameras restricted the action to one set, imitating theatrical conventions. Keeping the viewer at a constant distance from the action allowed for changes in the perspective of the set construction. However, the introduction of a moving camera demanded for larger and more complex three-dimensional sets (Barnwell 2004, pp. 4–7). Olson (1999) adds that the popularity of television transformed the studio system after the Second World War. Art directors now had to work with television productions with low budgets and limited production time. Moreover, advances in both colour and sound technology meant that art directors had to adapt to the changes and use them to their advantage (Olson 1999, pp. 8–9).

The role of a production designer has also evolved throughout the history of filmmaking. Olson (1999, p. 4) explains that the first cinema designers were scenic artists from theatre, who provided basic backdrops to shoot against. Barnwell (2004, p. 7) states that the possibility of creating self-contained immersive environments attracted designers to work in film and both theatre designers and architects were hired as art directors in the early days. Wyver (1989) explains that the art director has been in charge of the visual look of the film since the beginning of organised cinema, working closely together with the cinematographer and special effects team to reach the final design. By the Hollywood studio era (1920–1950), the art director had become a key member of every production and skilled carpenters and scenic artists were employed from around the world (Wyver 1989, pp. 81–88). Olson (1999, p. 4) states that the term production designer was first used in the feature Gone with the Wind in 1939. However, according to Schrader (2016), production designers were still referred to as art directors for a few decades, until the new term gained popularity in the 1970s.

According to director and cinematographer Jason Tomaric (2008, pp. 128–129), the art department, although working as a whole and towards a visually coherent film, can be divided into smaller departments: design, set construction, scenic art, set decoration and props, hair and makeup, and costume. Terrence St. John Marner (1974) adds that practical special effects can also be considered as part of the art department, as they are often physically incorporated into the set design. These effects can include, for example, rain and smoke effects, explosions and matte paintings (Marner 1974, pp. 58–59). Computer-based special effects are usually part of the post-production department, as these effects are added to the film footage after shooting has finished. However, as film teacher and author Vincent LoBrutto (2002, p. 22) argues, the production designer needs to be aware of the visual effects that will be added to each scene in order to plan appropriate designs, for example whether to use green screen or build something for real.
In an art department, individuals have different roles and job descriptions. According to Marner (1974), LoBrutto (2002), Rizzo (2005), Tomaric (2008), Barnwell (2017) and Ackland-Snow & Laybourn (2017) the basic structure often includes the following:

**Production designers** are in charge of the overall visual look of the film and act as the head of the art department. They work closely with the director and other HODs in order to decide on all the visual elements for the film. These include concepts for interior and exterior set design, lighting, props, wardrobe and makeup. The production designer maintains the overall visual style and quality throughout the production in order for the film to appear coherent to the viewers.

**Art directors** work closely with the production designer, bringing the latter’s vision to life. They coordinate the rest of the art department crew and are involved in the selection of every aesthetic detail, from materials and colours to prop placement. The art directors work hands-on with the shooting crew and organise the flow of materials to and from the sets. Additionally, the overall budget of the art department is usually the responsibility of an art director. Art directors can have several assistant art directors performing smaller tasks, such as location surveying and model making.

**Set designers**, also known as *draftsmen*, create technical drawings to illustrate the technical elements of different sets. They oversee the construction of different sets and make modifications if asked by the production designer or director. The *construction crew* uses the technical drawings to build the sets. The construction crew can consist of carpenters, plasterers, modellers, painters, scenic artists, riggers, drapers and prop makers, depending on the needs of the production.

Some productions also employ *concept artists* to illustrate the visions of the production designer. They create artwork to visualise the mood and atmosphere of each set. Moreover, *graphic designers* can be hired to create all of the graphic elements in sets, such as posters, signs and packaging labels.

**Set decorators** are in charge of overseeing the visual elements of a set and dressing them with furnishing and props to provide context, subtext and texture to each scene. They may have a team of *set dressers* helping position, alter, update, maintain and remove props prior to filming and *on-set dressers* maintaining the appearance and continuity of each set during filming. A *greensperson* can also be necessary if the production requires a large amount of landscaping and plants.

**Prop buyers** source all props needed by hiring, buying or borrowing. They liaise with different vendors and suppliers in order to source all necessary props. They are also responsible for sourcing vehicles and animals for productions, if another member of the art department has not been specifically appointed for that job. To assist prop buyers in their job, some productions employ *petty cash buyers*. They handle smaller amount of money and purchase last minute items, construction materials and consumable props.

**Prop masters** are responsible for organising collections and returns for the props sourced by set decorators and buyers. Additionally, they help prep locations for filming and arrange for all the props to arrive to the correct set on schedule. On some productions a prop master might be responsible for the props handled by actors, as they are of immense importance to the authenticity of the film. Moreover, a specialist *weapons master* is required to look after swords, guns or any other weapons that require special licenses.
Costume designers and a make-up artists design the look of each character in the film. They often work in parallel with the production designer, ensuring the overall style of the film stays coherent. The costume department employs costumers, costume buyers and seamstresses. The make-up department includes hair stylists, as well as special effects make-up and prosthetics artists.

The hierarchical structure of the art departments and the job description of each individual have changed little over the years. For example, Marner (1974, pp. 52–59) describes the art department structure in *Film Design* in much the same way as Rizzo (2005, pp. 37–38, 51) does in *The Arts Direction Handbook for Film*, despite the books being published 31 years apart. While some of the job titles listed above have evolved and new ones have been added to accommodate the skills that have emerged with the computer-aided design, the overall structure of an art department appears to have remained since the Hollywood studio era. However, in smaller productions with fewer individuals, these titles and job descriptions might not be as accurate. As production designer Kari Kankaanpää (2019) indicates in a personal interview, the work remains the same in each production, but the tasks are divided among those present. For example, a production designer might also do the work of an art director, set designer and set decorator, but only be credited with the highest title.

The next section introduces the four methods of sourcing props in detail and discusses the importance of selecting appropriate props for each production.

### 2.5 Prop Sourcing

Each prop placed on set must be chosen with care, as props play a role in set design, the work of actors and directors, as well as in the dramaturgy of the film. Hero props can be so integral to the dramaturgy that they guide the story or reveal important information from the past. Therefore, the director and actors might want to participate in choosing the most appropriate hero prop for the story. For example, British production designer Jonathan Barry (cited in Marner 1974, p. 128) states that “[t]he importance of the set to the dramatic structure of the film is that whatever the Director wishes to say in the scene will be said in the set before it is said in the action”.

Prop serve different purposes in a production depending on their use and placement in each scene. Rishi Kaneria’s (2015) video *Why Props Matter* explains how, although being just objects, props can help tie scenes together, represent characters and ideas, provide subtext and function, be symbols for reality, illusion or time and help actors to express themselves. Sometimes a prop can even be a character in a film, for example Wilson the volleyball in *Cast Away* (2000). In addition, props can be used to send messages or to evoke feelings in the viewers. Kaneria highlights the significance of props by stating that “great props can transcend the boundaries of the films they are in and become legendary icons of cinema and pop culture” (Kaneria 2015).

The visual side of props is at the forefront in set design. Stage designer Michael Holt (1988, p. 106) states that “[g]etting the right props for a production is very important . . . If they seem incongruous or inappropriate they will cast doubt on the accuracy of your whole design”. Each set usually requires dressing props in addition to the props mentioned in the script. Marner (1974) and LoBrutto (2002) discuss that in order to achieve accuracy and credibility for a feature, each object needs to fit with the style, colour palette, genre and period of the film.
The material, shade of colour, texture and shininess of the surface are aspects that must be considered also from the lighting perspective in order to attain a coherent visual world on screen. Moreover, because each object placed on set can tell a story and reveal information, they should be appropriate to the characters (Marner 1974, pp. 127–140; LoBrutto 2002, pp. 30, 73–75).

The members of the art department will determine together who will be in charge of sourcing each prop. As discussed in the previous section 2.4, the set decoration team is responsible for sourcing most of the props. However, the production designer or art directors may take responsibility of some specific items. Props buyer Kayleigh Powell (2019) explains that the set decorator together with a props buyer consult the production designer in order to understand the requirements of each set before sourcing items. They might also be required to source vehicles or animals depending on the production (Powell 2019). Production designer Sarah Hauldren (2019) describes how the props department in turn is in charge of collecting the props from suppliers and making sure they arrive to each set in schedule. In addition, the props department takes care of storing all the props during filming, as well as organising returns when each set is dismantled (Hauldren 2019). Props master Eric Hart (2013) explains that if a prop must be specifically designed for the production, this can be carried out by the set designer or another member of the art department. If a lot of props are required to design from scratch a specific props designer can also be appointed (Hart 2013, pp. 6–7).

According to Holt (1988) and Hart (2013), there are four ways to source props for a production: making, purchasing, borrowing and hiring. Holt (1988) lists three of these ways by explaining that props can either be borrowed from an individual, hired from a specialist hire company or custom made (Holt 1988, p. 106). Hart (2013) states that “[t]hough much of set decoration is bought, rented and borrowed, many set decoration departments do employ a number of upholsterers and soft goods artisans for window treatments and floor coverings” (Hart 2013, p. 8). These two statements, made 25 years apart, indicate that the means to source props have remained practically the same throughout the decades. The following paragraphs take a closer look at each of these sourcing methods individually.

Hart (2013) indicates that if the production budget allows, all the props can be bought from various shops, collections, flea markets or online marketplaces. Buying can often be cheaper than making everything from scratch, particularly if the necessary props are considered everyday items and are easily available from most general shops. Ordering items or materials from mass production countries with lax labour laws can be cheaper than sourcing them locally, even if the items must be shipped halfway around the world (Hart 2013, p. 5).

Holt (1988) explains that some objects can also be borrowed from different individuals and shops, if such deals can be negotiated. Productions might offer free advertisement in return for borrowed items. Borrowing items means the set crew needs to be careful not to damage these items, as they might not be insured like hired props (Holt 1988, p. 106).

A prop can be custom made from scratch or an existing item can be modified if it has a special use. For example, some items might be required in a custom size to fit a specific actor. Getting miniatures or oversized versions of items from a specialist prop maker can be faster and cheaper than ordering them from a manufacturer. Moreover, in particularly stylised productions, such as sci-fi or fantasy features, all props must suit the created world and custom making them to fit the overall visual style can be more practical than modifying shop bought items (ibid., p. 106).
Many productions opt to hire a large quantity of their props, as production schedules and budgets can be tight and, thus, creating every single prop from scratch might not be feasible. Specialist *property hire companies*, or ‘prop hires’ as they are more commonly referred to, offer a large variety of items for hire. Their stock usually caters specifically for film industry productions and range from all kinds of objects to scenic elements and even costume pieces. The hire companies charge a hire fee based on the value of the items, often in weekly amounts (ibid., p. 106). In addition, as LoBrutto (2002) explains, some studio-based art departments may have their own prop storage, which houses a smaller variety of props. These are often items that have already been used in some previous production. Both hire companies and studio storages stock multiple copies of one item in case of damage, or if a key prop is needed in different locations at a same time (LoBrutto 2002, p. 50).

### 2.6 Specialist Hire Companies: Defining the Research Scope

As there are many different types of prop hire companies worldwide, this section defines the types of hire companies included and excluded from this study.

Hire companies that supply objects for film industry productions are the main focus of this thesis research. These *object prop hire companies* and how they function will be discussed in more detail in section 4.1. Four other types of hire companies are excluded from the scope of this research. Their stock can in some occasions be regarded as objects in film industry productions, but for the purposes of this study they are not regarded as such. Furthermore, it is recognised that each of the following four types of hire companies excluded from this study would be worth their own research, but such was not feasible to include into this thesis.

First, *vehicle hire companies* were excluded from the research scope. In addition to regular car rental companies, there are hire companies that specialise in providing different vehicles for the use of film industry productions. Their supply can vary from boats, planes and battle tanks to period cars and horse carriages. Despite sourcing vehicles being part of the responsibilities of a props buyer in many productions (Powell 2019), vehicles are not regarded as props in this study. Therefore, all car rentals and vehicle hire companies are excluded from this research. Moreover, in the Finnish film industry sourcing vehicles for productions is usually a responsibility of the location manager (Mikkola 2019), who usually works in the production department as opposed to the art department.

Second, *animal hire companies* that can either supply live animals or specialise in taxidermy have been excluded. Mikkola (2019) explains that live animals need specific training to work in film productions. For example, they might need to act on cue and not fear loud noises or filmmaking equipment (Mikkola 2019). Taxidermy animals can be used as carcasses or decorative items depending on the production. Regardless, all animals, be they dead or alive, are not seen as objects, and are therefore outside the research focus.

Third, *event prop hire companies* are outside of the scope of this research. These companies stock large quantities of plain and contemporary furniture. Despite supplying objects, they cater mostly to large-scale formal events, such as conferences or fairs, instead of more artistic film industry productions. Depending on the needs of the production, the film industry may occasionally utilize the services and stock of an event hire. However, despite operating similarly to a prop hire company, event hires are excluded due to the lack of aesthetic qualities in the stocked objects, as well as the film industry not being their main client.
Fourth, costume hire companies have been excluded from the study. Both costume and prop hire companies cater to the film industry and operate in a similar manner. In fact, according to Hauldren (2019), the only difference between these companies is the supplied items. Whereas a prop hire companies deal with objects, the stock of costume hire companies consists of garments and costume props, such as shoes and accessories (Hauldren 2019). Some prop hire companies may also deal in accessories, for example Farley Prop Hire in London stocks costume props such as jewellery, walking sticks, pocket watches, belts and spectacles in addition to their main stock of furniture and decorative props (Farley 2019). Costume props can be used as hand props by actors, making categorising them as either part of the costume or a separate object sometimes difficult. In addition, a jewellery store set might need 500 pieces of jewellery to sit in showcases, in which case these costume props are considered set dressing. However, it makes sense for both costume and prop hires to stock various costume props, as both costume and set design departments might have need for them. All costume hires whose main stock consists of garments are excluded from this study, but prop hire companies that have garments and costume props as a smaller part of their stock are included in the research scope.
3 METHODOLOGY

This section describes the methods that were used for collecting and analysing material in this study. Each individual method is discussed in detail to provide the reader an understanding of the research process. In addition, a section to analyse how the selected material collection and analysis methods were utilised to achieve validity for the research findings is included in this chapter.

The following section introduces the methods used to collect research material for this study and analyses how each method benefitted this research.

3.1 Material collection methods

Different sources of data were utilised to gather information about the topic of prop sourcing around Europe. It was necessary to collect research material directly from the field, since little material was available regarding the research topic of prop sourcing and prop hire companies in Europe. Mostly qualitative material collection methods were used, as the flexible structure allowed for personalised interviews and open-ended replies. The first-hand experiences and views brought forward by various art department professionals provide this thesis with valuable content.

As I hope to benefit other practitioners and to advance the knowledge regarding prop sourcing methods in Europe within the practice, the research undertaken for this study can be regarded as practice-led. As both a practitioner and researcher studying this topic, I am able to reflect upon my own experiences when analysing the data collected from the field. Furthermore, as the research findings are mainly based on the material collected directly from various practitioners, the research is based on grounded theory. The research has evolved during the material collection period, guided by the different views expressed by the consulted practitioners.

Four methods were used to collect research material for this study. Each of these methods is discussed separately in the following sections. The literature review includes descriptions and analysis of the written works consulted throughout the process of writing this thesis, excluding previous research conducted on the topic, as this was covered in section 1.4. The online research methods section describes how different websites and online databases were utilised in the study. A separate section is dedicated to describing the online survey method utilised to collect data directly from various art department professionals. The qualitative interview method used to collect material from the field is described in depth in the last section.
3.1.1 Literature Review

In this section I discuss the books that were beneficial for my research. It became evident from the beginning of my research that existing literature on the topics of prop sourcing and prop hire companies is scarce and that I would need to make use of other means of collecting material in order to gain a deeper understanding of the subject. However, I was able to discover some writing regarding filmmaking, art department and props that benefitted different aspects of my research process. These texts are presented in this section.

History and practices of worldwide filmmaking have been widely researched and documented from several angles. The framework for my research regarding the history and development of European film industries comes from Wyver’s (1989) *The Moving Image: An International History of Film, Television and Video* and Bordwell and Thompson’s (2010) *Film History: An Introduction*, as their books contain a thorough chronological description on the development of filmmaking practices around the world. They also touch on the subject of Nordic filmmaking, but I utilised Soila, Södenberg Widding and Iversen’s (1998) *Nordic National Cinemas* and Bondebjerg and Bono’s (1996) *Television in Scandinavia: History, Politics and Aesthetics* to further expand on the topic. Additionally, in order to achieve a further understanding on the history and development of Finnish filmmaking specifically, the descriptions in Uusitalo’s (1965) *Decades of Finnish Film Making* and in Cowie’s (1990) *Finnish cinema* proved useful. Furthermore, a study about *The Markets and Competitiveness of Finnish Film* conducted by F&L Research (1999) into the Finnish film market and its competitiveness proved a valuable source of data. These pieces of literature helped me to develop a coherent overall understanding of the history of European filmmaking practices and where Finland stands in this context.

An abundance of books have been written about production design, art departments and filmmaking in general and several of them were consulted to gain more information about the practices. Works such as LoBrutto’s (2002) *The Filmmaker’s Guide to Production Design* and two books by Barnwell, *Production Design: Architects of the Screen* (Barnwell 2004) and *Production Design for Screen: Visual Storytelling in Film and Television* (Barnwell 2017) provide comprehensive descriptions about how an art department functions, with topics ranging from script breakdowns, budgeting and structure to the difference between working in a studio and on location. For more detailed description about the modern art department structure I consulted Rizzo’s (2005) *The Art Direction Handbook for Film*, Tomaric’s (2008) *The Power Filmmaking Kit*, and Ackland-Snow and Laybourn’s (2017) *The Art of Illusion: Production Design for Film and Television*. These descriptions were compared to those presented by Marner (1974) in *Film Design*, Holt (1988) in *Stage Design and Properties*, Millerson (1989) in *TV Scenic Design Handbook* and Olson (1999) *Art Direction for Film and Video* in order to explore how the art department structure and practices have evolved over time. All of these books complement each other and present more or less the same content. An interesting observation regarding the works referenced in this thesis is that, despite spanning over five decades, the descriptions regarding how an art department functions are very similar across all books. From this it can be concluded that the generic structure of an art department has remained constant over the years.

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6 Original title Suomalaisen elokuvan vuosikymmenet: Johdatus kotimaisen elokuvan ja elokuva-alan historiaan 1896–1963 (Uusitalo 1965)
7 Original title Suomalaisen elokuvan markkinat ja kilpailukyky (F&L Research 1999)
The amount of written works specifically relating to props is limited. Although many of the books that discuss filmmaking and art department in general usually have a short section or paragraph about props and their sourcing methods, these topics are rarely the sole focus of a book. However, Eric Hart’s (2013) *The Prop Building Guidebook* and Eleanor Margolies’ (2016) book *Props* both revolve solely around props. Interestingly, both of these books predominantly target theatre productions, but the information they provide can equally be applied to film industry productions. Despite Hart’s (2013) work being first and foremost a comprehensive guidebook into making props, from designing and selecting materials to manufacturing, the introduction offers an extensive description regarding types of props and their different uses, as well as the various needs of theatre, film and television productions. Margolies’ (2016) book describes thoroughly how props are utilised in theatre. Her writing ranges from describing how objects and actors interact together to scenographic approaches and object theatre. However, most beneficial for this research were her descriptions regarding prop sourcing methods and the ecological aspects to consider when dealing with props.

In preparation for qualitative interview research, which was used extensively to gather material for this thesis, I consulted comprehensive works of literature on the matter. Leedy and Ormrod’s (2002) book *Practical Research: Planning and Design* provides step-by-step guidelines and examples on how to prepare, conduct and analyse both qualitative and quantitative research. This proved informative for both interview and survey method research. For further information regarding qualitative interview research, I utilised Brinkmann’s (2013) book *Qualitative Interviewing: Understanding Qualitative Research*, as well as Taylor, Bogdan and DeVault’s (2016) *Introduction to Qualitative Research Methods: A Guidebook and Resource*. Both of these works describe practices of conducting qualitative interviews from start to finish in great detail, as well as offer both practical and analytical information. In order to achieve a more detailed understanding about survey methods I consulted *Survey Research Methods* book by Fowler (2002). This provided me with information regarding different components of surveys and tools for evaluating question design and survey instrument selection. Ruusuvuori, Nikander and Hyvärinen’s (2010) book *Analysing Interview* provided further information regarding analysing interviews material. Their detailed descriptions on how to analyse each stage of the research process, as well as the collected materials, proved useful for this thesis. Furthermore, their writing provided tools for analysing data in different languages.

The following section discusses how online research methods were utilised to collect material for this study.

3.1.2 Online Research Methods

The Internet proved an important tool for researching different prop hires around Europe. From the websites of different hire companies I was able to find information about their stock, hiring practices, pricing, locations and contact details for owners. Being able to locate the websites of what I believe to be the majority of prop hire companies around Europe, I was able to gather an understanding of roughly how many prop hires operate in Europe, where they are located and what their stock consists of. Accessing this kind of information in this quantity for my research would not have been possible without the Internet and the common practice of listing businesses online. I acknowledge that not every prop hire company is listed online and

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8 Original title *Haastattelun Analyysi* (Ruusuvuori, Nikander & Hyvärinen 2010)
that I would need to find local experts from each country in order to gather information about all such companies in Europe. However, due to having a limited amount of resources from my research, I am focusing on the companies I was able to locate through online searches or conversations with different film industry professionals.

Searching for relevant information for my research topic online presented some unexpected challenges. Some of these challenges rose from using English as my main research language. First, searching for keywords such as ‘prop hire’ or ‘property hire’ online often lead to irrelevant information, as the term ‘property’ in addition to meaning film props can also mean buildings, and ‘prop’ can also be understood as a type of support. Second, when searching for prop hire companies in various countries. I started by using keywords, such as ‘prop hire France’, to try and locate prop hire companies in various European countries. The websites I was directed to, albeit prop hires, were not necessarily in the researched country, and therefore not the result I was aiming to achieve. Instead, many of the results were for prop hires in English speaking countries that supply, for example, ‘French style’ props. These inaccurate results were due to English being the language of the researched keywords, as search engine algorithms attempt to rank results in relevance to the keyword query. Moreover, using English was not efficient for some of my research, as the websites of many European prop hires are only listed in their local language.

To get around these online research challenges, I strived to find out what a prop hire company might be called in different languages. Whenever I was able to find the correct translation, I gained more accurate results in my search for European prop hires. However, it quickly became evident that not every language uses the term ‘prop hire’ when referring to this type of business. For example, the Swedish term rekvisitaförråd directly translates to ‘prop storage’ and the Italian noleggio attrezzeria scenica means ‘scenic equipment rental’. Both of these terms are close to the English term, but not exactly the same as ‘prop hire’. It was integral for the research to locate the correct term in the local language in order to discover relevant websites to research further. Instead of relying solely on online translators to find the correct translations, I utilised people with knowledge of different languages to help me find the most appropriate term and to understand the content of different websites.

Another challenge that came about after discovering various websites with the keyword search revolved around the limited language skills, which were discussed previously in section 1.6. Cross-referencing and translating the information on websites solely available in the local language was time consuming. However, this was a necessary process to undertake in order to find out whether each webpage was for a prop hire company that fitted the research scope, which was defined in section 2.6. However, undertaking the translation process allowed me to collect a broad range of information about various prop hire companies around Europe and to ensure that scope-appropriate companies were included in the study.

In addition to searching for information on the Internet, I also conducted two surveys online. The survey method used will be described in the following section.
3.1.3 Internet Surveys

As described by Leedy & Ormrod (2005), the goal of survey research is to learn about a larger population by surveying a sample of that population. In survey design, a researcher poses questions to willing participants, summarizes their answers and analyses the patterns emerging from them. The answers in a survey are self-report data, meaning respondents express what they believe to be true. It is worth noting that this can be different from what is actually factual (Leedy & Ormrod 2005, pp. 183–185). Survey research is usually used for quantitative research. However, I used a questionnaire survey instrument with qualitative questions, making it a mixed method instrument.

I conducted two Internet surveys targeting art department professionals in order to gain a broader picture on the views and experiences present in the field regarding my research topic of prop sourcing. One survey targeted Finnish film industry professionals (Appendix A) and the other those of the United Kingdom (Appendix B), as these two are the main research countries in this study. I chose to use a sample survey conducted online, as this allowed me to potentially reach a wide variety of film industry professionals from a distance. My survey instrument was a questionnaire with questions about prop sourcing, prop hire companies and personal experiences within the field. Both surveys were available online during August and September 2018, and they were posted to as many different social media groups I could find that had art department professionals as their members. Most of the questions were kept open ended, since I hoped to gain personal views of the individuals regarding the topic of prop sourcing. I also paid attention to keeping the questions as clearly worded and non-suggestive as possible in order to allow the respondents to openly express themselves.

The chosen sampling approach and mode of data collection was to reach people through social media platforms on the Internet, primarily using Facebook as a platform. As Fowler (2002, p. 74) states, potential disadvantages of using an Internet survey is that the sample is limited to those with access to Internet. Using a specific social media platform also limits the potential respondents to the users of said platform, in this case Facebook. However, nowadays the Internet is a widely used tool to network within the film industry and I believe that by utilizing social media to spread the surveys I was able to gain a larger participation than I would have with other sampling methods under the time span of two months. One advantage of social media is that it allows people to share content to their colleagues, thus potentially reaching suitable people outside the specific groups and platforms. My questionnaire was on a separate form, and the online link to it could be shared forward, for example by email, which some of my respondents indicated they had done. In addition, as explained by Fowler (2002), online surveys can be answered whenever the participant wants to, providing time for thoughtful answers and the possibility to check sources or to consult with others before submitting the final replies. Online surveys are also fast and cost-effective, as no mail addresses, printed forms or postage costs are required. The answers become instantly available after the respondent has submitted them and the data is automatically stored by the survey platform (Fowler 2002, pp. 69–70, 74). I considered the advantages to outweigh the disadvantages of online surveys when choosing a survey method for my preliminary data collection process. All answers were analysed anonymously during this study and the respondents are referred to as ‘Designer’, follow by a number distinguishing them from each other.
The sample frame for my surveys was the art department professionals working on film industry productions in Finland and the United Kingdom. According to Fowler (2002, p. 5) “[t]he keys to good sampling are finding a way to give all (or nearly all) population members the same (or a known) chance of being selected, and to use probability methods for choosing a sample”. The sample itself consisted of those professionals who had access to internet, were part of the social media groups the surveys were posted in, and due to social media algorithms dictating what content is seen, to those who found the surveys on their feeds and decided to participate. I received 29 replies to the survey targeting Finnish professionals and 12 to the one targeting British professionals. Each respondent has voluntarily provided their views on the matter of prop sourcing, and each respondent is part of the final survey sample. It is unclear how large percentage this sample is of the total number of people associated with prop sourcing and working in art departments in each surveyed country. However, I consider this to be a decent amount of replies considering the participants have first-hand knowledge and expertise working in various productions and roles in the field. The responses allowed me to formulate a better understanding of the views and practices in both Finnish and British industries, while also reflecting on my own experiences.

The information I hoped to gain with the surveys required for expression of individual’s thoughts on a specific subject, prop sourcing. Personal views and thoughts are difficult to gain and analyse with closed questions, so to allow for people to express their thoughts freely, I used for the most part open questions in the questionnaires. Fowler (2002) lists the advantages of open questions: “They permit the researcher to obtain answers that were unanticipated. They also may describe more closely the real views of respondents. Third, and this is not a trivial point, respondents like the opportunity to answer some questions in their own words” (Fowler 2002, p. 91). I aimed to word each of my questions clearly to receive answers about specific topics and to avoid misunderstandings. Several of the replies I received were detailed and some brought forward interesting views that I was not expecting. Nevertheless, all collected information was beneficial for the research process.

The next section discusses the qualitative interview methods utilised to collect the majority of research material for this study.

3.1.4 Qualitative Interviews

It was clear from the beginning of my research process that conducting qualitative interviews and documenting oral histories would be a necessary method to collect material for my research. As discussed previously in section 3.1.1, the lack of literature on the specific subject of prop sourcing in Europe is scarce, guiding me to search for information through other methods. Using interview as a research instrument allowed me to access information not available elsewhere. I was able to collect experience-based data from a number of different individuals regarding prop sourcing.

The primary sources of data for my research were prop hire representatives and art department professionals working in European countries, mainly in Finland and the United Kingdom. As the quality of answers, rather than their quantity, was more interesting to my study, I chose to interview several people face-to-face. Each interviewee was chosen based on their experiences working in film industries and sourcing props, unique expertise in their fields, as well as availability and willingness to participate. Each interviewee signed a consent form prior to
being interviewed, to allow for audio recording and the use of the collected material for the purposes of this study.

I conducted twelve face-to-face qualitative interviews with art department and prop hire professionals to gather more in-depth information about the research topic. Three interviews were with Finnish film industry professionals and regarded the Finnish practices of prop sourcing. I was able to arrange a research trip to the United Kingdom, during which I interviewed seven professionals. Out of the seven interviews, four were with different art department professionals and three with prop hire representatives. In addition to these, I conducted two interviews with professionals representing Greece and Italy respectively. Furthermore, I was in email correspondence with six professionals currently working in various European countries to gather more views on European art department and film industry practices.

Each interview was conducted and analysed in the same way. The interviews were held in Finland during February and April 2019 and in the United Kingdom during June and July 2019. These unpublished personal interviews were conducted respectively in Finnish and English to allow for the interviewees to express themselves to full extent of their linguistic skills. Finnish testimonies have been translated into English when quoted in this thesis with original quotations as footnotes. I collected audio recordings of each interview and opted to transcribe them myself. I transcribed the recordings as soon as possible after each interview, while I could still recall the hand gestures and body language the interviewees used. Doing the work personally allowed me to already start analysing the interactions and testimonies while transcribing, and to note down different topics the interviewees had brought forward. In addition, I took handwritten notes of some of the mentions and views already during the interviews, in order to research them further or ask additional questions about them. All collected material is stored in my personal archive.

When choosing the most appropriate interview structure for my study, I evaluated unstructured, structured and semi-structured interview models. I felt that an unstructured interview could not guarantee reaching the type of answers I hoped to gain from the interviews. According to Brinkmann (2013, p. 20), unstructured interviews function best for recording life stories where the interviewer only presents the discussion topics and the interviewee provides the narrative. Because I was after answers to specific questions, I felt that an unstructured interview would have risked some topics being ignored completely. In addition, it would have been unnecessary to record the entire life histories of the interviewees for my research, since I was only interested in their experiences regarding prop sourcing. On the other hand, a structured interview format was also unsuitable for my research. Having the same, standardised questions for each interviewee, would not have allowed me to gain the variety of answers from different fields of expertise. In addition, as stated by Brinkmann: “Although structured interviews are useful for some purposes, they do not take advantage of the dialogical potentials for knowledge production that are inherent in human conversations” (2013, p. 20). Since I was interested in the personal experiences of the interviewees, I wanted to be able to be an active participant rather than passive questioner during the interview.

I opted for semi-structured, face-to-face interviews, as the flexibility of this structure allowed me to adapt to each interviewee and their expertise. I drafted a set of guideline questions for myself, which I customised for each interviewee prior to the interview in order to take full advantage of the specific expertise of each individual. The semi-structured style allowed me to make changes to the questions during the interview when necessary, probe for more detailed
answers if the interviewee did not quite understand the question or talked about another subject, and to ask follow-up questions from the topics raised by the interviewees. These advantages of semi-structured, face-to-face interviews are also noted by Leedy and Ormrod (2005, p. 185), as well as Brinkmann (2013, pp. 21–25).

Ruusuvuori, Nikader and Hyvärinen (2010, pp. 378–379) discuss that the case study research and analysis processes are interlinked, as preliminary evaluation of the material is already conducted during its collection and the design of each interview question reflects previous research and achieved knowledge. In addition, careful preparation for each interview allows the researcher to focus on topics that have yet to be fully covered by previous research and knowledge of the discussed topic grounds the expertise of the interviewer (Ruusuvuori et al. 2010, pp. 378–379). This can be observed during the design of the interview instrument, as each personal interview is tailored to the individual interviewee based on their expertise and experiences. I prepared around 20–25 questions for each interview to make certain all necessary aspects for my study would be covered during the interview. Since I already had the survey data, I was able to base some of my interview questions on those answers. The amount of questions and different responding styles of each interviewee made the interviews last from one to two hours on average. Despite personalising each interview, several of the questions remained the same or similar from interview to interview. This in addition to all questions revolving around the different methods and experiences with prop sourcing meant that the answers remained similar enough for me to make comparisons and draw conclusions from the data.

Following is a list of each individual interviewed for my research. A short introduction of each interviewee describes their field of expertise and connection to the film industry. Interviewees are presented in alphabetical order by family name.

Siân Bundy
Siân Bundy is the owner of Celtic Prop Hire. The company was established in 1999 and is located in Cardiff, Wales. The hire company is all inclusive, meaning it caters for film, television and theatre productions as well as for schools, events and private parties within the United Kingdom. The company stocks all kinds of props from large furniture pieces to small decorative objects in order to provide options for their wide variety of clients. Siân provided this research with detailed descriptions on how a prop hire company functions and its role within a film industry.

Grazia Colombini
Italian costume designer Grazia Colombini held a lecture in February 2019 in Aalto University, after which I had an opportunity to conduct a group interview with her regarding her work as a costume designer in the Italian film industry. Grazia has worked in the film industry for over thirty years. In addition to providing interesting insights into costume designing, she also shared her experiences regarding the Italian practices of hiring props and costumes from specialist hire companies.

Sarah Hauldren
Production designer Sarah Hauldren shared her experiences of working in various art departments in the United Kingdom from the point of view of a designer and art director. Sarah has been working in various feature films, commercials, television dramas and animation projects in the United Kingdom since 1991. She discussed in depth the jobs of various art department professionals, as well as prop sourcing practices and the significance of prop hire companies to the British film industry.
Kari Kankaanpää
I had the opportunity to consult production designer Kari Kankaanpää twice. First during a lecture he held at Aalto University in spring 2019 and later in a personal interview at his workplace Sankariliiga. Kari has twelve years of experience working in various productions in several countries including Finland, Norway, Spain, United Kingdom, New Zealand and the Baltic countries. He provided the research with interesting comparisons between Finnish art department practices and international ones, as well as offered his views regarding how a potential Finnish prop hire could function.

Lynn McFarlane
Lynn McFarlane owns a prop and scenery recycling company DRESD, which offers full recycling services for set constructions from dismantling them to recycling materials and props. Additionally, DRESD has a film studio and a large collection of recycled props and scenery elements for hire. The company has existed for six years and is currently situated in South Wales. Although the company offers United Kingdom wide services, Lynn has plans to expand her business to additional locations in order to cut down on transport emissions. DRESD also caters their services for events and interior design and deals solely in reclaimed and repurposed materials. Lynn was able to provide interesting views on the ecological side of filmmaking and how the industry could be improved towards sustainable practices.

Raimo Mikkola
Now retired location manager and producer Raimo Mikkola invited me to his home to conduct an oral history interview about his career and experiences working in the Finnish film industry. Raimo worked in the industry for over fifty years, having started from a location manager’s position and working his way up to eventually become a producer. Raimo’s expertise revolves around the prop house of YLE Tampere, the stock of which he has collected from the beginning himself. Raimo talked openly about his experiences and reminisced about past productions. His insight into the history of Finnish filmmaking provided an understanding on the developments of art departments and prop sourcing in the country.

Jeremy Moorshead
Jeremy ‘Jem’ Moorshead is in charge of the prop hire department of a larger set manufacturing, storage and recycling company Scenery Salvage. The company was founded 25 years ago, and the prop hire aspect was established ten years ago. The prop hire is located just outside London, and in close proximity to some of the larger film studios. Jem has worked in the prop hire department for the last four years, having previously worked in the recycling department. He is currently the only person working in the prop hire, and in charge of all the items and hire contracts. All props available from Scenery Salvage have been discarded by various productions and recovered from the recycling yard to be offered back to the industry for reuse.

Sofia Pantouvaki
I conducted a personal interview with Aalto University Professor Sofia Pantouvaki regarding prop sourcing practices in her home country of Greece. Her background as a costume designer and scenographer includes over 75 designs for various productions. Her personal experiences, as well as having first-hand knowledge on how props are sourced in Greece, provided this thesis with an interesting viewpoint into how recycling and reusing items in general can affect film industry and prop sourcing methods.
**Marita Pirttimaa**

I conducted an interview with Marita Pirttimaa, head of YLE Pasila prop house and expert prop master, in the Finnish national broadcasting company Yleisradio (YLE) premises in Helsinki. Marita has a background in artisan crafts and over thirty years of experience working in YLE. She is currently solely in charge of handling all prop rentals to non-YLE productions. Marita was able to explain the current situation YLE has with props in general and the future plans for the prop hire service development.

**Kayleigh Powell**

Kayleigh Powell has worked as a props buyer for five years in various television dramas in the United Kingdom. Her job responsibilities include sourcing props and on-screen vehicles, booking various film industry specialists, such as armourers, and organising everything the props department needs for each shooting day. Her specialist expertise offered valuable insight into the daily practicalities of prop sourcing in the United Kingdom.

**Georgia Reece**

Georgia Reece works as a petty cash buyer in the United Kingdom. Having worked in the film industry for a bit over a year, she is still learning about the practices of different art department individual. Regardless, she was able to provide detailed descriptions and first-hand experiences about the prop sourcing methods used by the art department professionals in the United Kingdom.

**Niina Topp**

Niina Topp is a Finnish production designer working in the United Kingdom. She moved to the Scotland in 2005 to study film and after graduation has worked in London based productions. Niina mostly works on feature films but also has experience from short films and commercials. Niina provided this study with detailed descriptions about the work of art department and prop sourcing in the United Kingdom from the point of view of the production designer.

In addition to face-to-face interviews I exchanged several emails with the following film industry professionals to gather a wider understanding on different film industries in Europe. I opted to communicate via email for a variety of reasons depending on the contacted professional in question. Some professionals were not available to meet for an interview due to their personal schedules. Others were impossible to reach in person, as the available resources did not allow for me to travel to multiple European countries during the research period. Therefore, communicating through emails proved a feasible tool to reach these individuals. As Brinkmann (2013, p. 30) indicates, one of the challenges of email interviews are the skills of written communication. Therefore, each email participant was given as much time as they needed to reply to the questions in as much detail as they deemed appropriate.

**Kenneth Damsgaard**

Kenneth Damsgaard works as a production designer in Denmark. He has experience working in commercials, music videos, short films, feature films and various television productions. Kenneth provided this research with detailed descriptions about the Danish film industry, the structure of art departments and the ways props are sourced in the country. He also shared his views regarding how the two Danish prop hire companies affect productions and art department professionals.
Mark Farley
The family of Mark Farley owns Farley Prop Hire company and Mark is in charge of sourcing all their new stock. Founded in 1962 and based in London, Farley Prop Hire is the parent company to three other prop hire departments: Lewis and Kaye, Spiller and Props Galore. Having started as a picture frame shop, Farley Prop Hire has evolved to stock over 50,000 pieces of antique furniture, props and accessories. The company also employs workshops craftsmen who restore and keep the antique items in good condition. The client base consists mostly of film and TV productions, but Farley also supply for events, window dressings, commercials and photography. Mark provided information about how a specialist prop hire company functions for this study.

Lucy Hammond
Lucy Hammond currently works as a props storeman for a BBC sci-fi drama production. She has four years of prop department work experience in different British television productions. Lucy’s job responsibilities include keeping track of all purchased and hired props when they arrive at the prop storage. She makes sure every prop is ready for each set, organises transport for hired goods, checks each item for damage before and after the filming and keeps a detailed inventory on every item in the storage. The BBC Wales studios where Lucy works has two prop storages: a smaller one at the studio for current filming needs and a bigger one a short drive away for all the previously purchased furniture, props and recurring sets. Lucy provided this study with detailed descriptions about how a large studio prop store functions in the United Kingdom and the job responsibilities of a prop storeman.

Veera Roman
Finnish television production designer Veera Roman has lived in Italy for over twenty years and works for the national public broadcasting company of Italy, Radiotelevisione Italiana (RAI). Veera provided the research with an insight into Italian prop sourcing methods. She also offered information about how the largest film studios in Europe, Cinecittà studios, function and the services they offer.

Pirjo Rossi
Pirjo Rossi is a Finnish production designer with over thirty years of experience working in the field. She has extensive knowledge of the Finnish film industry having worked on feature films, short films, television dramas, commercials and music videos throughout her career. She has created both period and contemporary designs and participated in international co-productions. Pirjo provided the research with descriptions about how the Finnish film industry functions and views regarding how a potential prop hire company might operate in the country.

Michelle Violette
American production designer Michelle ‘Mimi’ Violette lives and works in the Czech Republic. She has experience working in the film industry for twenty years and has worked on several international productions in Europe. She provided the research with detailed descriptions on how props are sourced in the Czech Republic.
3.2 Analysis methods

This section reviews how the collected material was analysed throughout the research process.

It was necessary to analyse the collected material in close detail in order to formulate an understanding regarding prop sourcing around Europe and the role of prop hire companies in the industry. Ruusuvuori, Nikader and Hyvärinen (2010) discuss throughout their book how systematic analysis and a detailed description of the process improve the evaluation of the research, as well as provide the reader with an insight into the modus operandi. Various views and aspects regarding the topic collected from different sources are compared to each other in order to formulate a view of the overall standards of practice in Europe. Due to the limited amount of literature available on the topic of prop sourcing in Europe, online sources and articles were utilised to add depth to the research and further the understanding of specific aspects surrounding the topic. Furthermore, two online surveys and various interviews with art department professionals were conducted to uncover first-hand experiences from the field.

Comparative methods were used to analyse the collected research material. Leedy and Ormrod (2005, p. 158) state that constant comparative method is central to grounded theory research. In order to gain an understanding of other cultures and their practices, cross-national research methods were applied. Hantrais (1995) explains that cross-national studies are used to identify and analyse similarities and differences across societies and allows for researchers to observe characteristics of particular institutions and practices. According to her, the same research instruments should be used to research each country in order to provide data in a comparable format (Hantrais 1995). This was taken into account while designing the research instruments used for this study.

While designing the survey instruments, I hypothesised that the respondents from one country would have similar experiences from the field with each other and, thus, would provide comparable answers. A computer-assisted data collection procedure was utilised to allow for easy review of the survey results after the answering period. An online form that automatically saves and arranges each answer to a spreadsheet proved useful as all the answers to any one question were easy to view. My hypothesis proved accurate giving validity to the selected material collection instrument. The respondents appeared to describe their experiences honestly and openly, expressing both positive and negative experiences regarding various aspects of the research topic.

The content collected from the two surveys was analysed in close detail. First the responses expressed by various art department professionals were compared to each other within each survey in order to gain an understanding of the shared and individual views of the professionals in the case study countries. The comparisons and conclusions were achieved by organising the material based on similarity between the answers. Then the analysed and synthesised responses from the two surveys were compared to each other in order to explore the differences and similarities between Finnish and British film industries. By comparing the synthesised results of the two surveys, some practices could be identified as industry-wide standards or distinguished as unique characteristics of one country. The analysed survey results provided a basis for the thesis research upon which to expand by utilising other material. Furthermore, some respondents brought forward interesting experiences and views I had not previously considered, which in turn guided the development of the study to some extent.

The interview analysis begins with understanding the collected material as a whole, as Ruusuvuori et al. (2010) state. By conducting preliminary organisations of the data, common
themes can be located and later analysed in closer detail (Ruusuvuori et al. 2010, p. 413). The interviews for this thesis research were conducted, transcribed and analysed by the author. The first stage of analysis included comparing the answers from individual representing the same film industry to each other. This led to an understanding on how a specific film industry functions and how prop sourcing is usually conducted by the local art department professionals. The second stage compared the research countries to each other, in order to comprehend the wider European standards of these practices. The cross-national comparison also allowed for the identification of practices that do not coincide with the general European standards and allowed for further research to be conducted in order to investigate the reasons behind these differences.

The personal interviews conducted with various film industry professionals offer valuable descriptions from the first-hand experiences of each individual about the prop sourcing practices in Finland and the United Kingdom, as well as descriptions regarding the general standards of the film industry. Utilising personal semi-structured interviews allowed the interviewees to express their views in great detail, thus making the answers longer than those expressed by other professionals via email communication or surveys. Furthermore, additional questions could be included to gain a more comprehensive understanding about each discussed topic. By asking the interviewees similar questions about prop sourcing practices and hire companies, their responses were structured in a similar way and, thus, could be effortlessly compared to each other. Common themes were identified from the answers, as well as contradicting experiences. These experiences are analysed and discussed during the course of this thesis.

The interview material collected complimented the survey data, and most views expressed by various art department professionals during the interviews coincided with those expressed by survey respondents. To balance out the uneven rate of survey responses between the two case study countries, a greater number of British than Finnish professionals were interviewed in person. The total number of professionals consulted for this study representing the Finnish film industry is 34 and the number of professionals working in the British film industry is 21. Additionally, five professionals provided insights into the film industries and prop sourcing practices of other European countries, bringing the total number of professionals consulted for the study to sixty.

Ruusuvuori et al (2010) indicate that analysing material in different languages has prerequisites in order to be successful. The researcher is required to have knowledge of language, history, culture and customs before analysing material in a foreign language, in order to fully understand the nuanced expressions (Ruusuvuori et al. 2010, pp. 411–412). The interviews and survey responses were analysed in their original language, as they were expressed in either Finnish or English, languages the author is fluent in. Finnish material is mainly paraphrased into English, in order to avoid mistranslations and to convey the views behind words, as direct translations might not accurately express the original idea.

Having worked in both Finnish and British productions, I was able to reflect on my own experiences throughout the research process. Knowledge of the culture of filmmaking in both case study countries allowed me to design the survey instruments and customise each research question in order to maximise the response suitability for my research. I was capable of analysing the responses against their cultural context and in their original language, providing nuanced understanding of the discussed topics. Furthermore, I was able to analyse how my own experiences compared to those discussed by the survey respondents and interviewees.
This study aims to be explanatory and focus on the variability between prop sourcing methods in each case study country, instead of juxtaposing them against each other. The history and development of film industries and current art department practices and structure are carefully observed, compared and analysed in order to understand the differences between the countries. Additionally, the role of a prop hire company across Europe is analysed based on first-hand testimonials of various film industry professionals. Hypotheses are generated from the conclusions derived through the comparative analysis about the potential future developments of the practices and how an addition of a prop hire to a country where such does not currently exist might affect its various film industry productions and professionals.

3.3 Achieving validity

This section discusses how this study strives to provide validity for the research findings. This study research strives to present multiple views and systematic discussion into the various topics surrounding prop sourcing methods in Europe, as subjective experiences of an individual person are not necessarily valuable on their own when attempting to achieve an overall understanding of the common practices present in the field. As discussed by Ruusuvuori et al. (2010), organising and analysing research material are two separate stages of the evaluation process and purely stating research findings is not sufficient evaluation. Additionally, presenting only material that is positive or supports the personal views of the researcher is not appropriate analysis (Ruusuvuori et al. 2010, pp.19–20). Because negative, positive and neutral expressions were presented regarding the research topic by the consulted individuals, all the views were equally taken into discussion. Individual responses are compared to each other and the shared or contradicting experiences are presented and analysed throughout this thesis.

The sixty individuals consulted for this study provided discussion about the topic of prop sourcing, regardless of whether they were consulted through interview, survey or email. Several of the professionals raised similar points regarding various aspects of prop sourcing, such as time, budgets and sustainability. Because each correspondence compliments more than contradicts the previous ones, it can be expressed that further interviews or surveys are unlikely to provide new information, but rather confirm the previous statements. Additional themes or views are unlikely to emerge; thus, the number of consulted individuals is sufficient to formulate a generalised understanding about prop sourcing practices in the studied countries. Furthermore, the amount of responses provides ample material for comparison and allows for the case studies to be contrasted with each other.

It can be argued that the first-hand experiences and views provided by each professional consulted for this study are reliable sources of information, as each individual works in the film industry and has knowledge about the topic of prop sourcing. Furthermore, the consulted individuals represent various art department positions and prop hire professionals, providing different point of view regarding all aspects of prop sourcing. Each interviewee and survey respondent were included in the final research sample. However, only discussion directly related to topic was included. All material regarding prop sourcing, art department practices and structure, sustainability, economy, prop hires and their effect on the industry were included in the discussion. Only unrelated or side-track remarks were excluded from the research material.
This chapter takes a closer look at prop hire companies and how they function in European context. Different prop hire companies and art department practices around Europe are investigated in order to understand the similarities and differences between countries. Finally, the research scope is narrowed down, and the countries selected as case studies for this study are introduced.

4.1 A Prop Hire Company
This section provides a detailed description about different prop hire companies and how they generally function within the European context. As previously defined in section 2.6 of this thesis, the research scope is limited to the prop hire companies that stock any objects from furniture and smalls\(^9\) to costumes props, scenery elements and soft furnishing.

According to Olson (1999, p.101), several prop hire companies are usually located around major production centres. Prop hires situated in the vicinity of large studios or other production facilities have a good chance of reaching the majority of potential clients filming there. As Powell (2019) indicates, productions are more likely to use the services of a prop hire if they have easy access to one not only during pre-production and preparation time but also to pick up any last minute items once the filming has already started.

Barnwell (2017, p.44) states that prop hire companies offer a diverse range of items from small-hand held objects to large pieces of furniture, and they can specialise in certain time periods or themes, such as medical or army props. Prop hires can opt to stock anything and everything that exist from decorative collectibles and toys to large scenery elements, such as doors, windows, fences or even part of an aeroplane. Prop hire companies accumulate their stock to mainly cater for different film industry productions, although many of them also supply items to various events and private parties.

Bundy (2019), Moorshead (2019), and McFarlane (2019) explain that the prop hiring process works in a standardised manner regardless of the company. Clients looking to hire props for their productions contact the hire company to begin the process. Clients tend to be looking for either a very specific hero piece or large quantities of dressing props. The hire companies usually prefer for the clients to visit in person and see the items before hiring anything. However, if a production has a strict schedule, the set decorator or props buyer is more likely

\(^9\) Smalls are small personal prop objects, such as office supplies, bags, diaries, journals, hand held electronics and lighters.
to select and collect all of the props during one visit. Additionally, prop hire orders can be placed through email or phone to save the production time. When selecting items from the stock of a prop hire clients can mark up the pieces they would like to hire by attaching small stickers to them. Each sticker will state the name of the production and the dates the items are requested for. Marking each piece helps the prop hire employees gather the correct ones for collection, as a client may wish to hire, for example, a specific suitcase out of the twenty stocked by the prop hire. The client together with a prop hire employee, usually a specialised booker, will list every item requested for hire. Based on the items and the pricing policy of each hire company, they will provide the client with a price quote. The number of props can be adjusted to suit the budget or potential changes in the design of sets. Figure 7 shows a form used by Celtic Prop Hire to list and keep record of the items booked for hire. Copies of the form will be kept by the production and the prop hire company in order to ensure all props get returned to the right hire company after the production ends. Once the final list of items and the price has been agreed upon the props department of each production will organise for the collection and return of the props. When items come back to the prop hire, the staff will ensure everything has been returned in good condition and place each item back to their allocated spot in the warehouse (Bundy 2019; Moorshead 2019; McFarlane 2019).

Prop hire companies need to select the items they stock with care in order to ensure the suitability of each piece to film industry productions. Millerson (1989, p. 116) states that “[i]deal stock furniture should be robust, easy to clean, without obvious scars from ungentle handling, easy to store, and of no obvious period”. These are all important factors to consider, since each item in a prop hire stock is expected to be hired out by many productions. Millerson (1989) also identifies types of objects that should be avoided in film productions. Wickerwork furniture creaks
when used and microphones can pick up these noises. Rocking and spinning chairs encourage actors to move back and forth which can disturb closer shots. Certain patterns, such as skinny stripes, can ‘strobe’ on camera. Reflective surfaces can reveal the crew behind the scenes and break the illusion the film is trying to create. Furthermore, heavy pieces of furniture, such as solid hardwood wardrobes, are difficult to transport to and from set. These bulky items are easier to utilise if they can be subdivided into smaller sections during transportation. On the other hand, very flimsy or lightweight pieces of furniture might break halfway through a shoot (Millerson 1989, pp. 116–117). It is worth for a prop hire to consider carefully whether to stock these kinds of items, as they might not be on demand for film industry productions.

Prop hire companies can be divided roughly into two types based on the nature of their stock. Some companies stock a bit of everything while others have specialised in a specific era, category or type of objects. For example, E. Rancati prop hire in Italy stocks just about anything from bathtubs and swords to typewriters (E. Rancati s.r.l. 2019), whereas Soubrier Antiques in France specialises in period and antique furniture (Soubrier Antiques 2013) and Electroprops in the United Kingdom deals solely in electronic and technological props (Electroprops 2016). Bundy (2019) indicates that a prop hire needs to adapt to the area it is located in. Her prop hire company, Celtic Prop Hire, is one of the few hire companies in the entire southwest of the United Kingdom. Thus, they stock all kinds of items from different periods in order to provide the local productions with a varied selection of props. Figure 8 shows just two shelves at Celtic Prop Hire filled with lanterns, boxes, fans, lamps, medical kits, fake plants, tea sets and wind chimes amongst other small items. The rest of their stock includes all kinds of items, such as medieval themed flags, phones from different eras, various pieces of furniture, post boxes and hundreds of books, the oldest one dating back to 1860s. Bundy explains that since the company provides props across the United Kingdom their stock reflects the geographical area and British culture. This makes their props appropriate for productions set in the country (Bundy 2019).

Prop hire companies can acquire their stock from various sources. Bundy (2019), Powell (2019) and Hauldren (2019) explain that often productions might opt to donate some of their purchased props to various prop hire companies. This can be done to offset the replacement costs, if the production broke or lost items hired from the prop hire. Additionally, productions might donate items away to avoid paying for storage. Bundy (2019) adds that various online shops and social media marketplaces are popular options for prop hire companies to both source new items and donate away old ones. McFarlane (2019) further discusses that sometimes clients can order items to be sourced by a prop hire company. However, the prop hire retains ownership of every piece they source and these items are returned to the hire company in order to be made available for other productions (McFarlane 2019).

Each production needs to carefully consider the matter of copyright when they feature props, artwork, logos and signs. Productions want to avoid being sued over a specific company logo being visible on a prop or in the background of a scene. Production designer Violette (2019) explains that in order to avoid copyright issues, new logos and signs are created from scratch by a member of the art department to be used to cover the existing ones. Violette adds that bigger productions can have lawyers to clear items for use in order to make sure the production will not be sued over any design element, even the original pieces created by the art department (Violette, 2019). Props buyer Powell (2019) explains that often productions utilise product placement services that are offered by various companies specifically for film industry purposes. Popular brands, such as Apple or Samsung, offer their products for
film and television productions for free through product placement companies in exchange for visibility. This provides a production with goods for free and removes the need to clear copyrights. Prop hire companies usually clear the sourced items before they are hired out to productions. According to Moorshead (2019), copyright is less of an issue when it comes to furniture or small objects, but especially artwork pieces must be cleared for use from the artist.

The final price for each hire agreement depends on the amount of time items are hired for and their value. Holt (1988, p. 106) states that “[t]he hire companies charge a hire fee based on the value of the items, often in weekly amounts”. This statement still holds true after more than thirty years. Bundy (2019) elaborates by explaining that the usual practice is to price items based on their replacement value, meaning how much it would cost to replace the current item. The hire price of an item is often around 10% of the replacement value (Bundy 2019). The industry standard is to offer goods for hire for a minimum of one week, but as Powell (2019) indicates the more common period is two weeks in order to allow time for the production to organise transport, cataloguing, dressing sets, filming, wrap and returns for each lot of hires. The period for hire will always be agreed upon when making the hire agreement, as many items can be booked back to back into different productions.

The practice of how items are priced varies between companies. Large prop hire companies, such as Farleys, have set charges for their goods. At Farleys, charges for 1 week are 10% of the value of the goods hired. For 2 weeks they are first week’s charges plus an additional 5% of the value of the goods hired. Hires over 2 weeks are first and second week’s charges plus an additional 2.5% of the value of the goods for any period up to each additional week (Farley 2019). Smaller prop hire companies, such as Scenery Salvage, price their items based on the client, amount of items and the hire period. Moorshead (2019), who works at Scenery Salvage, explained that he decides on the prices separately for each client. For instance, he supports local youth theatre and school productions by giving them discounts on hired goods (Moorshead 2019).

Bundy (2019) notes that if an item were to break beyond repair during filming or transport, the client is liable to pay for the replacement value of it in full to the hire company. This way the prop hire company can source another piece to replace the broken one. The replacement value does not, however, take into account the man-hours needed to source the replacement, just the value of each item on their own. Furthermore, sometimes it is impossible to find an exact replacement, especially if the original piece was antique or unique. In this case the prop hire company would try to find something similar in price and style to replace the original item (Bundy 2019). If hired goods get broken but can be repaired, the clients might either get the items mended themselves or pay for the cost of repairs directly to the prop hire. Some prop hire companies employ specialist craftsmen who can repair broken items and restore antiques, and many of the employees of prop houses are crafty enough to fix minor issues, such as surface damage or reattaching loose parts.

According to Bundy (2019), a prop hire needs to occasionally evaluate their stock and dispose of excess items, as the warehouse space is usually limited. The stock should consist of props that get hired out to productions on a regular basis in order to make each item worth storing (Bundy 2019). Nevertheless, both Bundy (2019) and McFarlane (2019) agree that most of the stock at a prop hire usually gets hired out at some point. McFarlane (2019) indicates that her company DRESD receives new items on a weekly basis and occasionally it can be difficult to keep up with itemising and organising everything into the warehouse before it is already hired out to another production (McFarlane 2019).
Showcasing the stock of a prop hire online with photographs helps clients to visualise the supply and can also attract new clients. McFarlane (2019) explain that photographing tens of thousands of items, taking measurements and pricing each piece individually is a time-consuming process. The prop hire companies also receive more items frequently, making the task of cataloguing every piece an endless process. However, McFarlane states that this is a necessary process, as productions are fast paced and increasingly prefer to order everything they can from their unit base in order to minimise resources spend on travelling. Bundy (2019) indicates that an internet presence helps a prop hire company reach more potential clients. Having a website is essential but companies can also advertise in magazines and interact with clients through social medial, thus increasing their visibility (Bundy 2019).

4.2 Prop Hire Companies around Europe

In order to locate different prop hire companies around Europe, primarily online research was utilised. This research method was described more in detail previously in section 3.1.2. For the most part information about European hire companies and how they function was collected from their individual websites. Additionally, a few online databases list various film industry companies around the world. One such database used for this research is KFTV (2019), a website that catalogues international production companies, services and crew. However, in order to get a business listed on one of these databases, the owner of a company must add their business there manually. Consequently, not all companies that exist get listed. Furthermore, due to the services being added manually, the element of human error is present in the listings. For example, companies can get allocated into incorrect categories and businesses that are no longer active might still be listed there. Regardless, databases like KFTV allowed for the discovery of different prop hire companies and a good overall idea of the number of various film industry businesses operating in European countries.

It is acknowledged that this research cannot account for every individual prop hire company in Europe, due to limitations discussed previously in section 1.6. Especially the lack of common language or access to information about companies without websites may have limited the research findings. However, from the online research and data available it can be estimated that overall a few dozen prop hire companies operate around Europe. On average most European countries with a film industry have 3–4 prop hire companies that fit the scope of this research, as is illustrated in Table 1 in the following section 4.3. As many of the websites of various prop hire companies were only available in the local language, it can be concluded that these companies operate mostly locally. Some larger companies, especially those affiliated with studio complexes, had their websites also available in English. This indicates that these prop hires work with international clients as well as local ones. This observation does not take into account websites of hire companies operating in the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland, as their local language is English.

Both specialised and general prop hire companies are found across Europe. Most European countries had at least one larger hire company with a general stock of all kinds of items. This could either be an independent prop hire company or a studio complex with a prop storage at the premises. For instance, the oldest large-scale studio complex in the world, Studio Babelsberg in Germany, provides film productions with sound stages and backlots, sets constructions services and access to a collection of more than 1 million props in their prop house (Studio Babelsberg AG 2019). In addition to the big prop storages, various countries have a few
smaller prop hires. These companies have often specialised in certain types of items in order to avoid competition with the larger hire companies. For example in Germany, Film Cops has specialised in police themed props, uniforms and vehicles (Film Cops e.K. n.d.) and Cuba Medical Props stocks both vintage and contemporary medical items (C.U.B.A. gGmbH, n.d.).

The following paragraphs introduce the prop sourcing practices in a few European countries in more detail. The information has been collected from various designers in short personal interviews or through email correspondence. Each consulted designer has been previously introduced in section 3.1.4.

**Italy**

According to television designer Veera Roman (2019), there are several prop hire companies in Italy. Most of them are located around Rome, as it is the centre of filmmaking in the country. Roman explains that each prop hire has specialised in a specific type of props, for example military items, greenery and plants, or furniture from certain decades. Furthermore, prop hire companies employ various craftsmen and artisans who create custom props (Roman 2019). Rome is also home for the largest film studios in Europe, Cinecittà. The studios were founded in 1937, and span over 400,000 square meters. The set construction and decoration department at Cinecittà combine traditional craftsmanship with latest digital technology and have a prop storage containing over 3000 individual pieces (Cinecittà Srl 2017). Part of their extensive statue collection can be seen in Figure 9. Roman (2019) further explains that the Cinecittà studios and their props can be rented by different productions and also private events. In addition, there are several private set design, prop and graphics companies operating within the Cinecittà premises that create designs for various productions, such as the productions of the biggest Italian television channel Rai Uno (Roman 2019).

![Figure 9: Cinecittà sculpture warehouse (Maja 1989. Used with permission)](image)
Greece
In a discussion with costume designer and scenographer Sofia Pantouvaki (2019), she identified three official prop hire companies operating within the Greek film industry. Additionally, many antique shops can also hire out their stock to different film and theatre productions. Items hired from shops are returned in order to be sold to customers or hired by other productions. Due to this practice, the current prop hire companies in Greece also started out as antique shops. According to Pantouvaki, it is also common practice to be able to borrow items from the residents around filming locations and to sometimes borrow or hire from large theatres for special occasions. She further explained how the culture of recycling and reusing items in general has become the norm when sourcing props in Greece. Items discarded by their previous owners can be collected straight from the streets of bigger cities or bought cheaply from flea markets. Items bought for a production will either be sold forward or donated to charity shops after the production ends (Pantouvaki, 2019).

Czech Republic
Production designer Mimi Violette (2019) describes the practices of prop sourcing in Czech Republic to be in line with the European standards. Props are rented from prop hire companies or bought from various shops, such as second hand, antique, online or specialist shops. According to Violette, there are at least four prop hire companies in Czech Republic. In addition, props can be rented from hire companies in nearby countries, for example from France or Spain. On feature film productions prop masters and buyers source the props. Set decoration team also works closely with the props department, as there is a fine line between a hand prop and a dressing item. Props that are bought for a production can be stored until the production company confirms there will be no further sequels to a film or TV show. Some props are then sold to members of the crew and the rest are thrown away, as there is usually little budget to pay for storage spaces for prolonged periods of time (Violette 2019).

Denmark
Production designers Kenneth Damsgaard (2019) was consulted in order to gain an insight into the Danish art department and prop sourcing practices. Damsgaard indicated that in Denmark the structure of an art department and the prop sourcing methods used depend, for the most part, on the scale of production. The art department can be as small as three people or scale up to well over ten people working under the designer. Larger productions employ set dressers to source the props, while on smaller productions the job may fall to the production designer and their assistant to complete. According to Damsgaard, Denmark has two commercial prop hire companies. However, props are not solely hired, as the rental selection is small and the items are used often in various productions, making them recognisable for the public. Damsgaard indicates that Danish productions tend to use the stock of prop houses more as filling and supplements while mainly dressing sets with bought or borrowed items. This helps to make the production look visually more unique. Occasionally, if the production requires, Danish features might also utilise prop hires and marketplaces in other European countries to source the correct style of props (Damsgaard 2019).

The following chapters of this thesis will focus on understanding prop sourcing practices in more detail in two European countries, the United Kingdom and Finland, as well as analyse how they fit into the overall European context.
4.3 United Kingdom and Finland: Narrowing Down the Research Scope

In order to analyse how the size of film industry affects the number of prop hire companies, the data illustrated in Table 1 was collected. This table provides information about the average number of feature films produced in selected European countries. This data was collected from the UNESCO Institute of Statistics website (2017). The table is organised by the population of each country. The number of prop hires per country was calculated from the testimonies of various film industry professionals and online research results. It is recognised that some prop hire businesses have been left out of this study due to the limitations of research, which have been previously discussed in sections 1.5 and 3.1.2. However, for the purposes of this thesis the collected data provides an overall estimation, upon which some arguments can be based. The table illustrates that the United Kingdom is one of the largest film production countries in Europe alongside France and Germany. In turn the production capacity of Finland is on par with countries such as Sweden, Poland and Greece, despite these countries having significantly larger populations. Therefore, it can be concluded that the size of the film industry is not directly related to the size of the population.

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<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>82.79 million</td>
<td>226</td>
<td>9</td>
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<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>67.12 million</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>7</td>
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<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>66.06 million</td>
<td>298</td>
<td>44</td>
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<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>60.59 million</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Poland</td>
<td>37.97 million</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>10.77 million</td>
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<tr>
<td>Czech Republic</td>
<td>10.58 million</td>
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<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hungary</td>
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<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
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<tr>
<td>Finland</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>4.78 million</td>
<td>33</td>
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Table 1: Film production and estimated number of prop hire companies in European countries (Source: Personal collection)

As Table 1 illustrates, the United Kingdom has upwards of 40 prop hire companies that cater to film and television productions and fit the scope of research of this thesis, making the country differs quite drastically from the rest of the European countries. As discussed previously in section 2.2, the United Kingdom is one of the biggest film production countries in Europe, British features receive a lot of funding annually and they are exported all around the world. Even when compared to other European countries that produce around the same number of features annually, such as Germany and France, the number of prop hire companies in the United Kingdom is notably high. The exceptional number of prop hire companies led to the United Kingdom being selected as one of the case study countries for this thesis.
As the research into the topic of prop sourcing around Europe has revealed, the film industries in several European countries are able to support the trade of prop hire businesses and, as stated in the previous section 4.2, several European countries have around 3–4 prop hire companies. However, out of the Nordic countries of Sweden, Denmark, Finland, Norway and Iceland only the first two have commercial prop hire companies, despite all of them having organised film industries. Out of all the Nordic countries it is especially interesting that Finland does not have any prop hire companies, because the country is similar to its close neighbours Sweden and Denmark in terms of population, location and film production practices. Both Sweden and Denmark have prop hire companies, and yet Finland does not. Finland was chosen as the second case study country in order to investigate the reasons behind the lack of a prop hire companies and how this affects the film industry productions and professionals in Finland.

These two countries were selected to be studied in closer detail in this thesis, as they represent the two ends of the industry scale. The United Kingdom has a large film industry and several prop hires, and Finland has an average size industry with no prop hires companies. The aim of this thesis is not to compare these two countries with each other, but rather to explore the two opposite ends. The selection of these two countries as the case studies is further supported by the author’s personal experiences working in Finnish and British productions, understanding of both Finnish and English languages, as well as the knowledge of the overall culture of both countries. The case study of the United Kingdom will be discussed in the following chapter 5, and the case study of Finland in Chapter 6.
This chapter explores the current prop sourcing practices in the United Kingdom and takes a closer look at the various prop hire companies around the country. United Kingdom was chosen to be studied as a case study because it has several different kinds of prop hire companies operating within of the film industry. Material collected from the field is presented and the effects a prop hire company can have on productions are discussed in depth. First-hand testimonies provided by various film industry professionals are compared with each other in order to conclude on common practices and popular viewpoints regarding prop sourcing and prop hire companies.

5.1 Prop Hire Companies

This section discusses how prop hire companies operate in the United Kingdom and how many such companies can succeed within one country.

The United Kingdom has dozens of prop hire companies. In fact, it has significantly more prop hire companies than any other European country researched for this study, as presented in section 4.3. The majority of all these hire companies in the United Kingdom are situated with close proximity to London, but several are also dotted around the entire stretch of the country, from DRESD (n.d.) in South Wales to Prop Hire Scotland (n.d.) in Glasgow.

Major production centres, such as London, attract many companies relevant to the film industry into the area, which in turn creates competition between the companies. Hundreds of features are filmed in London annually, and the demand for props reflects that. Due to high demand, several prop hire companies are able to succeed in the area, but it also means they cannot all supply the same props for the industry. Therefore, many of the prop hire companies in London have specialised in either a certain era or theme. For example, Film Medical (2019) specialises in hospital and medical gear, Living Props (n.d.) provides greenery and plants and Men at Work (n.d.) offers a wide range of industrial items, such as pipes, train parts, barrels and boilers. Nevertheless, companies which stock a bit of everything, such as Super Hire (2019) and Stockyard (2019), are equally capable of turning a profit because their overall selection is vast.

Moorhead (2019) states that there is usually a prop hire to suit every feature, as the productions have different size budgets and produce different types of films. In London, the high quantity of productions being filmed in the area supports the number of prop hire companies there (Moorhead 2019). According to Bundy (2019), other areas of the United Kingdom have fewer prop hire company clusters, but instead the hire companies are dotted around the country. These hire companies offer local productions services they would otherwise need to travel to.
London for. The availability of prop hire companies and other film industry businesses can draw productions to film in certain areas, which in turn supports the local services and can create a draw for even more film industry productions (Bundy 2019). From Moorshead and Bundy it can be concluded that the chain of demand and supply of film industry services can create a self-sustaining circle, which benefits both the productions and the prop hire companies equally.

Moorshead (2019) discusses that the physical location of a prop hire company might affect its clientele to some extent. Small productions might not be able to afford to source items from far away and, thus, favour local companies. On the other hand, major productions can source even individual props from across the country, if the items suit their needs. Regardless, good connections to large motorways and big studios can be beneficial for a prop hire company, as it makes them accessible for all kinds of productions (Moorshead 2019). Bundy (2019) agrees in regard to good transport links being vital to a prop hire. She further discusses that if a prop hire was affiliated with a specific studio, this would be beneficial for the productions being filmed there. However, outside productions, such as events and theatre productions, might not be able to access such prop hire due to studio security, which in turn could potentially limit its revenue (Bundy 2019).

Moorshead (2019), McFarlane (2019) and Bundy (2019) all state that a prop hire company can be located anywhere in the United Kingdom, as long as the building the company is situated in has enough space to house all the props. Moorshead (2019) explains that the building does not necessarily require heating to accommodate items, as cold can even help preserve them. However, clients and staff might not appreciate a freezing warehouse as much. Additionally, a space that is easy to clean is preferable, as dusty items look undesirable for productions and the items cannot be constantly cleaned by the prop hire staff due to the sheer quantity of the stock (Moorshead 2019). The warehouse building of Super Hire Props ltd. (2019) offers a great example of ample space for props, spanning over five floor and hundreds of square meters, with props stacked neatly onto shelves and arranged into themed groups, as can be seen on Figure 10. The top floor of Super Hire, the scale of which is visible from Figure 11, houses two smaller sections of the company: Modern Props and Old Times. Modern Props side of the floor is dedicated to sleek modern furniture and dressing props, and Old Times houses only antique pieces (Super Hire Props ltd. 2019). Displaying items in a way that each piece is visible helps art department members visualise the entire supply and to source the pieces they are looking for quickly.

Despite catering mainly to film industry productions, most prop hire companies in the United Kingdom also offer their services to school productions, amateur theatres, shop window dressing, photo shoots, events and property development dressing. This ensures an even flow of customers even during slow filming periods. Farley (2019), McFarlane (2019), Bundy (2019) and Moorshead (2019) all indicated that their respective prop hire companies offer their services across the United Kingdom and clients are also allowed to ship the hired items wherever they are needed, even abroad. Specialist companies, such as Farley Prop Hire, also attract clients from around the world with their unique and high-quality antiques (Farley 2019), some of which can be seen in Figure 12.

Close proximity of different prop houses in relation to each other provides productions in the area with easy access to a majority of the supply. Many of the prop hire companies in the United Kingdom are situated in London and even more precisely around the Park Royal area. According to Hauldren (2019), this allows productions to arrange for several collections for
Figure 10: Furniture at Super Hire (Koivurinta 2019)

Figure 11: Antiques at Super Hire (Koivurinta 2019)

Figure 12: Antiques at Farley Prop Hire (Koivurinta 2013)
props within a single day, which saves them time, and therefore also money. Powell (2019) indicates that on productions located near London, the set dressers and props buyer can spend two or three days each week going around different prop hire companies sourcing items for different sets. She also stated that “when I’m back home in Manchester, because there are not as many prop houses, we tend to buy a lot of the things” (Powell 2019), indicating that the location of a production in relation to prop hire companies influences the practiced prop sourcing methods.

Each prop hire company decides on their pricing individually. Larger companies, such as Farley Prop Hire (Farley 2019), have itemised catalogues of all their props and pricing policies online. As they specialise in antiques, the hire price helps to cover the upkeep of the valuable pieces, while giving productions access to high quality items that would otherwise be too expensive for them to source. Mark Farley discloses that some of their items are insured up to 70,000 Euros (Farley 2019). Smaller businesses, for example Scenery Salvage, might not have their props listed online and the price of each item can vary depending on the customer (Moorshead 2019). Customising the price to suit the budget of each customer allows for low budget productions, such as amateur theatre groups and school productions, access to the same items a Hollywood feature film might use. This type of pricing policy can be more inclusive and benefit the local clients. On the other hand, having a set price for every piece allows the customer to calculate their budget accurately early on and make changes to the designs based on what can be afforded.

The next section introduces how having access to a prop hire company can influence productions. The discussion considers the job of art department professionals, economy of productions and the sustainability of prop sourcing practices.

5.2 How Prop Hire Companies Affect Productions

The research findings of this study show that there is not one most common way of sourcing props in British productions, although hiring is often the most convenient one. As stated in section 2.6, props can be sourced in four ways: purchasing, making, hiring or borrowing. Hammond (2019) indicates that the method of sourcing is selected based on the resources available and the specific requirements of each props. For sets that appear only once or for a short amount of time, props would most likely be hired. Props and set dressings are often bought for recurring or longstanding sets, as the cost of hiring the items several times or for a long period would greatly surpass the cost of purchasing them. Hero props are often custom made, as they are needed throughout the film and are featured in close up shots (Hammond 2019). Hauldren (2019) adds that props are not usually borrowed, as damaging or losing a borrowed item can be troublesome for the production. Hire agreements have clearly stated instructions in case of damage or loss on which both parties agree. Furthermore, hired goods are insured, which might not be the case with borrowed items.

In addition to hiring props from a prop hire company, a lot of items are also purchased for British productions. Hauldren (2019), Powell (2019), Reece (2019), Hammond (2019) and Topp (2019) together list various places props could be purchased from in the United Kingdom, such as antique fairs, generic furniture stores, online shops and social media groups, specialist shops, individual collectors, flea markets and charity shops. According to Topp (2019), the selection of where to source props from is dictated by the style, budget and schedule of a production, as well as the location of the unit base. Hauldren (2019) explains that the art
department calculates the most cost-efficient way for sourcing each item in order to ensure the production stays on budget. She adds that different online marketplaces provide access to sourcing props worldwide; however, the quality of online products cannot always be guaranteed and delivery times need to be taken into account in regards to the filming schedule (Hauldren 2019). Topp (2019) further states that usually everything needed for a production can be found from the United Kingdom and only specialist items, for example American busses, might need to be sourced from other countries.

Based on the research findings it can be argued that sourcing props from a prop hire is the primary option for most productions. Out of the twelve respondents to the online survey targeting British art department professionals, eleven expressed that they usually source props by hiring them. All twelve mentioned that most productions in the United Kingdom utilise the services of prop hire companies, mostly due to these companies understanding the budget and scheduling limitation of the industry (Online Survey UK 2018). Hammonds (2019) states that “[p]rop houses are organised so you can walk into a room full of time specific, fully restored and prepped props and furniture”. This eliminates the need to spend hours looking for a specific item and makes selecting suitable props faster. Furthermore, the designer can be guaranteed that each selected piece is era or theme appropriate for the feature, as the prop hire company has checked the background of each prop already.

Prop hire companies can also offer to source items for clients. Bundy (2019) explains that as long as the prop hire company is given enough time, from few days to a few weeks depending on the items, basically anything can be sourced. McFarlane (2019) states that usually prop hires will have everything productions need, but occasionally something more special or difficult to source can be requested by clients. Prop hire companies retain ownership of the sourced items and each piece is returned to the prop hire after the production ends. This allows for other productions to further benefit from the specially sourced props as well. At DRESD, McFarlane does not even charge extra fees for sourcing props for clients, as the items remain owned by her company (McFarlane 2019). However, Moorshead (2019) states that smaller prop hire companies, such as Scenery Salvage, might not have the resources to directly source props for clients, but might instead connect customers to different suppliers.

Productions strive to source each prop in the most cost-effective way. Hauldren (2019) indicates that productions may opt to hire anything from a paperclip to an army tank, depending on how each prop is to be used in the production. However, there are certain items that are usually bought regardless of the production. For example, soft furnishings that actors interact with, such as bed linen, pillows and duvets, tend to get purchased for hygienic reasons (Hauldren 2019). Respondents to the online survey indicate that mostly furniture and smaller dressing props would get sourced from a prop hire. Everyday modern objects or items that are consumed or need editing would more often be purchased (Online Survey UK 2018). Designer 2 states that:

“Prop hire companies are crucial to creating well-dressed sets, however, in the current climate of high production-value fantasy and sci-fi drama in both TV and film, it is very important to ask at every opportunity - should this prop be made or hired? It can make a huge difference to the integrity and depth of a film's art direction if every prop has had the utmost attention to detail. Some productions are excellent at dealing with this issue, others are not, and it is always reflected in the final product.”

(Designer 2, Online Survey UK 2018)
The available items dictate the visual look of a production to a certain degree, and the possibility for two features to appear similar exists. However, as discussed by Bundy (2019), there are a lot of options available, as everything from cots to gravestones can be sourced from various prop hire companies. Bundy adds that even if two productions were creating films set in one time period and featured the same props they can still achieve unique visual style. For example, out of two period dramas set in Tudor times, one might feature a kitchen and a hallway while the other is filmed in a lounge and a bedroom. The same collection of items from one prop hire could feature in both productions, but as they are dressed into different sets and surrounded by other items, the individual pieces become less noticeable (Bundy 2019). Powell (2019) concurs with Bundy by stating that an item can look completely different depending on the other objects dressed around it.

Based on the research findings, it can be stated that prop hire companies supply film industry productions with a majority of the props they require. From the views of Bundy (2019), Powell (2019), Hauldren (2019) and Topp (2019) it can be concluded that several productions can use the same props, as the overall visual style of each film is unique and individual dressing props seldom stand out from a set. The dressing props together with lighting, set construction and use of locations help set the mood and atmosphere for the productions. However, prop hire companies need to maintain the quality of their stock, as reusing objects multiple times and transporting them from one set to another can result in breakages or faded and battered surfaces, making them less desirable for film industry productions.

The following subsections will look closely at how having access to a prop hire can affect the work of art department professionals, the productions economically in terms of time and money, and the potential ecological effects filmmaking and hiring props can have on the environment. Together these sections form an overview of the potential benefits and drawbacks of sourcing props from hire companies, as well as further describing various aspects of film production in the United Kingdom.

5.2.1 Art Department

Art departments in British productions are structured in a hierarchical manner, which was introduced previously in section 2.4. However, the size of the art department, and therefore its structure, correlate with the size of the entire production and how much resources it has overall. Production designer Topp (2019) explains that on large feature films the art department might consist of over fifty people with each person doing their own particular job. On smaller productions, with art departments consisting of perhaps seven people, the jobs are divided more broadly. However, Topp indicates that every feature film art department has at least a production designer, an art director, a set decorator, a props buyer, a stand-by art director and a stand-by props person accompanied by art department assistants and trainees (Topp 2019).

The production designer has the final say in all visual aspects of a film production. Topp (2019), Hauldren (2019), Reece (2019) and Powell (2019) all indicated that the involvement of the designer in the prop sourcing process depends on the individual person and where their personal interests lie when it comes to the various stages of designing for film. The designer works closely with the set decorator to create appropriate settings for the characters and together they work towards achieving correct dressing for each set. Being able to divide the responsibility of sourcing props to the set decorator and props buyer allows the designer more time to focus on the overall visual look of the production (Topp 2019).
Reece (2019) indicates that the job of prop sourcing is usually the responsibility of the set decorator and props buyer in most productions, with the petty cash buyer sourcing incidental props or materials for construction. She states that out of the entire art department, the set decorator and props buyer are usually the ones who visit prop hire companies (Reece 2019). According to Powell (2019), the props buyer along with the set decorator can spend several days a week in prop houses looking for items for each set, given the production is located in the vicinity of a prop hire. The selected props are photographed and shown to the production designer for approval, after which the buyer proceeds to book the items from the prop hire companies (Powell 2019).

Topp (2019) discusses that having access to prop hire companies and knowledge of their stock can influence the design process to some extent. Designers can get inspired by items while browsing at a prop hire and alter their plans to accommodate certain props. However, the overall visual look usually remains the same as originally planned. Occasionally it can happen that props of the correct style are simply not available, and the plans must be modified. According to Topp, despite making changes to design plans, the final result can be equally functional as the original idea (Topp 2019). Hauldren (2019) adds that finding the key piece of furniture or dressing prop for a set can affect how the rest of the design shapes up. Prop hire companies allow the designer to view a large variety of appropriate pieces under one roof which can speed up the design process. Hauldren adds that often the budget limits the artistic vision and in order to achieve a desired look for a film the art department requires creative problem-solving skills. All the props and pieces of furniture stocked by prop hire companies offer designers tools for creating their sets, and the design can be influenced by the items themselves (Hauldren 2019).

The job responsibilities of a prop master can vary in the United Kingdom depending on the production. Hauldren (2019) explains that in American productions that are filmed in the United Kingdom it tends to be the job of the prop master to source action props due to slight differences in art department structure between European and American standards. In British productions the prop master does not source props but organises collections and transport for all the items sourced by the buyer, as well as arranges and schedules for each item to get to and from each set being during filming (Hauldren 2019). According to Powell (2019) and Hammond (2019), the props team does not get a say in what gets dressed into a set, as their job is to simply keep track of the props when they arrive to the studio or filming location until the moment the props get packed up and send back to where they came from after the filming finishes.

Each production will have a temporary prop store set up for the duration of filming where all the hired and purchased props are catalogued, categorized and stored, as Hauldren (2019) explains. In charge of the prop store and everything that comes in and goes out of it is a prop storeman. The prop stores are generally temporary, because the productions cannot be left holding any assets after the production ends and they cannot usually afford to pay extensive storage bills for long periods of time. However, Hauldren further indicates that especially television shows are likely to buy rather than hire items if the production knows that further seasons of the show will be made. In such cases the props are worth storing in the prop store for longer periods of time, as it saves the production from sourcing them again for the next season (Hauldren 2019). Topp (2019) in turn explains that film productions might keep hold of some props for up to six months in case any pick-up shots or reshoots are required.
Large production institutions with long running productions, such as the BBC, have permanent in-house prop stores. According to Hammond (2019), the BBC prop store contains everything any commercial prop hire company would but the stock is catered to the productions being filmed at the studios and consists of both bought and hired items organised according to which set they belong to. The BBC prop house also lends their personal stock out to other BBC productions being filmed elsewhere than their studios. Prop house storemen are responsible for making sure all the props are in the right place at the right time, organising transport for collections and returns, cataloguing, photographing and organising each separate prop into corresponding sets, checking and reporting any possible damages and keeping track of all the assets the company owns. They work closely with various prop houses and other suppliers in order to negotiate deals and to make sure the production does not pay for anything that was already damaged when it was sourced (Hammond 2019). Moreover, as expressed by Designer 4 (Online Survey UK 2018), theatres have permanent prop stores, as the companies are usually active for longer periods of time and theatre shows have multiple runs. Many film companies might only exist to create one film and morph into another company for the next production, making any permanent prop storages difficult to manage.

The following subsection takes a closer look at the economy of British film industry productions and analyses how the availability or limitations of various resources can affect set design and prop sourcing.

5.2.2 Economy

According to Powell (2019), the film industry has been affected by a surge in film and television streaming services and the changing viewing habits of people. Nowadays people often watch a full season of a television show in one day instead of catching one episode a week. Thus, the demand for more content has skyrocketed. This is directly reflected in the number of productions being filmed everywhere. The limited studio space and its high demand in turn require productions to be completed quicker. Additionally, due to the high viewing demand, production companies aim to create as many different features in a year as possible. The increasing amount of productions made by one production company does not necessarily mean the company has more money to spend on each. Instead, the same amount of money is being spent overall as was a few years earlier, but each individual feature is made with a smaller budget (Powell 2019).

Production budgets can vary from a couple of thousand Euros to several millions. According to Barnwell (2004), the art department is one of the more expensive departments in film production and usually has a budget of around 10% of the overall budget of the production. However, quality of design does not correlate with how much money is spend on it and lower budget films can be equally stylish as multimillion-dollar features (Barnwell 2004, p. 48). Hauldren (2019) explains that the production designer has the ultimate responsibility for the art department budget. They allocate money to different sets, special effects, stunts, animals and vehicles depending of the needs of each scene and how much money there is to spend overall. Hauldren further expresses that “[y]ou ultimately as an art director, as a designer, have a pot of money and it is really how you feel that money is best spend to service the production”. Supervising art director usually keeps track of the construction budget and the props buyer runs the set decorating budget. They report to the production designer what has been ordered or bought in order for the designer to track the overall art department budget. In turn the designer is responsible of reporting the overall spend of the art department to
the production department, where the accountants keep a close eye on the budgets of every
department. Moreover, Hauldren indicates that it is vital to discuss with the director the scenes
that require a lot of extras, as well as the use of CGI throughout the film. This helps the designer
to manage the budget correctly from early on by allocating money where it is required and, for
example, not building something that is planned to be created in CGI later (Hauldren 2019).

Each production needs to consider what is worth building in a studio and what can be filmed
on location, as each scene requires some kind of backdrop to shoot against. Hauldren (2019)
explains that building sets from scratch is expensive, as the process includes studio space,
material and labour costs and often takes some time to complete. In order to save money,
productions with lower budgets are more reliant on finding good locations to film in. Regardless
of the budget, most productions still tend to have more locations than studio sets. Location
budget is kept separate from the art department budget, thus filming on location is cheaper
from the art department perspective than filming in a studio. Hauldren gives an example of
why a production might opt to pay £1000 an hour to film on location instead of building in a
studio by stating that:

“[A]lthough it’s an expensive location it might actually be a really good
place to get, because you get fantastic scale and proportion that you simply
can’t get from building. And there maybe is absolutely nothing that the
art department have to do to that location . . . so it could be a very cheap
location to film in. Because the cost of the location doesn’t come out of the
art department budget.” (Hauldren 2019)

Locations can also be prohibitively expensive. They might be far away from the unit base and
require a lot of transport to get to for dressing the set and filming. Furthermore, organising the
logistics can impact on the schedule (Hauldren 2019). However, creating spaces from scratch
in a studio space allows for total control of every single design element, which is not always
possible when filming on location. The professionals working for the production must discuss
and decide together which sets are worth building and when locations should be used, as
production companies aim to make as much profit as possible and cutting down on production
costs is one way to ensure that. A balance between staying on budget and achieving artistic
goals is essential to maintain throughout the production, as a poorly made film usually does
not make money at the box office. Hauldren (2019) and Topp (2019) both state that calculated
compromises are necessary in order to achieve a finished film, because there is usually not
enough money or time to achieve everything the designer wants.

According to Barnwell (2004), the art department spends the pre-production time
conceptualising, researching, drawing, planning and building the sets. The average pre-
production time for a feature film or television drama is two or three months, but it can vary
from few weeks to several years depending on the production (Barnwell 2004). Powell (2019)
explains that the props buyer and the set decorator spend the pre-production time organising
and planning the props required, but often the scripts can still change at that stage. If the
changes affect filming schedules, this can mean that some of the props booked for a certain
time are no longer available to fit the new schedule. Therefore, the buyer and set decorator
are usually kept busy sourcing props all the way until the end of filming (Powell 2019). Reece
(2019) explains that access to prop hire companies enables various props to be sourced both
well in advance and last minute, even on the morning of a shoot day when the props are needed
on set.
Knowing where and how to source each prop is essential in order to keep the production on schedule and on budget. Powell (2019), Reece (2019), Hauldren (2019), Topp (2019) and several of the Online Survey UK (2018) respondents all agree that having access to prop hire companies saves productions both time and money. However, this depends on how close to a prop hire company the production unit is located. As discussed in the previous section 5.1, most prop hire companies in the United Kingdom are located in the Greater London area. Powell (2019) explains that this means productions close to that area are likely to use the hire companies often and productions further away need to plan more carefully when it is most efficient to make the trip to London and back. Productions in other areas might also opt to buy or borrow more items, as making the trip to a hire company can be more time consuming and expensive than the production can afford (Powell 2019). Nevertheless, Powell (2019) and Reece (2019) agree that being able to source a large quantity of all the props needed for a production from a few places that are located close together saves productions both time and money in the long run.

Powell (2019) explains that the productions try to keep the hire fees as low as possible, meaning the goods are hired only for the amount of time they are needed for. However, it might overall be cheaper to buy props for the sets that are used regularly throughout the production, as the hire fees can stack up over several weeks and become very expensive (Powell 2019). According to Reece (2019), set decorators and buyers are sometimes able to negotiate deals for the hired goods because they visit prop hire companies often and become regular customers. However, as Hauldren (2019) indicates, some items can be too expensive to buy regardless of how long they are needed for. For example, a piece of antique furniture might cost 15,000 Euros from an antiques dealer. This would put its hire fee at 1500 Euros per week, if it was available from a prop hire. Despite still being expensive to hire, no production would be able to pay 15,000 Euros for a piece for furniture, making hiring a feasible option (Hauldren 2019).

Topp (2019) explains that due to limitation of time or money, occasionally some sets can appear emptier than intended. Nevertheless, she indicates that the stock supplied by various prop hire companies makes it possible to find all the required props from the United Kingdom (Topp 2019). Hauldren (2019) and Topp (2019) discussed a phenomenon they had both observed within the British film industry, that when one film of a certain genre, such as sci-fi or Victorian period drama, is made and becomes popular, it creates a surge of that type of productions for some time. This can lead to, for example five Victorian period dramas being filmed at the same time in the United Kingdom, which is then reflected on the demand of that style of props. Hauldren (2019) explains that since the hire fee is determined by what is actually collected and taken away from a prop hire and there are no cost to just booking items, many set dressers and buyers book more than they need as a precautionary matter. Topp (2019) describes one situation where she was forced to find alternative places from across the country to source props from because every prop of the genre she was after had been booked out from all of the prop hires in London by other productions. However, she adds that such a situation is a rare occurrence, as usually the productions that require similar props are not filmed at the exact same days and, thus, most props are available for the required days of each production (Topp 2019).

As discussed by Powell (2019) and Topp (2019), product placement is a commonly used way to require a variety of items, such as electronics, designer furniture, food or cosmetics for a production. In the United Kingdom some companies have specialised in providing product placement for film and television. These companies liaise directly with the suppliers and
arrange the contracts that are then agreed upon with the film industry productions. The items acquired this way are free to use by productions and are returned to the suppliers after the filming wraps. Product placement provides free advertising for the products and free items for the use of productions, which in turn helps to keep the budget under control (Powell 2019; Topp 2019).

In British productions the budget and use of money is monitored carefully by the production department. According to Hauldren (2019), specific art department professionals are usually trusted the job of handling money, but theoretically anyone could use the art department budget to buy and order necessary items. In addition to the props buyer and petty cash buyer, whose main job it is to spend money on props and materials, the production designer, art director and set decorator might source incidental items. Members of the construction team can source materials required for building the sets, as they have knowledge of what is needed and where it can be sourced from. Hauldren explains that orders are written out from an official order pad which guarantees payment for all the hired and bought goods, as well as helps the production to track the art department budget. Often production might also set a limit on how much a single purchase can be. Any purchases exceeding this limit need to be approved by a member of the production department, such as the production manager or the accountant, before they can be completed (Hauldren 2019).

A production designer creates a budget estimate at the start of each production by breaking down the needs of every set from the script and allocating money to meet those needs. The money spent by the art department should follow the budget estimate, regardless of who does the purchasing and ordering. Hauldren (2019) explains that the production designer can opt to work with the budget in one of two ways. First, they can request from the production department the entire sum of money allocated for the art department, including the wages of every professional. In this case the designer takes the responsibility of negotiating the wages with the members of the art department personally, ostensibly giving the art department more money to spend on screen. By taking responsibility of the wages, the designer has control over the size of the art department and how long everyone is hired for. Second, the designer might not want to deal with any of the wages and therefore requests only the money that can be spent on the sets. The production retains the responsibility of negotiating the wages of the art department professionals, which has the potential to lead to a shortage of employees if the production is trying to save money or has not discussed with the designer how many professionals are required to complete the production on time (Hauldren 2019).

Time equals money in the film industry productions. Hauldren (2019) discusses how the filming days are largely dependent on the availability of the actors, as securing certain actors for the production has the potential to help sell it to wider audiences and, thus, make more profit. Once the filming days are confirmed, the art department schedule is calculated backwards from them. Each set needs to be built, finished, dressed and ready when filming is scheduled to commence in them. When filming on location, time needs to be allocated for also clearing the space before any props and furnishings can go in. This means that art department work on location might start already a couple of weeks before the shooting day and the time spend emptying, building, painting, dressing and lighting the space needs to be budgeted for. Furthermore, the sets need to be designed, materials and colours chosen, and props sourced in advance for the construction to advance on schedule and not delay the filming (Hauldren 2019).
In addition to the availability of actors, filming schedules are created based on the script breakdowns and time requirements of the HODs. Topp (2019) indicates that often the script and previous experience tells the production designer how much time is required to complete each set on time for filming. She explains that usually it is possible to request more time from the production department if it is necessary. Especially on films that require historic details to be accurate, pre-production time can be extended in order to gain more time for research. Additionally, if very large sets need to be built, designers might request more time or personnel to complete their construction. Topp further explains that usually there is not enough time or money to get every set perfect and compromises are inevitable. However, careful planning and open discussions with the production team help filming to commence on schedule (Topp 2019).

All props need to be allocated a place when a production ends. Everything that has been hired or borrowed is returned to the owners at the end of production. Topp (2019) states that each production has different practices for dealing with their collected prop storage. Some might want to hold on to every single item they have purchased, some sell everything or leave it up to the designer to decide where all the props end up. Hauldren (2019) explains that if a production has not been commissioned to create a sequel film or series, they most likely do not want to hold onto any purchased props. Productions can recoup money by selling props after filming has finished. This helps the production gain some invested money back, as well as save them from having to pay for the storage of the items (Hauldren 2019). According to Topp (2019), items can also be donated to charity shops and different charitable organisations, or they can be recycled, burned or send to landfill. Especially if the production has run out of money, the quickest and cheapest option might sometimes be to load everything on a skip and send it to be disposed of by entities outside of the film industry (Topp 2019).

In the next subsection the sustainability of filmmaking practices are discussed and the ecology of various prop sourcing methods is evaluated.

5.2.3 Sustainability
Filmmaking is commonly regarded as a wasteful industry. Countless man-hours, billions of dollars and heaps of materials are used globally every year in order to produce digital files of film, which can be viewed by people for entertainment or educational purposes. In a sense, filmmaking is an incidental consuming moment that involves perhaps a few hundred people, but its product is virtually eternal with the potential to reach billions of people and, thus, being highly influential. Sustainable filmmaking has been extensively studied on a global level by various researchers, for instance the California Integrated Waste Management Board (2006) and scholar Ekin Özdemirci (2016) at Beykent University in Turkey. Therefore, this section will mostly introduce views expressed by professionals working in the British film industry and regard how sustainability is visible in the everyday practice.

Castley (2015) indicates that the impact of filmmaking on the environment consists of three factors: scale, extent and duration. The scale can range from local to global, extent refers to the size of the impact and duration considers how long the environment is exposed for. Filmmaking produces greenhouse gas emissions through fuel consumption, which affect the environment on a global scale. On a local scale, filmmaking creates light and sound pollution, alters landscape and increases waste generation through set construction. Different nations have regulations on where filming can take place and how much the environment can be affected by
it (Castley 2015). According to Harper (2018), productions are implementing more sustainable practices throughout the filmmaking process. As a 50 million dollar feature generally produces the equivalent of around 4,000 metric tons of CO2, many production companies are striving towards sustainable practices by offsetting greenhouse gas emission, diverting waste from going to landfill, reducing water usage and aiming for energy efficiency (Harper 2018).

Film productions that aim to work in a sustainable manner need to consider how all materials can be safely discarded, preferably through recycling and reusing, after the production. The art department line of work is one of the more wasteful sides of every production. Everything from creating cardboard scale models for the director to visualise different spaces to wallpapering the living room set of the main character requires the use of raw materials. A cardboard model is easily recycled but it might not be as easy to dispose of a studio wide cave set carved fully out of polystyrene, for instance. McFarlane (2019) explains that lightweight, durable and easily manipulated materials, such as polystyrene and expanding foam, are commonly used in set construction. However, these materials cannot be burned and take hundreds of years to decompose, making them a hazardous material for the environment.

Topp (2019) explains that certain items are often discarded to landfill after a production finishes. For example, broken items can be difficult to sell or donate onward, as private people or charity organisations are usually not interested in them. Additionally, the charred remains of items burned during filming would be of little use for other productions (Topp 2019). Powell (2019) further indicates that a lot of the construction material, such as wood and paints, also gets thrown away without any further consideration. She theorises that a structured scheme for recycling would be necessary in order for film industry professionals to reuse more materials. Furthermore, productions could benefit from a specialised person overseeing the recycling and reusing process throughout the production period, as the art department professionals currently do not have the time to monitor everything that gets discarded during set construction and dressing (Powell 2019).

Most sets are built from flats, which can often be reused alongside scenery elements, such as doors, windows, fences and ceiling pieces. However, because scenery elements are usually made from timber or metal, productions might opt to load them onto skips and send them to be recycled when the sets are dismantled, simply because it is faster than finding a new home for them. Topp (2019) explains that larger studios might have a storage full of flats that can be hired out by productions. This way each production does not need to bring everything they need for set building with them every time. Flats can be stacked up for compact storage and they can be painted and wallpapered countless of times before they reach the end of their lifespan, making them ideal for reuse (Topp 2019).

According to Hauldren (2019) and Powell (2019), props can be easily shipped to different countries or from abroad back to the United Kingdom, as it is not uncommon for a production to film in multiple locations around the globe. Hauldren (2019) explains that some items might be cheaper to buy abroad and ship back the unit base. Conversely, some items might not be available from abroad and need to be sourced from the United Kingdom. Continuity between shots is often the reason behind items being shipped between countries. For example, an exterior for a set might be located in Germany but the interior is built inside a studio in London. In order to maintain continuity, it might be necessary to ship the exterior door between the two filming locations. Additionally, even if prop hire companies do not offer delivery services to

10 A flat is a piece of fake wall, usually made out of a timber frame and an MDF board for the front surface. They can be attached together to create spaces, are easy to move and lightweight.
abroad locations, they usually do not mind the customers shipping objects there. Production
can use objects hired out from a prop hire freely, as long as they are returned in the condition
they were hired out in (Hauldren 2019).

A coherent final feature is the priority for every production and if accurate continuity between
shots requires props, gear, crew or cast to be transported between different countries, this
will be organised by the production. However, they might often prioritise the quick and easy
solution over the more sustainable one. For instance, shipping a door from the United Kingdom
to Germany and back requires the production to budget for petrol, wages of the driver and
possible vehicle hire, as well as scheduling for the door to arrive on time for filming. However,
this is likely to be faster and cheaper than attempting to create two identical doors, one in
each country. Custom making two doors requires double the materials and labour costs of
the craftsmen. Additionally, it cannot necessarily be guaranteed that the same materials are
available in both countries. Furthermore, even if the materials used were identical, the finishing
paintwork might be difficult to get exact, especially if the door needs to look old and weathered.
Coordinating craftsmen to create identical doors to be used in the two countries can save
money on transport but might end up costing more in other areas, not to mention potentially
risking a break in the continuity of the film. Furthermore, using double the materials to create
two doors might not be any more sustainable than transporting the original one. McFarlane
(2019) confirms these views by stating that “from a cost-effective point of view, travelling a
set is a lot cheaper for a production company than building another one”.

As discussed in the previous section 5.2.2, most productions do not want to hold on to any
purchased props after the filming has finished, especially if there is no guarantee of sequels or
further series. Paying for large storage spaces to hold items for an indefinite amount of time
is not something every production can afford. However, as described by Topp (2019), Reece
(2019) and Powell (2019), it would be wasteful and unfortunate to have to send everything
to landfill, since most of the props sourced for productions are in good condition. Therefore,
props are often either sold to cast and crew or donated to either charity shops or prop hire
companies. Items donated to a prop hire become available for other film industry productions,
as well as increase the stock quantity and variety available (Topp 2019; Reece 2019; Powell
2019). These views are concurrent with those expressed by the respondents to Online Survey
UK (2018); however, about half of the survey respondents indicated that a large amount of
props and scenery are also destroyed and send to landfill.

Hammond (2019) expresses that prop hire companies help minimise waste created by the art
department side of filmmaking, as every individual prop for every production does not need
to be made from scratch or purchased for it be used once. Instead, the items that exist can be
reused multiple times by several productions because a prop hire has made them available
(Hammond 2019). Hauldren (2019) explains that being able to hire a large amount of the props
needed for each production allows for the props to be packed up when the filming finishes and
returned to the prop hire companies they were hired from. Paperwork about each item that has
been hired is kept by the art department, accounts department and the prop hire companies.
This helps to source a specific prop again in the future. Additionally, it helps the prop hire
companies to make sure everything gets returned to them (Hauldren 2019).

Despite often being able to take donations from various productions, prop hire companies have
limited space at their disposal and sometimes they also need to dispose of some of their stock.
Bundy (2019) explains that only items that are completely broken and beyond repair are ever
thrown out. More often items, especially furniture, are donated to charity or small organisations
and drama groups. They can also be donated or sold on various websites dedicated to reusing and recycling (Bundy 2019). Moorshead (2019) adds that, since he only has cold storage space at Scenery Salvage Prop Hire, clothing and paperback books get donated away, as they would suffer from the cold and damp environment during winter time.

In the United Kingdom, two prop hire companies have specialised in recycling and reusing props and scenery elements, adding an even more sustainable option to the prop hiring process. First, Scenery Salvage is located in the Greater London area. Moorshead (2019) explains that having started out as a set manufacturing company, Scenery Salvage has evolved over twenty-five years to also offer storage for sets, recycling raw materials and hiring out props. They offer a full strike down service for film sets, where a team of people will dismantle everything and take the materials away for recycling. A production can also strike their own sets and send lorries full of material to Scenery Salvage, where the raw materials are sorted by type and recycled appropriately. Moorshead states that “there is always unfortunately going to be stuff that goes to landfill. But, as I say, it is a question of reducing it as much as possible”. At Scenery Salvage wood is burned to heat the warehouses, metal is send to a scrap yard, plastics are recycled by specialist, polystyrene is heated and crushed into bales which are then sold on, and props are stored at the prop hire department. Every item stocked by Scenery Salvage prop hire has been discarded by productions and given a new lease on life by the company. Instead of burning or sending the items to landfill, they are made available for other productions (Moorshead 2019).

Second, DRESD in South Wales also offers a full service of recycling sets and props. McFarlane (2019) explains that the company offers recycling services for film sets, hires out recycled props and scenery, organises workshops for the local community, sources props and material in a sustainable way for productions and offers studio space for filming. According to McFarlane, offering space to film and materials to build sets with creates a full circle of recovery, while also cutting down on transport costs significantly. DRESD acquires most of their stock from productions either by buying a large quantity of items and materials from them and, thus, also helping productions recoup some money, or by offering to store sets for the production for a set amount of time in case of reshoots, after which the items are released to DRESD. What sets the company apart from other prop hires, in addition to the sustainable ways of working, is that everything they offer for hire can be customised to suit the needs of the clients. Items can be repainted, things can be added or taken away and sets can be completely changed to suit each production. McFarlane describes DRESD as 99% ecological company, as nothing is taken to landfill. Furthermore, the delivery and collection routes are planned to be efficient in order for the material transportation to be as environmentally friendly as possible (McFarlane 2019).

McFarlane (2019) also discusses how the final goal of recycling all set building materials is that “eventually they [new sets] won’t be created, they won’t be cutting down trees, they will be reusing all the sets that are available”. One of the current challenges for spreading the word on sustainable filmmaking is being able to inform as many individual as possible about all the options available, as film industry productions have a fast turnover of professionals. Another is letting designers know that using recycled materials from the sets of other designers will not infringe on their design, as the raw materials can be rebuilt into any assembly and everything is cleared from copyright when acquired by prop hire companies. Intellectual property rights are a concern especially for large production companies, as they want to prevent props from a big feature ending up sold online or their sets being used by other productions as they are. Therefore, scenery recycling companies, such as DRESD, break down every set into their raw material form and nothing gets reused in its original assembly (McFarlane 2019).
McFarlane (2019) theorises that in order for the filmmaking practices in the United Kingdom to gain a more sustainable standard, the big studios would need to implement stronger green initiative. In order to achieve this, larger institutions, such as the British Academy of Film and Television Arts (BAFTA) and the British Film Institute (BFI), need to also want to lobby for more environmentally friendly filmmaking practices, as scenery recycling companies alone are too small to make a difference across the entire industry. BAFTA already offers a free online carbon calculator tool called the Albert Consortium, which helps productions to monitor their carbon footprint and work towards more sustainable practices. As McFarlane discusses, television productions engage reasonably well with the sustainable practices, but in order to make a real difference the larger film productions and big studios would need to participate more (McFarlane 2019). According to Topp (2019) and McFarlane (2019), currently large studios, such as Pinewood and Warner Brothers, organise recycling and reusing sets in their own preferred ways and these practices could be improved upon. However, it is equally important that companies, such as DRESD and Scenery Salvage, to make the recycling services easily available for all film industry productions across the country.

5.3 What if there were no prop hire companies?
This section discusses how the British film industry productions would be affected if there no longer were any prop hire companies in the country.

The effects of having access to prop hire companies and their various services discussed in previous sections give an indication of their benefits outweighing any potential negatives. Furthermore, several of the film industry and art department professionals interviewed for this research stated that prop hire companies are essential to the industry. Moorshead (2019) even states that a lot of productions, especially smaller budget ones, would be unlikely to happen without access to the services offered by prop hire companies. This raises a question as to how productions be affected if there were no prop hire companies?

Reece (2019) indicates that if a production did not have access to a prop hire company, they would most likely opt for purchasing most of the necessary props and furniture instead. Because designers usually aim to achieve a unique visual look for each production, distinctive and unusual pieces that have not been seen on other productions are on high demand already. In general productions do not purchase everything from one place in order to avoid looking like showrooms or adverts for generic furniture companies, such as IKEA. They also utilise several prop hire companies while sourcing props to get around the same issue and to create unique compositions of furniture and dressing props. Sourcing unique pieces takes a lot of time, which productions are able to make up for by sourcing a large quantity of props from a prop hire company and adding to the design with specifically sourced key items. Reece theorises that without prop hires, more time would need to be spent sourcing everyday items, in turn leaving less time for sourcing the special items that make each set look unique (Reece 2019).

Powell (2019) explains that without access to prop hire companies, most of the time allocated for prop sourcing would be spent looking for one or two items around the country. This would especially affect the schedules of period dramas, where every item must be style and era appropriate. Powell states that “without them [prop hire companies] there just would not be enough things out there to dress the sets” (Powell 2019). Hauldren (2019) explains that period dramas are popular in the United Kingdom, due to the long and vast history of the country.
Dramas can be set in any period from Stone Age to modern day and within one year a designer can work on several productions set in completely different eras. According to Hauldren, being able to create high-quality designs from various different periods is largely dependent on prop hire companies, as they make items from all eras available. The extensive variety of items stocked by prop hire companies provides visual and historical credibility for each production (Hauldren 2019). Bundy (2019) states that a prop hire is the first place to call when sourcing props and she is of the opinion that dramas could not be made without the services provided by prop hire companies.

Topp (2019) explains that not having access to a prop hire with good quality items and comprehensive stock makes prop sourcing more difficult and time consuming. Topp compares her experiences working and sourcing props in Sweden and the United Kingdom. She completed one production in Stockholm, where props can be hired from Sveriges Television AB (SVT). Topp explains that, compared to London prop hires, the furniture selection at SVT was small and deficient. Therefore, she resulted in sourcing most of the required furniture from shops instead. Topp theorises that a similar situation could happen in productions being filmed in Northern England and Scotland, where there are less prop hire companies than in London. However, within the United Kingdom props can easily be transported from across the country to wherever the filming takes place (Topp 2019).

Powell (2019) explains that not being able to hire props would affect art department structure, schedules and budgets. Props would need to be sourced from a wider area if there were no specialised hire companies supplying them. Therefore, transport costs and time spent on travelling would increase (Powell 2019). Respondents to the online survey indicate that not having access to a prop hire would require a greater investment from productions to scheduling, fabricating and budgeting everything, and sourcing props on current schedules would be extremely difficult (Online Survey UK 2018). Hauldren (2019) theorises that productions would need to keep the schedules as they currently are regardless of having no access to prop hire companies. In order to accommodate the needs of the art department, the productions would need to employ a larger crew. Hauldren explains that currently one person with a van can do around twelve collections from prop hire companies in London within one day and collect a huge number of items. Without the services provided by prop hire companies, a buyer would need to travel around different shops in order to find a couple of items in a day and negotiate deals with every seller separately. Moreover, production might need to rely on locations more, as the location budget is separate from the art department budget. If a location has everything required for filming the art department does not need to spend much money on dressing it with props and furniture and can focus their resources on other areas (Hauldren 2019).

As stated by Hauldren (2019), a production company aims to finish each feature with no assets left in their book keeping. This means each production aims to own nothing at the end of filming, if no sequel films or further series of a television show have been commissioned. Therefore, all props, furniture pieces and scenery elements need to be disposed of. Reece (2019) and Hauldren (2019) indicate that if all props were purchased, a production would want to recoup some of the money spent on them. This in turn would mean organising selling the props either to other productions or various individuals, for example through social media groups online. The production would need to employ individuals to take care of this process after the filming has finished, which requires budgeting for extra wages. In addition, being able to sell everything can take time, depending on the style of the production (Reece 2019; Hauldren 2019).
Hauldren (2019) and Topp (2019) explain that the production services offered by the British film industry draw in foreign productions. Topp (2019) states that productions from other European countries often source their props from the United Kingdom, due to the amount of prop hires and stock available. Since many European countries do not have as many or any prop hire companies, or they do not stock the desired style or era of furniture, sourcing props from the United Kingdom can be a cost-effective option for European productions as well. Hauldren (2019) adds that the availability of prop hires and other production services, as well as good locations for filming and skilled professionals, also act as a draw for foreign productions to come film in the United Kingdom. This in turn supports the British film industry and allows for the various production services to grow and expand (Hauldren 2019).

Bundy (2019) and McFarlane (2019) explain that prop hire companies offer productions a sustainable way of sourcing props, as every item can be reused by multiple productions. McFarlane (2019) discusses how props and scenery elements have a lifespan of several years as long as they are not intentionally destroyed during filming. Farley (2019) adds that apart from transporting items, which cannot be avoided in any means of sourcing props, a prop hire is an ecologically friendly business model. Without prop hire companies in close proximity to major production centres, props would need to be sourced from wider areas. This increases petrol consumption, as a larger number of vans and lorries would be required to travel longer distances to pickup and return props, which in turn places a larger strain on the environment.

Based on the research findings it can be stated that if there were no prop hire companies in the United Kingdom, this would affect the productions mostly in negative ways. As stated by the various professionals, not having access to prop hires to source props from would primarily affect the production budgets and schedules. Additionally, this would affect the structure of art departments, as more professionals would need to be employed. Furthermore, hiring props offers a sustainable option when compared to other prop sourcing methods, such as buying or making them from scratch, since goods available for hire are reused several times. Hammond (2019) concludes that sourcing props from a specialist hire company is more convenient than purchasing everything, simply due to the enormous amounts of props every production requires. However, as stated by Hauldren (2019), having to find alternative ways to source props might lead to more creative filmmaking.
This chapter takes a closer look at the prop sourcing practices in Finland. Finland was chosen as the second case study country because it differs drastically from the United Kingdom in terms of film industry size, art department structure and prop sourcing methods. First-hand testimonials collected from the field are analysed to formulate a comprehensive understanding about the art department structure and the work of its professionals. Special focus is given to how props are sourced in a country without prop hire companies.

The following section introduces how props are sourced by the art department professionals when they do not have access to a commercial prop hire company. The discussion also considers how this kind of situation affects the economy of the productions and the sustainability of prop sourcing practices.

6.1 Prop Sourcing Without Prop Hire Companies

Props are sourced from a variety of suppliers for Finnish productions because there is no place that has specialised in providing props for the film industry needs. Rossi (2019), Kankaanpää (2019b), Mikkola (2019) and the respondents to Online Survey Finland (2018) list flea markets, shops, recycling centres, collectors, social media groups, online shops and private individuals as some of the main resources for acquiring props. Props can also be ordered from specialist prop makers if the schedule and budget allow. Occasionally suitable items that have been discarded by others can even be found from skips (Online survey Finland 2018). Kankaanpää (2019b) explains that many production designers and prop masters have personal prop storages where they have collected items from productions they have worked on (Kankaanpää 2019b). Additionally, in the recent years the Finnish national broadcasting company Yleisradio (YLE) has opened up their prop storage for the use of other production companies as well. Their practices will be discussed more in detail in section 6.2.

The type of production dictates the style of props required. Kankaanpää (2019b) explains that both contemporary and period dramas are commonly made in Finland. Science fiction and fantasy features are rare, as they often require every set and prop to be custom made to fit in with the overall style. This can often prove very expensive to accomplish within the Finnish film industry and these features might not receive any funding from the Finnish Film Foundation. Nevertheless, according to Kankaanpää (2019b), every production requires good lighting fixtures, whether the filming takes place on location or in a studio. The lighting choice in turn affects the selection of curtains and all lighting choices need to be agreed with the director of photography. Moreover, contemporary productions usually require electronics, which are often sourced from different importers (Kankaanpää 2019b).
Mikkola (2019) emphasises that it is essential for certain aspects to be correct when items are sourced for a period drama because people learn history from films and television shows. In order to accurately reflect the atmosphere and conventions of the period, set dressing and hand props need to be era appropriate and it is important to consider the social customs of the era in question. For example, in a war time drama depicting the lives of average citizens, items that were considered luxury during the era, such as sugar or coffee, should be replaced with commonly used substitutes because depression and lack of resources would have made it almost impossible for the average citizens to acquire the genuine ones (Mikkola 2019).

Certain items can be difficult to source in Finland. The geographic location, smallness of the overall market, lack of prop hire companies and limited production resources offer challenges for sourcing items. The 29 respondents to Online Survey Finland (2018) indicate that period pieces, electronics and specialist props, such as a hospital or police items, are often difficult to locate. The respondents explain that sometimes alternative design solutions are necessary because the intended props cannot be found within the time frame available. However, in a creative process there is usually more than one appropriate solution and many of the respondents identify creative problem solving as part of their job. Often the reason for having to result in using alternative plans is the lack of resources because anything can be sourced with sufficient time and money (Online survey Finland 2018). According to Mikkola (2019), nowadays prop sourcing is becoming increasingly more difficult due to the increase in minimalistic and clutter-free lifestyles. Older generations used to hold on to everything that could one day be useful. Therefore, warehouses and attics owned by various people and businesses used to be overflowing with items that could be sourced cheaply and quickly for film use. Now most of the storages have been emptied and the miscellaneous collections of objects taken to recycling centres or to landfill, limiting the supply of items for film productions (Mikkola 2019).

Items are occasionally shipped to Finland from other countries, if it is faster or cheaper than sourcing them locally. Mikkola (2019) explains that shipping props to other countries is straightforward and necessary if the required items cannot be sourced from the country where filming takes place. Props have also been shipped from Finland to abroad for filming. For example, most of the items originally sourced for Finnish television series The Iron Age (1982) were shipped to Iceland to be used in The White Viking (1991), as nothing appropriate could be sourced from the country. Even large items, such as three meters wide bear-skin bellows weighing 80 kilos, were sent to Iceland for the production (Mikkola 2019). Moreover, Kankaanpää (2019b) indicates that Finnish productions are often cautious about utilising European prop hire companies. Despite having close connection to the neighbouring film industries in other aspects of filmmaking, Finnish productions still source props mainly from the local area. Kankaanpää hypothesises that this may be due to the lack of specialised prop masters with connections to European prop hire companies, as well as the somewhat isolated geographic location of Finland from the rest of Europe (Kankaanpää 2019b).

Hiring and borrowing items are both commonly used practices to source props in Finnish productions. Designer 4 (Online Survey Finland 2018) explains that the key difference between borrowing and hiring items is the role of the customer. When a production hires something, they become the customer and have the right to use the hired goods. When something is borrowed, the owner is the customer and the production is responsible for fulfilling the loan agreements. For example, suppliers might loan items in exchange for visibility, and it becomes the responsibility of the production to provide it. Many of the survey respondents state that they aim to pay compensation even for borrowed goods, in case the items are damaged or lost during filmmaking. Designer 8 states that the production department should budget for props
and set dressing in the same manner that film cameras and other equipment is budgeted for because set design is one of the most prominent aspects of the feature. Designer 8 explains that they pay a compensation for every item they source, as they do not want the production department to think that achieving the visual goals cheaply is a priority for designers. Designer 14 concurs to the views of Designer 8 and adds that it is unprofessional for the production department to assume that props should be sourced for free, especially for any production that aims to turn a profit. Some of the respondents indicate that offering to pay a compensation upright can make sourcing props easier, as many companies are reluctant to offer their stock for free (Online survey Finland 2018).

Prop can also be sourced by purchasing within the limitation of the art department budget. Several of the survey respondents (Online Survey Finland 2018) explain that the art department might opt to purchase items if doing collections and returns is especially time consuming. For example common dressing items, such as cutlery and office supplies, would not be collected from around the country, even if they were available for free, because of the additional cost of petrol and hours it takes to collect the items. Instead, such items are overall cheaper to purchase from a shop nearby the unit base. However, a key piece of furniture or a hero prop could be sourced even for far away, as they are integral to the feature. In addition, items that are intended to be consumed, broken or damaged during filming are always purchased for the production (Online survey Finland 2018).

Sourcing props by either hiring or borrowing benefits the film industry in many ways. Kankaanpää (2019b) indicates that it is better for a production overall if props can be hired or borrowed instead of purchasing, as these methods can save productions both time and money. The art department often aims to return items that are no longer needed already during filming. This is done in preparation for wrap, as the time allocated for striking sets and returning items is often limited (Kankaanpää 2019b). According to the Online Survey Finland (2018) respondents, borrowing or hiring items is beneficial when the production company does not have adequate storage space available. Items can be returned to their owners after the production ends for reuse, which saves the production company from paying for their storage. Additionally, the environment benefits from items being reused instead of being stored them indefinitely after one use or sending them to landfill (Online Survey Finland 2018).

The following subsection discusses the structure of Finnish art departments and how the responsibilities of prop sourcing are divided amongst Finnish film industry professionals.

6.1.1 Art Department

Art departments in Finnish productions tend to be small compared to the standards of other countries. According to Kankaanpää (2019b), until the 1980s and 1990s productions were created with minimal amount of crew members. Therefore, it used to be the norm for the production designer to work around the clock in order to finish the designs for each set, source props, monitor budgets and manage construction. Kankaanpää indicates that some of the old approaches and attitudes are still reflected in the current film industry. For example, the designer might often need to negotiate with the production department how many professionals should be employed to the art department (Kankaanpää 2019a). Rossi (2019) explains that the general size of the art department has increased a little bit over the past few decades. However, the designer is still often required to justify the size of the art department to the producer and in many cases the final art department remains smaller than the production would require (Rossi 2019).
The structure of a Finnish art department is dictated by how many professionals the production can afford to employ. According to Kankaanpää (2019b), the smallest art departments can consist of two people, between whom all the work of the entire art department is shared. Kankaanpää explains that this is a common set up in productions with a budget of under one million Euros. On larger productions the standard size of an art department is five people, which Kankaanpää thinks is still too few. He considers that each production should strive to employ at least the HODs and key professionals of each department, as well as assistants and runners (Kankaanpää 2019b). Rossi (2019) agrees by stating that an off-set art department should in turn consist of a production designer, art director, two prop masters and a graphics designer. On-set art department should include at least a stand-by props master, an assistant and a construction crew as needed (Rossi 2019). This would average the entire art department to seven professionals and the additional construction crew, which is a common structure for European productions.

The Finnish art department structure does not include all the job titles commonly used in other countries. For example, instead of employing a set decorator to dress sets, a props buyer to source props and a prop master to organise transport and storage for the items, all these jobs are done by the prop master11 in Finnish productions. Therefore, when referring to a prop master in this section, this job title is thought to contain all the responsibilities listed prior. Due to these responsibilities being allocated to the prop master, the Finnish film industry is lacking the roles of set dressers and props buyers entirely, as well as appropriate translated titles for these roles. Kankaanpää (2019b) explains that the role of a prop master almost disappeared when the role of an art director, another title that did not used to exist, was introduced into the Finnish art department structure. This was due to the production side assuming that the art director would take on the role of a prop master as well, instead of dividing the responsibilities. Kankaanpää hypothesises that one of the reasons as to why some art department job titles do not yet exists in Finnish productions could simply be that no one has specialised to work such roles. Another reason could be the small size of the overall film industry. Furthermore, schools and universities do not offer courses for students to specialise in different roles within the art department, but instead everyone is taught the role of the production designer (Kankaanpää 2019b).

Kankaanpää (2019b) argues that achieving international standards for the art department practices in Finland would be easily achievable, as long as the production budgets allow for it. He indicates that some film industry professionals are already working towards achieving a more structured art department for Finnish productions, as the hierarchical system can benefit both the production and the professionals. For example, a unified standard of filmmaking globally could make it easier for productions to film in other countries and various professionals could work for international productions without having to adapt to different practices each time (Kankaanpää 2019b). Kankaanpää (2019a) adds that by employing enough professionals regarding the size of the production, the work can be divided more evenly and completed within the schedule. In fact, the production can potentially save money by opting to employ additional professionals instead of paying for the overtime of the production designer or art director. Therefore, employing a more internationally standardised art department structure allows for the available budgets to be utilised more efficiently (Kankaanpää 2019a).

Rossi (2019) and Kankaanpää (2019b) discuss that the production designer can affect the size and structure of the art department to some extent and within the limitations of the budget.

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11 Prop master in Finnish is called rekvisitööri.
Often professionals, such as a graphic designer, are employed for a short period, instead of the duration of the entire production (Rossi 2019; Kankaanpää 2019b). Kankaanpää (2019b) adds that employing professionals only when they are needed can help the production save money, but if the contracts are not long enough the rest of the work will need to be completed by someone else in the art department. On the other hand, the art department can employ a large number of people for specific tasks or periods. For instance, extra crew can be employed during the construction stage, if a large set needs to be built by a set deadline. Kankaanpää further discusses that having a smaller art department allows the designer to be more hand-on with every stage of the production. However, if they are forced to take on even the smallest of responsibilities themselves, this can lead to the designer losing the sense and control of the overall picture (Kankaanpää 2019b).

The job of a Finnish production designer adheres to the European standards. Rossi (2019) and Kankaanpää (2019b) explain that the production designer discusses the overall visual style in detail with the director and director of photography and the finer details are decided with the members of the art department. Shared knowledge of the overall style of the feature and nature of the characters enables the other members of the art department to make choices without having to confirm everything with the designer. Additionally, the production designer is responsible for budgeting art department expenses and keeping track of the purchases (Rossi 2019; Kankaanpää 2019b). According to Kankaanpää (2019b), the job of a production designer in a Finnish production involves two interlinked stages. First, during pre-production the designer is in charge of the design process, as is the standard worldwide. Second, the designer is closely involved in the practicalities of set construction and decoration during filming, undertaking jobs that in other countries are usually carried out by other members of the art department, such as supervising art directors, set decorators and construction managers (Kankaanpää 2019b).

The prop master has main responsibility of sourcing props in Finnish features. Rossi (2019) explains that occasionally the stand-by props master can purchase incidental items required on the day of the filming and the art director can be in charge of sourcing specialist props. Rossi adds that the production designer often helps the prop master in the beginning of the production to source some props for them to understand the correct style. The production designer also makes the final decision regarding bigger items, such as furniture pieces, but rarely participates in sourcing small dressing props (Rossi 2019). Kankaanpää (2019b) states that if the designer knows where a specific prop or scenery element could be quickly sourced from, they might opt to acquire it themselves instead of giving the task to the prop master. Additionally, key props might sometimes be sourced by the designer (Kankaanpää 2019b).

In addition to the production designer and prop master, sometimes the location manager can also be in charge of acquiring certain items. Mikkola (2019) explains that when he started working as a location manager for Yleisradio in the 1960s, his job was to source everything, even costumes, for various productions, because the art departments were not particularly structured and the role of prop master was yet to be established. Mikkola describes how several other location managers would suffer a burn-out from working on television productions, due to the enormity of the job of sourcing everything from props and scenery to locations and vehicles. Furthermore, professionals would often be required to work on several production at once, unlike on film productions where they could focus on one feature at a time. Nowadays, with the addition of other art department roles, the job responsibilities of a location manager have been reduced to sourcing animals, vehicles and filming permits for locations (Mikkola 2019).

12 Location manager in Finnish productions is called ‘the organiser’, järjestäjä.
Mikkola (2019) explains that the location manager and the prop master have three main responsibilities. The first is to source everything the production designer asks for. The second is to source everything stated in the script. This requires deep knowledge of the characters: where they live, what are their political and religious tendencies and their socioeconomic status, where do they work and what their hobbies are, as well as which era the production is depicting. Combining all this information to source appropriate props helps create the atmosphere of the period, as well as illustrate the history and values of the characters. The third is to be able to react to anything unexpected that happens during filming. For example, Mikkola explains that he has had to pay the wages of an actor and source audiotape for the sound technician, despite neither of them being his official responsibilities as a location manager (Mikkola 2019).

The next subsection takes a closer look at the economy of Finnish film productions and how the art department and prop sourcing practices are affected by limited budgets.

6.1.2 Economy

The market for Finnish film and television is small, as the country has a low population of 5.5 million people and the language is not spoken anywhere else in the world. Kankaanpää (2019b) explains that despite the current high demand for Nordic dramas increasing the number of features made across the Nordic countries, the production budgets have not grown alongside the overall industry turnover. Kankaanpää adds that despite having otherwise similar film industries, Sweden and Denmark can invest more money into their productions than Finland, due to their general market being larger (Kankaanpää 2019b). Stretching across the Nordic countries, the Scandinavian film market consists of areas with closely related languages and cultures. Finland is often part of the export market of other Nordic countries, but more likely to be excluded from their import market due to the difference in language.

The production designer has ultimate responsibility of the art department budget in Finland. Kankaanpää (2019b) explains that the designer can allocate money from the art department budget to wherever it is required throughout the production. The designer usually makes a budget plan together with a script breakdown in order to indicate to the production department how much money each set requires. However, the production department makes the final decision on how big the art department budget is depending on the overall budget of the entire production. The sufficiency of the art department budget is relevant to the type of production and requirements of the script. Kankaanpää gives an example by explaining that a feature film art department budget of 40 thousand Euros would not be enough to complete building large sets from scratch. However, it can be an adequate amount to source all the props necessary for location-based filming (Kankaanpää 2019b).

The production designer needs to ask the production department separately what all is included in the art department budget, as every production in Finland does not adhere to the same standards. According to Kankaanpää (2019b), especially prop storage, animals and vehicles can be expensive and affect the design choices, if they are included in the art department budget. However, usually these three are part of the budget of the location manager. Kankaanpää adds that if both the production design and location budgets are small, investing in high-quality locations is usually beneficial for the entire production. Inapt locations require additional resources and time from the art department in order to be dressed and styled according to the script requirements. Therefore, a cheaper but unsuitable location can end up costing more than an expensive but appropriate location (Kankaanpää 2019b).
Anyone can be trusted to spend money from the budget in a Finnish production. Kankaanpää (2019b) explains that the production designer distributes money to the art department professionals who are responsible for sourcing materials or props. According to Kankaanpää, being able to trust even runners and assistants with money can be beneficial, especially when something needs to be sourced quickly. For example, a runner can easily leave the set to source incidental items halfway through a filming day when the other crew members are busy. All the purchases are required to be reported back to the production designer for them to monitor the overall art department budget (Kankaanpää 2019b).

The production designer is in the position to negotiate with the production department the needs of the art department, such as the length of time required for pre-production. However, according to Kankaanpää (2019b), the production department can make agreements regarding the art department without discussing with the production designer. For example, they can determine the length of the contracts of the art department professionals without considering how long the production designer would need each professional. This can lead to other professionals having to adapt to changing schedules or to doing work they were not initially contracted for (Kankaanpää 2019b).

The job responsibilities need to be shared efficiently to all members of the art department. Most of the respondents to Online Survey Finland (2018) indicate that prop sourcing takes a lot of time in each production, often weeks or even months. A majority of the pre-production time might be spent sourcing items, especially if the props are necessary to be acquired cheaply, they need to be of a specific era or style, or exceptionally large quantities of something specific are required. Designer 5 explains that if the budget allows for the majority of props to be purchased this can potentially speed up the sourcing process. Designer 29 states that the production designer needs to delegate prop sourcing to other members of the art department, as it otherwise takes too much time off their main responsibilities (Online survey Finland 2018). However, as stated in the previous section 6.1.1, the size of the art department reflects the overall budget of the production and the smallest art departments can consist of just two people.

Certain props are challenging to source from Finland. Several respondents to the Online Survey Finland (2018) indicated that generic modern day items are straightforward to obtain for contemporary productions. However, finding more unique or distinctive props, such as antiques from a specific decade, can be demanding, mostly due to tight schedules and budgets. Designer 9 explains that sometimes the script might require items that are complicated to source. For example, objects that do not exist and therefore need to be custom made, can be difficult to source, as there might not always be skilled craftsmen available to create the required item within the existing timeframe. Moreover, sourcing specialist items, such as paintings by famous artist or objects held in museums, can prove impossible due to the high insurance prices. Designer 14 adds that there usually is not enough time to source items from abroad or order online, as the delivery times can be long. They also explain that it can sometimes be difficult to source large quantities of items from Finland (Online survey Finland 2018).

Many Finnish productions rely on locations to keep the cost of filming down. Kankaanpää (2019b) explains that the price of constructing sets or custom making props usually surprises the production department. Material and labour costs can easily rise to thousands of Euros when something needs to be made from scratch. However, as long as the costumes, make-up and hand props that the actors interact with are accurate and of good quality the background set can be more suggestive (Kankaanpää 2019b).
Finland occasionally hosts international productions as well but such productions face challenges in the country. Tax breaks in certain areas attract production to utilise unique filming possibilities and landscapes of other countries. However, due to the structural differences in filmmaking practices, utilising Finnish crew and film industry services proposes challenges to international productions arriving to film in the country. Kankaanpää (2019b) explains that these foreign productions might have to ship all the props and several crew members from the country they are based in, because Finland might not offer adequate corresponding services. For example, a foreign production cannot necessarily rely on being able to source the required props from Finland and might opt to ship everything from screws to scenery elements with them (Kankaanpää 2019b). This adds an extra cost to the foreign production which they need to account for, and could potentially even direct them to use an alternative location where all the required services are available to film in. Additionally, when a foreign production ships everything they need to Finland, they do not need to use the film industry services Finland does offer, therefore leaving the local industry without the potential added income.

The sustainability of prop sourcing in Finland is discussed in the next subsection.

6.1.3 Sustainability
According to Maja (2019), sustainable thinking in the film industry is new to the Finnish field. Rossi (2019) indicates that ecologically friendly productions are slowly gaining a foothold in Finland and art department professionals can individually follow sustainable practices, such as recycling and avoiding excessive printing. According to Kankaanpää (2019b), drama productions are often considerate about how the materials and props are sourced and recycled, but especially commercials generate enormous amounts of waste due to their quick-paced schedules and limited storage space. In their response to the survey targeting Finnish film industry professionals, Designer 2 indicates that it is unfortunate having to purchase generic items time and time again for them to be used in only one production (Online survey Finland 2918).

Some production companies might have a storage space full of props that have been used in their productions. Rossi (2019) explains that production companies might hold onto some items if a sequel or other productions with similar style are being made by them. However, according to Kankaanpää (2019b), usually the storage is not properly maintained and the items are left to collect dust, never to be used again. Every few years the entire storage might be emptied straight to landfill because it is the quickest option for clearing out space for new props (Kankaanpää 2019b).

Often productions opt for the most cost and time effective methods for discarding items instead of considering the sustainable alternatives. Rossi (2019) and Kankaanpää (2019b) discuss that purchased props in good condition might be sold or donated to recycling centres. However, recycling centres are becoming increasingly selective on what they take in, as they must consider whether everyday customers would be interested in purchasing what they supply. Raw materials used for set construction, electronics and dangerous waste can be recycled at a waste sorting facility. Rossi (2019) adds that sometimes the producer might demand for materials to be discarded quickly to a landfill in order to save paying for the time it takes to sort and recycle everything.
6.2 Yleisradio

Yleisradio (YLE) is the national public broadcasting company in Finland and was founded in 1926. It started out as a radio broadcasting company and expanded to the film industry by commencing regular television broadcasting in 1958. In many ways YLE is similar to national broadcasting companies in other countries, such as the BBC in the United Kingdom and SVT in Sweden. YLE operates in 25 locations around Finland, but has two main unit bases for television production, YLE Pasila in Helsinki and YLE Toholppi in Tampere (YLE, n.d.). Both location host sizeable prop storages, which will be discussed in detail in this section.

YLE Pasila

YLE Pasila is the main office of the Yleisradio broadcasting company, located in Helsinki.

Marita Pirttimaa (2019) has worked in YLE Pasila for over 30 years, a majority of which she has been involved with the prop storage in one way or another. Since May 2018, she has worked as a specialist in the prop storage and is in charge of hiring props out to various productions. YLE does not advertise their prop hiring practices in any way, as they have been operational for only a short while. Pirttimaa indicates that since she is the only one responsible for the hiring process she might not be able to keep up with the demand if it grew significantly. Furthermore, as the props are not catalogued or priced, the hiring process has to be completed manually for each client. Pirttimaa indicates that most props get hired for two weeks but the duration of hire does not affect the price. Instead each piece is priced based on its value (Pirttimaa 2019).

YLE Pasila has had its prop storage for several decades. According to Pirttimaa (2019), a great number of props, as well as the first location managers, came to YLE Pasila from large film production companies, such as Suomi-Filmi\(^{13}\) and Fennada-Filmi\(^{14}\), in the 1960s. The stock has slowly increased over the decades and is nowadays divided into three categories: furniture, smalls and soft furnishings. Pirttimaa explains that props in the YLE Pasila storage have all been sourced for specific productions, as there is no budget to purchase anything in case it might one day be necessary. Furthermore, the YLE prop storage department does not employ buyers, as every prop acquired for productions is sourced by either the designer or prop master of each individual production (Pirttimaa 2019).

The YLE Pasila prop storage is primarily for the use of YLE’s own productions. Pirttimaa (2019) explains that when sourcing props each YLE production will first see if the prop storage already has what they require. If the props cannot be acquired from the already existing stock the first option is to borrow them from somewhere else. If nowhere is willing to borrow the second option is to hire them. If props are not available for hire either they can be bought. Finally, if the props are not available anywhere they must be made from scratch. The bought and custom made items are kept in the YLE prop storage for the use of other productions. YLE also receives item donations, but due to the limited storage space they cannot accept everything. Pirttimaa (2019) explains that the storage spaces at YLE Pasila are small by contemporary standards because they were built in the 1960s and 1970s. No additional lifts or pulley systems can be installed, and everything must be hoisted onto the shelves by hand. This in turn limits where each item can be stored (Pirttimaa 2019).

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\(^{13}\) Suomi-Filmi produced features from 1920 to 1980.

\(^{14}\) Fennada-filmi was operational between 1950–1982.
Pirttimaa (2019) indicates that a majority of all the props of the YLE Pasila storage are frequently used. Large portion of the stock consists of antique furniture, as it is not practical to store contemporary pieces that can be easily acquired from any store. However, according to Pirttimaa, the storage is lacking in 1980s and 1990s furniture. She explains that occasionally the stock might be thinned out by arranging sales for the YLE employees. Items that do not get bought by the crew are donated to recycling centres. Only broken items might be discarded to recycling or landfill. YLE props storage also contains a few historically valuable items that are kept only for the use of YLE productions. Pirttimaa indicates that the reason behind this is simply to keep the items intact, as they are fragile and can easily get damaged during filming or transportation. In addition, YLE will not hire out police equipment, such as guns or police vehicles, as they have special permits and protocols to use these items (Pirttimaa 2019).

Pirttimaa (2019) adds that YLE Pasila is in the process of relocating their entire prop storage to a new unit, as the entire studio area is being remodelled. She adds that since large dramas and features are nowadays rarely filmed at the YLE studios and sets are becoming smaller and more minimalistic than they used to be, most of the larger furniture pieces can be stored further away from the studio unit base. In addition, an online based prop hiring service is being developed for the YLE Pasila items. A barcode will be assigned to each item, making pricing and tracking them easier (Pirttimaa 2019).

**YLE Toholppi**

YLE Toholppi is the second largest unit of YLE, located in Tampere. Most of YLE TV2 channel content is produced there.

Mikkola (2019) started working as a location manager in YLE Toholppi in 1964 and ended up in charge of collecting props for various YLE productions. Mikkola was soon given the responsibility of collecting an official prop storage for YLE Toholppi, as sourcing items from different suppliers was becoming laborious. With knowledge of the prop storage at YLE Pasila mainly consisting of upper class, country estate items, Mikkola decided to focus on sourcing more rustic and farmhouse style pieces. He explains that in the 1960s furniture and smaller props were easy and cheap to source from auctions, antiques dealers and private residents around the country.
Mikkola has collected the largest collection of various shop items from 1940s to 1980s in Finland to the prop storage at YLE Toholppi, parts of which can be seen in Figures 13 and 14. Unlike the rest of the props at YLE Toholppi storages, these items are set up neatly in to film set-like displays which help designers visualise the post-war era (Mikkola 2019).

According to Mikkola (2019), in addition to the prop storage at YLE Toholppi studios, there are also several other warehouses full of items in the area. A warehouse in Mouhijärvi is dedicated to various vehicles ranging from sleighs and carts to army vehicles. One warehouse in Ylöjärvi stores various horse drawn carriages and carts from the 1800s, and another has been dedicated to army, hospital and school themed items. According to Mikkola, a prop storage is required to stock everything from birth to death from different decades, as nowadays museums and collector can be hesitant to borrow items for the use of film and television productions. Mikkola states that roughly 50% of the entire stock of YLE Toholppi has been used in productions so far. In his view the low usage is partly due to the poor organisation of the storage, for example lighting being scattered around different parts of the storage instead of being allocated one space. In addition, none of the items have been catalogue in any way, thus no one can be sure what all the storage contains (Mikkola 2019).

Mikkola (2019) explains that until the 1980s YLE was able to employ several people for each department. YLE Toholppi used to have eight location managers and YLE Pasila sixteen, accompanied by assistants. In addition, the storages had crew to help organise prop collections and returns. According to Mikkola, the standard of booking props out from the prop storage remains largely the same as it was in the 1980s. Designers, props masters and location managers leave a sticker or a label on the item they want to book out. The sticker states the name of the production and dates the item will be out of the storage. At the end of the production all hired items are returned to the storage (Mikkola 2019).

As can be seen from Figures 15 and 16, most props in the YLE Toholppi storage have an assigned place. YLE Pasila has similar shelving for all of their props. Pirittimaa (2019) explains that most of the YLE in-house art department employees are capable of returning props to their allocated places, but items hired out by outside productions need to be unpacked and stored by the prop storage staff. Mikkola (2019) and Pirittimaa (2019) explain that because the YLE storages in both Pasila and Toholppi nowadays employ only one or two people, the returned items can easily stack up before someone has time to place them back onto the shelves. Furthermore, due to the limited amount of staff and their busy schedules, each
A production wishing to utilise the YLE props is required to book a time in advance for both prop collections and returns. This can be difficult for some productions, especially those with short pre-production and wrap schedules. Each production is also expected to send enough people to load the hired items onto the transport vans, as well as during returns to place the larger pieces back to their assigned places (Mikkola 2019; Pirttimaa 2019).

Maja (2019) explains that YLE has participated in the production of many Finnish features. All productions co-produced by YLE have been able to gain access to the YLE prop storages throughout the decades, even when the official prop hiring practice has not been operational. Mikkola (2019) and Pirttimaa (2019) explain that nowadays productions outside of YLE are allowed to hire props from the storages. However, Rossi (2019) states that despite YLE prop storage offering an impressive selection of period items, the hire costs can be unfeasible for outside productions. Therefore, other than YLE productions might only opt to hire out individual pieces, potentially limiting the gain of the service (Rossi 2019). However, as Pirttimaa (2019) explains, this is not an issue for YLE, as they are not a commercial company and the prop hire service is only a minor side business for the broadcasting company.
7 DISCUSSION

This chapter offers a further discussion and analysis of the views and topics presented in the previous three chapters regarding the prop sourcing practices in Europe. British and Finnish practices are compared with the European context and the effects a prop hire company can have on a film industry are identified. This chapter also includes a discussion into how a prop hire company could potentially operate in Finland. Finally, suggestions for future research regarding the topic of his study are presented to the reader.

7.1 Comparative Analysis of the Case Studies

This section analyses how the art department practices vary between Finland and the United Kingdom, as well as comparing them with European context. Special focus will be given to prop hire companies and how their availability or absence affects prop sourcing in different countries. Comparing the filmmaking practices in Finland and the United Kingdom directly to each other would not be practical, as they operate in drastically different scale. However, the two case study countries and the other researched European film industry practices can be analysed as a larger structure, which allows for hypotheses and conclusions to be formulated regarding the common practices.

The research findings of this study reveal that Finland and the United Kingdom differ drastically from each other in terms of the size and structure of the film industry. This is partly due to the way these practices have developed in each country since the beginning of filmmaking. As introduced in Chapter 2, filmmaking started in several countries around the end of the 19th century. However, at this stage Finland was still part of the Imperial Russia and resources to make features were scarce. In fact, it was not until after the World Wars that filmmaking became more established in the country alongside the stabilised overall economy. The United Kingdom, on the other hand, has been at the forefront of filmmaking from the start and the first film studios in the country were established before the 1900s. In addition, the United Kingdom has worked closely with the North American film industry since the beginning of the 20th century and benefitted from their investments and common export markets. Overall, the United Kingdom has a longer and more diverse history than Finland, as well as larger population, a wider export market, and a higher amount of capital to invest into the film industry.

The history of the country can influence the types of features the film industry produces. According to Hauldren (2019), the film industry in the United Kingdom benefits from the extensive history, as it inspires and enables the creation of dramas from several periods. Popular eras for period dramas range from 12th century to modern day, commonly depicting the lives of aristocrats and the royal family. High quality historical British period features are also popular
outside of the United Kingdom, creating an international demand for such productions. In turn, Finland is just over one hundred years old as an independent country, which in theory limits the number of decades a Finnish period drama can depict. Nevertheless, a popular Finnish period television drama series *Hovimäki* (1999–2003) portrays the fictional lives of two families from 1798 to 1907, a time before the country gained independence. Thus, it is possible to create historical dramas in the country. However, it is arguable whether a drama set in 17th century Turku, for instance, should be considered to depict Finnish or Swedish history, as the Finnish area was part of Sweden from the 13th century to 1809. For example, the biographical drama *The Girl King* (2015) is directed by a Finnish director Mika Kaurismäki and features several Finnish locations, such as the Turku castle, but the story is about the Queen of Sweden and set in 1600s. Therefore, international co-production features, such as *The Girl King*, are difficult to allocate to represent the history of only one country.

The preservation of historical locations and items enables period dramas to be made more easily. Hauldren (2015) explains that the picturesque landscape and charismatic buildings attract foreign productions to utilise the United Kingdom as a filming location. Hundreds of conserved medieval castles and houses offer authentic backdrops for period features. In addition to the preserved locations, plenty of authentic antique items can be found from the country to dress film sets with. A large variety of these pieces have been made available and affordable for productions by prop hire companies. Conversely, as described by Nermes and de Anna (2019), Finland suffers from a condition known as the ‘Turku disease’, where old buildings are left to ruin until they are no longer salvageable. Once a building reaches this stage it will be torn down and a new one will be built in its place (Nermes & de Anna 2019). In addition, as described previously in Chapter 6, old furnishings and decorative items are also easily discarded. Furthermore, Finland does not have a prop hire company to preserve items from each decade for the film industry to use in the future. Therefore, certain historical features are challenging to create in Finland.

The size of the art department reflects the overall budget of the production. Larger productions are able to employ more professionals and, thus, utilise a hierarchically structured art department. The average budget of a British feature is £6.2 million, but individual budgets vary from as low as £150 thousand to highs of over £100 million (Stephen Follows 2014). The British Film Foundation supports productions by investing around £30 million annually to the industry (Steven Follows 2018). Average budget for a Finnish feature is 1.3 million Euros, with the Finnish Film Foundation investing around 20 million Euros to film productions annually (Aromaa 2017). According to Topp (2019), a small feature film art department in the United Kingdom usually consists of seven professionals, whereas Kankaanpää (2019b) and Rossi (2019) indicate that the average art department size on a Finnish feature tends to be five people. Therefore, it can be theorised that even with the same amount of production budget, an art department of a British feature would probably employ more professionals than its Finnish counterpart.

Production designers Kankaanpää (2019b) and Topp (2019) state that if the art department does not employ enough professionals in regards to the work that needs to be completed within the schedule that is available, it directly increases the length of days the employed professionals have to work. As both Kankaapää and Topp discuss this, it can be concluded that the country where a production takes place does not necessarily affect the art department structure. Instead, balancing budgets and schedules depends on the individual production. Rossi (2019) considers her experiences of working in art departments in Estonia, Latvia,
Belgium, Sweden and Georgia, when she states that the challenges of Finnish art departments are similar to other European countries. The professional skills and motivation, as well as salaries and working conditions are on par with the European standards. However, the number of professionals employed in the art department is often insufficient (Rossi 2019).

From the views of production designers Kankaanpää (2019b), Rossi (2019), Hauldren (2019) and Topp (2019) presented in Chapters 5 and 6, it can be concluded that the main responsibilities of a production designer are similar regardless of the country. However, in Finnish features the production designer is also responsible for more concrete elements of the design and construction process, as the art departments are smaller and lack some key professionals, such as a designated buyer and set decorator. Nevertheless, the involvement of a production designer with prop sourcing is down to each individual, regardless of the size of the art department. Furthermore, it could be argued that a structured art department where everyone knows their job responsibilities clearly is most beneficial for the overall production, regardless of its type or scale. Being able to divide the workload to various professional can help keep the production in budget and on schedule (Kankaanpää 2019b; Rossi 2019; Hauldren 2019; Topp 2019).

Several of the individuals interviewed and surveyed for this study described prop hire companies as essential for productions. As discussed by art department members in Chapter 5, the benefits of having access to a prop hire company largely revolve around schedules and budgets from the point of view of a production. Being able to consistently source the majority of props from a couple of locations saves the production time during all stages of filmmaking. In addition, the production does not need to worry about storing or disposing all of its props, as they can simply be returned to the prop hire. Furthermore, a substantial amount of available prop hire stock from different eras, styles and themes provides options for all types of productions. Authentic pieces visually enhance period productions and, for example, sci-fi features can easily source unusual items and materials to create alien spacecrafts.

Designers and productions can also have their own private prop storages in addition to prop hire companies storing large quantities of props. Topp (2019) points out that despite the United Kingdom having several prop hire companies, most designers still have their own personal prop storages. According to her, designers might want to keep hold of unique pieces or items they require in most productions, such as candles. In addition, designers might keep items that are still in good condition and reusable, but a prop hire does not wish to receive as a donation (Topp 2019). Kankaanpää (2019b) and Pirttimaa (2019) discuss that many Finnish production designers and production companies also have their own small prop storages and theorise that having access to a prop hire company could eliminate the need for individuals to maintain these small collections (Kankaanpää 2019b; Pirttimaa 2019).

Despite having many benefits, sourcing a majority of props from a prop hire company can also have disadvantages. Barnwell (2004) identifies two potential disadvantages on sourcing a majority of props from a prop hire company. First, the continuous use of each item can result in them looking tired and battered (pp. 74–75). Topp (2019) explains that often a production will be given permission to repaint and reupholster various pieces, which in turn benefits the prop hire company, as it helps their stock to look well maintained (Topp 2019). Moreover, according to Moorshead (2019) and Pirttimaa (2019), productions often want to use distressed and used looking items rather than brand new ones, as this gives the props more narrative and can add to the storytelling aspect of the production. Therefore, prop hire companies may
also stock broken or damaged items, as can be seen from Figure 17. Pirttimaa (2019) explains that being able to hire distressed items saves a production time and money from buying and damaging a new piece and naturally aged and broken pieces can look more authentic than purposefully damaged ones. Furthermore, hiring such pieces saves the environment, as broken items are difficult to sell or recycle (Pirttimaa 2019).

The second point that Barnwell makes regards budget as hire fees can accumulate over time. If certain props are needed for a very long period of filming it might be more economical to purchase them (Barnwell 2004, pp. 74–75). Hauldren (2019) confirm this by explaining that the art department calculates the most economical option for sourcing each prop. The estimate is based on how long a prop is needed for and its role during filming. In addition, it is necessary to take into consideration the transport time and cost, as picking up one cheap item from across the country might not be as efficient as sourcing it nearby for a higher price (Hauldren 2019).

In her later book, Barnwell (2017) adds a third disadvantage of using prop hires. She states that sometimes the stock of a hire company provides a rather homogeneous selection and the same props can appear in similar productions over and over again. Barnwell suggest that a way to achieve more bespoke quality to a film is to have some of the key props specially designed and custom made (Barnwell 2017, p. 44). However, Powell (2019), Hauldren (2019) and Topp (2019) argue that, due to the extensive selection of prop hires available in the United Kingdom, as well as every production using a different combination of objects to dress various sets, the issue of productions appearing visually the same is non-existent. Individual props are most likely recognised only by professional set decorators and buyers, as they have seen these items showcased in the prop hire warehouses on a regular basis (Powell 2019; Hauldren 2019; Topp 2019). Nevertheless, Damsgaard (2019) expresses that in Denmark most productions aim to source items from other suppliers, as the extensive use of the limited stock of hire companies is making props recognisable. Therefore, it could be speculated that countries with fewer prop hire companies and less available stock have a larger possibility of productions appearing similar. Kankaanpää (2019b) theorises that a prop hire could provide productions with generic objects and the time saved from acquiring them could be utilised to source unusual pieces from other suppliers. The combination of generic hired pieces and purchased key items would create a unique visual style for each set (Kankaanpää 2019b).
Certain types of props are required in every production. Both Kankaanpää (2019) and Topp (2019) mention the importance of good light fixtures, as all sets need to be lit in one way or another. Topp (2019) indicates that even in countries with large film industries and plenty of prop hire companies, such as the United Kingdom, lighting fixtures are often scarce. Lamp shades can easily get damaged during transport and electric wiring presents its own issues, resulting in several fixtures breaking easily or not functioning in the first place. Topp adds that also rugs are often difficult to source from hire companies. In the United Kingdom, not every client cleans the props after use. Therefore, rugs and other soft furnishing are easily damaged beyond repair, as the hire company might not have time to wash them between productions either (Topp 2019). In Finland, YLE offers soft furnishing for hire, but clients are obliged to clean them before returning. Furthermore, Pirttimaa (2019) explains that even YLE does not hire out all of their rugs, as some of them cannot be washed and, thus, need to be treated with extreme caution when used on set.

Despite having some downsides to the practices, the general consensus amongst the film industry professional is that prop hire companies greatly benefit the productions and create a foundation for the work of various art department professionals. Since several designers and other art department professionals consulted for this study have described prop hire companies as indispensable for the film industry, it is interesting to contemplate why it is not standard for every country to have such companies. Reasons for this no doubt vary to some extent between countries depending on the size of their film industries and the overall practices of filmmaking. In order for a prop hire company to comprehensively benefit the film industry productions, it is required to either have an extensive stock that is constantly maintained and updated or there needs to be several specialised hire companies. Nevertheless, as indicated by Kankaanpää (2019b), if something has not already been achieved within the film industry, all it might require is for someone to be the first one to try.

The following section discusses how costume hire companies can be profitable in areas where prop hire companies have not been able to succeed.
7.2 Why do costume hire companies make it but prop hires do not?

Costume hire companies exist all around Europe, similarly to prop hire companies. Specialist costume hire companies, such as Peris Costumes (2019) in Spain, offer garments depicting eras from ancient history to modern day. These companies usually stock jewellery, shoes, hats and other costume props. In addition, some prop hire companies, especially ones affiliated with large studios, such as Barrandov Studio Fundus (n.d.) in Czech Republic, can also stock a large quantity of costumes and may even have a separate costume hire service. Other prop hire companies, such as Farley Prop Hire (2019) in London, might stock a collection of costume props, ranging from walking canes and jewellery to pocket watches and eyeglasses, as illustrated in Figures 18 and 19.

Hauldren (2019) explains that specialised costume hire companies function in the same way as prop hire companies. Costumes from different periods are neatly organised onto racks and designers source pieces that suit the era and visual style of their production, as well as fit onto each actor (Hauldren 2019). Costume designer Grazia Colombini (2019) indicates that in Italy, the stock of a costume hire is usually organised by period, gender, theme or social class. This helps the designers to locate appropriate garments for various characters. Colombini explains that by familiarising themselves with the stock available in costume hire companies, the designers can also estimate early in the design process how many new garments they might need to have custom made. The costume hire companies also custom make garments to order (Colombini 2019). As with prop hires, different productions benefit from costume hires when a large quantity of the needed garments can be found from one place and returned there after the production ends. This saves sourcing time during pre-production and cost of storage space after the production.

Colombini (2019) explains that costume hires often suffer from the lack of appropriate storage space similarly to most prop hire companies.
Costumes require a cool, dry and pest free space to ensure a longer lifespan for garments. Conversely, as discussed by Moorshead (2019) objects are not as fragile and can withstand more moisture and extreme temperatures than costumes. Thus, it can also be argued that more storage spaces are appropriate for props than for costumes.

Hauldren (2019) explains that usually the production designer works closely with a costume designer to agree on colours, shapes and mood for the overall visual look of the film. Sometimes the production designer might also be in charge of designing costumes, if they have personal interest and skills on the practices. Hauldren states that it is probably more difficult to find the right costume for each actor than it is to find appropriate props for a set. Therefore, the production designer is more likely to change the set to accommodate for the costumes. For example, a period dress might only be available in one specific colour that clashes with the wallpaper of the set. Because the dress fits the actress and the period of the feature, it is faster and more cost-effective to change the wallpaper than to custom make another dress. The costumes are also more noticeable, as they are worn by actors and feature in close-up shots, whereas the set provides the background. However, if the costume department has the budget to create each piece from scratch, they can customise the costumes to integrate with the plans of the production designer (Hauldren 2019).

American costume designer Deborah Nadoolman Landis (2018) describes costume designers as the original recyclers of the theatre and film industry:

“...there is a tradition in the theatre and in the movies to re-use costumes. Costume designers are the original recyclers and up cyclers; nothing is wasted. After a film has completed shooting (wrapped) all garments are cleaned and placed into the costume stock of a studio or costume rental company. Costumes will be rented, used and re-used, re-trimmed, re-cut, re-dyed and recreated for new roles. These clothes are studio assets that must ‘pay for their room and board’.” (Nadoolman Landis, 2018, p.91–92).

These views were confirmed by Colombini (2019), as she described how the garments in costume hires have often been altered multiple times throughout their lifespan. The costumes may have been shortened, extended, tied or marked, potentially shortening their lifespan, as soft materials can only withstand so much washing, ironing, stretching, cutting and re-sewing before they become too frail to be reused. In addition, every inch of each garment is necessary to inspect before hire in order to avoid, for example, having visible holes on screen or the garment tearing during fitting (Colombini, 2019). However, altering garments is usually necessary, as the pieces need to fit different actors in a variety of productions. This is an aspect that somewhat differentiates costume hire companies from prop hires. Although props can often be altered by repainting or reupholstering, as discussed in section 7.1, in most cases they are hired as they are and returned in the same condition.

Being able to reuse garments is ecologically friendly in similar ways as reusing props, since each piece can be used until the end of their lifespan. However, as indicated by Colombini (2019), the lifespan of garments is often significantly shorter than the lifespan of objects. According to Colombini, a suit can be hired out for a maximum of ten times before it reaches an unusable state (Colombini 2019). Conversely, as discussed by McFarlane (2019), a prop can be used continuously for years or even decades before it becomes too fragile or battered for film use. Therefore, it can be hypothesised that prop hire practices might be more sustainable than hiring costumes. However, as Mikkola (2019) states, the variety and number of objects
in a prop hire is so immense that the additional resources required for storage and upkeep might be much larger than in a costume hire. Furthermore, shipping a costume in a neat parcel through the postal service required fewer resources in terms of transport than, for example, shipping an antique desk (Mikkola 2019).

Hauldren (2019) further discusses that costumes are commonly sourced from large costume hire companies and shipped around Europe. She adds that shipping props is just as easy; however, they are not transported abroad as often as costumes are (Hauldren 2019). Mikkola (2019) indicates that Finnish productions only occasionally source costumes from abroad. For example, uniforms of German soldiers with accurate medals and decorations attached can be ordered straight from a German costume hire, without the need to research every individual and their honorary rank at each stage of history and recreate the costume from resources available in Finland. Utilising foreign hire companies can thus save the production a great deal of time and money. Mikkola adds that having costumes custom made abroad, for example in St. Petersburg in Russia, can be more cost-effective than manufacturing them in Finland where labour is more regulated and expensive (Mikkola 2019).

Unlike prop hire companies, costume hires also exist in Finland. For example, Artistiasu (n.d.) offers costumes and costume props for the use of film, television and theatre, as well as themed costumes for events and parties. Artistiasu also designs and custom makes costumes and offers the services of professional costumers for film industry production. The company acquired a huge collection of costumes in 2005, after the Finnish commercial station MTV3 got rid of its entire prop and costume stock (Artistiasu, n.d.). The props collection of MTV3 ended up at Intercom (2019), an event prop hire company. In addition, YLE offers costumes for hire. Pirttimaa (2019) explains that the costume hire service at YLE has functioned for a longer time than the prop hire service and it is a much more efficient process. According to her, costumes can be labelled with hidden bar codes more easily than props, as labels or stickers attached to items might be visible when props are moved during a scene. In addition, costume designers and costumers are allowed to search the YLE costume stock independently which professionals are not allowed to do in the prop department (Pirttimaa 2019).

As discussed in this section, both prop and costume hire companies function in similar ways and having access to either or both types of hire companies can benefit the productions in terms of budget and schedule. In terms of costume hire companies, garments and costume props can be easily shipped in small parcels in the mail, potentially allowing for large supply regions and international clients. Garments are also easy to store, and hundreds of pieces can be fitted even into a small warehouse. However, the warehouse must be dry, cool and pest free to avoid damage to the garments. Additionally, altering costumes shortens their already limited lifespan. A prop hire company might require a larger warehouse, but it does not necessarily need to be heated or even completely weatherproof. Organising shipping for larger items is usually as straightforward as sending smaller ones in the post. Furthermore, the lifespan of props is usually much longer than that of garments, some items withstanding several decades of film use. Due to these reasons it is interesting that costume hires profitably exist in Finland but a commercial prop hire does not.

The following section investigates how the Finnish film industry productions and professionals would be affected if a commercial prop hire company was to be established in the country. In addition, a hypothesis into how such a company could function is presented.
7.3 How would a prop hire company affect Finnish productions?

Based on the views expressed by various Finnish art department professional regarding the topic of prop sourcing it can be concluded that the Finnish film industry would benefit from a commercial prop hire company. The majority of the respondents to Online Survey Finland (2018) indicated that having access to a prop hire company would mean that prop sourcing resources could be utilised more cost-efficiently. Rossi (2019) and Kankaanpää (2019b) indicate that, in particular, the time required for prop sourcing during pre-production would be decreased and the sourcing process would become more organised. Instead of spending the majority of the pre-production acquiring props, the art department professionals could allocate more time into other aspects of the design process, such as ensuring the productions appears visually coherent and finished (Rossi 2019; Kankaanpää 2019b).

Rossi (2019), Mikkola (2019) and Kankaanpää (2019b) agree that having an itemised list of the entire prop hire stock available online would provide art department professionals with the knowledge of items that can be easily sourced. Kankaanpää (2019b) explains that knowledge of available stock can allow for the design plans to be more exact from early on and the end result to resemble the plans more closely than is possible with the current prop sourcing methods (Kankaanpää 2019b). Designer 28 (Online Survey Finland 2018) further expresses that a common knowledge across the field regarding the easily available props would set a standard as to what can be expected from set design in a short time span.

Respondents to Online Survey Finland (2018) indicate that if the prop hire stock was collected by film industry professionals with the requirements of various productions in mind it would increase the value of the business in the eyes of art department professionals. Furthermore, as a majority of props could be hired instead of purchased, the money budgeted for item returns could instead be spent to cover the hire costs (Online Survey Finland 2018). Kankaanpää (2019b) adds that having one concentrated collection of props for the use of every production could eliminate the need for production companies and designers to have their own individual storages.

Mikkola (2019), Pirttimaa (2019), Kankaanpää (2019b), Maja (2019), Rossi (2019) and some of the respondents to Online Survey Finland (2018) indicate that there have been previous attempts to establish a prop hire company in Finland. However, these attempts have not succeeded in creating a commercial prop hire that would fit into the scope of this study. Maja (2019) explains that prior to the commercial broadcasting station MTV3 disposing of their prop storage all productions were able to hire items from there. In addition, YLE and MTV3 would frequently utilise the prop storages of each other in the 1970s and the 1980s (Maja 2019). The MTV3 prop collection first ended up under Blue Media Productions Oy, a company that purchased MTV3 studios, and later to Intercom. However, Intercom is primarily an event prop hire company and, thus, outside of the research scope of this thesis. Kankaanpää (2019b) indicates that any previous attempts to organise a commercial prop hire company have not been able to make the business profitable within the Finnish context and, thus, there are currently no such companies in the country. Rossi (2019) discusses her personal experience of utilising the MTV3 prop hire service in its various stages. She indicates that the quality of the service and the stock continuously decreased, new stock was not acquired, and the prices kept soaring. In addition, hire company staff was not always available, making prop collections and returns difficult to schedule.
The Finnish film industry poses challenges for achieving a profitable prop hire business. Both Kankaanpää (2019b) and Pirttimaa (2019) express that the cost of warehouse space and employing staff can be expensive in Finland, whereas production companies are usually small and production budgets low. Therefore, it can be challenging to find a big enough warehouse to house an extensive collection of props, as well as offer items for a competitive hire price. Kankaanpää (2019b) indicates that because the film industry is small compared to other European countries, targeting only film and television productions might not create enough demand for the prop hire stock. Therefore, it would be essential to engage as many art department professionals as possible and getting them to commit into utilising the prop hire services (Kankaanpää 2019b).

Hypothesis: A Finnish prop hire
This subsection discusses how a prop hire company could potentially operate in Finland and how it might affect the current prop sourcing practices.

Mikkola (2019) discusses that, conversely to the practices of United Kingdom where the large number of prop hires available has allowed for most of them to specialise in a certain type of props, a prop hire company in Finland would most likely need to stock a little bit of everything. According to Mikkola, a Finnish prop hire company should stock a full range of everyday items from every decade at least since the late 1800s. The stock should include everything from ink pens to bed frames and computer screens because the era a feature is depicting should be identifiable to the viewer in a glimpse. Full sets of school, hospital and office items should be available, as most period productions feature these locations. Mikkola adds that the stock should be rotated and updated by exchanging regularly used pieces to alternatives in order to prevent the same props being featured in every production depicting a certain era. He further discusses that the stock of a prop hire company should be organised by style or decade in order to make sourcing a specific piece efficient for the designers and prop masters (Mikkola 2019). Several of the respondents to Online Survey Finland (2018) state that the prop hire service would need to be cost efficient and adaptable to the requirements of film industry productions. However, every survey respondent indicated that they would use such services if they were available (Online survey Finland 2018).

The Online Survey Finland (2018) respondents indicated that they would opt to hire mostly pieces of furniture and smalls from a prop hire. Especially period pieces, special effects props, classical designer furniture, lights, textiles, weapons, electronics and scenery elements would potentially be in high demand from a prop hire company. Both neutral pieces that fit into any set and unique feature props would be sought after (Online Survey Finland 2018). In addition to these, Kankaanpää (2019b) states that props and scenery elements that can be easily customised would be beneficial for multiple productions. For example, kitchen units could be easily modified to fit several different types of sets by changing the cupboard doors (Kankaanpää 2019b). Rossi (2019) adds that a Finnish prop hire company could offer services for custom making and altering props to increase their business and value to the film industry clients.

Not all types of items are desirable for a production to source by hiring. Several respondents to Online Survey Finland (2018) indicated that they would not hire items that can just as easily be sourced from any contemporary shop, such as IKEA. Items that break easily, for example plates and glasses, are also undesirable for hire and their replacement value can be almost as high as their purchase price. Furthermore, as the budgets for Finnish productions are often
limited many productions might not be able to hire items that are expensive to insure, such as
designer antiques. Moreover, exceptionally distinctive items that become recognisable after
one production would not be ideal for a prop hire to stock (Online Survey Finland 2018).

Designer 4 (Online Survey Finland 2018) expresses their concern regarding every production
hiring a large quantity of the necessary props from one place resulting in these productions
looking similar over time. They theorised that a prop hire would benefit productions most by
offering unique and special props that could be sourced individually (Online Survey Finland
2018). However, Pirttimaa (2019) and Kankaanpää (2019b) indicate that several productions
hiring the same items would not directly result in productions visually appearing the same,
because productions source props from various places regardless of whether or not they have
access to a prop hire. The combination of props and various locations or studios sets creates a
unique combination and, thus, an individual visual style for each production (Pirttimaa 2019;
Kankaanpää 2019b)

Rossi (2019) states that a prop hire company should be located within a reasonable distance
from the capital area of Helsinki, as this is where a majority of Finnish production companies
and studios are located. However, Kankaanpää (2019b) and Mikkola (2019) agree that a
Finnish prop hire company could be located outside of Helsinki but it would be essential for
the hire company to provide transportation for props to and from filming locations. Mikkola
(2019) explains that features are often filmed all around the country on various locations.
Thus, locating a prop hire to the south of Finland could potentially limit its clients to the area.
Instead, a more geographically central location with good transport connections would allow
for a country wide supply and demand area (Mikkola 2019). Kankaanpää (2019a) points out
that Finland has efficient infrastructure already across the country which would allow for
props to be transported effortlessly even to more remote filming locations.

Kankaanpää (2019b) hypothesises that it would be beneficial for a Finnish prop hire company
to extend its supply to neighbouring areas, such as Sweden, St Petersburg area and the Baltic
countries. He discusses an example of a production in Lithuania, where props were sourced
from the surrounding areas. Items were brought in from neighbouring countries, such as
Estonia, Latvia, Poland and Germany, as the local area could not provide everything the
production required (Kankaanpää 2019b). Mikkola (2019) concurs with Kankaanpää and
further explains that props have been sourced from St Petersburg and Stockholm especially
for dramas situated in periods before Finnish independence, such as Hovimäki (1999–2003).
Therefore, the process should also work the other way around.

According to Rossi (2019), Kankaanpää (2019b) and Online Survey Finland (2018) respondents,
the biggest challenge with establishing a commercial prop hire is making it profitable for the
company itself. Various productions and individuals would no doubt benefit from being able to
access a concentrated stock of all kinds of props and hire individual pieces or a large quantity
of items. However, collecting an extensive stock and obtaining a varied client base takes time.
Furthermore, Rossi (2019) adds that the hire company would need to employ permanent staff
to keep the warehouse organised and items in good condition in order to attract clients. Rossi
(2019) and Kankaanpää (2019b) further discuss that the prop hire company most likely would
need to supply productions and events outside of the film industry in order to maintain a steady
flow of customers throughout the year. A varied client base of different types of productions
is also essential for many British prop hire companies in order to turn a profit, as discussed in
sections 4.1 and 5.1.
It should be carefully analysed which standard of pricing for hired goods would be most beneficial to employ in order to maximise profit for the hire company and high usability amongst productions. Pirttimaa (2019) expresses that setting a price for a hired item is demanding since “an item never improves while out on hire”\(^\text{15}\). Kankaanpää (2019) discusses that pricing each item in the stock of a prop hire company should take into account the budgets of various film industry productions. For example, it should be considered whether following the British standard of setting a weekly hire price would be affordable within the Finnish context. Another option could potentially be to follow the practice currently in use at YLE Pasila where items are hired against a bulk price regardless of the duration of hire. Rossi (2019) indicates that setting a daily hire price for an item could prove challenging to the client, as they might not be able to return everything immediately after filming finishes. Furthermore, the need for a specific prop can be several days or weeks due to continuity, even if it is only featured in a handful of scenes. Thus, Rossi views hiring items against a set bulk price suitable for the Finnish film industry requirements (Rossi 2019).

According to Kankaanpää (2019b), not being able to utilise a prop hire company can exclude people from entering the industry, as well as negatively impact those working within it. He explains that currently the network of each art department professional can influence the quality and speed in which they are able to do their job. Because building a comprehensive network of connections takes time, the new professionals entering the industry are at a disadvantage from the start. Kankaanpää hypothesises that having access to a prop hire company would offer every art department professional an equal starting point to sourcing props for any production thus making the field operate more equally (Kankaanpää 2019b).

Neither Pirttimaa (2019) nor Mikkola (2019) considers YLE prop storages to be negatively affected if a commercial prop hire business was introduced into the Finnish film industry. On the contrary, both Pirttimaa and Mikkola express that YLE could benefit from such a company and potentially engage in a partnership with them (Pirttimaa 2019; Mikkola 2019). Pirttimaa (2019) explains that in such a situation YLE might not need to hold on to their prop storage anymore nor practice prop hiring. In fact, the company is constantly evaluating whether they can afford to maintain the prop storage nowadays (Pirttimaa 2019). Mikkola (2019) explains that YLE is constantly increasingly outsourcing their productions to other productions companies which do not always utilise the YLE prop storages.

As discussed in section 5.2.3 and 6.1.3, reusing items through a hire process can save natural resources. Online Survey Finland (2018) respondents indicate that often Finnish production companies do not have permanent prop storages and, thus, props need to be discarded after the filming finishes. In turn, this can lead to some props to be sourced repeatedly for consecutive productions (Online Survey Finland 2018). Pirttimaa (2019) theorises that production companies would benefit from being able to donate their props to a prop hire company, as it cuts down storage and returns costs. However, the prop hire would in turn need to evaluate whether it is worth for them to keep each item they receive (Pirttimaa 2019).

A prop hire company could operate in various ways in order to succeed in Finland. Kankaanpää (2019b) suggest that a Finnish prop hire could function in a self-service manner, where the designer or prop master could collect and check out the props they require independently. In turn the prop hire would only need to provide the service of inspecting returned items for damages and putting them back on the shelf for the next production to use. A prop hire

\(^{15}\) Original quote: “[T]avara ei koskaan lainassa parane” (Pirttimaa 2019)
service could also potentially operate fully online by allowing various individuals to list their personal prop collections on a website. Productions could place orders through the website and the prop hire service would organise collections and returns for everything (Kankaanpää 2019b). Mikkola (2019) proposes that various production companies could combine their prop storages into one and pay a yearly fee for being able to access and maintain the entire stock, instead of each company having their own little storage.

7.4 Future Research Proposals
This section discusses some of the aspects that could be researched further, as this thesis provides a preliminary research into the topic of prop sourcing and prop hire companies in Europe. The research was necessary to focus on certain aspects of the practices due to limitation of time and other resources, as discussed in section 1.6.

This study discusses the prop sourcing practices within the European context, but the research was limited to investigating a few European countries. Mostly due to the available practitioners to consult, the research was restricted to study the United Kingdom, Finland, Greece, Italy, Denmark and Czech Republic. However, additional online research was applied to study France, Spain, Hungary, Germany, Poland, Sweden and the Republic of Ireland. The practices in the United Kingdom and Finland were explored more in depth through case studies. Additional research into more European countries, as well as studying the ones introduced in this thesis as larger case studies can offer a more varied and detailed description of how props are sourced in each individual country. Comparing more countries to each other can establish a more concrete and nuanced conclusion regarding the prop sourcing practices around Europe. Moreover, the research could be further expanded to include countries outside of Europe, either as reference or for direct comparison.

Contacting and interviewing more art department professionals from various European countries could provide further first-hand views regarding how the general prop sourcing practices are conducted in each country. Through evaluation and comparison of the material, variations can be identified and an understanding about the shared practices across the industries can be achieved. As for the research conducted for this study, the professionals can help identify more prop hire companies around Europe. Since information about every company is not available online or accessing it requires knowledge of a specific language, being able to consult professionals with first-hand experiences from the field is invaluable to collect research material for this type of study.

Collecting information about film funding and the overall economy of the film industry in each country can reveal how some countries are able to sustain a large film industry and produce more features than others. In addition, the history of how the film industry has developed in each country plays a role in the current size and practices of the industry. Researching these aspects of various European countries could reveal whether the number of film industry productions affects the number of prop hire companies in any way, or do the hire companies rely on other clients to sustain their business. Furthermore, including separate research into how international productions filming in certain European countries can affect the local industry could reveal new information relevant to the prop sourcing practices and how prop hire companies are affected by them.
The case studies presented in this thesis could also be expanded upon, as every new professional interviewed can provide new views into how the industry functions. Individuals working on different productions and in different roles within the art department can have different experiences regarding prop sourcing. Overall, by interviewing and surveying more art department professionals, more depth can be added to this study. Additionally, more resources to conduct further investigation into other European countries would benefit the research into the topic of prop sourcing and prop hire companies within the area. The more countries that can be researched in depth, the more they can be compared to each other and, thus, the variations between countries can be understood in more detail.

Expanding the research to businesses excluded from the research scope of this thesis would further the knowledge on how other types of hire companies function and the effects they have on film industry productions. Costume, event, vehicle and animal hire companies were excluded from the research scope in section 2.6, due to limited resources. However, each of these four types of companies would undoubtedly be worthy of research in as much detail as prop hire companies have been studied in this thesis. Each of the five types of hire companies offer services essential to the film industry. Furthermore, various art department professionals often utilise their services, as most productions require garments, objects, vehicles and animals. Thus, providing the industry with detailed descriptions of each type of hire company would further the knowledge about various prop sourcing practices.

Further expanding the research into sustainable film industry practices and especially the ecological effects that sourcing and disposing of props has on the environment would offer the industry with more tools to promote sustainable filmmaking. Sustainable practices in general are becoming increasingly vital for the environment to survive various challenges, such as climate change and plastic pollution, and the film industry is relatively new and slow to engage in these practices. Detailed calculations into the environmental cost of various prop sourcing methods could guide art department professionals to consider their options more carefully. Additionally, uncovering alternative solutions to disposing of different types of materials and props could reduce the amount ending up in landfill sites.

Future research into the topic can add valuable material to this study. Nevertheless, this thesis provides the industry with an overall view of the current prop sourcing practices around Europe and how they affect various productions and professionals working in the film industry.
This study has explored, in great detail, the prop sourcing methods used by art department professionals across Europe. The benefits and challenges of each of the four sourcing methods have been discussed from different angles, such as their impact on the economy and sustainability of filmmaking practices. The study has also observed how the practices of custom making, buying, borrowing and hiring props alternates between European countries. Furthermore, this study has explored and evaluated the significance of prop hire companies as suppliers of props to various European film industry productions.

This study adds to the knowledge of common prop sourcing methods in Europe and the significance of prop hire companies to the film industries. The research is strongly grounded in the field, presenting views and experiences of film industry professionals currently working around Europe. The applied methodology for collecting and analysing material proved effective in uncovering first-hand experiences and personal views of film industry professionals regarding prop sourcing practices and, thus, expanding the available information on the topic. Qualitative surveys and interviews provided detailed descriptions of the current prop sourcing methods and how effective various art department professionals regarded each method in different situations. As the study aimed to uncover personal experiences from the field, the quality of the collected research material was more important than its amount. Therefore, the selection of qualitative research methods was appropriate and beneficial for the study.

Based on the testimonies of various art department professionals consulted for this study, it can be concluded that prop sourcing practices are alike across Europe and all four prop sourcing methods are utilised. Props are commonly bought from various shops or online, borrowed or hired from a variety of individuals, or custom made for specific purposes. The ratio in which these methods are utilised varies somewhat depending on the resources available for each production. In addition, the type, style and use of each prop can dictate the most appropriate supplier to source them from. However, the research findings reveal that if a prop hire company is located in the vicinity of a production, the art department professionals are likely to utilise its services. Especially in countries with several prop hire companies, such as the United Kingdom, the art department professionals are likely to utilise these services as the primary source for props. Conversely, in countries with no commercial prop hire companies, such as Finland, other sources must be relied upon and productions usually opt to purchase most of the required props.

The research suggests that it is common for European countries with organised film industry to have a few prop hire companies. The research findings showcase that the more prop hire companies there are within an area, the more diverse the overall supply is, as the prop hire companies will specialise in certain periods or themes in order to compete with each other. However, if only one or two prop hire companies are supplying props to all of the productions...
in one area, the productions are likely to utilise other suppliers and prop sourcing methods to supplement their selection. Sourcing props from a variety of suppliers can also help the production achieve a unique visual look because the stock of the prop hire companies is in frequent use. However, the art department professionals are usually required to opt for the most cost-effective method for sourcing each prop, regardless of the country or the type of production.

Understanding the special requirements of the film industry enables prop hire companies to customise their services and maximise the benefits for productions. Often, hire companies will specialise in a certain type of items to attract specific customers, especially if there are other prop hire companies in the same area. Despite focusing on catering to local productions, prop hire companies can also attract customers from across the country or even from abroad, if their stock corresponds to the requirements of such productions. To ensure income during low filming period, prop hire companies offer their services to productions outside the film industry as well, for example to events, private parties, photo shoots and amateur theatre groups. Each hire company can decide on how they price their stock in order to make the business profitable, taking into account the budgets of their clients, the hire period and the condition of each item. The ability to customise the services of a prop hire to the needs of various productions makes these companies attractive to the film industry. The research findings reveal that, without access to prop hire companies, productions would need to source items from a larger area, spend more time and money on the sourcing process and employ more art department professionals to complete the design process. By offering a large quantity of items for hire, negotiable prices and a place to return everything after filming finishes, prop hire companies help productions save valuable resources, such as time and money.

Prop sourcing is usually allocated to a team of highly skilled art department professionals because sourcing the right items can significantly improve the overall visual look of a feature, as well as help to convey the story to the audience. Large productions usually employ a team of specialised prop buyers and set decorators to source all of the required items. In small productions the task can be handled by the production designer, art director or props master alongside their other responsibilities. The research findings reveal that the responsibilities of a prop master vary drastically depending on the country and structure of the art department. For example, in British productions with hierarchical art department structure, the prop master simply schedules when each prop is required on set and arranges for their collection and returns accordingly. Conversely, in Finnish productions a prop master can be responsible for sourcing props, arranging for their transport, dressing the sets and organising the disposal of each props, whether they are to be returned to the owners, stored for future use, donated to charity, sold to cast and crew or discarded to landfill. This is due to the art departments being small and the industry lacking the job titles for specialised prop buyers and set decorators.

Several of the art department professionals consulted for this study describe the film industry as wasteful, mostly due to the amount of props and material sent to landfill after each production. The services of a prop hire are regarded as sustainable, as props can be returned to the hire company and reused by other productions until the end of their lifespan, instead of being discarded to landfill after single use. Most of the consulted professionals indicate that they strive to recycle as much as possible in all stages of production. However, the production schedules are often so tight that not everything can be sorted properly and some items have to be discarded to landfill regardless. Furthermore, because productions aim to turn as large of a profit as possible, selecting the most cost-effective prop sourcing and disposal methods is usually a priority over the more sustainable options, which are often regarded as expensive.
The research findings suggest that the Finnish film industry would benefit from a prop hire company. The views expressed by Finnish film industry professionals regarding establishing a prop hire company in the country were, for the most part, in support of such a business. As long as the hire company would have large enough stock of sought after items for a reasonable price, the art department professionals would be likely utilise its services. As discussed in section 7.3, a prop hire company could operate in various ways in order to profitably function in Finland, since the biggest challenge would be to make the business profitable for the company itself. Moreover, based on the research findings, it can be argued that Finnish art departments could benefit from a more hierarchical structure, as well as the addition of the missing job titles, such as ‘props buyer’ and ‘set decorator’, to the industry. Realising this change would require active promotion of the structure from the art department professionals, as it relies on a larger portion of the overall production budget being allocated to the art department. Therefore, the needs of the art department should be made clearer to members of the production department in charge of the budgets. Overall, adhering more closely to the European standard of filmmaking and prop sourcing practices could be beneficial for the Finnish film industry and its professionals.

This study has explored how props are commonly sourced in European film industry productions and how prop hire companies affect these productions and art department professionals. Several of the film industry professionals consulted for this study described prop hire companies as essential for the industry and that the art department professionals are very likely to use the services of a prop hire company if available. Utilising prop hire companies to source a large quantity of the required props can help productions save valuable resources. In addition, prop hire companies can provide access to expensive and unique pieces, which would otherwise be difficult and time consuming to source for most productions. Furthermore, prop hire companies offer a sustainable practice to the otherwise wasteful industry, by enabling props to be reused until the end of their lifespan. Overall, it has been established in this study that having access to a prop hire company can benefit both productions and art department professionals, regardless of the country or size of the film industry.
Appendix A
Online Survey Finland Questionnaire

Rekvisiitan hankkiminen Suomessa
Vastaamalla alla olevaan kyselyyn annat luvan käyttää vastauksiasi osana Maisterin
Opinnäytetyön (Aalto Yliopisto) aineistoa. Vastauksista muodostetaan kokonaiskuva ja
tehdään johtopäätöksiä, ne eivät esinyy yksittäin opinnäytteessä. Aineiston tarkoituksena on
hahmottaa alalla vallitsevia näkemyksiä ja kokemuksia rekvisiitan hankinnasta.

Sanalla ’ala’ viitataan Suomen elokuva, televisio ja teatteri alaan. Jos olet toiminut rekvisiitan
parissa myös ulkomailla, vastaa vain Suomen kokemuksiesi mukaan.

Jos et ole tällä hetkellä töissä, käytä esimerkikinä viimeisintä työnkuvaasi. Vastauksia ei käytetä
opinnäytetyön ulkopuolella.

Vastausaika on 30.9.2018 asti.

1. Työnimikkeesi alalla (esim. lavastaja, rekvisitööri…)
2. Montako vuotta olet alalla toiminut?
3. Minkä tyypissä produktionissa toimit tai olet viimeksi toiminut? (Esim. teatteri,
fiktiolokuva, viihdeohjelma…)
4. Mistä olet usein hankkinut rekvisiittaa?
5. Onko rekvisiitan löytäminen mielestäsi helppoa? Miksi/Miksi ei?
6. Joudutko mielestäsi käyttämään paljon aikaa rekvisiitan etsimiseen?
7. Koetko usein stressiä löytää tiettyä rekvisiittaa aikarajojen puitteissa?
8. Joudutko usein keksimään jonkun muun ratkaisun kun juuri oikeanlaista rekvisiittaa
   ei löydy? Miltä se sinusta tuntuu?
9. Yritätkö pääsääntöisesti saada tarvitsemiasi rekvisiitan lainaan vai maksatko siitä?

Rekvisiittavuokraamo
Rekvisiittavuokraamo, eli Prop Hire, on ulkomailla laajasti käytössä oleva yritysmuoto. Rekvisiittavuokraamo
nimessä mukaisesti vuokraa erilaisille produktionille rekvisiittaa tarvittavaksi aikavälissä. Rekvisiittavuokraamoilla on yleensä
laajat varastot erilaisia
huonekaluja, asusteita ja lavasteen osia.

1. Uskotko käyttäväsi rekvisiitta vuokraamon palveluita, jos sellaiseen olisi
   mahdollisuus?
2. Minkälaista rekvisiittaa toivoisit voivasi vuokrata? Miksi?
3. Minkälaista rekvisiittaa et haluaisi vuokrata? Miksi?
4. Uskotko, että rekvisiitan vuokraaminen yhdestä paikasta tekisi työstäsi helpompaa?
5. Uskotko että rekvisiitta vuokraamosta olisi hyötyä Suomessa? Miten? Miksi?

Vapaaehtoinen
Jos haluaisit jakaa lisää näkemyksiäsi rekvisiitan hankkimiseen ja rekvisiitta vuokraamoihin
liittyen, jätä tähän sähköpostiosoitteesi. Lähetän sinulle mahdollisesti lisäkysymyksiä seuraavan
12 kuukauden aikana, joista muodostuu haastattelu aineistoa. Vastaukset käsitellään aina
nimettömänä, ellet erikseen suostu esintymään nimellisesti. Sähköpostiosoitteen jättäminen
tähän kenttään ei vielä valtuuta kyselyn tekijää käyttämään nimeäsi.
Appendix B
Online Survey UK questionnaire

Prop Sourcing in the United Kingdom
By answering the survey below anonymously, the views expressed can be used as material for a Master’s thesis (Aalto University). Your answers will not appear individually in the work, but together with all the answers received they form basic views on the subject to be reflected upon. The main focus of the thesis is in Prop Hire companies and how film/TV/theatre art department professionals use and perceive their services.

If you are not currently working on a production, please use the latest production you worked on as an example. Please only consider your experiences working in productions in the United Kingdom.

The answers provided will not be used outside of the thesis project.

This survey closes 30th September 2018.

1. Your current job title (e.g. set dec, production designer...)
2. How many years have you been working in art departments professionally?
3. Which cities have you worked in?
4. What type of productions have you worked on? (e.g. period drama, feature film, theatre etc.)
5. Where do you usually source props from?
6. In your opinion, how important do you think prop hire companies are for the film, television and theatre industry in the United Kingdom?
   Not important 1 2 3 4 5 Very important
7A. Consider all art departments you have worked with. Based on this, would you say most productions use services provided by prop hire companies?
   Yes / No
7B. Why do you think this is? Additional comments?
8. What types of props have you most often hired from a prop hire? (e.g. furniture, costume props, lighting...)
9. What kind of props do you source from somewhere else than a prop hire? Why?
10. If you did not have access to any prop hire companies, how would it affect your everyday job? (e.g. in terms of time, money, final visual look of production etc.)
11. What happens to the props after the productions has ended?
12A. Does the production company you work for have their own existing prop storage for the use of all their productions?
12B. Have you ever worked in a production company that had prop storage facilities?
   Additional comments:

Voluntary
If you wish to provide more views and thoughts for the thesis work, please leave your email address below. You may be contacted within the next 12 months with additional questions about sourcing props for productions and the service of prop hire companies. All answers will be treated anonymously unless you separately agree to provide your name, filling this email field does not yet give permission to use your name.
Personal Archive


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114


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Figures & Tables


Figure 1 – Koivurinta, E. (2019) *Set Props* [Photograph]. Personal collection.


Figure 7 – Celtic Prop Hire (2019) *Prop hire form* [Form]. Personal collection.

Figure 8 – Koivurinta, E. (2019) *Various props at Celtic Prop Hire* [Photograph]. Personal collection.
Figure 9 – Maja, A (1989) *Cinecitta sculpture warehouse* [Photograph].
Personal collection, used with permission.

Figure 10 – Koivurinta, E. (2019) *Furniture at Super Hire* [Photograph].
Personal collection.

Figure 11 – Koivurinta, E. (2019) *Antiques at Super Hire* [Photograph]. Personal collection.

Figure 12 – Koivurinta, E. (2013) *Antiques at Farley* [Photograph]. Personal collection.

Figure 13 – Koivurinta, E. (2019) *Various packaged goods, YLE Toholppi* [Photograph].
Personal collection.

Figure 14 – Koivurinta, E. (2019) *Cash register and pharmacy items, YLE Toholppi* [Photograph].
Personal collection.

Figure 15 – Koivurinta, E. (2019) *Shelving for smalls, YLE Toholppi* [Photograph].
Personal collection.

Figure 16 – Koivurinta, E. (2019) *Shelving for furniture, YLE Toholppi* [Photograph].
Personal collection.

Figure 17 – Koivurinta, E. (2019) *Distressed and broken furniture at Super Hire* [Photograph].
Personal collection.

Figure 18 – Koivurinta, E. (2013) *Jewellery at Farley* [Photograph].
Personal collection.

Figure 19 – Koivurinta, E. (2013) *Walking canes and umbrellas at Farley* [Photograph].
Personal collection.

Table 1 – Koivurinta, E. (2019) *Film production and prop hires in Europe* [Table].
Personal collection.