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The New Threshold of Creative Labor: Qualitative Insights from Turkish Cinema Professionals

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Abstract

This study examines the transformative effects of artificial intelligence (AI) on film production in Türkiye, focusing on two primary axes: screenwriting and editing, and visual effects (VFX) and post-production. Drawing on semi-structured interviews with eight cinema professionals and analyzed through Reflexive Thematic Analysis, the research moves beyond technical descriptions to map the socio-technical shifts in creative labor. The findings identify an emergent model of 'Assisted Creativity under Resource Scarcity,' where AI functions as a 'senior assistant' that enhances speed and cost-efficiency while remaining limited by its inability to replicate local narrative and cultural codes, character 'inner transformation,' and causal plotting. Within the Turkish context, the study highlights a democratization-precarity paradox: while AI lowers entry barriers for independent productions, it intensifies labor through 'multi-role' requirements and role contraction. Ultimately, the study discusses the relocation of cinema in an algorithmic age and offers theoretical insights into the preservation of national narrative sovereignty.

Keywords: artificial intelligence; cinema; screenwriting; visual effects; post-production; creative labor; Türkiye

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Introduction

As work with AI tools accelerates across various segments of the industry, prominent actors and directors have begun collaborating with AI and entering into agreements for upcoming projects. For example, in 2025, Darren Aronofsky announced a collaboration with Google DeepMind, stating that his forthcoming film, *Primordial Soup*, would be realized with new AI tools (Hellerman, 2025; Google DeepMind, 2025). On the other hand, the introduction of AI into screenwriting has sparked major debates within the industry. In 2023, the Writers Guild of America staged a 148-day strike that resulted in measures intended to prevent AI from displacing screenwriters (Watercutter, 2023). Following the growing adoption of AI tools across artistic fields, comparisons between human-made and AI-generated outputs have intensified debates around originality, creativity, and authorship. Zengin (2020), in their examination of AI-assisted production in contemporary art and cinema, argue that while digital tools open new aesthetic possibilities for artists and filmmakers, they also call for a reconsideration of concepts such as originality, authenticity, and creative authority. At the same

time, the authors warn that technological convenience may lead to risks of standardization, superficiality, and a potential erosion of artistic originality.

The use of artificial intelligence in mainstream cinema remains at an early yet rapidly evolving stage. Initial applications largely focused on promotional materials such as trailers and short audiovisual assets; the widely cited *Morgan* (Luke Scott, 2016) campaign is often considered one of the earliest examples. Over time, however, AI-supported technologies have increasingly entered film production processes, particularly within visual effects and performance capture workflows. For instance, in *Avengers: Infinity War*, actor Josh Brolin's facial performance was digitally captured and mapped onto the character Thanos using AI-supported tools, while Digital Domain employed machine-learning software to enhance the realism of the performance capture (Zengin, 2020, p. 166). Similarly, Martin Scorsese utilized AI-assisted techniques in *The Irishman* (2019) to digitally de-age actors such as Robert De Niro, Al Pacino, and Joe Pesci, demonstrating how AI can extend the visual and temporal flexibility of cinematic representation. While feature-length productions initially adopted AI in relatively limited ways, experimentation has expanded rapidly in short-form filmmaking. Early projects explored AI-generated screenplays realized by human directors and crews (e.g., *Sunspring* and *It is No Game)*. More recently, many films have been produced using fully AI-generated

imagery, with cinematography, artistic design, and sound design created through generative models. Parallel to these developments, film festivals dedicated to AI-generated works have begun to emerge internationally, reflecting growing interest in aesthetic and industrial developments.

AI-assisted production has also begun to appear in the Turkish audiovisual sector. One notable example is the mini-series *Castle Walls*, announced by *Ay Yapım* in 2025 and presented as one of the first Turkish projects to integrate AI tools across multiple stages of production, from script development to editing. The production reportedly employed generative tools such as ChatGPT, Midjourney, Runway, and ElevenLabs, as well as an in-house diffusion model trained on the company's own archive (Anadolu Ajansı, 2025). Although the series has not yet been released, such initiatives suggest that AI-supported production is gradually moving from experimental contexts toward professional implementations. The use of AI in film production in Türkiye remains in a developmental stage and is perceived differently among industry professionals. While many recognize AI's potential to reduce production costs, enhance technical quality, and streamline creative processes, limited access to technological infrastructure and expertise constrains its implementation. Uncertainties surrounding creative authorship and persistent economic constraints emerge as key factors shaping the adaptation of AI within Türkiye's film industry.

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This study treats the integration of AI not merely as a technical upgrade, but as a profound socio-technical transformation that reshapes creative decision-making and the economic underpinnings of cultural production. The 'Turkish case' offers a unique theoretical vantage point, illustrating a synthesis between a resilient 'on-set problem-solving' culture and the strategic adoption of algorithmic tools amidst chronic budget constraints. Within this framework, we propose the concept of 'Assisted Creativity under Resource Scarcity,' positioning AI as an 'epistemic lever' that enables independent producers to bypass high-cost infrastructural barriers while navigating the structural fragilities of a local production ecosystem. By focusing on two primary axes, visual effects (VFX) and post-production/ screenwriting/editing, the research examines how these tools redefine the ontology of creative labor. Through a reflexive thematic analysis of in-depth interviews with eight high-level industry experts, the study maps the emergent 'democratization-precarity paradox'. It seeks to understand the relocation of cinema in an algorithmic age.

Artificial Intelligence in the Post-Cinema Era

The integration of artificial intelligence (AI) into the film industry marks the latest stage of cinema’s digital transformation. Throughout film history, each new technological breakthrough has dramatically reshaped aesthetic forms of expression, production workflows, and audience experiences (Manovich, 2001; Bordwell & Thompson, 2023). In the digital age,

cinema has evolved beyond optical–mechanical tools to become part of a more flexible and data-intensive techno-network driven by algorithmic logic and big data (Parikka, 2012). In this sense, AI should be regarded not merely as a technical tool but as a complex force that radically restructures, transforms, and redefines both creative and economic processes (Latour, 2005).

The diffusion of digital technologies within cinema initially took shape through the transition from analog to digital formats. However, since the second decade of the twenty-first century, the inclusion of AI through machine learning (ML), deep learning (DL), and generative AI (GenAI) has enabled production and consumption models that extend far beyond the traditional limits of digitalization (Chow et al., 2026; Rajas and Gértrudix, 2024). Initially concentrated in visual effects (VFX) and post-production, AI systems have increasingly influenced almost every stage of the filmmaking chain, including screenwriting, casting, editing, color grading, and sound design (Singh et al., 2023; Hallinan & Striphas, 2016).

Each technological shift in film history has generated new theoretical debates. The most recent discussions revolve around the concept of *post-cinema*, emphasizing altered narrative forms, new media environments, and evolving modes of spectatorship rather than the literal "end of cinema" (Dixon, 2001; Mitchell, 1992). Stam (2000) observes that the current situation mirrors cinema's earliest phase: "Pre-cinema and post-cinema have begun to resemble each

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other. Then, as now, everything seemed possible, and cinema shared a neighborhood with a wide range of simulation devices."

Debates on the "death of cinema" fundamentally stem from the continuous transformation of production, circulation, and viewing practices since the late twentieth century. Casetti (2016) interprets this process as a *relocation of cinema*, emphasizing that a medium is reactivated in new contexts through different devices, spaces, and purposes. In this light, the migration of cinematic experience beyond theaters (through alternative devices and platforms) signals that cinema now occupies a distinct position from its traditional form. As Satıcı (2025) notes, concepts such as "end" or "death" imply the dissolution of classical forms of viewing, production, and distribution; yet this dissolution points not to extinction but to adaptation and transformation in line with new realities. In "*What Is Digital Cinema?"* Lev Manovich argues that digital media fundamentally redefines cinema's identity, distancing it from traditional photographic recordings of reality. He maintains that the digital revolution blurs boundaries between live-action cinema and animation, and, in some respects, returns the medium to practices reminiscent of pre-cinematic techniques in which images were hand-painted and manually animated (Manovich, 1995:3). In this sense,with AI-generated imagery, cinema again appears to be traversing an inaugural phase, one that ushers in new meanings and industrial

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conditions.

The development of AI technologies is driving a comprehensive, multi-dimensional transformation in film production. Historically, the film industry's interaction with technology has unfolded through successive innovations, such as the transitions from silent to sound cinema and from analog to digital, each fundamentally reshaping production processes and content creation (Bordwell & Thompson, 2023). Today, AI constitutes the most current and far-reaching stage of this transformation, entering every phase of filmmaking through diverse applications. These applications affect both technical and creative dimensions, accelerate workflows, alter cost structures, and introduce new expectations regarding professional roles and competencies (Brynjolfsson & McAfee, 2014).

AI represents an advanced phase of cinema's digital transformation, and its effects extend across all layers of the production chain. The integration can be summarized along two main lines: screenwriting/editing, VFX–post-production. While film production is commonly divided into three phases -pre-production, production, and post-production- AI's most pronounced areas of use appear in screenwriting and development, visual effects, and post-production (Frederick, 2019). Systematically mapping AI's uses across these processes is essential to delineate the scope and limits of the ongoing transformation.

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Screenwriting and Editing

Screenwriting is one of the most hotly debated domains because it is closely tied to creativity. Traditional screenwriting is typically a lengthy and costly process shaped by the screenwriter's personal creativity, experience, and intuition. At the professional level, script development involves numerous sub-processes, including research, story development, character construction, and dialogue writing. AI's advantages in script development include accelerated research, support for narrative structure and character analysis, and other forms of technical assistance (Vincent, 2019). Algorithmic tools such as ScriptBook and DeepStory facilitate the analytic evaluation of existing scripts and the drafting of new storylines (Chow, 2020). Their core function is to identify robust story structures through data-driven analysis and to offer creative suggestions grounded in existing content. However, a key criticism is that AI-assisted script generation may constrain originality and creativity (Napoli, 2014).

Another dimension of AI use in screenwriting is direct story generation or content creation. Generative AI models can assemble core story elements to create original material or rapidly produce alternative versions of existing stories (Frederick, 2019). Nevertheless, AI-generated stories often display limitations in creative depth, originality, and emotional intensity. These constraints make it difficult to position AI as a fully autonomous creative force, fostering instead a tendency to employ it as a "creative assistant" (Vincent, 2019).

A further contribution of AI-supported screenwriting tools is time and cost savings during script development. The automation of extensive research and evaluation enables screenwriters to devote more attention to creative tasks. In this sense, the speed and efficiency advantages provided by AI may enrich creative workflows and allow writers to shape their stories more effectively (Sharda & Delen, 2006).

However, an important aspect of the debate on AI in screenwriting and editing concerns fears of mechanized creativity and diminished originality. Accordingly, AI-assisted production processes are frequently said to risk over-standardization and "averaging." These concerns highlight the need to preserve and cultivate a mode of screenwriting grounded in human creativity, cultural depth, and lived experience. They argue that AI should not fully replace human authorship (Napoli, 2014). This line of critique overlaps with long-standing arguments that modern mass media standardize cultural products, suppressing authentic artistic expression and turning individuals into passive consumers (Horkheimer & Adorno, 2002).

Despite disagreements and ongoing discussions about collaboration with AI, those who adapt to new tools appear to be advancing in their screenwriting practice, and academic research on the topic is growing. Notably, Şavk and Gürsoy (2024) argue that, in the traditional sense, the writer is no longer merely "the person who writes." With AI, authorship is increasingly

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being defined by the person who provides and directs prompts, a new figure they call the "promptor." While AI is not an autonomous creator, it has begun to act as an active "partner" in the writer's creative process, a trend that is increasingly visible across the sector.

In sum, while the use of AI in screenwriting and editing provides substantial support to creative processes, it also raises critical ethical and aesthetic questions. Optimal use is likely when AI assumes a supportive, assistive role within creative workflows. Such collaboration may enrich human creativity, increase the efficiency of production processes, and introduce innovative dimensions to storytelling. In this context, more effective models for integrating AI into script development are likely to emerge in the coming period.

Post-Production and Visual Effects

Post-production and visual effects constitute another major area of use. Especially with deep learning (DL) and generative AI (GenAI), recent accounts note dramatic gains in post-production efficiency (Singh et al., 2023). AI contributes significantly to image and sound manipulation, VFX creation, digital set design, and virtual production (Zalipour, 2026). The growing prevalence of deepfake techniques in Hollywood and the expansion of virtual production studios are taken as important indicators of this shift. These developments lower costs, accelerate production, and open new avenues of aesthetic expression (Hemraj, 2025).

Today, media are less "captured" than "computed" and "distributed." Accordingly, the image is reproduced as an inter-device, algorithmically guided density of visuals (Denson, 2016, p. 110). Denson emphasizes that, in the post-cinema era, cameras and computer-generated images are grounded in a different logic. Whereas the camera's function in classical cinema centered on visual perception and the human gaze, in the post-cinema era, imaging devices not only "record" or "represent" reality but also operate as components of systems that process data and continuously transform the image digitally. Post-cinematic cameras are therefore not merely instruments that represent the world or mimic perception; they are digital apparatuses that incessantly process and transform the world while affecting bodies on a sensory level. This shift exceeds the classical "regime of the gaze" and signals a passage toward a post-human, algorithmic register of sensation (Denson, 2020). As Cook (2020) notes, in the digital age, the cinema and media experience have undergone a profound transformation: the ocular-centric (vision-centered) regime of classical cinema gives way to a more affective, layered, and algorithmically operating configuration.

VFX is among the fastest-evolving domains of AI adoption and is now widely used across the sector. In VFX workflows, conventional techniques, such as background replacement, adding characters or creatures, and removing unwanted objects, are increasingly being automated through AI. Notable AI-enabled advances have proliferated in areas including

automatic rotoscoping and masking, deep scene reconstruction, deepfake-based facial animation, hyper-realistic CGI character creation, content generation and enrichment, predictive analytics for production planning, deep-learning–based image processing, real-time VFX, and customized content creation (Sharma & Kochhar, 2024). In parallel, research on video editing is advancing. Argaw and colleagues' 2022 study introduced a new dataset and benchmark to further AI-assisted video editing research: a large database of 196,176 shots with more than 1.5 million annotations for elements such as shot size, camera angle, motion, and sound source. Using these data, the study compared the performance of different deep learning models on tasks such as classifying shot attributes and clustering camera setups.

The Use of AI in Türkiye's Film Industry: Potentials and Limitations

Regarding sectoral awareness and implementation levels, the trajectory of artificial intelligence (AI) in Türkiye has been institutionalized through national policy documents. The *National Artificial Intelligence Strategy (2021–2025)* and the subsequent *2024–2025 Action Plan* define roadmaps for human capital, education, standardization, and cross-sector diffusion (Digital Transformation Office of the Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye [T.C. Cumhurbaşkanlığı Dijital Dönüşüm Ofisi], 2021; Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Industry and Technology (MoIT), 2024). While this framework does not present a film-specific plan for the creative industries, it functions as an enabling ground for building AI capacity in the sector. At

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the implementation level, virtual production and LED volume–based shooting infrastructures have become more visible, and examples combining game engines with real-time image processing have begun to emerge (Brompton Technology, 2022; MGX Studio, 2022; Ledeca, 2022). These infrastructures shorten shooting and finishing cycles, automate certain technical steps, and enable more consistent visual quality management.

Nevertheless, the depth of adoption varies. Due to factors such as hardware costs, access to specialized personnel, and licensing and operating expenses, the diffusion of AI solutions into areas like script development and post-production automation (e.g., rotoscoping, tracking, speech–text alignment) varies with institutional scale and project budgets. European assessments emphasize that generative AI should be addressed with particular care regarding copyright, personality rights, and employment impacts, and note that the sector is advancing through a "fail fast–learn fast" approach (European Audiovisual Observatory [EAO], 2024a; 2024b). In Türkiye, the landscape points to an early-maturity phase in which the establishment of technical capacity coincides with a growing need for professional reskilling. On the production side (particularly in virtual production and real-time visualization), early examples are accelerating, and these cases tend to diffuse through knowledge sharing and training (MGX Studio, 2022; Brompton Technology, 2022).

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Method

This study examines the use of artificial intelligence (AI) tools in film production in Türkiye through a qualitative approach. The research design is based on semi-structured, in-depth interviews; the analysis follows Braun and Clarke's reflexive thematic analysis (2006, 2019, 2021). The study received ethics approval from the Yaşar University Ethics Committee, with a decision dated 30.01.2025 and numbered 75976.

An interpretivist–constructivist epistemology is adopted, and participants' experiences of, and meaning-making regarding, AI are analyzed in context. The process begins with familiarization with the data, open coding, and the formation of code clusters by areas of focus, and proceeds through theme development, review, naming, and reporting. The analysis is conducted predominantly inductively. However, two focus areas derived from the research aim, VFX/post-production, screenwriting, and editing, serve as an analytic guide.

Population and Sample

The study population comprises cinema professionals who play an active role in Türkiye's film production chain (development–production–post-production). The geographical focus is the Turkish film industry, and both independent and commercial production practices are considered. Given the topic, the defining characteristic of the population is either contact

with or experience with AI tools and/or professional competence to evaluate AI within existing workflows.

The sample consists of eight cinema professionals selected through purposive and maximum variation sampling. Roles represented include director, screenwriter, cinematographer, and producer/VFX–post specialist. The selection criteria were as follows:

i. professional experience in Türkiye in feature/short film or series/advertising;
ii. direct experience with AI tools or a decision-maker/practitioner position;
iii. voluntary participation and informed consent.

The sample size of eight participants was determined based on the principle of 'information power,' which suggests that the adequacy of a sample depends on the study's aim, sample specificity, and the quality of dialogue. Given that the participants are high-level experts with direct experience in the Turkish film industry, including prominent directors, cinematographers, and producers, their narratives provided high-density insights. This 'information-rich' approach enabled a deep mapping of emergent AI practices, with the diversity of professional roles ensuring thematic saturation. Rather than seeking statistical representativeness, this study prioritizes the depth of professional 'know-how' and meaning-making in a rapidly evolving technological landscape.

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Table 1 summarizes participants' names, professional roles, production domains, and modes of contact with AI. This facilitates contextual reading of quotations and interpretations in the findings section, allowing each participant's area of expertise and thematic contribution to be seen at a glance.

No.	Name	Role/Title	Production Domain	AI use (brief)	Interview Highlights
1	Aysim Türkmen	Director	Film / Series	Functions as a "senior assistant" at the writing stage; linguistic refinement	Need for ethics and education; responsible use; workflow integration
2	Berk Tuğcu	Screenwriter	Series / Film	Draft variations; idea development	Limits of AI in character development/arc, causality, and "inner transformation"
3	Emre Yeksan	Director	Independent Cinema	Leveraging post/VFX capabilities	Aesthetics–production relations; increased accessibility and the risk of homogenization
4	Gülseren Aydın	Screenwriter	TV Writing	Short-form experimentation	Local narrative logic; scene rhythm; tendency to produce clichés
5	Meryem Yavuz	Cinematographer	Film / Advertising	Previs and storyboard production	Near-zero-cost previsualization; risk reduction; preparation culture
6	Nesra Gürbüz	Producer	Film / Series	Speed–cost optimization in the post track	Speed, convenience, risk of homogenization; the need to verify decisions
7	Ozan Takış	Director	Independent / Experimental	Image generation with AI	Team downsizing; low-budget feature-scale production; role transformation
8	Umut Aral	Director	International Co-Productions	Pitch decks; visual lookbooks; language editing	Presentation efficiency

Table 1: Participant Profile Summary.

Data Collection

Data are collected through semi-structured, in-depth interviews. The guide is organized

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along four axes:

- VFX and post-production (speed, cost, access, quality),
- Screenwriting and editing (assistantship, creative boundaries, character–causality),
- Cross-cutting thematic analysis (cost, creativity, employment, responsible use, and rights management).

Interviews are conducted either face-to-face or online, according to participants' preferences. Each interview is recorded, and concurrent field notes are taken (including salient emphases and contextual cues). The average interview length is approximately one hour. Participants appear under their real names. We adopted an open-identity, permission-based quotation protocol that presents names and roles with each quotation.

The analysis followed Braun and Clarke's (2022) reflexive thematic analysis, an approach that emphasizes the researcher's active role in knowledge production. Moving beyond descriptive summarization, the coding process functioned as an interpretative bridge between raw data and theoretical anchors such as post-cinema and creative labor theory. For instance, codes related to 'speed and cost' were not merely categorized as industrial benefits but were critically examined in relation to labor precarity and the potential homogenization of the cinematic image. This allowed the findings to move from 'what is happening' to 'how these changes redefine the ontology of creative labor'.

Research Limitations

While providing grounded insights, this study has limitations regarding its scope. The

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findings reflect the experiences of professionals primarily active in feature films and series in Türkiye; therefore, different dynamics might exist in areas such as animation or documentary filmmaking. Furthermore, because the research is based on qualitative interviews, it captures practitioners' subjective perceptions and professional anxieties rather than providing a quantitative measure of AI's impact on production budgets. Finally, this study focuses on the transformation of workflows and labor; future research could expand on this by performing a formal aesthetic analysis of AI-generated cinematic outputs to assess shifts in visual style and narrative complexity.

Findings

In this section, the qualitative data obtained in accordance with the roadmap outlined in the conceptual framework and method are presented and discussed thematically. The findings are organized around two main workflow axes of the film production chain: screenwriting, visual effects, and post-production.

The "Speed–Cost–Access" Triangle in Visual Effects and Post-Production

This theme examines how AI tools in VFX/post accelerate workflows, lower costs, and broaden access, alongside dilemmas in labor, aesthetics, and governance. In Türkiye, efficiency gains are most visible in pre-production and post-production; however, existing production relations and QA practices set important limits. The findings indicate that in Türkiye,

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independent and mid-scale projects achieve marked efficiency gains, especially during pre-production and post-production; however, these gains are constrained by existing production relations and quality-assurance mechanisms.

Participants identify speed, low cost, and convenience as AI's primary benefits in VFX. These gains allow for the automation of tasks previously handled manually. However, this efficiency is not merely an industrial convenience. It serves as a catalyst for labor restructuring and role contraction within the production chain. Furthermore, the pursuit of speed often triggers an 'anxiety of averaging'. This suggests that technical efficiency may inadvertently lead to aesthetic homogenization.

> "Both fast and low-cost… [AI] makes things easier because it already goes through all the stages we would handle manually." (Participant 6)

Previsualization (previs)/Storyboard Culture and Risk Management

AI is "normalizing" low-cost previsualization (previs) and storyboard production, fostering a culture of preparation that reduces pre-shoot risks. Participant 5 notes that they can now generate storyboards "very easily, at zero cost, with just a computer and an internet connection," which visualizes the story's rhythm and even its tone, thereby minimizing on-set risks. The same participant adds that, with AI, "the pre-production period has become longer," describing a shift toward a more planning-heavy production regime (e.g., tool selection and workflow design).

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> "We can produce the storyboard at zero cost… by minimizing risks during time on set, we accelerate the process." (Participant 5)

Democratization and Micro-Crew Production

Gains in speed and cost reduce barriers to access by enabling feature-length or short-form production with micro crews. Participant 7 exemplifies the single-producer model, noting that they completed a short film/trailer project "by myself… with only a hard drive and a 2016 MacBook Air," and describing the experience as "comfortable yet, at the same time, frightening." The same participant adds that options such as cloud or remote server rental have become cheaper, indicating a lower hardware barrier. This picture concretely substantiates Participant 3's observation that certain tasks have reached "a level where anyone can do them."

> "I did all of it by myself… with only a hard drive and a 2016 MacBook Air." (Participant 7)

The Accessibility–Aesthetics Dilemma and the Anxiety of "Averaging"

Conversely, increased accessibility does not, by itself, elevate aesthetic outcomes. Participant 3 argues that in the technology–art relationship, "the aesthetic side always comes later," and that production/finance relations are often decisive; "doing the job cheaply" is not a solution on its own. Participant 6 emphasizes that algorithmic recommendation ecosystems foster homogenization, noting that the tools we use also reshape demand and taste. Read together, these accounts suggest that while VFX/post-production can deliver time and budget savings, there remain risks of a pull toward "average" aesthetics and an erosion of diversity.

> "By leveraging the existing pool, it increases speed and access… but the aesthetic side always lags; production/finance relations are decisive." (Participant 3)

Legal–Organizational Constraints and Operational Caution

The integration of AI into the post-production pipeline is not only technical but also legal and organizational. Participant 8 notes that, because current regulations remain unsettled, some production companies refrain from using AI directly; nevertheless, under time and budget pressures, AI offers multiple possibilities. The same participant emphasizes the need for clear rules around questions such as "who is the primary producer?" and intellectual property, adding that major distributors are therefore proceeding cautiously.

AI increases operational efficiency in the VFX/post track by delivering speed and cost advantages; it renders steps such as previs/storyboard low-cost, thereby reducing on-set risk and rationalizing pre-production timelines. This constitutes a notable expansion of access, especially for independent and mid-scale productions (e.g., Participant 5 on storyboard and risk mitigation; Participant 6 on speed–cost; Participant 8 on multi-stage acceleration). While AI lightens the load on certain intermediary roles (e.g., simple manipulations/effects, format conversion) and enables micro-crew production, it simultaneously raises expectations and triggers anxieties about precarization (Participant 7's single-producer experience; Participant 3 on the primacy of production relations).

Beyond its cost-efficiency, AI-driven previsualization (previs) marks a significant shift

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in the cinematic ontology of the Turkish film industry. As Participant 5 notes, the ability to generate storyboards at 'zero cost' with 'just a computer' effectively front-loads the creative process into the digital interface. This transformation echoes Manovich's assertion that digital cinema blurs the boundaries between live-action recording and manual animation. In the Turkish context, the move toward a 'planning-heavy' regime suggests that the visual look of a film is increasingly 'computed' before a single frame is shot. While this reduces on-set risks, it also risks a 'post-cinematic' homogenization in which the 'manual' spontaneity of traditional Turkish production culture, often characterized by on-set problem-solving, is replaced by a pre-calculated, algorithmic aesthetic.

Cumulatively, shorter post-production timelines and smaller crews push unit costs downward; however, aesthetic quality and distribution visibility remain governed by platform logics and market relations (Participant 3 on aesthetics/market dynamics; Participant 6 on homogenization concerns).

Representative Quotations:

"We can produce the storyboard at zero cost. We minimize risks." (Participant 5)

"Both fast and low-cost… [AI] is very practical." (Participant 6)

"[AI] increases speed and accessibility; it brings things to a level where anyone can do them." (Participant 3)

"I did all of it by myself… with a 2016 MacBook Air." (Participant 7)

> "[AI] provides very high speed, including writing–storyboard–post." (Participant 8)

> "The aesthetic side comes later; production/finance relations are decisive." (Participant 3)

AI in Screenwriting and Editing: Assistant Role, Boundaries, and Potential

This theme examines how AI is positioned as a "smart/senior assistant" in screenwriting and in editing/language refinement, while identifying its current limits in narrative depth, alignment with local cultural codes, and structural coherence, as well as its format-dependent potentials (especially in short form). AI significantly accelerates literary workflows and reduces research costs. Tasks that require once a week of effort are now compressed into minutes. This efficiency redefines professional authorship toward the role of a 'promptor' or senior editor. While speed is gained, authorial intuition remains necessary to prevent 'tonal flattening'. Consequently, the focus shifts from manual writing to managing the risk of over-standardized narrative outputs.

> "I position it like a senior, knowledgeable assistant in my life… I need to prepare summary presentations (pitch decks)… I use it for all writing checks, from punctuation to grammar." (Participant 8)

The Limits of Creativity: Cultural Codes, Scene Rhythm and the "Soul" Debate

The findings indicate that AI still faces clear limitations in "producing" narrative content. Participant 4 reports that AI-generated scenes tend to have a "public-service-announcement/school-play tone" and struggles to grasp Turkish TV drama codes and the local narrative mathematics. The participant further emphasizes recurring problems in scene-internal rhythm and construction, noting that scenes are "generally set up incorrectly." These

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assessments suggest a tendency toward templated, clichéd outputs and indicate that, in scene writing requiring fine-tuned alignment with local cultural parameters, authorial intuition remains irreplaceable.

From a broader perspective, participants point to a gap between expectations of works "with a soul" and AI's current production capacity. Participant 4 contends that AI is unlikely, at present, to deliver a professionally crafted work "with a soul," implying that the distinctive value of professional authorship is preserved.

> "Very poor, like a public service announcement or a school play… it does not know our codes… it cannot grasp our script mathematics." (Participant 4)

Integrating Inner Transformation into Narrative: Challenges in Causality and Character Development

Within the core triad of character–goal–transformation that structures a screenplay, AI still struggles to achieve overall structural integrity. Participant 2 notes that while a script hinges on a character, a goal, and an anticipated inner transformation by the end, AI has difficulty embedding that inner transformation into the plot and producing consistency in how events are connected. This diagnosis suggests that AI can accomplish linguistic/formal refinement at the text level, yet remains constrained where deeper dramatic logic and affective architecture are required.

> "AI struggles to embed inner transformation into causal plotting and to maintain event-level coherence." (Participant 2)

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"It still cannot link, very well, the events that are supposed to occur in the script." (Participant 2)

The limitations of AI in grasping 'inner transformation' and 'causal plotting' point to a formal boundary in algorithmic storytelling. Participant 4's description of AI-generated outputs as having a 'public-service-announcement' or 'school-play' tone highlights a disconnect between statistical textual variation and the affective 'pulse' of Turkish drama. This 'tonal flattening' suggests that AI remains a tool for linguistic polish rather than a generator of narrative depth. In terms of cinematic form, the AI's struggle with 'scene-internal rhythm' reinforces the argument that the 'soul' of a screenplay is tied to an embodied understanding of cultural codes and dramatic timing, elements that currently escape the predictive models of generative AI.

Responsible Use of AI and Rights Management

This subtheme compiles participants' identified needs regarding ethical responsibility, transparency, and intellectual property (ownership, licensing, derivative content) in the use of AI. The findings indicate that, in Türkiye, protecting creative labor, disclosing AI use, and establishing institutional policies are becoming salient across screenwriting, image generation, and post-production. Four focal points emerge from participant accounts:

Participants emphasize that because AI can generate content by manipulating others' works, regulatory measures and principles of transparent use are needed at the state and professional organization levels. Director Participant 8 notes that the core question in field

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debates on rights protection is "who is the primary producer?": "…companies using AI produce visuals by manipulating other people's content… That area carries some risk… who is the primary producer? The person who enters the prompt, or Midjourney?" This statement confirms the need, in practice, to clarify credits (contributors, authorship) and the allocation of responsibility.

Screenwriter Participant 4 raises the issue of constraining AI on copyright/intellectual property (IP) grounds in "write a script similar to X" requests: "…when you say 'write a script similar to the scripts of these series'… this falls under intellectual property. Can it say it will not do that?" The same participant proposes a partial-content approach: "Not 'make the same'… let it provide a part of the script, at least not the whole thing… let it give 20 pages and have the rest written by the screenwriter." This suggestion points to the practical need to document, in project records, the relationship between the amount/intensity of creative input and any downstream rights claims.

Director Participant 1 argues that courses should be offered on "AI ethics, AI philosophy, and AI techniques," adding that AI has triggered a debate on "theft/imitation": "I think there should be courses on how to use AI… AI ethics… There is an ethical dimension here… AI is stealing… where should we draw the line?… we need to rethink this." This emphasis indicates

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that responsible use requires not only legal frameworks, but also pedagogical and institutional ones.

Producer Participant 6 notes that, alongside AI's speed and ease, it can expand comfort zones and increase the risk of superficiality: "…it leads to thinking less and quickly moving toward the solutions it proposes." The same participant adds that even market/fee data produced by AI requires verification: "…I still think this needs to be checked." This finding supports complementing ethical/rights frameworks with editorial oversight and verifiable source information (provenance).

Cinematographer Participant 5 describes a generally positive stance toward AI "except certain legal problems": "…If we put aside some of the legal problems that AI will bring…" These statements show a sector oscillating between adoption and caution, and indicate that, absent clear protocols, institutions are proceeding prudently.

Employment, Ethics, and Production Culture

This theme shows that AI is transforming the division of labor; increasing demand for micro-crewing and multi-competency; strengthening a preparation-oriented culture; and reconfiguring the relationship between production volume and diversity. The principal codes include micro-crew, role contraction, reskilling, single-producer models, and cloud/remote resources.

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Transformation of Employment

Participant 7 underscores that very small teams can handle the post-production phase and that certain roles are narrowing: “I did all of these by myself, with a 2016 MacBook Air… This is comfortable on the one hand, but on the other it means unemployment… it will leave many professions behind…”; “the traditional post-production workflow will disappear; three or four people will be able to make very long films.” The same participant adds that cloud/remote server rental lowers access barriers: “…you rent a server from Google… and do whatever you need from there…” A stark projection is also offered regarding the loss of some set/post roles: “…the cinematographer, focus puller, camera assistant… lighting… all go away… two people will do it on computers….” These findings suggest a simultaneous rise in role contraction and in expectations for multi-role competency.

The transition to 'micro-crew' production models, facilitated by AI’s ability to handle complex post-production tasks on a single laptop, presents a socio-technical paradox. While it democratizes filmmaking for independent creators by lowering entry barriers, it simultaneously accelerates the precarization of specialized roles such as focus pullers and lighting assistants. This shift suggests that the 'democratic' potential of AI in Türkiye is inextricably linked to the intensification of creative labor, in which the filmmaker must evolve into a 'multi-role' operator to survive the contraction of traditional industry hierarchies.

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Shifts in Preparation Culture

The principal codes here are "storyboard/previsualization, risk reduction, and time management." By making storyboard/previs generation low-cost, AI reduces on-set risks. Participant 5 notes: "With just a computer and an internet connection, we can produce this very easily, at zero cost… we minimize risks during time on set and accelerate the process"; similarly, "…you describe the image you envision… and we can make it visible within seconds… the aim in storyboard logic is not one-to-one reproduction." This shift also entails lengthening the pre-preparation period.

Growth in Production and Diversity

The principal codes in this theme are accelerated production, volume increase, bold work, and a window for independent cinema. Participant 2 anticipates that AI will expand production volume and open space for more innovative/bold projects: "Because there will be more production… more daring work will emerge." From a cost perspective, Participant 7 offers a dramatic claim that AI enables low-budget feature filmmaking: "I will do it with AI. I will do it for one million TL. Moreover, I will convey the same feeling! These accounts suggest emerging opportunities for independent toproducers to gain visibility, while also indicating the need to track how market demand and algorithmic logics critically affect diversity.

On the employment front, AI increases micro-crewing and the need for reskilling, while

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strengthening a culture of preparation oriented toward risk management. On the economic plane, lower cost thresholds generate new possibilities for independents; however, the balance of algorithmic visibility and market concentration remains decisive for the sustainability of diversity.

Discussion: Reconceptualizing Creative Labor

This study moves beyond treating AI as a mere technical innovation. Instead, it frames AI as a dialectical reconfiguration of creative labor within a post-cinematic landscape. The findings suggest that AI integration in the Turkish film industry does not linearly substitute human agency. Instead, it represents an emergent model of 'Assisted Creativity under Resource Scarcity'. Global literature often focuses on AI for mass-scale content generation in studio-centric models. In contrast, the Turkish case shows how AI functions as an 'epistemic lever.' This tool allows independent producers to bypass high-cost infrastructural barriers while navigating the financial fragilities of a local ecosystem.

Literature–Findings: Overlaps and Tensions in Creative Labor

The dialogue between existing scholarship and our empirical data suggests that the integration of AI in Türkiye does not merely follow the global trajectory of digital transformation; rather, it disrupts the universalist narrative of post-cinema by introducing a localized model of 'Assisted Creativity under Resource Scarcity'. While the literature often

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frames post-cinema as an era of 'discorrelated images' and algorithmic autonomy, the Turkish production ecosystem reclaims the human agent through a strategic 'on-set problem-solving' culture.

In post-cinema theory, digital tools are frequently viewed as a means to democratize production by lowering hardware barriers. However, our findings transform this understanding by positioning AI as an 'epistemic lever', a strategic force that allows independent filmmakers to bypass high-cost infrastructural gates. This goes beyond 'technical convenience'; it is a survival mechanism where the 'computed' look of a film is front-loaded to manage financial risks before a single frame is shot. Consequently, the Turkish case suggests that in resource-constrained environments, the 'post-cinematic' transition is driven less by aesthetic experimentation and more by the need to sustain national narrative sovereignty against structural fragilities.

Manovich (1995) argues that digital cinema blurs the line between live-action and manual animation, returning the medium to its pre-cinematic roots. Our study adds a critical dimension to this 'computed cinema' thesis by identifying a resilient boundary: 'Local Narrative Mathematics'. While AI excels at linguistic refinement and 'visual polish,' it fails to grasp the internalized structural logic, culturally specific rhythmic patterns, and dramatic timing unique

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to Turkish storytelling. In Turkish cinema, cultural codes refer to shared patterns of meaning shaped by social experience, which become visible in narrative structures, character relations, visual aesthetics, and modes of dialogue. These codes frequently manifest through family-centered storytelling, strong emotional expression, melodramatic narration, themes of social pressure and class relations, tensions between tradition and modernity, and character-driven dramaturgy. In addition, a distinctive narrative rhythm, openness to improvisation in production, genre hybridity, and dialogue-oriented storytelling are characteristic features of Turkish filmmaking. Such cultural codes often limit the direct transfer of globally standardized production models and narrative templates, thereby increasing the importance of human interpretation and contextual judgment, particularly in digitally mediated and AI-assisted production processes.

This 'tonal flattening' of AI outputs highlights a significant gap in current post-cinema literature. It suggests that even as cinema becomes algorithm-guided, the affective depth of national cinema remains anchored in culturally embedded creative judgment. Currently, statistical models cannot replicate this embodied depth.

Convergences: Efficiency and the 'Assistantship' Model

The literature's emphasis on operational efficiency largely intersects with the field data collected in this study. Consistent with global trends, Turkish cinema professionals report that

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AI significantly accelerates workflows and lowers specific cost barriers, particularly in previsualization and routine post-production tasks. The prevailing 'assistantship' frame identified in recent scholarship aligns with local practice: AI is used for linguistic refinement of scripts, rapid production of textual variants, and enhancement of pitch-deck quality. These overlaps suggest that AI has successfully institutionalized itself as a 'senior assistant' that lightens the load of preparatory knowledge work without yet claiming full creative autonomy.

Tensions: The Myth of Creative Substitution

A primary point of tension emerges regarding the narrative of 'creative substitution.' While some theoretical accounts imply a proximity to fully AI-generated authorship, the Turkish case demonstrates that AI remains complementary rather than substitutive in core dramatic domains. Our findings indicate that AI struggles with 'inner transformation,' 'character motivation,' and 'causal plotting,' which are the very elements that define the 'soul' of a screenplay. Participant 4's description of AI-generated scenes as having a 'public-service-announcement' or 'school-play' tone highlights a significant gap between algorithmic textual variation and the affective depth required by local narrative codes. This suggests that the distinctive value of professional authorship is preserved through culturally embedded creative judgment.

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The Economic Paradox and Labor Precarity

Furthermore, while the literature often predicts a linear decline in production costs, the reality on the ground reveals a more fractured economic landscape. Hidden costs arise from the need for specialized reskilling, legal uncertainties, and extended pre-production phases. On the employment plane, the transition toward “micro-crew” models, enabled by a single operator's ability to perform complex tasks on a laptop, presents a democratization–precarity paradox. As professionals such as cinematographers and focus pullers face role contraction, the democratization of access to production tools becomes inseparable from intensified labor and increased job insecurity. This tendency aligns with literature on creative labor and media precarity, where digital tools often individualize responsibility while reducing stability. The Turkish case both supports and complicates existing accounts of automation. Here, AI adoption appears less as a replacement of labor and more as an extension of already fragile production structures.

Aesthetic Homogenization and Local Sovereignty

Finally, a critical divergence exists on the aesthetic plane. Whereas literature occasionally anticipates a new 'AI aesthetic,' our findings warn of an 'anxiety of homogenization. The reliance on algorithmic tools and existing data pools risks creating an 'average' visual and narrative language tailored to mass appeal, potentially eroding the diversity of national cinema.

This configuration heightens the importance of what we term 'Assisted Creativity under Resource Scarcity', a model in which AI is used not as a template for standardization but as a strategic lever to maintain local narrative sovereignty amid the structural pressures of platform capitalism.

Cinematic Form, Change in Cinematic Style Aesthetics

In addition to its industrial and economic implications, the findings also suggest that AI-assisted production may lead to gradual but significant changes in cinematic style. As generative tools become integrated into screenwriting, visual design, editing, and post-production workflows, they may encourage more standardized narrative structures, accelerated editing rhythms, and visually homogenized aesthetics shaped by algorithmically trained models. While such tools can increase efficiency and accessibility, they also raise concerns about the potential narrowing of stylistic diversity, particularly in film industries where local cultural codes and production practices play a defining role. In this sense, AI not only transforms how films are produced, but also how cinematic form itself may evolve under the influence of platform-driven and data-oriented production logics. For instance, interviewee 7, who produced a short film entirely using AI tools, chose a form in which the characters do not speak, with the narrative conveyed through voice-over. This preference was largely due to the technical limitations of AI at the time, particularly the insufficient quality of lip-sync

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generation. Similar constraints were also observed in the continuity of camera movement and the visual flow of scenes, as current image-generation systems often produce short clips, making it difficult to construct longer sequences with natural motion and coherent mise-en-scène. As a result, AI-generated scenes may appear more fragmented and mechanically structured than those in conventional filmmaking. These limitations suggest that AI-assisted production can influence not only production processes but also film rhythm, visual form, and narrative structure, potentially leading either to the resolution of these constraints through technological development or to the emergence of a distinct cinematic language shaped by the logic of generative systems.

Conclusion

This study treats the integration of artificial intelligence (AI) into the Turkish film industry not merely as a technical upgrade but as a profound epistemic transformation that redistributes production knowledge and reconfigures creative labor. The findings indicate that within Türkiye's specific production ecosystem (characterized by budget constraints and a resilient 'on-set' problem-solving culture), AI is currently positioned as a 'senior assistant' rather than a substitutive force. While AI significantly accelerates linguistic workflows, literary refinement, and routine post-production tasks, it remains incapable of replicating the 'local narrative mathematics' (the internalized structural logic, culturally specific rhythmic patterns,

and dramatic timing unique to Turkish storytelling) and the affective depth required for complex character transformations and causal plotting.

The transition toward 'micro-crew' models and the expansion of low-cost AI-driven pre-production tools demonstrate a democratization-precarity paradox. While these tools lower entry barriers for independent and mid-scale productions, they simultaneously accelerate the contraction of traditional professional roles and intensify the labor required of individual filmmakers. Critically, this shift threatens the industry's long-term sustainability by eroding traditional apprenticeship pathways. AI increasingly assumes routine 'junior' tasks. As a result, experienced producers and directors prioritize the speed and cost-efficiency of algorithmic assistants over mentoring newcomers. This shift significantly heightens the entry-level barrier for the next generation of talent.

Moreover, the economic narrative surrounding AI requires a more nuanced calibration. Although the budget allocated to AI tools remains markedly lower than that for traditional high-end production processes, it represents a significant expenditure that should not be overlooked. The financial commitment becomes particularly non-negligible when professional-grade results necessitate the coordinated use of multiple generative models or the adoption of specialized, high-tier AI tools tailored for cinematic-grade fidelity. Consequently, the transition from

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experimental use to professional implementation involves cumulative licensing and operational costs that continue to shape the financial boundaries of independent filmmaking in Türkiye.

Furthermore, the transition toward solo production or micro-crew models may eliminate the group dynamism and collaborative synergy traditionally fostered by large teams and specialized professionals. This centralization of creative labor risks dismantling the collective friction and shared problem-solving energy that have historically defined the industry's production culture.

Policy–Practice Implications and Suggestions for Future Research

To ensure a sustainable and ethics-centered diffusion of AI in Turkish cinema, policy efforts must move toward a comprehensive governance framework that prioritizes human oversight and institutional documentation. Strengthening the dialogue between public bodies, professional associations, and universities is essential for establishing standards of transparency and protecting the rights of creative workers against algorithmic precarization. Rather than treating AI as an isolated technical convenience, stakeholders should foster an 'interdisciplinary literacy' that balances operational efficiency with the preservation of culturally authentic aesthetic depth.

Future research should expand on this qualitative mapping by conducting formal aesthetic analyses of AI-generated cinematic outputs in Türkiye to assess shifts in visual style and editing rhythm. Furthermore, longitudinal studies are needed to track the long-term impact of AI-driven 'micro-crewing' on the socio-economic sustainability of independent filmmakers. Exploring how AI affects spectatorship and the 'relocation' of the cinematic experience beyond traditional theaters remains a crucial avenue for understanding the full scope of Türkiye's post-cinematic transition.

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