

UNIVERSIDADE CATÓLICA PORTUGUESA

**ENTRE DOCUMENTÁRIO E FICÇÃO:**  
**OS CINEMAS CONTEMPORÂNEOS CHINÊS E DINAMARQUÊS**  
*BETWEEN DOCUMENTARY AND FICTION:*  
*CONTEMPORARY CHINESE AND DANISH CINEMAS*  
紀錄片與故事片之間：中國及丹麥當代電影

**Tese apresentada à Universidade Católica Portuguesa  
para obtenção do grau de Doutor em Ciência e Tecnologia das Artes**

*Thesis presented to Universidade Católica Portuguesa  
For the Degree of Doctor of Science and Technology of the Arts*

Por/ by

António Tomé Saldanha Quadros Dias Ferreira

ESCOLA DAS ARTES

Setembro 2015/ September 2015





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Sob a orientação de/ *Under the guidance of:*

Orientador/ *Thesis Adviser:* Prof. Doutor Adriano Nazareth

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ESCOLA DAS ARTES

Setembro 2015/ *September 2015*

To my wife Katy, my son Tito and my daughter Lola.

To my parents Ana and António.

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## **Abstract**

“*Cinéma par excellence*, a language the semantic and syntactic unit of which is in no sense the Shot; in which the image is evaluated not according to what it adds to reality but what it reveals of it.” (Lehman, 1997: 62)

In 1972 Denmark’s affiliation with the Europe took place. Seven years later, the economic reforms in China were launched and the openness to the West became a reality. After the Tiananmen massacre in June 1989 and the fall of the Berlin wall in November 1989, the history of world cinema was celebrating one century of existence when the Danish Dogme 95 cinema, headed by Lars von Trier and Thomas Vinterberg, and the Beijing Film Academy Youth Experimental Film Group, led by Jia Zhangke, emerged.

In the eyes of Jia’s “A Touch of Sin” and Vinterberg’s “The Hunt, the present PhD thesis entitled “Between Documentary and Fiction: Contemporary Chinese and Danish Cinemas” establishes a comparative study between two distinct historical and cultural backgrounds as well as socio-economical trajectories placing the following key research question: To what extent social do changes influence cinema aesthetics? First, we examine the similarities and differences between Chinese sixth generation cinema and Dogme 95 in terms of artistic expressions, and the use of cinema in depicting social movements; second, the social issues that arise in the “public sphere” surrounding a society in constant change create a space for joint reflection towards the “modernization of cinematic language”, which is distinct from the state and which emphasizes the need to rethink both societies.

Through a self-reflexive perspective this research contends that China and Denmark have in common a contemporary cinema production that portrays on-going social changes in their respective contexts, which lies between fiction and non-fiction, digetic and non-digetic realites, evoking collective or individual memory representation. At the turn of the twenty-first century both cinemas reinvent and rethink *cinéma vérité*, emphasizing the intrinsic dimensions of reality and fiction, or authenticity and illusion. A new visual culture was founded; a new film paradigm was edified.

**Key words:** authentic; contemporary cinema; illusion; memory; socially constructed reality.

**Resume (Portuguese)**

“*Cinéma par excellence*, a language the semantic and syntactic unit of which is in no sense the Shot; in which the image is evaluated not according to what it adds to reality but what it reveals of it.” (Lehman, 1997: 62)

Em 1972, a Dinamarca assina os tratados de Adesão à Europa. Seis anos mais tarde, são implementadas reformas económicas que marcam o início da abertura da China ao Ocidente. Aquando da celebração do centenário da história mundial do cinema, depois do massacre da Praça de Tiananmen e da queda do muro de Berlim, emergem o movimento Dogma 95 (Dogme 95) liderado por Lars von Trier e Thomas Vinterberg, e o Grupo de Jovens Realizadores de Cinema Experimental da Academia de Cinema de Pequim (Beijing Film Academy Youth Experimental Film Group) liderado por Jia Zhangke.

Através do olhar fiel de Jia Zhangke em “China, um toque de pecado” e por outro a realidade construída de Thomas Vinterberg em “A caça”, a presente tese de doutoramento intitulada “Entre documentário e ficção: os cinemas contemporâneos Chinês e Dinamarquês” estabelece como ponto de partida a seguinte questão: Em que medida as transformações sociais influenciam a estética do cinema? O estudo comparativo entre dois contextos social e cultural distintos, constitui-se pertinente e original. Em primeiro lugar, este estudo visa investigar as semelhanças e as diferenças entre o cinema da sexta geração de realizadores chineses e o cinema Dogma 95, quer ao nível da expressão artística quer na forma como o cinema aborda e retrata questões de índole social. Em segundo lugar, estas questões de cariz social referentes a uma sociedade em permanente mutação que são levantadas na “esfera pública”, constroem um espaço de reflexão e conduzem à “modernização da linguagem cinematográfica”.

Através de uma perspectiva introspectiva conclui-se que China e Dinamarca inscrevem-se no mesmo cinema híbrido e global, entre ficção e não ficção, realidades diagética e não diagética, evocam a representação da memória colectiva e individual. Na viragem do milénio, ambos cinemas reinventam e reflectem o *cinéma vérité*, enfatizando as dimensões intrínsecas da realidade

e ficção, autêntico ou a ilusão. Uma nova cultura visual foi criada, um novo paradigma cinematográfico foi edificado.

**Key words:** autêntico; cinema contemporâneo; ilusão; memória; realidade social construída.

**Resume (Chinese)**

“*Cinéma par excellence*, a language the semantic and syntactic unit of which is in no sense the Shot; in which the image is evaluated not according to what it adds to reality but what it reveals of it.” (Lehman, 1997: 62)

於一九七二，丹麥年簽署條約加入從屬歐洲，七年後，中國實施經濟改革政策，正式向西方國家開放。於一九八九年六月發生的六四天安事件及於一九八九年十一月柏林圍牆倒下後，正當我們為慶祝電影誕生的世界歷史一百週年紀念時，同時出現了由拉斯馮提爾和湯瑪斯凡提柏格所領導於丹麥發起的逗馬宣言 (Dogme 95) 及由賈樟柯所領導的北京電影學院青年實驗電影小組。

透過賈樟柯的真摯作品《天註定》及另一由凡提柏格所構建的寫實作品《謊言的烙印》，本博士論文題目命為：“紀錄片與故事片之間：中國及丹麥當代電”，由兩部作品作為出發點探討以下問題：社會變革以何種方式影響著電影美學？在兩個不同社會和文化背景之間，藉其之相連及原始性進行比較研究。首先，不論是從藝術展現的層面上；抑或是以電影描繪手法反影社會問題的層面上，本研究旨在探討第六代中國電影導演與逗馬宣言的電影作品之間相同及不同之處。其次是，有關在“公共領域”中所提及到在持續發展社會裡所衍生出來的社會性問題上，可帶來一個反思的空間，並可促使“電影語言現代化”向前邁進。

通過自我反思的角度來看，中國與丹麥的電影作品同具多樣性及國際性，在虛構與真實之間；在真實故事與虛構故事之間，這些都喚起著不同的集體及個人記憶。在二十一世紀之交兩種電影均重新改造及充分體現了“真實電影”(cinéma vérité)，強調現實與虛構；真實與假像的內在層面；從而創立一種新的視覺文化；啟迪一種新的電影範式。

關鍵字：真實的；當代電影；錯覺；記憶；社會建構的現實。

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## **Introduction**

## 1.1 Methodology, definition of terms, notes on transliteration

At the turn of the twenty-first century, the observation of real, socially-constructed knowledge through Chinese and Danish contemporary cinema aesthetics comprehends strategies and methods, which are implied in designing research projects, in the perspective of the researcher, it is crucial to bear in mind the following main concerns: the appropriate choice of comparative subjects; the new film paradigm and its configuration within the context of world cinema studies; and the cultural critique centred on the “viewer”. In other words, the term “viewer” is adopted since he or she is the one invited to “reconstruct” the filmic narrative through the principles of narration and the film forms applied, establishing a relationship between narrator, narrative and narrate.

Both cinemas place filmic narrative as an art form, centring critique on the viewer’s perspective. Thus, this study applies qualitative research design, focusing, on the one hand, on how film elements, such as space, time, and character’s action or causality; and, on the other hand, sequences of filmic units, such as frame, shot; sequence, episode, and narrative are cohesively tied together as films unfold. Therefore, as narrative plays a major role in this research, our approach is from an analytical perspective. In chapters IV, V and VI, narration and film form are, then, central issues. We intend: to place and to justify our investigation by identifying a gap between the existent references and the tentative references included in the study; to contend investigation’s findings relating these to theories, methodologies, background context and other central aspects through categories; and to propose a certain conclusion from two different paradigmatic and syntagmatic axis. Therefore, “reading”, “viewing”, and “interpreting” research data are essential to present and to deliver the *rationale* behind this study to the viewer. That is to say, using a qualitative research method, and more specifically, through method triangulation, this PhD research project illustrates how “The Touch of Sin” and “The Hunt”, despite its unconventional sequencing, are actually highly cohesive. As both film narratives unfold, information is added to identity chains in a way that preserves much of the explicit structuring expected of a narrative, regardless of the fact that temporal sequencing is reversed.

On the one hand, the Beijing Film Academy, since its genesis in 1950, has been playing a major role within the context of Chinese cinema. As a generational classification, this term distinguishes the different generations between them according to a specific socio-political context and to the graduation year, with the exception of the Chinese Cultural Revolution. The term “contemporary Chinese cinema” is more comprehensive and up-to-date since it encompasses not only the Fifth and Sixth generations, but also the Documentary Chinese movement and iGeneration cinema. Since the late 1970s until today, all generations of filmmakers and all genres of Chinese cinema compose the Post Mao cinema or contemporary Chinese cinema. In 1982, at the end of the Cultural Revolution and after a long period break, after the re-opening of the Beijing Film Academy, the Fifth generation of filmmakers graduated. Thus, it is used to describe the crucial impulse Fifth generation has had and its contribution, intertwined with post-Mao cinema, to the renewal or transition of the cinema era. This enabled the development of the “Contemporary Chinese cinema”. The Sixth generation of Chinese filmmakers highly contributed to transform the face of post-Mao cinema. Moreover, this term observes and suggests a larger cultural and social discourse witnessed today in China, not only Mainland China, but also in Hong Kong, Macao, Taiwan and China overseas. The Sixth generation cinema has occasionally been replaced by Urban generation cinema, since it mainly depicts the paradigm shift and growth from the late 1970s and early 1980s. Although contemporary Chinese cinema reflects post-Mao cinema, this cinema might be divided into two periods: the last decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century on one hand, and the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century on the other, with the emergence of iGeneration cinema, which overlaps the Sixth Generation cinema. The main difference between those cinemas has to do with character motivation. The many characters in Sixth Generation cinema stand against the new economy and cycle of consumption, China’s newfound economic power. Despite the fact the value of generational classification has been questioned by many scholars because of its limited application and ever-changing content (for example, Fifth and Sixth generations has occasionally been replaced by the term “New Chinese cinema”), this research applies the term “Contemporary Chinese cinema” because it is important to place it in chronological terms in

order to structure the study of Chinese cinema in general, and post-Mao cinema in particular.

On the other hand, in the 1970s, the Danish cinema industry presented two main trends: artistic films that, in essence, were state-sponsored films; and mainstream films, which were mainly privately funded. The Danish Film Institute (DFI) played a major role and highly contributed to the Danish film industry, since its work was not dependent on political power - the so-called "at-arms-length" principle. Contemporary Danish cinema was grounded by graduated filmmakers from the National Film School, and, thus, blueprinted the New Danish cinema. Along with the National Film School, and the succession of relevant moments in Danish modern film history, the emergence of the Dogme 95 movement in the 90s grounded the seeds for the transformation of Danish contemporary cinema as a response to Hollywood cinema and global cinema. Dogme 95 stands for a truthful approach to filmmaking, and stands against the auteur status of the director. Therefore, this research applies the term "Contemporary Danish cinema", which comprehends the succession of relevant moments in Danish modern film history, as mentioned above.

Lastly, this PhD thesis uses the pinyin system to romanize Chinese characters. Chinese-language names and phrases first appear in English translation followed by Chinese pinyin. Chinese-language film titles all appear in their English translations and pinyin in brackets. Names of Chinese authors, filmmakers and individuals appear according to the Chinese convention, with surname followed by first name.

Regarding this research project and its definition of terms, decisions have been made for the readers' benefit, namely:

- Contemporary Chinese cinema instead of New Chinese cinema;
- Contemporary Danish cinema when referring to New Danish cinema;
- Dogme the English word for Dogma;
- Global hybrid cinema rather than global cinema;
- Viewer instead of audience.

## 1.2 Theoretical and conceptual framework

From the Greek tragedy, in the eyes of Aristotelian hypothesis within the context of Western civilization and tradition, to Confucianism in Chinese civilization and tradition, different modes of representation have emerged and have been deployed. Aristotle's Poetics is still one of the most influential documents in Western civilization and tradition today. Aristotle's Poetics' influence is, then, present in contemporary cinema in the way the elements of storytelling are structured and outline filmic narrative. As follows, "[...] the limitation of actions in the real world, *praxis*, was seen as forming an argument, *logos*, from which were selected (and possibly rearranged) the units that formed the plot, *mythos*." (Chatman, 1980:19) Furthermore, Confucian values have had a significant impact on contemporary cinema today, since the genesis of "Dianying Xiyang" ("electric shadowplays", where dianying is the Chinese word to describe the term 'film).

Since the late 1970s and early 1980s, Chinese cinema, labeled as the renewal or transition cinema era, has been portraying the deep social transformations that have ensued such as large scale economic liberalization through the work of the Fifth and Sixth Generations of Chinese filmmakers, respectively headed by Chen Kaige and Zhang Yimou for the former, and Jia Zhangke, Lou Ye, and Wang Xiaoshui for the latter. Denmark has been at the *avant-garde* of European cinema: Dogme 95 represents the legacy of two masters of Danish cinema, Carl Dreyer and Ingmar Bergman. Dogme 95, created by Lars Von Trier and Thomas Vinterberg, was later joined by fellow Danish directors Kristian Levring and Søren Kragh-Jacobsen. The present PhD research project establishes a comparative case study between Sixth Generation and Dogme 95 cinemas focusing on the aesthetics and film-style. Placing side-by-side contemporary Chinese and Danish cinemas evokes the concept of authenticity and illusion, which leads to reality and socially constructed reality representations. This research focuses on the concept of authenticity and illusion within the context of Realist moving image theories, namely André Bazin's "evolution of the language of cinema", which represented the new realist impulse in cinema, and made the filmmaker the "equal to the novelist".

The Chinese and Danish contemporary cinemas, which had found inspiration in Post World War II cinema, namely the Italian and French neorealism's cinemas and with special emphasis filmmakers like François Truffaut, Jean-Luc Godard and Michelangelo Antonioni, made the film the desired reality-effect inviting the viewer to discuss issues of general interest. Therefore, this study intends to establish a comparative study, which emphasizes the "practices of social interaction" (Chow, 2007: 17) and where Chinese reality doesn't fit Western reality, evoking interpretive inferences as the grounding filmic elements of narrative comprehension, based on real socially constructed knowledge observation, at the turn of the twenty-first century, within an emerging contemporary hybrid global cinema. As Benjamin Chatman contends, filmic narrative is the "substance of expression" (discourse). The economic reforms that took place in China and Denmark in late 1970s and early 1980s have fostered and influenced both contemporary cinemas. This contributed and grounded the political and social concerns of Chinese and Danish contemporary cinema speech. Vinterberg's "The Celebration" (The Festen) debut film and also the first Danish Dogme 95 film ushered the new Danish cinema suggesting "alternative methods for film production", both locally and globally. Hjort explains this as follows, "[...] the invented self-imposed constraints are indeed meant to stimulate creativity, but they are also intended to redefine film aesthetics in such a way as to level the playing field somehow." (Hjort, 2003: 35) Jia Zhangke's "One Day, in Beijing (You Yitian, Zai Beijing) debut film and the first film produced by a small group of students calling themselves the Beijing Film Academy Youth Experimental Film Group, as mentioned above, grounded the foundations of contemporary Chinese cinema, whose aesthetics and way of thinking resulted largely from the documentary impulse witnessed in the 1990s. The three cornerstones of aesthetics of contemporary Chinese cinema are the following: 真 [zhen] true, real, authentic; 善 [sxien] kindness, benevolence; 美 [mei] beauty. Wu Wenguang coined the term *Xianchang*, which is best translated as 'on-the-scene'. Vulpiani contends "The Sixth Generation films combine *xianchang* with fictional narratives, not only to capture the impact of urban change in 1990s China, but also to explore urban subjectivity in moments of great

transformation.” (2014: 89) Sixth Generation cinema is characterized as having “[...] a singular preoccupation with the destruction and reconstruction of the social fabric and urban identities of post-1989 China.” (Zhang, 2007: 2) In the 1990s, and at the turn of the twenty-first century, cinema observes and reveals societal transformation as its major theme. It critically portrays the particularities and singularities of societal changes in the recent past, tries to decipher its present and offers some possibilities for the near future, as follows, “The postsocialist realist films of the 1990s are thus imbued with the faith that just going out into public with a camera and capturing the unvarnished street life found there serves to unmask ideology while documenting the realities of contemporary China.” (McGrath, 2007: 85)

In conclusion, throughout the framework of a modern and global society today, and approaching cinema as social reality itself, this research will address local and global issues, depicting small life-worlds, within a hybrid global context. Contemporary Chinese and Danish cinemas represent a staged reality calling for a subjective, individualistic and symbolic side. The issue of social identities in “public sphere” and its concerns are, thus, placed as the dominant theme towards the “modernization of cinematic language”. Both cinemas envisage documenting reality or desired-reality effects within narrative fiction form, despite the contours of the film form. The thin line between fiction and documentary is fading; a hybrid global cinema is constructed and new cultural identities are being edified.

### 1.3 Objectives and structure of dissertation

Within the context of contemporary hybrid global cinema at the turn of the twenty-first century, the new realist cinema depicting social issues is the main subject of this dissertation. This research addresses the following preliminary research objectives: firstly, to establish how it is possible to understand the concept of authenticity and illusion regarding the process of how Chinese and Danish contemporary cinemas, namely the Sixth generation and Dogme 95 respectively, depict reality at a global level; secondly, to analyze under this perspective the *rationale* behind this study, which lies centrally on film form and filmic narrative construction. Therefore, this research focuses the readers' attention on the following key research question: To what extent do social changes influence cinema aesthetics? This key research question leads to a research discussion with three related sub-questions:

1. What are contemporary Chinese cinema and Danish cinema?
2. How do the Sixth Generation and Dogme 95 portray their respective society?
3. Do Dogme 95 and the Sixth Generation represent a new cinematic aesthetics?

In accordance to the research objectives for this research and the above-mentioned research sub-questions, this thesis has been organized into six chapters, which are divided in two distinct parts and a conclusion. Moreover, this thesis also includes the following: appendices - full transcription of an interview with Professor Mette Hjort, and "A Touch of Sin" and "The Hunt" visual grammar; references that are divided into bibliography and filmography; bio; and published articles. Chapter I, entitled "Introduction", will introduce the research problem and its background, which supports the research key question. It will also address the reasons to develop further research in this area, especially the reason for the need to establish a comparative study between contemporary Chinese and Danish cinemas as two "realist cinemas", within the same global cinema territory, between fiction and documentary film forms. The sub-questions correspond to the structure of the present thesis from Chapter IV onwards; and preceded by Chapter I (Introduction), Chapter

II (Literature Review), and Chapter III (Methodology). The first research sub-question will correspond to Chapter IV; the second to Chapter V; and the third to Chapter VI.

The first part corresponds to the Theoretical Context. This comprises the bibliographic research undertaken and presented in Chapters II and IV. The Theoretical Context introduces, debates and reflects on different historical perspectives and film theories regarding the relationship between cinematographic discourses and representing reality, particularly in contemporary hybrid global cinema, in the eyes of Chinese and Danish contemporary cinemas. The bibliographic research undertaken in Chapter II seems to indicate that most narrative film theory has been dedicated to the study of fiction narrative. For this reason, this research has attempted to suggest that cinema today is hybrid between fiction and non-fiction or fiction and documentary. The aim of Chapter II is precisely to establish that narrative construction, both fiction and non-fiction, entails translating and communicating the filmmaker's experience of the event represented. Chapter IV comprises a review of the state-of-the-art and will develop themes using a chronology, researching the cultural diversity of the different contexts during the 1990s in China and Denmark; the communalities and differences between Chinese and Danish contemporary cinemas; and the thin line between documentary and fiction. The Second part corresponds to Chapters V and VI and presents the comparative case study on narrative construction and the representation of a social reality and socially constructed reality at a global level. Chapter V places the literature review in Chapter II and the state-of-the-art in Chapter IV side-by-side, along with the filmic analyses of Jia's "A Touch of Sin", Vinterberg's "The Hunt", and an in-depth interview with Professor Mette Hjort covering the key research questions addressed by this PhD research project (see appendices). The final conclusion integrates the research results accomplished in the first and second parts of this thesis, discussing and comparing the results obtained through the research analysis. Chapter VI intends to close this research, addressing the last sub-question, which in the end reflects the central research question or the central research theme. At the same time, it is relevant to emphasize that the closing doesn't necessarily mean conclusion. It means that this research aims to reveal

possible academic paths to be able to observe and to interpret reasons that bounds global hybrid cinema and its ability to represent a staged reality.

## 1.4 Motivation, scope and limitations

Tomé Quadros lives in Macau Special Administrative Region – People’s Republic of China since 2004. Since then, his research has been addressed in China, Japan and Portugal, focusing on contemporary Chinese and Danish cinemas, leading his particular interest on this subject, as academic researcher and documentary filmmaker. After accurate and deep discussion together with thesis advisor Professor Adriano Nazareth and co-advisor Professor Émilie Tran of the present PhD research project entitled “Between documentary and fiction: contemporary Chinese and Danish cinemas”, it was decided that placing two completely different social and cultural contexts side-by-side, in a comparative case study of Jia Zhangke’s “A Touch of Sin” and Thomas Vinterberg’s “The Hunt”, would be the most appropriate method to undertake this research and to try to answer its main central research question. In other words, to what extent do social issues in “public sphere” shape contemporary cinema, namely in the context of a global hybrid cinema at the turn of twenty-first century?

In the course of the present PhD research project, which took four years to conclude, the following constraints were found:

- Difficulty in obtaining access to references regarding the chosen central research theme;
- Difficulty in obtaining Chinese and Danish accurate translation work, thus limiting access to sources;
- Difficulty in articulating the professional duties as full-time senior lecturer and academic researcher work.

However, in spite of the difficulties, motivation and interest to research the chosen theme were achieved and accomplished in this PhD thesis, which has been intensified through time since the very first moment. Thus, the initial purpose, and the preliminary main objective were attained. This grounds new challenges for the near future.

## **Chapter II – Literature review**

### 2.1.1 Major theories of the moving image: “a theory of film, or *the* theory of film”?

“I do not believe that there is a theory of film, or *the* theory of film. Rather, there are film theories, or, as I say, “theories of the moving image.” There are theories of film narration and of metaphor, of editing and acting.”

(Carroll, 1996: xiii)

First and foremost the turn of the twentieth century is represented as the visual shift in the literature, photography, and finally cinema. At the end of the nineteenth century, with the birth of cinema, filmic narrative was not yet created. Thus, it is of utmost importance to depict the conceptual and theoretical frameworks in cinema, or, in other words, to capture the essence of cinema. This signifies not only a greater understanding about film, but also its relationship with the individual viewers, as well as the filmic subject, as follows: “(...) on the one hand, “what is said” about film; on the other hand, *how* that content is expressed.” (Casetti, 1999: 3) Regarding the present PhD research project entitled “Between documentary and fiction: Contemporary Chinese and Danish cinemas”, and before addressing the major theories that will support the key research question and the sub-questions later developed in Chapter III, it is crucial to have in mind that the century of cinema’s existence has raised two interconnected questions: the film language and the film essence, as previously mentioned. Furthermore, three central questions arise: If film is understood as distinct from verbal language, what is cinema experience about? Has cinema shaped society towards a social narrative discourse? What is the main purpose of film theories, and what is specific in cinema?

With the birth of film in the late 1800’s, the major film theories and their main interveners emerged. The film theories, past and present, thus, did not exist without World film history, which, according to *The Oxford History of World Cinema* edited by Geoffrey Nowell-Smith (1996), has witnessed three major periods: 1) Silent Cinema (1895-1930); 2) Sound Cinema (1930-1960); 3) The Modern Cinema (1960-1995).

In the early 1890s Thomas Edison had developed the kinoscope and the kinoscope, and staged several demonstrations. On the one hand, the kinoscope “(...) allowed a single viewer to see moving pictures in a peep-show cabinet.” (Nebeker, 2009: 250) On the other hand, “(...) *the kinoscope was thus simply a new work tool*, neither more or less. It was used *within* various cultural practices; *cinema*, at that point, *did not yet exist* as an autonomous medium.” (Gaudreault, 2012: 15) The kinoscope became, then, the first viable film camera, a three-in-one device that could record, develop and project motion pictures, and allowed a large audience to view a film. Later, in “[.] 1897, the invention of the cinema was largely completed. There were two principal means of exhibition: peepshow devices for individual viewers and projection systems for audiences.” (Edwards and Casper, 2007: 12) The impact of the new apparatus brought to light a new reality. The perception mode and the spectator mode or viewing had been changed. After the apparatus made cinema invention possible years before, cinema was then developed by the Lumière brothers with the so-called “actualities” films or views of every-day life (such as: “Workers leaving the Factory” [1895], “The Arrival of the Train at La Ciotat” [1895], “Baby’s Breakfast” [1895] or “Demolition of a Wall” [1896], which introduced the reverse shot film technique); Georges Méliès’ “A Trip to the Moon” (1902) was probably the first science fiction ever made, staging fantasy epics and using new technological possibilities, it was inspired by Jules Verne’s novel “From the Earth to the Moon” (1865) and influenced by Vaudeville Theater; David W. Griffith’s “The Birth of a Nation (1915) represents today one of the prominent pioneers of that time; and later Dziga Vertov’s “The Man with the Movie Camera” (1929) became a synonym of modernity and introduced the *kino Pravda* or *cinéma vérité*). These brought to the screen the manipulation of the real.

Together with the film technique transformation these were the crucial levers, which made cinema an art form. Furthermore, a social transformation was observed. This dramatic shift turned cinema into an extension of reality and, at the same time, the social collective were no longer innocently looking at reality. The camera became a collective imaginary, and the creation of cinema or the role of the camera became a visual construction of the social. Thus,

cinema became a sharing of a collective experience. The so-called invention of Cinema derived then from the necessary conditions for the development of film based on three prerequisites: being able to record images; being able to create the illusion of movement; and being able to project those images.

The transition from early cinema to a narrative cinema, towards sound cinema, based on the work of Cinema of Attractions resulted from the attempts Sergei Eisenstein made, both as a theorist and filmmaker, to find an alternative model and mode of cinema analysis, somehow inspired by the study of Japanese haiku poetry. The Cinema of Attractions was observed by Tom Gunning and prevailed in his research, firstly in 1986 and after in 1991 as follows:

“(…) an excitement about the (then) new possibilities of cinema deriving from the Utopian confluence of modernist practice and political revolution that Russian Constructivism had allowed, combined with a concerted critique, both ideological and formal, of dominant practices.” (Gunning, 2006: 32)

Early film theorists had two main concerns: one was to legitimize cinema as an art form and the other was to identify the way films are made and received. During the early cinema period, “(…) one primary concern prevailed: a desire to map out the evoking contours of cinema as a distinctive cultural form.” (Simpson, Utterson and Shepherdson, 2004: 19) At the end of nineteenth century, French philosopher Henri Bergson in *Matter and Memory* (1896) had anticipated the development of film theory, expressing the need for new ways of thinking regarding image and movement. Bergson coined the terms “the movement-image” and “the time-image”, decades later reflected in Gilles Deleuze’s *Cinema I* and *Cinema II* (1983-1985) and revisited in Gilles Deleuze’s *Matter and Memory* (1986). Hugo Münsterberg and Rudolf Arnheim considered silent film and sound film to be art because it does not merely mechanically record surrounding reality. Rather, it transforms the normal ways in which the human eye perceives, through editing, camera angles and photography. These theorists attempted to understand the ways in which cinema differed from other art forms. Münsterberg constructed the formative tradition in two layers. Firstly, matter and means; and secondly form and function. The first layer, matter and means, is related to “The cinematic aspect

corresponding to emotion is the story itself, the highest unit or ingredient available to this narrative art, and the one which directs all the lower processes of film.” (Dudley, 1976: 19) The second layer, form and function, was inspired by Gustav Kant’s *phenomenal realm*, where time, space, and causality hold the so-called realm of sense experience towards a filmic object, as follows, “Now the filmmaker has the means to displace precisely these categories of experience, conferring on appearances whatever spatial, temporal, and causal relations he chooses.” (Andrew, 1976: 25)

World War II was a crucial milestone in Film History as well Film Theory History. Before World War II,

“[...] theoretical discourses had often seemed to be guided by the need to promote the new medium. By underscoring its potentials, if only by comparison to the other arts, and by praising its major achievements, these discourses tried to rescue film from its marginal position and to make it into something deserving full respect. In the postwar years cinema no longer needed to be defended.” (Casetti, 1999: 7)

During this period, took place different theoretical contributions regarding film theory. On the one hand Jean Epstein identified this difference as cinema’s *photogenie* and, on the other hand, Bela Balàzs attributed it to the unique, even spiritual expressiveness of the close-up. On the contrary, the soviet cinema in the 1920s, in the eyes of Sergei Eisenstein best known *The Battle of Potemkin* as a representative example of the impulse of utopian in film, wherein the cinema offered a promise or fantasied world, it had been as well described by the French “Impressionists”, and, later, into the 1930s, by Walter Benjamin and Siegfried Kracauer. After World War II, the most important stages of film theory, roughly from 1945 to the present, from neo-realist and modernist theories to psychoanalytic, “apparatus”, phenomenological and cognitivist theories. World War II represents the decisive moment for history in general, and world film history in particular: the moment before and after the emergence of cinephile movements. Film theories have been influenced too. There are, thus, several different possible approaches to systematize film theories or, at least, the major film theories: “After 1945, however, there was a growing feeling that such differences might also influence the construction of

a theory, the motivations behind it, the aims that guide it.” (Casetti, 1999: 10)

During the 1950s and 1960s,

“(…) there was a conflict between those who considered cinema a means of expression through which personality, ideology, and culture were manifested and those who viewed it as an objective reality, to be examined in its tangible components and in the way it actually works.” (Casetti, 1999: 11)

With the end of World War II,

“(…) a fragmentation of the national landscapes took place, leaving room for currents of thought that were often indifferent to one another, while the channels of thought that were often indifferent to one another, while the channels of communication between geographically distant groups became stronger.” (Casetti, 1999: 9)

At same time, “This does not mean that prewar film theory ever knew real unity; it abounded in diverse themes, interests, and sensibilities.” (Casetti, 1999: 10) Later, during the 1970s and 1980s,

“(…) the conflict was between an *analytical* and an *interpretative* approach. The former proceeds through prospecting, surveys, measurements, polls; the latter through a sort of dialogue between the scholar and the object of study, a dialogue capable of progressively modifying both its protagonists.” (Casetti, 1999: 1)

In the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, academia assumed an influential role in film theory, introducing different concepts from different established disciplines such psychoanalysis, gender studies, anthropology, literary theory, semiotics and linguistics. Film studies became a discipline established in higher education institutions throughout the United Kingdom and the United States, and, thus, “[...] cinema was *accepted* as cultural fact, theory became more *specialized*, and the debate was more *international*.” (Casetti, 1999: 9)

The idea of cinema as a mirror became a central paradigm of film theory from the mid-1960s to the mid-1980. Under the sign of mirror construction or *mise-en-abyme*, it highlighted the reflexive potential of cinema as follows,

“[...] the ideological critique of the cinematic apparatus that had dominated Film Theory post-1968, these earlier avant-garde thinkers and practitioners saw revolutionary possibilities (both

political and aesthetic) in the novel ways cinema took hold of its spectator.” (Gunning, 2006: 32)

Thomas Elsaesser in 1986, Tom Gunning in 1991, William Uricchio in 2003, and lately Andre Gaudreault in 2008 have demonstrated the impact of the 34th Congress of the International Federation of Film Archives that was held in Brighton in 1978 on the emergence of the so-called new film history and film theories.

The 1970s were strongly influenced by Jacques Lacan’s poststructuralist re-formulation of Freudian psychoanalysis. These drew on Michel Foucault’s theory of the panopticon as a model for social relations based on vision and control. This model implies symmetrical schemata of look and gaze, as they are structuring and structured in a film, circulating between the camera and the characters, as well as between spectator and film. This school of thinking implies that a certain distance is maintained between spectator and film, which manifests itself in the field of vision as a form of pathology (“voyeurism”, “fetishism”) and mistaken perception (“miscognition”, “disavowal”).

In the late 1980s American universities introduced a new paradigm in film theory, focusing on David Bordwell as a prominent theorist who, since the 1970s, had already argued against different issues regarding film theory development and introduced “neoformalism”, which is related to his “SLAB theory”, reflecting the ideas of Ferdinand Sausurre, Jacques Lacan, Louis Althusser and Roland Barthes. The 1990s emerged with a digital revolution in image technologies and seeking, in the film’s essence, the capacity to capture an “indexical” image of a certain moment in time.

[...] On the one hand, theorists such as Noël Burch, André Gaudreault and Ben Brewster have challenged the notion of ‘primitivism’ in relation to early cinema and have argued instead that early cinema was a ‘system’ with its own conventions and signifying practices that was different from, rather than inferior to, the classical cinema that developed out of it. [...] On the other hand, historians such as Robert C. Allen, Douglas Gomery, Charles Musser and Miriam Hansen have explored the history of cinema as a social institution in its early years [...]” (Chapman, 2003: 51-52)

The institutions producing theory were changing and continued to shift:

“Before the war, the debate about the new medium appeared to be open to anyone. Directors, scholars, critics, musicologists, and psychologists all found themselves working the same terrain. After the war, more precise areas of expertise began to be defined.”  
(Casetti, 1999: 8)

Over time, and in general terms, film theory has been developing interpretative frameworks aiming to better comprehend its unique properties and effects, borrowing from the disciplines of philosophy, art theory, social science, cultural theory, psychology, literary theory, linguistics, economics, and political science. Therefore, “Film theory must be seen as part of a long-standing tradition of theoretical reflection on the arts in general.” (Stam, 2000: 10) The film theory has witnessed the following changes: 1) “Acceptance” of cinema as a cultural fact, 2) More precise areas of expertise began to be defined, and 3) Before the war, theory was fundamentally autochthonous, at a local level. After World War II, there were three great kinds of film theory: 1) *Ontological theory*; 2) *Methodological theories*; and 3) *Field theories*.

Since “Film theories are almost as old as the medium itself.” (Elsaesser and Hagener, 2010: 1), the main objective behind film theory “[...] is to formulate a schematic notion of the capacity of film.” (Andrew, 1976: 5) In other words, film theorist’s activity includes three main elements: “There is a nucleus of basic ideas that frames the research; there is a network of concepts that establishes the order and the modality of the exposition; and there are several concrete observations that make verification possible.” (Casetti, 1999: 12) Therefore, it is important to emphasize that “The history of film theory reveals, not surprisingly, that there is no simple chronological progression toward the *truth* or a *right answer*.” (Lehman, 1997: 10) Film theory is, as well, prospective because it is liable to change in a way where every new present tends to rewrite its own history, but it also witnesses the past. Above all, theory takes on new meaning in different contexts; generally speaking, it is never historically stable. Each new theory creates its own questions, meaning that it can find itself once more confronting the same issues, which a previous theory had considered as resolved.

### 2.1.2 Moving image: Formalist vs. Realist

“[...] the classical formalist emphasis upon the artificiality of cinema structure being absorbed into theories of the apparatus, of psychoanalysis, or of ideology as applied to the cinema. [...] Cinematic realism is viewed as a discourse *coded* for transparency such that the indexicality of photographic realism is replaced by a view of the ‘reality-effect’ produced by codes and discourse.”

(Prince, 1996: 31)

Andrew Dudley in *The major film theories* (1976) draws our attention to three major trends of film theories: the formative tradition; realist film theory; and contemporary French film theory. In counterpart, Peter Lehman in *Defining Cinema* (1997), within film history, attempts to deliver a framework, which relies on dividing film theory in two different components: classical theorists; and contemporary theory. The twenty-first century has been crucial in the field of film studies, a time that has been *par excellence*

“[...] the age of film – or, at any rate, it was largely perceived as such. Film’s “microscopic images” mirrored the trajectory of this century, recording events as they took place, asserting themselves as a widespread presence, and becoming constant points of reference.” (Casetti, 2008: 1)

Nonetheless, it is consensual that the major film theories divide and converge mainly into two central theories: formalists and realists. Traditionally, the frame corresponds to film theories *called formalist or constructivist*, while the model of the window held is wavered in *realist* film theories. In other words, the Formalist and Realist trace, over time, approaches of European theorists since the early pioneers (namely, Béla Balázs, Dziga Vertov, Henri Bergson, Hugo Münsterberg, Jean Epstein, Rudolf Arnheim, Siegfried Kracauer, Walter Benjamin) to modern thinkers (namely, Fredric Jameson, Gilles Deleuze, Noël Carroll, Stanley Cavell, Slavoj Žižek). On the one hand, formalists were image-oriented filmmakers with special emphasis on dissecting the integrity of space continuum. The formalist tradition or formalist theory reveals the presence of a tension between the two strands: rationalism, and intuitionism

that “[...] can be found in the ideas of a German ‘formative’ film theorist such as Arnheim.” (Aitken, 2008: 34) The body and senses is the subject in realist theories, but they become the object in constructivist theories. Furthermore, the formative tradition theorists “[...] struggled to give to cinema the stature of art. Cinema, they claimed, was the equal of the other arts because it changed the chaos and meaninglessness of the world into a self-sustaining structure and rhythm.” (Andrew, 1976: 12) Rudolf Arnheim and Sergei Eisenstein have emphasized the principles of construction governing the image’s composition within frame-as-frame, caused in part by the development of cinema itself, which increasingly resembled reality with the introduction of sound, deep-focus photography, and Italian neorealist aesthetics. “Eisenstein had always held that to attain “reality” one must destroy “realism”, break up the appearances of a phenomenon and reconstruct them according to a “reality principle.” (Andrew, 1976: 67) Arnheim, author of *Film as Art* (1932), coming from the well-known Gestalt school of psychology, unfolded the formative tradition in the eyes of the Gestaltists principles. In other words, Arnheim emphasized the idea of film based on three principles: film as raw material; film in terms of creative use of the medium; the film form itself and its purpose: “film’s material must be all the factors which make it a less than perfect illusion of reality.” (Andrew, 1976: 28) Arnheim postulates some fundamental differences between “film and reality”. Arnheim’s conclusion is that it creates a world and a reality of its own: “[...] refute the assertion that film was nothing but the feeble mechanical reproduction of real life.” (Arnheim, 1958: 34) According to Eisenstein, whose perspective diverges from Arnheim’s or Münsterberg’s, the cinematic means resulted from montage as a crucial part of the creative process. As Dudley states, “[...] montage is the life principle which gives meaning to raw shots.” (Andrew, 1976: 53) The author argues that Eisenstein developed formalist tradition beyond the limits traced at the very beginning, or his own film theory: “[...] infinitely richer and more complex than those of either Arnheim or Munsterberg” (Andrew, 1976: 42). Andrew continued arguing, “[...] Eisenstein was not the kind of thinker who embraces a single idea or tradition which he then systematically develops. Eisenstein was interested in countless subjects and numerous theories about those subjects.” (Dudley, 1976: 42) Therefore, Eisenstein developed the idea of film

as synaesthetically experienced by the viewer at a certain moment, through four combined senses: sight, hearing, touch, and smell. Eisenstein never viewed cinematic as a simple recording of life but instead believed that “[...] narrative *sense* must be extracted so that their physical properties might be used to create a new and higher signification.” (Andrew, 1976: 46) In other words, the shot, seen as one of the narrative elements, should be understood as the *locus* where the formal elements should be placed, and, moreover, the filmic object itself should be self-sufficient. The new dialog between the hard sciences and the humanities around cognitivism has given Hugo Munsterberg’s *The Photoplay: a Psychological Study* (1916), the idea that film theory extends into the future, since it is liable to change.

On the contrary, realist filmmakers deployed the duration of time, staging narratives in order to create a multiple sense of reality and belief. Thus, the discussion of realism in cinema has often revolved around the opposition between formalist theorists, namely Arnheim, Eisenstein, Balázs and Pudovkin; and realist theorists, like Bazin, Kracauer and Vertov.

“[...] the creationists or formalists (including Rudolf Arnheim, Sergei Eisenstein, V. I. Pudovkin, and Béla Balázs), who defended cinema as an Art form which goes beyond realism; then there are the realists, especially André Bazin and Siegfried Kracauer, who celebrate cinema specifically because it sticks so close to the real.” (Easthope, 2013: 3)

Over time, the paradigm behind the concept of realism has been transformed:

“[...] while ultimately rooted in the classical Greek Conception of *mimesis* (imitation), gained programmatic significance only in the nineteenth century, when it came to denote a movement in the figurative and narrative arts dedicated to the observation and accurate representation of the contemporary world.” (Stam, 2000: 15)

Since then, Classical philosophy has unfolded the concept of realism wherein,

“[...] distinguished between Platonic realism – the assertion of the absolute and objective existence of universals, i.e. the belief that forms, essences, abstractions such as “beauty” and truth” exist independent of human perception – and Aristotelian realism – the view that universals only exist within objects in the external world

(rather than in an extra-material realm of essences).” (Stam, 2000:15)

The present PhD research project entitled “Between documentary and fiction: Contemporary Chinese and Danish cinemas” will approach film studies field engaging aesthetic realist film theory analysis and will evoke interpretive inferences as the grounding filmic elements of narrative comprehension based on real social constructed knowledge observation, at the turn of the twenty first century, within an emerging new global cinema wave, placing side by side contemporary Chinese and Danish cinemas. Therefore, the present PhD research project will center on the work developed by the prominent realist theorists: André Bazin, Rudolf Arnheim, and Siegfried Kracauer. In the relation to the real, the above mentioned realist theorists approach realism and the real with differing motivations and explanations:

“[...] Sergej Eisenstein, Rudolf Arnheim, the Russian Formalists and the American Neo-Formalists all advocate cinema’s artificial construction [...] whereas the opposite side would rally around Béla Balázs, Siegfried Kracauer and André Bazin under the banner of an “ontological” realism.” (Elsaesser and Hagener, 2010: 3)

Moreover,

“[...] classical film theory was organized by a dichotomy between realism and formalism, contemporary theory has preserved the dichotomy between realism and formalism, contemporary theory has preserved the dichotomy even while recasting one set of its terms.” (Prince, 1996: 31)

Film Studies (and its sister-discipline, Cultural Studies) have been at the forefront of the “culture wars” for much of the 1980s and 1990s. To paraphrase Gilles Deleuze: theory’s task is not to talk *about* films, but to speak with (and through) films.

In the second half of the 1990s, the emerging revival of Bazin, Kracauer, Epstein, Balázs and Arnheim shows clear evidence that the history of film theory is not a teleological story of progress to the ever-more comprehensive or elegantly reductive models.

“[...] realist theories emphasize film’s ability to offer a hitherto unattainable view onto (non-mediated) reality, “realists” call attention to the (semi-) transparency of the filmic medium, which

ostensibly turns us into direct witnesses.” (Elsaesser and Hagener, 2010: 3)

Moreover, theorists Béla Balázs, Siegfried Kracauer and André Bazin developed film theory work under the tag of an “ontological” realism. The “ontology of the photographic image”, Bazin’s central question that had been laid to rest since the 1970s, - transition from analog to digital media - rises again. In the eyes of André Bazin, the cinematic image is capable of offering a privileged outlook onto and insight into a diegetically coherent, but separate, universe. Bazin observes that realism is an attitude or stance where the filmmaker adopts vis-à-vis material,

“[...] wherein the daily life habit of apperception, recognition and mental elaboration is structurally reproduced in cinema.” Thus, realism is always a question of being grounded not only in a perceptual but also in a specific social reality, without authorial intervention. Béla Balázs’ *Visible Man* (1924) and *The Spirit of Film* (1930) emphasized his attention in depicting, revealing, and, thus, turning visible social groups that had never a chance to be portrayed before, as follows “[...] are peppered with further allusions to what Balázs terms the ‘face of things’.” (Carter, 2010, xxvi)

This progression from the spectator’s world to the world of the film that Bazin observed was coined the *myth of total cinema*, which could be experienced the same way as people experienced phenomenological reality. This position often opposed realist to formalist theorists. André Bazin is commonly seen as a realist because he focuses on the transparency of the filmic medium as something important to say about the frame. “It would, however, be fundamentally wrong to locate Bazin within the realm of a traditional film aesthetics of psychological realism.” (Elsaesser and Hagener, 2010: 30) Bazin observes the idea of reality, repeatedly, as an “inseparable whole” and means that the things embraced by a film – the “fact”, as Bazin calls it - possess an ontological unity which film has to respect. The smallest unit of filmic construction is therefore not the shot or the scene (as Eisenstein or analytical montage would have it), a technical quantity derived from production, but the “fact”, a given and pre-existing element, which overrides technique and technology. For Bazin, the meaning of film arises from the ontological presence of the things themselves (“reality conceived as a whole”), filtered

through the filmmaker's sensibility ("a consciousness disposed to see things as a whole"). Bazin became a key figure in film theory, not only because of his writings, but also due to his contribution as co-founder of the film magazine *Cahiers du Cinema*, probably the most important publication on film criticism published over the past 50 years. The fact that Bazin's writings

"[...] consists of creative tinkering and bricolage, of hybrid texts and an ad-hoc mixture of polemics and reflection, prescription and description also contains the possibility of transcending conventional boundaries and of creating something radically new."  
(Elsaesser and Malte Hagener, 2010: 32)

Siegfried Kracauer, a critic of authoritarian aesthetics, argued that cinema should focus on the unpredictable, unplanned events of everyday existence. During the late European cinema and Realism,

"[...] the ideas of Siegfried Kracauer, particularly as expressed in *Theory of Film* (1960), emerged against the context of a poststructuralist tradition which consigned Kracauer's model of cinematic realism to the margins of critical concern, and it was not until at least the late 1970s that Kracauer's work began to influence Western European film-making or film theory to any meaningful extent." (Aitken, 2001: 203)

Kracauer's theory of cinematic realism is based on the concept of the 'base of life', the 'texture of everyday life', in the way that it tracks its characters as they grow, older, marry, divorce, fight, suffer, rejoice and die.

In general terms, on the one hand the realist theory is more centered on documenting the surrounding reality. At the same time, the major differences between Formalist and Realist film theories are the pacing and the focus. Thus, in the beginning, Realistic films did not deal with story lines that were in fact staged or acted out, but they still continued with their previous characteristics of documenting life with long singular shots. The focus of these films was very different from Formalist films as well. Realist films were more interested in showcasing the characters and/ or actors. They used close-ups much more frequently in order to convey emotion. The focus on the talent meant they relied on them to tell the story to the audience. Another popular

style of filmmaking during this era was Formalist. These types of films were very different from the realist films discussed above.

### 2.1.3 Dogme 95: A reaction to local and global cinematic trends

“[...] part of a national heritage culture, recognized internationally during the golden years of silent cinema as a leading contributor to the seventh art. Something is historical at stake in keeping the tradition of Danish filmmaking alive.”

(Hjort, 2005: x)

After World War II, neorealism was the first of a series of modernist cinema movements of renewal that, under the name of “new waves”, would shape European cinema well into the 1980s, even when its aesthetic precepts were not always followed. At the same time, and “Despite the fact that the films of the new wave were marketed in the same fashion as earlier productions, they found an audience.” (Widding, 2005: 24) At the turn of the twenty-first century, the present PhD research project will address film studies, engaging aesthetic realist film theory analysis and will evoke interpretive inferences as the grounding filmic elements of narrative comprehension, based on real social constructed knowledge observation, within an emerging new global cinema wave, placing side by side contemporary Chinese and Danish cinemas.

### 2.1.3a Dogme 95: A reaction to local Nordic cinema

Throughout the twentieth century in *Nordic National Cinemas* (1998), Tytti Soila, Astrid Söderbergh Widding and Gunnar Iversen trace the arc of Danish cinema, emphasizing the relevance of the history of Danish film since its early cinema:

“The history of Danish film begins in a grand way despite Denmark’s smallness, as the story of one of the world’s leading film nations. During the first half of the 1910s the so-called golden age of Danish film occurred, when Denmark alongside France, had the status of being Europe’s most influential country in the realm of film production.” (Widding, 2005: 7)

Moreover, Widding highlights as milestones of the Danish cinema century, the following movies: *The Abyss* (1910), representative of the so-called Nordic Touch; *Night of Revenge* (Christensen, 1916), regarding its stylistic innovations; *The Clergyman of Vejly* (Schnéevoight, 1931), where the sound appears in Danish cinema through this movie; the so-called Danish *film noir*, the most illustrative being *Astray* (Ipsen and Lauritzer, 1942); the realism in *Ditte, Child of Man* (Henning-Jensen, 1946); the concept of Danish auteur in *The Word* (Dreyer, 1955); the beginning of the Modern Danish Art Film in the eyes of *Element of Crime* (von Trier, 1985); and the Feminist and Comedy genres in *Hearts Flambé* (Ryslinge, 1987).

During World War II, when Germany occupied Denmark, there was a pressure to screen German cinema more and more. As follows:

“Denmark, like Norway, was occupied by Germany in 1940, and thereafter the situation there was to be radically different from that in Sweden. Film production and the demand for film certainly increased throughout Scandinavia. But the German Occupation forces at the same time endeavoured to control all three levels of the film industry: production, distribution including import, and cinema screenings” (Widding, 2005: 13)

However, “The Danish resistance to German films was striking for political as well as economic reasons. [...] Swedish’s neutral status but were none the less completely free of German influence.” (Widding, 1998: 13) In Denmark during World War II,

“[...] another genre was beginning to make itself known, which was given the term ‘problem drama’ This has been called a Danish variation of the *film noir*: black film distinguished by psychological realism, not all that different from its contemporary Swedish counterpart.” (Widding, 2005: 13-14)

During the 50s “[...] Danish film industry reached its absolute peak. The year 1955 marks the turning point when audience ratings began to decrease (Dinnesen and Kau 1983:256)” (Widding, 2005: 17) During this period,

“[...] the notion of quality film appeared as one of the central concepts of the Danish film debate. [...] a clear dichotomy between the official and the unofficial film culture: the recognized quality films on the one hand and the popular culture on the other.” (Widding, 2005: 17)

The qualification and characterization of Denmark is then observed as a small nation interested in the production of reduced scale cinema. This was developed in *The Danish Directors: Dialogues on a Contemporary National Cinema* (2001), based on the following:

- 1 The size of its population is too small to sustain a commercially based, indigenous film industry.
- 2 The language spoken by the nation in question, Danish, is understood primarily by Danes, making it difficult to expand the market for Danish film through export and international distribution.
- 3 A key problem for the indigenous film industry is the ongoing influx and dominant presence of American films.

(Hjort and Bondebjerg 2001: 20)

At the turn of 1960s and before the emergence of the French new wave, the Danish film industry had nearly stagnated. The main reason “[...] was closely connected with a surfeit phenomena of sorts in a number of countries. The grand film spectacles could not get any grander. The sensations and

masterpieces had ceased to be sensations.” (Widding, 2005: 24) Around the same time as in China, in 1966, the first Danish film school was founded:

“[...] and in 1968 the first generation of directors were examined from it, among them such names as Dirk Brüel and Christian Braad Thomsen. [...] An important change was also constituted by the establishment of the state-run Danish Film Institute in 1972, modelled on the Swedish one.” (Widding, 2005: 25)

After this period, Danish cinema “[...] witnessed three decisive moments between 1984 and 1989.” (Hjort, 2005: 4) In 1984, Lars von Trier’s *Element of Crime* was awarded the Prix Technique at Cannes Film Festival, and Gabriel Axel’s *Babette’s Feast* (1988) and Bille August’s *Pelle the Conqueror* (1989) won the Oscar for Best Foreign Film in successive years, 1988 and 1989 respectively.

### 2.1.3b Dogme 95: A reaction to global Hollywood cinema

At the turn of the 90s, the succession of these relevant moments of recognition of the Danish film industry brought global visibility to Danish cinema. On the other hand, “The ‘90s witnessed the graduation, year after year, of young filmmakers from the National Film School, and it is their breakthrough moments, nationally and elsewhere, that constitute the New Danish Cinema.” (Hjort, 2005: 5) The emergence of this movement, Dogme 95, played an extremely important role in transforming Danish contemporary cinema in the 90s, contributing to the creation of the New Danish Cinema, and challenging Hollywood cinema model as well. In 1995, responding to this way of filmmaking, Lars von Trier and Thomas Vinterberg wrote the founding documents of the Dogme 95 movement: *Manifesto* and *Vow of Chastity*. These texts are not theoretical, thus, they should be considered artistic gestures and not in need to forcibly find logical and artistic contradictions in them. *Manifesto* and *Vow of Chastity* present a poetics of Dogma filmmaking. The outline of the Dogme 95 cinema engages the search for cinematic truth, wherein *The Vow of Chastity* imposes few technical rules, which should eliminate technology from cinema while retrieving its ability to represent reality. The *Manifesto* specifically states that the well-developed dramaturgy results in extreme predictability, as follows: “[...] Dogme 95 filmmakers are using the conventional dramaturgy full of passion of melodrama in order to let the viewers operate in the reception of the story those practices they are already used to.” (Gyenge, 2009: 78) The drive of this cinema aims to achieve an authentic cinema found lacking in the counterpart cinema, namely: “[...] in many ways a small nations’ response to globalization [...]” (Hjort, 2005: 7-8). Moreover,

“[...] Dogma 95 is an ingenious mixture of irony and high seriousness, of cynicism and deep commitment, of self-promotion and self-effacement, of political savvy and simple play. [...] The aim here, then, is twofold: to make a case that the rules defining the Dogma project are a small nation’s response to Hollywood-style globalization; and to suggest that Dogma 95 has become an instance of a quite different kind of globalization, one that shares

important features with what Arjun Appadurai (2001) calls 'grassroots globalization'." (Hjort, 2005: 36)

Lars von Trier, one of the prominent Danish filmmakers of the contemporary Danish cinema that has contributed to influence the so-called new Danish cinema, works from the deeply held conviction that self-imposed rules and constraints revolutionize and intensify creativity. These films expose idiosyncrasy through the echoes of the social rules and constraints:

"I have always been crazy about manifestos. I read the Surrealist Manifesto as a young man and was impressed by it. I have also been a communist and, as far as I believe, there was also a manifesto there. Manifestos are a good thing." (Cit. Hjort and McKenzie, 2003: 58)

Thomas Vinterberg confirms this idea that the premise of Dogma 95 was that constraint fosters creativity. By adhering to their rules or manifesto, the production processes of his films are as significant and as managed as the text. His rules increasingly promise a 'purer', more socially engaged cinema regarding the sardonic ascetism of Dogme'95.

Mette Hjort and Scott MacKenzie, in *Purity and Provocation* (2003), argue that Dogme 95 "[...] is an attempt to resist the dynamics of an intensified localism fuelled by globalism by focusing attention, not on heritage and ethnicity, but on the very definition of cinematic art and on the conditions of that art's production." (2003: 38) Dogme 95 cinema engages the realist film theory to emphasize this attempt, converging to Bazin and Kracauer's epistemological realism. This level of realism through cinema seeks to shape a construction of the social, as it more often takes place in documentary film. In Dogme 95 cinema, the non-fictional elements "[...] were brought into fictional cinema, but without becoming *cinema vérité*, as the story still remained highly fictional." (Gyenge, 2009: 75) This issue in contemporary Danish cinema evokes:

"[...] a crime drama from 1950, *Smedestroede 4*, where the film poster advertised: 'Filmed with the assistance of the Copenhagen police department'. This refers specifically to one sequence in the film which shows in great detail the work of the police at the scene of murder, how to secure evidence and if possible establish the events that took place." (Widding, 2005: 15-16)

The social shapes Dogme 95 cinema realm and the reality is staged on screen. Film content drives the audience, whereas the technical manipulations, such as lighting and sound, are seen as superficial because they constrain the truth behind cinema. Christensen explain this as follows:

“[...] to achieve a purification of film language by avoiding a lot of otherwise well-established technical devices since these are seen as creating an undesirable filter between the profilmic setting and the actual film. Technical manipulations of a film are rejected as cosmetics that hide the true images or the truth of the film.”  
(Christensen, 2000: 113)

The Dogme *Manifesto* implicitly claims realism; as such, critics regularly discuss its films in relation to realism. The real shapes the filmic aesthetics. The self-consciousness of Dogme films pushes the formal properties into the realm of the subject. Dogme’s aesthetic is realist in the Bazinian sense. It tries to convey the world without excessive manipulation. The Dogme 95 manifesto, unlike other Realist cinemas, imposes its restrictions mainly on the formal level, wherein the truth is contained within the film’s world and the main objective is to give access to this world. Mette Hjort also discusses the impact and the significance the *Vow of Chastity* manifesto had on the New Danish Cinema arguing, “[...] an imposition of constraints can help to enhance creativity [...]” (Hjort, 2005: 37) Elster first explored this issue in “Conventions, Creativity, Originality” (1992). In “Crime and Fantasy in Scandinavia Fiction, Film and Social Change” (2008) Andrew Nestingen observes family melodrama, which configures the central theme in Scandinavian cinema, namely the Danish cinema and Dogme 95 movies, featuring strong melodramatic elements attached, as follows:

“[...] combine tight plotting and personalized moral disclosure. Although the films obey the proscription against music in Dogma 95, they are built around the coincidences, intense emotional struggle, and betrayal associated with the family melodrama.” (Nesting, 2008: 119)

Mette Hjort and Scott MacKenzie in *Purity and Provocation* (2003) argue, “[...] Dogma 95 involves taking issue with a common misapprehension of the movement as profoundly apolitical” (31). Lars von Trier’s *Zentropa*’s

contribution has been crucial in galvanizing the development of the Danish film industry. Hjort explains this as such: “The bold pronouncements about film’s potential and future direction, coupled with the insistence on the medium’s democratization, bring to mind aspects of Walter Benjamin’s much earlier “Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction” ([1935] 1985)” (Hjort, 2005: 19).

Moreover, Hjort and MacKenzie argue, “[...] the manifesto clearly situates Dogma 95 within an international art-cinema tradition in which meta-level reflection on art and notions of authenticity and innovation figure centrally.” (2003: 41) In *Small Nation, Global Cinema* (2005), Mette Hjort focuses on the so-called New Danish Cinema “[...] in order to understand the dynamics of various globalizations within a privileged small-nation context.” (Hjort, 2005: ix) Hjort argues in *Small Nation, Global Cinema* that Dogme 95 is part of one of the “dynamics of cultural circulation” as a strategy to face the “transformation and globalization of contemporary Danish cinema.” The author states the following:

“Small Nation, Global Cinema attempts to pinpoint key strategic changes from the late 1980s onward, shifts that have allowed for the emergence of a minor cinema capable of reconfiguring unfavourable patterns of global indifference that lasting significant asymmetries inevitably produce.” (Hjort, 2005: xi)

In 1998, in order to encourage the Danish filmmakers to depict Danes culture concerning cinema as a construction of their own identity or artistic and cultural views, “[...] the Danish Film Institute presented an ambitious ‘Four-Year Plan’ outlining a series of strategies designed further to develop the Danish film industry.” (Hjort, 2000: 95) The contemporary Danish cinema sees itself as an excellent example or case of national policy representation, wherein the term New Danish Cinema

“[...] denotes a success that marks a break with earlier, somewhat moribund periods of cinematic production. There is one founding document to which the New Danish Cinema can be traced, unlike the New German Cinema, which can be traced to the Oberhausen manifesto.” (Hjort, 2005: 6)

### 2.2.1 Post-mao cinema: Chinese contemporary cinema

“ [...] Xie Jin can be regarded as a transitional figure between the classical Chinese cinema and the new wave cinema of the early 1980s. [...] This critical edge became a source of inspiration [...] including the rebellious Fifth generation, although the later went much further than Xie Jin in their film practice and sought to break away from the melodramatic tradition his films embody.”

(Ma, 1996: 15)

In the past thirty years, China has been through a spectacular paradigm shift and growth, where it repositioned itself from an isolated underdeveloped country at the end of the 1970s, to being today the world's second largest economy after the United States. The paradigm shift and growth has been translated into an accelerated urbanization process with all of the dramatic social transformations that such a process implies:

“[...] the final result of Mao's Cultural Revolution is today's unheard-of explosion of capitalist dynamics in China. That is to say, with the full deployment of capitalism, especially in today's "late capitalism," it is the predominant "normal" way of life which, in a way, becomes "carnivalized," with constant self-revolutionizing, reversals, crises, and reinventions.” (Žižek, 2009: 197)

Despite the constraints of this context, since the late 1970s and early 1980s, Chinese cinema, labeled as the renewal or transition era cinema, has harbored the seeds of cultural change. During this period, two crucial historical moments took place in China: Tiananmen democracy movement and its suppression (1989); and Deng Xiaoping's famous “tour to the south” (1992). Zhang (2007) describes these two moments as follows:

The relentless urban demolition and transformation in the 1990s has forever altered the spiritual as well as the material topography of socialist China and has ushered the reforms to points of no return. The mantra of the new decade, following Deng Xiaoping's “Southern trip” in 1992, is the notion of *zhuanxing*, or transformation and system shift. In a speech reflecting on the success of the Special Economic Zone in Shenzhen and other coastal cities following his tour there, and in an effort to jump-start the

“modernization” program that had encountered a serious challenge in 1989, Deng resolutely pronounced that “socialism can also practice market economy.” (Zhang, 2007: 5)

Between 1983 and 1989, several research studies were conducted regarding China’s economic and cultural reforms, such as Yuezhi Zhao (1998), Ying Zhu (2002, 2003), and Chris Berry (2003). However,

Zhu Ying’s work is a key documentation of progressive policy changes to reform the Chinese film industry and rescue it from the ashes. [...] Zhu’s studies centre on the 1990s; since then there have been several major changes, notably rapid corporization, conglomeration, rejuvenation of old state studios and reform of the distribution – exhibition system.” Further, China’s screen industry has accelerated its transnational activities in co-productions and joint ventures absorbing outside investment in infrastructure.” (Yeh and Davis, 2008: 38)

Today, the idea of a certain inconstancy in modernity in China bears the ambiguous concept and discourse of ‘Guoxue’ 国学 (National Studies). Yuan Xingpei, one of the leading scholars on classical Chinese literature and culture and Director of Beijing University’s *Guoxue* Academy, argues “[...] that *guoxue* emerged to meet the new trends of thought at the turn of the twentieth century and safeguarded traditional Chinese culture [...]” (Xie, 2011: 41), as follows:

“Guoxue as an idea and intellectual pursuit has a history of roughly a century in China. From its origins in the last decade of the Qing dynasty (1644-1911), it has been integral to the search for a past that is appropriate to the formation of China as a nation, as well as its place in the world. Interest in Guoxue declined during the height of the revolution, from the 1940s through the 1960s, but has enjoyed resurgence since the 1990s among scholars and the general public alike.” (Dirlik, 2011: 1)

Despite the fact the value of the term “Fifth Generation” and “Sixth Generation cinema” has been questioned by many scholars due to its limited application and ever-changing content, and that the term has occasionally been replaced by “New Chinese Cinema”, the present PhD research project will apply the term *contemporary Chinese cinema*, including the so-called “Fifth Generation

cinema” and “Sixth Generation cinema”, which has received the greatest attention from film scholars. In the end, “[...] Chinese film-making remains internally distinguished and multiple, but this may be manifested less in territorial separation than in different modes of film-making and different sectors of film culture.” (Berry and Pang, 2008: 5) The contemporary Chinese cinema embodies challenging representations, lying between fiction and documentary, tracing tradition and modernity. Among the disaffected and disillusioned youth, the contemporary Chinese cinema perceives the avoided reality, where, “film is a moving image of skepticism” (Cavell, 1979: 188), playing an invisible narrative through a certain kind of realism. In Mainland China, the official press as People’s Daily, points out that

“[...] *diaosi* culture “originates exactly from the social reality of wealth polarization” [...] The People’s Daily commentary represents the commonplace view that focuses on individual success and failure rather than systemic inequalities.” (Kan, 2013: 68)

Emilie Yueh-yu Yeh and Darrell William Davis trace the shift of the Chinese cinema since the 1950s until the 1990s as follows:

“[...] has exemplified a radical cinema in both content and industrial structure, with national subsidies, central planning, and tight management of output and exhibition. [...] But this state-backed radical cinema crumbled in the 1980s when the socialist system was riddled with inefficiency and mismanagement. [...] Hence, like other industries in the 1980s and 1990s, Chinese cinema underwent a série of wrenching structural reforms, gradually transforming from a state propaganda apparatus to a market-oriented profit-driven enterprise.” (2008: 37)

After the Cultural Revolution, the Chinese film industry began to renew, and the Fourth Generation of filmmakers started to make films that were often very different from those made previously, during or before this period. Praised by the Fifth Generation, Xie Jin, a prominent Fourth Generation filmmaker, already used to observe the socialist emancipation in the eyes of the role of women in Chinese society of that time. Xie’s *Two Stage Sisters* (1964), on the eve of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, depicts the dramatic social and political turmoil in the eyes of two sister women set against the backdrop of the Shaoxing opera world. This probably constitutes as one of the most

representative film, not only in Xie's filmography but also his entire generation. The Fourth Generation of filmmakers started to show clear intention to introduce new themes and story lines in Chinese cinema. Moreover, probably the most relevant contribution brought by the Fourth Generation of filmmakers consisted in suggesting that China was a socialist idyll not anymore, portraying the surpassing social pressures. Chen Kaige, one of the prominent Fifth generation filmmaker exclaimed

"I don't feel comfortable with melodrama because I don't like emotional excess. I could never make a film like Xie Jin's *Hibiscus Town*, which says that there are good people and bad people and that everything will be fine if we can just get rid of the bad people! It seems to me that all of us have positive and negative sides, and the same capacities to love and hate." (1999: 235)

However, this always took place within the boundaries of socialist realism and the melodramatic tradition, wherein

"[...] Contemporary Chinese cinema through the continuity with and conflict between the pre-liberation traditions of Confucianism and the post-Liberation ideologies of Socialism, a continuity and conflict that turn on the relation among the self, the family, the stakes of social constraint and transgression." (Browne, 1996: 41)

The social shapes Dogme 95 cinema realm and reality is staged on screen the same way it takes place in Chinese contemporary cinema. The social Conception in China is build upon

"[...] the five basic social relationships codified by Confucianism and called Wulun: ruler-subject, father-son, husband-wife, elder brother-younger brother, friend-friend. These relationships embody codes of loyalty, filial piety, benevolence, and honor, and each individual derives his or her personal ethical identity from them." (Ma, 1996: 17-18)

At the turn of the twenty-first century, the contemporary Chinese society witnesses that "[...] the socio-economic status and household registration (hukou 户口) of the family into which a young person is born have a singularly decisive effect on his or her access to better education." (Kan, 2013: 69)

In contemporary China, Harry H. Kuoshu's *Celluloid China: Cinematic Encounters with Culture and Society* (2002) provides an in-depth

understanding of representative films from the People's Republic of China tracing five key moments: (1) History in and out of melodrama: glory, guilt, and fantasy; (2) speaking for the *other*: changing allegorical roles for women; (3) cinema exotica: ethnic minorities, as the PRC's "internal, *other*"; (4) the western Chinese: roots hidden in the Yellow Earth; (5) New city films: beyond – yellow – earth experiences of post socialism. The first two moments are related to the historical perspective, and the last three moments refer to the emergence of a new cinema during post-Mao time.

At the same time, "[...] Chinese film was event of transnational capital from its beginning." (Lu, 1997: 4), wherein "The prefix 'trans' denotes processes across, beyond, and through borders to 'trans' means to answer, transcend, trespass, transgress. Yet the parameters of such activities are not only physical, nor are the borders merely those of the nation-state." (Ferrari, 2008: 55) 'Chinese cinemas' central theme in plural and 'transnational Chinese cinemas' dimension was rarely used before Sheldon Hsiao-Peng Lu's *Transnational Chinese cinemas: Identity, Nationhood, Gender* (1997). A decade later, Yingjin Zhang reflects upon the proliferating works on Chinese cinema, and argues for 'comparative cinema' in place of 'transnational cinema', since the former indicates a broader field that "[...] comparative studies are more likely to capture the multi-directionally with which film studies simultaneously looks outwards (transnationalism, globalisation), inwards (cultural traditions, aesthetic conventions), backwards (history, memory), and sideways (cross-media practices and interdisciplinary research)" (Yingjin, 2010: 31) For instance, Yiman Wang argues that transnational cinema should be observed as a *methodology*,

"[...] a new way of approaching Chinese film studies that can be extended to film studies in general. This approach will enhance the analytical power of the concept and open up a new framework for treating Chinese cinema as one link in the larger constellation of social-political as well as filmic negotiations." (Yiman, 2008: 10-11)

Song Hwee Lim argues that, "[...] the plural form of Chinese cinemas is usually deployed along national lines to distinguish film-making practices among mainland China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and the Chinese diaspora." (2007: 3) At same time,

“The term ‘transnational’ remains unsettled primarily because of multiple interpretations of the national in transnationalism. What is emphasized in the term ‘transnational’? If it is the national, then what does this ‘national’ encompass – national culture, language, economy, politics, ethnicity, religion, and/ or regionalism? If the emphasis falls on the prefix ‘trans’ (i.e. on cinema’s ability to cross and bring together, if not transcend, different nations, cultures, and languages), then this aspect of transnational film studies is already subsumed by comparative film studies.” (Zhang, 2007: 37)

Rosella Ferrari points out that “Chris Berry and Mary Farquhar highlight the persistent vitality of the national in the configurations of the Chinese transnational and the effectiveness of probing their mutual interactions,” (2008: 55) In fact, Berry and Farquhar encourage ‘transnational scholarly Exchange and discussion’ that will also benefit other national cinemas, including those of the West. (Berry and Farquhar, 2006: 15) Chris Berry and Mary Ann Farquhar’s *China on Screen: Cinema and Nation* (2006) focus the reader’s attention on ways to reenergize transnationalism in Chinese film studies. In their view, transnationalism is important

“not as a higher order, but as a larger arena *connecting differences*, so that a variety of regional, national, and local specificities impact upon each other in various types of relationships ranging from synergy to contest” (Berry and Farquhar, 2006: 5)

Moreover, “In the mid 1990s ‘transnational’ meant a pan-Chinese universalism trying to reconcile the differences and conflicts among the mainland, colonial Hong Kong, KMT Taiwan and the Chinese diaspora. But since the rise of the new China market the transnational currency may have been replaced by an intra-national, if not hyper-national tender.” (Yeh and Davis, 2008: 37) Although, the concept of *Transnational within the Transnational Chinese cinemas* can be observed or approached as “[...] as a method; as a history; in terms of its relationship to the national; as a space where cinema meets other media and as a cultural geography. [...] As a conceptual framework, ‘Transnational Chinese cinemas’ certainly corresponds to empirical reality better than the old territorially-bounded fantasy of a monolithic ‘national cinema’.” (Berry and Pang, 2008: 3) In China, the “importation of Hollywood films was not just a political delusion to open China

to the world but an economic strategy to save the film industry from its worst slump since the 1950s.” (Yeh and Davis, 2008: 39) As follows, “[...] China’s film reform, Hollywood (called ‘the wolf’ by journalists) was more than an invader: it was used as a financial and institutional instrument.” (Yeh and Davis, 2008: 40) In contemporary Chinese cinema,

“[...] the continuity with and conflict between the pre-liberation traditions of Confucianism and the post-liberation ideologies of socialism, a continuity and conflict that turn on the relation among the self, the family, the workplace, and the state, the fundamental terms of any image of the social totality.” (Browne, 1996: 40)

Since the early 1990s, as Chinese film studies have become a burgeoning field, more and more sophisticated research on Chinese film has been undertaken by scholars from various disciplines: namely Western critical theory (Rey Chow and Dai Jinhua); genre studies (Nick Browne, Paul Pickowicz, Esther Yau and David Bordwell); art history (Jerome Silbergeld); literature and urban studies (Zhang Yingjin); women’s studies (Dai Jinhua and Cui Shuqin); and industry research (Paul Clark, Chris Berry and Zhu Ying).

## 2.2.2 Contemporary Chinese cinema:

### Commonalities and Differences between the Fifth and Sixth generations

“[...] I use a broader concept of filmmaking “generations” to highlight some characteristics of almost a century of Chinese filmmaking [...] In the twentieth century [...] Chinese filmmaking has generated five or six chronological groups, or generations, of filmmakers.”

(Kuoshu, 2002: 1)

All generations of filmmakers and all genres of Chinese cinema from the late 1970s until today compose post-Mao cinema or contemporary Chinese cinema. At the turn of the new economic reforms, the late 1970s and early 1980s “[...] are best described as an ideological reorientation that affected an ambivalent embrace of a postsocialist ethos and the adoption of a “March into the world” (*zouxiang shijie*) attitude in intellectual discourse, cultural production, and popular consciousness.” (Zhen, 2007: 3,5) The transition or renewal era, which grounded the so-called “structural shifts in Chinese filmmaking” (Berry & Pang, 2008: 5), wouldn’t be a reality without the great contribution and impulse of the Fifth generation filmmakers. The face of the new Chinese cinema has changed forever. The Fifth generation Chinese filmmakers led by Chen Kaige and Zhang Yimou, and the Sixth generation Chinese filmmakers led by Jia Zhang-ke, Lou Ye, and Wang Xiaoshui, have made this the most important moment of cinema in China. This cinema shows clear evidence of Deleuze’s idea on the “movement-image” (1986/1983) and the “time-image” (1989/1985), when realism is the place to represent the dramatic transformation of Chinese urban landscape, sharing this new cinematic view of the new urban cinema (*xin chengshi dianying*). Throughout Contemporary Chinese cinema, more prominent in Sixth Generation cinema, human condition and the social in modern China has been a central theme. Hence, the Fifth and the Sixth cinemas play a major role within the construction of the contemporary Chinese cinema reflecting

“[...] the human subject, who is always defined in terms of his or her relationships with others. This social Conception is closely related to

the peculiar power structure of traditional Chinese patriarchal sociocultural order and its ethical basis.” (Ma, 1996: 17).

Likewise, “[...] since the mid-1980s when Chinese Fifth Generation filmmaking began drawing increasing international attention, Chinese film studies have attracted a substantial amount of writing and translation.” (Kuoshu, 2002: xiii) The Fifth generation’s first features guided critics towards the predecessor generation. Throughout time, the Chinese filmic narrative pattern was used to reflect its traditional society. The Chinese euphemism in traditional Chinese society “[...] was built on a moral edifice, ethical codes such as *ren* (benevolence, humanity) became the key signifier of the patriarchal order and the foundation of the insider-outsider, moral-immoral divisions.” (Ma, 1996: 16) Before, the narrative was characterized by a bipolar structure. After, during Post-mao cinema and still today, Chinese contemporary cinema acquired a new dimension, the one of social cinema. Žižek explains this as follows:

“At the level of social reality, there is obviously some truth to the claim that the Cultural Revolution was triggered by Mao in order to re-establish his power (which had been seriously curtailed in the early 1960s, in the aftermath of the spectacular failure of the Great Leap Forward, when the majority of *nomenklatura* staged a silent inner-party coup against him); it is true that the Cultural Revolution brought incalculable suffering, that it cut deep wounds in the social fabric, that its story can be told as the story of fanatical crowds chanting slogans - however, this is simply not the entire story.” (Žižek, 2008: 205-206)

The main feature of Contemporary Chinese cinema mirrors the logic of Chinese culture and focuses the attention on ‘*others*’, those who can be defined as the ‘weaker’ or ‘disadvantaged’ social groups (*ruoshi qunti*). They are suffering more from the consequences rather than the benefits of the rapid industrialization and urbanization, where “two Chinas seem to coexist: a China already integrated with the world market, and a China still unable or unwilling to enter the playground of finance capital, global competition, and neoliberal social policies.” (Xudong, 2001: 12). At same time, it is possible to observe “[...] a contradiction in Chinese society: a valorization of the material

figure as a figure of power, on the one hand, and a very prejudicial treatment of women in society and culture in general, on the other.” (Browne, 1996: 41) Like the Fourth Generation, the Fifth Generation cinema, emerging amidst these changes, also had the desire to record elements of their Cultural Revolution experiences in some way on film. Many had left school to join the army (Tian Zhuangzhuang, Li Shouhong, Hu Mei) or work with the peasants (Chen Kaige, Zhang Yimou), and their experiences had left them in such a critical state that set them at odds with Mao's *On Contradictions*. Inevitably this led to censorship, bans and, in some cases, exile. These two separate generations were accidental contemporaries; inevitably the simultaneous evolutions of these two groups meant that they both influenced and collaborated with one another. Insofar, the Sixth Generation filmmakers, by tracing tradition (past) and modernity in today's China (future), lie between fiction and documentary, as Lu Xinyu explain:

“Like the New Documentary Movement, they focused on contemporary Chinese reality rather than the ancient past. Furthermore, many of them shot documentaries themselves, and the themes, styles, and aesthetics of their features have genealogical connections with documentary filmmaking. Jia Zhang-ke and Zhang Yuan are representative examples.” (2010: 26)

Among the disaffected and disillusioned youth, the Sixth Generation cinema perceives the avoided reality where “Film is a moving image of skepticism precisely because it does not resolve the stand-off between the desire to know the world and a sense of its retreat from us” (Davis, 2010: 155).

The realist impulse in Contemporary Chinese cinema relates to the “modernization of cinematic language”. It emphasizes the intrinsic dimension of the representation of reality through fiction documenting reality and implying new narrative structures.

“The ‘New Chinese Cinema’ producers of the post-socialist era have loudly foresworn the conventions of the previous generation of Chinese film: the stereotyping of characters, the stylistic and emotional exaggeration, and the rigidity of propagandist content. Chinese-filmmakers and critics alike have expressed this as a reaction against ‘melodrama’.” (Silbergeld, 1999: 235)

The new narrative structures generating a new film form and placing central the human dimension, depicts social transformation and its issues, such as: real and fictional atmospheres; elements and fictional realities; film spatiality and film observational narrative. The Sixth generation cinema triggers realism to represent and portray social and psychological issues in Chinese society today, since

“Chinese families have been getting smaller for decades, and not just because of the country’s reviled family planning policies. Before the 1950s, the average household in China had more than 5.3 people. But the report shows that number dropping to 3.96 by 1990, and then to 3.02 by 2012. Since 2000, the decrease in birth rates has no longer been the primary driver of shrinking of family size, with geographic mobility and changes in social mores playing bigger roles.” (Lu, 2014)

This cinema embraces themes of social dislocation and the disaffection of urban youth, mirroring a new cultural and aesthetic meaning. In other words, Sixth Generation cinema seeks a new cinematic paradigm through an innovative language: fiction with documentary effects, and documentary with fictional effects. Hence,

“The humanist ideology of the film is simultaneously transparent and complex in its relation to the processes of both Socialist revolution and modernization in China in the 1980s. Contemporary Western film criticism since 1968, heavily invested in ideological critique, has not generally confronted the problem of the critique of socialist representation.” (Browne, 1996: 52)

If individual memory is interdependent with social and collective memory, and if a film aims to evoke a common historical consciousness despite the actual multiplicity and diversity of experience, then the synthetic or composite memory may generate the same effects as “real” memory. Mainly characterized by political concerns, focusing on the social and cultural development of China at the turn of the twenty-first century, Jia stated the following:

“Now I feel more of a sense of social responsibility. A movie can be a fantasy or it can be a realistic depiction of society. At the same time, a film is a memory. At this point, I’m most interested in

emphasizing cinema's function as memory, the way it records memory, and how it becomes a part of our historical experience.”  
(Jia, 2009: para. 17)

Modernity has as the commitment to give audiences a sense of belonging to a community to compensate for the traditional communities they have been disowned from. A concern or engagement with the future can be one way of correcting uncritical traditionalism and deepen one's involvement with the political status of the traditions of the defeated and the marginalized. Such engagements with the future may sometimes be episodic because they have to build upon an oscillation between the past and the future, and it's not possible to avoid the past when addressing the issue of modernity. The contemporary Chinese cinema gave Chinese audiences knowledge on how to freely know its own cinema – to some extent the basis of its own identity or nationhood. A 'cultural critique' is observed based on a 'historical reflection', shifting back and forth between the Chinese countryside and the metropolis. The new Chinese cinema 'nation' is national not anymore because the emergent category of transnational Chinese cinema problematizes the traditional paradigm of national cinema towards a condition of global hybridity.

### 2.2.2a The Fifth generation of Chinese filmmakers

Since that initial breakthrough with *One and Eight*, the Fifth Generation filmmaking has come a long way on different paths of development. These careers of Chen Kaige and Zhang Yimou highlight certain characteristics of this development.

(Kuoshu, 2002: 10)

The same way contemporary Chinese films suddenly burst onto the international scene in the middle of the 1980s, so too did academic studies of contemporary Chinese films. The concept of Fifth Generation was introduced into Western scholarship by Paul Clark in *Chinese Cinema: Culture and Politics* in 1949 (1987), as follows:

The Fifth Generation [...] was trained by exposure to a wider range of world cinema than its predecessor. The new artists were products of the Cultural Revolution years, when their life and education had been disrupted and they had gained a knowledge of society rare among intellectuals since the May Fourth era. (Clark, 1987: 180)

Stylistically, according to Clark (Paul Clark), Fifth Generation films feature a minimal story, slow pace and simplicity in composition. A more detailed study of Chinese cinema after the Cultural Revolution continued in the more detailed study of Chinese cinema after the Cultural Revolution continued in the second edition of *Perspectives on Chinese Cinema* (BFI Publication, 1991), edited by Chris Berry. In this book, out of twelve essays, four are dedicated to films of the 1980s. Chris Berry's *Market Forces: China's Fifth Generation Faces the Bottom Line* (1991) presents industry research on challenges such as: the decline of admissions, the rising cost of production, and political campaigns initiated by conservative forces in the party that were faced by the Fifth Generation filmmakers during the social, cultural, and political changes brought about by an economic reform. Esther Yau's essay, *Yellow Earth: Western Analysis and a Non-Western Text* (1984), adopts Western theories such as semiotics and structuralism, undertaking an

analysis of the narrative of *Yellow Earth*. Other pioneering works include *Chinese Film: The State of Art in the People's Republic* (Semsel, 1987) and *Chinese Film Theory: A Guide to New Era* (Eds. Semsel, Hong, Jianping, 1990). The former provides an introduction of the Chinese film industry of the early 1980s and also features interviews with many Chinese filmmakers of the 1980s. The latter is the first comprehensive anthology of Chinese film theories. Although containing some inaccuracies in translation, it still introduces several important issues in Chinese film theory, such as the impact of the early conception of “shadowplay” and the debate on theatricality.

In 1982, at the end of the Cultural Revolution and after a long period break, after the re-opening of the Beijing Film Academy, “[...] the first renewed class of film directors, cinematographers, and art designers graduated [...] China's only film school and the one that had trained the Fourth generation.” (Kuoshu, 2002: 9) The Fifth Generation Filmmakers include, among many others, Chen Kaige, Zhang Yimou, and Tian Zhuangzhuang – who graduated from the Beijing Film Academy (BFA) in 1982 and began making their films in the early 1980s.

Since that initial breakthrough with *One and Eight*, the Fifth Generation filmmaking has come a long way on different paths of development. These careers of Chen Kaige and Zhang Yimou highlight certain characteristics of this development.

(Kuoshu, 2002: 9)

Because the majority of filmmakers of this generation experienced the political turmoil of the 1960s and 1970s and entered the BFA around the same time, they form a collective that shared similar approaches to film narrative, style, and ideology. In *Confronting Modernity in the Cinemas of Taiwan and Mainland China*, Tonglin Lu divides the development of Chinese cinema mainly in two, as follows:

“The first step can be characterized as experimental. During the early 1980s, China started opening up economically, culturally, and also to an extent politically. [...] Enjoying a brief moment of the best of two worlds, the Fifth Generation directors made a significant number of highly experimental and artistically refreshing, even shocking, films, such as *On the Hunting Ground* (*Liechang zasa*,

1985) and *King of the Children* (*Haizi wang*, 1987). The second step can be called the period of the Zhang Yimou model. I should first emphasize that films following this model have never been mainstream in the Chinese market despite their emphasis on commercial success. [...] In other words, their audiences were more global than local.”

(Tonglin, 2007: 157-158)

The Fifth Generation cinema unifies image and ideology. In the 1980s, films such as *Yellow Earth* (Huangtudi, 1984) and *Red Sorghum* (Hong gaoliang, 1987) brought a new generation of filmmakers, including Chen Kaige and Zhang Yimou, to national and international attention:

“During the 1980s and 1990s, Chinese cinema has become relatively popular among Western filmgoers, especially critics. Chinese films won various prestigious awards at international festivals. At the same time, the so-called Chinese cinema includes three regional cinemas that are fairly independent from one another: mainland Chinese, Taiwanese, and Hong Kong cinemas.” (Tonglin, 2007: 157)

During this period, the most influent filmmakers were: Chen Kaige, whose *Yellow Earth* (1984) won an award at the Hong Kong International Film Festival, and the Golden Rooster Awards for Best Cinematographer; Zhang Yimou, whose *Red Sorghum* (1987) won the Golden Bear Award at the Berlin International Film Festival, the Hundred Flower Award for Best Feature, and Golden Rooster Awards for Best Feature, Cinematography, Sound, and Music. The significance of these filmmakers is not necessarily a result of the large number of films produced, but rather reflects the degree to which their films represented major cinematic trends and exerted influence on the films of their contemporary and filmmakers later on. Throughout the last two decades, their works have undergone dramatic transformations. For instance, Zhang Yimou began to make blockbuster martial art/action films, such as *Hero* (Ying xiong, 2002) and *House of Flying Daggers* (Shimian maifu, 2004); Chen Kaige made a psychological thriller, *Killing Me Softly* (2002) for Hollywood Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Studios (MGM) – many of the successes, failures, promises, and dilemmas that they experienced are rooted in their careers during the 1980s and 1990s. In both cases, the representative figure in Chinese cinema

since the middle of the 1990s onwards is Feng Xiaogang (1958-). His films, including the so-called New Year Celebration Films (*hesuipian*) exemplified by *Party A, Party B* (Jianfang yifang, 1997), *Be There Or Be Square* (Bujian busan, 1998), *Sorry Baby!* (Meiwan meiliao, 1999), *Big Shot's Funeral* (Da wan, 2002) and others such as *Sigh* (Yi sheng tanxi, 2000), *Cell Phone* (Shou ji, 2003), and *A World Without Thieves* (Tianxia wuzei, 2004), have consistently achieved a high degree of box office success. These films not only reflect the changing social-political context of Chinese cinema since the mid-1990s, but also demonstrate the nation-wide growth of popular cinema, a cinema that meets the needs of domestic audiences instead of serving as political propaganda or catering to the demands of international film festivals. The tension between compositional balance and ideological balance represents the blue print or the main feature of Fifth Generation cinema: such is the case of, in *One and Eight* or *The Big Parade*, the framing of men, earth and sky at various points; the distortion of perspective according to Taoist models; the symbolic use of colour and blank space for example in *Yellow Earth* or *Ju Dou*; and the minimal dialogue and image-based narrative development giving room to the image to speak for itself in *Yellow Earth* or, alternatively, the replacement of narrative by autonomous image sequences in *On the Hunting Ground*. All of these characteristics show clear evidence that the initial Fifth Generation films traced the arc from traditional pictorial arts through still photography. However, the feature that distinguishes the Fifth Generation cinema is

[...] how they mutated this trait, artistically speaking, into what I have called 'the children of melodrama', a series of theatrical incarnations which mark the failure – perhaps the inability – to outgrow melodramatic form and an examination of which helps one to chart the historical evolution of 'Fifth Generation' cinema. (Silbergeld, 1999: 236)

As a generational classification, this term distinguishes this group of filmmakers by associating them with a specific social-political context and, thus, giving them a unique place in Chinese film history. It is true that the term "New Chinese Cinema" is more comprehensive and can be used to describe all films made after the Cultural Revolution and films made not only in

mainland China, but also Hong Kong, Macau, Taiwan, and by Chinese Overseas filmmakers. Thus, Chinese contemporary cinema “[...] can incorporate mainland cinema into a larger cultural and social discourse.” (Yingjin, 2002: 25) However, a problem arises when this term is used as a substitute for “Fifth Generation” because it ignores the role that Chinese historical and political specificities have played in the development of Chinese cinema since the 1980s. Furthermore, by putting films made in various political and cultural contexts under the single “New Chinese Cinema” rubric, significant digressions and variations are glossed over – for example, the emergence of underground cinema and the popularity of New Year comedy films over the course of the last decade of the twentieth century. At the same time, the Fifth Generation is, then, a very diverse group. In the early 1990s, the emergence of the Sixth Generation influenced the previous one seeming, which became more hybrid and fragmentary. The Fifth Generation cinema is, in many ways, very different but at the same time is, in some important ways, similar. To some extent, these similarities, both in visual technicality and philosophical approach, such as the Taoist method, develop a complete and distinct method from both traditional Chinese and other national cinemas. This has led to the gradual development of a new visual style, which, alongside new narrative conventions, developed together with their Fourth Generation contemporaries, gives many of the filmmakers a distinctive hallmark. Thus, it seems correct to suggest that the initial Fifth Generation cinema pointed towards an idea of cinema movement. However, this initial approach that united a group of filmmakers regarding a method or paradigm of doing cinema means, at the same time, the exclusion of other directors who have influenced and worked within the group like Wu Tienming did. Likewise, this may include those who perhaps were or are still moving towards several directions, such as Zhang Yuan is doing today. In the end, what is significant is not who belongs or does not belong to a certain group or cinema movement. It is, in fact, the method or paradigm that bears the existing and innovative body of work that defines its ideas. The *Fifth Generation* of filmmakers might be seen just as a label or as a piece of referential shorthand. It is important to place it into chronological terms to structure the study of the Chinese cinema in general, and the post-Mao cinema in particular.

## 2.2.2b The Sixth generation of Chinese filmmakers

“[...] the Sixth Generation grew up with no heroes, no ideals, no government – sponsored jobs, and no hope for the country’s future.”

(Kuoshu, 2002: 14)

The Sixth Generation cinema has been portraying the deep on-going social changes that have emerged, such as the large-scale economic liberalization. The intrinsic dimension of the real has been depicted and emphasized, where fiction is approached as a realm of reality through the use of new narrative structures, i.e. real and fictional atmospheres; elements and fictional realities; film spatiality and film observational narrative; film narrative and the search for the truth of human condition portrayed in modern China and Chinese society today. Within this context, acting styles became more fluid, less theatrical, and, thus, closer to reality. Furthermore, the storylines and pacing of the films themselves became less melodramatic and less structured. In some early Sixth Generation films the realism was highlighted against melodramatic set pieces. These various visual methods provide the filmmakers with both the semantics and the syntax with which to make complex but clear points, above and beyond plot, story or dialogue. Today the Sixth Generation of Chinese filmmakers mirrors the best of the new Chinese cinema purposes, concerns, and aesthetics. It “[...] went through the most important keywords from the past one hundred years of Western documentary - Direct Cinema, cinéma vérité, and the concepts of performative and reflexive documentary.” (Lu, 2010: 24). Today’s China’s visual culture found its roots during this time. Challenging representations, the contemporary Chinese cinema builds cinematic city views of Chinese society today.

Representing the start of the Sixth Generation filmmaking are titles of the early and mid-1990s such as *Beijing Bastard* (*Beijing Zazhong*, directed by Zhang Yuan), *Weekend Lovers* (*Zhoumo Qingren* directed by Lou Ye), *Red Beads* (*Xuanlian*, directed by He Jianjun), *Days* (*Dongchun de Rizhi*, directed

by Wang Xiaoshuai), *Lost Youth* (*Yanmo de Qingchun*, directed by Hu Xueyang), *Yellow Goldfish* (*Huangjinyu*, directed by Wu Di), *Dirt* (*Toufa Luanle*, directed by Guan Hu), and *Rainclouds Over Wushan / In Expectation* (*Wushan Yunyu*, directed by Zhang Rung). The study of the Sixth Generation cinema focuses on the prominent filmmakers of this group such as Jia Zhang-ke, Wang Xiaoshuai, and Lou Ye. The research in this subject field is exemplified by studies by Shelly Kraicer and Jenny Lau, and has grown rapidly since the late 1990s. The Sixth generation of Chinese filmmakers contributed greatly towards the transformation of post-Mao cinema. Kuoshu explains this as follows:

“Contemporary filmmaking in the PRC has undergone a tremendous transformation in recent years. Faced with the post-1989 (Tiananmen square massacre) political control, the changed situation of film production financing, and renewed competition from Hollywood, a group of younger filmmakers has quietly begun to make films that are attracting increasing critical attention at home and abroad. When this new cinema first appeared, critics in the PRC eagerly referred to it as Sixth generation filmmaking, making the younger film directors the successors to the commonly held chronology.” (Kuoshu, 2002: 13)

Discussions on the new documentary, urban cinema, and experimental films arised by Sixth Generation filmmakers and Chinese artists can be found in popular magazines and newspapers such as *That's Beijing*, *Daily Telegraph*, *Variety*, *Modern Chinese Literature and Culture Dianying yishu* (Film Art), *Dangdai dianying* (Modern Cinema), *Xin dianying* (New Cinema), and *Beijing qingnianbao* (Beijing youth newspaper).

Despite working under the constraints of official film ideology within the context of the Chinese soft power, and, the pressure of profit-making as well, Jia Zhang-ke has striven to retain, in all his films, a distinctive and personal imprint, characterized by his sense of humor and cynical commentary on problems of Chinese society. The resulting ideological and political ambivalence of his films have become something of a Hallmark, and arguably, one of the distinctive characteristics of contemporary Chinese popular cinema in general.

The period of Chinese cinema on the eve of the Tiananmen Incident in 1989 was characterized by the rise of “entertainment films”, early attempts at industry reform, and the first film rating system designed to regulate film content through legislation. According to Feng Xiaogang, in the 1990s a filmmaker had to please “[...] the three olds (*san lao*): *laoganbu*, *laoban*, and *laobaixing*”, i.e. “officialdom, investors and audience.” (Keane and Tao, 1999). When discussing to this period, attention will also be paid to the historical background and implementation and perpetuation of the Communist art policy. Jia stated that, “surrealism is a crucial part of China’s reality. In the past 10 or so years, China has experienced the kinds of changes that might happen across a span of 50 or even 100 years in any normal country, and the speed of these changes has had an unsettling, surreal effect” (Chan, 2009). In other words, the contemporary or new Chinese cinema and its new urban cinema (*xin chengshi dianying*), through the new documentary movement that first appeared in 1992, is concerned with the human dimension of sweeping reforms by the Chinese government since the late 1970s, and the struggles imposed upon the country’s huge marginalized population over three decades: namely, the rural and migrant working classes or the so-called, “floating generation”.

Jia’s filmography delivers the possibility to trace a trajectory of ambiguity and uncertainty: observing, revealing and portraying the dramatic transformation of Chinese urban landscape. The tension in Jia’s feature is often shaped by the confrontation of the popular and the political culture, (where/from what), a society that allows its citizens to have flexibility and freedom to establish a way of life and to use the public spheres according to their needs. As Braester claims, “The documentary impulse in the new urban cinema became a vehicle of criticism - not only by placing a mirror in front of a numbed society but also by foregrounding the limitations of documentation in the face of inevitable and sometimes partly desirable urban development.” (2007:162)

## **Chapter III - Methodology**

### 3.1 Research design

Michael Crotty (1998: 2-3) established four key questions in order to reach a research proposal according to the particular research project's needs and nature,:

1. What *methods* do we propose to use?
2. What *methodology* governs our choice and use of methods?
3. What *theoretical* perspective lies behind the methodology in question?
4. What epistemology informs this theoretical perspective?

Following this train of thought, John Creswell (2003: 5) conceptualized Crotty's model to address three support questions in the design of research:

1. What knowledge claims are being made by the researcher (including a theoretical perspective)?
2. What strategies of inquiry will inform the procedure?
3. What methods of data collection and analysis will be used?

The present PhD research project entitled "Between documentary and fiction: Contemporary Chinese and Danish cinemas" will approach film studies field engaging aesthetic realist film theory analysis and will evoke interpretive inferences as the grounding filmic elements of narrative comprehension, based on real social constructed knowledge observation at the turn of the twenty-first century. Film studies field is broad, ranging both in its methods and approaches, and in its objects of inquiry, as follows: "The viewer is invited to observe reality in itself or reality as spectacle. The feature film also offers viewers a unique opportunity to observe people in all their comings and goings." (Tan, 2011: 31) The present study will focus the reader's attention on the following key research question: To what extent do social changes influence cinema aesthetics?

Based on this key research question, three related sub-questions will be placed under research discussion:

1. What are contemporary Chinese cinema and Danish cinema?

2 How do the 6<sup>th</sup> generation and Dogme 95 portray their respective society?

3. Do Dogme 95 and the 6<sup>th</sup> generation represent a new cinematic aesthetics?

Therefore, the chapters' structure of this thesis will follow the above-mentioned research sub-questions comprehending the following stages, as shown in Figure 1: approach; data collection forms; data analysis strategies; written report; and general structure of study.

Chapter #	Approach	Data Collection Forms	Data Analysis Strategies	Written Report	General Structure of Study
<b>Chapter IV S-R.Q. 1</b> What are contemporary Chinese cinema and Danish cinema?	Narrative research	Literature review	Reading; analyzing references; taking notes.	Chapter IV will develop themes using a chronology.	1) Cultural diversity; 2) Communalities and differences; 3) Film kind.
<b>Chapter V S-R.Q. 2</b> How do the 6th generation and Dogme 95 portray their respective society?	Case studies	Observation	Viewing; analyzing both films; taking notes; developing themes using criteria.	Chapter V will unfold a case description and case-based themes.	1) Assumptions; 2) Hypotheses; 3) Meaning-making relational process.
<b>Chapter VI S-R.Q. 3</b> Do Dogme 95 and the 6 <sup>th</sup> generation represent a new cinematic aesthetics?	Grounded theory	Face-to-face interview	Open coding stage; axial coding; selective coding.	Chapter VI will provide a general framework (from the smallest to the broadest perspective ).	1. Coding text and theorizing; 2. Memoing and theorizing; 3) Integrating, refining and re-writing theory.

## Figure 1. THESIS RESEARCH STAGES

In the eyes of “A Touch of Sin” and “The Hunt”, seen as two “realist cinemas”, this PhD research project will establish a comparative case study between contemporary Chinese and Danish cinemas. These cinemas play an invisible narrative through a certain kind of realism, having the ability to perceive the voided or skeptic reality. The “sense of reality”, Cavell reiterates, “*cannot* from the beginning be real or have happened, except perhaps by the purest or most miraculous of coincidences [...]” (1979: 183) Therefore, this comparative study will ground its foundations on a “sense of reality” to establish the bridge between two completely different social and cultural contexts through this context, within an emerging new global cinema wave, placing side by side contemporary Chinese and Danish cinemas. They both play a social role. The real social constructed knowledge observation leads to strategies, and methods, which are implied in designing research projects. As Creswell states, “a researcher can then identify either the quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methods approach to inquiry.” (Creswell, 2003: 5-6) The present PhD research project entitled “Between documentary and fiction: Contemporary Chinese and Danish cinemas” will apply a qualitative research design. This study will investigate how film elements, such as space, time, and character’s action; and sequences of filmic units, such as frame, shot; sequence, episode, and narrative are cohesively tied together as films unfold.

In the eyes of “A Touch of Sin” and “The Hunt”, this process will provide an accurate and solid foundation for film narrative interpretation based on real social constructed knowledge observation. According to Michael Crotty (1998), constructivism or socially constructed knowledge relies on the following:

1. Meanings are constructed by human beings as they engage with the world they are interpreting. Qualitative researchers tend to use open-ended questions so that participants can express their views.
2. Humans engage with their world and make sense of it based on their historical and social perspective - we are all born into a world of meaning bestowed upon us by our

culture. Thus, qualitative researchers seek to understand the context and gathering information personally. They also make an interpretation of what they find an interpretation shaped by the researchers' own experiences and backgrounds.

3. The basic generation of meaning is always social, arising in and out of interaction with a human community. The process of qualitative research is largely inductive, with the inquirer generating meaning from the data collected in the field.

Chapters IV, V, and VI's analytical perspective intend:

- To place the investigation in the context of previous research and justify how I have approached my investigation.
- To provide evidence to help explain the findings of my investigation.

Such as the previous two points, the focus of the present research will shed light mainly on cultural diversity; communalities and differences; and film kind.

Furthermore, the three research questions pointed out previously will correspond to the structure of the present PhD research. In other words, research question 1 will correspond to chapter IV; research question 2 will correspond to chapter V; and finally research question 3 will lead to chapter VI. It will, thus, influence the choice of qualitative methods; the content of the structure outline; and consequently chapter organization. Chapter IV will develop themes using a chronology, researching the cultural diversity different contexts during the 1990s in China and Denmark; the communalities and differences between Chinese and Danish contemporary cinemas; the thin line between documentary and fiction. On the one hand, it will contemplate the reality-effect desired through the lens of authenticity feeling and, on the other hand, the desired-effect of illusion brought to the audience.

### 3.2 Research question 1

The present PhD research project focuses on contemporary Chinese and Danish cinemas, commonalities and differences, cultural diversity and film type. The data collection forms will include not only bibliography sources, but also visuals. The literature review developed in the previous chapter II is crucial to attain, specially, the first research sub-question and, thus, leads to sub-questions two and three:

- The research lens will be placed in the context of the wider academic community within the film studies field;
- The critical analysis of the relevant references that will be reported and tracked down will lead to the rationale;
- The process of literature review will identify a gap between the existent references and the tentative references included in the study.

The process of critically analysing the literature will be divided in three steps: reviewing references; interpreting and analysing references; synthesising. Reviewing references will show the reader that references are being examined with a critical approach. Interpreting and analysing references are crucial to present the rationale behind this study, so that the reader can follow the line of thought that supports the literature critique. At the end of this chapter, synthesis will generate interpretation upon interpretation. During the process of critically analysing the literature, implied in the literature review's qualitative research method, the reviewing references research procedure will imply reading, note taking, and annotating bibliography. Critically reading the literature will allow us to obtain the following achievements:

- Defining the scope of the references will lead to key terms relating to theories, methodologies, background context, and other central aspects.
- In order to avoid constraints it is necessary to define the scope of the literature review, for instance, to structure it by date of publication.

- Proceeding with a on going research process will reflect the relevance of how each material is being applied, and, thus, if it will be worth it. At same time, it will allow to track down the range of importance within the different references, and to conclude what should be really included in the literature review.

In the present PhD research project, an effective note taking will take place, as a crucial strategy to ensure the previous data collection is accurately accomplished. All references needed for an accurate literature review, are, thus, structured and clustered accordingly. This effective note-taking strategy will focus on the following points:

- The reasoning behind the arguments, and any other references that might be needed later.
- The critical references' evaluation and bridging this to other reading that has taken place previously places new perspectives and addresses feedback to the reading.
- The impact of the note-taking strategy itself reveals new research development contributions.

Therefore, the research procedure of reviewing references and the annotated bibliography is a crucial strategy to ensure accurate note taking and, thus, the incorporation of new material that has been researched:

- Allows the research to keep track of minor works, which are only needed to provide supplementary information.
- Gives the possibility to remind previous notes taken at earlier stage and being consulted further on.
- Being annotated bibliography a strategy to identify what the references include, and including references that have been identified as not relevant, this will track the criteria to exclude these references.

As mentioned before, interpreting and analysing references are crucial to present the rationale behind this study, which depends directly on a re-writing literature review research procedure. The data collection forms as part of the data analysis strategy, including reading bibliography references, note taking, and critical thinking, will be developed in two main sections: the literature

review and literature discussion. On the one hand, the literature review will comprehend the framework of arguments and questions referring to the present study. At same time, the purpose of the literature review is to chart the progression and development of the rationale behind the study, which will depict, at the end of the present study, a clear view of the extent to which the research accomplished the previous objectives. In other words, discussion of its findings will provide a solid view of the arguments and counter-arguments, side-by-side, confirming or not what was found before, or possibly transforming these arguments into future research projects.

### 3.3 Research question 2

Chapter V will address research question 2 (How do the 6<sup>th</sup> generation and Dogme 95 portray their respective society?), and, thus, it will use literature review as a qualitative research method. To answer the present sub-question, we will carry out comparative study, placing Chinese and Danish contemporary cinemas side-by-side, in the eyes of “A Touch of Sin” and “The Hunt”, respectively, depicting social subject matter. This part will apply qualitative research design, analysing these two different social and cultural contexts today, sharing a common film aesthetic ground or remapping the modern filmic subject under the contemporary global cinema movement. The present study will focus on the reappearance of global narrative elements of film categorization, such as: identities of characters, objects and settings. As a consequence, a thin and blurred line between documentary and fiction will be tracked down, approaching semantic and syntactic forms. The differentiation between the semantic and the syntactic connect the differences between the linguistic elements of which all texts are made and the textual meanings, which are sometimes built by syntactic bonds found between primary elements. The characterization of how to approach semantic and syntactic forms separately leads to a new kind of film meaning, thus introducing a new theory. Since Metz (1977), most film theorists conclude that the main structural units of the dramatic film are the frame, the shot, the sequence, the episode, and the narrative. Meanings in film are created by the complex and coherent combination of modalities such as words, images, sounds, actions, and technical features, among many others. As the film unfolds, the viewer is invited to construct narratives. On the other hand, Rick Altman (2008) suggests that genres come up in an already existing syntax. Therefore, a new set of semantic elements or comparatively stable set of semantic givens is created through the testing of the syntactic idea into a logical and durable syntax. Altman explains this as follows, “every narrative text may usefully be understood as a series of individual following-units, joined by modulations and arranged in a particular manner. Each narrative text thus displays a specific “following-pattern” (2008: 26)

The present study will develop its own film narrative interpretation structure, a numbered scheme aiming to provide filmic analysis and identification determined by narrative elements and units, using a semantic and syntactic approach in reality representation, based upon the filmic identification system developed in Tseng (2009), as shown in Figure 2. This will allow us to assess the feeling of authenticity evoked by “A Touch of Sin” and “The Hunt”, experienced by the subject in the real world outside the cinema.

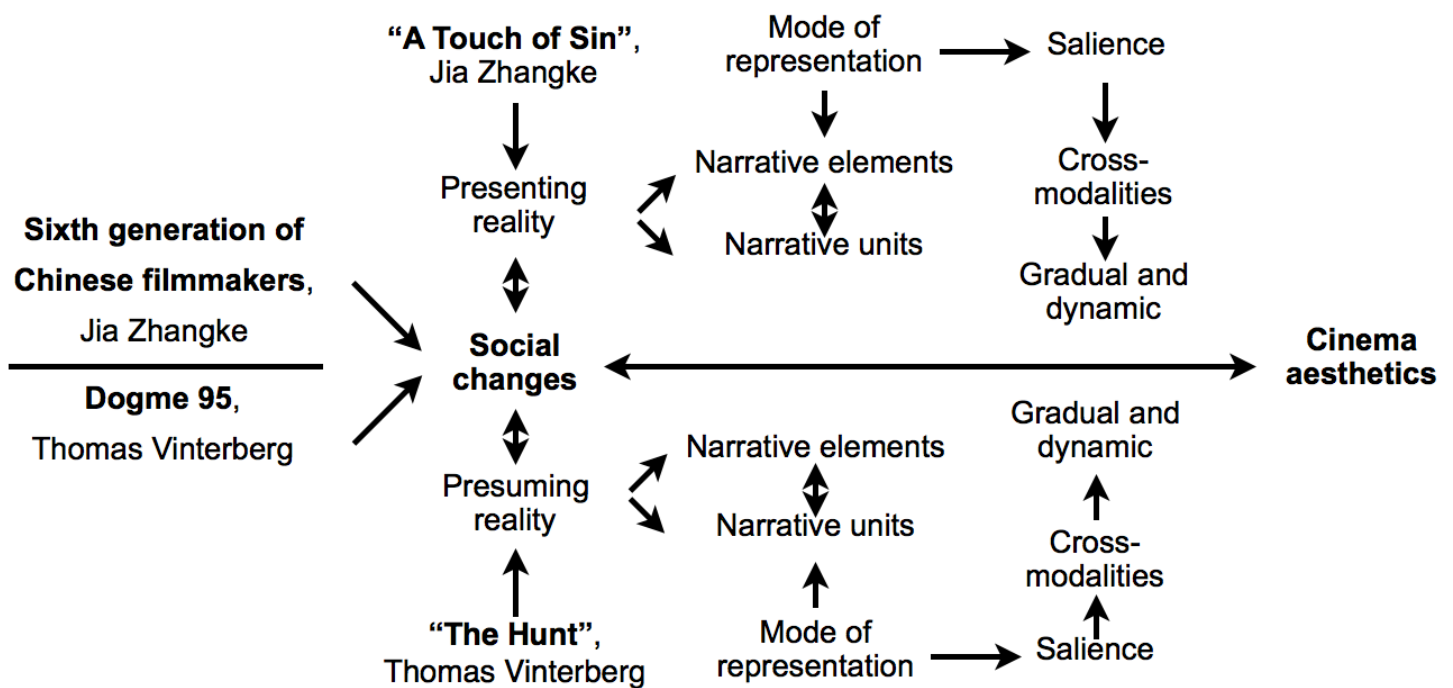


Figure 2. FILMIC ANALYSIS AND IDENTIFICATION  
IN REALITY REPRESENTATION

In the eyes of “A Touch of Sin” and “The Hunt”, and, thus, in the lens of the present study, reality places itself as the uncensored subject matter, and configures a new cinema aesthetics depicting an unfolding realism of social changes. On the one hand we have the representation of contemporary Chinese reality (realistic illusionism), and on the other, the desired reality effect (illusion of reality) in contemporary Danish view, within the scope of narrative fiction film analysis, as depicted in Table1:

	Narrative elements			Narrative units			
	Space	Time	Characters	Frame	Shot	Sequence	Episode
“A Touch of Sin”, Jia Zhangke	Reality			Realistic illusionism			
“The Hunt”, Thomas Vinterberg	Desired reality effect			Illusion of reality			

Table 1. FILMIC NARRATIVE IN REALITY REPRESENTATION

The empirical domain of this study will be determined by scoping the range of two subjects, cohesive devices and cohesive patterns. In other words, it will track how cohesively tied narrative elements are and how narrative units are presented and re-presented as films unfold. Moreover, the study intends to determine to what extent new cinema aesthetics, within a hybrid global context, is taking place by presenting or presuming reality, namely social changes. The present study will develop a film narrative interpretation based on real, socially-constructed knowledge observation, and therefore the core criteria to comprehend film elements and units will be the following: seeing, showing and knowing. Following this line of thought, the context of contemporary hybrid global narrative elements and units, regarding *état filmique* and the relevance between object and audience, film and viewer, reality or desired reality effect, leads to the paradigm that narrative is taken as a deliverer of truth and cinema as a general image of the truth. While “the massive outer world has lost its weight, it has been freed from space, time and causality, and it has been clothed in the forms of our consciousness [...]” (Langdale, 2002: 153-154) Narrative elements will be identified according to their participation in chains. The cohesive chains simply reflect the textual commitments made by the film, which may be manipulated in a variety of ways for further textual and dramatic effects. In the eyes of “The Touch of Sin” and “The Hunt”, this *progression* of cohesive strategies across a film sequence will play an essential part of the film narrative analysis. The cohesive strategies adopted for a certain narrative element is, thus, collected

in order to build *cohesive chains*. Such chains are formed whenever particular elements are placed repeatedly in sequences of cohesive ties over the unfolding of a text. The cohesive chains will generate tracking identities, which then will foster 'abstract' narrative configurations that viewers see as emerging spontaneously out of the *texture* of the material presented in the film. Therefore, the main objective of this part of the research, in particular chapter V, is to set out methods that can be used to systematically conduct analysis across the dimensions of film cohesion and social context. Applying methods to construct cohesive patterns for further investigations on how those patterns interact to form action patterns that reflect one dimension of the events of the story in film. Therefore, bidding together by comparison or by contrast cohesive patterns across different modalities divided in narrative elements and units, leads to dynamic analyses of film kind, lying between fiction and non-fiction. In other words, we intend to identify the patterns this construction process entails. At same time, multimodal mechanisms contribute to the complex analysis of the meaning-making process: generic (cohesion), and stylistic properties (action patterns).

### 3.4 Research question 3

The present PhD research project, entitled “Between documentary and fiction: Contemporary Chinese and Danish cinemas”, namely Chapter VI, that will address research question 3 (Do Dogme 95 and the 6<sup>th</sup> generation represent a new cinematic aesthetics?), within a hybrid global context today developing critical thinking in narrative fiction film aesthetics analysis, aims to show clear evidence that the conveyed message relies in social meanings and concerns. It will approach the network of definitions serving not only as an instrument for analysis, but prior to that, as standards for the delimitation of what is understood as narratives. Accordingly, in Chapter VI the literature review will be developed in two different axis: paradigmatic and syntagmatic. On the one hand, paradigmatic axis characterizes inter-relationships and dependencies among filmmakers’ options, through the lens of Jia Zhangke and Thomas Vinterberg, which is similar to many approaches to classification, and will convey the analysis towards aesthetics’ similarities and differences. On the other hand, the syntagmatic axis lays on the structural consequences of filmmakers’ options to what extend it is possible to characterize these film practices and common concerns within the global hybrid context at the turn of the twenty-first century, thus developing critical thinking in the analysis of narrative fiction film aesthetics. Gaines states, “The assumed link between cinema and social criticism begins with the fact that moving pictures, a nineteenth-century invention, exhibited such an amazing similarity to the social world, not as it was but as it appeared to its observers.” (2008: 361) In other words, the main focus in Chinese and Danish contemporary cinemas is to document the reality or the desired reality effect within narrative fiction. Tracing a narrative arc is, then, a consequence of this main characteristic. The issue of social identities and their concerns will be placed as the dominant theme, which extends across Chapters IV, V, and VI in a thin line between documentary and fiction, to the extent that it will illustrate the lack of one singular, ‘authentic’ Chinese or Danish identity in favour of many cinematic views. ‘Authentic’ “depends upon how stereotyped the mode of representation is, upon how commonplace the labels and their uses have become.” (Mitchell, 1994: 351) Chapter VI, thus, will triangulate documents

analysis (Chapter IV), film observation (Chapter V), and face-to-face research interview (Chapter VI). Chapter VI will provide a general framework, from the smallest to the broadest perspective, including a face-to-face research interview with Professor Mette Hjort. The full transcription of this interview is attached in appendices that will address the following main questions:

1. In your view, how could we frame contemporary Chinese and Danish cinemas?
2. Dogme 95 emerged as a local reaction to Nordic cinema, and as global reaction to Hollywood cinema. Do you agree with this view? If so, how you would define Dogme 95?
3. I've seen that you might be preparing a documentary on Dogme 95 and Jia Zhangke. This has been the core of my PhD research since 2011. You must see in both some commonalities and differences. Would you mind sharing with me some of your thoughts in this regard?
4. Jia Zhangke said that Chinese Urban cinema has China as backdrop. Is it possible to establish a cross-cultural communication between China and the West thinking for instance about Dogma cinema a reality represented as an illusion?
5. In your view, how do the Sixth Generation of Chinese filmmakers and Dogme 95 portray their respective society?
6. Therefore, in your perspective is it possible to establish differences in narrative Sixth Generation and Dogma cinemas? What are they?
7. Do Dogme 95 and the Sixth Generation represent a new cinematic aesthetics?
8. In your view, it makes sense to shed light on Asian and Eurocentric views in order to comprehend those differences? Or, do these process take place in both ways?
9. In your view, to what extent social changes influence cinema aesthetics?

These 'abstract' narrative configurations "[...] are varied and multiple, leading the researcher to look for the complexity of views rather than narrowing meanings into a few categories or ideas." (Creswell, 2003: 8) Wildfeuer emphasizes "Film comprehension and interpretation is a matter of inferential reasoning concerning the film's content, the events and participants involved

in the story and their functional and social embedding in the film's context." (2014: 11) Hence, the "reality and contingency" observed by Sebastian Veg in China Perspectives n° 2007/03 prevails as a global communication process, where the cinema implies "A language in which the image plays the part of both *speech* and *word* through its symbolic and logical properties and its attributes as a potential sign. A language in which an equivalence of the data of the perceptible world is no longer acquired through (more or less) abstract shapes but through the reproduction of *concrete reality*." (Mitry, 1997: 15) Nelson Goodman argues that realism is relative and it is always defined by a representational system. This is standard or normative for a person or for a culture at a given time, which "is thus an active process of relational meaning-making and inferring its propositional content in terms of assumptions and hypotheses, which the recipient makes according to concrete cues within the text." (Wildfeuer, 2014: 1) To conclude, the qualitative research method, and more specifically the triangulation methods show clear evidence as to how this PhD research project illustrates that "The Touch of Sin" and "The Hunt", despite their unconventional sequencing, are actually highly cohesive. As both film narratives unfold, information is added to identity chains in a way that preserves much of the explicit structuring expected of a narrative, regardless of the fact that temporal sequencing is reversed. Tan explains: "What viewers find so appealing in films is the fact that they help them to fill gap, a gap that originated somewhere in their past." (1996: 20) Throughout the context and the framework of a modern society today, and approaching cinema as social reality itself, the present research will address local and global issues, depicting small life-worlds, within a hybrid global context.

## **Chapter IV - Contemporary Chinese and Danish Cinemas**

## 4.1 Introduction

“[...] one looks *through* a window, but one looks *at* a frame. The notion of the window implies that one loses sight of the framing rectangle as it denotes transparency, while the frame highlights the content of the (opaque) surface and its constructed nature, effectively implying composition and artificiality.”

(Elsaesser, Hagener, 2015: 15-16)

This research will establish a comparative study between contemporary Chinese and Danish cinemas. Xiaomei Chen states:

“[...] Chinese Occidentalism is the product of Western Orientalism, even if its aims are largely and specifically Chinese. [...] As a result of the cultural and sociological specificities of contemporary Chinese society, such Occidentalism can be understood as a powerful anti-official discourse using the Western Other as a metaphor for a political liberation against ideological oppression within a totalitarian society.” (2002: 8)

Edward Said's Orientalism has introduced the shift of the academic paradigm regarding relationships between Western and non-Western cultures, wherein the author places Orientalism as a “[...] style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between ‘the Orient’ and (most of the time) ‘the Occident’”. (1991: 2) Furthermore, Said suggests, “[...] Orientalism is-and does not simply represent-a considerable dimension of modern political-intellectual culture, and as such has less to do with the Orient than it does with “our” world.” (1991: 12) This research project will place two completely different social and cultural contexts side-by-side, engaging realist cinema with a central theme in common, and will focus the reader's attention on the following key research question: To what extent do social changes influence cinema aesthetics? Moreover the present chapter IV will address the second research question: What are contemporary Chinese cinema and Danish cinema?

First and foremost, it is crucial to highlight that both cinemas disclose, before the viewer's eyes, the representation of humanity and all social issues implied. This is similarly to what “New Waves”, from the 1950s through the

1970s, did to re-appropriate the cinema in order to renew the faith in the medium's capability to show reality as it was before it presumed to change it. Politically, it was the first series of modernist cinema movements of renewal that, under the name of "new waves", would shape European cinema well into the 1980s, even when its aesthetic precepts were not always followed. The motto of "mirror and face" or self-referentiality exemplified by the modernizing movements in European cinema from the 1950s through the 1970s, during the emerging period of the so-called "New Waves", explores the reflective (identification) and reflexive (reflexivity) potential of cinema. Furthermore, the contemporary Chinese and Danish cinemas are, *par excellence*, the cinematographic of gaze, or, in other words, "eye" and "look". The events seem to unfold independently of the director's gaze. Gripsrud and Lavik explain as follows, cinema "[...] regulates the potential range of experiences and meanings to be associated with it, but it is through audiences that film becomes an 'input' to larger socio-cultural processes." (Gripsrud and Lavik, 2008: 455) The concepts of window and frame share several fundamental premises, but also show clear significant differences. It is, then, important, to establish the meaning of authenticity in relation to cinema. Namely, the objectives of the Sixth Generation of Chinese filmmakers and Dogme 95 attempt to minimize the distance between the film and its subject, placing the non-fictional elements recalling Bazin's "cinema of time" or Bergson's "cinema of duration" without becoming, in the end, Bazin's *cinéma vérité*. In Bazin's perspective, cinema's core realism is "[...] not certainly the realism of subject matter or realism of expression, but that realism of space without which moving pictures do not constitute cinema." (1967: 112) In both cinemas, time is prioritized according to a "life time" view rather than the dramatic dimension, depicting the global social dramatic shift at the turn of twenty-first century. The Sixth Generation of Chinese filmmakers and Dogme 95 cinemas take place when it is close to the world or close to reality. Wherein the camera works as a catalyst to provoke (re) actions and the viewer remains either a silent witness or is invited to take part in events taking place. Following the motto of "mirror and face" or self-referentiality paradigm, the present chapter aims to trace the outline of the Sixth Generation of Chinese filmmakers and Dogme 95 cinemas, which in the end still remain fictional. Realism, then, relies, as

Goodman suggests “[...] not in quantity of information but in how easily it issues. And this depends upon how stereotyped the mode of representation is upon how commonplace the labels and their uses have become.” (1976: 36) This cinema paradigm accommodates the spectator’s visual curiosity or interest. The contemporary Chinese cinema depicts the past, emphasizing tradition, and the present, gazing modernity. That is to say that the reality, which is taking place in the present moment, is an impression of a reality presented in the form of a filmic narrative. The event in the contemporary Chinese cinema exists in front of the camera and after being recorded by the camera. The Danish contemporary cinema in the eyes of Dogme 95 urging a relevant issue, points towards the cinema’s ability to frame reality. The utterance that an image is like reality means nothing more than the fact that it looks the same as reality is usually represented. Dogme 95 have staged reality, placing, as Peter Schepelern suggest, “[...] a highly self-reflexive visual style and on the other hand they combined it with a genre, which calls for extreme audience identification.” (2005: 74) At the turn of the twenty-first century, both Chinese and Danish contemporary cinemas screen national visual culture seeking authenticity and truth within the international panorama (re) searching for reality. Trevor Elkington state:

Dogma 95 insists on national participation in the art world and on the renewal of international art traditions. Dogma 95 [...] is an attempt to resist the dynamics of an intensified localism fuelled by globalism by focusing attention, not on heritage and ethnicity, but on the very definition of cinematic art and on the conditions of that art’s production.” (2005: 38)

Ove Christensen (2000) traces three levels of authenticity in cinematic history. Christensen does not claim that these levels are exclusive or operate independently. But each one suggests a different meaning or degree of Realism:

1. *Epistemological level: The truth is in the external world and the task of the film is to represent it.*
2. *Formal level: The truth is contained within the film’s world and the task is to give access to this world.*

3. *Thematic (ideological) level: The truth is an idea that spectator must see for him or herself. Here the film relates to reality only through symbolism.*

Historically, Bazin and Kracauer have given importance to epistemological realism. The Sixth Generation of Chinese filmmakers and Dogme 95 approach the epistemological level of reality. This level seeks to transmit knowledge about the world through film. Bazin believed that by placing the camera in the right position and letting it register what is before it, film could show the world as it was. The difference between recording and interpreting the reality is the central motto. For Bazin, realism is always a question of being grounded not only in a perceptual but also in a specific social reality, or in other words, an attitude or stance that the filmmaker adopts *vis-à-vis* his material. The “fact”, as Bazin refers to things embraced by a film, possess an ontological unity which film has to respect. The smallest unit of filmic construction is therefore not the shot or the scene (as Eisenstein or analytical montage would have it), a technical quantity derived from production, but the “fact”, a given and pre-existing element, which overrides technique and technology. In counterpart, Bazin contented the filmmaker’s sensibility is placed through “a consciousness disposed to see things as a whole”. (For Bazin the filmmaker’s sensibility through “a consciousness disposed to see things as a whole”.) Bazin compares traditional Realism with bricks produced for the specific purpose of building a bridge, whereas Neorealism resembles more readily the boulders in a river: one can use them to cross the river but they were not made specifically for this purpose. Consequently, their “stone reality” will not be altered by their use. Accordingly, Bazin wants “neorealist” to be understood solely as an adjective, since only certain elements of a film can conform to this aesthetic. In a Bazinian perspective, Neorealism can therefore hardly be conceived of as a movement. With the significant differences of emphasis and nuance mentioned above, Arnheim, Eisenstein and Bazin nonetheless implicitly accepted cinema as a window in the world and as a frame in a pre-constituted reality. Since the epistemological level of reality relates more often to documentary, the Sixth Generation of Chinese filmmakers and Dogme 95 approach this dimension. In both cinemas, it is possible to find a commitment to emotional truths, seeking humanism reality.

Moreover, the epistemological level focuses on the knowledge understood as theoretical or practical understanding of a subject that film can deliver to the viewer by perceiving or exploring general issues, namely social. As follows, "Film is made first of all out of images and sounds; ideas intervene (perhaps) later." (Burch, 1981: 144) In general, the narrative in Sixth Generation and Dogme 95 cinemas is fragmented, unfolded through the forms of succession and extension of drifting and random parallel plots, and marked by a self-reflexive *mise-en-abyme* construction process leading into an impression of a state of mind and manner of speech. This recalls Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin's concept of remediation in mediating reality based on Jean Baudrillard's notion of simulation and simulacra. Bolter and Grusin suggest that "[...] all mediations are themselves real." (2000: 55) Patricia Waugh suggests that "Contemporary metafiction draws attention to the fact that life [...] is constructed through frames, and that it is finally impossible to know where one frame ends and another begins." (2001: 29) Therefore, the reality in both cinemas become a performative discourse that accounts for the same ideological forces that frame the social context from which the film comes from, and to which the film returns. This is an essential contribution to achieve the essence of film within the global context. On the one hand, metafiction conveys the self-portrayal of Chinese contemporary society transformation at the turn of the twenty-first century; and on the other hand, it also delivers the possibility to depict emerging social issues in the contemporary Danish society. The relationship between the two worlds of fiction is grounded together: the fiction itself, and the fiction's surrounding. Xudong Zhang suggests, "By integrating fragmentary collective memory into individual consciousness as is characteristic of meta-fiction, [...] can be justly grasped with reference to history, specifically, to the particular historical moment of post-Mao China." (1997: 163) The main focus of these cinemas refers to the ability to represent a staged reality, leading to the postmodernism idea of cinema today. Jean-François Lyotard approaches post-modern to describe "[...] the condition of knowledge in the most highly developed societies." (1984: xxiii) In turn, Linda Hutcheon acknowledges that postmodernist "[...] clearly also developed out of other modernist strategies: its self-reflexive

experimentation, its ironic ambiguities, and its contestations of classic realist representation.” (Hutcheon, 1988: 43)



FILM STILL 4.2.1 | “THE WORD”, CARL DREYER (1955)

## 4.2 Dogme 95

“It this what the ‘100 years’ have brought us? Illusions via which emotions can be communicated? [...] By the individual artist’s free choice of trickery? [...] To Dogme 95 the movie is not an illusion!” (Lars von Trier and Thomas Vinterberg, Dogme 95 Manifesto, [www.dogma95.dk](http://www.dogma95.dk))

Over time there have been several initiatives for Nordic cooperation, and to attract international attention as well. In the 1970s, the Danish cinema industry presented two main trends: artistic films that in essence were state-sponsored films; and mainstream films, which were mainly privately funded. Elkington and Nestingen explain as follows: “Film production and reception in the Nordic region draw from diverse sources. The economic, political, and cultural relationships underpinning cinematic production, distribution, exhibition, and consumption are increasingly transnational.” (Elkington and Nestingen, 2005: 2) In 1972, with the revised Film Law, the Film Fund had

shifted into the Danish Film Institute, which is still part of the Ministry of Culture. Although the Film Law and state support to Danish cinema might be seen as government intervention into artistic freedom, from this moment onwards, the organizational support became a crucial tool for all national film productions. For the very first time film was directly placed in the state budget. Elkington suggests, "Recognizing the precariousness of their national film industries, Nordic governments have adopted strategies to support and fund national and regional filmmaking institutions in the belief that film could be a powerful expression of national culture." (2005: 31) The Danish Film Institute (DFI) played a major role and highly contributed to the Danish film industry, since it did not need to be dependent on the political power, relying on the so-called "at-arms-length" principle:

"The point of the Danish Film Institute is to be the key site for ensuring that Danes are presented with artistically qualified offerings in an increasingly global media culture. The Institute's support policy is to guarantee the availability of films that express and sustain Danish culture, language, and identity." (Anon, 1998: 6, cited in Hjort, 2000: 95)

At first, this was done primarily through the so-called *consultant scheme* where state aid decisions were made by consultants, who were hired for two to three years. Along with the revised Film Law of 1972, several attempts were made in order to break through the international cinema stage. Years later, the revised Film Law of 1989 requiring that Danish films be spoken in Danish was abolished, and this certainly contributed highly to widen the international horizons of Danish cinema. In the end of the 80s the majority of Danish films relied upon government support. Denmark was a small nation and with a limited population, and where the cinema industry presented relatively expensive production costs. Thus, the private initiative highly contributed for its succession in the 90s. Between 1994-2002 the Institution *Novellefilm* (originally *Dansk Novellefilm*) was created to support young filmmakers, namely: Lotte Svendsen, Jonas Elmer, and Henrik Ruben Grenz. During this period, a new breakthrough was stimulated and experienced, creating a wave of confidence in Danish contemporary cinema. One year later, the contemporary Danish cinema met a new milestone:

The Danish Film Institute presented an ambitious 'Four-Year Plan' outlining a series of strategies designed further to develop the Danish film industry. Arguments having to do with economic viability figure centrally in the 'Four-Year Plan', but they are complemented throughout by a consistent attempt to articulate a set of artistic and cultural visions, one of which concerns the construction of a national culture through film. (Hjort, 2000: 95)

The succession of these relevant moments was crucial for the recognition of Danish film industry and brought global visibility to Danish cinema. The National Film School played a central role in this process, as Mette Hjort suggests, "The '90s witnessed the graduation, year after year, of young filmmakers from the National Film School, and it is their breakthrough moments, nationally and elsewhere, that constitute the New Danish Cinema." (2000: 5) Hence, graduated filmmakers from the National Film School, who blueprinted the New Danish cinema, grounded the contemporary Danish cinema. Therefore, Hjort suggests the following filmmakers and films:

Suffice it to say that the New Danish Cinema reflects the combined efforts and contributions of Ole Bornedal (*Nightwatch/Nattevagten*, 1994), Nicolas Winding Refn (*Pusher*, 1996), Thomas Vinterberg (*The Celebration/ Festen*, 1998), Lone Scherfig (*Italian for Beginners/Italiensk for begyndere*, 2000), Susanne Bier (*Open Hearts/Elsker dig for evigt*, 2002), Lasse Spang Olsen (*In China They Eat Dogs* and *Old Men in New Cars/ I Kina spiser de hunde I & II*, 1999, 2002), Hans Fabian Wullenweber (*Catch That Girl/Klatretøsen*, 2002), Per Fly (*Inheritance/Arven*, 2002), Annette K. Olesen (*Minor Mishaps/Små ulykker*, 2002), Anders Thomas Jensen (*The Green Butchers/De grønne slagtere*, 2003), Christoffer Boe (*Reconstruction*, 2003), Paprika Steen (*Aftermath/Lad de små børn*, 2003), Henrik Ruben Genz (*Someone Like Hodder/En som hod- der*, 2003), Lars von Trier (*Dogville*, 2003), Charlotte Sachs Bostrup (*Lost Generation/Familien Gregersen*, 2004), Simon Staho (*Day and Night/Dag og nat*, 2004), and Lotte Svendsen (*What's Wrong with This Picture?/ Tid til forandring*, 2004). (Hjort, 2000: 5-6)

In March 20, 1995, at the "Le cinéma vers son deuxième siècle" conference, to celebrate the first century of film in Paris, Lars von Trier and Thomas Vinterberg presented the founding documents of the Dogme 95 project: Manifesto and Vow of Chastity. Schepelern explained:

People took notice when, in the spring of 1995, Lars von Trier presented Dogma 95, a manifesto that – referring back to the French New Wave’s admirable but ultimately insufficient effort around 1960 – went on the offensive against certain tendencies in contemporary film. Dogma 95 proclaimed a “rescue mission” against the predictable dramaturgy, superficial action, and technological cosmetics that are so prevalent in the Hollywood-dominated repertoire of theatres all over the Western world. (Schepelern, 2005: 73)

These texts are not theoretical, therefore they should be considered artistic gestures, a protest against the time’s superficial, technological and economically overloaded film style. One should avoid forcing the need to find logical and artistic contradictions in them. Hjort suggests, “Dogma 95, then, is best thought of as a form of cinematic expression that comes to us from, [...] the margins of cinematic production that small nations and minor cinemas inevitably are.” (2003: 31)

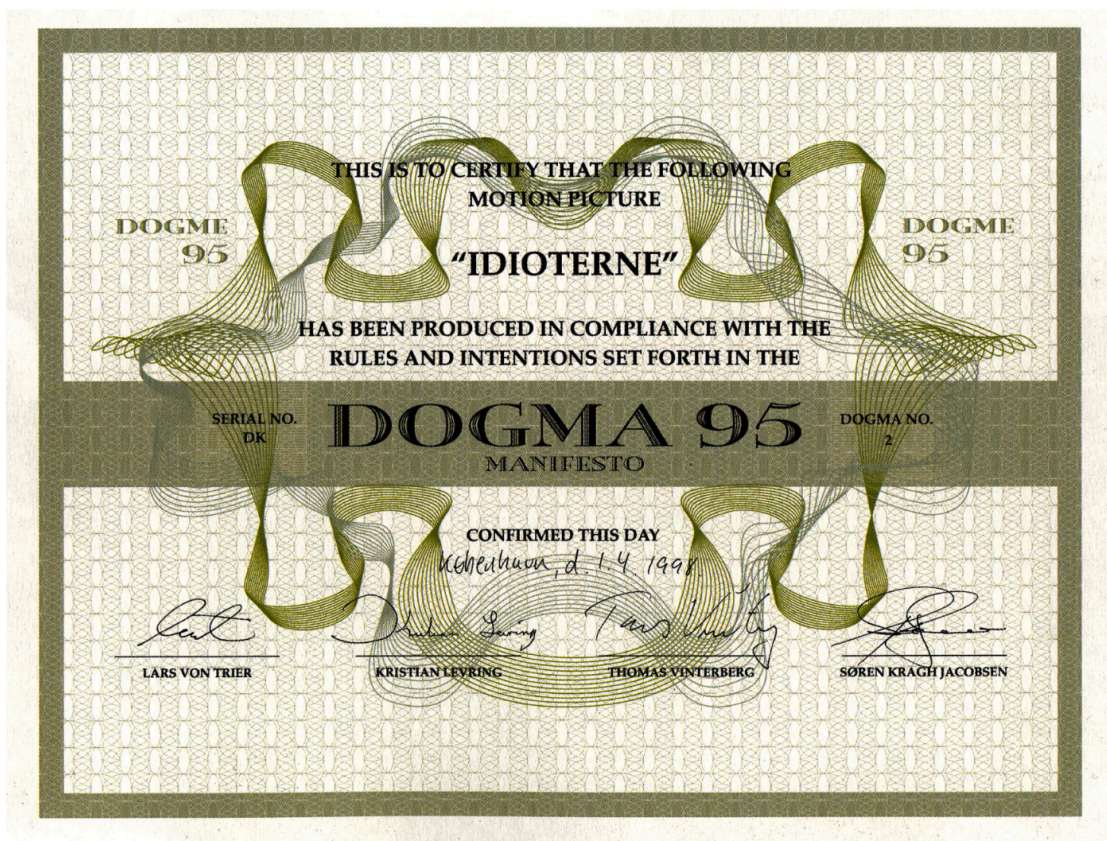


FIGURE 4.1 | “DOGMA 95 FILM CERTIFICATION”, DOGMA 95 (1995)



FILM STILL 4.2.2 | “THE CELEBRATION”, THOMAS VINTERBERG (1998)

Manifesto and Vow of Chastity present a poetics of Dogma filmmaking. Dogme 95 started as a collective of four filmmakers – Lars von Trier, Thomas Vinterberg, Søren Kragh-Jacobsen and Kristian Levring – who shared the belief that cinema could be awakened by establishing itself above the mentioned rules and restrictions that would shape filmmaking. However, the films that were the outcome of this Manifesto were quite different and it would be risky to approach them from a totalising perspective. However, it is important to analyse the films inspired by these documents and the relationship of these films to the Dogme 95 movement. Along with the National Film School, and the succession of relevant moments in Danish modern film history, the emergence of the Dogme 95 movement in the 90s grounded the seeds for the transformation of Danish contemporary cinema as a challenge to Hollywood’s model and global cinema as well. Hjort suggests:

Dogma 95 insists on national participation in the art world and on the renewal of international art traditions. [...] Dogma 95 [...] is an attempt to resist the dynamics of an intensified localism fuelled by globalism by focusing attention, not on heritage and ethnicity, but on the very definition of cinematic art and on the conditions of that art’s production. (2003: 38)

The Vow of Chastity seeks the search for cinematic truth, suggesting “alternative methods for film production”, which should eliminate technology from cinema. The cinema’s ability to represent reality is a relevant issue. Thus, Dogme 95 cinema claimed a simpler mode of film production. Namely,

1. Shooting must be done on location. Props and sets must not be brought in (if a particular prop is necessary for the story, a location must be chosen where this prop is to be found).
2. The sound must never be produced apart from the images or vice versa. (Music must not be used unless it occurs where the scene is being shot.)
3. The camera must be hand-held. Any movement or immobility attainable in the hand is permitted. (The film must not take place where the camera is standing; shooting must take place where the film takes place.)
4. The film must be in color. Special lighting is not acceptable. (If there is too little light for exposure the scene must be cut or single lamp be attached to the camera.)
5. Optical work and filters are forbidden.
6. The film must not contain superficial action. (Murders, weapons, etc. must not occur.)
7. Temporal and geographical alienation are forbidden. (That is to say that the film takes place here and now.)
8. Genre movies are not acceptable.
9. The film format must be Academy 35mm.
10. The director must not be credited.

(Dogma 95, cited in Schepeleyn, 2005: 73-74)

As John Roberts points out, “What is significant about this list [of rules] is its technical and formal character.” (1999: 141) Dogma 95, ‘Identify the very means of cinematic expression on which you habitually rely and then make the technique or technology in question the object of an interdiction’ (*The Purified*) Lars von Trier suggests, “I think the issue of whether you can gain something by throwing away total freedom in exchange for a set of rules is worth discussing.” (Hjort, 2003: 54) The Dogme 95 Manifesto incorporates some anxieties and thoughts about the future of the cinema at the turn of the

twenty-first century. These films made under these imposed rules are not characterised by formal or thematic uniformity, and they do not intend to result in similar types of films. Even the “alternative methods for film production” frame the paradigm behind the production and post-production filmmaking phases. The major impact “[...] was Dogma’s proof that making a film could be both technologically and financially accessible.” (Elkington, 2005: 49) This cinema places itself as a counter-strategy to the individual film and, setting out the ten self-imposed rules of filmmaking, expresses a strong belief regarding the productive potential of new technologies. As the Dogme 95 Manifesto suggests, “[...] the ultimate democratization of cinema.” (1995) This cinema project is self-consciously ideological with the political modernist filmmaking rhetoric: “[...] political modernism is the expression of a desire to combine semiotic and ideological analysis with the development of an avant-garde aesthetic practice dedicated to the production of radical social effects” (Rodowick, 1997: 1-2) Dogme 95 places its own importance in the democratization of cinema and seeks a new paradigm in filmic practice. Dogme 95’s rhetoric mainly echoes early political modernist practices, such as Vertov’s and Brecht’s. Both expressed their enthusiasm over the film medium and equated technology with productivity. On the one hand, Brecht’s theory and practice, which centres on the distance between reality and representation, influenced the development of a political modernist filmmaking. On the other hand, Vertov’s view regarding the act of filmmaking as mediating reality relies on the paradigm that the intervention of the camera emerges onto the surface and delivers to the viewer the hidden aspects of reality or empirical reality. However, it is possible to recognize a polemical cinematic language in Dogme 95, which aims to shape the spectatorship by offering the viewer an alternative view of social reality, but also here there is also a troubling paradox. The political modernist rhetoric, in certain way a disciplined ‘*avant-garde*’, comes along with the concepts of ascetic realism. The “alternative methods for film production” in Dogme 95, mentioned previously, clearly engage a preference for a realist filmmaking process or simply realist aesthetics. The strong convictions holding this cinematic paradigm - shooting in real locations; avoiding the use of extra props; simultaneous recording of sound and image on location; hand-held camera

work; natural light only; renouncing all forms of visual editing; and avoiding the concept of *auteur cinema* - leads to a political modernist rhetoric. Avoiding the concept of the *auteur*, which is central in Dogme 95, is part of aesthetics concerned with assigning a more productive role to the viewer. This makes way for an anti-illusionist aesthetics that is not interested in reproduction but, rather, in the presentation of a set of contradictions. Hjort states:

“Dogma 95’s contribution resides to a significant extent in this civic dimension, in the capacity to generate meaningful discussion about topics that are divisive yet absolutely fundamental, including, among other things, questions of access to and voice in the world of film.”  
(Hjort, 2005: 49)

Dogme 95 mainly rejects Hollywood dramaturgy, which structures goal-orientated narratives wherein the actions justify the characters and vice versa. Schepelern suggests, “The main purpose of the rules was to create a countermovement against (primarily American) mainstream film’s adoration of genre clichés and special effects as well as its tireless dance around the golden calf.” (2005: 74) Dogme 95’s project constitutes, then, a cinematic movement that holds onto a realist filmmaking process, which recalls Italian’s Neorealism when showing clear preference for real locations, unaffectionate acting, and aesthetics of reality that undermines the role of the script in favour of the presentation of the fragments of surrounding reality.

The two documents that grounded Dogme 95 purposes, a set of strategies that resist the illusion of filmmaking and the well-developed dramaturgy, resulted in extreme predictability. The Manifesto ensures a cinema where “the instant is more important than the whole” and the director’s ultimate goal is to “force the truth out the characters and settings”. (Manifesto, 1995) Hence, Dogme 95 leads the filmmaker towards a cinematic challenge, delivering to the viewer a cinema empty of excessive technical resources. Dogme 95’s cinematic nature demands a formal level of realism, as previously outlined, wherein the truth and authenticity is self-contained within the narrative. Vinterberg and von Trier place the truth within the film’s world as follows: “My supreme goal is to force the truth out of my characters and settings.” (Lars von Trier and Thomas Vinterberg, “Vow of Chastity”, 1995) The aesthetic affect realism has on film depends on to which extent levels vary between

Dogme films. The self-consciousness of Dogme films pushes the formal properties into the realm of the subject, establishing a dichotomy between form and content.



FIGURE 4.2 | “YOUTH EXPERIMENTAL GROUP - LOGO”, Y.E.G. (1994)

### 4.3 Youth Experimental Group (Beijing Film Academy)

In December 1978, the Four Modernizations program that was into the last stage of the Cultural Revolution, set on course by Deng Xiaoping, and officially made a basic national policy, appealed to Chinese intellectuals, once again, to participate in the program reemphasizing the need to become a modern China. Tradition along with Modernity was reborn along with economic reforms, whereas Chinese cinema was labelled as the renewal or transition era cinema. This harboured the seeds of cultural change. As Xudong suggests:

“ While the Deng reforms brought a historical break in the social world, expressed in the “scientific” futurology in the opening stage of the Great Cultural Discussion, different responses to the enormous questions concerning the past and the present, China and the West

brought the problematic of Chinese modernity into a new terrain and a new discursive space.” (1997: 42)

During this period two crucial historical moments took place in China: the Tiananmen democracy movement and its suppression (1989); and Deng Xiaoping’s famous “tour to the south” (1992). Zhang explains:

The relentless urban demolition and transformation in the 1990s has forever altered the spiritual as well as the material topography of socialist China and has ushered the reforms to points of no return. The mantra of the new decade, following Deng Xiaoping’s “Southern trip” in 1992, is the notion of *zhuanxing*, or transformation and system shift. (2007: 5)

The process of cultural change in post-Mao China is usually divided into two discrete stages, that is, the 1980s and the 1990s, the former labelled as “modernity” and the latter “post-modernity”. In 1985, Fredric Jameson introduced the idea of postmodernism in China during lectures delivered at Beijing University and the then newly founded Shenzhen University. This had a major impact on some young students, including Zhang Yiwu and Zhang Xudong. Jameson describes the impact as follows:

[...] unfinished social experiment of the New China – unparalleled in world history – the unexpected emergence, between the two superpowers [...] the freshness of a whole new object world produced by human beings in some new control over their collective destiny; the signal event, above all, of a collectivity which has become a new “subject of history” and which, after the long subjection of feudalism and imperialism, again speaks in its own voice, for itself, as though for the first time.” (Jameson, 1991: 29)

In the 1980s and 1990s Chinese cinema, as Emilie Yueh-yu Yeh and Darrell William Davis emphasize “[...] underwent a series of wrenching structural reforms, gradually transforming from a state propaganda apparatus to a market-oriented profit-driven enterprise.” (2008: 37) In the early 1990s and according to Yingjin Zhang, the film production in China could be divided into three categories:

First, the state-subsidized and propagandist leitmotif films (*zhuxuanlü dianying*) were to become an increasingly visible presence. Second, the art films (*yishu dianying*) – less avant-garde than a few years before – were reduced to a shrinking minority in

quantity more than in quality. And third, the entertainment (*yulepian*) or commercial films (*shangye dianying*), of numerous genres and varied production values, constituted a dominant majority. By the end of the decade, as exemplified by the 1999 season celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of the People's Republic of China, both art films and entertainment films moved closer to official ideology, while leitmotif films gradually acquired commercial features and successfully recruited several leading art film directors.

(Zhang, 2007: 49-50)



FILM STILL 4.3.1 | “YELLOW EARTH”, CHEN KAIGE (1984)

The Post Mao cinema composed by all generations of filmmakers and all genres of Chinese cinema, which “[...] has generated five or six chronological groups, or generations, of filmmakers.” (Kuoshu, 2002: 1), enabled the development of its contemporary cinema. In 1994, the Beijing Film Academy Youth Experimental Film Group or Youth Experimental Group, which harboured the seeds of the Sixth Generation of Chinese filmmakers, highly contributed to frame and shape the contemporary Chinese cinema. The Fifth generation of Chinese filmmakers led by Chen Kaige and Zhang Yimou, and the Sixth generation of Chinese filmmakers led by Jia Zhang-ke, Lou Ye, and

Wang Xiaoshui, among many others, have made this the most important moment in cinema in China. As Yomi Braester suggests:

The documentary impulse in the new urban cinema became a vehicle of criticism - not only by placing a mirror in front of a numbed society but also by foregrounding the limitations of documentation in the face of inevitable and sometimes partly desirable urban development." (2007:162)

Many scholars because of its limited application and ever-changing content have questioned the value of the term Fifth Generation "and" Sixth Generation cinema. For this reason it has occasionally been replaced by the term "New Chinese Cinema". The present research project will use the term *contemporary Chinese cinema* because the "modernization of cinematic language" in contemporary Chinese cinema took place when the so-called "structural shifts in Chinese filmmaking" (Berry & Pang, 2008: 5) were grounded by the Fifth Generation of filmmakers, and after with the great realist impulse of the Sixth Generation of filmmakers. This cinema blurs the thin line between fiction and documentary, which "[...] went through the most important keywords from the past one hundred years of Western documentary - Direct Cinema, Cinéma Vérité, and the concepts of performative and reflexive documentary [...]" (Berry, Lu, Rofel, 2010: 24). China's contemporary visual culture found its roots during this time. The contemporary Chinese cinema perceives the avoided reality, where, "film is a moving image of skepticism" (Cavell, 1979: 188), in which addresses social issues depicting the urban transformation against the will of the authorities. It means, this cinema plays an invisible narrative through a certain kind of realism. Contemporary Chinese cinema aims to depict the transformation of the Chinese urbanscape today, among the disaffected and disillusioned urban youth. The sense of hope reports to its roots and the sense of transformation lead to a time of change in Chinese Society. As Linda Lai suggests, "[...] geography of fragmented memories and elliptical personal histories. [...] a fluid journey in which the boundaries between fact and imagination, fantasy, and madness, dreams and desires, memories and history blur or collapse." (Lai, 2007: 223)

At the turn of the twenty-first century, contemporary Chinese cinema is once

again dominated by a tripartition: art, politics, and capital. This cinema builds cinematic city views of Chinese society today, through realism aesthetics challenging visual representations and depicting social conception in China based on “[...] the five basic social relationships codified by Confucianism and called *Wulun*: ruler-subject, father-son, husband-wife, elder brother-younger brother, friend-friend.” (Browne, Pickowicz & Yau, 1994: 17-18) The main feature of Contemporary Chinese cinema reflects the logic of Chinese culture and focuses the attention on the ‘others’, who can be defined as the ‘weaker’ or ‘disadvantaged’ social group (*ruoshi qunti*). After this, during Post-mao cinema and present to this day, Chinese contemporary cinema acquired a new dimension as social cinema. Thus, this cinema depicts a new cultural citizenship and aesthetic meaning, portraying the daily life of common citizens as individual characters, part of the floating population, such as ex-farmers and peasants, who left the countryside to look for better job prospects in cities. They greatly contributed to build the urban China today, and the contemporary Chinese cinema lens brought this self-portrait. The Sixth Generation of Chinese filmmakers, being themselves contemporary of this floating generation, have transformed the face of contemporary Chinese cinema into an observatory of social and psychological changes in Chinese society. This major contribution shaped the filmic language of contemporary Chinese cinema. Bazin suggests:

The word ‘realism’ as it is commonly used does not have an absolute and clear meaning, so much as it indicates a certain tendency toward the faithful rendering of reality on film. Given the fact that this movement towards the real can take a thousand different routes. (1973: 85)

Rapidly, realism became the *leitmotif* within contemporary Chinese cinema. In his films Lou evokes the feeling of an everyday China, revealing the daily life in China today, representing its social issues. It lies between fiction and documentary film forms. As Robin Visser suggests:

Most of the fiction, art films, and documentaries depicting China’s urban demolition share a gritty documentary aesthetic which addresses dislocation anxieties by deconstructing the present with a conspicuous absence of nostalgia. In postsocialist Chinese urban

culture, nostalgia itself gets called up, exploited, and treated ironically. (2010: 36-37)

The Sixth Generation cinema seeks a new cinematic paradigm through an innovative language: fiction with documentary effects, and documentary with fictional effects. This cinema emphasizes the intrinsic humanistic dimension of reality representation, in which fiction documents reality through the use of new narrative structures: real and fictional atmospheres; elements and fictional realities; film spatiality and film observational narrative. If individual memory is interdependent on social and collective memory, and if a film aims to evoke a common historical consciousness despite the actual multiplicity and diversity of experience, then the synthetic or composite memory may generate the same effects as “real” memory. The fast paced urbanization at the turn of the twenty-first century results in a fading and floating collective memory, making this the crucial moment for social transition in Chinese contemporary history. The legacy of this memory has just been erased, leaving a sense of void and emptiness. The new Chinese cinema is characterized by a critical attitude towards the past, whether it would be the failures of nationalism and modernization. Gary Xu suggests, “Since Chinese literature is the major vehicle for the discursive practice of Chinese modernity, the postsocialist shift to the visual can be regarded as ‘postmodern’ [...]” (2007:12). Moreover, modernity is committed to give audiences a sense of belonging to a community to compensate for the traditional communities they have been disowned from. A concern or engagement with the future can be one way of correcting uncritical traditionalism and deepen one’s involvement with the political status of the traditions of the defeated and the marginalized. Such engagements with the future may sometimes be episodic because they have to build upon an oscillation between the past and the future, and it’s not possible to avoid the past when addressing the issue of modernity. Contemporary Chinese cinema gave Chinese audiences the knowledge to freely know its own cinema – to some extent its own identity or nationhood. A ‘cultural critique’ is observed based on a ‘historical reflection’, shifting back and forth between the Chinese countryside and the metropolis. Contemporary Chinese cinema’s ‘nation’ is not national anymore because the emergent

category of transnational Chinese cinema problematizes the traditional paradigm of national cinema towards a condition of global hybridity.



FILM STILL 4.3.2 | “SUZHOU RIVER”, LOU YE (2000)

After the Tiananmen massacre, in the early 1990s when the Sixth Generation of Chinese filmmakers emerged, the filmic language introduced by Jia Zhangke, Lou Ye, Wang Xiaoshuai and Zhang Yuan was characterized by a serious concern regarding political repression. This made possible Sixth Generation’s cinematic impulse towards state discourse. The proposition “my camera doesn’t lie”, which came from Lou Ye’s *Suzhou River* reiterates the Sixth Generation filmmaker’s intention to capture the “real look” (*zhenshi mianmao*), depicting the transformation of Chinese contemporary urbanscape at the turn of twenty-first century. Contemporary Chinese cinema draws viewer’s attention to “a sense of reality” (*xianshi gan*), wherein the independent filmmakers and all their claims for “reality” have strategically avoided *xianshi zhuyi* (realism), instead choosing to use a documentary style (*jishi fengge*) to distinguish from the other realist cinemas. Over time, the Beijing Film Academy (BFA) has played a crucial role in the construction of the Chinese cinema paradigm. The same happened with the post-Mao and

contemporary cinema. The concept of independent cinema, or cinema in the margins tap to contemporary Chinese cinema propelled by the Sixth Generation of filmmakers. Independent filmmaking is not only disrupting the generational hierarchy of filmmaking and challenging the rigid departmental division within the BFA, such as the Literature Department and Directing Department, but is also creating a critical discourse towards the film language of the predecessor generation or generations, as well a critical view of institutional constraint. Zhen explains this as follows:

“Despite its genesis in the Beijing Film Academy (BFA), this trend takes leave of BFA – centered genealogy and its elitism and joins forces with an incipient DV (digital video) movement. Jia and his friends took up the work of filming while studying in the Film Literature/ Criticism Department. Their burning desire to make their own films and their distaste for the entrenched nepotism as well as for the kind of academic style of filmmaking perpetuated at the BFA plunged Jia and his group (including Wang Hongwei, who plays the lead role in all of Jia’s three features to date) headlong into their extracurricular and extremely low-budget film projects.” (Zhen, 2007: 15)

The Sixth Generation cinema that figures as independent is inspired by a different vision of history when compared to the Fifth Generation. Above all, being independent and part of the contemporary Chinese cinema reflects a different understanding regarding the established mode, and the right of representation, based on their experiences of “national history” and “trauma”. Born in the 1960s and 1970s, the Sixth Generation of filmmakers grew up during the transitional period that took place at the end of the 70s, when the economic reforms were implemented. Thus, they expressed a sense of loss, anxiety and frustration regarding the dramatic shift from one political, economic and social system that was communist-driven for three decades, towards one that is now market driven. These mixed feelings place this generation somewhere in between the “[...] “nostalgia for the past and indulgence in the future” and “a lingering sense of idealism and sentimentality” unique to his generation of filmmakers, who experienced “moments of crisis” in the post socialist China of the 1990s. (Zhang, 2007: 58-59) Born in 1970 in Fenyang County in the Shaanxi Province, Jia is one of the most prominent

figures of the Sixth Generation. Jia has contributed to an innovative filmic language and aesthetics, which is the blueprint of the Sixth Generation cinema, mainly approaching a paradigm of amateur filmmaking (*yeyu dianying*). Zhen explains:

The advent of the “amateur cinema” as a significant ramification of the Urban Generation cannot be separated from a decade-long struggle of the new documentary movement, which has run a parallel, at times intersecting, course alongside the experimental narrative film. [...] The time and space traversed by these amateur actors is also traversed by the Urban Generation as a collective, which takes as its primary task to bear witness to the rupture and transformation of history.” (Zhen, 2007: 17-18)

Jia’s first work, a fifteen-minute Betacam video entitled *One Day, in Beijing* (You yitian, zai Beijing, 1994), was produced back by a small group of students who called themselves the Beijing Film Academy Youth Experimental Film Group. McGrath explains their objective:

The project’s main goal was simply to record the movement of ordinary people in China’s perhaps most quintessential public space. The layers of symbolism accumulated by the official representations of Tiananmen are thus belied by the quotidian activities of the people passing through, and the work as a whole demonstrates the capacity of the videographer to directly capture “real” life even in the most ideologically encumbered of settings. (McGrath, 2007: 86)

One year later Jia directed the group’s next project, *Xiao Shan Going Home* (Xiao Shan huijia, 1995). Zhen explains how this came about:

[...] the appearance in the late 1990s of Jia Zhangke and his films *Xiao Shan Going Home* (1995), *Xiao Wu* (1997), and *Platform* (2000) inaugurated a different phase in the independent movement that effectively ended the era of the Sixth Generation. Most of them were born in the 1960s and share the memory of the intense tail-end of the Cultural Revolution and its aftermath (as exemplified in *How Steel Is Made*). Jia, born 1970, is emphatically a product of the reform era of the 1980s and represents a different mode of filmmaking. Rather than engaging in the anxious takeover of its precursors, the “amateur cinema” (*yeyu dianying*), or “unofficial cinema” (*minjian dianying*), advocated and practiced by Jia and his

group (Beijing Film Academy Young Experimental Film Workshop), has found a following among emerging filmmakers mostly outside of the elite academy in particular and the professional branch in general. “ (Zhen, 2007: 15)

The statement delivered by this generation confirmed their differentiation between the concepts of *tequan* (privileged) and *quanli* (authority) that, in their understanding, determines not only the filmmaker’s perspective and view but also the truth-value of the films made. That is to say, Jia establishes a relationship between the two worlds of fiction: the fiction itself, and the fiction’s surrounding. Xudong Zhang suggests, “By integrating fragmentary collective memory into individual consciousness as is characteristic of meta-fiction, [...] can be justly grasped with reference to history, specifically, to the particular historical moment of post-Mao China.” (1997: 163) The narrative in contemporary Chinese cinema is a fragmented narrative, which unfolds in succession and extension of drifting and random parallel plots, and is marked by a self-reflexive *mise-en-abyme* construction process leading into an impression of a state of mind and manner of speech. Hence, the theme of nostalgia and the hometown *leit motif* are not unique to Jia’s films, but are common within contemporary Chinese cinema.



FILM STILL 4.4.1 | “STILL LIFE”, JIA ZHANGKE (2006)

#### 4.4 Synthesis: Commonalities and differences

In 1994, the Beijing Film Academy Youth Experimental Film Group or Youth Experimental Group highly contributed to frame and shape the Chinese contemporary Chinese cinema. One year later in Denmark Dogme 95 emerged suggesting “alternative methods for film production”, as a response to challenge Hollywood’s model and global cinema as well. Hjort states:

What is intriguing about the Danish case is the way in which a series of interactions involving state institutions, private companies, and various agents operating in, around, and among them have resulted in a kind of cultural effervescence that is not only transformative for those who are involved in the process but also of theoretical interest to anyone attentive to the dynamics of globalization. The New Danish Cinema is in many ways a small nation’s response to globalization, an instance of globalization, and a dense and complicated site for the emergence of alternatives to neoliberal conceptions of globalization or cinematic globalization on a Hollywood model. (Hjort, 2005: 8-9)

On the one hand, under the National Nordic cinema, the New Danish Cinema “[...] presents a precious opportunity for understanding the dynamics of a globalization in small-nation contexts.” (Hjort, 2005: 23) through the tension

encapsulated in a tradition-modernity duality in which Danish contemporary cinema gaze the social and the subjective look. As follows, “[...] the strength of Danish cinema culture right now is the pluralism and diversity of its many tendencies and generations, the coexistence of both national and international art film traditions and national and international mainstream genre tendencies.” (Bondebjerg, 2005: 138)



FILM STILL 4.4.2 | “THE IDIOTS”, LARS VON TRIER (1998)

On the other hand, Contemporary Chinese Cinema depicts local accelerated urban transformation process, and all social issues resulting therefrom, sharing similar cinema aesthetics concerns common to other national contemporary cinemas, namely the Danish cinema. Likewise, Contemporary Chinese cinema depicts local reality at global stage, wherein the strain regarding a tradition-modernity duality leads, in this case, to social and objective look. . As follows:

“[...] Great Cultural Discussion constituted one of the most provocative events in the cultural life of post-Mao China. By confronting a persistent problematic of modern Chinese social and intellectual history, it has raised a whole range of questions to be

scrutinized with social concern and intellectual watchfulness. The intellectual “freedom” and “creativity” shown in the discussions are inevitably illusory to some extent, given the Chinese social and cultural conditions in the late eighties; but they nonetheless provide in their texture a clue to analyzing the collective experience generated in the Deng Xiaoping era.” (Xudong, 1997: 36)

The dramatic shift of Chinese society and the urbanscape transformation at the turn of the millennium, is the central theme in contemporary Chinese cinema, as Jia suggests:

“ I have the impression that a surrealist atmosphere prevails in China today, because the entire society faces an enormous pressure to speed up. As a result, many strange and unimaginable events have occurred in reality. As they say, ‘reality is more exceptional than fiction.’ The surrealistic elements sound unbelievable to most of us, but they are part of reality.” (Tonglin, 2006: 126)

The concept of globalization, and since it is a central key to research contemporary cinema, is crucial to frame this new paradigm today, which “[...] establish a basic rhetoric of opposition between the officially sanctioned point of view and the view revealed by the independent filmmaker’s camera [...].” (McGrath, 2007: 86) Juergensmeyer identifies eight types of globalization, as follows:

- 1 Globalization of production, ownership, market . . .
- 2 Globalization of currency and financial instruments . . .
- 3 Globalization of political alliances, law, world order . . .
- 4 Globalization of military justification and intervention . . .
- 5 Globalization of environmental concerns and protection . . .
- 6 Globalization of media and communications . . .
- 7 Globalization of culture and ideology . . .
- 8 Globalization of citizenship and identity . . .

(Cited in Hjort, 2005: 25, Mark Juergensmeyer, 2002: 6)

The “globalization of media and communications” or cinema; “globalization of culture and ideology”; and “globalization of citizenship and identity” establish a remote relation between these two cinemas. Nevertheless the representation of reality in Chinese and Danish contemporary cinemas placing central the above mentioned duality tradition-modernity is convergent through similar

social concerns and filmic narrative aesthetics. That is to say, in both cinemas the realm of the real is taking place in the present moment in the form of filmic narrative or, in other words, the event exists in front of the camera and after being recorded by the camera. At the same time, the depicted reality pursues the model of its own national cinema. Higson describes this as follows:

[...] there are two central conceptual means of identifying the imaginary coherence or specificity of a national cinema. On the one hand, a national cinema seems to look inward, reflecting on the nation itself, on its past, present and future, its cultural heritage, its indigenous traditions, its sense of common identity and continuity. On the other hand, a national cinema seems to look out across its borders, asserting its difference from other national cinemas, proclaiming its sense of otherness. (Higson, 2000: 67)

First and foremost, the commonalities and differences between the Sixth Generation and Dogme 95 cinema lies on the context of the new global cinema wave. This comparative study focuses, then, on researching the impact and influence these two social cinemas exerted on today's global cinema aesthetics at the turn of the twenty-first century. Moreover, understanding global cinema today is crucial to comprehend the overall context of their national film history timelines: “[...] the history of film, and therefore of film theory, must be seen in the light of the growth of nationalism, within which cinema became a strategic instrument for “projecting” national imaginaries”. (Stam, 2000: 19) Lu Tonglin suggests that globalization has gradually “freed the collective imaginary in developing world from cultural complex created by the myth of modernity, eurocentrism.” (Lu, 2006: 123)

Bazin's *Cinema vérité* reflects the paradigm that the viewer figures as an invisible witness or virtual participant of the world outside the cinema through the frame, where the camera creates the illusion of transparency as a catalyst to provoke (re)actions. The narrative in the Sixth Generation of Chinese and Dogme 95 cinemas (re)searches reality and organizes time not according to dramatic purposes but rather in accordance with “life time”. The Sixth Generation of Chinese filmmakers and Dogme 95 meet two central cinema concepts: Bazin's “cinema of time” and Bergson's “cinema duration”. Hence, these cinemas are, above all, about time accomplished by the filmic ellipses,

minimizing the apparent cause-effect narrative and rather utilizing a detached, objective, non-judgmental narrative that delivers to the viewer the flow of real life events. Therefore, I contend that these cinemas lie on the following main characteristics:

- Both reuse cinematic realism, Chinese real life experience vs Danish fictionalized life experience;
- The subject itself plays the central theme in both filmic discourses, encompasses cinema as a self-expression form;
- The perspective delivered to the viewer is marked by self-reflexive *mise-en-abyme* narrative construction process as an extension of the speaking subjects "I".

When the turn of twenty-first century is witnessing moments of global dramatic historical change, these cinemas experience time depicting reality as simple duration of everyday moments with all this implies. Sixth Generation of Chinese filmmakers and Dogme 95 are, thus, not cinemas for show but cinema of life. Therefore, it is crucial to understand the relation and the distance between viewer and filmmaker, or filmic object and surrounding reality. McGrath explains:

"[...] a document not of an immediate reality but a complex network of personally experienced temporal displacements shot through with distance and duration. [...] These distances are not overcome but literally are endured, as both the characters within the film and the viewer watching it experience the empty duration of the present moment largely as the absence of some future or past fulfilment, lending the film as a whole a gradually increasing sense of melancholy." (McGrath, 2007: 99)

The Sixth Generation of Chinese filmmakers don't follow an implicit manifest like Dogme 95 does. However, their way of filmmaking and thinking cinema pursues an implicit paradigm. Without any political speech attached, the Sixth Generation of Chinese filmmakers cinema places the eyes of viewer focused only on depicting dramatic society shift as it is, at the turn of the twenty-first century. Michael Renov (2012) suggests that the boundaries between fiction and reality in cinema raise crucial questions: if documentary contains obvious fictional elements, does this mean that documentary is fiction? Or do we

consider that documentary fictionalises reality for being subjective like fiction? Does it mean that we do not reveal reality through cinema?

In fact, the Sixth Generation of Chinese filmmakers cinema is fiction staging reality, binding together fiction and documentary, wherein fiction plays with documentary effects and wherein documentary places reality with fiction effects. The same happens in Dogme 95, as it believed in filming real people in real locations, frequently with hand-held camera where subjects revolved around issues ignored by society like poverty, marginal people or social injustice. Bill Nichols claims that all films are documents because any fiction film “gives evidence of the culture film produced it and reproduces the likeness of the people who perform within it” (2001: 1).

On the one hand, the realistic impulse of independent contemporary Chinese filmmakers is reconfirmed by the historical magnitude of literary and cinematic realism since the May Fourth Movement. There are several cases of contemporary Chinese filmmakers, namely the Sixth generation that underwent the transition from “underground” to “aboveground”, seeking state studio cooperation later in their career. In today’s China social context, they are considered by the general public as “the favourites of society” (*shehui de chong*) and “the proud children of heaven” (*tian zhi jiaozhi*), that is to say, they represent the future direction of the nation’s development and the discourse of progression. Zhen states:

“The experience and conception of *xianchang*, or “on the scene”, indeed captures the contemporary spirit (*dangxiaxing*) of the Urban Generation in general and the “amateur cinema” in particular. It is also the space in which the conventional boundaries that separate documentary and fiction, video and celluloid film, and professional and amateur practice are challenged and transgressed. By insisting on blurring these boundaries, filmmakers subject such genre distinctions as well as the cinematic medium itself to critical scrutiny.” (Zhen, 2007: 19)

On the other hand, in Dogme 95 the realm of reality “[...] created a highly self-reflexive visual style [...] which calls for extreme audience identification. Documentarism and deeply conventionalized stories are put together in most Dogme films to create the reality of fiction.” (p. 74) Moreover, “[...] the

manifesto clearly situates Dogma 95 within an international art-cinema tradition in which meta-level reflection on art and notions of authenticity and innovation figure centrally.” (Hjort and MacKenzie, 2003: 35-36) The current state of criticism on Dogme 95 relies on rethinking the boundaries of realist cinema. As follows, “[...] the representation of 'reality' as an empirical process precisely because of a belief that the real exists concretely and manifestly.” (Conrich and Tincknell, 2000: 173)

In conclusion, on the one hand Vinterberg confirms the idea that the premise of Dogma 95 was that constraint fosters creativity. As Hjort suggests, “[...] the invented self-imposed constraints are indeed meant to stimulate creativity, but they are also intended to redefine film aesthetics in such a way as to somehow level the playing field. [...] Dogma film deals with a closed system, [...] the film come to us as a definitive expression.” (35-36) On the other hand, Jia’s cinematography meets “[...] a creative method that begins with conception, which is the mark of the poetics of signification. [...] the creative process begins with the citing of a situation and the employment of simple rules as point of departure.” (Lai, 2007: 225-226)

**Chapter V – The sixth Chinese generation of filmmakers  
and Dogme 95: local depicting global reality today**

## 5.1 Space, time and causality: authenticity and illusion

“A film, I shall suggest, does not “position” anybody. A film cues the spectator to execute a definable variety of operations.”

(Bordwell, 1985: 29)

The present chapter encompasses the literature review in Chapter II and the state-of-the-art review in Chapter IV, as well as the filmic analysis of “A Touch of Sin” (directed by Jia Zhangke) and “The Hunt” (directed by Thomas Vinterberg), and an in-depth interview with Professor Mette Hjort covering the key research questions addressed by this PhD research project. “Reading”, “viewing”, and “interpreting” research data are essential to present and to deliver the *rationale* behind this study to the viewer. Narration and film form are, then, central issues. Rick Altman traces the evolution of narrative definition, suggesting:

“[...] virtually no attention has been paid to the notion of character. Aristotle goes so far as to proclaim that character is simply unnecessary. Barthes and the structuralists relegate character to a dependent position. Anglo-American theorists have been similarly effective in excluding character from definitions of narrative.”  
(Altman, 2008: 12)

David Bordwell’s view on narration and film points towards a paradigm focused on “narration” rather than a narrator only. Seymour Chatman claims, “[...] Bordwell's viewer is not a passive object "positioned" by what happens on the screen but an active participant—indeed, an agent—who virtually creates the film's narration.” (Chatman, 1990: 125) Although, Chatman suggests “[...] it is not that the viewer constructs but that she *reconstructs* the film’s narrative (along with other features) from the set of cues encoded in the film.” (1990: 127) This PhD research project places the viewer somewhere close to Chatman’s perspective. It means there is no narrative without viewer and vice versa. So, narrative and film, and its perception imply a complex and dynamic process. Interpretation as rhetoric, and the viewer’s activity leads to the theories of filmic narration and the principles of narration – *fabula*, *syuzhet*, and *style*. Originally, interpretation was fully understood as a verbal

process. In the course of time, the term has shifted involving any art form that by building, inferring and delivering meaning allows to comprehend (*ars intelligendi*) and to interpret (*ars explicandi*) filmic narrative. This process, however, requires the viewer to approach conceptual interpretation schemes. Bordwell suggests “A film theory consists of a system of propositions that claims to explain the nature and functions of cinema.” (Bordwell, 1991: 4) Moreover, meaning making takes place “[...] when spectators or critics make sense of a film, the meanings they construct are only four possible types.” (Bordwell, 1991: 8) The author explains this as follows:

“The perceiver may construct a concrete “world” [...] The perceiver may move up a level of abstraction and assign a conceptual meaning or “point” to the fabula and diegesis she constructs [...] The perceiver may also construct covert, symbolic, or *implicit* meanings [...] In constructing meanings of types 1-3 the viewer assumes that the film “knows” more or less what it is doing. But the perceiver may also construct *repressed* or *symptomatic* meanings that the work divulges “involuntarily”.”

(Bordwell, 1991: 8-9)

The present chapter will address the following research question: How do the Chinese Sixth Generation and Dogme 95 portray their respective society? Since the central paradigm of the present PhD research focuses on a new aesthetic global cinema today, the films “A Touch of Sin” and “The Hunt” were chosen, mainly to attempt present and possibly future academic research and discussion towards space, time, and social consciousness in filmic narrative. Both cinemas represent the materialisation of a collective memory with a documentary pulse suggesting, then, an innovative film production methods and rhetoric narrative that bind together fiction and documentary filmic territories. The diagram below, previously introduced in chapter III, shows clearly the comparative study between the two films above-mentioned. The mode of representation depends on the narrative as an art form through the narrative elements and units, which comprehends a layer of salience or depth of the subject to reach or confront reality. Through cross-modal model filmic analysis, which intertwines film form to rhetoric narrative, In “A Touch of Sin” the subjects are since the very beginning of the filmic narrative placed in the

margins and are oppressed as well (presenting reality), and in “The Hunt” along the filmic narrative the subject becomes gradually oppressed and marginalized (presuming reality). On the one hand the authenticity, on the other hand the illusion. This is shown in Figure 2 below, introduced in Chapter III.

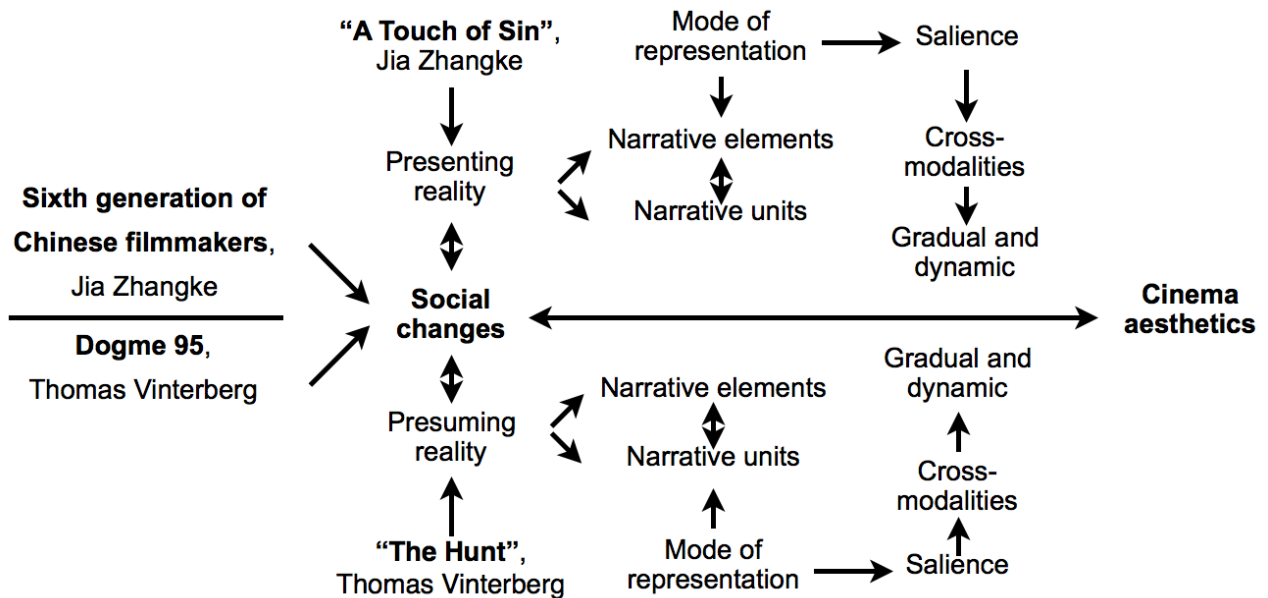


Figure 2. COMPARATIVE FILMIC ANALYSIS AND IDENTIFICATION IN REALITY REPRESENTATION

Therefore, by placing side-by-side a distinct social and cultural context, the Sixth generation and Dogme 95 cinemas are part of and play a major role within the same global cinema, implying different concepts of identity, tradition and globalism in the eyes of two prominent filmmakers of their cinemas, respectively, as shown in the diagram below.

Thomas Vinterberg:  
 Space – Time – Consciousness  
 (Real – Dream – Fantasy)

Jia Zhangke:  
 Space – Time – Consciousness  
 (Uncertainty – Raw – Real)

Figure 3. COMPARATIVE FILMIC ANALYSIS AND IDENTIFICATION IN REALITY REPRESENTATION

The context of contemporary hybrid global cinema throughout narrative elements and units depends on viewers “[...] ability to *understand* a narrative, or *nonnarrative*, is distinct from our *beliefs* as to its truth, appropriateness, plausibility, rightness, or realism.” (Branigan, 1992: 192) This search for a new narrative paradigm leads to the representation of reality or desired-reality effects establishing a close relationship between film and viewer, in which the film becomes the mirror of truth or the realm of real. As mentioned previously in Chapter III, the main objective of this PhD research project, and the filmic analysis as well, is assessing the feeling of authenticity evoked by “A Touch of Sin” and “The Hunt” and experienced by the subject in the real world outside the cinema, based on a filmic narrative interpretation structure divided into film elements and units. Thus, together with the above-mentioned diagram that establishes a parallel between Jia and Vinterberg’s cinemas, the filmic narrative interpretation of both films will apply Table 1, previously introduced in Chapter III.

	Narrative elements			Narrative units			
	Space	Time	Characters	Frame	Shot	Sequence	Episode
“A Touch of Sin”, Jia Zhangke	Reality			Realistic illusionism			
“The Hunt”, Thomas Vinterberg	Desired reality effect			Illusion of reality			

Table 1. COMPARATIVE FILMIC NARRATIVE IN REALITY REPRESENTATION

The communication process implies a sender, a message and a receiver. In modern narratology, where the function of the narrator is a basic element of the narrative text, some of the key concepts derive from Aristotle’s *Poetics*: logos, pathos and ethos. Narratology constitutes, in this case, a grammar of narrative, and how the narrative elements and narrative units are presented and re-presented as films unfold. The theoretical consequence of Plato’s terminology regarding *mimesis* and *diagesis* that Aristotle had further developed, which have been simplified since then, probably might be said to be concerned with different kinds of narrativity. It means, this theoretical

evolution raised a strict division between modes conceived of as respectively fiction and non-fiction, or digetic and non-digetic realities. Altman addresses narrative using a critical language, based on the two fundamental principles that follow:

1. Narrative meaning arises from character/ action considerations;
2. Narrative meaning depends not on single character/ action units but on relationships among units.

(Altman, 2008: 294)

The filmic analysis of both Jia's "A Touch of Sin" and Vinterberg's "The Hunt" relies, then, on the rhetoric of fiction. Over the years, Mieke Bal's view on modern narratology became an essential reference, widening its theoretical contours, from literary to non-literary works. Bal suggests that film narratology plays a major role within visual narratology, namely in three dimensions:

"First, the analysis of visual images as narrative in and of themselves can do justice to an aspect of images and their effect that neither iconography nor other art historical practices can quite articulate. Second, the comparison of literary narratives and films based on them can be developed as a form of cultural criticism that does not privilege the literary 'source.' Third, perhaps most unexpectedly, attention to visuality is tremendously enriching for the analysis of literary narratives."

(Bal, 1997: 162)

In other words, filmic narrative interpretation means "film narratology", which examines several ways that narrative structures viewer's perception and surrounding reality, implies different theorists perspectives. As follows:

"*Narratology* is the theory of narratives, narrative texts, images, spectacles, events; cultural artifacts that 'tell a story.' Such a theory helps to understand, analyse, and evaluate narratives. A theory is a systematic set of generalized statements about a particular segment of reality. That segment of reality, the corpus, about which narratology attempts to make its pronouncements consists of 'narrative texts' of all kinds, made for a variety of purposes and serving many different functions."

(Bal, 1997: 3)

David Herman suggests, “In the narratological framework, narration can be conceived as a communicative process in which information about the story level is conveyed by a particular kind of narrator to a particular kind of narratee.” (2009: 79-80) It means that the previous model applied to film shifts to narrator, narrative, and narratee. The author explains this as follows: “Gerald Prince defines the narratee as “[t]he one who is narrated to, as inscribed in the text” ([1987] 2003: 57), and contrasts this participant role with both the real reader and the implied reader [...]” (Herman, 2009: 79-80) On the other hand, Rick Altman suggests that narratives are subject to be built upon the concept of “following units”. This means, “[...] the process of following contributes heavily to narrative rhetoric and meaning.” (Altman, 2008: 21) According to Altman, narrative rhetoric leads to “[...] the operative concern here is ‘following’ not ‘point view’ [...] wherever there is narrative there is following. (Altman, 2008: 22) Hence, this process gives the viewer an impression “[...] of the existence of a character; similarly, the process of framing lends such importance to certain events that they readily appear as the actions required by narrative.” (Altman, 2008: 21) Bordwell suggests three main schemata, which govern film interpretation:

1. The definition of genre as a principle, distinguishes it from other types of concepts.
2. The framework that defines a *system* of genres, discriminating one from another.
3. The definition of a single genre.

(Bordwell, 1991: 146)

In conclusion, “reading”, “viewing”, and “interpreting” the films “A Touch of Sin” and “The Hunt” leads to a filmic narrative interpretation, or “film narratology”, relying on reality or desired-reality effect, evoking authenticity in film, structured in narrative elements and units, constructed upon the analysis of the two levels of filmic narration: diegetic and non-diegetic.

### 5.2.1 Sixth generation cinema vs. new Chinese cinema

The quasi-documentary and hyper-realist aesthetic reveals that cinematic representation is hardly a transparent window onto reality but rather a form of interrogation of the “truth” value of both its referent and its image and their indexical rapport.”

(Zhen, 2007: 18)

Since the late 1970s until today, all generations of filmmakers and all genres of Chinese cinema belong to the new Chinese cinema. Without the contribution and impulse of the fifth generation at the turn of the new economic reforms, transition or renewal era – the face of the new Chinese cinema would be different. The fifth generation of Chinese filmmakers led by Chen Kaige and Zhang Yimou, and the sixth generation of Chinese filmmakers led by Jia Zhang-ke, Lou Ye, and Wang Xiaoshui, have made this the most important moment of cinema in China. The sixth generation of Chinese filmmakers mirrors the best of the purposes, concerns, and aesthetics of the new Chinese cinema. It “went through the most important keywords from the past one hundred years of Western documentary - Direct Cinema, *cinéma vérité*, and the concepts of performative and reflexive documentary” (Lu, 2010: 24). China’s visual culture today has found its roots during this time. Challenging representations, the new Chinese cinema builds cinematic city views of Chinese society today. Jia stated that, “surrealism is a crucial part of China’s reality. In the past 10 or so years, China has experienced the kinds of changes that might happen across a span of 50 or even 100 years in any normal country, and the speed of these changes has had an unsettling, surreal effect” (Chan, 2009). In other words, the new Chinese cinema and its new urban cinema (*xin chengshi dianying*), through the new documentary movement first appearing in 1992, is concerned with the human dimension of sweeping reforms by the Chinese government since the late 1970s, and the struggles imposed over three decades upon the country’s huge marginalized population.

At the turn of the twenty-first century, the post-Mao Chinese society experienced a dramatic shift and urban development that was a transitional

period of the institutionalization of globalization and capitalism, which had negative social consequences. This society witnessed a cultural experience of deterritorialization, of citizenship. Gary Xu suggests, "Since Chinese literature is the major vehicle for the discursive practice of Chinese modernity, the postsocialist shift to the visual can be regarded as 'postmodern' [...]" (2007:12). The "modernization of cinematic language" in contemporary Chinese cinema took place when the so-called "structural shifts in Chinese filmmaking" (Berry and Pang, 2008: 5) were grounded by the Fifth Generation of filmmakers, and after, with the great realist impulse of the Sixth Generation of filmmakers. They are not only caught in the crevice between self and the modernization project, current life experience, and the nation's desire for a more promising future, but they are also victims of abandoned enlightenment ideals. Films made by the new generation challenge the boundary of representation under the current political system and explore the composition of reality for individuals living in a vastly changing environment. Reality is shown as the disempowered self set in a shattered locale and a disintegrated present that often displays an abstract or symbolic quality. The Sixth Generation of Chinese filmmakers, compared to their predecessors, is closer to the emotional realm of ordinary people or common citizen, tracing a more representative feeling towards the past. And different than their predecessors, the younger generation of Chinese filmmakers examine the reliability of experience either by advancing extreme close-ups of daily life, or by presenting non-intervening reflections of mundane humanity. Their camera brings forward the mechanical, suppressive and repetitive dimensions of modern life that were not measured in earlier Chinese independent films. Michael Berry argues that the central theme of "money control" transforms the narrative from a typical coming-of-age to "a tragic-comic parable of undoing." The filmography of the 90s "[...] serves to unmask ideology while documenting the realities of contemporary China." (McGrath, 2007: 85) The Sixth Generation of Chinese filmmakers, being themselves of the same generation as the migrant workers who have built the cities across China in the post-Mao reform era, has transformed the face of contemporary Chinese cinema into a prospective observatory of social and psychological changes in Chinese society and culture today.



FILM STILL 5.2.1 | "24 CITY", JIA ZHANGKE (2008)



FILM STILL 5.2.2 | "24 CITY", JIA ZHANGKE (2008)

Zhang Zhen claims the following:

“Most of the Sixth Generation directors came from privileged backgrounds in big cities and studied in the elite departments of directing or cinematography. In contrast, Jia came from an ordinary lower-middle-class family in a small town in Shanxi, one of the poorest provinces. [...] While not a fully matriculated student at the BFA, he paid the tuition and supported himself in part by taking on “ghost writing” jobs piecing together TV drama episodes. Jia’s first-hand experience (as opposed to ethnographic “fieldwork”) as a migrant urban subject and his desire to reclaim cinema as a communicative tool for the ordinary Chinese citizen caught up in the tides of urbanization and socio-economic transformation have compelled him to place the “migrant-artisan” at the center stage of his cinema. As a result Jia has been called, admiringly, the “migrant-worker director” (*mingong daoyan*).”

(Zhang, 2007: 16)

The realm of the real depicted is truthful to reality. Delivering a sense of hope and transformation, Jia Zhangke’s cinema spans from post-socialist realism to a transnational aesthetic, recalling André Bazin’s realist aesthetic or cinematic realism. Zhang justifies this as follows:

“This tangible sense of being “on the scene” (*xianchang*) allows both the filmmaker and the viewer to witness the film as raw life and as history of the present. For those filmmakers drawn to documenting the everyday and the immediacy of happenings, video enhances the cinema verite style and the power of long takes that respect the “unity of the event”.”

(Zhen, 2007: 18)

This major contribution shaped the filmic language of contemporary Chinese cinema. Bazin suggests:

“The word ‘realism’ as it is commonly used does not have an absolute and clear meaning, so much as it indicates a certain tendency toward the faithful rendering of reality on film. Given the fact that this movement towards the real can take a thousand different routes.”

(1973: 85)

Realism rapidly became the *leitmotif* within contemporary Chinese cinema. In his films Jia evokes the feeling of an everyday China, revealing the day-to-day life, representing its social issues, laying between fiction and documentary film forms. As Robin Visser suggests:

“Most of the fiction, art films, and documentaries depicting China’s urban demolition share a gritty documentary aesthetic which addresses dislocation anxieties by deconstructing the present with a conspicuous absence of nostalgia. In postsocialist Chinese urban culture, nostalgia itself gets called up, exploited, and treated ironically.”

(2010: 36-37)

The sense of hope reports to its roots, and the sense of transformation leads to a time of change in Chinese society today, depicting disorientation and dissolution of the Chinese dream in the post-Mao era. The Sixth Generation of Chinese cinema, just like Jia’s filmography, is a roadmap for the future filled with anxieties and uncertainties, today a part of the future’s memory of the cityscape’s transformation. Paradoxically, it represents the presence of the future. As Linda Lai suggests, “[...] geography of fragmented memories and elliptical personal histories. [...] a fluid journey in which the boundaries between fact and imagination, fantasy, and madness, dreams and desires, memories and history blur or collapse.” (Lai, 2007: 223) The drifting cinematic narrative through memory-space seems to be an emotional reconstruction of the past today looking forward to the future, gliding into this urban dreamscape of ruins and memory. Xudong Zhang suggests, “By integrating fragmentary collective memory into individual consciousness as is characteristic of meta-fiction, [...] can be justly grasped with reference to history, specifically, to the particular historical moment of post-Mao China.” (1997: 163)



FILM STILL 5.2.3 | “A TOUCH OF SIN”, JIA ZHANGKE (2013)

### 5.2.2 Jia’s “A Touch of Sin”: ‘national’ community vs. global issues

“ There’s a danger of filming only appearances. It’s even more difficult when filming ordinary people, and they are the ones I want to talk about.”

(Jia cited in *China Perspectives*, Batto, 2005)

Within the context of post Mao era, the Sixth Generation of Chinese filmmakers being themselves of the same generation as the floating population and often named as the “Urban Generation”, emerged in the early 1990s as a reaction to the socialist realism cinema that was at that time mainly characterized by the melodrama of Chinese history and politics. On the one hand, the rise of the new market economy and mass culture, which led to deep social and economical transformations witnessed today in the Chinese society, and on the other hand the emergence of a filmic narrative centred in the social narrative rhetoric and innovative cinematic style as well. Jason McGrath suggests:

[...] Jia’s works must be understood as drawing upon two distinct sources. The first source is the broader indigenous movement of postsocialist realism that arose in both documentary and fiction filmmaking in China in the early 1990s. [...] the realism of his films must also be understood in the context of a second source, namely the tradition of international art cinema – in particular a type of

aestheticized long-take realism that became prominent in the global film festival and art house circuit by the late 1990s.”

(McGrath, 82)

Jia Zhangke’s filmography mirrors today the ongoing social dramatic shift depicting the transformation of urbanscape in Mainland China. In the realm of real, Jia’s films might be seen as a historiographical or even ethnographical works of reality, blurring the thin line between the diegetic and non-diegetic realities, and establishing a close relationship between the subject and the viewer with a cinematic view extremely poetic. The typical Chinese realist films represents social bottom through the form of a specific social class or communal group. Jia’s films approach reality differently, it means the quotidian life experience of common citizens is depicted and articulated within the context of Chinese nationhood although distanced from its own past. Therefore, Jia’s cinematography pursues the documentary method. Jia clarifies:

[...] the documentary method is not only necessary when the film is set in his hometown, which supplied all the “locations” for *Xiao Wu*, but also critical for the particular kind of story he wanted to tell about people *in* their social milieu. It is an aesthetic grounded in social space and experience – contingent, immanent, improvisational and open-ended.”

(Zhang, 2007: 19)

Just as the Sixth Generation cinema, Jia’s “A Touch of Sin”, which won the award for best screenplay in Cannes, depicts a new cultural citizenship and aesthetic meaning, portraying the daily life of common citizens as individual characters as mentioned previously. These citizens were part of the floating population, such as ex-farmers and peasants who left the countryside to look for better job prospects in cities or the metropolis. Zhang elucidates:

The salience of the floating urban subjects, particularly the figure of the migrant worker or *mingong* (literally, “peasant worker”), registers the scale and the intensity of the urbanizing process and acknowledges the labor of migrant workers in the building of the new Chinese city. The centrality of the floating urban subjects foregrounds the radical unevenness of this process, which has created new class divisions and social inequity and hence some of

the most glaring contradictions in China's latest drive toward modernization. The figure of the migrant worker, unlike the timeless cipher of Gong Li, is hardly an icon for a "national cinema". Migrant labor problematizes China's image as a "third world" country by exposing the internal rift between the city and the countryside, or the affluent eastern seaboard and the impoverished "vast west" (*da xibu*), within one of the most rapidly developing economies in the world. The new urban cinema, especially its independent segment, articulates with this figure its radical contemporaneity and its localized critique of globalization.

(Zhang, 2007: 6)

The fragmented narrative in the "Touch of Sin" unfolds through the succession and extension of four parallel plots inspired by recent real-life events stories, and marked by a self-reflexive, *mise-en-abyme* construction process leading into an impression of a state of mind and manner of speech of each one of the four main characters. Jia contends:

"These four characters all came from news reports from China; they're all people who have endured severe acts of violence, and who have since transformed from victims to being perpetrators of violence themselves. I first learned of these events via Weibo and social media and other news reports, and I found the cumulation of these events very unsettling. I decided I had to use film as a way to form a deeper contemplation of violence in our society."

(*The Dissolve*, Adams, 2013)

The four distinctively plots are filmic narrative segments and are placed together in the same timeline or narrative, which crosses a geographic line through Mainland China and the four seasons. The four leading characters act on their momentary instinct and impulse. "A Touch of Sin" pays homage to two *wuxia* films, namely "King Hu" and "A Touch of Zen". The *wuxia* film remains popular to the present day, and it is the oldest genre since the early Chinese cinema, at that time based in Shanghai. Professor Stephen Teo contends:

"[...] 'wuxia' and 'kung fu' are genre-specific terms, while 'martial arts' is a generic term to refer to any type of motion picture containing martial arts action, mostly including the martial arts of

China, Korea and Japan but also Thailand and other countries in Asia. [...]"

(2009: 2)

The main feature of the Sixth generation cinema, namely Jia's "A Touch of Sin", is that it focuses the attention on 'others', who can be defined as the 'weaker' or 'disadvantaged' social group (*ruoshi qunti*). They are suffering more from the consequences than the benefits of the rapid industrialization and urbanization, where "two Chinas seem to coexist: a China already integrated with the world market, and a China still unable or unwilling to enter the playground of finance capital, global competition, and neoliberal social policies" (Zhang, 2001:6). Among the disaffected and disillusioned youth, the new Chinese cinema perceives the avoided reality where: "Film is a moving image of skepticism precisely because it does not resolve the stand-off between the desire to know the world and a sense of its retreat from us" (Davis, 2010:155). Jia's "A Touch of Sin" meets the struggles imposed upon the country's huge marginalized population, especially on the so-called floating generation, both rural and migrant working classes. Jia contends, "Through the film, I wanted to explore the process and progress of violence, the mounting injustices of society, and also the scarcity of resources available to the individual." (The Dissolve, Adams, 2013) Floating in "A Touch of Sin" is not only about floating people but also about time and space. The central theme converges differently into two twin sub-themes. On the one hand, the idea of wealth leads to a certain animalistic behaviour depending on the citizenship; and on the other hand, the metaphor that mobility across Mainland China is, in the end, an illusion. The homage to *wuxia* films mentioned previously in Jia's "A Touch of Sin"

"[...] diverges from traditional *wuxia* films is that these characters are very ordinary people living in contemporary society. They are not supernatural characters such those told in classic *wuxia* films. The picture tells a story of transformation from these ordinary lives to a supernatural state – where they're faced with real acts of danger, and they transform into a sort of warrior. [...] In traditional *wuxia* pictures, there is a tendency to aestheticize violence, but in my film, I wanted to focus on that destructive moment and nature of violence."

(*The Dissolve*, Adams, 2013)

Jia is interested in exploring life itself within individual characters as they are. However, “A Touch of Sin” “[...] is an attempt to subvert the notion that violence can only be responded to with violence. [...] The characters are in a state of anger. [...] The film itself is a sort of intervention for me.” (*The Dissolve*, Adams, 2013) The four leading characters are: a villager and examiner named Hu Dahai (Wu Jiang); a migrant worker named Zhou San (Baoqiang Wang); a receptionist named Xiao Yu (Tao Zhao); and a youngster named Xiao Hui (Lanshan Luo). The opening credits of “A Touch of Sin” have, as background, wallpaper with floral motifs, which is the same as the walls of the room at the sauna parlour (third filmic narrative segment).



FILM STILL 5.2.4 | “A TOUCH OF SIN”, JIA ZHANGKE (2013)

The first two main characters of the first two stories are introduced to the viewer right after the opening credits, in the film’s prologue, which takes place in the Shanxi province. Firstly, three muggers tried to ambush Zhou San who is riding his motorcycle on a country road. It resulted in the death of the three burglars. Zhou San goes ahead and finds a truck carrying fruits that is overturned on the road. Hu Dahai, who is about to eat an apple, is on his motorbike parked next to the truck.



FILM STILL 5.2.5 | "A TOUCH OF SIN", JIA ZHANGKE (2013)

The driver lies dead on the pavement. Zhou San passes between the truck and Hu Dahai, observes what is happening and moves on. Hu Dahai finally eats the apple and a large explosion suddenly occurs. The first story starts depicting a series of tragic events in the Shanxi province, which, by coincidence — or not —, is Jia's native province, played by an outraged villager named Hu Dahai, as mentioned previously. He claims justice against exploitation and corruption in his local community. In a way, this situation mirrors what is happening today across China. However, this is not a political character even if social and political concerns are implied. The first shot of this first story takes place in the centre of the village where the statue of Mao Zedong is located; 'Wujinshan' (Black Gold mountain) gives the name to this first story. A small cycle-truck carrying a big oil canvas portraying Madonna and Child passes through and stops next to Hu Dahai asking for a street address. In the shot that follows, the viewer discovers that Hu Dahai has diabetes, when he injects himself with insulin before he goes to meet his co-workers at lunchtime. Sanming, who was the main character in "Still Life", is now his co-worker as well and is going to visit his wife during the Chinese New Year. Hu Dahai argues recurrently about the alienation of public assets and contends that he had been studying law to know more about collective property. The workers are requested by the police to go outside the factory to

verify their documents and probably their working permits. On the way home, Hu Dahai witnesses a horse being whipped to death. He becomes more and more repulsed by everything surrounding him. At home, Hu Dahai writes a letter to the central government in Beijing complaining and reporting the abusive leadership by the chief of the village and Jiao Shengli. On the right, the viewer has the possibility to observe a towel with a printed tiger, which is going to be used after, during the killings. At the post station, the officer refuses to accept the letter. Hu Dahai gets frustrated and, at the exact moment he is leaving, a bus that is bringing people and workers for a welcoming reception to Jiao Shengli at the aerodrome, promoted by the chief of the village, passes by and stops, inviting Hu Dahai to come on board. He starts to ask Liu, Jiao Shengli's accounting officer, uncomfortable questions. He doesn't like the tone of the questions and asks Hu Dahai to leave the bus. At the aerodrome, and after Jiao Shengli is greeted by the chief of the village and by the children with flowers, as he is waving to people Hu Dahai challenges him and questions him about the embezzlement, ignoring the terms of the contracts they signed when the former state-owned companies were made private. The welcoming ceremony stops immediately, and two thugs beat seriously him. When Hu Dahai is recovering at the hospital, two of Jiao Shengli's brothers visit him to give compensation in cash and a fruit basket. Hu Dahai soon leaves the hospital to start preparing his scheme of "Honor Killings", first targeting Jiao Shengli and then the chief of the village. Hu Dahai challenges them face-to-face; taking justice into his own hands, which then consists in a personal revenge. On the way home, a Chinese opera is taking place in the neighbourhood, as if to announce what would happen next. He covers his shooting gun, specific for hunting large animals with the printed tiger towel, previously mentioned and seen. Carrying the gun on his shoulder, he leaves home to initiate the killings, namely: Liu (the accounting officer) and his wife, the secretary of the village chief, the village chief, the man who was whipping his horse to death, and finally Jiao Shengli. Hu Dahai killed six people in total. This moment of honour killings reminds us of Sergio Leone's films. Tony Rayns suggests that "[...] Jia shows explicitly that Hu is inspired by the outlaw heroes of the classical novel/ opera *The Water Margin*; Hu even drapes a tiger-pattern cloth, evoking the Legendary

Tiger-killer Wu song, over his hunting rifle.” (Film Comment, 2013) The tension in Jia’s feature is often shaped by the confrontation of popular and political culture, (where/ from what), a society that allows its citizens to have flexibility and freedom to establish a way of life and to use the public spheres according to their needs. The two last shots of this first story are very significant. The horse is freed and goes nowhere, passing two nuns on the roadside, when the police cars drive by at high speed. This is the first animal of the Chinese zodiac that is depicted in the film. The shot immediately after and before the second filmic narrative segment depicts the skyline composed by factory chimneys, expelling black smoke at sunset, visually contending that something tragic happened.



FILM STILL 5.2.6 | “A TOUCH OF SIN”, JIA ZHANGKE (2013)

The second story opens with a close-up shot of Sanming travelling by ferry on the margins of the Yangtze River, at the three gorges dam area, to his hometown during the Chinese New Year to visit his wife. This shot reminds us of a very similar one in Jia’s previous film “The Still Life”, also played by San Ming when they are setting out at the ferry pier. In the same boat, side by side, travels Zhou San, the main character of this filmic narrative segment, as mentioned previously. San Ming, in “A Touch of Sin”, asks Zhou San to light his cigarette. Zhou San is also traveling back to his hometown in the outskirts of Chongqing, to celebrate, the New Year as well. His wife and son are waiting for him, and it’s his mother’s 70<sup>th</sup> birthday party too. A huge birthday celebration welcomes him home. However Zhou’s wife is not happy because

she has doubts about how much her husband earns for a living. She questions him about 130 000 yuans he sent from different cities across Mainland China, and contends that she doesn't want his money. From the window of the living room, the skyline divides in two: the rural and the urban.



FILM STILL 5.2.7 | "A TOUCH OF SIN", JIA ZHANGKE (2013)

This reminds us of Jia's earlier films "24 City", which clearly approaches the transformation of the urbanscape in Mainland China. During the Chinese New Year's eve, a lively discussion and a big fight between the men in the neighbourhood in an improvised bar occurs because they were talking about women getting infected with VIH virus, namely their wives. After that, Zhou San asked his son if he wanted to fire a rocket. His son said yes so he took his gun and fired once straight up into the air. The day after, Zhou San goes to central station and buys train tickets to three cities: Guangzhou, Yichang and Nanning. At home his wife discovers this when she finds them in the pockets of his jacket. She asks him if he cannot stay at home, and why, so, he has to leave. Zhou San is emotionally lost and finds life boring. The only time he finds life is worthwhile is when he is shooting or killing someone. This represents his stunted emotional life and professional *modus operandi*. Zhou San leaves home and arrives in a new city and moves on to another robbery

and killing. After, when he is riding his motorbike, a truck with buffalos drives after him. This is the second animal from the Chinese zodiac that appears in the film.



FILM STILL 5.2.8 | “A TOUCH OF SIN”, JIA ZHANGKE (2013)

The third filmic narrative segment begins as Zhou San is travelling by bus, and one of the main characters of the third story, Ziaoyu’s lover, is also on board. Zhou San asks the driver to stop nowhere in the middle of the night and leaves. The day after, in the morning, the bus arrives. Ziaoyu is waiting inside the restaurant for his lover. She has an unresolved relationship with this man who is married. She is pressuring him to leave his wife. They leave by car to the train station. Once they arrived, there is a problem with his bag because he carries a small knife. She keeps it. After, she goes after him and knocks on the window but he doesn’t correspond and the train leaves. She is completely disappointed and devastated. Ziaoyu goes to find work at the site construction of the new airport. Ziaoyu’s mother is working there as a cook. She travels by ferry in the Yangze River like Sanming and Zhou San. Once again, this scene reminds us of Jia’s previous film “The Still Life”. Ziaoyu finds a lousy work as a receptionist in a sauna parlour called “Night Traveller”. The

wife of her lover finds Xiao Yu at her new job and sends two thugs after her to beat her. She escapes and finds shelter in a van of snakes for a show, parked in the village centre. Inside the van, she finds the steer with the snakes that foretells luck or misfortune. The snake is the fourth animal of the Chinese zodiac depicted in the film. One night, a local officer attempts to abuse Xiao Yu. This scene, especially his despot attitude towards her, namely the sound and the rhythm of beating her in the face with the banknotes reminds us of the two scenes in the first story, when the man is whipping the horse. This local officer who had before this scene in which was killed that took place in a sauna parlour and protagonist by Xiao Yu, shown clear evidence of misfeasance during a dispute had happened in the traffic queue when he tried to extort a truck driver for a tax payment to get in the city. This scene represents and reflects, in somehow, the void society in China today, lacking moral, ethical principles and values. Her inner state of anger, together with fact that her lover abandoned her, leads her to stab to death the local officer, with the knife her lover used to cut fruit. Just as Hu Dahai, protagonist of the first story, she also has her moral principles and values. In a way, Xiao Yu shares the same morality during the “honour killings” when Hu Dahai takes justice into his own hands. Xiao Yu leaves the sauna parlour in a state of great emotional upheaval and walks along the road throughout the night. On the road, an enigmatic man with a monkey on his shoulder passes by. The monkey is the fifth animal of the Chinese zodiac depicted in the film.



FILM STILL 5.2.9 | “A TOUCH OF SIN”, JIA ZHANGKE (2013)

The fourth and last filmic narrative segment entitled “Oasis of Prosperity” has the ability to identify the void and skeptic reality in China today. This is the result of the accelerated growth of the country and its dramatic shift in society.



FILM STILL 5.2.10 | “A TOUCH OF SIN”, JIA ZHANGKE (2013)

Among the disaffected and disillusioned youth in Mainland China, this last story, based on a real event like the previous three filmic narrative segments that took place three years ago, had a huge impact on the local and global social media. The fourth story opens with a medium close up shot of a manufacturing line. The youngster Xiao Hui is working together with two young co-workers who are also his friends. He is dressed with a green t-shirt with word “attractive”. A very serious work accident happens next. His best friend gets seriously injured in his hand with an industrial cutting machine. Xiao Hui gets too scared and doesn’t accept that he has to work for his friend while he is recovering, so he decides to escape to another city, Dongguang. In the train he will see for the first time the girl who will become his girlfriend

for a short period of time afterwards. This is very important to build Xiao Hui's character motivation. Once in Dongguang he finds a friend who also works in an industrial complex and ends up working as a butler in a brothel named "Golden Age". The girl he met in the train works there. Her name is Lianrong (Seed Lotus). She and Xiao Hui slowly become closer. During the breaks after attending the clients, Lianrong browses her iPad looking at the weather forecast or the news in the Chinese QQ. In QQ she is the "Fish looking for water" and he is "The little bird". Lianrong is Buddhist and the day after being together with Xiao Hui, they decide to free the fish in the lake. On their second date, it starts to rain heavily and they find shelter in an abandoned car in the parking lot nearby. This brings to mind Baudelaire's artificial paradise, where Xiao Hui chases a dream to be happy at the end of the journey. He kisses her once and they start talking about the future. Lianrong says promptly that there is no true love in work sex, and asks him, "Do you know me well?" She has a three-year-old daughter and, without saying it, makes it clear to Xiao Hui that the dream will not become a reality. This sequence ends with a close-up shot of a small Buddhist statue on the hood of the car and the heavy rain. The following scene is very important because it greatly contributes to Xiao Hui's emotional thread. He witnesses and spies Lianrong attending an awkward old male client with a very special request: he is the Comrade chief leader and she is the train driver. This scene takes place in a train carriage located inside the brothel. Suddenly she asks him what to do next, what direction she should follow. He replies "Youngsters nowadays don't have a sense of orientation anymore." Once again, Xiao Hui escapes and looks for his friend at the factory to find a job there. He is very thoughtful. He finds himself pressured by his mother who is asking him to send her money all the time, and his friend that got seriously injured and chases after him. Xiao Hui cannot handle the pressure and commits suicide on the balcony of his residence, facing a building that has "The Oasis of prosperity" written in the façade. This scene recalls or even works as an implicit quote from the suicide at the end of Italian neorealist Antonioni's *Il Grido* back in 1957. In a way, this highly theatrical and deliberately artificial scene attracts the viewer's attention to a recognizable surrounding reality. The film ends with Xiao Yu probably released from prison, this is not clear, back in her hometown. This is also Hu Dahai's hometown and

the place where the film and the story began. She looks aged. Xiao Yu tries to get a job at Shengli Corporation. "A Touch of Sin" closes with a second and final intervention of a Chinese opera, where the main singer says something like "In court the judge changes his mind. He declares that I'm guilty and I cannot defend myself. I'm obliged to confess. The tears drop... Su San! Do you understand my sin?" This last sentence is repeated two times while the picture shows a close-up of Xiao Yu's very sad face.

The representation in "A Touch of Sin" leads the spectator into a *vis-à-vis* of two different worlds made of realism and uncertainty, which coexist side by side. As previously introduced in chapter IV, the duality tradition-modernity in the eyes of Jia's "A Touch of Sin", tradition plays the social role and represents a glorious collective memory; and modernity plays the psychological analysis towards an individual and prosperous future. "A Touch of Sin" is not a film to inspire political activism, although it is politically meaningful, situated between a social documentary and fiction drama. This film is about a faded and erased collective memory, and, at the same time, a reflection upon identity and modernity in post-Mao China with a cinematic view. "A Touch of Sin" is a journey across Mainland China, a half-century's fictional silence shedding light on its human dimension, which enables critical thinking to be built upon dramatic social change that such a fast urban shift and growth implies. "A Touch of Sin" consists of an emotional thread that hold the four filmic narrative segments sequentially, delivered in a rather random, impressionistic and elliptical manner. They do not establish any narrative relation to each other or form a coherent larger narrative, although the four real-events stories are placed in the same story line as mentioned previously. In "A Touch of Sin" documentary and fiction narrative forms breed to create and deliver to the viewer an accurate truth. Jia's, binds the mirrors the contradictory feeling. On the one hand, China's accelerate urbanscape transformation at present time; and on the other hand its social consequences. The four leading characters represent real Chinese common citizens facing their personal problems in prospective future today.

Jia contends:

“When people are faced with these cruel social realities, the opportunity to express oneself gets taken away. There’s no intellectual way to reflect upon these realities. The violence becomes a mode of expression for those who do not have the language to express themselves in these moments.”

(*The Dissolve*, Adams, 2013)

“A Touch of Sin” is composed by long shots, with steady cameras and mainly close-ups on body and landscape features. The full shots represent the “collective-social foundation” and embody the idea of portraying reality as it is – the memory and the future. The close-up shots represent the individuals and their emotional side through their stories. The idea of a timelessness and emptiness is also inherent. However, the full-shots don’t look empty. In an interview back in March 2009, Jia Zhangke stated:

“In my long shots and long takes, my goal is to respect the viewer’s agency, and even to give my films a sense of democracy. I want audiences to be able to freely choose how they want to interact with what’s on screen. But everyone’s reasons for using long shots and long takes are different; personally, I just don’t want my position as a director to become dictatorial, because I want my films to be governed by a sense of equality and democracy.”

(*Film Comment*, Chan, 2009: para.11)

As a result, any personal story in “A Touch of Sin” related to the floating population can be, in a way and to a certain extent, read as a national allegory. It tries to re-establish an increasingly attenuated link between China’s recent past and its present by alluding to the broken promise and broken dream of socialism. In any society, the city stages the idea of modernity. In China today, at the turn of the twenty-first century, the city leads the major role heading towards modernity. In a certain way, the cities are the hub for significant modernizing efforts, including social and political stages. Tradition and modernity through cinema, “[...] contributes to the experimental quality of their works through its open-endedness [...]” (Tonglin, 2002: 13)

The struggle for cultural identity, which looked back at the past and history, is today present at a modern nation and represented through contemporary cinema.



FILM STILL 5.2.11 | “A TOUCH OF SIN”, JIA ZHANGKE (2013)

In other words, tracing tradition (past) and modernity in today’s China (future), this cinema lies between fiction and documentary:

“ Like the New Documentary Movement, they focused on contemporary Chinese reality rather than the ancient past. Furthermore, many of them shot documentaries themselves, and the themes, styles, and aesthetics of their features have genealogical connections with documentary filmmaking. Jia Zhang-ke and Zhang Yuan are representative examples.”

(Lu, 2010:26)

Jia contends that in “A Touch of Sin”

“[...] could apply this documentary aesthetic and portray these surreal events. I think the film enters into theatrical mode when those moments of violence are unveiled. When they happen, because they seem so surreal, they are necessarily imagined and expounded upon by my imagination, to fill in the missing parts of the

picture. I wanted to capture this feeling when I was filming. [...] when the story begins, it is in documentary mode, and slowly, as the kettle begins to heat up, you hear a quiet whistle that accumulates, and eventually, the water reaches a boiling point. And that's the moment of violence when the wuxia elements enter the picture."

*(The Dissolve, Adams, 2013)*

At last, the leafy-green wallpaper of the brothel is the same as the graphic backdrop to the film's credits, one of numerous explicitly interconnected images that tie the four sections together into a continuous picture. In counterpart, the migrant workers who are continually and hopelessly on the move, often framed against crumbling ruins as they wander in search of a reason to keep on going. Jia's "A Touch of Sin" contrasts this impossibility of mobility across Country with the decay whereas it has emerged. Jia gazes this vanished dream at finding the poetry in dislocation social phenomenon.



FILM STILL 5.3.1 | "THE IDIOTS", LARS VON TRIER (1998)

### 5.3.1 Dogme 95 cinema vs. Nordic cinema

"Dogme was meant to be a revolt against conventional filmmaking in the 90s.

There was a risk to it. It was an arrogant and playful attempt to avoid conventional filmmaking. [...] I guess what happened at Cannes was the beginning and the beginning of the end.

(Vinterberg cited in *The Wall Street Journal – Speakeasy*, Steinberg, 2013)

Within a span of one hundred and fifty years and since the 1970s, the constitutional monarchy of Denmark evolved from an agricultural to an industrialized society. It has also been struggling through economic crises and its social consequences. After the "green wave" of the 1980s, many city dwellers moved to the countryside, hoping to return to nature. However, many returned to urban areas after years of unfulfilled dreams. Danes rarely refer to *Danishness*, a term used for the first time in 1836, but that has been a hotly debated topic since the rise in immigration in the 1960s and Denmark's affiliation with the European Union (EU) in 1972. Much political and public debate on elements of nationality, sympathies, feeling and patriotism occurred in the late twentieth century. Many Danes seem to have a strong national

attachment, although differences exist and a "Danish community" may be more "imagined" than real — as Benedict Anderson put it — with regards to culture and traditions. However, for many people, the national identity lies in the Danish language. Regarding cinema production in Denmark within the Nordic context, Danish cinema has been at the *avant-garde*, not only locally, but also within the European cinema. Dogme 95 stands as a relevant example of the materialization of a collectivism in contemporary cinema, somehow brought to light a new generation of film makers and critiques, who never had the chance of witnessing a movement, which placed a re-observation of past and critique of contemporary cinema. This cinema represents the legacy of two masters of Danish cinema, Carl Dreyer and Ingmar Bergman. Mette Hjort suggests "[...] Danish national cinema is for the most part a call, not for thematisations of nation, but for films that simply incorporate the elements of a banal nationalism." (Hjort, 2000: 108) Dogme 95 in a way represents a reaction to Danish cinema, namely the previous art-cinema movements, within the local context; and a reaction to Hollywood's cinema, within the global context. On the other hand, Thomas Vinterberg suggests that Danish cinema is often dark and austere:

"I think it is part of our tradition. Maybe part of the reason is because it is just so dark over there. Maybe it is in the soul. I also think darkness is sometimes the most powerful way of telling about love when it is challenged."

(*The Economist*, E.F., 2012)

In contemporary Denmark, one of the central debated social issues, which is also reflected in contemporary Danish cinema, is immigration. Denmark was once considered an open and welcoming country to foreigners, but tensions between native residents and immigrants arose during the last decades of the twentieth century, culminating in political parties that were in favour of the exclusion of foreign ethnic inhabitants from social services and other forms of public support. Immigrants of the second and third generations tend to be doubly socialized, displaying competence in Danish values in public and in the native language at home. The population is categorized into social layers, according to their level of education and their occupation. As mentioned previously in Chapter IV, Lars von Trier, Thomas Vinterberg, Søren Kragh-

Jacobsen and Kristian Levring were the ones responsible for a new cinema, meeting national and international levels.



FILM STILL 5.3.2 | "BICYCLE THIEVES", VITTORIO DE SICA (1948)

However, the assertion of the global of unity of space and time towards the aim to reach reality is contradictory to Gilles Deleuze's time-image regarding modernist cinema of Italian Neorealism and Nouvelle Vague. It means, analyzing the post World War II cinema and the emergent movements, that Deleuze divided the notion of time-image into two dimensions, the action-image cinema and time-image cinema. On the one hand, Hollywood or commercial entertainment cinema; and on the other hand filmmakers like Roberto Rosellini, Vittorio De Sica, Jean-Luc Godard, François Truffaut, Alain Resnais. Dogme 95 cinema is closer to time-image and consequently to Italian Neorealism cinema as well, since it contends a 'pure' cinematic language where characters are isolated and are motivated by situations that

the action turns to be impossible for them. Moreover, within the context of World history of cinema the name of the movements or schools are intertwined with the name of the countries. Cinema at that time was too national, still resulting from the social and political environment right after the end of World War II. In the counterpart, Dogme 95 stands for a global stage, across the globe, across the nations. The Vow of Chastity manifesto exhorted by Dogme 95 cinema exceeded the national Denmark borders, bringing new cultural geographies. Dogme 95 cinema movement responded its call by expanding evidence in a wider cinema scene, and within the context of the history of filmmaking became global. At the same time, Hjort contends, “[...] Dogma 95 involves taking issue with a common misapprehension of the movement as profoundly apolitical.” (Mette and MacKenzie, 2003: 31)

The movement's success continued into the new millennium with Lone Scherfig's *Italian for Beginners* (2000), Åke Sandgren's *Truly Human* (Et rigtigt menneske, 2001), Ole Christian Madsen's *Kira's Reason – A Love Story* (En kærlighedshistorie, 2001), Susanne Bier's *Open Hearts* (Elsker dig for evigt, 2002), Natasha Arthy's *Old, New, Borrowed and Blue* (Se til venstre, der er en svensker, 2003) and – as the last of the total of 10 Danish Dogme films – Annette K. Olesen's *In Your Hands* (Forbrydelser, 2004). In the first five Dogme 95 films, family and human relations were the chosen themes to frame social issues in Danish contemporary society. Dogme 95 is about psychic trauma narrative, where hypocrisy and cynicism play the major role. Dogme 95 first films are strongly narrative and conventional depicting social constructed real through diagetic and non-diagetic realities. Lars Von Trier and Thomas Vinterberg have contributed to reshape and resize the landscape of contemporary Danish cinema. In other words, Dogme 95 rebuilt and extended a new concept for their own national cinemas, becoming an inspiration for filmmakers all over the world. Vinterberg frames the transformation of contemporary Danish cinema and shares his testimony:

“The films being made now are all part of a big reaction to the films that were produced during the 1980s. With regard to the role played by Lars and Bille, it's clear that they've significantly expanded the stage for Danish film, and I think that was really necessary. I think that at an unconscious level that has affected us all a lot; the fact

that Danish film now figures on the world map.”

(Hjort and Bondebjerg, 2003: 271)



FILM STILL 5.3.3 | “ITALIAN FOR BEGINNERS”, LONE SCHERFIG (2000)

The ambiguity between the illusion created and the reality represented defines Dogme 95 cinema as an unusual form of representation using a peculiar visual style, “[...] while the vow of chastity suggests a pared down aesthetic in which the hand-held camera is an index to the ‘immediate’ reality of the shooting process, untainted by technology, the narratives of the eventual films foreground artifice and performance in an extremely playful manner [...]” (Catherine Fowler, 2002: 53). The Vow of Chastity manifesto brought to light a strong aim to contradict the norms and techniques used in mainstream feature films, such as: hand-held cameras; spontaneous and unexpected camera movements; shacked, noised images and faded images. Ove Christensen suggests “Insisting on rules forbidding technical interference

with the image is inconsistent, insofar as the brotherhood of Dogma 95 does make fiction films.” This contradiction is what Christensen calls “authentic illusion.” (2000) The rules drive the filmmakers to reach an audience without excessive technical support, which gave way to a structured space for creativity, and consequently truth is contained within the narrative. In other words, Vinterberg and von Trier locate the truth within the film’s world, and Dogme 95 imposes its restrictions mainly on the formal level. Vinterberg contends:

“[...] the use of on-site materials attenuates the extent of the transgression. The emphasis in these meta-discourses on certain fleeting audiovisual moments and minute production details has the performative effect of reinforcing the idea, if not the unquestionable reality, of an overall abidance by rules. More importantly, the true significance of the rules lies not in the extent to which they, each individually, are followed at a micro-level, but rather larger systemic effect.”

(Hjort and MacKenzie, 2003: 37)

Although Vinterberg is one of the founders of Dogme 95, the film “The Hunt” is not, in fact, a Dogme 95 film. Vinterberg shifted towards a different direction, creating a Scandinavian film too. This is explained as follows:

“I found that having done “Festen,” I had completed something. I had gone down a road where I couldn’t do more. I had to reinvent myself and completely start over. I’ve not really been looking for movements. [...] Up until 2004, 2005, there was no one interested in Danish movies. It vanished. It came out of fashion again. Danish cinema was trying to redefine itself after this whole Dogme thing. Now there’s a new shape of Scandinavian film. [...] I’ll say Danish cinema is quite successful but quite middle of the road.”

(*The Wall Street Journal – Speakeasy*, Steinberg, 2013)



FILM STILL 5.3.4 | “THE CELEBRATION”, THOMAS VINTERBERG (1998)

### 5.3.2 Vinterberg’s “The Hunt”: ‘local’ community vs. global issues

“I think the film has become a comment on the weakened modern man, especially the weakened Scandinavian man, and this whole gender role thing that seems to be around Scandinavia at the moment.”

(Vinterberg cited in The Economist, E.F., 2012)

Vinterberg’s “The Hunt” summons his earlier film “The Celebration”, which is acknowledged to be the first Dogme 95 film, created back in 1998. The theme of sexual child abuse takes place in both films, but it is depicted in different angles. In “The Celebration”, the narrative follows only one single story. Helge’s family decided to settle in the countryside and never come back to city, looking forward to a better future. This film starts the same way it ends. Christian, one of the main characters personifies the emptiness caused by the

trauma of being victim of sexual abuse when he was a child. The narrative in “The Celebration” follows the time of the action, as if it were happening in real time. This film is about individual memory of a real past event, portraying the 1980s in Denmark when an economic upturn occurred. This was the so-called “green wave” when the population moved to the countryside to settle down, looking forward for a better quality of life, hoping to return to nature. However, many returned to urban areas after years of unfulfilled dreams. In “The Celebration”, Helge stayed in the countryside. This film is not about Helge’s anniversary celebration. It is about Linda and Christian’s rebirth from ashes. Probably one true story, among many others in the Danish society. Lucas (Mads Mikkelsen) kindergarten teacher who has been falsely accused of molesting a small child Klara (Annika Wedderkopp), are the main characters of Vinterberg’s “The Hunt”, which takes place in a small-town. Hans Christian Andersen’s fairy tales and stories have inspired Vinterberg’s film “The Hunt”. The excerpt that follows explains how:

“We were inspired by Hans Christian Andersen. In the sense of, here’s a completely innocent and warm society with a lot of togetherness and harmony and something from outside comes in and spreads evil, such as in “The Snow Queen.” This virus spreads among them and everything turns dark. That was the recipe we combined. There was the psychoanalyst who gave me the idea for this: Consider the thought a virus. We’ve lived under this comfortable conception that children don’t lie, and I just find that it’s a very dangerous thing to keep saying. The kids are the ones who end up as victims ironically. If you look at Klara’s life, or similar stories in real life, she’s going up among people who create perfect illusions that she’s the victim. She’s going to gynecologists, she’s seeing her father have fights, she’s suffering from added memory. These little boys or little girls grow up to believe that something happened. They can remember something that happened. This is another kind of violation of children.”

*(The Wall Street Journal – Speakeasy, Steinberg, 2013)*

The plot behind this filmic narrative, which seems to be apparently simple, depicts the psychological phenomenon built upon a false memory, the so-called “false memory syndrome”, which reveals the distorted and fictionalized memento of facts and events that did not happen the way the person

“remembers” them. Vinterberg has researched real-life cases of false memory of child abuse extensively, namely the academic work developed throughout the years by Psychologist and Scholar Dr Elizabeth Loftus. Loftus contends, “We should be able to get behind the pursuit of genuine perpetrators of childhood abuse while still having a healthy skepticism of allegedly de-repressed memories that surface only after suggestive activities.” (1996: 293) “The Hunt” is closely related to the phenomenon of confabulation, where lies and their social acceptance as truth is one of the film’s central themes.



FILM STILL 5.3.5 | “THE HUNT”, THOMAS VINTERBERG (2012)

The film “The Hunt” begins as it ends; the social gathering is recurrent and it is present throughout the images; men and women get along separately, which blurs with a certain idea of ritual. In the beginning the viewer witnesses the moment when a group of men friends dive in the lake with very cold water before they have a drink. The scene suggests that they were probably hunting deer. In other words, this scene paints the portrait of a day in the countryside in Danish society when friends gather. The two scenes that follow of “The Hunt” represent the moment when the two leading characters, Lucas and Klara, first meet in the film, at the main door of the supermarket. The viewer is introduced to the kindergarten, *logos*. Theo, Klara’s father, is one of Lucas’ best friends. Some scenes after, the seeds that harboured Lucas’ ordeal take

place and ground the plot of “The Hunt”, *pathos*. Klara is at home gazing through the window when her brother Torsten and a friend walk in. They are holding an iPad looking at explicit sexual images and they insist on showing these to Klara before they walk away. The day after, on his way to work Lucas finds Klara outside her house. She is waiting for her father or her mother to take her to kindergarten. Agnes and Theo are quarrelling inside their home and this is audible outside. Lucas, after asking Theo permission, takes Klara to kindergarten. Klara holds Lucas’ hand since she gets disturbed when she has to walk on the pavement with strips, so she tries to avoid this fear looking in front. This moment and the previous one, together with the fact Klara is a child with great imagination, which is mentioned several times in the film, may suggest that Klara projected some type of feeling towards Lucas that never really happened.



FILM STILL 5.3.6 | “THE HUNT”, THOMAS VINTERBERG (2012)

Once in kindergarten, Klara initiates the central filmic narrative event that holds the plot, which will trigger the core action of the narrative. She draws the shape of a heart, wraps it, writes her name, and puts it in the pocket of Lucas’

jacket. After that, all of the sudden Klara kisses Lucas. He confronts her regarding this situation and the drawing he found in his pocket. Klara denies everything and tells him he was the one who did it since it has her name on it.



FILM STILL 5.3.7 | "THE HUNT", THOMAS VINTERBERG (2012)

Lucas tries to make everything clear to her and, above all, to avoid any kind of misunderstanding. Nonetheless, Klara tells Grethe, the principal of the kindergarten, that Lucas molested her, and from this moment onwards, the events in the filmic narrative shifts dramatically. By contrast, Lucas receives a phone call from his ex-wife giving him the good news that their son Marcus is going to live with him. At same time, Lucas begins a relationship with Nadja who works in the kindergarten as well. A succession of positive filmic narrative events takes place. However, before the parents meeting, Grethe asks Agnes, Klara's mother, to come by earlier because she has something very serious to tell her. Grethe rushes to wrong conclusions and tells the local community. Because of this, Lucas' ex-wife insinuates that Lucas molested Klara. The parents and the local community accept the lie as truth, and Lucas

becomes a deceiver. Searle contends that “The complex ontology seems simple; the simple ontology seems difficult. This is because social reality is created by us for our purposes and seems as readily intelligible to us as those purposes themselves.” (2010: 4)



FILM STILL 5.3.8 | “THE HUNT”, THOMAS VINTERBERG (2012)

At a certain moment someone at the kindergarten says, “I don’t think that anyone here no longer has any doubt about what Lucas has done.” Klara’s parents and the local community have, then, collectively “constructed” Lucas as child molester. All kids from the kindergarten are convinced Lucas molested them as well and, consequently, Grethe files a case in the police. Thus, an emotional statement is built against Lucas, a disruption of the equilibrium takes place, and he will face complex events in order to attempt to repair this disruption. Lucas has to urgently reset the truth. Firstly he tries to talk with Agnes and Theo but in vain. Everyone, except Bruun and Marcus, are convinced this did happen, and the local community sees Lucas as a child sexual offender. Bruun, his best friend and his son’s godfather, will support him until the end. At the very beginning Klara seems to be aware that she has

built up this story, and has, then, falsely accused Lucas. However, her parents' influence becomes crucial to change her mind, as well that of the local community. Thus, Klara became more and more convinced that it indeed happened. In other words, she tells her mother she imagined this story and that it is not the truth, and her mother explained to her that she is trying to forget what happened to her.



FILM STILL 5.3.9 | "THE HUNT", THOMAS VINTERBERG (2012)

This memory disorder, without the conscious attempt to lie or deceive, based on John Searle's "construction of social reality" concept, grounds the plot behind the filmic narrative in "The Hunt", creating the narrative tension between the two main characters, Lucas and Klara. Nadja begins to doubt him and Lucas evicts her from his house. Throughout the film, there are only two intertitles. The first one is "December", announcing the arrival of snow and Christmas time. It is also the time that Marcus comes to visit his father and stays to live with him. Marcus witnesses the moment his father is brought by the police to be interrogated. The children mention that they were molested at Lucas' house in the cave, but there is no cave at all. So, he is released. This

is not the end yet. The opposers in the community that don't believe in his innocence; and after that he is beaten at the supermarket kill his dog, Fanny. They want to threaten Lucas to death. The filmic narrative tension increases more and more. During Christmas mass Lucas gets too angry about this injustice and revolts against Theo. The mass stops at a certain moment. The moment right after Christmas when, at home, Klara is dreaming and talking to Lucas saying loudly that it was not her intention for this to happen. This is probably the moment when the central issue behind the plot is solved or starting to be solved. Her father, Theo, hears this and finally acknowledges that it did not, in fact, happen and goes visit Lucas immediately. Theo attempts to reconcile and asks Lucas to forgive him. Lucas is obviously too sore and sad.



FILM STILL 5.3.10 | "THE HUNT", THOMAS VINTERBERG (2012)

The last scene opens with the second intertitle, when the filmic narrative identifies a time gap, precisely “one year later”. This is when Marcus gets his hunting license and his godfather throws a party welcoming his first hunt. However, this is above all a new step in Lucas’ life. This scene reminds us of the scene in “The Celebration” when everyone is gathered trying to get along and to reconcile. The reconciliation and the reset of truth is apparently back to normal, but at the very end, when they are hunting deer and Lucas is alone, someone tries to shoot him. The past is not resolved. Even when it seems that everything has gone back to normal, there is always someone who is not convinced about his innocence.

Vinterberg’s “The Hunt” gives the opportunity to, simultaneously foster the discussion on the value of the truth, and to observe the fragile boundaries between truth and memory. The latter brings to mind Friedrich Nietzsche’s “On Truth and Falsity in Their Extramoral Sense”, when the author states that “[...] truths are illusions about which one has forgotten that this is what they are illusions [...]” (1995: 92) In “The Hunt” the paedophilia panic in a local and small community causes the illusion that children who report abuse must always be believed no matter what. This is repeatedly conveyed until the end when its collective social acceptance takes place, and when this lie holds the status of truth. Moreover, this depicted central theme in “The Hunt” representing a small local community, is indeed a global issue that can be found in other national cinemas. Vinterberg contends:

“I’ll put it like this, the core of it, the bones of it, are universal. The cases I read aren’t Danish, this is something that is happening all over Western society and I am sure it is also happening in Asia. There are many of these cases, but having said that there is life around this plot that is where the heart is. That is what I am about as a filmmaking - the ritualism, the community, going to church.”  
(*Cine Vue*, Walsh, 2012)

This film deals with truth, lies, and the way they shape the perception of reality. It might then be seen as the antithesis of “The Celebration”. Vinterberg explains:

“‘The Hunt’ did start as the antithesis of ‘Festen,’ as it [worked to] prove the other side of these things. It did grow into its own film and

it had its own writing process. Whereas 'Festen' was an explosive three-month ride, this was a dragged-out year of refinements. We considered making this a Dogme film but I found that whereas Dogme was intended to be naked and pure and undressing the movie back then, it would be a little like wearing an old dress today. It would be old-fashioned. [...] We had a philosophy — both in filming and writing the script — that every scene should happen as if we were stopped in traffic and couldn't make it there. This was a life going on and we were lucky enough to be there for the moments. Sometimes too early, sometimes too late and sometimes not at all. We show snippets of life such as in a documentary."

*(The Wall Street Journal – Speakeasy, Steinberg, 2013)*

"The Hunt" is about a man's role in a local and global modern society, involved in a theme that provoked quite a remarkable impact in Danish society. It is, above all, about family values, morality, and the need to protect children from potential sexual abuse. "The Hunt" overlaps with "the construction of social reality", building a filmic narrative depicting hypocrisy and cynicism, which implies a strong representational dimension. This moving picture delivers an illusional state of mind. The same way "The Celebration" depicts the theme of stolen childhood since Linda and Christian were victims of sexual abuse; in a way "The Hunt" also approaches the same theme since the adults surrounding Klara contribute to her loss of innocence. On the other hand, Thomas Caldwell suggests that "Both men and women are portrayed as rushing too easily into forming a negative opinion against Lucas, and both male and female characters are guilty of asking Lucas's alleged victim leading questions designed to confirm their suspicions rather than arrive at the truth." (Caldwell, 2013) The documentary film narrative form in "The Hunt" contributes to the viewer's ability to place themselves within the story (as a participant), making it easy to identify themselves with those experiencing this startling revelation. As Vinterberg contends:

"Reality is much more grim – this is the airplane version. [...] I wanted this film to be as naked and truthful as possible, because this was a film about truth and lies, but I had to find a new way of doing it. [...] the film got bigger and more universal for being something I made in my back yard. [...] We made an artistic choice: This is not a chase story. This is about love and friendship. No

police, courtrooms, no press, no lawyers. This is about human life.”  
(*The Wrap*, Pond, 2014)

Not only was the filmic narrative form crucial to make this film possible, but cinematography also shaped and integrated the appropriated aesthetics and language. Cinematographer Charlotte Bruus Christensen discusses her work in Vinterberg’s “The Hunt” and compares it to “The Celebration”, (Anthony Dod Mantle was responsible for the cinematography). Bruus establishes a parallel in terms of aesthetics between both films. She clarifies:

“From a technical standpoint, Thomas wanted to feel as free as he had on a film like *Festen*. Of course we weren’t going to go back to the very restrictive principles of the “Dogma,” but we nonetheless wanted to approximate that sort of image. [...] Thomas Vinterberg is very close to his characters, and the number one priority for me in terms of lighting was enhancing faces and eyes.”

(*AFC*, Reumont, 2012)



FILM STILL 5.4.1 | "A TOUCH OF SIN", JIA ZHANGKE (2013)



FILM STILL 5.4.2 | "THE HUNT", THOMAS VINTERBERG (2012)

## 5.4 Conclusion

" Les films sont plus harmonieux que la vie. Il n'y a pas d'embouteillage  
dans les films, il n'y a pas de temps mort."

(Cited in *La Nuit américaine*, François Truffaut, 1973)

The Sixth generation and Dogme 95 national cinemas, with repercussions on the global motion picture, involving different concepts of identity, tradition and globalism, contributed to a new narrative paradigm that today is assumed as a deliverer of truth and film as the realm of the real. Since the late 1970s, in China and in Denmark, contemporary Chinese and Danish filmmakers made this the most relevant moment of their cinemas. On the one hand, the economic reforms in China implemented in 1978 contributed to and grounded the new Chinese visual culture and consequently contemporary Chinese cinema. On the other hand, Denmark's' affiliation with the European Union (EU) in 1972 and after the "green wave" during the 1980s have indirectly contributed for the appearance of Dogme 95 as a reaction to local and global contexts. The movement emphasized the need to rethink Danish society and its identity, tradition and values through film. In other words, the present PhD research project spans the past 30 years of social and economic reforms in China and Denmark, which most contributed to the turn of the twenty-first century, reflecting a new aesthetic global cinema today. Therefore, the present chapter's research question – How do the Chinese Sixth Generation and Dogme 95 portray their respective society? – led to the selection of Jia's "A Touch of Sin" and Vinterberg's "The Hunt" in order to better illustrate this comparative study between Chinese and Danish contemporary cinemas, namely the Sixth generation of Chinese filmmakers and Dogme 95 Danish filmmakers, at the turn of twenty-first century.

In 1994, Jia's first film entitled *One Day, in Beijing* (You Yitian, Zai Beijing) produced by a small group of students calling themselves the Beijing Film Academy Youth Experimental Film Group, which depicts passing crowds in Tiananmen Square in May 1994, reflects utmost the documentary impulse in the 1990s. Ten years later, Jia founded his independent production company X-Stream, keeping alliances with Office Kitano and MK2 in Paris, and later on

with Shanghai Film Corporation, which descended from the old Shanghai film studio. In Denmark, back in the 1990s, Lars Von Trier and Thomas Vinterberg contributed to reshape and resize the landscape of contemporary Danish cinema creating Dogme 95 cinema, suggesting “alternative methods for film production”, as a response to Hollywood cinema and global cinema. The controversy in the New Danish cinema has been part of a somewhat planned strategy - in other words it centred around the author or director (persona), contrasting with New Chinese cinema where controversy is part of the result of being independent from Beijing authorities. Above all, Jia and Vinterberg emphasize the concept of the *auteur* in cinema. John Caughie suggests, “[an *auteur*] film is more than likely to be the expression of [the director’s] individual personality; and [...] this personality can be traced in a thematic and/or stylistic consistency over all (or almost all) that director’s films.” (1993: 9) The cinema aesthetics mirrors local and global social changes. The representation mode, through the narrative elements and units, shape the filmic narratives in both cinemas, and, thus, introduce a layer of depth that is mediated by the viewer. Thus, “reading”, “viewing” and “interpreting” is essential to present and to deliver the *rationale* behind this research project to the reader or viewer. Thus, the term “viewer” is adopted because he or she is the one that participates in the cross-modal events reading characterized by a gradual and dynamic filmic narrative process. As follows:

I adopt the term “viewer” or “spectator” to name a hypothetical entity executing the operations relevant to constructing a story out of the film’s representation. [...] Spectator is “real” in at least the sense that she or he possesses certain psychological limitations that real spectators also possess. [...] Any theory of the spectator’s activity must rest upon a general theory of perception and cognition.  
(Bordwell, 1985: 30)

Establishing a relationship between narrator, narrative and narrate, the viewer “reconstructs” the filmic narrative through the principles of narration and the film forms applied. In “A Touch of Sin” and “The Hunt” - four plots and one plot respectively - the filmic narrative interpretation implies a process of inferring and delivering meaning through film elements and film units. On the one hand, the sarcasm and the criticism are always present in “A Touch of Sin”.

Namely the scene when Xiao Hui commits suicide. The building in front has “The Oasis of prosperity” written in the façade. The prosperity of some is the disgrace of others. The rapid economic growth witnessed in China is leading to a severe and dramatic shift in society. “A Touch of Sin” within the contemporary Chinese cinema approaches is first and foremost innovative because it portrays and addresses relevant political, public and social issues avoided by the central government. As follows: the corruption at local and central power levels; the great violence and disoriented youth among society; public ignorance about AIDS in China represents a major public health issue; religious tolerance, namely Christian and Buddhist; mobility across Mainland China, not only the issue of the floating population in China is depicted, but also the portray of African immigrants is alluded (when Xiao Hui arrives in Dongguan there are three Africans gathering and having beer); Taiwan, Hong Kong, Macao territories; and globalization. The references to South of China, namely Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao are recurrent in the film. Lianrong is learning Cantonese. One day at the brothel she tells Xiao Hui that the Cantonese people call the mistress the “illicit traders”. The news Lianrong shared with Xiao Hui or even to viewer mirrors what is happening in today China and the feeling of mistrust. shares with him the news she is reading, such as a local officer who were found at her house 130 Louis Vuitton bags or the explosion in a mine in Shanxi. Xiao Hui suggests the comments she should add. Both are the same and can be summarized as ‘WTF’. Two good examples of globalization are when Lianrong and Xiao Hui free the fish in the lake, and the way there a DHL yellow van passes by. Throughout the film the allusion to animals from the Chinese zodiac is recurrent. The meaning behind its symbology shapes the salience and builds the depth of the characters throughout the different filmic narrative segments. The story probably represents the most impressive examples. In this story Xiao Yu often faces a large snake that recalls her luckless past. Jia Zhangke participates in the film in the last filmic narrative segment, namely in the scene in the brothel when he answers the mobile phone telling someone to sell a Xu Beijong painting and he was going to Macao the day after. Macao and Hong Kong are incorporated in the film when Xiao Hui receives a tip, a banknote of one hundred Hong Kong dollars. Above all, the role of women in Chinese society

and the attention to other, disadvantaged people, are the central themes in “A Touch of Sin”. On the other hand, the central themes in “The Hunt” are hypocrisy in society and the role of man in Danish society. In other words, moral values are crucial elements to judge others without proof that he or she is really guilty. This is a social phenomenon that has been under discussion lately in Danish society, and “The Hunt” portrays and delivers this to the viewer. The issue of emigration is represented, for instance, in Nadja who works in the kindergarten and falls in love with Lucas. Tradition and religion are major obstacles in this small local community for these influence its mind-set and prejudices. An example is the fact that after everything that happened and at the end of the journey, Lucas is yet to be completely innocent by everyone. The last scene shows that someone wants to shoot or kill him.

Both “A Touch of Sin” and “The Hunt” share several structural issues. The plots that build the filmic narratives are grounded on their way of thinking and doing cinema in both aesthetic and formal levels. The main themes are the following: the idea of hunting - not only literal but also symbolic; sin - not only seen as destiny but as message of hope; immigration and emigration - essential players in today’s global society; moral values; tradition; and identity. In conclusion, Chinese and Danish contemporary cinemas reinvent and rethink *cinéma vérité*, emphasizing the intrinsic dimensions of reality and fiction, and blurring the thin line between fiction and non-fiction, the diegetic and non-diegetic realities. The historical magnitude of literary and cinematic realism since the May Fourth Movement is indirectly reconfirmed by the realistic impulse of independent contemporary Chinese filmmakers. In the case of Dogme 95, the realistic impulse is reconfirmed by the social-realist tradition. Through a self-reflexive perspective, both cinemas create an impression as to the state of mind and manner of speech. A new narrative paradigm can be identified in both “A Touch of Sin” and “The Hunt”, namely film as the deliverer of truth and film as a mirror of truth or the realm of the real. The use of new narrative structures are implemented in order to enhance the gaze of reality, such as: real and fictional atmospheres; elements and fictional realities (the relation between atmosphere and where the action takes place); film spatiality and film observational narrative; film narrative and the truth of the human condition. The realm of the real in “A Touch of Sin” mirrors

the social surrounding reality and, in “The Hunt”, it takes place as a socially constructed reality. It can be said, however, that to a certain extent both films consist of an emotional thread representing a national allegory. The promise and broken dream of Socialism in China. Or rather, an allegory of a society that is keen to believe something that is not real. In other words, in the eyes of “A Touch of Sin” the reality represented overlaps with the surrounding real, and, in the eyes of “The Hunt”, gazes the subjective look. Both films perceive the avoided reality, where, “[...] film is a moving image of scepticism [...]” (Cavell, 1979: 188), playing an invisible narrative through a certain kind of realism. Born in two distinct contexts, it appears that both Dogme 95 and contemporary Chinese cinema led by the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> generation of filmmakers, share common features such as the aesthetic expressions and the conveyed message that, together, contribute to create a new form of global cinema. If individual memory is interdependent with social and collective memory, and if a film aims to evoke a common historical consciousness despite the actual multiplicity and diversity of experience, then the synthetic or composite memory may generate the same effects as a “real” memory. Thus, the self-portrayal of Chinese and Danish contemporary societal transformation is a way to establish a relationship between the two worlds of fiction: the fiction itself, and the fiction’s surroundings. Chinese and Danish contemporary cinemas grounded the “modernization of cinematic language”, expressing a contradictory feeling towards future, blurring the thin line between fiction and non-fiction, depicting the deep transformations within the society at the turn of the twenty-first century.

**Chapter VI – The sixth Chinese generation of filmmakers  
and Dogme 95: a cinema in the state of transition or latency?**



FILM STILL 6.1.1 | “MAN WITH A MOVIE CAMERA”, DZIGA VERTOV (1929)

## 6.1 Space, time and causality: authenticity and illusion

“The quasi-documentary and hyper-realist aesthetic reveals that cinematic representation is hardly a transparent window onto reality but rather a form of interrogation of the “truth” value of both its referent and its image and their indexical rapport.”

(Zhang, 2007: 18)

The birth of cinema itself brought the capability to imply vision and create illusion through moving pictures. First and foremost, this gave the opportunity to depict the atmosphere of everyday life around the world. The viewer wished to see real life on the screen. Then, emerged the capability and possibility to create illusions. Throughout time, the viewer’s horizon became wider, and the way filmmakers captured moving images took different directions in different dimensions. The cinema at a global level can be seen as a dichotomy that places side-by-side unreal and real objects, or what is rational and irrational at

the same time. The illusionary opportunity to depict reality is reconfirmed by Chinese and Danish contemporary cinemas.

Through two different, paradigmatic and syntagmatic axis in filmic narrative, the present chapter intends to be the closing of this research, addressing the last sub-question, which, in the end, reflects the central research question or the central research theme.

From Aristotle to Bazin, the concept of art as a mirror which reflects reality, and the ontological level that establishes an existential relationship between cinema and reality respectively, depicting what is real has been a major theoretical issue surrounding art, firstly image and lately moving image. After a century of history, where cinema is seen as an Art form - which depicts space, time and causality - is still a subject that is constantly evolving. In 1994, the Beijing Film Academy Youth Experimental Film Group or Youth Experimental Group emerged. This group deeply contributed to frame and shape contemporary Chinese cinema, characterized by a critical attitude towards the past, even the failures of nationalism and modernization. Celebrating moving picture's one-century existence in Paris, Danish Dogme 95 emerged suggesting "alternative methods for film production" through self-imposed rules and constraints, revolutionizing and intensifying creativity, an idiosyncrasy. Dogme 95 echoes social rules, as a response to Hollywood cinema and global cinema. Both cinemas have mutated since its early beginning. However, the Chinese Sixth generation and the Danish Dogme 95 cinemas - playing a major role within the same global picture and coming from different concepts of identity, tradition and globalism, contributed to a new narrative paradigm that is, today, taken as a deliverer of the truth and a realm of the real. Since the late 1970s, in China and in Denmark, contemporary Chinese and Danish filmmakers made this the most relevant moment of their cinemas. On the one hand, the economic reforms in China implemented from 1978 onwards contributed and grounded Chinese new visual culture and consequently contemporary Chinese cinema. The "globalization of media and communications"; "globalization of culture and ideology"; and "globalization of citizenship and identity" establish a relation between these two cinemas that came across since they depict the past, referring to tradition, and the present, relating to the idea of modernity. Cinema aesthetics mirrors the local and

global social changes. On the other hand, Denmark's affiliation with the European Union (EU) in 1972 and the "green wave" during the 1980s have indirectly contributed to the emergence of Dogme 95 as a reaction to local and global contexts, emphasizing the need to rethink Danish society and its identity, tradition and values through film. However, Mette Hjort contends, "[...] Dogma 95 involves taking issue with a common misapprehension of the movement as profoundly apolitical." (2003: 31) The Chinese Sixth generation and Danish Dogme 95 cinemas have ultimately contributed to narrow boundaries between national cinemas and have fostered a new paradigm of filmmaking towards global hybridity. It is, then, relevant to clarify if both cinemas represent a state of transition or, instead, constitute the turning point in the cinema's history today. In a way, both cinemas unfold a manner of speech based on a discourse that derives from cultural citizenship with political and social concerns, which have contributed to transform contemporary moving picture culture at national and global levels. Back in the early 1990s, the Chinese Sixth generation and Danish Dogme 95 cinemas emerged as a challenge to the previous cinematic models, representing a state of latency since both national cinemas created a rupture from the previous generations of filmmakers, and consequently contributed to enlarge national cinema moving pictures at a global level. At the turn of the twenty-first century, both cinemas are established and constitute a milestone within the context of hybrid global cinema, emphasizing the role of the viewer. The term "viewer" is adopted once he or she is invited to participate in the process of searching meaning in film through the combination of modalities in narrative, such as: events, words, images, sounds or technical features. A gradual and dynamic filmic narrative process characterizes this process.

However Chinese and Danish cinemas are not only mirrors that reflect reality. Pierre Bourdieu's theory on the field of cultural production opens the potential to look at contemporary Chinese and Danish cinemas as a dynamic and open-ended circle that goes beyond textual analysis: the dialectic between the state and the individual; and the relation between cinema and realism. Both cinemas are already part of reality itself and participate in its existence as follows, "Hence a close bond established between cinema and reality: the

former completely overlaps the latter and becomes its ‘finger-print’, more than its copy.” (Cassetti: 31)

On the one hand, the paradigmatic axis characterizes the inter-relationships and dependencies among filmmaker’s options, through the lens of Jia Zhangke and Thomas Vinterberg, which is similar to many classification approaches, and will convey the analysis towards aesthetic similarities and differences.



FILM STILL 6.1.2 | “THE HUNT”, THOMAS VINTERBERG (2012)

On the other hand, the syntagmatic axis is based on the structural consequences of filmmakers’ options, and to what extent it is possible to characterize these film practices and common concerns within the global hybrid context at the turn of XXI century, by developing critical thinking within the framework of a narrative fiction film aesthetics analysis. Chinese and

Danish contemporary cinemas pursue the common citizen who has something to tell and does not follow pre-determined narrative formulas that structure the plot of the film. Therefore, both cinemas, through the combined film elements and units, structured into filmic narrative form achieve to recreate real life experiences and its social issues.



FILM STILL 6.2.1 | “BREATHLESS”, JEAN-LUC GODARD (1960)

## **6.2 The social changes and the construction of the contemporary hybrid global cinema aesthetics**

The representation mode, through the narrative elements and units, shape the filmic narratives in both cinemas, and, thus, introduce a layer of salience or depth mediated by the viewer. André Bazin’s cinema vérité contends that the viewer figures as an invisible witness or virtual participant of the world outside cinema events through the frame, where the camera creates the illusion of transparency as a catalyst to provoke (re) actions. This level of realism through cinema seeks to shape a construction of the social, as it takes place more often in documentary film. The narrative in Chinese Sixth generation and Danish Dogme 95 (re) searches for reality, and organizes time not according to dramatic purposes but rather in accordance with “life time”. Therefore, Jia’s generation of Chinese filmmakers distinguishes itself from its predecessor, the Fifth Generation, approaching an independent cinema

paradigm and focusing on central themes of social dislocation and the disaffection of urban youth, and consequently mirroring a new cultural and aesthetic meaning. Collective and individual memory grounds the realm of the real. Jia's filmography delivers the possibility to trace a trajectory of ambiguity and uncertainty: observing, revealing and portraying the dramatic transformation of Chinese urban landscape. Jia's cinematography pursues the documentary method. Zhang describes this as:

"[...] the documentary method is not only necessary when the film is set in his hometown, which supplied all the "locations" for *Xiao Wu*, but also critical for the particular kind of story he wanted to tell about people *in* their social milieu. It is an aesthetic grounded in social space and experience – contingent, immanent, improvisational and open-ended."

(2007: 19)

The tension in Jia's films is often shaped by confrontation between popular and political culture, (where/ from what), a society that allows its citizens to have flexibility and freedom to establish their way of life and to use the public spheres according to their needs. The realistic impulse of independent contemporary Chinese filmmakers is reconfirmed by the historical magnitude of literary and cinematic realism since the May Fourth Movement. The Sixth generation, which have undergone the transition from "underground" to "aboveground", seeking cooperation with state studios later or in their careers. Today in China, the general public considers them "the favorites of society" (*shehui de chong'er*) and "the proud children of heaven" (*tian zhi jiaozi*). That is to say, they are seen as the future direction of the nation's development and as the discourse of progression. The realist impulse in both cinemas relates to the "modernization of cinematic language". It means that, in both cinemas, the realm of the real is taking place in the present moment in the form of filmic narrative, or in other words, the event exists in front of the camera and after being recorded by the camera. The Chinese Sixth generation cinema constitutes itself as the realm of surrounding reality or invisible narrative based on a type of truthful realism. In contemporary Chinese cinema, authenticity prevails over illusion as a manner of speech. Jia's "A Touch of Sin" represents and portrays social and psychological issues



FILM STILL 6.2.2 | “STILL LIFE”, JIA ZHANGKE (2006)

related to the Chinese urbanscape dramatic shift at the turn of the twenty-first century.

The contemporary Chinese cinema builds cinematic city views of Chinese society today. The storylines and pace of the films themselves became less melodramatic and less structured. In some early Sixth Generation films realism was highlighted against melodramatic set pieces. On the other hand, in the 90s Dogme 95 played an extremely important role in the transformation of Danish contemporary cinema, contributing to the creation of the New Danish Cinema, and challenging the Hollywood model, which drifts between the surreal and a certain social construction of the surrounding reality. Hjort contends, “Dogma films are characterised by compelling stories and outstanding performances.” (2003: 32) In contemporary Danish cinema illusion prevails over authenticity. *Manifesto* and *Vow of Chastity*, which are not theoretical texts, present a poetics of Dogma filmmaking, which should be approached as artistic gestures in order to avoid the need to find logical and artistic contradictions in them. The self-consciousness of Dogme films pushes the formal properties into the realm of the subject. Dogme’s aesthetic is realist in the Bazinian sense. It tries to convey the world without excessive manipulation. The Dogme 95 manifesto, unlike other Realist cinemas, imposes its restrictions mainly on the formal level, wherein the truth is contained within the film’s world and the main objective is to give access to this world. Both the Chinese Sixth generation and the Danish Dogme 95 cinemas are, thus, not cinema of spectacle but cinema of life. Vinterberg’s “The Hunt” opposes *The Vow of Chastity* since it does not eliminate

technology from cinema. Instead, it uses it to revisit its aesthetics principles as stated in *The Manifesto*, namely in his early film “The Celebration”. Moreover, Vinterberg contends:

“Festen was a finalization of many things for me; the ultimate film in a certain direction. I couldn’t go further down that line, so I had to destroy everything and restart. And that’s where I started exploring in other ways. It’s also around the time that Kubrick died. His filmography is a tour de force through different forms, and that inspired me. But, I feel I’m returning to what was *me*, starting with a flicker of a fragile moment in humanity.”

(Thomas Vinterberg, cited in Film Quartely, interviewed by Basia Lewandowska Cummings, 14 May, 2013)

Vinterberg confirms the idea that the premise of Dogma 95 was that the constraint fosters creativity and new challenges. “The Hunt” engages the search of cinematic truth indeed, retrieving its ability to represent reality or a socially constructed reality as mentioned previously, avoiding extreme predictability in terms of dramaturgy as contended in *The Manifesto*. Jia and Vinterberg enhance the intrinsic dimension of reality representation, fiction-documenting reality through the use of new narrative structures. The documentary film form contributes to place the viewer within the filmic narrative (as a participant), making it easy for them to identify themselves with those experiencing this startling revelation, such as real and fictional atmospheres; elements and fictional realities; film spatiality and film observational narrative; film narrative and seeking the truth of the human condition through filmic narratives. That is to say, Jia and Vinterberg embark in the endless quest for truth and meaning of humanity, through a new cinematic paradigm, blurring the boundaries between fiction and non-fiction. The social shapes the realm of both Chinese Sixth generation and Danish Dogme 95 cinemas, and realism became the *leitmotif* delivered to the viewer. The depicted reality pursues the model of its own national cinema. Above all, Jia and Vinterberg, emphasize the concept of the *auteur* in cinema. The Chinese contemporary visual culture, namely the Chinese Sixth generation, depicts this crucial moment of social transformation and transition presently witnessed in Chinese contemporary history, built upon a fading and floating

collective memory. The individual memory in “A Touch of Sin” and “The Hunt” depends on the social and collective memory, where legacy has faded, leaving a sense of void and emptiness. The Chinese Sixth generation cinema depicts the floating population: for instance the ex-farmers and peasants who left the countryside to look for better job prospects in cities. Kan suggests:

One of the most distinctive features of new-generation migrants is their degree of integration into urban life. For first-generation migrants, working in the city is seen as a temporary measure for earning extra cash. Many continue to farm land in the countryside (*yigong yinong* 亦工亦农), shuttling flexibly between urban and rural areas as a quintessential “floating” population, with the goal of making enough to ultimately settle back in the countryside. The benefits of urban residency such as welfare and social security were simply not made available to them. For the post-1980 migrants, however, many flock to cities with the desire to stay in the long run and become full urban residents. Unlike earlier migrants, who might have been compelled to leave the countryside for purely economic reasons, the young migrants are primarily pulled by the attraction of city life and multitudinous non-economic factors, such as boredom with village life and the desire to pursue freedom from parents. (Kan, 2013: 72)

Jia’s “A Touch of Sin” is mainly concerned with mobility and the cultural identity of the Chinese people across the country, represented in four plots, which compose the narrative. “A Touch of Sin” portrays, then, disorientation and dissolution of the national dream in the post-Mao era, wherein Vinterberg’s “The Hunt” depicts socially constructed realities or composite memory, generating the same effects as “real” memory does, in “A Touch of Sin”. The narrative tension in both films, opposing reality to memory becomes, then, thinner and the film content drives the viewer’s attention and the reading of the narrative. The social contexts framed throughout the narrative plots in both films are central performative discourses and essential contributions to achieve the essence of the film, since they account for cultural citizenship without being political statements within the emerging global cinema. At a time when the turn of the twenty-first century is witnessing moments of global dramatic historical change, these cinemas experience a time-depicting reality, as simple as a daily moment with all that this implies.

Therefore, the present PhD research project contends that these cinemas are based on the following main characteristics:

- Both reuse cinematic realism, Chinese real life experience vs. Danish fictionalized life experience;
- The subject itself plays the central theme in both filmic discourses, encompassing cinema as a form of self-expression;
- The perspective delivered to the viewer is marked by a self-reflexive, *mise-en-abyme* narrative construction process, an extension of the speaking subjects "I".

A critical perspective of Bazin's theory is termed as "natural style". The filmmaker's contribution lies, then, on how reality is delivered and not transformed. The viewer is not expected to comprehend the significance built by the filmmaker but should recognize the degree of significance within reality itself. "A Touch of Sin" and "The Hunt" mediate different layers of reality, lying between fiction and documentary film forms, sharing several structural issues in the way the film was made and grounding the plots that build the filmic narratives. Merleau-Ponty (1964) emphasizes our common belief, which makes us accept everything that comes to us through our sensory organs, especially our eyes: "we don't believe the world itself, but we think that our vision leads us to the things". Following this train of thought, David Bolter and Richard Grusin's concept of remediation in mediating reality, based on Jean Baudrillard's notion of simulation and simulacra, suggests "[...] all mediations are themselves real." (2000: 55) The narratives in both films are themselves the realm of the characters and their surrounding realities. "A Touch of Sin" depicts the marginalized and the oppressed as the subject; in "The Hunt" the subject became marginalized and oppressed. The main themes in "A Touch of Sin" and "The Hunt" are the following: the idea of hunting - not only literally but also symbolically; sin - not only seen as destiny but as a message of hope; immigration and emigration - essential players in today's global society; moral values; tradition; and identity. These films might be seen as an observatory for today's social and psychological changes in Mainland China and in Denmark. The full shots represent the "collective-social foundation" and embody the idea of portraying reality as it is – the memory and the future; and close-up shots represent the individuals and their emotional side through their

stories, as well as the idea of timelessness and place of emptiness, which is also inherent.



FILM STILL 6.2.3 | “THE HUNT”, THOMAS VINTERBERG (2012)

This is explained as follows, “Vinterberg has created a disturbing mirror to look into, revealing the collective fears and prejudices of a community that only required the suspicion of a crime for it to take a step closer to savagery.” (Cinema Autopsy, Thomas Caldwell) The Chinese Sixth generation and the Danish Dogme 95 cinemas meet two central concepts of cinema: Bazin’s “cinema of time” and Bergson’s “cinema duration”. Hence, these cinemas are, above all, about time accomplished by the filmic ellipses, minimizing apparent cause-effect narrative and utilizing detached, objective, non-judgmental narrative that depicts the flow of real life events. In fact, the Sixth Generation of Chinese filmmakers cinema is fiction staging reality, binding together fiction and documentary, wherein fiction plays with documentary effects and wherein documentary places reality with fiction effects. The same happens in Dogme 95. It believes in filming real people in real locations, frequently with hand-held camera where subjects revolve around issues ignored by society like poverty, marginal people or social injustice. Bill Nichols claims that all films are

documents, as any fiction film “[...] gives evidence of the culture film produced it and reproduces the likeness of the people who perform within it”. (1991: 20)



FILM STILL 6.2.4 | “A TOUCH OF SIN”, JIA ZHANGKE (2012)

“A Touch of Sin” and “The Hunt” mirror this contradictory feeling – the outside world and the realm of the characters that are isolated from it and cannot control their fate and future. Sarcasm and criticism are always present in both films. In “A Touch of Sin”, in the scene where Xiao Hui commits suicide, the building in front has “The Oasis of prosperity” written in the façade. The prosperity of some is the disgrace of others. The rapid economic growth witnessed in China has leading to profound transformations within the Chinese society, as one can expect when the most populated country in the world has been shifting from a communist economic model to a capitalist system. Wang contends that “As Chinese cinema is now revealed to be a site traversed by various internal and external forces, we feel the prevalent euphoria over the broadened horizon, the relaxed border lines and the newly discovered territories.” (2008: 9) On the other hand, the central themes in “The Hunt” are hypocrisy in society and the role of man in the Danish society today. In other words, values and moral as crucial elements to judge others without proof that he or she is really guilty. This is a social phenomenon that has been under an on going discussion lately in Danish society. “The Hunt” portrays and delivers this to the viewer. The issue of emigration is also

present in this film. For instance, Nadja works at the kindergarten and falls in love with Lucas. Tradition and religion are major obstacles in this local and small community, particularly in relation to its mindset and prejudices. After everything that happens, and at the end of the journey, not everyone believes Lucas is innocent. Thomas Caldwell suggests that “The threat to Lucas is not a Kafkaesque nightmare of legal dead-ends, but the self-appointed accusers from the community. Like the mob in *M* acting without the authority of the law, the townspeople in *The Hunt* are the true threat to social order and stability.” (Cinema Autopsy, Thomas Caldwell) A ‘cultural critique’ is, then, observed based on a ‘historical reflection’, shifting back and forth between the Chinese and Danish countryside and the metropolis. Modernity has committed to give audiences a sense of belonging to a community to compensate for the traditional communities they have been disowned from. A concern or engagement with the future can be one way to correct uncritical traditionalism and deepen one’s involvement in the political status of the traditions of the defeated and the marginalized. Such engagements with the future may sometimes be episodic because they have to build upon an oscillation between the past and the future, and it is not possible to avoid the past when addressing the issue of modernity. Contemporary Chinese and Danish cinemas gave local audiences the knowledge on how to freely interpret its own cinema – to some extent their own identity basis or nationhood.

### **6.3 Synthesis: the realistic impulse of Sixth Generation and Dogme 95 filmmakers, and contemporary global hybrid cinema**

Both cinemas stand at a global level, depicting the immediacy of reality at the turn of the twenty-first century, with social and political concerns, engaging realistic aesthetics, pursuing the cinematic “truth” or the essence of cinema. In the course of post-Mao cinema the paradigm shift of the state owned studios, from state to private hands in the 1980s and early 1990s and, at the same time, the financial problems faced by European and Scandinavian cinema, namely Danish, contributed in part to the emergence of Sixth Generation and Dogme 95 cinemas. The transition from “aboveground” to “underground” and vice versa, often related with paradigm shift in the film studios system, resulted from being the forerunners of the market-oriented reforms. Moreover, being independent sometimes is not an option, but rather a solution to keep filmmaking production running. The trajectory of post-Mao cinema to a large extent reflects the structural changes in the film industry during the 1990s, as part of the in-depth state-run enterprise reforms in China in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Sixth Generation cinema develops and builds itself from the Fifth Generations’ self Orientalization, depicting the backstage of the miracle of China’s economic boom or the so-called Chinese dream, through the cinematic metamorphosis of the subject: from corporality to reality. For instance, Jia Zhangke and Thomas Vinterberg’s professional career helps to clear this issue related with “underground” and “aboveground” in both cinemas. Jia’s first work, a fifteen-minute Betacam video entitled *One Day, in Beijing* (You yitian, zai Beijing, 1994) was produced by a small group of students calling themselves the Beijing Film Academy Youth Experimental Film Group. Ten years later, in 2004, Jia founded his independent production company X-Stream, keeping alliances with Office Kitano and MK2 in Paris, and later on with Shanghai Film Corporation, which descended from the old Shanghai film studio. Parallely, the Nordic countries, were also facing at the same time the very same difficulties and developments; it was common to establish film co-production with different countries. In Denmark, back in the 1990s, the companies behind the Dogme films were Zentropa, founded in 1992 by Lars von Trier and producer Peter Aalbæk Jensen, and Nimbus Film,

established in 1993 with Vinterberg as the central figure. In 1999, together with several smaller companies, they established their studio facilities and administrative offices in disused shacks in Film City, located in Avedøre in Copenhagen. Lars Von Trier and Thomas Vinterberg have, since then, contributed to reshape and resize the landscape of contemporary Danish cinema creating Dogme 95 cinema, suggesting “alternative methods for film production”, as a response to Hollywood and global cinema. The controversy in the New Danish cinema has been part of a somewhat planned strategy - in other words centered around the author or director (persona), contrasting with New Chinese cinema where controversy is part of the result of being independent from Beijing authorities. The constraints faced by the Sixth Generation and Dogme 95 filmmakers were conceptual, theoretical, social and political, as well as economic. These constraints largely contributed to foster innovative film narrative and, consequently, shaped global hybrid cinema aesthetics. It is within this context that a new narrative paradigm emerges, that assumes itself as a deliverer of truth, and film as a mirror of the truth or the realm of the real, clearly reflected in both “A Touch of Sin” and “The Hunt”. The use of new narrative structures are implemented in order to enhance the gaze of reality, such as: real and fictional atmospheres; elements and fictional realities (the relation between atmosphere and where the action takes place); film spatiality and film observational narrative; film narrative and the truth of human condition. The realm of the real in “A Touch of Sin” mirrors the surrounding social reality, and in “The Hunt” it depicts a socially constructed reality. Zavattini admits, “Cinema must tell what is going on. The camera is meant to look at what lies in front of it. [...] The time is ripe for throwing away scripts and following them with camera.” (Zavattini, in Casetti, 1999: 26) However, both films embed an emotional thread that holds the different stories together and, to a certain extent, represent a national metaphor. Or simply, an allegory of a society that is keen to believe something that is not real at all. In other words, in the eyes of “A Touch of Sin” the reality represented overlaps with the surrounding real based on an erased collective memory depicting the faded promise of the Socialist broken dream in China. In the eyes of “The Hunt”, illusion is created upon a socially constructed reality. Hjort explains, “[...] Danish national cinema is for the most

part a call, not for thematisations of nation, but for films that simply incorporate the elements of a banal nationalism.” (Hjort, 2000: 108) Dogme 95 tests the director’s ability to limit the tools with which they express themselves. It constitutes a challenge in the filmmaker’s perspective. At same time, the rules impel the filmmakers to reach an audience without excessive technical support. On this level, truth is contained within the narrative. Therefore, it does not escape the formal level of realism defined above. Dogme 95 requires this kind of realism. One of the final exhortations from the *Vow of Chastity* states: Here Vinterberg and von Trier locate the truth within the film’s world. Both films perceive the avoided reality, playing an invisible narrative that is expressed as a certain type of realism. Born in two distinct contexts, it appears that both Dogme 95 and contemporary Chinese cinema led by the Sixth generation of filmmakers share common features such as the aesthetic expressions and the conveyed message that, together, contribute to create a new form of global cinema. If individual memory depends on social and collective memory, and if a film aims to evoke a common historical consciousness despite the actual multiplicity and diversity of experience, then the synthetic or composite memory may generate the same effects as a “real” memory. Thus, today’s self-portrayal of Chinese and Danish contemporary society transformation is a way to establish a relationship between the two worlds of fiction: the fiction itself, and the fiction’s surroundings. Chinese and Danish contemporary cinemas grounded the “modernization of cinematic language”, expressing a contradictory feeling towards the future, blurring the thin line between fiction and non-fiction, depicting the dramatic shift of society at the turn of the twenty-first century. Through cinema, tradition and modernity “contribute to the experimental quality of their works through its open-endedness” (Tonglin, 2002:13). Tradition plays the social role and represents a glorious collective memory. Modernity enacts the psychological analysis towards an individual and a prosperous future. The struggle for cultural identity, which brought to mind the past and history, is today looking forward at a modern nation.

Both Chinese and Danish contemporary cinemas reinvent and rethink the *cinéma vérité*, emphasizing the intrinsic dimensions of representing reality

and fiction, and blurring the thin line between fiction and non-fiction, the diegetic and non-diegetic realities.

Within the context of the post-Mao era, the Sixth Generation of Chinese filmmakers, being themselves of the same generation as the floating population and often named the “Urban Generation”, emerged in the early 1990s as a reaction to the socialist realism cinema standing against the upheavals of Chinese history and the politics of that time. Confrontation with the rise of a new market economy and mass culture, which led to unprecedented social and cultural changes in the Chinese society, contributed to the emergence of a filmic narrative centred on a social rhetoric and innovative cinematic style. The rapid modernization and social dislocation are the central themes of this cinema, tackling a wide spectrum of social experiences and issues, such as: migrant work; civic consciousness; public health issues awareness; corruption; and social inequalities. The Sixth Generation cinema aims to heighten the sense of reality through social reality. Through a self-reflexive perspective of identity and modernity, leading into an impression of state of mind and manner of speech, reality is shown as the disempowered self set in a shattered locale and a disintegrated present that often displays an abstract or symbolic quality. The Sixth Generation and Dogme 95 cinema are inheritors of the legacy of the Italian Neorealism and Nouvelle Vague aesthetics. Dogme 95 is probably one of the latest movements that confronts mainstream world cinema. The Sixth Generation cinema, behind the slogan “my camera doesn’t lie”, which results from Lou Ye’s “Suzhou River”, reveals how the filmed subjects are able to trigger the redefinition of external cultural icons and iterates the director’s intention to capture the human’s gaze. Additionally, it depicts the moments when those social, cultural, economic and political constraints, faced by each individual, change. The attempt to capitalize the “I” as a subject that is capable of delivering authenticity through the gaze of reality, emphasizes both cinemas’ effort to relocate the semantic drift in cinematic language from “realistic” to “true to art”. Therefore, the realistic impulse of the Sixth Generation and Dogme 95 filmmakers contributed to build the contemporary global hybrid cinema at the turn of the twenty-first century.

## **Appendices**

**Full transcription of the interview  
with Professor Mette Hjort**

## **Full transcription of the Interview with Professor Mette Hjort,**

The interview with Professor Mette Hjort took place last June 2<sup>nd</sup> 2015 at Lingnan University, Hong Kong. The key research questions were the following:

1. In your view, how could we frame contemporary Chinese and Danish cinemas?; 2. Dogme 95 emerged as a local reaction to Nordic cinema, and as global reaction to Hollywood cinema. Do you agree with this view? If so, how you would define Dogme 95?; 3. I've seen that you might be preparing a documentary on Dogme 95 and Jia Zhangke. This has been the core of my PhD research since 2011. You must see in both some commonalities and differences. Would you mind sharing with me some of your thoughts in this regard?; 4. Jia-Zhangke said that Chinese Urban cinema has China as backdrop. Is it possible to establish a cross-cultural communication between China and the West thinking for instance about Dogma cinema a reality represented as an illusion?; 5. In your view, how do the 6<sup>th</sup> generation of Chinese filmmakers and Dogme 95 portray their respective society?; 6. Therefore, in your perspective is it possible to establish differences in narrative Chinese Urban and Dogma cinemas? What are they?; 7. Do Dogme 95 and the 6<sup>th</sup> generation represent a new cinematic aesthetics?; 8. In your view, it makes sense to shed light on Asian and Eurocentric views in order to comprehend those differences? Or, these process it takes place in both ways?; 9. In your view, to what extent social changes influence cinema aesthetics?

**Tomé Quadros** - (So) Professor Mette Hjort, thank you very much for your time and to make this possible. I'll start this interview, asking you in your view how could we frame contemporary Chinese and Danish cinemas?

**Professor Mette Hjort** - Right. So, I have to tell you that I've only just printed this out, so I hadn't a lot of time to you to look at the questions. Now, probably I have more to say about some of them than others. (So, in terms of ... yeah) contemporary Chinese and Danish cinemas, I think one thing very interesting about those cinemas is it the filmmakers in question all working in context where there is a tremendous and drive towards to documentary. So the documentary impulse in both contexts is very very strong. In terms of the international interest in contemporary Chinese is very much linked as you well know to the Sixth Generation, so as you again know very well to filmmakers who have tried to blur the boundaries between fiction and non-fiction who have tried to pull fiction filmmaking in direction of documentary and to also have had a very very powerful interest in ensuring that the Chinese filmmaking actually is relevant take some issues that are of concern to people in the here and now, and so on so forth. In the contemporary Danish context, of course, in the wake of dogma, although in the Danish context at this point one doesn't actually talk about Dogma that much any more but certainly in terms of the international reception at Danish as cinema dogma is a term is always very much on people's lips even to this day. And in the Danish context certainly one thing that Dogma did was it also called fiction filmmaking in the direction of documentary filmmaking this emphasis again on making sure that films actually were about something that was worth engaging with, had a sense of relevance, are the films are dealing with important issues, and all of that is is, you know a kind of lasting influence in the Danish context. And then, related to that you have, you know, a kind of a blossoming of the documentary film milieu in Denmark, which is something that my colleagues and I said this was [...] at the University of Copenhagen, I try to take up in this thirtyish directors interview about which focuses uniquely on the Danish documentary filmmakers so I would say the documentary impulse is very very strong in both contexts. And the documentary impulse as I understand it is one where people filmmakers' asset to this idea and that filmmaking if will going to

engage in filmmaking should be relevant and should have something to say. So in a nutshell, I think that that's how I would sort of frame the continuities between these two contexts. The contexts that I have sorted calm down by framing things in this way, is of course one that and then excludes all sorts of other things and the Chinese filmmaking context is of course much much bigger than that but I think that's it that's the frame that allows you to actually sort of, you know, capture some very nice continuities between the two contexts.

**TQ** - So, talking about Dogme 95 emerges as local reaction to Nordic cinema and as global reaction to Hollywood cinema. Do you agree with this view? And if so how you would define Dogme 95?

**MH** - Right. Are you familiar, have you read what I written about Dogma? Because I guess in a nutshell I see Dogma 95 as an incredibly canny response to some of challenges of small nation filmmaking. And canny because the rules are basically dealt very effectively with some of the recurring challenges of small nation filmmaking. And did so in a way that also I'm allowed this particular initiative to become a global initiative. So what was canny about it was the two both provided solutions, you know, specific problems in the Danish context, but problems that of course are specific not only to that context but to any small nation filmmaking context. And then the solutions were such that they easily could travel. So, the, the, the, whole set up was one that was simultaneously inward looking and outward looking. It was in initiative that was destined to travel and go global right from the start. And so, yah, I see it as a canny solution to both local problems but also this, you know, a very sort of savvy response to the imperatives of a Hollywood Cinema tend to define what cinema, what counts in cinema, and to create a very unlevelled playing fields. So, for me, you know, what was absolutely fascinating about the initiative was really via the manifesto, rules, and was an attempt to kind of, create a much more set of level playing field and also to redefine what counts as cinema in terms of the aesthetics of cinema. So, for me what is interesting about dogma also is that verity initiative also that verity initiative you suddenly get this sort of obvious connections to other parts of

the world where are making films is incredibly challenging. So, I go to West Africa on regular basis I go and I help out [...] with alternative film schools in Burkina Faso, and, you know, in the wake of dogma one sees the obvious connections between places like Denmark and Burkina Faso. And, I think those connections previously were not so obvious but now they are very obvious. And, because it is about redefining what counts in cinema asserting this idea that cinema is going to get us about something that matters and asserting this idea that if we're going to spend a lot of money making films let those films be worth it in somehow. And what's interesting is that now actually we have all this, you know, beautiful alliances Denmark and Mali, between Denmark and Burkina Faso, and, and so on. So I think that was exciting about the initiative is that it created a sort of incredible can-do spirit in the local context and the Danish context those incredible sort of sense milieu building there and redefined what counts in cinema and then also created the conditions for kind of a transnational solidarity amongst various peripheral, small, however you want to define, contexts where challenges of making films are great. So I see, you know, I see places like Palestine in Denmark suddenly being connected, Mali, Denmark and Burkina Faso, Denmark and Lebanon. And, my own research at the moment is looking at these different Danish connections with West Africa, Middle East, and so on. And, I'm not saying that those connections all are traceable to dogma, definitely not, but dogma and the sorts of arguments that it allowed people to float, the kind of debates that suddenly were very much on everybody's radar. Certainly helped to create the conditions, under which this different sorts of solidarities became, became obvious. People started to understand that filmmakers in Burkina Faso and Denmark, and China and Denmark, Palestine, they have a lot more in common they actually thought. So that's what I think is, is really exciting (yeah).

**TQ** - Because, when I, if you allow me, I thought about this question, and rewinding a little bit, I have in mind the period, of course it's a different historical moment, it's a different moment itself, during the World War II in Denmark and after the WWII, during the WWII let's say there were very interesting episodes, reports, (describing) to avoid the German cinema, there

is one story I think you mention in your book with a Swedish film was (exhibited) in the theatre for one year, this was a kind of a way to resist let's say to the German cinema, right? And right after the end of WWII the Hollywood cinema tried to conquer, let's say, market, correct? And the answer, let's say, Danish cinema gave was, in my opinion, very interesting. Because a small nation maybe would be very easy, let's say, a very big market in numbers, in figures, of course, that would take an advantage. But I think, I see here, maybe I'm mistaken and you tell me, but I see here a very strong attitude, let's say. [...] In this case, we are talking about cinema; I'm talking about Danish cinema. What I want to say is, not only in the 1990s, suddenly a group of young filmmakers tried to awake, let's say, (and) as you were saying Danish cinema already before, periods, very important critical moments for Denmark, so we had a couple of examples. So, that's why I wrote this question, I thought, that's why I included the Nordic, in terms of local of course, but global Hollywood. Because (in Denmark) the arrangement they had, in the beginning Hollywood wants (wanted) being successful, right? Exporting films (to) Denmark, but then Denmark, (if I'm mistaken) you correct me please, there was some kind of rule or something that avoid this, the balance between the national production, let's say, towards. I find this very interesting because, was not only, I think, the dogma, was not, let's say moment within the Danish cinema. Right?

**MH** - Right. I mean, I think, you know, if it's some (if it were), if it's about Danish cinemas relationship to Hollywood than that obviously, that would be a different sort of question.

**TQ** - Of course.

**MH** - (Yeah) So, you know, as I understood (realized) what you really sort of looking at theories is you're trying to sort define these, these, links between contemporary China, contemporary Denmark, and so. I need to do this and pipe through the kind of movement that Dogma was. I mean, I do think that in terms Dogma's response to Hollywood it is very important always to come back this idea that was nothing about the initiative that was sort of nationalistic

or that emphasized questions of national identity or national languages, and so on and so forth. I think in that sense there was, there were something quite different and quite unique about this particular response because it was a very internationalist, you know, attempt. Actually, energized the local milieu, and so on forth then. And was a very, I mean, there was many different dimensions on that, on one level was very practical problem oriented initiative and it was also very personal initiative that was basically about also, you know, creativity and the constrain from the perspective of the artist and it was a publicity stunt it was a lot of different things. And in that sense, I think probably quite different from, you know, initiatives that had come, that had come earlier. And what also really, really fascinates me about it, and here I think there is a difference between the Danish context and the Chinese one, and in a sense it was policy-making from below, which I think is absolutely intriguing. So, this idea of, you know, artistic leaders actually taking up this business of life. Well how do we generate interesting and appropriate policies and of course, you know, the Danish context Dogma 95 did end up having, you know, spillover effects within the context of the Danish Film Institute, New Danish Screen, is very much piggybacking on inspired by this kind of thinking then they went to Dogma 95. And of course, in the Chinese context there we we, we have it at with regard to the sort of initiatives that people like Jia Zhangke, this amounting, you've got a very different context of reception. So that's I think an interesting areas of difference, but, but there is, there is differences are also part of what makes the solidarity so important. So you know the Scottish initiative, right, the advance party initiative, which again you know piggybacks on dogma, the alliance gets established because there is this with a sense of shared values, this, this transnational solidarity and there is a real and genuine difference in terms of the milieu. Where, you know, the milieu there is seen as challenging it in either sorts of ways or even more challenging, right? So, I think that, you know, the, the milieu based differences in China as compare to say Denmark, where Denmark counts as a policy rich context and China counts, as you know, a censorship rich but perhaps policy poor context when it comes to nurturing, you know, important filmmakers because you have something, and so on so forth. Those differences and then become all the more important in terms of filmmakers transnational

solidarities. And so I think that what one sees very, very, very in terms of dogmas influence or impact in China is, is this incredible sort of sense of filmmakers affinities. So, I remember having a very, very interesting conversation with Ning Ying, and of course in terms of her age, counts as Fifth Generation filmmaker in terms of how she makes her films is completely consistent with the Fifth Generation she thought because she actually wants her films to be, you know, officially acknowledged and then to be able to actually make their way into the cinemas, and so on. But when she was in Hong Kong she said: you know, I wanted to make a Dogma film that she thought this idea of relevance the here and now, social issues and all of that. That was exactly what I as a filmmaker at all about. So, she said: you know making the Beijing trilogy, the, the titles which are suddenly escaping me, but anyway have very famous Beijing for Fun, On the Beat, and I forget the third title. So, the whole point is to make those films in a way those entirely consistent with Dogma. But, to do it in such a way that I actually could get the official stamp of approval, and, and so on. So, you know, in a right down to the technological requirements where she was having to work with the big sorted traditional apparatus of filmmaking where is what she actually wanted was a sordidly you know handheld, static, and so on. So, I think that in real differences in terms of milieu but you have got this incredible sort of resonance amongst the filmmakers. (Because, yeah.)

**TQ** - This leads to the third question, we have been talking before starting the interview, because I have seen you might preparing a documentary, on Chinese, this relation, what we have been also here discussing, since this have been the core of my PhD research since 2011, 2010, briefly since you have already answer right now, I would like to ask you kindly, you must see in both some commonalities and differences. Would you mind to share with me some of your thoughts in this regard?

**MH** - Right. The idea of doing, so it wasn't a documentary on Dogma 95, the idea as I mentioned earlier was to do an interview book with contemporary Chinese filmmakers. And since several of the filmmakers in my team, one of them is a Professor film at Xinxiang University, a very fine filmmaking and

graduate of the Beijing Film Academy and the other was a PhD student at the time focusing on documentary film festivals in China and Asia more generally, and himself is also a documentary filmmaker. So, we felt that since we had filmmakers in the team it would be really, really wonderful to actually, you know, capture other filmmakers in their working environment in their personal milieu. Well, and into envisage doing a documentary alongside the interview book. I'm a great fan of practitioner interviews I think that if one is working in an environment where one, if is focusing contemporary cinema and working in a environment where one has access to the filmmakers, I think it makes absolutely no sense not to engage the filmmakers. So, that's a very, very sort of personal commitment of mine, and so (yeah) I thought I felt all along that an interview book like this we have got Michael Berry's very wonderful interview collection of course, but I felt that there were figures who had not, you know. I wanted to pull a number of these filmmakers together in a single place. Both the book then the documentary, and of course the filmmakers that we had in mind were people like Jia Zhangke, Hu Wang Gan, Ai Xiaoming. Precisely those filmmakers who very much as in the case of, you know, some of the others that we had interviewed in Danish context had this incredible drive to demonstrate that filmmaking is, is, is serious business. It's, it's about, you know, I think you need from me in the Chinese context it's about filmmakers being public intellectuals of sorts. It's about filmmakers being researchers of sorts. You know, people like Jia Zhangke, people like Ai Xiaoming, people like Evans Chan who is not working some might on Chinese Mainland, but, but I see him as similar kind of figure, who, these people who is using the camera as a research tool and as, as an instrument that really is, you know, producing films that invite us to talk about, to debate and to take a stand on very, very important things. So, that was the thinking behind the original project.

**TQ** - Thank you very much.

**MH** - Maybe, we, just one after thought, if you go online, Ai Xiaoming, Ai Xiaoming of course, you know, is, is such wonderful speaker right has been invited all the United States, so on so forth. So one can easily define, you know, recorded lecturers given by Ai Xiaoming. But this idea of pulling all this

voices together in a, in a single documentary, single text that seems like an important and viable thing to do.

**TQ** - Talking about Chinese cinema, and then crossing over to, towards to, Dogma 95, Jia Zhangke said that Chinese urban cinema has China backdrop, is it possible to establish cross-cultural communication between China and the West, thinking for instance about Dogma cinema, as a reality represented as illusion?

**MH** - Right. Yes, this, this business of the real in both of these cinemas is incredibly important. It's really, really important. I think one of the most interesting people in Danish context on this is Annette Olesen who's Dogma film is the film called "In your hands", which is this prison drama about a priest and an inmate where the inmate played by Trine Dyrholm is this woman sentenced to prison on an account infanticide. And where, you know, the plot of the film is all about whether this, this mother convicted of infanticide has special gifts or not. And I think if you are not familiar with the interview that we did with her than I would recommend you that you would take a look at it. Because she describes absolutely beautifully what Annette Olesen does, why she is somebody who is actually, you know, very, very committed to documentary filmmaking, felt that taking up a dogma challenge was an interesting thing to do. And she talks about how, you know, she developed this script, how she worked with the actors to further developed the script, and how there was something about the dogma rules indicates it. That were incredibly wonderful because certain questions that were actually being explored in the film, she because the dogma rules was allowed to not to answer these questions. So, there is a lovely passage in the interview that we did with her where she talks about this business, whether or not this mother has these gifts or not where she said, you know, her scriptwriter give books. Annette Olesen gave one answer to that question, she has herself probably would be tending towards giving a different answer. But the dogma rules didn't allow them to actually answer the question. So it's left and unanswered. And she talks about this whole process of developing the script with her, with her, with her actors, and about how she doesn't feel she needs always to be

completely the deciding for she doesn't have to be the all controlling figure. As to what was important for her was knowing that there was something about the way in which they have developed the whole process that became her guarantee that there was a kind of the voracity there was a veridical dimension. There was an authenticity that was, you know, there was a truthfulness to the, to the, to the final film. And I think her way of talking about all of that is the best answer I have heard to the question what is it, you know, this business of dogma and truth. How does one make sense of that? Well I think she makes beautiful sense of it. So, yes, dogma was allegedly about, you know, finding a certain kind, re-finding a certain kind truthfulness in film, a certain kind of authenticity. The Danish filmmakers do that in one sort of way, and of course Six Generation filmmaking is all about truthfulness as well the camera not lying, the filmmaker actually taking upon him or herself this responsibility of having, you know, filmmakers deal with important issues in truthful ways. And of course the films are going to be different, the issues are going to be different, the approach is to a certain extent also going to be different. But I think that, you know, driving the filmmakers in these respective contexts is this, is this commitment to wanting to make something that authentic and true. And so you never look at the dogma films in Denmark, ok it's a prison drama or it's, it's a birthday, 60th birthday celebration, questions about family dynamics incest and so on. In the case of Lone Scherfig it's, you know, people who are misfits, fits alcohol syndrome, etcetera, etcetera. This is a kind of, this is, this is seriousness; and of course in the Chinese context it's probably easier to say what unites all of these different people because it really is. It's, it's about, you know, looking about, looking at social issues in the awake of, you know, the dramatic process of urbanization commercialization, get rich quick, etcetera, etcetera. I mean, it's, it's that China. And a sort of, the people who have born the brand of, you know, they born the cost the cost of urbanization and, you know, state capitalism in, in, in, in China. So, the social issues side of things in the Chinese context it is I think easier to get one's head around in a sense this perhaps in a Danish context where there is more diversity. I think there is more diversity.

**TQ** - This issue of China, China has this very interesting characteristic that is the history is still taking place. Right?

**MH** - Absolutely.

**TQ** - So, is like a real time going on process, what makes (it) very interesting.

**MH** - Absolutely.

**TQ** - And since Sixth Generation cinema is a mirror, let's say, of this process. It's a very interesting (process).

**MH** - It is.

**TQ** - A kind of social lab on screen.

**MH** - Completely.

**TQ** - And, this issue that Professor Mette Hjort address related to authenticity and truth, I think, it's, it's suits and leads to the fifth question that it's the following: In your view, I would like to have your perspective, how do, do the Sixth Generation Chinese filmmakers and Dogma 95 portray their respective society?

**MH** - Well, I think I already sort of started to talk about that. So, you know, the... I think; the Danish Dogma films are gravitating towards difficult, difficult issues, right? So, it's, it's child abuse, it's mental illness, it's as I said in the case Lone Scherfig, you know, people who are broadly speaking classifiable boys as, as, as, as losers. This, this sort of a diverse range their issues, and I think probably the difference between the social issues approach that is evident I think in both Dogma films and Sixth Generation films.

Is that, it's probably not possible in Danish case to sort of draw a clear line from all of these different social issues which are quite diverse down to a

single sort of causal or a single explanatory matrix. Where is in the Chinese context, I think that is more evident. Right? So, it tends, okay migrant workers, expropriation of lands, the impact of a certain state policies on the dissolution of the social, on the social bond. Dissolution and it's, it's, I think in the Chinese context there is a more obvious invitation to draw a very clear, clear line from this social issues being dealt in the films back to you know State policies, State decision-making, State priorities, and so on so forth. So, the, the, the Sixth Generation films in that sense are more obviously a critical engagement with, with the State. That's just, I don't, I don't see anything like that on Danish context. So, if I had to sum it up, I would say there is a greater, I see a greater diversity of social issues in the Danish Dogma films, and those, that diversity issues cannot be there is no there is no obvious authorial intent to link their social issues to, you know, of particular State agency whatever that is and have a responsible for them. In the Chinese case, I see a convergence on the same sorts of issues and the strong authorial intend to allocate responsibility to, you know, governmental agency, State agency.

**TQ** - For instance, in, this is a, right now, occurred to my mind, for instance "The Hunt" (Thomas Vinterberg) film is something that, is (represents) a social issue. We can address it also as a social issue. You (do you) agree or not?

**MH** - The film definitely takes up social issues, and that of course the film that also, you know, engages very much with social institutions in very interesting ways.

**TQ** - Yes.

**MH** - It's not a Dogma film of course. Right? So. You know insofar is the question focus on Dogma that one is not Dogma film but it's a, I think every Danish Dogma filmmaker I have spoken to as told me that once you have made a Dogma film it is in your blood. It's, it's, it's, it's really part of you, you are as a filmmaker; something that you take with you from that experience. So, so I say, you know, "The Hunt" is not a Dogma film and of course it's not. But, you know, I can certainly see why you would want to say that you

perceive for example, you know, a certain continuities between the, you know, Vinterberg's Dogma film and then now on. And certainly one, one that is very powerful about "The Hunt" I think, is it looks at, you know, something that is part of it's a human universal gossip and it's absolutely pernicious effects. But in this particular case what is very, very powerful about it, about the film I think, it's the way in which it links something that we recognize as universal to something that is very, very specific. Mainly the particular sort of dynamics of a, of, of social institutions in the Danish context. That's very powerful.

**TQ** - You said something, then minutes before, maybe, I totally agree, the Fifth Generation, are more, I'm talking now about Chinese cinema, the Fifth Generation, it is not coherent, let's say.

**MH** - The Sixth.

**TQ** - The Fifth.

**MH** - The Fifth.

**TQ** - Now I'm talking the Fifth.

**MH** - Ok.

**TQ** - Is not a coherent (generation) because it's not possible to catalogue because let's say Chen Kaige starts (started) like a Fifth, as you was mentioning and maybe the Sixth Generation is more able to be coherent because they are Fifth Generation from the first film they, they, they did until the last one they recently released. Right? So, Dogma 95 in somehow, in terms of coherence, let's say, is (more) closer than, if I understood correctly, is (more) closer to Fifth Generation; because you right now you said that Thomas Vinterberg, for instance "The Hunt" is not a Dogma 95 (film), correct?

**MH** - Right.

**TQ** - Or, or don't reach a consensus in terms of characteristics.

**MH** - Ok. So, yeah.

**TQ** - (Did) you understand the question?

**MH** - I think, well, I think I do. I mean, at least your question made me realize that I need to clarify something. Yeah, so, I mean a really really important feature of Dogma, certainly the Danish Dogma filmmakers is of course, you know, they made a single Dogma film and then they went, you know, so they all them then moving back and forth between different types of, of, of filmmaking. Right? That's a very, very important feature of, of, of that particular context. So, so right now when I was answering your question about sort of continuities and connections between Dogma 95 and Sixth Generation filmmaking, what I have (of) course was doing was I was pulling out single isolated works from filmographies by people who have been making all sorts of films, you know, the Dogma framework. Right?

**TQ** - Of course.

**MH** - So, so it's, it's, it's a matter of creating continuities between on the one hand Sixth Generation filmmakers who's filmography actually far more consistent with the stylistics traits that we associate with, you know, Sixth Generation. So, that's a kind of, you know, authorial consistency their across the filmographies and were drawing links between that isolated films produced by, by filmmakers you have, you know, had the liberty of working across a sort of a wider range of approx. cinematic. Were, you know, possibilities, right? Yeah.

**TQ** - (But) in that particular, is just a curiosity of mine, about that particularity the Fifth Generation, you mentioned one director (that) tries until the end to do, to have the stamp. Right? (of the Fifth Generation)

**MH** - Right.

**TQ** - It means that, we have Chen Kaige for instance or Zhang Yimou in the beginning of the Fifth Generation they start to do something else. They tried something else but on the contrary the Sixth Generation they are much more, how can I say, loyal to their cinema they want to do.

**MH** - I think so. Well, yeah. I mean I see.

**TQ** - And probably the Dogma 95 in that sense, you correct me (if I'm mistaken) please, in that sense maybe Dogma 95 is more like the Fifth Generation in a sense that in the beginning they had the *manifesto* they tried to, to, to follow a list of features but then they wanted to try other (film forms or film kinds).

**MH** - I will, no, I would, I would not set it up in that sense; because Dogma 95 was a punctual intervention it was, you know, we're going to intervene, we're going to try to make some ways, we're going to create a movement. It was never a matter a sort of say, okay now we defining once and for all this sort of filmmakers what are going to be. It was, let's, let's have a go at this and see what we can do with this particular punctual intervention. Where's Fifth Generation filmmaking was a group style that emerged over a period of time on it really articulated, you know, and ethos of an aesthetic preference and over a period of time where, you know, it really is going to be comes in authorial identity on the part of quite number of people. So, I think in that sense really quite different ways, where becomes relevant to ask you know given that you be making this sorts of films for so long, why are you suddenly sort of a ban, you know, what, what sits at stake and then, you know, making about it whatever. Where is if it's a punctual intervention I don't think you, I don't think that that question arises in quite the same way.

**TQ** - Okay. I see. So, moving to the next question, is it possible in your perspective establish any differences in terms of narrative comparing the so-called China's Urban cinema that it's a pretty much the contemporary Chinese cinema, the Sixth Generation and Dogma (95) cinemas.

**MH** - I would say that many of the Danish filmmakers are graduated the National Film School of Denmark and that is a school that has really, really emphasize the screenwriting; and so even Noel Breger [...] somebody who has, has, really for granted that it's little bit sort of present towards, so, I think I show here and (in) also they do in book number three, so if you've gone, if you graduated from that schools or of you are Lone Scherfig, or Annette Olesen, or Susanne Bier, a Lars von Trier, a Thomas Vinterberg, and so on, you have spent a lot of time with people like you know, talking about what makes a good story I'm screenwriting, so on so forth. So, I think that there is a difference. I would, I would go suffice to say that the Dogma films, probably are tightly structured. As so, if you look at Jia Zhangke' "A Touch of Sin", you know, a hundred and thirty minutes film it's long following bunch of different characters. I think that there is a tendency for these the Chinese I'm stories to be to be more loosely structured. There is a much lose narrative structure. I think, than in the Danish case.

**TQ** - This has to do with notion of time? That might be different.

**MH** - Yeah. It's hard; it's hard to know exactly what it is. I would suspect that there many different explanations that would have to be brought into play here. There are so many different examples that I could point to. Have you seen "1428" by Du Haibin, which is a documentary about Sochuan earthquake. Yeah, collaborates with the editor Mary Stephen film divides into sort of, you know, two chunks. Du Haibin as a filmmaker reminds me a lot of Jia Zhangke in terms of his approach, approach to narrative. I think the, there's something about the stories that they want to tell in China right now which I think makes them have a very strong preference for almost a kind of the cinema direct approach that if, if, I had to pick up just one explanation, I would, maybe two, I would say that in the Danish context many of these filmmakers have gone through film school that has really, really, focused on screenwriting. And, so, that sort of in their DNA. In the Chinese context I would say these filmmakers are trying to capture realities and there's something about those realities that makes the filmmakers deeply suspicious

of imposing a very, very, obvious explicit narrative structure. (My), I get the sense that people like Du Haibin, like Jia Zhangke, are deeply suspicious at some level, all of the very explicit and obvious narrative structure because they see it as an imposition that gets between them and audiences and then this truth. So, so, there filmmaking weather is documentary filmmaking or, or, fiction filmmaking has this very, very, powerful affinity with, with, cinema direct and this idea that the veridical nature of, of, of, filmmaking is going to be most in evidence if one doesn't put a very, very, clear structure in play.

**TQ** - Is like, to be close, as much as possible, to the essence of, of, cinema, in somehow.

**MH** - Yes. And, and, to the, the, the, sort of the truth as you're capturing on the hoof, you know. So, I mean, I think Du Haibin's "1428" illustrates it's just beautifully. It's not cinema direct because the editing Mary Stephen, you know, one of, you know, this part of the worlds most brilliant editors long-term collaborating with ethical manner she's phenomenal editor. She is going (our) artist residence actually, this coming semester. The way they edited it is absolutely not cinema direct, as you get this sort of breaks with that but then within the context of those breaks that are very performative theatrical, sort of, you know, suddenly a black, you know, in search of a black sort of frame within the flow of that much of it tends towards to cinema direct. And, I see, I see, a lot that in the, in the, Chinese context. Of course, you know, actually one of my PhD students right now is just finishing up the PhD dissertation focusing on independent cinema in the last 10 years in China. And one of the things that she is arguing is it much greatest stylistic diversity now in the Chinese context then used to be. So, in a sense this idea that, you know, Sixth Generation is, is, all of, is very much about, you know, the cinema direct. Ethos and styles for this is, is, that's an argument that needs to be challenged now as there is indeed growing stylistics diversity. When it comes to narrative, I would say that, that's, that's, much a loose narrative structure, often times in, in, the Chinese context.

**TQ** - And in terms of, moving to the following question, in terms of cinematic aesthetics, do you think define that Dogme 95 and Sixth Generation represent a new cinematic aesthetics? Before we were talking about narrative dimension and now we are talking about the aesthetics dimension.

**MH** - Yeah. Yes. Yes, I think they do. I mean, of course at this point, you know, how new, are they, because this is been sort of taking up in some other places but, but, but yes. I mean Dogma, Dogma legitimated. Of course, one can say, you know, there, you can, there is this continuities between Dogma and Italian Neorealism and Cassavetes, and so on so forth. But what Dogma really did was it legitimated a certain kind of aesthetic, the aesthetic where, you know, the image was pretty mucky. It was, you know, pretty shaky and where the sound was actually difficult to discern away it was all about the power of the acting. So, you know this idea that you could have award-winning films are that we consider to be incredibly powerful and important and yet, you know, the image was, you know, a complete deviation from this sort of a static that say, you know, the Fifth Generation aesthetic valorizes it, right? So, so, in that sense yes definitely, there, there, there was via Dogma 95 and Six Generation filmmaking a legitimization of a certain kind of you look and sound that previously I could easily have been dismissed as simply substandard filmmaking. So, nothing is ever entirely new, so that's an important point. But there was a legitimation of, of, of a certain look, a certain sound, and because of that legitimation a platform created for novices, people who didn't have access to, you know, the kind of technological apparatus that we have been, previously been, been required, and so on so forth. So if, if it creates a platform that makes possible a certain kind of critical mass where by it's no longer just a single filmmaker intervening it actually becomes, you know, possible to have something like a group style where what, what ties that group together is not the prettiness of the images, or the perfection of the sound but rather the power of acting and the importance of the social issues.

**TQ** - In your view, it makes sense to shed light on Asia and Eurocentric views? Or in order to comprehend those differences, or this process it takes place in both ways?

**MH** - I'm not sure I understand this question.

**TQ** - The differences that, that, we witness in Dogme 95, and the, in the Sixth Generation, it happens, it happens in both ways? It means, because we are talking about two possible views, it means, Asina view, right? And Eurocentric view, as well.

**MH** - I wouldn't use the term Eurocentric. If, if your question is asking is it fruitful to draw these comparisons. Is it fruitful to create these intercultural conversations? I would say absolutely, 100% absolutely. One of my fondest memories of being an academic was, we had this summer institute at Hong Kong University when I was teaching there, and we, had a panel on Dogma, Dogma is still very quite new and fresh, and we invited Vincent Chui who was the first Hong Kong filmmaker to make a Dogma film. He came to be part of the panel, and then there was me, and there was Ann Hui. And of course, Vincent never, you know, wanted to make a completely bonafide Dogma film. Was like, I like this rule, I like that rule. He also likes the platform. And, Ann was saying what is this nonsense with all of these brethren, I, I, can't get this business of "Vow" taking, so on so forth. But, she said what a wonderful sort of egalitarian, ethos I discern here. So, you know, by putting a Dane and Hong Kong filmmakers in a room together discuss with an international audience why Dogma mattered, we got the most fantastic conversation going. And, and, you know, so, so, I think, you know, the Danish people who actually came up with Dogma 95 and who signed on for earlier phases can learn a lot, about what that movement was all about and what they actually were, you know, achieving by talking to people in other parts of the world to engage with Dogma and felt into, it was important. And I think it's a tremendously illuminating also. If you are a Danish filmmaker to understand that you know that somebody called Ning Ying is dying to make a Dogma film but chooses to make the antithesis of the dogma film but to make, you know, the entire production process is antithetical to dogma but the whole aim is to make the final film actually in every other respect be faithful to the Dogma ethos and to have Dogma look. I think fantastically, interesting for Danish filmmakers in the Danish context to be aware of that sort of, you know, process because it

makes you think more about, you know, what you're doing yourself as a filmmaker, it helps you understand, you know, the challenges of, of, of being a filmmaker in this other context. The thing is that, that, that, that actually make for this fantastic transnational solidarity. Even though you're working out of such completely different sort of filmmaking environments. So, I, I, think one doesn't actually come to understand the full contribution of a movement like Dogma, unless you get the intercultural conversation going. And I don't think you; I don't think you actually get to see the tremendous opportunity is coming out of transnational solidarity. Again, unless you actually have, you know, that kind, that of kind of conversation. So, I think that you know some of the most interesting projects are ones that come out of the sort of conversations. I've just completed a chapter focusing on docs labs talent development program, which is all about matching a European and a non-European filmmaker. One of the rules or one of the requirements is that they actually have to co-director a film. So it has to be genuine co-direction. So, that's, you know, I think, you know, an example of a very particular approach to talent development that insists on this idea bringing Europe and, and, not Europe together. So, I think these conversations are incredibly important.

**TQ** - A last question, thank you very much, is (an) already a long, long but interesting talk. A last question, and is one of my main key questions, research key question, has to do, to what extent social changes influence, or doesn't influence, cinema aesthetics. In your view, social changes, in other words, to what extent social changes influence aesthetics?

**MH** - Well, there are lots, lots, of examples of, of, social issues, social change, the social context influencing film aesthetics. I think it's really important as a film scholar captures some of that and to also defend that link. So, what interests me about, you know, say West African cinema, Ousmane Sembène his film "Moolaadé" is that, you know, the, the, aesthetics of Sembène's cinema is, is so obviously traceable to one the very specific constraints and the which is working as an African filmmaker. On the one hand, those constraints, which are social constraints, linked to the specificities of his cultural context, those constraints are evident in the films. But then also the

society that he wishes to remain true to and to capture is also entirely evident, in, in, in the aesthetics, right? So, he has this wonderful discussion of for example sound where he says, you know, Western cinema has sound for everything, you know, every emotion has to be captured in a, in a sonic, in a sonic way and, and, he, you know, fascinated by this idea of, of, of, of, silence because all natural sound because he sees a completely different approach to sound as being much, much, much sort of faithful to Africa realities. There is a wonderful discussion also of the business of, you know, of editing pace; and of the idea of, you know, film aesthetics as needing to be also reflective of oral traditions or storytelling and the sort of continuity between an oral storytelling tradition and then, himself understanding as an African filmmaker. So, I think that, yes, cultural diversity social difference on those things, or what or what to make their way into film aesthetics. And when they do not it's because there are obstacles, you know, being created by, you know, financiers and the dynamics of film industries, and so on so forth. I think that as a film scholar, one of the things that one can do you, one can be, one of the, you know, the people to step up to capture the value of those cases where against all odds, as in the case of Burkina Faso up. People continue to make films and to do so in ways that they see as faithful to their local context and specificities of their cultures. So, social change doesn't, you know, or the social aspect doesn't always influence cinema aesthetics but I think it should, it should. Yeah. Yeah.

**TQ** - Thank you so much Professor Mette Hjort.

**MH** - You're very welcome. You're very welcome.

**TQ** - For this fruitful discussion.

**MH** - Good. I'm glad. Good.

**TQ** - Thank you very much.

**“A Touch of Sin” and “The Hunt” visual grammar**

**Close-up Shot**



FILM STILL 1 | "A TOUCH OF SIN", JIA ZHANGKE (2013)



FILM STILL 2 | "A TOUCH OF SIN", JIA ZHANGKE (2013)



FILM STILL 1 | "THE HUNT", THOMAS VINTERBERG (2012)



FILM STILL 2 | "THE HUNT", THOMAS VINTERBERG (2012)

**Long Shot**



FILM STILL 3 | "A TOUCH OF SIN", JIA ZHANGKE (2013)



FILM STILL 4 | "A TOUCH OF SIN", JIA ZHANGKE (2013)



FILM STILL 3 | "THE HUNT", THOMAS VINTERBERG (2012)



FILM STILL 4 | "THE HUNT", THOMAS VINTERBERG (2012)

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*Be There Or Be Square* (1998), Feng Xiaogang

*Sorry Baby!* (1999), Feng Xiaogang

*Big Shot's Funeral* (2002), Feng Xiaogang

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*House of Flying Daggers* (2004), Zhang Yimou

*Beijing Bastard* (1993), Zhang Yuan

**Tomé Quadros' bio**

Graduating from the School of Arts of the Portuguese Catholic University in 2003, Tomé Quadros lives and works since 2004 in Macau SAR - People's Republic of China. In 2010, he received his Master of Arts in Film Documentary with the thesis entitled "Macau Music Box - O Eu e o Outro no Filme Documentário, uma possibilidade de encontro entre Oriente e Ocidente".

Since 2011, he is Ph.D. Candidate in Science and Technology of the Arts at the School of Arts, Portuguese Catholic University, specializing in the field of Cinema and Audiovisual, researching on the topic Contemporary Chinese and Danish Cinemas. His research has been addressed in China, Japan and Portugal, with special emphasis on presentations in Serralves Foundation during Interfluxus 2012; Black & White Audiovisual Festival in 2013; III Colloquium on Intermedia Studies, Oporto; FilmAsia - the Second Asian Conference on Film and Documentary, Waseda University (Japan); Lisbon Consortium 2014; and Avanca International Conference Cinema 2014.

The paper entitled "Jia Zhangke's 24 City in the Spotlight of the New Urban Cinema, Rethinking a State of Transition in Today China" authored by Tomé Quadros and presented at the 9th International Conference on the Arts organized by ESE - IPVC (School of Education) was published last 2014 in *Diálogos com a Arte*, vol. 4 (ISSN: 2183-1726), journal of Art, Culture and Education published by IPVC (Viana do Castelo - Portugal) and Minho University (Braga - Portugal).

Late this year 2015, the book chapter entitled "Social Transformation in the Eyes of Contemporary Chinese Cinema and Dogme 95" co-authored by Émilie Tran and Tomé Quadros, is a forthcoming paper to be included in an edited book by Susana Gonçalves and Suzanne Majhanovich entitled "(Inter)cultural Dialogue Through Arts and Media", and to be published by Sense Publishers (The Netherlands).

Tomé Quadros has directed several feature and documentary films, and TV programs. Namely, in 2006 he directed the video entitled “Nam Van Square” as part of the “Habitar Portugal 2003-2005” project exhibited at the 10th Venice Biennale Architecture; 2009 co-directed the documentary entitled “Macau Music Box” sponsored by IACM - Macau SAR; 2014 cinematography of the documentary entitled “Fat Tea” sponsored by IACM - Macau SAR.

Tomé Quadros has also directed a documentary about the world famous Portuguese painter Nadir Afonso, in the second half of the 1940s Nadir Afonso began working at the architect Le Corbusier’s ATBAT studio in Paris where He met, among others, Picasso, Calder, Max Ernst, Fernand Léger and André Wogenscky, included in the book entitled “Nadir 16.11.00” authored by António Quadros Ferreira, and published by Edições Afrontamento Oporto - Portugal in late 2014.

Since 2010 Tomé Quadros is a Senior Lecturer in Communication and Media studies at the Faculty of Creative Industries, University of Saint Joseph - Macau.

## **Publications of the author**

**Published Paper**

## Published Paper

The paper entitled “Jia Zhangke’s 24 City in the Spotlight of the New Urban Cinema, Rethinking a State of Transition in Today China” authored by Tomé Quadros and presented at the 9th International Conference on the Arts organized by ESE - IPVC (School of Education) was published last 2014 in *Diálogos com a Arte*, vol. 4 (ISSN: 2183-1726), journal of Art, Culture and Education published by IPVC (Viana do Castelo - Portugal) and Minho University (Braga - Portugal).

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# Diálogos com a arte

revista de arte, cultura e educação

Escola Superior de Educação de Viana do Castelo - IPVC  
Centro de Estudos da Criança do Instituto de Educação - UM

## 2 | *Jia Zhang-ke's 24 City in the spotlight of the new urban cinema, rethinking a state of transition in today China*

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### **Abstract**

In the past thirty years, China has been through a spectacular paradigm shift and growth, from an isolated underdeveloped country at the end of the 1970s, to being today the world's second largest economy after the United States. The paradigm shift and growth has been translated into an accelerated urbanization process with all of the dramatic social transformations such a process implies. Despite the constraints of this context, since the late 1970s and early 1980s, Chinese cinema, labeled as the renewal or transition era cinema, has harbored the seeds of cultural change.

The new Chinese cinema shows clear evidence of Deleuze's idea on the "movement-image" and the "time-image"<sup>1</sup>, when realism is the place to represent the dramatic transformation of Chinese urban landscape. The contemporary Chinese cinema shares this new cinematic landscape view – the new urban cinema (*xin chengshi dianying*) – and has been portraying the deep on-going social changes that have ensued, such as large scale economic liberalization through the work of the fifth and sixth generations of Chinese filmmakers, respectively headed by Chen Kaige and Zhang Yimou for the former, and Jia Zhang-ke, Lou Ye, and Wang Xiaoshui for the later. The new Chinese cinema embodies challenging representations, lying between fiction and documentary, tracing tradition and modernity.

Among the disaffected and disillusioned youth, the contemporary Chinese cinema perceives the avoided reality, where, "film is a moving image of skepticism" (Cavell, 1979: 188), playing an invisible narrative through a certain kind of realism. In the eyes of Jia Zhang-ke's, *24 City*, this paper aims to discuss to what extent the new Chinese cinema may contribute to better understand this as a defined state of transition or latency, within a collective and individual memory representation in today China. Jia Zhang-ke's *24 City* portrays the struggles imposed upon the country's huge marginalized population, especially on the rural and migrant working classes – the floating generation.

**Keywords:** *cinéma vérité*, fifth-generation, latency, sixth-generation, urban landscape

### **Introduction: the new Chinese cinema and the emergence of a critical concept**

In the past thirty years, China has been through a spectacular paradigm shift and growth, from an isolated underdeveloped country at the end of the 1970s, being today the world second largest economy after the United States. The paradigm shift and growth has been translated into an accelerated urbanization process with all the dramatic social transformations such a process implies.

<sup>1</sup> In Gilles Deleuze's (1986/1983). *Cinema 1. The movement-image*. London: The Athlone Press and (1989/1985) *Cinema 2. The time-image*. London: The Athlone Press.

Despite the constraints of this context, since the late 1970s and early 1980s, Chinese cinema, labeled as the renewal or transition era cinema, has harbored the seeds of cultural change. During this period, two crucial historical moments took place in China: Tiananmen democracy movement and its suppression (1989); and when Deng Xiaoping made his famous “tour to the south” (1992).

The new Chinese cinema is composed by all generations of filmmakers and all genres of Chinese cinema, since the late 1970s until today. Without the contribution and impulse of the fifth generation at the turn of the new economic reforms, transition or renewal era – the face of the new Chinese cinema would be different. The fifth generation of Chinese filmmakers led by Chen Kaige and Zhang Yimou, and the sixth generation of Chinese filmmakers led by Jia Zhang-ke, Lou Ye, and Wang Xiaoshui, have made this the most important moment of cinema in China. The sixth generation of Chinese filmmakers mirrors today the best of the new Chinese cinema purposes, concerns, and aesthetics. It “went through the most important keywords from the past one hundred years of Western documentary - Direct Cinema, *cinéma vérité*, and the concepts of performative and reflexive documentary” (Berry, Lu & Rofel, 2010: 24). China’s visual culture today has found its roots during this time. Challenging representations, the new Chinese cinema builds cinematic city views of Chinese society today. Jia stated that, “surrealism is a crucial part of China’s reality. In the past 10 or so years, China has experienced the kinds of changes that might happen across a span of 50 or even 100 years in any normal country, and the speed of these changes has had an unsettling, surreal effect”<sup>2</sup> (Andrew Chan, 2009). In other words, the new Chinese cinema, and its new urban cinema (*xin chengshi dianying*) through the new documentary movement first appearing in 1992, is concerned with the human dimension of sweeping reforms by the Chinese government since the late 1970s, and the struggles imposed over three decades upon the country’s huge marginalized population. Mainly, on the rural and migrant working classes or the so-called, “floating generation”.

The main feature of the New Chinese cinema focuses the attention on the ‘*others*’, who can be defined as the ‘weaker’ or ‘disadvantaged’ social group (*ruoshi qunti*). They are suffering more from the consequences rather than the benefits of the rapid industrialization and urbanization, where “two Chinas seem to coexist: a China already integrated with the world market, and a China still unable or unwilling to enter the playground of finance capital, global competition, and neoliberal social policies” (Zhang, 2001: 6). Among the disaffected and disillusioned youth, the new Chinese cinema perceives the avoided reality where: “Film is a moving image of skepticism precisely because it does not resolve the stand-off between the desire to know the world and a sense of its retreat from us” (Davis, 2010: 155). In other words, tracing tradition (past) and modernity in today China (future), the new Chinese cinema lies between fiction and documentary. As follows:

Like the New Documentary Movement, they focused on contemporary Chinese reality rather than the ancient past. Furthermore, many of them shot documentaries themselves, and the themes, styles, and aesthetics of their features have genealogical connections with documentary filmmaking. Jia Zhang-ke and Zhang Yuan are representative examples.” (Berry, Lu, & Rofel, 2010: 26)

The new Chinese cinema plays an invisible narrative through a certain kind of realism, having the ability to perceive the voided reality, or the skeptic reality. The “sense of reality”, Cavell reiterates, “cannot from the beginning be real or have happened, except perhaps by the purest or most miraculous of coincidences [...]” (1979: 183). The new Chinese cinema emphasizes the intrinsic dimension of representation to reality, and fiction documenting reality through the use of new narrative structures, i.e. real and fictional atmospheres; elements and fictional realities; film spatiality and film observational narrative; film narrative and seeking for the truth of the human condition portrays modern China and Chinese society today. Jia’s filmography delivers the possibility to trace a trajectory of ambiguity and uncertainty: observing, revealing and portraying the dramatic transformation of Chinese urban landscape. The tension in Jia’s feature is often shaped by confrontation of the popular

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.filmcomment.com/article/jia-zhangke-interview>

culture and the political culture, (where/ from what), a society that allows its citizens to have flexibility and freedom to establish a way of living and to use the public spheres according to their needs. As Braester (2007: 162) follows, "The documentary impulse in the new urban cinema became a vehicle of criticism - not only by placing a mirror in front of a numbed society but also by foregrounding the limitations of documentation in the face of inevitable and sometimes partly desirable urban development." Jia seeks a new cinematic paradigm through an innovative language mainly characterized by political concerns, focusing on the social and cultural development of China, at the turn of the twenty-first century. *24 City* shifts back and forward between documentary and fiction, where documentary plays the social role and fiction plays the psychological analysis. In the eyes of Jia Zhang-ke's, *24 City*, this paper aims to discuss to what extent the contemporary Chinese cinema may contribute to better understand this as a defined state of transition or latency towards a new form of global hybrid cinema.

### **Jia Zhang-ke's *24 City*: a state of transition or latency?**

In China, the process of social reform started before in the 70s, has acquired today a surreal quality of cultural incongruity. The new Chinese cinema builds an invisible narrative based on a certain way of realism. In July 2005, Jia Zhang-ke gave an interview to *China Perspectives* concluding,

[...] when you make a documentary, and you want to raise certain questions, people do not necessarily want to talk about their private lives. There's a danger of filming only appearances. It's even more difficult with ordinary people, and they are the ones I want to talk about." (Batto, 2005: 8)

The representation of reality at 420's factory complex in *24 City* leads the spectator into a vis-a-vis of two different worlds made of realism and uncertainty, coexisting side by side. The 'city' inside the factory complex, and Chengdu as the representation of the outside world. Tradition plays the social role and represents a glorious collective memory. Modernity plays the psychological analysis towards an individual and prosperous future. *24 City* is not a film to inspire political activism, however it is politically meaningful, laying inbetween the social documentary and drama fiction. *24 City* is about faded and erased collective memory, and at the same time a reflection upon identity and modernity in post-Mao China with a city view of Chengdu as back drop. The 420's factory complex it is now being transformed into a landmark of market economy: an apartment complex called "*24 City*". Jia, plays a relationship between the city and his cinema, where, "Urban spaces appear in the film in two forms, either as not yet demolished structures or as yet to be completed new buildings" (Braester 2007: 167). *24 City* is composed by long shots, with hand-held cameras and mainly close-ups on body and landscape features. The full shots represent the "collective-social foundation" and embody the idea of portraying reality as it is – the memory and the future; and close-up shots represent the individual and their emotional side through their stories, and the idea of a timeless and place of emptiness is also inherent. However, the full-shots don't look like empty. In an interview on March 2009, Jia Zhang-ke stated:

In my long shots and long takes, my goal is to respect the viewer's agency, and even to give my films a sense of democracy. I want audiences to be able to freely choose how they want to interact with what's on screen. But everyone's reasons for using long shots and long takes are different; personally, I just don't want my position as a director to become dictatorial, because I want my films to be governed by a sense of equality and democracy. (Chan, 2009: 11)

The main characters are workers or retired workers from the state-own military aircraft engines factory in Chengdu, given the name Factory 420 as an internal military security code. The narrative in *24 City* is made of their life experiences, and represents a crucial moment of China's social reality today, showing "the quiet brutality of a regime that inculcates its population with the belief that the responsibility of each person is to the larger society, and then the family. Little is left for the

individuality” (Nochimson, 2009: 104). This film is a journey of a half-century’s fictional silence shedding light on its human dimension, which enables critical thinking to be built upon dramatic social change, which such a fast urban shift and growth process implies.

All over the film, the soundtrack is made of atmosphere and background sound; but when the characters are presented or when some moment is ending, there is a recurrent score, as if to announce something. Then, there are some recurrent visual elements, or recurrent visual frames, like the truck in the beginning and very near in the conclusion, or the main gate of the factory, illustrating and delivering the mood of floating time and space. The narrative is composed of multiple stories, namely the story of five female main characters – Hou Lijun, Dali, “Little Flower” or Gu Minhua, Yang Mengyue, and Su Na; and five male main characters – He Xikun, Master Wang, Secretary Guan, Song Weidong, and Zhao Guang. Hou Lijun, Dali, and Gu Minhua, personify the memory of post-socialist legacy. In counterpart, Hou Lijun and Gu Minhua represent the generation of migrants or the floating generation. Hou Lijun moved from rural countryside to Chengdu as a factory worker, and Gu Minhua, who graduated from Shanghai Aviation Academy, is placed by Beijing authorities to work at that time at Factory 420 as a high-qualified expert. Both never went back home, and are part of Chengdu’s memory city and examples of social transformation.

Gu Minhua remembers the times she arrived in Chengdu, and how the environment (and not to say society), was so primitive and closed. The young girl, Yang Mengyue, has both parents working at 420, but she has never been there. Yang becomes the exception when she studied in a school outside the 420 factory complex. Together with another female character, Su Na, they embody the generation gap; but at the same time, the future hope and a certain idea of modernity. <sup>24</sup> City echoes women’s voice and their issues in modern China. Jia’s observational approach through the eyes of Su Na leaves many unanswered questions. On the other hand, Hou Lijun He Xikun, Master Wang, and Secretary Wang, represent the male voice of 420’s memory (tradition). Song Weidong, 420’s Assistant Director, represents tradition towards modernity. Zhao Gang is the anchor of the “News Round-Up” on Chengdu TV. Always believing in a better education to face a brighter future, Zhao’s character intends to preserve the memory of his own life’s learning experience, embodying modernity and perseverance.

<sup>24</sup> City consists of an emotional thread that hold the different stories together: the workers’ ambivalent feelings towards the factory and its relocation. This is also what binds the two panels of the film together – documentary and fiction. Delivered in a rather random, impressionistic and elliptical manner, they do not establish any narrative relation to each other or form a coherent larger narrative. Jia is rather interested in exploring the life itself within individual characters as they are. As Jiwei (2011) writes:

Jia lets his camera roll on as silence dawns upon the person at the end of his/her interview. Silence sometimes permeates the whole scene. The idea of letting silence speak the ineffable comes from Jia’s real-life interviews, during which he intuits that ‘more extraordinary stories of memory must have submerged into the silence, into the moments when these people finished telling their stories and probably those silences are the most important.’ (p. 31)

Jia Zhang-ke’s *24 City* mirrors this contradictory feeling – the outside world and the workers whom are isolated from it and cannot control their fate and future. As a result, any personal story in *24 City* related to the floating population can be read as a national allegory to a certain extent. It tries to reestablish an increasingly attenuated link and relevance between China’s recent past and its present by alluding to the broken promise and broken dream of socialism. In any society, the city stages the idea of modernity. In China, at the turn of the twenty-first century, the city leads the major role heading to modernity. In a certain way, the cities are the hub for significant modernizing efforts, including social and political stages. Tradition and modernity through cinema, “contributes to the experimental quality of their works through its open-endedness” (Tonglin, 2002: 13). The struggle for cultural identity which looked back to the past and history is today looking forward at a modern nation.

### Conclusion: the new Chinese cinema towards a new form of global cinema

The main theme of the new Chinese cinema deals primarily with economic reforms implemented in the late 1970s; to be specific – the opening policy and its impact in the Chinese post-Mao society. With more emphasis in the late 1980s, Garry Xu stated, “A new paradigm of cultural production and consumption is taking shape in China” (Xu, 2007: 10). The new Chinese cinema portrays the daily life and individual characters as common citizens as they are for real. The floating population (those ex-farmers and peasants who left the countryside to look for better job prospects in cities, greatly contributed to building the urban China we see today through the new Chinese cinema lens. Namely, the sixth generation of Chinese filmmakers, being themselves part of this floating generation, have transformed the face of new Chinese cinema today into an observatory of social and psychological changes in Chinese society. This major contribution shaped the filming style of the new Chinese cinema’s visual language. André Bazin states, “The word ‘realism’ as it is commonly used does not have an absolute and clear meaning, so much as it indicates a certain tendency toward the faithful rendering of reality on film. Given the fact that this movement towards the real can take a thousand different routes” (Bazin, 1973: 85). Realism became the *leitmotif* in the new Chinese cinema. Jia evokes in his films the feeling of an everyday China, revealing the daily life in China today, representing its social issues, and laying between fiction and documentary film forms. As Visser suggests:

Most of the fiction, art films, and documentaries depicting China’s urban demolition share a gritty documentary aesthetic which addresses dislocation anxieties by deconstructing the present with a conspicuous absence of nostalgia. In postsocialist Chinese urban culture, nostalgia itself gets called up, exploited, and treated ironically. (2010: 36-37)

The realist impulse in the new Chinese cinema relates to the “modernization of cinematic language”. It emphasizes the intrinsic dimension of representation to reality, fiction documenting reality through the use of new narrative structures. Such as real and fictional atmospheres; elements and fictional realities; film spatiality and film observational narrative; film narrative and seeking the truth of the human condition. Jia seeks for the endless quest of truth and the meaning of humanity. *24 City* triggers realism to represent and portray social and psychological issues in Chinese society today. Jia embraces themes of social dislocation and the disaffection of urban youth, mirroring a new cultural and aesthetic meaning. Jia seeks a new cinematic paradigm through an innovative language: fiction with documentary effects, and documentary with fictional effects.

If individual memory is interdependent with social and collective memory, and if a film aims at evoking a common historical consciousness despite the actual multiplicity and diversity of experience, then the synthetic or composite memory may generate the same effects as “real” memory. Mainly characterized by political concerns, focusing on the social and cultural development of China at the turn of the twenty-first century, Jia stated the following:

Now I feel more of a sense of social responsibility. A movie can be a fantasy or it can be a realistic depiction of society. At the same time, a film is a memory. At this point, I’m most interested in emphasizing cinema’s function as memory, the way it records memory, and how it becomes a part of our historical experience. (Chan, 2009: 17)

Jia Zhang-ke’s filmography embodies a bold new style of urban realism within the bounds of the new Chinese cinema. The fast pace of urbanization at the turn of the twenty-first century results in fading and floating a collective memory, making this the crucial moment of social transition in Chinese contemporary history. The legacy of this memory has just been erased, leaving a sense of void and emptiness. The new Chinese cinema is characterized by a critical attitude towards the past, whether it would be the failures of nationalism and modernization, “Since Chinese literature is the major vehicle for the discursive practice of Chinese modernity, the postsocialist shift to the visual can be regarded as ‘postmodern’ ” (Xu, 2007: 12).

Modernity has as a commitment to give audiences a sense of belonging to a community to compensate for the traditional communities they have been disowned from. A concern or engagement with the future can be one way of correcting uncritical traditionalism and deepen one's involvement with the political status of the traditions of the defeated and the marginalized. Such engagements with the future may sometimes be episodic because they have to build upon an oscillation between the past and the future, and it's not possible to avoid the past when addressing the issue of modernity. The new Chinese cinema gave Chinese audiences how to know freely its own cinema – in some extent its own identity basis or nationhood. A 'cultural critique' is observed based on a 'historical reflection', shifting back and forth between the Chinese countryside and the metropolis. The new Chinese cinema 'nation' is not anymore national, because the emergent category of transnational Chinese cinema problematizes the traditional paradigm of national cinema towards a condition of global hybridity.

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**Forthcoming Paper**

## **Forthcoming Paper**

Late this year 2015, the book chapter entitled “Social Transformation in the Eyes of Contemporary Chinese Cinema and Dogme 95” co-authored by Professor Émilie Tran and Senior Lecturer Tomé Quadros, is a forthcoming paper to be included in an edited book by Susana Gonçalves and Suzanne Majhanovich entitled “(Inter)cultural Dialogue Through Arts and Media”, and to be published by Sense Publishers (The Netherlands).

# **Social Transformation in the Eyes of Contemporary Chinese Cinema and Dogme 95**

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## **INTRODUCTION: TWO DISTINCT COUNTRIES AND ITS CINEMAS**

In the past thirty years China has been through a spectacular paradigm shift and growth, from an isolated underdeveloped country at the end of the 1970s to being today the world second largest economy after the United States. The paradigm shift and growth has been translated into an accelerated urbanization process with all the dramatic social transformations such a process implies. Since the late 1970s and early 1980s, Chinese cinema, labeled as the renewal or transition era cinema, has been portraying the deep social transformations that have ensued such as large scale economic liberalization through the work of the fifth and sixth generations of Chinese filmmakers, respectively headed by Chen Kaige and Zhang Yimou for the former, and Jia Zhangke, Lou Ye, and Wang Xiaoshui for the latter.

On the other side of the globe, the constitutional monarchy of Denmark evolved from an agricultural to an industrialized society within a span of one-

hundred fifty years and since the 1970s, it has also been struggling through economic crises and its social consequences. One of the hotly debated social issues in contemporary Denmark is the question of immigration. As for cinema production, Denmark has been at the avant-garde within the European cinema: Dogme 95 represents the legacy of two masters of Danish cinema, Carl Dreyer and Ingmar Bergman. Dogme 95 created by Lars Von Trier and Thomas Vinterberg, was later joined by fellow Danish directors Kristian Levring and Søren Kragh-Jacobsen.

The authors argue that despite their fundamentally distinct historical and cultural backgrounds as well as socio-economical trajectories, China and Denmark have in common a contemporary cinema production that portrays on-going social changes in their respective contexts. Thus, this study aims firstly at examining the similarities and differences between Chinese contemporary cinema and Dogme 95 in terms of artistic expressions and the use of the medium in telling about social movements. In the 1990s, and at the turn of the twenty century, cinema observes and reveals society transformation as their major theme, and portrays with critical thinking the particularities and singularities of society changes in the recent past and deciphering its present and offer some ways towards the near future. Secondly, this paper discusses to what extent contemporary Chinese cinema and Dogme 95, both lying between fiction and documentary, may contribute to facilitate the state and/in society dialogue and to the understanding of social issues. emphasizes the filmic representational hybrid territory, lying between fiction and documentary, in order to address social issues due to society transformation. On the one hand, as a psychological observatory, on the other hand as a social collective or individual memory representation.

In addressing the above mentioned questions, this paper aims to build a comparative case study by contrasting two different ways of cinematic productions, analyzing two icons of contemporary Chinese cinema and one from Dogme 95, respectively Jia Zhangke's "24 City" (2008); and analyzing Thomas Vinterberg's "The Celebration" (1998). "24 City" is considered a typical illustration of urban Chinese cinema, and on the other hand "The Celebration" is acknowledged as the first Dogme 95 film back in the 1990s.

Both cinemas reinvent and rethink the *cinéma vérité*, emphasizing the intrinsic dimensions of reality and fiction representations. The use of new narrative structures are implemented in order to enhance the gaze of reality, such as: real and fictional atmospheres; elements and fictional realities (the relation between atmosphere and where the action takes place); film spatiality and film observational narrative; film narrative and the truth of the human condition. Fiction and documentary boundaries are blurred.

### 1) Similarities and differences between contemporary Chinese cinema and Dogme 95

“ There’s a danger of filming only appearances. It’s even more difficult when filming ordinary people, and they are the ones I want to talk about.”

(Jia Zhangke, July-August 2005)

Globalization accelerates the processes of social change, which affects our relationship to time and space. The main theme of the new urban cinema (*xin chengshi dianying*) is concerned with the human dimension of sweeping reforms by the Chinese government since the late 1970s, and the struggles imposed over three decades upon the country’s huge marginalized population, especially on the rural and migrant working: floating generation. Jia Zhang-ke’s “24 City” portrays the changes the last half century of a Chinese state-owned military factory in Chengdu, given the name factory 420 as an internal military security code. This factory produced aircraft engines and witnessed years of prosperity, where the workers were separated with the outside world and couldn’t control their destination and future. It is now being transformed into an emblem of market economy: an apartment complex called 24 City. Jia Zhang-ke’s “24 City” tells about the boundaries of memory and its representation: tradition and modernity. “24 City” is made of fictional curiosity with moments of silence and documentary sincerity. Those fictional moments of silence show clear evidence of Jia’s interest in exploring the life within individual characters as they are. Although the political message is not clearly

stated, it is still conveyed in a rather subtle way. “Jia lets his camera roll on as silence dawns upon the person at the end of his/her interview. Silence sometimes permeates the whole scene. The idea of letting silence speak the ineffable comes from Jia’s real-life interviews, during which he intuits that more extraordinary stories of memory must have submerged into the silence, into the moments when these people finished telling their stories and probably those silences are the most important.” (Jiwei Xiao, 2011). Moreover, “hearing” the silence, the audience might turn to their own silent world of memory and feel their own inability to recall and speak.

Jia Zhang-ke’s filmography often makes reference to other forms of arts. While *Still Life* evokes Chinese landscape painting, “24 City” refers to Chinese literature. The script of “24 City” was co-screenwritten with the famous Chinese female poet Zhai Yongming. Jia Zhang-ke explained in an interview for *FilmComment* magazine about his collaboration with Zhai, “She is a Chengdu native with a profound understanding of the city, and she really helped me in localizing this film.” (Andrew Chan, 2009). “24 City”, has a strong relationship with poetry, its general structure and effect is not that of narrative cinema but that of visual poetry in prose mode. The name of “24 City” comes from an old poem, “The Cherished Hibiscus of 24 City in full bloom, a flourishing flower”. This poem is the first, between four other poems, intertitles during the film to guide the audience’s view. The stories delivered to the audience from the interviewees are apparently excerpts of longer reminiscences. Delivered in a rather random, impressionistic and elliptical manner, they do not establish any narrative relation to each other or form a coherent larger narrative. However, I argue there is clear evidence that “24 City” is a wonderful cinematic journey that travels from tradition to modernity. “24 City” is composed of an opening, five moments, and a closing. The opening and the first four moments are representative of tradition seen as memory of a collective and glorious past (social role), and modernity seen as an individual and prosperous future (psychological analysis). The narrative is composed of multiple stories, namely the story of five female main characters (Hou Lijun, Dali, “Little Flower” or Gu Minhua, Yang Mengyue, and Su Na) and five male main characters (He Xikun, Master Wang, Secretary Guan, Song Weidong,

and Zhao Guang). Hou Lijun, Dali, and Gu Minhua personify the memory of post-socialist legacy. On the one hand, Hou Lijun and Gu Minhua represent the floating generation. Hou Lijun moved from rural countryside to Chengdu as a factory worker, and Gu Minhua graduated from Shanghai Aviation Academy is placed by Beijing authorities to work at 420 factory, as high-qualified expert. Both never went back home, and are part of Chengdu's memory city and examples of social transformation. Gu Minhua remembers the times she arrived in Chengdu, and how the environment, and not to say society, was so primitive and closed. The young girl, Yang Mengyue, has both parents working at 420, but she herself has never been there. She becomes the exception when she studied in a school outside the 420 factory complex. Together with another female character, Su Na, she embodies the generation gap, but at the same time the future hope and a certain idea of modernity. Through an observational approach Su Na somehow represents the narrator and Jia Zhang-ke chooses to leave many questions unanswered. On the other hand, Hou Lijun He Xikun, Master Wang, Secretary Wang, represent the male voice of 420's memory (tradition). Song Weidong, 420's assistant director, represents tradition towards to modernity. Zhao Gang, is the anchor of the "News Round-Up" on Chengdu TV: he preserves the memory of his own life learning experience, embodies modernity and perseverance, always believing in a better education to face a brighter future. "24 City" consists of an emotional thread that hold the stories together: the workers' ambivalent feelings towards the factory and its relocation. This thread is also what binds the two panels of the film, documentary and fiction, together.

"Dogme 95" also cast five female main characters (the Mother, Helene, Linda, Pia, and Michelle), and five main characters (Helge, Christian, Michael, Kim, Helene's boyfriend). It's important to note that Linda, even though she is not a living character, is one of the main characters of "The Celebration". Starting with the female main characters, the Mother, and Linda who had committed suicide, represent the past and the memory of a dark past that will stay forever, and on the other hand, Helene, Pia and Michelle are witnesses of that past but also represent the present of a better tomorrow. According to the main male characters, Helge embodies the dark past, and is somehow

guilty for Linda's death and Christian carries everyday this emotional heavy burden until he is able to finally reveal the truth. Christian, Michael and Kim represent the witnesses of that dark past, but finally move towards to a clear and better present and future. Helene's boyfriend represents the immigration's impact and the reaction in Danish society. Although both "24 City" and "The Celebration" are products of different cultural, social and political contexts, it is possible to trace several similarities, and a common main idea behind their cinemas. In Thomas Vinterberg's "The Celebration", the narrative follows only one single story. Helge's family decided to settle their life in countryside and never came back to city, looking forward for a better future. Today, Helge celebrates his sixty anniversary, and he invited his sons and daughter, relatives, and friends to gather in his property in the country side. Christian's twin sister, Linda, had died one month before. Together, both were victim of sexual abuse and incest, during their childhood. "The Celebration" starts the same way it ends. Christian, one of the main characters, personifies the emptiness caused by the trauma of being victim of sexual abuses when he was a child. The film opens with him walking with a vague visage in the countryside of Denmark in the middle of the fields, that belong to his father property, and it ends with his same expression. The nostalgia, and the loneliness of a victim of sexual abuse and incest, feeling depressed being in silence for a long time, and finally now is able to make a settling of accounts with the past. The narrative in "The Celebration" follows the action time, as it would be happening in real time. The leitmotiv is the dinner birthday party, and around the dinner table settle in H shape, where Helge and Christian sit down at the heads of the table, the exposition (rising action), climax, and falling action (denouement) will take place in a conventional way. In mid-time, before dinner, Helene finds a message kept in Linda's room, never been open since the tragic death, and she decides to keep it with her not revealing it to anyone. At the very beginning of the dinner, Christian asks permission to do the opening speech and he had prepared two speeches: one printed on green paper, and the other on yellow paper. His father, Helge, chose the green one. Some might say, it's due to the fact the sofa where the sexual abuses took place was green. Some might say, it represents a message of hope, a window to open and to reveal the dark past they have been through.

However, this 'mission' will not be easy, after three attempts, and by coincidence or not with the help of Pia, the message will be found in Helene room, and Christian will have that proof missing to support the accusations addressed to his father. Nevertheless, what is relevant to underline is the psychological drama in "The Celebration". Like "24 City", there is a tension between documentary and fiction, or in other words, between memory and psychological drama. "The Celebration" is in matter of fact a psychological family drama, "Vinterberg acknowledges Bergman's Fanny and Alexander (1982) as a key influence on "The Celebration", while von Trier's work self-consciously emulates the Danish art-cinema precedent set by Dreyer. While the close-up is a familiar device used in the Kammerspielfilm to lend emotional intimacy with characters, however, Dogma's home-camcorder-style punk anti-aesthetic installs an amateurish desperation in the security of intimate lives that is far from Bergman's or Dreyer's stately family dramas" (Nicholas Rombes, 2005). "The Celebration" is about individual memory, and "24 City" personifies collective memory. Although, at different levels, both films are alive psychological drama of everyday life. "The Celebration" is a fiction staging a true story, provoking a quite remarkable impact in Danish society, but never told like this before. "24 City", is fiction staging reality, revealing and giving the spectator the opportunity to observe a reality that Beijing authorities aimed to not be shown. The ambiguity between the illusion created and the reality represented, defines Dogme 95 movement cinema as an unusual form of representation through a peculiar visual style, " while the vow of chastity suggests a pared down aesthetic in which the hand-held camera is an index to the 'immediate' reality of the shooting process, untainted by technology, the narratives of the eventual films foreground artifice and performance in an extremely playful manner" (Catherine Fowler, 2002). The Vow of Chastity manifesto brought to light a strong aim to contradict the mainstream feature films norms and techniques, such as: hand-held cameras; spontaneous and unexpected camera movements; shaken, noised images and faded images.

The cinematic language in Jia Zhang-ke's "24 City" is composed by long shots, crane shots, tracking shots, and steady-cam shots. The frame

visual work focuses mainly on close-up shots, and even the full-shots don't look like empty. The full shots in "24 City" represent the "collective-social foundation" and embody the idea of portraying the reality as it is, the memory and the future; and close-up shots represent the individual and their emotional side through their stories, and the idea of timeless and emptiness place is also inherent. The character's point-of-view work in "24 City" is very eye captivating. For example, right at the beginning, during the general director's speech, the collective audience of 420's workers is seen in frame. Jia Zhang-ke says, "In my long shots and long takes, my goal is to respect the viewer's agency, and even to give my films a sense of democracy. I want audiences to be able to freely choose how they want to interact with what's on screen. But everyone's reasons for using long shots and long takes are different; personally, I just don't want my position as a director to become dictatorial, because I want my films to be governed by a sense of equality and democracy" (Andrew Chan, 2009). The cinematic language in "24 City" embodies mainly timeless and empty space as collective memory sphere towards modernity .

All over the film, the soundtrack is made of atmosphere and background sound, but when the characters are presented or when some moment is ending, there is a recurrent score, as if to announce something. Then, there are some recurrent visual elements, or recurrent visual frames, like the truck in the beginning and very near in the conclusion, or the main gate of the factory, illustrating and delivering the mood of floating time and space. "24 City" is about faded and erased memory, at the same time a reflection upon identity and modernity in post-Mao China, with the city view of Chengdu as back drop.

## 2) Cinema to comprehend social issues and social change

" Les films sont plus harmonieux que la vie. Il n'y a pas d'embouteillage dans les films, il n'y a pas de temps mort."

(La Nuit américaine, François Truffaut, 1973)

At the turn of the twenty-first century in China, the process of social reform that started some 20 years before, has acquired a surreal quality of cultural incongruity. The new urban cinema builds an invisible narrative based on a certain way of realism. The new urban cinema is characterized by a critical attitude towards the past, whether it would be the failures of nationalism and modernization. Jia Zhang-ke argues that "surrealism is a crucial part of China's reality. In the past 10 or so years, China has experienced the kinds of changes that might happen across a span of 50 or even 100 years in any normal country, and the speed of these changes has had an unsettling, surreal effect" (Andrew Chan, 2009). Migration in China has been a reality in China over the last 25 years, after being prohibited for the preceding 20 years. Today, the new urban cinema label today might be the most accurate term to identify the renewal or transition era and nowadays cinema, because it covers all genres, trends, and generations in post-socialist Chinese cinema. Following this line of thought, Yomi Braester argues the new urban cinema "is better understood as a critical approach that cuts across genres and generations" (Zhang Zhen, 2007). The present paper entitled "The society transformation in urban China, building contemporary Chinese cinema today" will use the term of new urban cinema.

The blueprint of the new urban cinema meets the struggles imposed upon the country's huge marginalized population, especially on the rural and migrant working classes: floating generation. Floating is not only about floating people but time and space. Jia Zhang-ke's filmography show clear evidence on Deleuze's idea on the "movement-image" and the "time-image", because it delivers the possibility to trace a trajectory of ambiguity and uncertainty: observing, revealing and portraying the dramatic transformation

of Chinese urban landscape. Jia Zhang-ke, not only portrays the rural Chinese culture and analyzes the society in general, but also looks for the endless quest of truth and meaning of humanity. Jia Zhangke seeks a new cinema paradigm through an innovative language mainly characterized by political concerns, focusing on the social and cultural development of China at the turn of the twenty-first century. His cinema embodies a bold new style of urban realism in contemporary Chinese cinema. Like the new urban cinema, Jia Zhang-ke embraces themes of social dislocation and the disaffection of urban youth, mirroring a new cultural and aesthetic meaning. Realism is the key word in order to characterize the new urban cinema, likewise Jia's cinema too. André Bazin argues that "The word 'realism' as it is commonly used does not have an absolute and clear meaning, so much as it indicates a certain tendency toward the faithful rendering of reality on film. Given the fact that this movement towards the real can take a thousand different routes" (André Bazin, 1973). Realism in the new urban cinema is represented through a very special gaze that portrays the daily life, where fiction and documentary are united in a single territory which is Chinese contemporary cinema. It emphasizes the intrinsic dimension of representation to reality, fiction documenting reality through the use of new narrative structures, such as real and fictional atmospheres; elements and fictional realities (the relation between atmosphere and where the action takes place); film spatiality and film observational narrative; film narrative and the truth of the human condition. The realist impulse in new urban cinema has to do with the "modernization of cinematic language" with documentary effects. Modernity has as a commitment to give audience a sense of belonging to a community to compensate for the traditional communities they have disowned. A concern or engagement with the future can be one way of correcting uncritical traditionalism and deepen one's involvement with the political status of the traditions of the defeated and the marginalized. Such engagements with the future may sometimes be episodic because they have to build upon an oscillation between the past and the future, and it's not possible to avoid the past when addressing the issue of modernity. The fast pace of urbanization (fading and floating), along with the demolition (erasing), has become the very

theme of contemporary Chinese society today. This long memory has just been left there, giving a sense of void and emptiness.

In both contemporary Chinese cinema and Dogme 95, reality and fiction embody the memory representation of today and the past: tradition (past) and modernity (future). Stanley Cavell argues that “film is a moving image of skepticism” (Stanley Cavell, 1979). The new urban cinema have the ability to perceive the voided reality, or the skeptic reality. What are these most important things hidden in the hollowed moments of silence?

Through “24 City”, Jia touches on a spot in the collective psyche that sets off spasms of painful memory, and in real life, repressed resentment and flares of violence. The massive privatization of state-owned enterprises that started in the 1990s was the cause of hundreds of thousands of laid-off workers acute unemployment issues. Seldom did such disputes escalate into violence. In most cases, anger, resentment, and despair would sink deep into silence and disperse into public oblivion. “24 City” does not explicitly divulge any resentment among the workers. Only a brief glimpse into the impoverished apartment occupied by one of the characters betrays the muffled sentiment—there, “time seems to have stopped in the late 1970s or 80s.” The extensive interviews Jia collected and later published show how fully he understood the grievances and disaffections among these factory workers. The film’s reticence on this issue speaks to Jia’s aesthetic restraint as much as to his delicate position as the “above-ground” independent film director. “24 City” shifts back and forward between documentary and fiction, where documentary plays the social role and fiction plays the psychological analysis. On the one hand, when Jia Zhan-ke blurs interviews with staged scenes; on the other hand when those interviews are disrupted by narrative ellipsis or poetry, stylized visual images and silence moments as well. “24 City” lies between reality and fiction, and embodies the memory representation of China today: “24 City raises the tantalizing question about the constructedness of memory not only because of the narrativity of any memory representation but also because of the collective framework of memory. If the past is inevitably distorted in “recollection” because “we wish to introduce greater coherence,” if individual memory is interdependent with

social and collective memory, and if a film aims at evoking a common historical consciousness despite the actual multiplicity and diversity of experience, then the synthetic or composite memory may generate the same effects as “real” memory. It is the collective-social foundation and function of memory that Jia underscores in his film that finally renders performed storytelling as meaningful as real reminiscences.” (Jiwei Xiao, 2011).

In Denmark, after the "green wave" of the 1980s, many city dwellers moved to the countryside, hoping to return to nature. However, many returned to urban areas after years of unfulfilled dreams. In “The Celebration”, Helge’s stayed in the countryside. This film is not about Helge’s anniversary celebration, rather the reborn from the ashes of Linda and Christian. Probably one true story, among many others in the Danish society.

The controversy in the New Danish cinema has been part of a somewhat planned strategy - in other words centered around the author or director (persona), contrasting with New Chinese cinema where controversy is part of the result of being independent from Beijing authorities. In the first five films of Dogme 95, the theme of family and human relations was chosen as appropriate tool to frame social issues in Danish contemporary society. Dogme 95 is about psychic trauma narrative, where hypocrisy and cynicism play the major role. The film's first wave of Dogme 95 are strongly narrative and also conventional in the use of resources construction of narration and diegetic world. In urban Chinese cinema, work and public persona are one. Lars Von Trier and Thomas Vinterberg have contributed to reshape and resize the landscape of contemporary Danish cinema. In other words, the Dogme 95 and urban Chinese cinemas, rebuild and extend a new concept for their own national cinemas respectively, being an influence for other filmmakers all over the world. Thomas Vinterberg frames the transformation of contemporary Danish cinema sharing his testimony, “my collaboration with Lars Von Trier has taught me that he is able to make Denmark big, without leaving Denmark. And this, for me, is the ultimate ideal. The idea is not to go international and become famous, but to think oneself beyond the Danish mentality” (M. Hjort and I. Bonderbjerg, 2001).

## CONCLUSION: TOWARDS A NEW FORM OF GLOBAL CINEMA

Danes rarely refer to Danishness, a term used for the first time in 1836, but that term has been a hotly debated topic since the increase of immigration in the 1960s and Denmark's affiliation with the European Union (EU) in 1972. Much political and public debate on elements of nationality, sympathies, feeling, and patriotism occurred in the late twentieth century. Many Danes seem to have a strong national attachment, although differences exist and a "Danish community" may be more "imagined" than real — as Benedict Anderson put it — with regards to culture and traditions. However, for many people, the national identity lies in the Danish language. The Vow of Chastity manifesto exhorted by Dogme 95 cinema exceeded the national Denmark borders, bringing new cultural geographies. Therefore, Lars von Trier, Thomas Vinterberg, Soren Krag Jacobsen and Kristian Levring were responsible to print a new cinema, on national and international levels. Dogme 95 movement in the history of film making became global. In the history of cinema movements, schools such as Nouvelle Vague, Italian Neo-realism or New German Cinema, find a direct relation between names and nations where the movements took place. In a different perspective, Dogme 95 cinema movement responded its call by expanding evidence in wider cinema scene. Denmark once was considered an open and welcoming country to foreigners, but tensions between native residents and immigrants arose during the last decades of the twentieth century, culminating in the establishment of political parties whose platforms called for the exclusion of inhabitants of foreign ethnicity from social services and other forms of public support. Immigrants of the second and third generations tend to be doubly socialized, displaying competence in Danish values in public and in the native language at home. The population is categorized into social layers, according to level of education and occupation.

On the other hand, the main theme of the urban Chinese cinema deals with economic reforms implemented in the late 1970s, namely the opening

policy and its impact in the Chinese post-Mao society. The floating population (those ex farmers and peasants who left the countryside to look for better job prospects in cities) greatly contributed to build the urban China we see today. The new urban cinema, namely the sixth generation of Chinese filmmakers, being themselves part of this floating generation, have transformed the face of contemporary Chinese cinema today into an observatory of social and psychological changes in Chinese society. In order to be better understood as a critical approach, the new urban cinema is composed by all generations of filmmakers and all genres of Chinese cinema, since the late 1970s until today. Moreover, without the contribution and impulse of the fifth generation at the turn of the new economic reforms, transition or renewal era, the urban cinema today would not take place, and the face of contemporary Chinese cinema would be different too. The sixth generation of Chinese filmmakers mirrors the best the urban cinema purposes, concerns, and aesthetics. The reality represented in urban cinema, placed between fiction and documentary. In other words, the relationship between social and psychological analysis. Jia Zhang-ke's "24 City", one of the key filmmakers in China's sixth generation of filmmakers, place reality to trigger realism as to represent and portray social and psychological issues in Chinese society today.

"24 City" is a journey of half century time fictional silence shedding light on human dimension, where documentary plays the social role and fiction plays the psychological drama. "The Celebration" is a dark journey, revisiting Helge's family past. It is a psychological family drama, questioning the human dimension and the human truth, in a hybrid territory where fiction meets reality. The representation of reality at 420's factory complex in "24 City", moves the spectator into two different worlds made of realism and uncertainty, through the tension between documentary and fiction. 24 City is in the end a vis-a-vis of two different worlds coexisting side by side. The 'city' inside the factory complex, and Chengdu city as the representation of the outside world. The same way, "The Celebration" is a vis-a-vis of an inner domestic reality back in the past, dealing with present time in order to be able to attain an emotional equilibrium. "24 City" personifies the memory representation of China today: on the one hand the glorious past and a

collective social memory, on the other hand the present future or a certain idea of modernity seen as an individual and prosperous future. The narrative is composed of multiple stories, main five female characters and main five male characters. Some of them represent the collective memory in post-socialist China, some evoke the modernity, and some belong to the floating population or migrant workers. Like the urban landscape is placed as the main theme and back drop of the new urban cinema, *24 City* echoes woman voice and their issues in modern China looking at the recent past. According to director's note, "This film is made up of interviews with five workers, who share their real-life experiences with us, and of fictional monologues by three women. I decided to integrate documentary and fiction in this parallel flow because this seemed to me the best way of representing the last halfcentury of Chinese history. As far as I'm concerned, History is always a blend of facts and imagination."

"The Celebration" is also about women's role in modern society, but above all about family values, morality, and to protect children from potential sexual abuses. In other words, "The Celebration" is about a stolen childhood, hypocrisy and cynicism. "The Celebration" portrays the time in Denmark when economic upturn took place, in 1980s, the so-called "green wave" population went to the countryside to settle down their lives, looking forward for a better quality of life. "*24 City*" focuses on post-industrial and post-socialist China atmosphere, and floating becomes itself a visual language concept, or a filming style. It comprehends the idea that emphasizes the following of the flow or simply showing the flow: the flow of time, the flow of people, the flow of actions and unarranged life itself. The sense of floating is not only about floating people but time and space., Deleuze's idea on the "movement-image", the necessities of action, and the "time-image", in which free time from causality. The transformation of spaces finally leads to a question of the meaning of "public sphere", which probably is an inseparable part to understand Jia's interpretation of the concept of floating.

The urban Chinese cinema observes a 'culture critique' based on a 'historical reflection', shifting back and forth between the Chinese countryside and the metropolis. Urban Chinese cinema nation is not anymore national,

because the emergent category of transnational Chinese cinema problematizes the traditional paradigm of national cinema towards to a condition of global capitalism. Facing tradition, the new Chinese cinema addresses to a collective imaginary of a developing country as a distant backdrop on its way to modernization. On the counterpart, facing modernity new cinema in Europe, namely Dogme 95, is on its route seeking to reinvent tradition.

Born in two distinct contexts, it appears that both Dogme 95 and contemporary Chinese cinema led by the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> generation of filmmakers, share common features as of aesthetic expressions and conveyed message that altogether contribute to create a new form of global cinema.

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