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# Extending the local : documentary film festivals in East Asia as sites of connection and communication

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# EXTENDING THE LOCAL: DOCUMENTARY FILM FESTIVALS IN EAST ASIA AS SITES OF CONNECTION AND COMMUNICATION

by

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## ABSTRACT

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by

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Doctor of Philosophy

East Asian cinema is receiving increasing global attention. This attention is not focused merely on the fiction and feature films produced in the region, but also on the documentaries produced there; films such as *Petition* (2009) by Chinese director Zhao Liang which premiered at Cannes Film Festival in 2009. This attention to East Asian documentary can be traced to the documentary film festivals organised in the region, particularly those that devote their programming to independent documentary productions from the region. These festivals open a window that enables such works to be exhibited for the rest of the world.

But these festivals do not aim merely to exhibit and screen these works. They also pay attention to the filmmakers. The attendance of filmmakers at festivals has previously been assessed to be of low importance. By encouraging filmmakers to visit and participate the festivals examined here can be seen to represent shared concerns regarding the cultivation of documentary filmmaking in the Asian region. The four film festivals that serve to exemplify this are the Yamagata International Documentary Film Festival (YIDFF) in Yamagata, Japan; the Documentary Film Festival China (DOChina) in Beijing, China; the Taiwan International Documentary Festival (TIDF) in Taichung, Taiwan; and the Hong Kong's Chinese Documentary Festival (CDF).

Each festival forms the basis of a case study in the hope that the context of documentary film festivals in the East Asia can be delineated. Particular aspects of the festivals are discussed in relation to a significant underlying dimension that is identified in each of the festivals in question: the emphasis on *communication* in YIDFF that enhances the sense of connectedness in the participating festival community; the *independent and underground* status of DOChina that is embedded in the festival as a form of resistance to the state government; the relocation of TIDF to a government-supported museum contextualises the festival and draws on the general functions and purposes of a museum: *exhibition, education and collection*. The fourth case study examines the multi-faceted nature of CDF through the previously examined concepts to demonstrate the generalisability of the concepts to, and the inherent complexity of film festivals.

A common theme underlies all of these concepts: a sense of the *local*, of '*local-ness'*. The 'local' here is a relative term that depends largely on where it is that these events regard as home. So, it is not merely the immediate locale of the festival that can be regarded as 'local'; the 'local' can be extended to encompass the nation or the entire region if that is where '*home*' has been identified. Such an extensive and fluid understanding of 'local-ness' not only defines those areas to which the festivals pay specific attention, it also furthers understanding of the festivals' shared ambitions; ambitions rooted in the cultivation of a 'local' documentary filmmaking milieu.

## DECLARATION

I declare that this is an original work based primarily on my own research, and I warrant that all citations of previous research, published or unpublished, have been duly acknowledged.

.....

(Cheung Tit Leung)

Date:

**CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL OF THESIS**

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## PREFACE

This work proceeds from my specific interest in documentary filmmaking. The unique conditions under which this cinematic genre must function in order to survive in the Asian region provided the impetus to what has become a far more extensive exercise than was originally intended.

One of the most difficult aspects of the work comes as a result of the language employed in much of the academic work and published scholarship (English) and that used by the film festival organisers, participants and film practitioners in the field (usually Chinese). On some occasions then, it has been necessary to attempt translations from the Chinese to the English (and vice versa) in order to convey the specific meanings intended in the originals. Where this has been done the translation has been indicated by the use of [square brackets] within the quoted sentence in the same manner as any other authorial intrusion, thus: "Using a period of thirteen years to make a harvest of films [Yong shisan nian de shijian, shougele dianying]".

The increasing ubiquity of online material makes many traditional referencing styles problematic because of the lack of page numbers that can result from the extended and fluid textual capabilities of the medium. Where specific quotes are sourced from the Internet, rather than attempt to indicate their position on a possibly altered web page, the line of approach adopted here has been to cite the specific web page in a footnote immediately following the quote.

The referencing style employed in this work is APA style, the style of the American Psychological Association, according to the sixth edition of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (2010). A valuable resource for this system, the "most commonly used citation system within the social sciences",[1] can also be found online at the *Purdue Online Writing Lab* (*OWL*) provided by Purdue University, Indiana, USA.

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[1] http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/

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I treasure still my weekend trips with Dr Alex Fischer and Dr Alex Marlow-Mann around the Scottish Highlands and the Hebrides; their motto of "stay on target" always echoes in my mind.

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I would also like to thank my 'local' Australian editor Steve Blackey, who applied his skills beyond mere pedantic grammar-checking to crystallise my ideas and provide invaluable support during my frustrations.

Special thanks are due, too, to all the friends I made at the Para/Site Art Space during the early 2000s; their saying of "act local, think global" has long been rooted in my mind and is even more relevant today.

***

Deepest thanks to my Mother and Father, family, loves and friends.

## DEDICATION

To my Mother, May Wong, for all of the love and support you have given since my birth. You say you are proud of me, but it is I who am proud of you; and so proud to be your son.

# CHAPTER ONE: Introduction and Literature Review

## Introduction

The contemporary proliferation of film festivals is a worldwide phenomenon. One non-academic source, *filmfestivals.com*, maintains that there are – at least in their database – up to 6000 film festivals worldwide; even with a more reliable figure of between five hundred and one thousand (Chan, 2011) it is still possible to fill each and every day of the calendar year with a film festival. The nations of East Asia are a vibrant part of this trend and the important festivals that have emerged and continue to emerge there – the Busan International Film Festival, for example – are gradually coming to receive the international reputation they deserve, a reputation contributed to by specialised film festivals which devote their focus to a specific 'theme'. A theme, in this instance, can comprise a set of conceptual ideas such as human rights, global warming or political freedom; a theme can also be presented as one of the various types of film, such as animation, feature or – as is the focus of this thesis – documentary.

Since 1989, when the first film festivals devoted to documentary were inaugurated in East Asia, the region's documentary film festival scene has gradually developed both in momentum and numbers. By providing exclusive screening opportunities for documentaries, these festivals serve as a major channel for the exhibition of the work of the region's documentarists to both local and foreign audiences.

In response to this growing trend, this thesis aims to provide a fresh outlook on the festivals in the East Asian region, especially the Greater China regions. The investigation encompasses four of the documentary film festivals in the region: the Yamagata International Documentary Film Festival (YIDFF) in Yamagata, Japan; the Documentary Film Festival China (DOChina) in Beijing, China; the Taiwan International Documentary Festival (TIDF) in Taichung, Taiwan; and Hong Kong's Chinese Documentary Festival (CDF). A case study chapter is devoted to each of these festivals which, after beginning with a contextualising discussion, aims to provide a detailed portrayal of the particular festival through an

examination of the various aspects of its organisation. A range of specific concepts is thus adopted to illustrate a significant common dimension among the events: a shared concern for the 'local'. Certainly, the term local here, is a relative term that refers to that place which the festival identifies as its home. Rather than being restricted to the immediate physical locale of the host festival, however, the idea of what is 'local' can be seen to reach out to connect the nation, the region and beyond, drawing them together for a common domestic purpose. A detailed understanding of those aspects of festival organisation which contribute to this fluid notion of 'local-ness' can assist in identifying particular film festivals' expressions of a specific concern for 'local' filmmakers. That is, the underlying objective, or shared ambition, of all of these festivals can be seen to be the cultivation of local documentary filmmaking.

**Table 1: Documentary film festivals in East Asia.**
(The festivals examined in this work have been set in **boldface** type.)

| *Country* | *Festival title* | *Year launched; periodicity.* |
|---|---|---|
| China | Guangzhou International Documentary Film Festival (GZDOC) | 2003; Annual |
| China | Yunnan Multi Cultures Visual Festival (Yunfest) | 2003; Biennial |
| **China** | **Documentary Film Festival China, (DOChina)** | **2003; Annual** |
| **Hong Kong** | **Chinese Documentary Festival (CDF)** | **2008; Annual** |
| **Taiwan** | **Taiwan International Documentary Festival (TIDF)** | **1998; Biennial** |
| **Japan** | **Yamagata International Documentary Film Festival (YIDFF)** | **1989; Biennial** |
| South Korea | Seoul Independent Documentary Film & Video festival | 2001; Annual |
| South Korea | DMZ Korean International Documentary Festival | 2009; Annual |

***

**A dearth of research**

Even in light of their essential and voluminous contributions, for film festival studies' self-appointed archivists, Marijke de Valck and Skadi Loist, this emergent disciplinary field has "been a blank spot of cinema scholarship for many years" (2009, p. 179). The recent work of academic practitioners such as Alex Fischer (2009) has been critical of the fact that although there exist "countless" articles penned from a non-academic perspective, such as festival reports by film critics or film journalists, there remains "an historical vacuum with regards to the amount, quality and type of information available about such events" (p. 12) capable of addressing the phenomenon in a suitably scholarly manner. De Valck (2007) also points to the fact that while press coverage of festivals is "omnipresent", it often "fails to provide us with an encompassing cultural analysis of the phenomenon that transcends the individual festival editions, both historically and on a contemporary level" (p. 14). Despite the vast quantities of empirical information they generate and the volumes relating personal experiences of festivals, such materials often provide only subjective observations and lack comparative and critical discussion of the very materials related or experienced (as well as those things not experienced). As a result, in any exploration of film festivals as an academic field of study, the festivals themselves should be further understood "in broader and more specific contexts" (de Valck & Loist, 2009, p. 180).

In response to the dearth of scholarship in this field, academics have recently begun to investigate the field in a more rigorous way. The word 'recent' here, signifies a period of time of about a decade, during which film festivals can be considered to have emerged as a distinct field of study. This emergence of film festival studies as a field of study in its own right has coincided with a vast proliferation of film festivals. Dina Iordanova and Ragan Rhyne (2009) note that the "festival circuit seems to have grown nearly tenfold in the last three decades and festival research has struggled to keep pace"; the number of festivals has risen from 170 in the late 1970s to 700 in 2003 (p. 1). The facilitation provided by "the ease and ubiquity of online publication" (Fischer, 2009, p. 14), means that "raw information" from different film festivals

can now be circulated in tremendous amounts without the researcher needing to gain actual physical access to an event. As a result, academic articles and publications devoted to film festivals have begun to emerge that studiously follow the growth of film festivals. As de Valck and Loist (2009) point out, film festival studies is indeed a "burgeoning field" (p. 179).

**What is a film festival?**

In her ground-breaking monograph devoted to film festival studies, *Film Festivals: From European Geopolitics to Global Cinephilia*, de Valck (2007) correctly points to "Europe [as] the cradle of the film festival phenomenon" (p. 14). The first regularly organised film festival, La Mostra Internazionale d'Arte Cinematographico, was instituted in Venice in 1932 with a strong affiliation to Mussolini's fascist Italian government, which regarded the event as a "powerful international instrument for the legitimization of the national identity of Fascism" (p. 47).

Further reasons for considering Europe as the cradle of film festivals are to be found, paradoxically, in the "American domination of the global film market" (de Valck, 2007, p. 58). Although "antagonistic forces" railed against the domination exercised by Hollywood films, the "first European film festivals" and thus the first film festivals generally, according to de Valck, still "relied heavily on the glamour and presence of American (studio system) stars to make the events more attractive, prestigious, and popular" (p. 58). As a result, these film festivals became purveyors of not just "national" productions, but of "international" films, too; Hollywood films were invited by the festivals specifically in order to "enhance their profile[s]" (p. 58).

So, a *national* agenda served as an important role in the emergence of film festivals; an agenda that has a specific concern with the 'local' or home nation of the festivals. This is displayed in Venice's concern with the involvement of Italian films in the service of 'national identity'. It is this concern with 'local-ness' that this thesis sees as one of the key motivations driving film festivals since their emergence as social artefacts in the first half of the last century. And it is an examination of the 'local-ness' and its various manifestations in film

festivals, that is maintained as one of the key ideas undergirding this thesis and the discussion that proceeds in the following chapters.

**Features of film festivals**

Despite the fact that there were events held to celebrate film prior to the La Mostra Internazionale d'Arte Cinematographico, de Valck (2007) maintains that festival as the first because of its repeat scheduling on a "regular basis" (p. 47). So, for her, one of the criteria for an event to be regarded as a film festival is its regular rescheduling. In her 2009 article "The Film Festival Circuit", Iordanova (2009) is critical of a festival circuit that appears to be concerned chiefly with the "business of film distribution" rather than the "business of showing films" (p. 25). Any functional definition of film festival is a slippery concept and very much a matter of personal discernment, for as Fischer insightfully points out, the "term film festival has an 'accepted understanding' rather than a formalised definition that identifies particular characteristics" (2009, p. 17). Such 'accepted understandings' can become complex and confusing because, as Fischer again shows, some festivals which do not label themselves as such in their official title escape recognition and other events are often regarded as film festivals because of superficial resemblances, when in fact they are, essentially, film markets. An attempt to provide a solid definition of the term film festival might be seen as seeming to restrict the possibility for the creative development of film festivals, however in order to explore the distinctive features of these events, it will be helpful to pin down the term somewhat.

After labelling an event a *film* festival, it is obvious that any event that neglects to include film – in any of its available formats – cannot be considered to be a film festival as such; a film festival must at the very least have films. The question then becomes: to what end? What are the films 'doing' there? For Iordanova (2009), a film festival is in the "business of showing films" (p. 25). Certainly, the exhibition of film forms the basis of all film festivals, but the term mere exhibition is "too nebulous" (Fischer, 2009, p. 18) a concept and one that makes no distinction between the various theatrical film exhibition processes, such as daily

film screenings at commercial cinemas, which cannot count as festivals. The notion of a 'showing' of film is very instructive here.

That is, if mere exhibition, is not enough, it is proposed here that film festivals rely on the *presentation of films*. As sites of exhibition, film festivals showcase films in series by presenting them in *clusters*; they show film programmes composed of thematically assembled films. Instead of presenting single films in isolation (without any accompanying films or activities) – as discrete events – film festivals present films in series. But film clubs and film societies also show films in series, so the timing and duration of an event becomes another definitional concern. De Valck, as has been noted, counts La Mostra Internazionale d'Arte Cinematographico as the first film festival because it was and continues to be held on a "regular basis". This suggests not only a regularity, or continuity, for film festivals', but also implies the 'on-and-off' cyclical and 'regular' nature of these events. A festival (film or otherwise) is an event which takes place over a prearranged period of time and that is scheduled according to predetermined starting and ending times. As suggested by Fischer (2009) festival organisers arrange off-festival activities to achieve a "year-round visibility" (2009, p. 157) for the actual pre-determined period of the festival.

As Fischer (2009) also points out, there are film festivals that are not explicitly named as such: the "American-based Worldfest Huston and the French-based Cinemalia" (p. 19), for example. Among the film festivals whose examinations form the case studies of this thesis, there are, similarly, festivals that do not name themselves 'film festival' in their official Chinese titles. It is too restrictive and reductionist to define as film festivals only those events that name themselves as such. The focus should instead be on how the organisation identifies its event in terms of its *structure*; on the organisers' self-identification of their event as a film festival (or something else if the organisers do not intend their event to be a film festival). Although actually discerning the organisers' intent may entail, or even rely on, the assemblage of information external to the event itself, such as interviews and other statements

from the organisers, the *intentions* of the organisers can serve as a primary principle in defining the nature of their event.

The work of Alex Fischer (2009) in his doctoral thesis *Conceptualising Basic Film Festival Operation: An Open System Paradigm* has provided invaluable assistance to my approach to the various aspects of festival organisation. Although this thesis does not closely follow Fischer's terminological approach to festival analysis, the breadth of application he achieves in order to indicate that no matter how different individual festivals may appear to be, they are, at root, all constructed along similar lines and prey to similar shortcomings, was extremely useful in crystallising my own thoughts regarding notions of organisational systems and generalisability.

**Publications concerning film festivals**

Film festival studies is indeed the burgeoning field that de Valck and Loist (2009) have described, and their call for academic film festival research that "goes beyond the glamour, stars and gossip of one specific festival" (p. 180) is being answered. To be sure, film critics still write of film festivals from a personal perspective and confine their examinations to single 'recent' events that they have attended. Yet there are now more academics and "film festival scholars [who] instead work *out-of-sync* with the imposing festival rhythm and offer meta-views and frameworks for understanding festivals in broader *and* more specific contexts" (p. 180, emphasis in original). Certainly the literature devoted to film festivals has tended to focus less on academic examinations and more on the provision of how-to guides and tips for filmmakers on negotiating the vagaries of film festival submission. The *Ultimate Film Festival Survival Guide* (Gore, 2001), for instance, is described in a review as "chock-full of practical down-and-dirty advice",[1] and *Film Festival Secrets: A Handbook for Independent Filmmakers* (Holland, 2008) similarly aims to provide filmmakers with a do-it-yourself toolkit for film submission. But although these titles serve to meet the demand for information from filmmakers who want to submit their films to festivals, they do not (nor, it

[1] http://www.amazon.com/Ultimate-Film-Festival-Survival-Guide/dp/1580650570

should be admitted, do they intend to) offer critical and analytical perspectives on the particular events, and so they tend to understate or leave unaddressed the complexity of film festivals as an institution or as a cultural phenomenon; unfortunately these authors feel no need to "guide" their readers through these particular film festival "secrets".

The nascent field of film festival studies has been consolidating its aims and knowledge by examining festivals in a deeper, less superficial manner. This has been done by drawing on the complexity to be found both 'inside' film festivals themselves, in the social functions they perform – national identity building, for instance – as well as 'outside' film festivals, with research into their impacts upon, for example, film distribution. Indeed, as de Valck and Loist (2009) declare, it is "no longer possible to maintain that there are no comprehensive studies of film festivals available" (p. 179). One of the pioneering works in film festival studies, Kenneth Turan's *Sundance to Sarajevo: Film Festivals and the World They Made* (2002), presents first-person examinations of the various festivals that the author, a critic for the *Los Angeles Times*, has toured. Turan selects some of the more prominent festivals for scrutiny, such as Cannes and Sundance, since, as he explains one "can't hope to understand why and how festivals function without considering the ins and outs of the biggest, brashest, and most influential of the bunch" (pp. 8-9). Yet other selections in the book – Sarajevo and Havana, for instance – owe their presence to the insightful observation that festivals "not only show films, but they also serve as picture windows onto a wider, more diverse world and cinema's place in it" (p. 9).

The festivals Turan (2002) investigates are categorised along three lines, according to one of three agendas that he sees as governing them: a business, a geopolitical and an aesthetic agenda. Those festivals complying with Turan's business agenda include Cannes, Sundance and ShoWest in Las Vegas. These festivals are categorised as such because of their strong affiliations with the film industry, as manifested in the film market at Cannes, the participation of film distributors at Sundance and the particular concerns of the movie theatre owners at ShoWest. His chapter addressing geopolitical agendas encompasses: the Panafrican

Film and Television Festival of Ouagadougou (FESPACO) in Burkina Faso, Africa; the Havana International Film Festival in Cuba; the Sarajevo International Film Festival in Yugoslavia; and Finland's Midnight Sun Film Festival. These festivals reflect the cultural identity of their respective regions; regions where the political situation is not totally or even comfortably peaceful. Festivals of the third type, those with an aesthetic agenda, have their focus on, according to Turan, specific film forms. For example, the Italian festival Pordenone Days of Silent Cinema focuses on, unsurprisingly, silent films; the Lone Pine Film Festival provides an exclusive showcasing of productions shot in the neighbouring Alabama Hills; and the Telluride International Film Festival in Colorado encompasses "worthy new films, in-person tributes to cinema grandees, and exclusive showings of venerable rarities" (p. 147).

Overall, however, Turan offers a film practitioner's point of view from within the festivals he investigates and, despite the book providing something of a "meta-view" (de Valck & Loist, 2009, p. 180) of the festivals it presents in its case studies, which proceed in a manner similar to more academic works on film festivals, there are limited critical and reflexive questions posed or arguments proffered to substantially broaden and extend understanding of film festivals per se. (Still, some issues raised in the case studies are very relevant to the festivals examined by this thesis. By only showcasing films that feature the neighbouring Alabama Hills, the Lone Pine Film Festival, for example, provides evidence of a local dimension – the festival locale – examined by this thesis.) Yet, despite the fact that *Sundance to Sarajevo* does go beyond the how-to/guidebook formula for festival submission and focuses on specific film festival as case studies, the book retains an air of overtly subjective and anecdotal journalism.

The broadening of film festival studies into an academic field has, as one of its pioneering figures, Marijke de Valck with her especially significant *Film Festivals: From European Geopolitics to Global Cinephilia* (2007). As Iordanova and Rhyne (2009) remark, the book "was the first monograph to address a range of historical and methodological issues and is still the most comprehensive study on the subject to date" (p. 2). By presenting an

"historical overview of the development of film festivals and a cultural assessment of the workings of the present-day international film festival circuit", the book "aims to offer a comprehensive introduction to the film festival phenomenon" and serves as an admirable response to the paucity of publications concerning film festival studies (de Valck, 2007, p. 14).

The book details the historical development of film festivals through case studies of four major events, namely the Berlin International Film Festival (Berlinale), the Cannes Film Festival, the Venice Film Festival and the International Film Festival Rotterdam. De Valck draws upon advanced theoretical frameworks, such as actor-network theory (Latour, 1999) and upon notions of cultural capital suggested by Pierre Bourdieu (1987) to further extend our understanding of film festivals. Since she holds that Europe is "the cradle of the film festival phenomenon" (de Valck, 2007, p. 14), the festivals examined in the book are inevitably (and unfortunately) confined to European examples. The integration of perspectives of, for example, the Asian milieu into film festival studies must rely on other research to complete the picture. And this is precisely the theme to which a particularly valuable volume, in fact series of volumes, is devoted.

Since 2009, The Centre for Film Studies at the University of St Andrews has published an annual edited series, dedicated to particular thematic examinations of film festivals and essential to all readers in the field. The *Film Festival Yearbook* series aims, according to the "Introduction" (Iordanova & Rhyne, 2009) of its inaugural volume, "to put the study of film festivals onto a systematic footing, consolidate existing strands of work, and build bridges between the communities of scholars and festival practitioners through a single annual collection of the best festival research" (p. 3). As a result, each of the annual volumes in the series has been devoted to a specific theme, with essays on different subtopics contributed by festival scholars from around the world. In the course of writing this thesis, four volumes have already been published. The first volume, *The Festival Circuit*, edited by Iordanova and Rhyne, has as its primary focus "the international dynamic of festivals" (p. 3), while the

second volume, edited by Iordanova and Ruby Cheung (2010), addresses the notion of *Film Festivals and Imagined Communities* by examining "festivals that serve the causes of various minority groups and showcase international cinema which does not find its way into mainstream circulation or into boutique art houses" (p. 1).

Invaluable as these two books are to the film festival scholar, it is the third volume, similarly edited by Iordanova and Cheung and published in 2011, that is most relevant to this thesis: *Film Festivals and East Asia*., According to Iordanova (2011), the focus on East Asia came as a response to the "most exciting developments in world cinema over the past two decades", developments which were seen as being "linked to East Asian countries such as China, Japan and South Korea". The volume in question is also a response to the observation that "film festivals in East Asia are still given insufficient scholarly attention" (p. 1). In addition to the theoretical and conceptual analyses and interview articles included in the volume, there are also case studies which examine festivals in the East Asian region. One article in particular, by Abé Mark Nornes, pays specific attention to two documentary film festivals in China and is discussed below. Its examination of the Documentary Film Festival China or DOChina (named China Documentary Film Festival by Nornes (2011a)), has been of much value to this thesis since an analysis of that festival forms one of the case studies here.

As has been stated, during the course of writing this thesis, the fourth edition of the *Film Festival Yearbook* series has been published. *Film Festivals and Activism* (2012), edited by Iordanova and Leshu Torchin, is another valuable addition to this annual series and serves to present the field as a constantly developing academic endeavour. This volume incorporates articles pertaining to issues of close relvance to this thesis, such as the audience development in "Human Rights Film Festivals: Global/Local Networks for Social Justice and Advocacy" by Mariagiulia Grassilli (2012) who discusses the Geneva's Festival et Forum des Droits de l'Homme aim of "creating a sharing, collaborational and participatory community space in the festival hub" through the screening of in various nontheatrical venues and placing an

emphasis on after-screening discussions (p. 39). An interview with Sean Farnel, the former Director of Programming at Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Festival in relation to the topic of human rights film festival by Alex Fischer (2012), touches upon that festival's role in educational outreach, which it accomplishes with the cooperation with schools for instance, and sketched on documentary film festival circuit as compare to other documentary film festival, including YIDFF, that influenced the participation of filmmakers, which made direct relevance to this project.In such a way, the pioneering *Film Festival Yearbook* series continues to significantly consolidate the field of film festival studies, and serves to actively address the previously noted lack of research that had plagued it.

In addition to the aforementioned publications, the development of the field has also been manifested through other academic publications devoted to film festivals. In 2009, another edited volume devoted to film festivals, the third book in the *Dekalog* series, was published. *Dekalog3: On Film Festivals* (2009), edited by Richard Porton, is a "specially-themed volume", that aims "to offer a distinctive alternative to the largely pedestrian film festival reports found in newspapers and even film magazines – as well as the decidedly uneven commentary on film festivals that has appeared in book form in recent years" (Porton, 2009, p. 2).

In addition to the *Dekalog* volume, two further invaluable works have been published in recent years. In *Film festivals: Culture, People, and Power on the Global Screen* (2011), Cindy Hing-Yuk Wong examines, in part, those people – the "producers, directors, agents, stars, programmers, critics, and spectators" – who "create" film festivals (p. 4). For her, "film festivals are not only important for what they offer on-screen, or for their claims about politics, culture and identities, but also for their centrality to the networks, business, knowledge and circulation that constitute global film today" (p. 4). Wong also devotes a chapter to an examination of a major film festival within East Asia, the Hong Kong International Film Festival. In addition to Wong's monograph, another publication devoted to a specific East Asian film festival appeared during the course of the writing of this thesis,

namely *The Pusan International Film Festival, South Korean Cinema and Globalization* by SooJeong Ahn (2012).

It is worthwhile here to remark on an academic network focusing on film festival studies that has risen to influence over the past few years. The Film Festival Research Network (FFRN) was founded in 2008 by Marijke de Valck and Skadi Loist as "a loose connection of scholars working on issues related to film festivals". The organisers of the network have gathered "all academic sources in the field" with the intention of "compiling a thematic annotated bibliography on film festival research".[2] The resultant bibliography is published annually as an essential addendum to each edition of the *Film Festival Yearbook* series and is available for any and all interested researchers to peruse on the Network's website at http://www.filmfestivalresearch.org.

## East Asia

Film festivals have outgrown their European cradle and are now a world phenomenon. Increasingly, the attention of academic research has been directed towards non-Western film festivals. The addressing of this specific theme in the volume devoted to East Asia by the *Film Festival Yearbook* has been noted, as has SooJeong Ahn's (2012) monograph on the Busan International Film Festival. But other articles, book chapters and essays devoted to film festivals in Asia have clearly manifested this concern for further examination of film festivals in the region. These include: case studies of specific film festivals within Asia by Cindy Hing-Yuk Wong (2011) and Cheung (2009) on Hong Kong International Film Festival; Chris Berry (2009) on China Independent Film Festival; Berry (2007b) and Ran Ma (2012) on the Shanghai International Film Festival; Felicia Chan and Dave Chua (2011) on the Singapore International Film Festival (SIFF); Yun-hua Chen (2011) on the Taipei Film Festival; Yun-mi Hwang (2011) on the Migrant Worker Film Festival in South Korea; Adrian Martin (2011) on the Jeonju International Film Festival; David Teh (2008) on Bangkok

[2] http://www.filmfestivalresearch.org/

Experimental Film Festival; Ahn (2012) on the Busan International Film Festival (BIFF); James Bell (2011) on the Pyongyang International Film Festival.

Discussion of a regional Asian perspective for festivals is to be found in: Stephen Teo (2009), who studies Asian Film Festivals with reference to three renowned events, namely PIFF, SIFF and the Hong Kong International Film Festival (HKIFF); Darrell William Davis and Emilie Yueh-yu Yeh (2008) similarly examine PIFF, SIFF and HKIFF in the chapter "Festivals, Events and Players" in their monograph *East Asian Screen Industries*; Iordanova (2011) looks at "the role of film festivals as creative clusters in East Asia's evolving transnational infrastructure" (p. 1); Cheung (2011a) assesses film markets related to East Asian film festivals; and Nornes (2011b) discusses Asian film festivals in relation to the A-list film festivals of the Western world.

Examination of film festivals that draw particular attention to the nation or nations from which they operate forms the basis of the work of: Ma (2009), who studies the urban generation of Chinese cinema through the film festival circuit; Julian Stringer (2002, 2011) who sets out to uncover "how Japanese cinema circulated as a cultural currency at and around international film festivals between the years 1951-70" (p. 63); Adam Knee and Kong Rithdee (2011) who are concerned with the growth of Thai films in relation to film festivals; Wong (2007), whose research into Hong Kong cinema attends to film festivals; and Rhyne (2011) in the area of gay and lesbian film festivals in China. These lists are by no means exhaustive, but serve to indicate the proliferation of recent works concerned with the region.

Despite the numerous treatments of East Asian film festivals, academic research is rarely focused on those film festivals devoted to documentary filmmaking. One exception is the pioneering essay "Bulldozers, Bibles and Very Sharp Knives: The Chinese Independent Documentary Scene" by Abé Mark Nornes (2011a) mentioned above. Nornes examines the Chinese independent documentary scene through two documentary film festivals held in China: the Yunnan Multicultural Visual Festival (Yunfest) and the China Documentary Film Festival (referred to as Documentary Film Festival China or DOChina in this thesis).

According to Nornes, "Chinese independent documentary" deals with "three inevitabilities": "demolition, Christianity and the slaughter of animals great and small" (p. 101). These are the "bulldozers, bibles and very sharp knives" that form the title of his essay and that underlie not only the subject matter of many regional documentary productions, but also go some way to describing the documentary film festival milieu reflected in this thesis. Regional cultural and political conditions often mean that "run-ins with authorities" and having one's festival "shut down" in one place, only to be "regrouped and quietly moved to an unobtrusive location" elsewhere (as was the case during DOChina 2007) are inevitable. Nornes describes this opportunism and resilience as independent documentary filmmakers playing a "cat-and-mouse game with the government" (p. 105).

Prior to this essay, Nornes (2007b) had devoted a section to a discussion of the first documentary film festival in Asia, the Yamagata International Documentary Film Festival (YIDFF), in his monograph devoted to that festival's organiser, the renowned Japanese documentary filmmaker Ogawa Shinsuke (pp. 221-237). Nornes' exclusive access to a wide range of contacts and materials – and his own considerable personal experience working with Ogawa and YIDFF – makes his book an invaluably insightful contribution.

Besides the detailed materials listed above, however, there are only limited examples of research conducted into East Asian documentary film festivals. It is in response to this lacuna in the academic literature that the current work aims to provide an original and substantial contribution in hopes of forging and furthering the academic discussion of documentary film festivals. By employing case studies of specific film festivals in the region, it seeks to illustrate the distinct dimensions of documentary film festivals. And, precisely because the festivals being analysed in this study are exclusively focused in and on a specific region – East Asia – the thesis further draws upon regional perspectives to place its findings in a non-Western context.

Film festivals, and especially those festivals devoted to documentary, serve as major exhibition sites for independent documentary productions by providing alternative outlets to

augment the limited showcasing available – in comparison with feature and fiction films, at least – via television channels and the commercial cinema circuit. The festivals detailed here articulate a common strategy for the promotion of documentary production that emphasises a concern for the local; they exercise and project a sense of local-ness that is not only manifested in the selection of local productions to fill their programmes, but also in their stated aims for the cultivation of a local documentary milieu by addressing seriously the concerns of those filmmakers present at the festivals. Despite this common ground and these shared goals, however, each of the festivals takes a different approach to its representation of the local. And this is to be expected, since, as Stringer (2003) puts it, film festivals are

> not one 'thing'; no single approach (to cultural policy or any other issue) can possibly hope to untangle the many different sides of this particular phenomenon. In other words, the film festival needs to be viewed first and foremost as a *multi-dimensional* entity.
>
> (p. 11, emphasis in original)

The festivals discussed here exemplify this 'multi-dimensionality' in that the sense of local-ness under which they operate is approached via the employment of differing agendas. As a social construct, the film festival is an inherently complex entity, with no single agreed-upon definition or approach that either works for, or is applicable to all film festivals, everywhere. Similarly, the issues identified and the approach to their investigation adopted in each of the case studies is intended to represent the different facets of a film festival, such as the political dimension and influences from the hosting venue. These individual approaches and issues reflect a significant facet central to the festival's existence, such as the inevitably illegal status of DOChina as an independent film festival in China and the museum sector's supervision of the festival in the case of TIDF. These are not the only issues discernible or approaches possible when examining these festivals, and it should be made clear that each and all of these issues are in fact relevant to and expressed by all the festivals to varying degrees. By adopting a particular concept or issue in relation to the discussion of a single festival is to delineate but *one* of the core or intrinsic stances of that particular festival, with

the intent of further illustrating the shared circumstances that produce – and the shared concerns expressed towards – the notion of the 'local' among the film festivals in the region. Indeed, the chapter on CDF is deliberately representative of the interchangeability of the concepts identified in the previous chapters and aims to show their existence along a spectrum of relevance that is applicable in varying measures to the discussions of other festivals. By examining these particular East Asian film festivals, this thesis seeks to draw out those multiple, complex facets of film festival organisation which facilitate these events in fulfilling their aspirations for documentary film in the region.

## The East Asian documentary film festivals

There are eight film festivals in the East Asian region explicitly devoted to documentary films and practices.[3] These festivals have sprouted during the two decades since 1989 when the first Asian documentary film festival was inaugurated in Japan. That the festivals are located in Japan, South Korea, China, Hong Kong and Taiwan, marks the proliferation of such events across the major cities of East Asia. The three documentary festivals in China were all inaugurated in 2003. Such a growth in specialist festivals confirms de Valck's (2007) assessment of the increased relevance of documentary and other genre-specific festivals, "especially from the 1980s onwards, when the global proliferation and professionalization of the festival phenomenon coincided", bringing to fruition specialised festival programming in the form of, for example, "children's film… and documentary" (p. 179).

The idea of an *explicitly* dedicated festival comes from the manner in which the various events detail, either through their film programmes, the festival's title or (as in the case of Yunfest)[4] in their mission statement, their devotion to a particular cinematic form: documentary film. This devotion to documentary is illustrated explicitly in the festivals' stated ambitions or initiatives: the goals of YIDFF are listed as "To illustrate the current state

[3] See the appendix on Documentary film festivals in East Asia.

[4] This festival does not explicitly state documentary as its focus, yet the organisation of the festival is, according to its website "devoted to professional visual documentary training, production and exchange", and this, in addition to the documentaries that form the majority of films screened, tends to confirm Yunfest's aspirations as a documentary-specific film festival.

of documentary cinema… To impart the appeal of documentary… To explore new concepts in the field of documentary"[5]; the launching of DOChina came as a response to the emerging phenomena of documentary as a "form of creation [Chuangzuo de fangshi]" (Lin, 2011a) in that country, " as one of the most important media to witness these crucial moments of the history of the island; the founding of TIDF was intended as "an initial effort to archive, preserve, and promote these historical documents",[6]; and CDF began with one of its central ambitions being "to promote and further encourage documentary filmmaking to the audiences".[7]

Each of these stated ambitions and initiatives explicitly emphasises the *documentary film form* as a focus of the festival's perspectives. This is different to those thematic events that prioritise their content and issues according to a specific issues-orientated intent. Although some of these events consist mainly of documentaries – the Iron Horse Film Festival in Taiwan and the Hong Kong Social Movement Film Festival are just two examples of this – these 'social movement festivals' are primarily concerned with human rights and social issues rather than cinema, with "information and testimony rather than art and entertainment" (Blažević, 2009, p. 15). That is, "the films are not simply a main feature of the programme; they are tools for a higher objective: raising awareness" (Grassilli, 2012, p. 37). The Hong Kong Social Movement Film Festival, for instance, holds that its "image [Yingxiang]" should be a "carrier [Zaiti]" by which the oppressed can assert their equality in order to build concern, support and networks.[8] As such examination of these 'social movement festivals', while potentially fruitful, is deemed as more relevant to other more contextually-focussed research projects.[9]

[5] http://www.yidff.jp/faq/faq-e.html

[6] http://www.tidf.org.tw/2004/english/main6_about/about1.htm

[7] http://www.visiblerecord.com/zh/festival/11/

[8] http://smrc8a.org/8a_cht/2012/06/annual-report-1112-smff/

[9] See also D. Iordanova & L. Torchin (2012).

The primary focus of the current research project is the East Asian region, especially Greater China, which is "geographically composed of the People's Republic of China (PRC), the Republic of China (ROC) or Taiwan, the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR), and the Macao Special Administrative Region (MSAR)" (Lo, 2009, p. 3). Four documentary film festivals are the subjects for the individual case studies contained herein: the Documentary Film Festival China (DOChina) in Beijing;[10] the Taiwan International Documentary Festival (TIDF) in Taichung, Taiwan; Hong Kong's Chinese Documentary Festival (CDF); and the Yamagata International Documentary Film Festival (YIDFF) in Japan. The latter is included as a case study because of its renowned position as the first East Asia documentary film festival and its pioneering promotion of East Asian documentary; the festival's stated mission to cultivate Asian documentary is detailed in the corresponding chapter.

## Research, the researcher's position and methodology

The search for an answer is usually the catalyst that begins the research journey. Research has been described as a "systematic investigation to establish facts, or principles, or to collect information on a subject" (Wilkes, 1986), although Hurston's (1996) statement that "research is formalised curiosity. It is poking and prying with purpose" is equally accurate (p. 146). The aims of research can be either objective or subjective, but as Kolb (1991) says, "totally bias-free social research using either qualitative or quantitative methods is impossible" (p. 40). Research designs typically reflect the values and beliefs of either the field of study or of the researcher; often both. The selection of the most appropriate research path requires conscious decisions to clarify whether or not the researcher follows a quantitative path or a qualitative path.

Quantitative research is the term used to describe research focusing on quantities – on the numbers involved – and uses statistical procedures to present the data. Qualitative

[10] At the time of writing, two other documentary film festivals are operating in China. The selection of DOChina for analysis here, rather than either of these other festivals, is based on the themes which the thesis seeks to articulate: notions of *independence and* the *underground*. As the chapter dedicated to DOChina (Chapter Three) indicates, this festival serves as a more effective exemplification of both themes.

approaches use a range of approaches to 'tell the story' and reveal meaning. The table below lists the chief points of differentiation between quantitative and qualitative approaches.

**Table 2: Quantitative versus qualitative approaches (Neuman, 2006, p.13)**

| **Quantitative Approach** | **Qualitative Approach** |
|---|---|
| Measure objective facts | Construct social reality, cultural meaning |
| Focus on variables | Focus on interactive events |
| Reliability is the key | Authenticity is the key |
| Value free | Values are present and explicit |
| Theory and data are separate | Theory and data are fused |
| Independent of context | Situationally-constrained |
| Many cases, subjects | Few cases, subjects |
| Statistical analysis | Thematic analysis |
| Researcher is detached | Researcher is involved |

This study, then, comes as a response to the noted lack of research into a specific area of film festival studies: the documentary film festival. As has been noted, increasing academic attention has been paid to the film festivals of the East Asian region; however, those film festivals that specialise in documentary and that over the last two decades have come to represent an important regional cinematic phenomenon (despite their smaller size in comparison to the major East Asia festivals like the Busan International Film Festival (BIFF)), still require further analysis.

The impetus for this research project evolved out of my personal experience as a documentary filmmaker. In my hometown of Hong Kong, screening platforms for independent films made outside the film studio framework are almost non-existent; the cinema circuit is nearly impenetrable for independent productions. While there are video competitions – the Hong Kong Independent Short Film & Video Awards (IFVA) being the most prominent among them – to which numerous independent films are submitted, the scene is so highly competitive that only the few winners are ever awarded with further screening opportunities. Film submission to film festivals in different global regions began to appear as if it might provide the only other screening opportunities for his independent documentaries.

Films could be sent to various film festivals, ranging from non-thematic events such as Slamdance, to film festivals that do specialise in documentary, such as the acclaimed International Documentary Film Festival Amsterdam (IDFA). Yet entry into this enormous and enormously competitive global arena served only to further dishearteningly minimise the chance of exposure.

It is now possible, certainly, for filmmakers to upload their work into the online environment for free viewing, however it is not possible in virtual space to enter into an embodied, personal interaction with one's audience, which is my preferred mode of distribution. Because of this, I struggled with the question of how to locate alternative screening platforms that would enable films to reach the public. So, it was precisely this disheartening experience that sparked my resolve to conduct research into one of the screening channels available to independent filmmakers: film festivals, especially those devoted to documentary. Because non-themed film festivals serve as one of the major screening channels for independent documentary as an alternative to the commercial cinema circuits, documentary festivals can play an even more vital role by providing exclusive and dedicated screening opportunities for documentaries that are sourced outside the studio systems.

Preliminary research indicated the unique qualities of the documentary film festivals in my home region – the local film festivals of East Asia – which led to a refinement of the study. The resultant research questions that have governed the project are:

- *How do these film festivals contribute to the documentary film milieu, especially locally?*
- *What aspects of festival organisation serve their specified 'mission'?*
- *Do these East Asian festivals display any common approaches to documentary film presentation?*
- *Is the festival circuit based on a specific agenda? If so, what is the nature of the circuit and how is it maintained? Is it a matter of a distribution model? Of a business model?*

That I am a film practitioner has been of much benefit to the project in that I have been able to draw attention to and provide insight into the important role that filmmakers can play by participating in film festivals. Such a notion lies in stark contrast to the ranking of "interest groups" suggested by Mark Peranson's (2009) "two models of film festivals" (p. 28). There, filmmakers are ranked as the least important participants for both of his business and audience models. My status as a filmmaker also allowed me access to a network of other film practitioners, which greatly facilitated the development of the specific toolbox of methodologies employed here.

In their "Thematic Bibliography on Film Festival Research" in *Film Festival Yearbook 3*, de Valck and Loist (2011) note that film festival studies is "usually linked to Film and Media Studies, but benefit[s] from the (still rather few) interdisciplinary links to Ethnography and Anthropology, History, Sociology, Business and Management Studies, Political Science" (p. 287). This interdisciplinary linking coheres with Stringer's (2003) observation of the film festival phenomenon as a "multi-dimensional entity", which cannot be untangled by a "single approach" (p. 11). As social artefacts, film festivals are inherently complex systems of interaction and exchange (Fischer, 2009), and so effective research can be undertaken by adopting a *multi-dimensional* approach,[11] one which draws upon the theoretical frameworks of different disciplinary areas of study and applies various methodological approaches in response to the complexity that the researcher observes, in the form of interviews and fieldwork. The approaches of qualitative research are interactive and humanistic and enable the participants' stories to be told. According to Denzin and Lincoln (1994), the research aim in qualitative studies as an attempt "to study things in their natural settings, attempting to interpret or make sense of the meaning people bring to them" (p. 2).

[11] SooJeong Ahn (2008) also draws on Stringer's observations regarding the adoption of "multi-dimensional methodologies" (p. 19) in her thesis examining the Busan International Film Festival.

## Interdisciplinary studies

In responding to the film festival as a 'multi-dimensional entity', this thesis adopts theoretical frameworks from different disciplinary areas. Primarily, the chapters devoted to the case studies of these East Asian film festivals contain analysis conducted through a specific theoretical framework, one that illuminates a particular and significant dimension of the festivals. These frameworks serve further as a 'theme' for the respective chapters, governing the analysis of the various organisational aspects of the festivals, such as the framework of Museum Studies that is employed in the discussion of TIDF. Of course, the 'theme' that has been chosen is not the only way of approaching the topic, and the attempts made here to examine these events should not be seen as exhaustive or completely representative of a festival; instead it forms one of the key components that constitutes the festival's unique identity.

The drawing upon frameworks from different disciplines further exemplifies film festivals as a phenomenon not solely determined by film. Along with the proliferation of film festival events worldwide come the constitutive and motivational issues embedded within them. National and nationalistic agendas, distribution, archival imperatives, education and thematic film programming are just some of the socially determining facets of the film festival phenomenon. Indeed, as has been noted, the 'theme' or frameworks adopted for each of the festivals here can also be applied, to varying degrees, to the other festivals, and this is precisely what is attempted on a small scale in the chapter dedicated to CDF, which employs all of the frameworks discussed in the previous chapters to elucidate the functioning of that particular event. The concern, then, has been with *how a selected theme could best be explored so as to echo a significant dimension of the festival*, so that, for example, the theme of the *underground*, which is an unavoidable part of the agenda of any independent film festival in China where approval from the government can never be taken for granted becomes the focus of the chapter on DOChina.

Incorporating theoretical frameworks from diversified disciplines facilitates this thesis' delineation of the complexity of the film festival phenomenon. Despite there being similar organisational elements that are manifested consistently among the various festivals, such as the seminars organised by the different events, film festivals are fundamentally different one from the other. And the difference lies in their historical contexts and in the people who organise them, that is, in their curators' ambitions for the festivals, the actual impacts they achieve during the festivals, as well as their aspirational objectives, and influenced by the social circumstances under which they operate. While some of this information is available in print through festival-specific publications and administrative materials, much that is of importance can be overlooked without the employment of alternative empirical methodologies.

## Festival materials, interviews and field trips

A number of data collection approaches are used in the research to increase the accuracy and trustworthiness of the data and the subsequent interpretations of the findings. The decision to incorporate a number of data collection approaches in this study is based on the belief that "the combination of multiple methods, empirical materials, perspectives and observers in a single study… adds rigor, breadth and depth to any investigation" (Denzin & Lincoln 1994, p. 2). The case study focuses on describing the lived experience of each festival from a range of perspectives. To capture the rich and varied ways people can experience the festivals, the research utilises the following data collecting approaches: organisational document analysis, participant observation, semi-structured interviews and artefact analysis.

Because only limited research has previously been undertaken into the specific area of this study, the analysis of materials needed to include – in addition to academic writings – much relevant festival literature, from journalism, such as the festival reports and articles, to the information provided by the festivals themselves: the festival catalogues and programmes; introductions on the festivals' webpages.

The utterances of a festival are primarily conducted through officially distributed advertising material and one of the key pieces of information for a researcher to seek is the stated ambition of the festival. When analysing a particular festival, the declared missions of the festival serve as a crucial insight into how the festival identifies itself. This information enables a positioning of the festival according to the goals it pursues. As Christoph Huber (2009) points out, "on paper, the potential for festivals is always greater – unencumbered by necessities or even simple scheduling conflicts the attractive stands out (a first look at a festival's programme is always more promising than the final result) – and the eccentric is just charming" (p. 137). Analysis that proceeds by examining a festival's stated rhetorical ambition can only portray those dimensions asserted by the festival, and the expected performance can deviate substantially from the outcomes when the intentions are put into practise. As a result, empirical methodologies are required to reveal the actual dimensions of the festivals rather than to merely uncover their charms and eccentricities.

Empirical research techniques are valuable because they offer the chance for information that can serve as a comparison with the ambitions stated in festival information sources. And there are festivals that do not have an extensive online presence or much published materials. DOChina is one such event where only limited information can be posted online because of its underground nature. As a result, it is essential to conduct empirical research that reveals the "actual result" of the festivals, especially for those festivals that maintain a limited public profile. Through my position as a filmmaker, I was able to conduct empirical research in the form of "participant observation" that is closely linked to ethnography.[12] I actively participated in these festivals through involvement in both official and informal events as a film practitioner, while simultaneously observing the 'field' as a researcher. Martin G. Forsey (2010) highlights the importance of "engaged listening" for ethnographic practice through, for instance, interviews, both formal and informal (p. 74). He further notes that for ethnographers it is "axiomatic that we move beyond what people say

[12] See also Hammersley and Atkinson (1995).

they do to document and evaluate what they actually do" (p. 71). This approach coheres with the need to reveal the 'actual' facets of the festivals that require the empirical methodologies, observing and listening, which this study has adopted.

## Participant observation

As Paul Atkinson (1992) notes, the "field" is "constituted" by the researcher's "writing and reading", and "is the outcome of a series of transactions" before being "constructed through the [researcher's] gaze" (p. 9). My position here as a film practitioner means that my "gaze" could be undertaken as a form of "participant observation", which Serena Nanda and Richard L. Warms (2011) summarise as "the technique of gathering data on human cultures by living among the people, observing their social interaction on an on-going daily basis, and participating as much as possible in their lives" (p. 53). The idea of participation during research is further differentiated by Harry F. Wolcott (1988) into "active participant", "privileged observer" and "limited observer" (p. 194) positions. Summarised by Margot Ely, Margaret Anzul, Teri Friedman, Diane Garner and Ann McCormack (1991), the active participant is one who "has a job to do in the setting [in this case as a film practitioner] in addition to the research"; the privileged observer is "known and trusted and given easy access to information about the [research] context", while the limited observer "observes, asks questions, and builds trust over time, but doesn't have a public role other than researcher" (p. 45).

Benefiting from this status as a film practitioner professionally engaged with a festival, I have positioned myself within the range of the "active participant" and "privileged observer", varying the role from festival to festival. In addition to actively participating in CDF as an advisor to the festival, thereby filling the role of an "active participant", I also maintained a "known and trusted" position with the key staff members, curators and programmers of other festivals. This in turn assisted his access to other practitioners and staff at the festivals, thus enabling me to assume that position of 'privileged observer'. So I was able to gain 'behind-the-scenes' access to some of the more hidden facets of festival

organisation not usually open to the public gaze, such as the festival offices, opening and closing parties and even the dormitory provided by YIDFF exclusively for its Asian film practitioner guests.

With a view to obtaining first-hand information from the festivals, fieldwork was undertaken at each of the festivals examined in this thesis. Prior to the start of each event an informal message was sent to festival staff members with whom I had previously met or made contact, requesting permission to 'visit' the festival in order to perform 'fieldwork' for this research project. During the festival period, I attended as many of the daily screenings and events organised by the festivals as possible, as well as other informal events, such as the gatherings organised among other film practitioners. This fieldwork was conducted throughout the festival period, with observations being primarily focused on the festival events: observing their organisation, as well as the responses of the festivals' other attendees. The participatory experience provided me with a physically embodied experience of film festivals that was crucial to deepening understanding of the events. For example, the actual physical environment of the festival venues could be gauged; and the walking distance between venues is indeed a significant factor impacting upon visitors' experiences of a festival. Such fieldwork also enabled me to obtain information that is not available online. This was particularly the case with DOChina, which maintains a subtle, somewhat clandestine profile so as to avoid unwelcome government attention. The information gleaned from this fieldwork ranged from the published festival materials – festival catalogues, for instance – to the content delivered during festival ceremonies and events.

Importantly, the fieldwork facilitated my development of a network among the festivals' practitioners. These relationships have not been limited to the festivals' operational periods; lasting, long-term relationships have been maintained, and thus observation of festival updates and innovations can also be more easily maintained. The sustainability of these relationships has also been manifested in potential cooperative ventures with the festival practitioners that I have begun to develop, including a proposed book project with the curator

of DOChina, Zhu Rikun, which would bring me into the role of active observer at that festival. In terms of the research, these genuine human relations have also enabled me to conduct interviews both formally and informally with the practitioners in amicable, cooperative and productive ways that can and will stretch beyond the festival's operating periods.

## Listening

As has been noted both formal and informal interviews were conducted with the festival practitioners. Film festivals are team projects that require inputs from more than one person; the "group dynamics" necessary for success cannot merely rely on the oversight of a single 'boss' of the festival: the curator or financial underwriter, for instance. Indeed, a festival is organised by numerous people who play "key social roles" and who perceive and react differently to each other even when working on the same project (Hjort, 2010c, p. 43). By adopting the notion of "practitioners' agency" proposed by Mette Hjort (2010c) in her analytic work on Lone Scherfig's (2000) film *Italian for Beginners* (for which she conducted interviews around the film with "a range of key figures" (p. xii) rather than with just the director), the interviews in this research project were not conducted exclusively with the festival curators; other key figures, ranging from the programmers and coordinators of the festivals, were also asked for their opinions and insights.

The aim of an interview is firstly to inquire after any relevant information that has not been provided publicly and then to seek out the interviewee's personal reflections on the topic, in this case the particular film festival, with the central aim of uncovering information that can serve to provide a context for the research. The formal interviews were conducted by prior appointment and only after providing detailed explanations of questions to be asked. Other informal interviews were improvised during casual meetings with no prior arrangements, and some were conducted in the form of email and telephone conversations. Concerning the questions asked during the interviews, the formal interviews were pre-scripted with central questions that were explained to the interviewee prior to the interviews, and with follow up questions in response to the conversation. Informal interviews were conducted in a

more casual manner, employing improvisational, reflexive questioning and casual chats with film directors and other practitioners to tease out their impressions of, for example, the host city of the festival during the various festival gatherings. Formal interviews provide crucial technical information about the festivals, while the informal interviews serve as conduits through which the researcher may gain important insights into the human dimension of the festival that are not conveyed easily by the written word.

## Rationale for case studies

A case study enables the examination of what happens at a particular eventam, and the exploration of a variety of dynamic processes in action. According to Stake (1994):

> The case is a complex entity operating within a number of contexts, including the physical, economic, ethical and aesthetic. The case is singular but it has many subsections, groups, occasions, a concatenation of domains – many so complex that at best they can be sampled.
>
> (p. 239)

The case studies here explore a range of perspectives and processes and provide information on how each festival was experienced and organised. The subsequent analyses were emergent from the data, rather than prefigured (Green 2002; Burns 2000). In the compilation of the multiple perspectives on the festivals that takes place in the case of CDF, it is possible to distil and identify key components that should be considered significant to the broader range of festival organisation and experience.

Stake (1994) cautions that although the "case study can usefully be seen as a small step towards grand generalisation… damage occurs when the commitment to generalise or create theory runs so strong that the researcher's attention is drawn away from features important for understanding the case itself" (p. 238). By understanding the specific cases, as well as through the examination of the broader contexts of film festivals as social constructs, increased knowledge of how specific festivals provide experiences for their audiences and assist in the fostering of a documentary filmmaking milieu in East Asia will eventuate.

Case studies as a research method have previously been questioned on the basis of their rigour, objectivity, and validity. For this project however, the case study is deemed an

appropriate method since, as Yin (1994) notes: “In general, case studies are the preferred strategy when…the investigator has little or no control over events, and when the focus is on contemporary phenomenon within some real life context (p. 1).

And this is true of the present study. Yet whilst the researcher had little control over the festivals being studied, it was possible to be structured and disciplined in the development of the case study and the records kept. Yin (2003) has refined the case study approach over the last two decades and has developed an itemised number of procedures and ways to ensure that case study research is rigorous. These steps have been implemented in the development of this research in its use of multiple sources of evidence.

For Yin (2003), a “major strength of case study data collection is the opportunity to use many different sources of evidence… furthermore the need to use multiple sources of evidence [in case studies] far exceeds that in other research strategies” (pp. 97-98). He goes on to emphasise that “the most important advantage presented by using multiple sources of evidence is the development of *converging lines of inquiry*, a process of triangulation [which means] any finding or conclusion in a case study is likely to be much more convincing and accurate” (pp. 97-98). The following table, adapted from Yin (2003), reduces his six sources of evidence (p. 86) to the four key approaches used in this study by combining the two types of written documentation, and the two approaches to observation within the research. It clarifies the importance of incorporating a number of data collection techniques in order to attempt to overcome the weaknesses of each approach if applied independently.

**Table 3: Four sources of evidence (based on Yin. 2003, p. 86)**

| Source of evidence | Strengths | Weaknesses |
|---|---|---|
| Documentation and Archival records | • Stable – viewable repeatedly<br>• Unobtrusive – not created as a result of the case study<br>• Exact – contains exact names, references, and details of an event<br>• Broad coverage – long span of time, many events, and | • Retrievability can be low<br>• Biased selectivity if collection is incomplete<br>• Reporting bias – reflects (unknown )bias of author<br>• Access may be |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | many settings<br>• Can be precise and quantitative | deliberately blocked |
| Interviews | • Targeted – focuses directly on case study topic<br>• Insightful – provides perceived causal inferences | • Bias due to poorly constructed questions<br>• Response bias<br>• Inaccuracies due to poor recall<br>• Reflexivity – interviewee gives what interviewer wants to hear |
| Direct and participant observation | • Reality – covers events in real time<br>• Contextual – covers context of event<br>• Insightful into interpersonal behaviour and motives | • Time consuming<br>• Selectivity – unless broad coverage<br>• Reflexivity – observation of the event may change the way it proceeds<br>• Cost – hours needed by human observers<br>• Bias due to investigators' manipulation of events |
| Physical Artefacts | • Insightful into cultural features<br>• Insightful into technical operations | • Selectivity<br>• Availability |

## Further potential perspectives

No marketplaces are organised in conjunction with any of the festivals examined in this thesis. But certainly informal marketing negotiations occur during the festivals and casual negotiations are loosely conducted as film distributors come from across the Asian region and the world beyond to sample the latest potential hits and ponder their possible distribution to foreign screens. However, the market orientation behind these festivals and within the festival community is not examined by this thesis for the simple reason that my priorities lie elsewhere: in emphasising the role of filmmakers in festivals.

There are also other areas that this thesis leaves for further investigation by other researchers more knowledgeable in their specifics. This study is not intended to constitute

historical research into why these particular festivals have emerged at this particular moment. This refers not merely to the festival beginnings outlined here, but also to the historical development of the social, as well as the film industry, conditions that produced these events. Next, examination of the particular cultural policies (restrictive and otherwise) imposed by the respective governments upon these festivals would provide many fruitful areas for dedicated research projects. Governmental regulation of cultural policy influences film festivals to various, but undeniable degrees; this is a perspective that can be further extended to include governmental regulation of specifically cinematic issues, including government-overseen censorship as well as partisan film funding and film trading regulations.

The online manifestation of film festivals is a third area left untapped by the current work. The online environment has the potential to challenge and reshape the notion of 'local-ness' posited here because once online the physical space occupied by a festival is effectively and actually altered to become a 'virtual space'. This re-placement of the festival into virtual space further challenges the concept of 'home' in a way that seems to require further analysis, since, for these film festivals at least, the shift of attention from the immediate physical locale of the events can have profound effects on the productions (and their content) sourced according to their agenda-specific requirements.

Finally, this project leaves unexamined the question of how documentary film festivals approach and constitute the numerous forms of documentary; it does not attempt to define documentary. Through their selection of films, the festivals here imply a preference for the 'kind' of documentaries they wish to acknowledge and screen. These 'kinds' of documentary can certainly be among those six influential models of documentary noted by Bill Nichols (1991, 1994a, 2001), but they can also be seen to be related to the way a director structures a film, such as in the relationship between the filmmaker and the subject. Despite the fact that there are numerous definitions of documentary, including the classic definition "creative treatment of actuality" suggested by John Grierson (Winston, 1995, p. 11), and much scholarly work towards the understanding of documentary by academics such as Carl

Plantinga (1997) and Noël Carroll (1997), there is no single, shared and *definite* encapsulation of this still evolving cinematic form. Thus documentary film festivals in their role as arbiters of taste for their audiences, as well as for the filmmakers whose works they undertake to screen, are at the coalface when it comes to shaping a definition of what it is that should be regarded as documentary. Any attempt at such an expansive discussion lies well beyond the scope of the current work.

## Thesis chapters

To illustrate the manner in which contemporary East Asian documentary film festivals cultivate documentary filmmaking and filmmakers in the region, this thesis employs a case-by-case examination of the four previously mentioned festivals. That is, the thesis encompasses four case studies of the documentary film festivals to illustrate the circumstances in the region conducive to this filmic format. An outline of the chapters that comprise the research project follows.

To open the discussion into East Asian documentary film festivals, Chapter Two, the first case study, introduces the first documentary film festival inaugurated in East Asia (and in Asia), namely the Yamagata International Documentary Film Festival (YIDFF) in Japan. As the first documentary film festival in the region, YIDFF opened a pioneering window for the exhibition of Asian documentaries to the world, and continues to serve as the most prominent documentary film festival in the region; yet YIDFF brings these films to the world not through a market-orientated approach, by for example the setting up of a marketplace in the festival space, but instead, it cultivates the regional documentary filmmaking by encouraging communication, by providing a meeting place for film practitioners to learn from each other through events organised and facilitated by the festival. The emphasis on communication by YIDFF is delineated here into three categories: ‘local and regional’, ‘the creating and sharing of a festival community’ and ‘sustaining extensions’. Ultimately, the chapter argues that it is precisely the emphasis on communication that realises the ambition of the festival: the cultivation of local documentary filmmaking.

Chapter Three shifts the discussion to the Greater China region to examine the Documentary Film Festival China (DOChina) in the Chinese capital of Beijing. While YIDFF receives funding and support from the Japanese government, DOChina receives neither official governmental funding nor approval, and this situation lends to the festival a sense of operating 'underground'; DOChina is a defiantly independent film festival. The independence here is not merely the festival's independence from governmental support or recognition, but also characterises the films that the festival aims to exhibit: independent Chinese documentaries. In this chapter, DOChina is discussed with these two concepts – the underground and independence – in mind, such that it is shown that the event's objectives are a similar attempt to uphold and enhance independent documentary filmmaking in China as that of YIDFF in Japan.

The focus on festivals in Greater China remains in Chapter Four, but is broadened to take in a second documentary film festival in the region, namely the Taiwan International Documentary Festival (TIDF) in Taichung, Taiwan. Like YIDFF, this festival is a government-supported festival, and has evolved from a festival sustained by public organisations to a government museum-supervised event. By so doing, the festival has become an event in the museum calendar and this situation has also altered the festival by pushing it requiring it to adopt and adapt to the museum setting. In analysing the festival within this museum setting, some of the underlying purposes of museums are examined to further understanding of TIDF, especially where the fundamental purposes of collection, exhibition and education coincide with the priorities of film festivals generally.

The fourth and final case study in Chapter Five is devoted to a relatively young documentary film festival held in Hong Kong, the Chinese Documentary Festival (CDF), which started in 2008. The chapter draws upon the three objectives stated by the festival: to facilitate cultural exchanges among the Chinese speaking regions; to present the social context of these particular regions; to promote and further encourage documentary filmmaking to the audiences, the ambitions echoed the concepts stated in the previous

chapters. Through marking the link between the festival's stated ambitions and the conceptual lenses through which these are viewed, namely communication, independence and education, the chapter aims to illustrate the multi-dimensional aspects of this event.

Following these case studies, Chapter Six presents a summary aimed at confirming the distinct features shared by these documentary film festivals, which express their concern towards 'local-ness'. Local-ness does not simply refer to the immediate locale of the hosting city of the festival, but is indeed a relative term that depends on an identification of home. An extensive examination of the concept provides this chapter with three differentiated understandings of what is 'local', namely the *local-habitat*, the *local-nation* and the *local-region*. Ultimately, such concerns for the local converge into a shared ambition among the festivals that places emphasis on filmmakers and with a view towards the cultivation of documentary filmmaking within and throughout the East Asian region.

In addition to the case studies and discussion chapters, a number of Appendices that detail various data related to the festivals are provided in order to illustrate the arguments presented by the rest of the thesis with clear empirical evidence.

## CHAPTER TWO: Yamagata International Documentary Film Festival (YIDFF)

### Introduction

This chapter examines the first and, until 1998, only documentary film festival in the East Asia region, namely Japan's Yamagata International Documentary Film Festival (YIDFF), which has been held biennially in the prefecture of Yamagata on the main Japanese island of Honshu since 1989. Over that time it has earned a reputation as the showcase platform for the latest documentaries from around the world, and especially those from the Asian region. Recent examples of this contribution include the nine-hour epic documentary *Tie Xi Qu: West of Tracks* (2003) by Chinese director Wang Bing, and the self-documentary *Tarachime* (2006), produced by Kawase Naomi.

This chapter is divided into two parts. The first provides the context of the festival itself, including its history and reputation, as well as the background and motivations of the festival's creator, the renowned Japanese documentary filmmaker, Ogawa Shinsuke. The second part of the chapter is devoted to an analysis of various aspects of the festival. The claim here is that these aspects facilitate a form of communication that can lead to a genuine human relationship between the festival, its participants and its audience. Indeed, such an arrangement can be referred to as one of the central ambitions of the festival: to develop documentary film culture as a form of cultural/social alliance in the region.

This chapter arranges these various aspects into three categories in order to explore the ways in which they facilitate communication for the festival community. The first of these categories is labelled the 'local and regional connections' and its discussion examines the programming of the festival so as to indicate how communication can be facilitated by the sense of regionality embedded in the programmes. The second category, the 'creating and sharing of festival community', is explored in order to reveal various undertakings of the festival that aim to provide the community with communicational experiences; these undertaking include the formation of festival groups, workshops, meeting places and site

visits. The third category, ‘sustaining extensions’, examines those elements which keep the momentum of the festival and its community rolling during not only the festival period itself, but also the post- and pre-festival intervals; the festival’s publications and off-festival events are primarily the focus here. In summary, this analysis seeks to identify how the festival facilitates communication to and between participants across regions through these three categories, and how the festival community, including participant filmmakers, is to be regarded.

The importance of this investigation into YIDFF is based not merely on the festival’s reputation in the region. The significance of YIDFF is also accounted for by the communicational emphasis structured into the festival itself. Such a communication model is targeted at audiences from Yamagata and beyond, and is further embraced by the film practitioners and volunteers who support the festival. These concerns for such diversified groups of people demonstrate a distinctive film festival model; one that intertwines audiences, filmmakers and other film practitioners. Such an intertwined model adds an extra dimension to the “ideal” two-dimensional business and audience model according to which Mark Peranson (2009, p. 25), interprets film festivals. And importantly, the rationale behind this emphasis is related to the development of a documentary *culture*. Indeed, the developmental focus with which YIDFF is concerned is not about financial support. Instead, the festival aims at building up a transnational milieu for the filmmakers in the region through screenings, training and networking. Such a developmental aim relies on the participation of local and regional filmmakers. Through an involvement with filmmakers from not just Yamagata and Japan, but from across the Asian region, it is hoped that connections and alliances between documentary practitioners may be strengthened. In effect, YIDFF is a platform for connection and communication that welcomes participants from all nations and all walks of life to become part of its festival community.

## A brief history of YIDFF

The Yamagata International Documentary Film Festival (YIDFF) is a biennial film festival located in the north-eastern (Tōhoku) region of Japan's main island of Honshu. Yamagata City is the capital of the Yamagata Prefecture and has a population of around 250,000. The prefecture is traditionally a farming region yielding harvests of fruits and rice, the latter being its iconic produce. Mount Zao, a nationally renowned ski and hot-spring resort, provides another attraction for visitors to the region. In contrast with the capital city of Tokyo around 380 km away, Yamagata is an area rooted in traditional agricultural practices.

The festival was inaugurated in 1989, making YIDFF the first documentary film festival in the East Asia region. As a biennial festival, YIDFF concluded its twelfth edition in 2011. The festival home office is located in Yamagata City. Additional branch offices are located in Tokyo, which enable an easier access to other countries for the gathering of information and the soliciting of film submissions (Tanaka, 2008a).

The festival is scheduled during the month of October, usually around mid-October. The first edition of the festival ran for six days, and this was increased to eight days in the eleventh edition in 2009. Film screenings in 2009 were scheduled from around 10am until 10pm. Except for those days scheduled for the opening and closing ceremonies – and the day devoted to awarding film prizes – about twenty-four films were screened per day. Prices for the tickets ranged from 1000 yen for a single film to 10,000 yen for a festival pass. The screenings for the 2009 edition were held at four locations, in both private (the Forum and Solaris cinema houses) and government-owned venues (the Yamagata Central Public Hall and Yamagata Citizens' Hall). The Yamagata Central Public Hall is the key location for the festival and is where the ceremonies take place. It is located in one of the most crowded and store-packed streets in Yamagata City and a shopping mall is just downstairs of the Public Hall itself. The distance from the Public Hall to Solaris, the furthest of the venues, is roughly

a twenty-minute walk, while walking to the Citizens' Hall and Forum is only a ten-minute journey.[1]

The organisation of the festival was originally intended to serve as one of the activities for the centennial celebration of the founding of Yamagata City. The idea of a film festival was initially proposed by the executive director of the Art and Cultural Society of Yamagata City, Tanaka Satoshi, who is now the chairperson of the YIDFF organisation. Tanaka wished to create a sustainable activity rather than merely a one-off celebration; however the idea was actually inspired by his friend in the region, the renowned documentary filmmaker, Ogawa Shinsuke.

## The pilot of the festival, Ogawa Shinsuke

Ogawa Shinsuke is widely regarded as an influential Japanese documentary filmmaker. Born in 1936, he studied Economics at Kokugakuin University in Tokyo.[2] His enthusiasm for film began to develop after his initiation of a film club at the university, where he organised screenings and tried his hand at making his own films. An interest in left-wing ideas and consequent participation in the university's student movement led him towards an interest in politics. After graduation, Ogawa took up a post as assistant director in a public-relations film production company, Iwanami Productions. He quickly accrued experience in film production during his time there, further consolidating his vocation towards filmmaking. Yet the films he participated in for Iwanami Productions did not align with the films he wished to make and the film company did not appreciate his filmmaking methods. As a result, Ogawa began to pursue an independent career and to produce films based on his own interests.

[1] These details were gathered during my attendance at the eleventh edition of YIDFF in 2009. They serve to indicate the proximity of the festival venues and to display the sense of close community developed by the event.

[2] According to Nornes (2007), Ogawa liked to tell people that he had been born in 1935 rather than 1936, and that he studied ethnology rather than economics. Furthermore, he told others that he had never graduated. This "false" information provided Ogawa a more mature status among his peers and "all of his best friends" and gave him "a badge of honor in the days of the student movement". This misleading personal account was seen by some of Ogawa's friend as "Ogawa's way of engaging someone in discussion" rather than anything as sinister as a self-aggrandising lie or trick (p. xviii).

Beginning with film production for a student activists' group, Ogawa subsequently produced a series of documentaries which have since become regarded as "monuments" in the history of Japanese cinema: the Sanrizuka Series (Nornes, 2007b, p. xiv). The series consists of seven films documenting the social struggle faced by farmers living the Sanrizuka area where the Narita International Airport was initially planned to have been built. Erik Barnouw (1993) describes how in *Narita: The Peasants of the Second Fortress*, the third feature film of the series, (1971), Ogawa, over four years "patiently record[ed] the growth of resistance… achiev[ing] an extraordinary social document, and one of the most potent of protest films" (p. 283). One of the astonishing features of the series is its extended chronological nature. Ogawa decided that the struggle should be recorded chronologically and cyclically, from spring to winter, and then start all over again… and again. The idea for such a chronicle was suggested by the titles of some of his other works, such as *The Battle Front for the Liberation of Japan – Summer in Sanrizuka* (1968) and *Winter in Sanrizuka* (1970) which seek to represent a continual historical period in Sanrizuka. In terms of the films' formal structures, apparently chaotic handheld shots and sounds give the film a "raucous aesthetic" like an "action film" (Nornes, 2007b, p. 62).

After the completion of *Sanrizuka – Heta Village* (1973), Ogawa felt that the way in which he had captured the daily life of the farmers was actually only a mere "peeking [Kuishi]" into their existence (Ogawa, 2007, p. 45). Despite Ogawa and his team capturing the actual labour of farming, they felt that the position represented merely an outsider's viewpoint; one which did not and could not truly evoke a farmer's life (p. 44). As a result, Ogawa decided to leave Sanrizuka with his team Ogawa Productions and move operations to a small, remote village in Yamagata Prefecture where they learned to become farmers themselves and where they developed a bond and friendship with the people in the local neighbourhoods. Such a manner of documentary filmmaking resembles what Bill Nichols (2001) has called a participatory model; one which, through an active engagement with the subjects in question over a period of time, "gives us [the audience] a sense of what it is like

for the filmmaker to be in a given situation and how that situation alters as a result" (p. 116). The 'period of time' Ogawa spent on this project was thirteen years. Over this extended period, Ogawa and his teammates learned to function as real farmers so as to genuinely capture that arduous life to the fullest. Thus, for example, they researched how the best harvest could be achieved, including undertaking empirical studies of the area's weather and soil.

Their scientific studies on farming were presented in the film *Nippon: Furuyashiki Village* (1982), which was awarded the FIPRESCI prize at the 1984 Berlin International Film Festival. The first part of the film, in which a model demonstrates the flow of cold air into the village in the style of educational science documentaries, resembles an NHK (Nippon Hōsō Kyōkai, the Japanese Government Broadcaster) educational documentary style (Nornes, 2007b, p. 186). As suggested by the title of an article written by Ogawa, "Using a period of thirteen years to make a harvest of films [Yong shisan nian de shijian, shougele dianying]" (2007, p. 133), the productions actively engage with the subject they seek to document by immersing themselves in the environment. From 1975, when they first moved to Yamagata, to 1991, Ogawa Productions produced four documentaries devoted to the villagers of Yamagata Prefecture, including the almost four-hour long opus, *The Sundial Carved with a Thousand Years of Notches – The Magino Village Story* (1986). During his thirteen years in Yamagata, Ogawa developed close relationships with many of its citizens, including the executive director of the Art and Cultural Society of Yamagata City, Tanaka Satoshi, who, as mentioned above, figured prominently in the establishment of YIDFF. Through such an extended engagement with their neighbours in Yamagata, Ogawa and his teammates ceased to be the visiting "Trotskyites" (Nornes, 2007b, p. 155) who had stumbled into the village. Instead, they transformed themselves into 'local' farmers-filmmakers who actually resided in the region under study.

Through the invitation to organise a documentary film festival in Yamagata, Ogawa took up a leading role in instituting YIDFF, including planning for the recruitment of staff,

networking with directors and even initiating an idea to produce a documentary to promote the festival itself, which eventually resulted in the film *A Movie Capital* (1991). Further, he teamed up with film critic Sato Tadao and other film and cultural practitioners in the region to garner support for the festival. As a result, the festival organisers included – at least until the festival became independent in 2007 – the festival office, various festival committees and the municipal government.

After playing an instrumental role in organising a festival for the celebration of Yamagata City's centennial, Ogawa's ambitions for the festival moved well beyond that of a one-off event. By creating the first documentary film festival in the Asian region, Yamagata City positioned itself not only as "a significant site in the Asian independent film sector", but also began to nurture film culture in the prefecture (Nornes, 2007b, p. 222). Furthermore, the festival provided a platform for communication between fellow documentary filmmakers in Asia to further consolidate a sense of community, and the festival can now be seen to serve as a window for the promotion of documentary makers from the region. The lasting contribution Ogawa gave to the festival – a kind of spiritual energy – is best described by Abé Mark Nornes (2007b) as "a quasi-religious 'Ogawaism' that the volunteers speak about" (p. 224). Tragically, this active spirit became just a memory in 1992. After the completion of *A Movie Capital* (1991), Ogawa was diagnosed with cancer. During the 1991 festival period, he was unable to attend due to an extended stay in hospital for surgery. His condition waxed and waned for a time until he passed away in 1992 at the age of 55.

### Funding and the transformation into an independent festival

As Sai Yoichi, a former juror at YIDFF notes, "a film festival's fundamental character is shaped by the sources of support" (Yamamoto, 2007, p. 22). In this context, support can be primarily understood as financial support: YIDFF was faced with a significant financial crisis in response to the city's economic downturn in the 1990s. In 2007, the festival was officially transformed from a government-supported event into an independent festival run as a non-profit organisation (NPO).

Funding from Yamagata City was dropped from US$1.2 million in 1997 to US$760,000 in 2005 (Yamamoto, 2007, p. 20). This resulted in the festival needing to reconsider its previous activities, including those screening events previously held before the festival and trips aimed at information gathering among film festivals worldwide; both have been reduced (Miyazawa, 2007). Additionally, the festival journal, *Documentary Box*, was terminated, presumably because of budget cuts.[3] It is obvious that financial issues such as these restrict a festival in a profound manner because the operation of a festival is fundamentally reliant on its financial inputs (Fischer, 2009). So, to understand the festival itself it is essential to gain an understanding of its funding situation, especially in terms of which bodies hold financial power.

Prior to its move to independent status in 2007, YIDFF was an official Yamagata City event. Indeed after its inauguration, the majority of the budget was covered by the Yamagata City. As a biennial festival, YIDFF operated according to a two-year cycle: in effect, a preparation year and the festival year. During the festival year, the city covered 80 per cent of festival costs and, similarly, most of the costs during the preparation year were also covered by the city. Although some corporate sponsorships and grants from other organisations were forthcoming, the majority of the operating budget was still reliant upon the city (Miyazawa, 2007, p. 3). Spending was directed into three main areas: film selection expenses, which included spending on travel for film selection, subtitling and prize money; overheads spending, including the salaries for the staff and rental costs of offices, etc.; and lastly, almost half of the total expenses went to support festival events, which included the hiring of venues, receptions and PR work (Yamamoto, 2007). Revenues from ticket and catalogue sales covered just 7 per cent of the required revenues (p. 22). This data clearly indicates how

[3] Unfortunately no information is available as to why the *Documentary Box* publication was terminated. Indeed in speaking of the termination Ono (2007a) explicitly wishes "to avoid discussing here the reasons why *Documentary Box* is being discontinued" (p. 2); however, given the financial pressure which YIDFF was under at that time, it is logical to assume that a lack of funding played a major part in the decision.

heavily YIDFF relied on the subsidies, sponsorship and grants from the city for funding support.

These city auspices were, however, steadily reduced during the 1990s and a sudden termination of the festival due to any adverse political consideration could be easily envisaged (Miyazawa, 2007). With a view towards creating a sustainable future for the festival, the suggestion that it achieve independent status was proposed. Indeed the idea of independence was recommended strongly by a city evaluation report in 2004. Thus a move towards reshaping the festival as a non-government managed event became an inevitable consequence. It was decided that the best way to deal with a potential impending crisis was to be prepared before the sudden, unwelcome call came.

To this end discussion on separation from the government sector began in 2005. After confirming a move towards independence, the festival's model of organisation became another crucial question. Frameworks considered by the festival organisers ranged from the creation of a legally incorporated foundation, to a merge with an existing foundation to form a joint stock company; even the establishment of an organisation without any legal standing was on the table. Of these different choices, the non-profit organisation (NPO) model was seen as the most appropriate. According to Miyazawa (2007), chief of YIDFF's office, a transformation into an NPO was the model that could best present the festival's objectives in contributing to society and to social responsibility; more practically, the NPO model did not necessarily require a capital fund. Yamagata City also promised to provide financial support on an ongoing basis in support of the festival's determination to follow a path of transformation to independence.

Since its change to NPO status in 2007, YIDFF primarily represents itself through its NPO. Yamagata City stepped back for the most part as co-presenter of the festival, although government-affiliated sectors continue to give support to the festival in the form of the Agency for Cultural Affairs and The Japan Foundation, for instance. In addition to the support related to governmental sectors, there are also forms of institutional support provided

by several non-governmental sectors, such as the Goethe Institute and the UniJapan J-Pitch Office. Moreover, the festival also aroused support from commercial sectors, such as the long-term partnered screening venue, Forum, and the SKY Perfect JSAT Corporation. These alliances with governmental sectors, commercial sectors, as well as parties from the film industry align with Cheung's (2009) analysis of the corporatisation of the Hong Kong International Film Festival (HKIFF). While the corporatisation of HKIFF brings "extensive media coverage" that involves "co-operation among the government, commercial sector and film industry" and "conveys the optimistic message to project investors and filmmaking professional that Hong Kong cinema is still vibrant and promising", as Cheung also points out "audiences may in effect move down from the top of the festival's stakeholder list to be replaced by film industry practitioners and commercial sponsors" (p. 112-113). In the case of YIDFF, corporatisation enhanced the media coverage in terms of the event's ability to cooperate with the media – the NHK (Japan Broadcasting Corporation) Yamagata, and VigoFM for instance. However, with the absence of a marketplace accompanying the festival, the involvement of audiences was not pushed into a subordinate role. Indeed, the film programme there is focused on the local Yamagatan citizenry and precisely curated with the ambition of increasing their intimate involvement in the festival, as will be further illustrated in what follows.

In 2009 – the second edition after the switchover to NPO status – the total number of co-presenting, supporting and co-operative units, grew from eight in 2007 to eighteen. Such an increase in the festival's support from diversified parties meant that the festival was not exclusively a prefectural event relying on local city involvement, but, instead, had become a transnational co-operative project that welcomed other national parties' from overseas; the Goethe Institute and the British Council, for instance. That these parties joined forces in supporting YIDFF, is indeed a form of "milieu-building transnationalism" (Hjort, 2010a, p. 49), with the parties sharing their resources in both financial terms and with films, in order to "develop capacity" (p. 49) in specific contexts. By generating a larger pool of audiences and

by providing an opportunity for interaction and communication among filmmakers globally, the festival effectively creates a milieu that is at once shaped by transnational efforts and that offers space in which a transnational perspective on film and festival culture can evolve.

This background information and its contextualisation of YIDFF opens up and serves to invite subsequent analysis. To understand a festival is inevitably to examine the constituent factors of that festival. Furthermore, the process of the constitution of a festival is always influential on its subsequent development, and the various options it undertakes to continue operation, such as the extent to which the scale and location of a festival is likely to affect a partnership, are telling. It is unlikely that the initiation of YIDFF would have been possible without the support of the Yamagata municipal government. Similarly, without Ogawa's presence in Yamagata, a documentary film festival – especially one with such a form as YIDFF – would not have been organised, and it is probable that no festival of any form would have eventuated.

## The festival as communication

In his dissertation *Regarding Film Festivals*, Julian Stringer (2003) uses a chapter entitled "Festival Communities" to analyse the international mystery and thriller festival Shots in the Dark held in Nottingham, England. Stringer adopts the theory of "epideictic discourse" provided by Celeste Michelle Condit (1985) to analyse the relations between communities and festivals. Condit outlines a three-fold function for communication between audience and speaker which can be summarised as: understanding and definition; the offering of entertainment and display; and the creation and sharing of community. Through this three-fold function, Stringer's (2003) analysis of the Shots in the Dark festival foregrounds an idea of "how communities are constituted for festivals" (p. 227). Instead of regarding audiences as something ready-made, Stringer argues that communities are actually constituted by the "rhetorical utterances surrounding a film festival" itself (p. 229). The resultant community, which he refers to as the "festival community", consists of the "audience [as] both a local audience, and also a travelling audience" (p. 239).

Regarding this idea of the relationship between a film festival and a festival community, this thesis agrees that there is obviously some evidence to show that communities can be constituted by festivals, and particularly by the rhetoric used in the advertisement of festivals which foregrounds the local area and its citizens. However, the division between festivals and their communities, a dichotomy which Stringer can be understood to represent as existing between "forms of spectatorship and forms of participation" (p. 231), can be blurred if the members of the communities are actually involved in the organisation of the festival to any extent. Thus the constitution can actually be further interpreted in terms of the relationship between the communities and the festival. In other words, the crucial point lies in how the festival regards the festival community and the extent to which it engages with that community in creating the festival itself.

As Yano Ono, the director of YIDFF's Tokyo office (and former director and one of the founding members of YIDFF) puts it, "a documentary film festival ideally operates on a foundation of concrete human relations among organisers and guests alike" (Yano, 2007, p. 7). In pursuit of this ideal, YIDFF works with its festival community to curate film programs, create a festival network and even run a pub. Some of the people in charge of these events are volunteers and film practitioners who are supporting events not directly connected to the presentation of their own works. Thus, in considering YIDFF's 'festival community', one must include a whole array of individuals who attend the festival, from local and travelling visitors, to volunteers and film practitioners.

For YIDFF the aim is to establish collaboration between the festival community and the festival itself, consistent with a central idea of forming "concrete human relations" (Yano, 2007, p. 7). The festival structures its various aspects as a means towards this end. Among the efforts employed to pursue and achieve this, the notion of communication is argued here as being crucial. Since communication, in its many and various forms, is a vital process in the cultivation of all human relations, it is through the indicated festival aspects that the following will explore the communicational dimension embedded within YIDFF's festival structure.

The aim here is to illustrate how YIDFF's structure is based on communicational concerns by drawing on the three different festival aspects developed from Condit's three-fold function, and identified earlier as the 'local and regional connections', the 'creating and sharing of a festival community', and 'sustaining extensions'. That is, YIDFF makes a concerted effort to offer communicational opportunities between and across different groups of people. The event constitutes a unique model that demonstrates that a film festival is not merely about film screenings, but is also about creating a platform for cultivating genuine human relationships in a manner akin to Ogawa's idea of documentary film as itself a representation of genuine human relationships. By thinking of the festival as ultimately rooted in such humanistic documentary filmmaking beliefs, YIDFF actually becomes a base of communication.

## Local and regional connections

One of YIDFF's main concerns lies in nurturing the development of Asian documentary filmmaking. As the first and, until 1998, only documentary film festival in the Asia region, YIDFF is a pioneer in Asia's documentary scene. However, despite over 200 works being submitted from around the globe to the first edition of festival, no Asian work was selected for the competition section. In light of this, Ogawa called upon different documentary participators from Asia to hold a symposium to discuss "why documentary films had not been coming out of Asia" (Fujioka, 2008, p. 23). Participants included Ogawa himself as the moderator, Stephen Teo from Malaysia, Chiao Hsiung-ping from Taiwan and Kong Su-chang from South Korea. In a final remark to the symposium, Philippino director Kidlat Tahimik presented a manifesto in conjunction with other Asian documentary filmmakers which declared that despite a "sad absence of any Asian film in the competition [in YIDFF 1989]" and the "major obstacles [which] exist in the making of relevant and interesting documentary films in the Asian region", the "essential ingredients for quality filmmaking" – including energy, technical skills, themes and talent – were nonetheless available in these countries (Erikawa, Teo & Yano, 2007, p. 63). It was thus the belief of these filmmakers that

documentary filmmaking could and would eventually overcome such obstacles. Tahimik concluded: "We declare here, the SPIRIT of the independent Asian documentary filmmakers is alive! And will one day, soar with the wind!" (p. 63). As a result, a programme devoted to Asian documentaries was organised that has become, since the second edition of the festival, a cradle for subsequently renowned regional documentary filmmakers, such as China's Wu Wenguang.

The ambition towards regional documentary development incorporates primarily those nearby Asian countries. The local Japanese documentary industry is doubly served by this situation. As a country in the Asian region, Japanese documentaries naturally form part of those films targeted by the Asian programme and, because YIDFF and the local Japanese filmmakers are actually the hosts for this event – which welcomes their 'fellow' Asian filmmakers (Erikawa, Teo & Yano, 2007) to meet together – there are also programmes devoted to Japanese documentaries. So, when analysing the interviews in the documentary produced for YIDFF, *A Movie Capital* (1991) the situation becomes, as Nornes (2007b) puts it, a "celebrat[ion of] the new connections forged between Asian filmmakers visiting the festival" (p. 225), connections which further indicate "a massive shift in the geographic imagination of the Japanese film world, from a primarily Euro-American bilateral conception of international film flow to a strong identification with other Asian filmmaking centres" (p. 225). Those film practitioners coming from Japan (i.e., the local areas) and the Asian region may now join forces to form a network, or an alliance, of Asian documentarists.

The film programmes curated by YIDFF spell out the festival's underlying connections to Yamagata, to the nation and to the region. This can be seen in the titles of the film programmes themselves – 'The New Asia Currents' and 'New Docs Japan' – which explicitly foreground the regional considerations in their curation. Such attention is crucial in terms of the developmental goals pursued by the festival. It is the claim here that the local and regional aspect of the film programmes can and does actually facilitate the development of documentary filmmaking in the regions.

So how do the programmes adopt perspectives for the local in order to achieve the goal of development?[4] As has been indicated the local and the regional represent two sides of the same coin for YIDFF and an examination of both the Asian programme and the Japanese programme will provide evidence that promotes an understanding of this. Parallel efforts were made to address both local and regional works, in addition to the provision of collaborative programmes involving works from different nations to reflect on certain topics. Such endeavours provide opportunities for the film practitioners to co-operate and, further, to draw attention to interests shared by the collaborative parties and their nations. In addition to this, programs devoted to works produced in Yamagata Prefecture itself take the connection between the festival and the festival community to another a more specific local level, as film production was (and is) actually undertaken in locations where the festival itself is held.

## Film programmes

From the seventh edition of YIDFF in 2001 to the eleventh edition in 2009, the number of film programmes on offer during the festival remained at between ten and thirteen. This compares with only five programs curated for the first edition. Programmes are classified here primarily according to their scheduling and are labelled as either *regular* programmes or *occasional* programmes. The two regular programs devoted to Japanese and Asian documentaries – namely, the 'New Asia Currents' and 'New Docs Japan' – begin the discussion.

## Japan and Asia

Programmes devoted to Asian documentary have been curated in every edition of YIDFF since the first. The category emerged as a response to the perceived lack of Asian works being selected for the international competition program.[5] Ogawa urgently proposed a

[4] The development of YIDFF was proposed as a solution to the limited number of documentary films produced by individual filmmakers in the 1980s, and as a way of overcoming the "obstacles" that then limited the opportunities for documentary production, such as the "political and market motivations" (Erikawa, Teo & Yano, 2007, p. 63).

[5] The international programme, entitled the 'International Competition', is open globally for submissions, so Asian works can also submit to this programme. The programme screens a vast array of works from many nations. The famous previously mentioned work *Tie Xi Qu: West of Tracks* (2003) by Wang Bing was screened in this particular programme in the 2003 edition and was awarded the programme's grand prize.

programme devoted to Asian works and organised the Asian Symposium mentioned previously. This programme has since become one of the regular programs for YIDFF. In the third edition of the festival in 1993, the Asian programme was re-titled as the 'New Asia Currents' and became a competition programme with a prize awarded in Ogawa Shinsuke's name.

According to the co-ordinator of this Asian programme, Fujika Asako (2008), the attendance for this particular programme has increased since the 1997 edition, which indicates that the programme is not merely a charitable exercise to encourage "developing countries" (p. 23). Fujioka maintains that the prize represents

> a holistic program whose spirit lies not in competition but in coexistence, mutual support, and mutual supplementation – this sense of 'community' among the creators, the viewers and the film festival organisers is the attraction of New Asia Currents, as I'm sure it will continue to be in the future. (p. 23)

In addition to this regular programme devoted to Asian documentaries generally, local Japanese documentaries are of serious concern for the programmers. A special programme presenting only Japanese documentaries was organised for the first edition of the festival and began a series of Japanese documentaries which took place until the fifth edition. The series addressed Japanese documentaries as a historical phenomenon spanning the 1920s to the 1980s. In addition, a programme responding to the contemporary Japanese scene has also been curated since the second edition in 1991,[6] and was re-titled as 'New Docs Japan' in 2003. Surprisingly, there was also a programme incorporating Japanese fiction films entitled 'Japanese Classical Films' curated from 1993 to 2001, for which works by renowned Japanese directors such as Akira Kurosawa and Yasujiro Ozu were screened.

Regular programmes in a festival provide a sustained platform for showcasing the responding works, and programmes gain their reputations from the time invested in their

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A discussion of this programme is not included in this chapter because the focus here is primarily directed towards the Asian region and its documentary filmmaking development. The 'International Competition' has undoubtedly enriched the development of documentary culture in the Asian region in terms of its display of a diversified array of documentaries and a consolidation of the global status of YIDFF. However, to include the 'International Competition' in the discussion here would detract from the focus of this section.

[6] Absent in 1995.

presentation and from the actual works screened. These regular programs are always on the front line of a festival and, to a certain extent, reflect the ambition of a festival. In the case of YIDFF, there have been programmes devoted to Asia and to Japan respectively since the festival's inception; this reflects an ambition towards Asian documentary development. Through the sustained curating of these programmes, film practitioners in the Asia region are enabled to gain attention and develop a reputation, especially within the Asian region, not readily available otherwise. Furthermore, these programmes have become one of the major attractions of the festival and draw people to the event by rendering YIDFF as a centre of Asian documentary. Such a reputation serves to increase the festival community for YIDFF, and further enriches the networking within that community. In summary the regular programming of YIDFF devoted to Japan and to Asian documentaries constantly promotes the works in question. These efforts result in an attraction to the festival that actually increases its attendances. That would not be possible without the genuine and constant support both of and from the local and regional documentary filmmaking community.

## Collaboration and transnationality

In addition to this regular programming, there are also programmes that appear occasionally, or irregularly, in the festival. These are usually organised in a one-off manner, although sometimes they may appear serially to examine a specific topic. These topics can range from retrospectives of directors and regions, to social and cultural issues. For instance, occasional topics which YIDFF has organised include retrospectives on Joris Ivens and Ogawa Shinsuke, special regional programming focusing on Germany and Okinawa, and the 'Tomorrow's A Day Away' programme in the 2009 edition, which explored European youth culture. In comparison to the Asian regional programs, the transnational collaborative programme and the Yamagata programme adopted the locals and region in a different fashion.

The collaborative programs between different regions further the discussion here by highlighting the heterogeneous dimension of festival programming. That is, the collaborative programmes do not merely screen works from or specifically *about* the respective nations, but

instead examine a topic that draws attention to a specific issue or issues relevant within the region. Examples from YIDFF include an examination of political activism in the 'Video Activism in Japan and Korea' programme, and of independent cinema groups in Taiwan and Japan in the 'Full Shot & Cinema Juku' programme from the 1999 edition. This collaborative approach provides for transnational reflection on specific topics and shifts the focus from the distinctly nationalistic by drawing connections between the countries of the region that indicate the common issues they share.

This transnational perspective of the collaborative programming can be interpreted according to Mette Hjort's (2010a) idea of affinitive transnationalism. In terms of festival programming generally, affinitive transnationalism describes the "shared cultural values and common purposes embraced by individuals, small groups and professional milieus" which aim at providing an "unexpected *discovery*" rather than the "common knowledge define[d] as more or less pervasive across entire regions" (p. 50-51, emphasis in original). The 'unexpected discovery' shared among the nations of the region, comes in contrast to the expected mainstream discussion of a national community. The topics for these transnational collaborative programs are actually an exploration of shared cultural traits, which are mostly hidden from mainstream national discourses. In the case of YIDFF's programming, this is represented by an affinity based on similar concerns and problems faced by different individuals and groups from the various nations in the Asian region (such as the aforementioned concerns with activism and the problems faced by independent film groups), rather than by particular states or nations. So, in the 'In Our Own Eyes/First Nations' Moving Images' programme, devoted to works by indigenous filmmakers from Native American, New Zealand Maori, Australian Aboriginal peoples and the Ainu of Japan, the aim is not to reaffirm any particular *national* discourse. Instead, it provides counterpoint to the re-imagining of nations, where mainstream discourse would usually not adopt activism or the indigenous as part of its primary national imagination.

## Films About Yamagata

'Films About Yamagata' was programmed into the 2007 edition to celebrate the tenth anniversary of YIDFF. It aimed to draw more citizens from Yamagata Prefecture to the festival as well as to provide participants from other areas of Japan, and the local Yamagata citizens themselves, with a "deeper understanding of this region while enjoying the festival" (Saito, 2007, p. 3). The programme was divided into six parts that comprising different genres. These included: pre-World War II footage and films on Yamagata; films focusing on the Zao mountains; films featuring Yamagata-born actress and singer Tatsuta Shizue; works produced by students in the festival's partner institution in Yamagata, Tohoku University of Art & Design; and, interestingly, a live benshi performance – a narration of a lost film about Yamagata of which only the script had been preserved. Screenings ranged from newsreel and documentary to fiction and animation and were programmed to focus directly on Yamagata. In addition to fostering local Yamagatan filmmakers by offering them a screening opportunity, the programme also reflects the significance of both the local and regional festival communities. 'Films About Yamagata' has been curated in subsequent editions of the festival. The programme was divided into sections examining specific topics concerning Yamagata, and two films produced by the directors of works which had been selected in the same programme during the previous edition of the festival were also shown. These works were shown in that part of the previous programme devoted to student works from the Tohoku University of Art & Design, and two of these students continue to pursue careers in filmmaking (YIDFF, 2009).

Through screening films drawn from the locale in which the festival itself is held, what is here termed 'site specificity' was added to the screening. This serves to draw the audience's attention to the relationship between the work and the screening space.[7] In the case of 'Films About Yamagata', the locations portrayed in the films are actually places surrounding the screening location of the moment. So, for example, *Mount Zao* (1935) by Tsukamoto Koji

[7] This site specificity of the programme should be noted as differing from the concept of site specific art that gives "itself up to its environmental context, being formally determined or directed by it" (Kwon, 2004, p. 11).

that opened the 2007 edition of YIDFF is a documentary dealing with skiers visiting the famous tourist attraction, Mount Zao, and the must-go landmark Juhyo there.[8] Such a viewing experience not only acquaints audiences with the scenery depicted in the films, but also links the viewers to their locations nearby so that connections between the festival community watching the films and the local Yamagata Prefecture community are established and strengthened. In other words, the film is further 'contextualised' for both local and visiting audiences.

## Summary

A film festival's programming forms a representation of its ambitions. The programmes mentioned above display efforts made by YIDFF towards the development of documentaries from throughout Asia. They reference Japan and the Asian region generally, but also, and specifically, Yamagata itself. The concern though, is not with any single nation in the region, but rather aims at development across and between all of the regions in Asia and is an effort at nurturing connection and communication between and among the Asian countries. The film programmes draw attention to the production location of the films they contain and their titles refer explicitly to this, with the Japanese and Asian programmes specifically incorporating works from the region.

Yet YIDFF has not simply closed its doors to the world beyond Asia, and some programmes involve international works, thus providing an array of films from different regions of the world which not only inspire the festival community with a diversified understanding of documentary, but also gain the festival a global status and recognition that attracts increasing numbers of international guests. The 'International Competition' and the retrospective of renowned foreign documentarists Robert Flaherty and Joris Ivens are examples of this. As Yamamoto (2007) states, the on-going development of filmmaking facilitated by film festivals is an indication of how these events "excel at creating human and cultural capital via their impacts on filmmakers and audiences" (p. 23). Such 'human and

[8] 'Juhyo' means 'tree monster' and refers to trees on the mountain that become fully covered by ice and snow during winter and resemble an army of deformed snowmen marching up the slopes.

cultural capital' can be discerned implicitly in the case of YIDFF as a "symbolic value" and explicitly as the "skills and experiences embodied within individuals" (p. 23) fostered by the festival. Yamamoto's analysis is especially relevant here, because the 'symbolic value' can be seen to align with the connections between regions, communities and individuals observed previously. She describes this as an example of the attainment of "a new sense of Yamagata's identity through the works of Ogawa Shinsuke or young documentary filmmakers" (p. 23) and it provides evidence of the success of that documentary filmmaking development agenda which YIDFF is pursuing.

The local and regional aspects of the film festival are obviously structured into film programming. The programmes serve to advocate the films in and from the region to the outside world while at the same time facilitating a culture of networking amongst those filmmakers attending the festival. At YIDFF, the pursuit of documentary development is conducted through networking and communication. The Asia Symposium during the first edition of YIDFF mentioned above is a demonstration of the serious concern the festival has regarding communication: the immediate response to an absence of Asian works was the organisation of a symposium to discuss the prevailing circumstances in the region. As Ogawa (2007) pointed out, the nature, or central ambition of YIDFF was (and is) not to provide "merely a place looking for patrons [Bing bu danchun shi xunzhao chuzi ren de changsuo]", but instead, YIDFF exists for film practitioners to provide a place to train each other, a place to help each other – it is indeed a place where everyone related to film can communicate their ideas and share information (p. 235). In other words, the development is not conducted in terms of finance, but rather as an alliance to encourage connections between filmmakers, and to further communication within the festival community as a way to overcome the obstacles identified by the Symposium.

## Creating and sharing of festival community

The festival community at YIDFF includes among its members not only the spectators (audiences) at the screenings, but also anyone who has participated in the festival itself.

Spectatorship and participation are often deemed to be distinct from each other, and Stringer (2003) classifies these two aspects in terms which imply a polarity (p. 246). However, the divide between spectatorship and participation is blurred in YIDFF. That is, YIDFF aims to create an inclusive atmosphere and invites spectators to participate actively within the festival itself through the setting-up of the festival volunteers group, the pub, local tours and workshops (which, importantly, are mostly open-to-all activities). Even something as seemingly mundane as going to the pub and meeting other film enthusiasts is a form of participation that YIDFF actively encourages. Meanwhile, filmmaking participants can become spectators themselves in that they are very much invited to attend each other's screenings. This intertwined relationship between spectators and participants is a distinguishing feature of the festival which is not merely a festival about film screening, but instead emphasises a holistic participation among its festival community, in the facilitation of communication and further nurturing of relationships. This emphasis on *creating a shared experience* – a connection – among the members of the festival community is the way YIDFF seeks to fulfill its ambitions.

### The emphasis on creating a shared experience

Those organisational facets of the festival which serve to provide a shared social experience for the festival community are the focus of this section. 'Social experience' here refers to that which can be gained through participation in the activities that emphasise the social and communicational purpose of the festival community. These organisational facets are important for nurturing human relations because they emphasise the connectedness of the people participating that is created by their social interaction with each other.

These human relationships can be understood through Yamomoto's analysis on 'human capital' mentioned previously. There, "an important aspect" of such capital lies in the "relationships and social ties" that she also refers to as "social capital" (Yamamoto, 2007, p. 24). The concept of social capital stems in part from the work of Robert Putnam (2000), who identifies two aspects of term, which he labels *bonding* (or exclusive) and *bridging* (or

inclusive) social capital. For Putnam, bonding social capital is "more inward looking and [has] a tendency to reinforce exclusive identities and homogeneous groups" while bridging social capital is "outward looking and encompass[es] people across diverse social cleavages" (p. 22). Elaborating on this he goes on to state:

> Bonding capital is good for under-girding specific reciprocity and mobilizing solidarity… Bridging networks, by contrast, are better for linkage to external assets and for information diffusion… Moreover, bridging social capital can generate broader identities and reciprocity, whereas bonding social capital bolsters our narrower selves… Bonding social capital constitutes a kind of sociological superglue, whereas bridging social capital provides a sociological WD-40 [a mechanical lubricant].
>
> (pp. 22-23)

However, as Putnam notes, 'bonding' and 'bridging' social capital are not actually related in an "either-or" manner but can occur "simultaneously" in specific groups according to a "more or less" dimension (p. 23) or continuum. Drawing on Putnam's analysis, this section adopts the classifications of bonding and bridging social capital to understand how the festival community was created at YIDFF and how it shares, through the festival's organisational facets, a common social experience.

## YIDFF Network

Prior to the inauguration of YIDFF in 1989, Ogawa toured Yamagata Prefecture to promote the festival. By screening classic documentaries such as Robert J. Flaherty's *Nanook of the North* (1922), Ogawa wished to attract more audiences to the upcoming festival. During this time he also developed an idea for the creation of a network of local volunteers from the immediate area to support and promote the festival into what came to be called the Yamagata International Documentary Film Festival Network (Masuya, 2008). Volunteers from different backgrounds, such as film practitioners and editors, gathered from around Yamagata Prefecture to support the festival and to join together for various connective reasons, among them "the love of cinema" (p. 12) and to "do something for the film festival" (Takahashi, 2008, p. 7). These volunteers, however, differed from the kind of volunteer who "answered loyally to the organisers' demands" (p. 7) for assistance with logistical matters. Rather, they

contributed their own ideas and talents to the festival's running, despite "often contradict[ing]" (p. 8) the civil service workers in charge of supporting the festival, and they performed within their specialised areas towards its promotion.

Since the promotional works became less necessary as the festival was approaching, Ogawa suggested that the YIDFF Network publish a daily newspaper for the festival. Thus the duty of the Network shifted towards handling the *Daily Bulletin*. This is discussed further in the next section. In addition to producing and publishing promotional works, the Network also became involved in film selection for the festival's regular film programmes, including the 'International Competition' and, importantly, from 1993, for a programme devoted to films selected specifically by the Network itself, entitled 'YIDFF Network Special Screenings'. The films screened in this programme are based primarily on the Network's choice and mostly comprise works coming from Japan, although occasionally foreign works are also screened in the programme, one example being the Taiwanese documentary *The Lost Honor of Mountain* (2000) by Lin Wan-yu in 2001. Additionally, the Network supports off-festival activities such as the Friday Theatre event organised in the Yamagata Documentary Film Library in Yamagata City.

The YIDFF Network demonstrates how a festival can actively co-operate with its 'audiences' and further involve them as 'participants' of the festival. It also displays how a festival can involve local citizens. Ogawa once told the Network that "young film lovers living in the prefecture should, more than anyone else play a positive role and support the festival" (Takahashi, 2008, p. 8).

Participation in the Network is an experience-based process that both provides and enhances social capital among members of the festival community. Each of the two types of social capital can be identified in the Network: bonding social capital, in terms of the participants' identity as Yamagata citizens who wish to contribute to the prestige of Yamagata City; and bridging social capital in the sense that effort is made to involve people from different social backgrounds, or even other regions of Japan to support YIDFF through a

shared love of cinema. The latter is the stronger dimension in the case of the Network and is emphasised by its inclusiveness. Since the Network does not explicitly exclude any specific group or groups of people, the growing number of volunteers in Japan is evidence of this. Despite the notion of 'capital' here standing as a possible contradiction to the non-market-driven status of YIDFF, as has been previously stated, the festival not an event that merely seeks to match patrons with film projects. The capital referred to here is Putnam's interpretation of the 'value' accounted for in the social and cultural traits which such events possess, foster and develop, and does not signify a purely financial phenomenon.

For Putnam (2000), networks by definition involve "mutual obligations" rather than the establishment of "mere contacts" (p. 20). Just so, the YIDFF Network is constituted by a manifestation of 'mutual obligations' with respect to the festival. The Network supports the festival by the various means mentioned above. Yet, its members do not ask for any formal payoff and they perform their self-assigned duties voluntarily. The festival fulfils its side of the 'mutual obligation' by creating social capital, in the form of, for example, pride and honour in Japan, or in Yamagata; in identity, expanded relationships and in enjoyable moments spent with different, though like-minded people. This is the substantial 'gain' for the Network members: their self-initiated obligations become the lubricating 'WD40' which enables a close 'bridging' to occur.

### The Komian Club

The local-volunteers-run pub is another phenomenon that reflects the communicational dimension of the festival. The name of this "communal space", as Murayama (2007, p. 18) describes it, is the Komian Club. The initiative was undertaken because there were seen to be no facilities allowing guests to gather after the end of the screenings during the first edition of the festival. Thus guests were consigned to talking in the street if they wished to discuss the screening amongst themselves, which made the local citizenry feel "sorry" for such a situation. Consequently, a "warm space" for "discussion of cinema into the night and also [to] intermingle with local residents" was set up (Satomi, 2008, p. 21). The Komian Club has

become the official festival ‘communal space’, providing an open-to-all and welcoming environment during the festival period. It is open from 10pm to 2am and has ‘borrowed’ a local Japanese restaurant as its regular location.

The Komian Club is run by a “volunteer-based community building group”, the Yamagata Beautiful Commission. The commission is composed of around 35 members of Yamagata citizens and, to quote a member of the commission, forms an organisation where “no one is forced” into any action, and where consequently the membership “proliferate[s] unsolicitedly like amoebae” and foresees itself as being able to “continue indefinitely” (Satomi, 2008, p. 22). Some members meet each other only once every two years at Komian Club gatherings.

The Komian Club’s popularity is demonstrated by the “jam-packed” attendance (Satomi, 2008, p. 22) during its opening hours when everyone is welcomed. The festival community will often propose to meet up at the Club because everyone knows where it is and guests range across all those people in the festival community. The Komian offers what Satomi describes as a “socialization spot” (p. 22) where people can chat casually over a ready supply of beer or sake, which acts as a social lubricant (see Putnam’s reference to WD40). This social experience shared among different guests serves to cultivate relationships.

The social capital thus cultivated can be regarded as forming that “bridging” dimension described by Putnam (2000) in which “ bridging networks[…] are better for linkage to external assets and for information diffusion” (p. 22). This coincides exactly with the intentions of the festival organisers and their helpers towards the constitution of a community aiding the development of Asian documentary. That is, the linkages among the community involve “broader identities”, and further the aim of “getting ahead” (Putnam, 2000, p. 23) for Asian documentary filmmaking’s development.

### Other aspects and summary

In addition to the YIDFF Network and the Komian Club, three other festival undertakings are aimed at providing shared experiences to the festival community. These are local tours, a

hostel for guests and a training camp. The local tours are organised during the festival and invite all from the festival community to participate. One of the tours is scheduled as a day trip visiting different spots in Yamagata City, including a temple and a local school. Additionally, there is a tour which visits Furuyashiki, the village where Ogawa stayed during his filmmaking and where he produced the work *Nippon: Furuyashiki Village* (1982). During that tour, the villagers share with the visitors their experiences of living in the village, as well as some anecdotes concerning Ogawa. A lunch of traditional Japanese food and a guided tour of a traditional village dwelling are also provided.

Unlike the local tours, which are open for the participation of anyone and everyone, the hostel and the training camp are, to a certain extent, more exclusive. The hostel is devoted to film practitioners coming from abroad, mainly, as the name of the hostel – Asia House – suggests, from Asia. The hostel is devoted to serving as a cheap – and sometimes even free – temporary accommodation during the festival. The festival organisers negotiate with local property owners or the municipal government over the possibility of adapting an apartment for the purpose. As a result, its location has varied and there is no guarantee that it will be available at all. In the 2009 edition, a vacant building was re-furnished by the students in the partnered Tohoku University of Art & Design,[9] to serve as that year's version of Asia House. The building was divided into a dormitory, cafe and lecture basement of which the festival staff and students were in charge. Events such as talks and screening were scheduled daily at the lecture basement, and the cafe welcomed anyone to pass through. The dormitory provided an opportunity for guests to live in close proximity to other film enthusiasts during the festival period, thus potentially nurturing the process of bonding and networking.

The training camp was similarly designed to accommodate specific guests. As the title of the camp – 'Self and Others China-Japan Documentary Dojo' – suggests, it is devoted to Chinese and Japanese filmmakers. This five-day camp was held at the Furuyashiki Village, also the destination of one of the tours and the shooting location of Ogawa's work mentioned

[9] The university in Yamagata City is also partnered with the festival for the film programme concerning Yamagata mentioned previously.

previously. The participant filmmakers were separated into teams that included both Japanese and Chinese people, and employed film stock to produce short films, instead of using the video camcorders that they would normally employ.

The organisational processes mentioned above create an experience that can be shared by the festival community. However, the degrees of inclusiveness-exclusiveness, as well as the resultant bridging and bonding social capital vary between them. The local tours are constructed to provide a higher degree of inclusiveness due to their welcome-to-all nature, while Asia House was set up primarily for foreign film practitioners, although mixing with other guests during the house events is encouraged. The 'China-Japan Documentary Dojo' was provided exclusively to specific guests. Thus a comparison of inclusiveness (bridging) to exclusiveness (bonding) can be seen to comply with that "more or less" dimension indicated by Putnam (2000, p. 23); both inclusiveness and exclusiveness are embedded simultaneously to varying degrees.

And importantly, drawing from the observation of those experience-based aspects discussed above, this provides evidence as to where the festival is positioned overall along the inclusiveness-exclusiveness continuum. From the stated goals of the festival on their official web page,[10] and with those organisational aspects discussed, YIDFF's work can be seen as primarily inclusive in form, in that it is never explicitly devoted to a single specific group of peoples. Instead, YIDFF aims to open a window for "as many people as possible to see the worlds' best documentary in Japan".[11] Indeed, YIDFF can be seen to form a four-way bridge

[10] "To illustrate the current state of documentary cinema, by collecting radical documentary works from around the world and focusing on this genre, which continues to follow its own distinctive direction even as cinema has become established as a common global culture.

To impart the appeal of documentary, by allowing as many people as possible to see the world's best documentary cinema in Japan, where opportunities for viewing are few and far between. To present new realms and possibilities for expression through cinema, which is generally recognized as mass entertainment.

To explore new concepts in the field of documentary, which is building a niche for itself while converging with various media in our high-tech information society.

To uncover new talent and expand spheres of interaction, by actively encouraging the works of young filmmakers."
http://www.yidff.jp/faq/faq-e.html

[11] http://www.yidff.jp/faq/faq-e.html

which reaches first to Yamagata, then out from Yamagata towards the rest of Japan, on towards the Asian region and then towards the rest of the world.

### Sustaining extensions

It is widely agreed that film festivals manifest an exhibition space (de Valck, 2007; Iordanova, 2009; Koehler, 2009; Fischer, 2009), primarily and most recognisably during the actual film screenings. De Valck (2007), however, draws attention to the "exhibition value" of a film festival itself, which results in festival "visitors [who] not only decide to devote their attention to watching a particular film… [but] also choose to experience that film as part of the festival screening process" (p. 19). In other words, this festival screening process actually adds value to the film. This is related to how a festival plans its various components, and includes those experience-based aspects (tours, workshops) and the film programmes' curatorial efforts mentioned previously. What are termed here 'sustaining extensions' can further extend the festival experience across individual festival events or even across the festival as a whole for community members.

Sustaining extensions are those non-event-based and off-festival aspects that are organised in conjunction with the festival and that sustain the festival experience for the festival community over the festival period. This is a strategy to obtain the "year-round visibility" noted by Alex Fischer (2009, p. 157) in his analysis of the Denver International Film Festival (DIFF). This festival invites more visibility and funding by organising the Denver Film Society. In the case of YIDFF, this sustained visibility is accomplished primarily by off-festival screenings and the festival publications.

### Publications

The publications produced by YIDFF can be divided into two categories: in-festival and off-festival. Before discussing the details of these respective publications, attention should be given to the languages in which the publications are produced. Some of the publications, such

as the festival catalogue, are printed as bilingual documents, in Japanese and English,[12] while others are divided into two separate print runs which produce separate Japanese and English versions; the in-house journal *Documentary Box*, for instance. Such an effort in bilingualism clearly indicates a targeted audience for the festival that is not just local Japanese. Through these publications, foreign audiences can comprehend all festival materials, and gain a deeper understanding of its aims and organisation. Such a concern with communication shows that the inclusiveness which forms part of the festival's aims is clearly targeted at that sector of its community comprised by foreign guests.

The term in-festival publications refers to those publications released during the festival period, which include the festival catalogue, the special event catalogue and a festival daily newspaper entitled the *Daily Bulletin*. The festival catalogue is devoted to information about the festival itself – details of the film programmes and curatorial statements – and costs around 1000 yen. Special events catalogs on the other hand, are devoted to those occasional programmes or special events, such as The Asia Symposium, film programming at Yamagata City cinemas and the retrospectives mentioned previously. The special events catalogues include the details of these programmes and events, and further include articles discussing the issues in question.

The *Daily Bulletin* is a free newspaper distributed daily throughout the festival venues during the festival's operation and has been published by the volunteers of the YIDFF Network since the first edition. The newspaper consists of daily event information, news about the festival and interviews with the participant directors written during and for the festival and thus not available beforehand. These interviews are conducted by the volunteers of the Network and aim at discussing the issues raised by specific works.

[12] In addition to the publications, the films screened during the festival, the Q&A sections and the official festival events, such as the ceremonies and seminars, are also conducted bilingually. Films are bilingually subtitled, and a translator offers a simultaneous interpretation to the filmmakers and the audiences during the events.

Because the newspaper and the interviews are produced by volunteers, the quality of the newspaper is of serious concern to the organisers. Before the festival starts training of the volunteers in the conducting of interviews is performed, one requirement being that an interviewer watch up to 50, or even 100 works related to the films whose director they are to interview (Masuya, 2008). Formal editors ensure quality control over the newspaper. Thus the *Daily Bulletin* actually resembles a formal newspaper in its structure and is intended to serve not as propaganda for the festival, nor as an independent film magazine, but rather to provide a "viewpoint" that balances being "'impartial' to the authors and works" with "a certain partiality" from the writers (p. 13).

In addition to these in-festival publications, there was at one time a regular journal published by YIDFF: *Documentary Box* (DB). First published in 1992, its final issue was published in 2007, after a run of 28 issues in total, or between one and three per festival edition. The journal first served as a "promotional vehicle" for the festival (Ono, 2007a, p. 2), however, as the festival grew it became more independent of the festival itself, eventually becoming "devoted to making and thinking about documentaries"[13] within a global perspective. The journal contained articles about the documentary filmmaking scene globally, as well as interviews with documentary directors – in its 'Documentarists of Japan' series, for instance – and later added reviews of books related to documentary filmmaking. With an ambition to "further show the intellectual and educational potential of film festivals, in part by helping break down the barriers between film festivals and academia" (Gerow, 2007, p. 15), and under the editorship of film scholar Aaron Gerow, the *Documentary Box* became established as a regular academic journal. It assembled an editorial board, became involved in the Film Literature Index and obtained an ISSN number (Gerow, 2007). The *Documentary Box* was further enhanced by academic articles contributed by renowned documentary film scholars, such as Chris Berry in the DB#11 and Michael Renov in the DB#7. As Gerow (2007) states in an article in the final issue, "if you are going to promote documentary, you also have

[13] http://www.yidff.jp/docbox/docbox-e.html

to foster understanding of the films you are not going to show, not just the ones you do, and speak to people even after the film festival is over" (pp. 16-17).

### Off-festival film screenings

In addition to the publication, YIDFF extends its visibility by the use of off-festival screenings. These screenings are organised by the festival outside the festival period and are mainly conducted by the festival organisation. Screenings are scheduled twice a month on Fridays and primarily programme works screened during past festivals. As the name suggests, the Yamagata Documentary Film Library Friday Theater is held at a local film library, a facility organised by the festival, which aims to "collect and preserve films" from the festival.[14] The ticket price for the Friday Theater is 1000 yen for a one-day ticket although admission is free for festival members[15]. Additionally, off-festival screenings are conducted in collaboration with other parties. Tohoku University of Art & Design is one of the long term partners of the festival which cooperates with the festival on different occasions, such as with the festival programming and with Asia House as mentioned above. These screenings are thus held at the university campus and admission is free. However, the off-festival screening locations are not limited exclusively to Yamagata City and occasional screenings take place in other regions of the Yamagata prefecture in conjunction with various regional organisations. As a result, films will tour Yamagata prefecture during the regional screenings, especially those works relevant to or about Yamagata itself. The screenings of the Yamagata works serve not only to consolidate the citizens' connection to the area, but also increase the visibility of the festival in the region.

These endeavours extend across the festival period, providing the festival with a "year-round visibility" (Fischer, 2009, p. 157). However in the case of YIDFF, the extended aspects do not necessarily increase their revenues. According to Gerow (2007) the cost of mailing the *Documentary Box* "around the world was considerable" and no subscription fee was charged

[14] http://www.yidff.jp/library/library-e.html

[15] After its transformation into an NPO, YIDFF invited individuals to donate in support to the festival: purchasing membership of the festival for an annual charge of 3000 yen per year is one way this can be accomplished.

(p. 16). This suggests that the reason for the existence of these organisational facets, at least insofar as the *Documentary* Box was concerned, is not based on financial concerns. Instead, the extensions aim to "increase the awareness" of the festival and further "promote documentary" (p. 16). This revenue is not measured in terms of financial capital, but rather in terms of human and social capital. And indeed, the development of documentary filmmaking needs to be a sustainable one, because any such development is actually a long term process which changes step by step over time. The festival is not merely focused on the "short term benefit"; as Gerow puts it, "YIDFF has always maintained a long-term outlook" (p. 17).

## Conclusion

Ogawa (2007) once said of documentary filmmaking that "when you are capturing your subject, you are indeed capturing the relationship between the subject and you [as a director]" (p. 36).[16] As a result, Ogawa did not hesitate in presenting himself in his films, and even spent years nurturing acquaintanceships and relationships with local citizens and other individuals before shooting began.

This concept was not merely played out in the execution of his filmmaking, but was shared by the film festival he created. The infusion of various levels of communication and the three aspects of YIDFF outlined above – local and regional, the creating and sharing of a festival community, and sustaining extensions – converge into a single concern: the promotion of communication among the festival community. Ogawa's documentary filmmaking concept of involving the director and the subject in a relationship is manifested too in the case of YIDFF and its festival community: the festival, in essence the 'director', carefully and deliberately fosters a relationship with its 'subjects', the festival community. Thus as was stated earlier, the exhibition site that usually identifies film festivals is, in the case of YIDFF, transformed into a site of communication.

[16] In the original: "Ni paishe duifang de shihou, shiji shang shi zai pai ni he duifang de guanxi."

## CHAPTER THREE: Documentary Film Festival China (DOChina)

### Introduction

This chapter enters the Greater China region by examining a festival devoted to independent documentary film there, the Documentary Film Festival China (DOChina)[1] in China's capital city of Beijing. Despite its comparatively young age – having only seen its first edition in 2003 – DOChina presents one of the most distinctive efforts towards the cultivation of independent filmmaking in China. Many now-renowned filmmakers made their Chinese premieres at the festival, among them Zhao Liang, director of the politically sensitive film *Petition* (2009), Xu Tong, who directed the film *Wheat Harvest* (2008), a portrayal of a prostitute that drew much discussion, and Wang Bing, director of what is considered to be a contemporary documentary classic, *Tie Xi Qu: West of Tracks* (2003). DOChina is a significant occasion for showcasing the latest trends of the Chinese independent documentary scene.

This chapter is divided into two parts: the first provides a context for the festival – its historical background and the intentions of its organisers, for instance, are stated; this is followed by an analysis of particular organisational aspects of the festival that, it is claimed here, represent the festival's pursuit of independence in filmmaking. It is a pursuit which is motivated by ambitions towards developing Chinese independent filmmaking as a form of cultural exchange among the attending film practitioners and can be seen as a form of active political resistance.

The analytical section discusses two concepts frequently referred to in discussions of Chinese independent filmmaking, namely independence and the underground. The claim here is that despite these concepts being often left undefined they can and do reflect concurrent but different dimensions of the Chinese independent film festival context. The discussion here identifies particular aspects of DOChina's festival organisation that demonstrate each of these

[1] Also known as the China Documentary Film Festival.

concepts. The examination of the concept of independence primarily addresses organisational aspects of the festival motivated by aspirations towards fostering independence, including the issues of film selection, film schooling and distribution. For instance, film selection displays the festival organisers' emphasis on works that have been produced independently as distinguished from state-produced works. The concept of an underground is explored with reference to some of the methods employed to tackle the constraints imposed upon filmmakers by the Chinese government: certain organisational arrangements of the festival 'protect' it from disturbance, such as the festival's name and its sometimes unorthodox scheduling.

This chapter seeks to illustrate how an independent documentary film festival is curated in China, and how its central ambition towards independence is concretely enabled by particular organisational aspects. Situated within a system of state censorship, the festival, in order to offer alternatives – indeed independence – to the dominant film culture in China, is inevitably driven underground and to the violation of certain regulations overseen by the government.

## Documentary film festivals in China

It is DOChina which, of all the other Chinese film festivals devoted to documentary, best represents independence and the underground. In addition to DOChina, two other significant documentary film festivals[2] are held in China, they being the Yunnan Multicultural Visual Festival (Yunfest) and the Guangzhou International Documentary Film Festival (GZDOC). In terms of their 'independence', Yunfest certainly places a similar emphasis on its efforts to provide an "uncomprising commitment on independence" (Nornes, 2011a, p. 102), however, GZDOC, as one of the China Government's "official recognized event[s]", is capable of dismissal, by the organiser of DOChina at least, as "merely a showcase for government

[2] There are also a number of other festivals that present a significant proportion of China's documentary screenings, such as the May Festival and the Crossing Festival organised by the Chinese documentary pioneer Wu Wenguang in his dancing studio in Beijing, where live theatre is scheduled beside screenings of documentary works. There is too, the China Independent Film Festival (CIFF), discussed by Berry (2009), which programmes one of its categories for documentaries.

television programmes [Na jiben shang shi dianshitai de yingzhan]" (Lin, 2011a); it is not welcoming of most Chinese independent filmmakers and the censorship imposed upon submitted works is not welcomed by those independent producers who do contribute (Nornes, 2011a). Although both DOChina and Yunfest receive censorship pressure from government officials, it is the Beijing-centred DOChina that most frequently and easily catches official attention. The diversified activities and branching projects of DOChina make it a distinctive example to illustrate the issues of an underground film scene in China.

DOChina also provides an alternative to the "ideal" two-dimensional business and audience film festival models proposed by Mark Peranson. In these models Peranson (2009) identifies a hierarchy of "separate groups that each have a vested interest in some part of the operations of the film festival". These groups include the buyers, sales agents and the audience, ranked according to their "ideal importance" (pp. 27-28) to the festival. Surprisingly, filmmakers rank lowest in this hierarchy in each of the models. Their attendance at a festival is presumed to entail "not as much work (more like [a] vacation)" (p. 28). In other words, for Peranson at least, the attendance of filmmakers at a festival is a comparatively unimportant phenomenon. Yet, DOChina is a festival seriously concerned with becoming a 'communication' platform for any attending film practitioners, and especially for filmmakers.[3] This is reflected in the fact that the Chinese name of DOChina contains no words that literally mean 'film festival' and that DOChina's Chinese name (Zhongguo jilupian jiaoliu zhou) actually refers to the event as an "exchange week" or communication week.[4] (The political regulation which brings about this naming is discussed in the section that examines the underground.) This alternative naming of 'communication' reflects a more humanistic approach which endeavours to serve as a way to cultivate and enlighten the development of Chinese independent cinema as opposed to an "exchange" which implies a loose form of economic transfer; a trade as it were.

[3] Interview with the organiser, Zhu Rikun, 4 May, 2010.

[4] Nornes (2011a) translates this as "exchange week", but "communication week" seems a preferable alternative translation; one that more accurately places emphasis on a fuller human interaction.

## Songzhuang and Fanhall Films

DOChina is an annual film festival held in Songzhuang in the Tongzhou District, a suburban area of Beijing. Although it is located in the capital city of China, the area of Songzhuang is completely different to the developed urban landscape one would expect. Songzhuang is, as well as being a rural farming area, one of the major artist communities in Beijing; a place where galleries, studios and an official Songzhuang Art Museum are located along the main street. Unlike other internationally-renowned artist communities in Beijing – the 798 Art District, for instance, where international and commercial galleries are densely packed – Songzhuang is a cheap place to rent, so newly-emerging artists can live there in company with their more established artist neighbours.

The Songzhuang artist's community was formed primarily with the support of one of China's "foremost art critics and curators", Li Xianting, who is regarded as the "Godfather of Songzhuang" (Shaffer, 2011). When a previous artist's community in Yuanmingyuan was closed in the mid-1990s in accordance with a government building plan, the artists there, led by Li, moved their studios to Songzhuang. But Li's influence stretches beyond simply heading a migration of artists, for he also collaborated with municipal government officials to arrange the building of the Songzhuang Art Museum, at which he took up the role of curator. Importantly to the context here, though, is Li's creation in 2006 of a film fund – the eponymous Li Xianting's Film Fund – to sustain the development of Chinese independent filmmaking.[5] This funding actually supports DOChina and provides for screening and office space during the running of the festival.

Li Xianting's Film Fund has provided financial and venue support since DOChina's 2007 edition, with the festival itself being organised by Fanhall Films, the group responsible for its institution. While the group's English title – Fanhall: 'a hall for movie fans' – is somewhat prosaic, the Chinese title, Xianxiang Gongzuoshi, has a more expansive (and ambitious) literal meaning of 'Phenomenon Studio'. Fanhall Films also conducts two other

[5] The film fund was funded by Li and other established artists, including the painter Fang Lijun.

festivals, namely the Beijing Independent Film Festival (BiFF) and the Beijing Queer Film Festival.

Fanhall was begun by its leading organiser Zhu Rikun in 2001 as, originally, a film store selling VCDs and audio discs on the campus of Tsinghua University in Beijing.[6] The store was opened to simply satisfy Zhu's personal enthusiasm for watching movies (Lin, 2011a, Foxley, 2006). In subsequent years, Fanhall organised regular screenings in independent Chinese cinemas (also inviting filmmakers to participate in Question and Answer fora), film clubs, workshops and Internet discussion platforms. In 2002, Fanhall organised what was considered to be a film festival devoted to the Sixth Generation Chinese filmmakers, which included works by Jia Zhangke and Wang Xiaoshuai. It was a year later that DOChina was curated for the first time.

## Brief history of DOChina

Inspired by the success of this first festival, DOChina has, with the exception of two years, operated annually since 2003.[7] Zhu had noticed quite a number of filmmakers adopting documentary as a "form of creation [Chuangzuo de fangshi]" (Lin, 2011a); the first edition of DOChina was curated as a retrospective as a means to seek out and collect Chinese documentary films.

The first edition of DOChina was organised by Fanhall with venue support from the School of Art and Communication of Beijing Normal University, which had previously collaborated with Fanhall for university screening events. A screening room in the National Library of China in Beijing was rented to provide an additional venue. Over 50 films were screened during the festival, including both independent and state-television-related works. Tickets were priced so as to provide a small amount of financial support to the organisers. The film selection displayed a retrospective approach to Chinese documentaries, screening works which ranged from those subscribing to the "New Documentary Movement" (Lu, 2003;

[6] Zhu is also the director of the Li Xianting's Film Fund.

[7] The 2005 and 2010 editions were cancelled due to funding and censorship problems, which are detailed in the later part of this chapter.

2010),[8] through "no-budget independent documentary" (Berry & Rofel, 2010a, p. 4) productions such as Wu Wenguang's *Bumming in Beijing: The Last Dreamers* (1990), to state-television-related works like *The Last Mountain God* (1992) by Sun Zengtian. Because some projects were funded by, and allowed to screen on, state television – and a number of filmmakers actually worked for TV stations – the festival developed a relationship that intertwined independent works and stated-television works. According to Lu Xinyu (2010), the "roots of the New Documentary Movement can be found inside and outside the [television] system" (p. 20). As a retrospective festival on Chinese documentaries, the creation of a dialogue between these films and works produced by 'the system' is inevitable.

The simple inclusion of works from 'the system' did not provide DOChina's organisers with an automatic stamp of approval for their new film festival. The Beijing Normal University and the National Library of China refused to rent venues for the festival in the following year. After searching for a substitute, Fanhall rented screening rooms in the Beijing World Art Museum – a state-supported museum – which became the venue for the festival in 2004. In this edition, Zhu curated the film programming into a more diverse presentation by including the categories of Chinese independent documentary, Chinese television documentary, documentaries of humanity and social concern, a Chinese documentary retrospective, international documentaries and Japanese documentaries. However, because the museum was an official government-supported site, the museum's officers were afraid of receiving any form of complaint from other government officials, especially regarding the screening of films which touched on sensitive issues, such as homosexuality and HIV. After two days of the festival, apparently in response to pressure from within the government, the museum curator decided to terminate the lease on the venue. The museum's curator was

[8] New Documentary Movement refers to a "cultural phenomena" in which Chinese documentary filmmakers began to present a characteristic "rebellion against the old, rigid aspects of Maoist utopianism and established political ideologies in China during the late 1980s and throughout the 1990s" (Lu, 2010, pp.15-16). Because of the filmmakers' affiliation to the state system, the "root" of the movement can be "found both inside and outside the system" (p. 20) "simultaneously" (2003, p. 16). As a result, both state television programmes and independent productions can have equally been included in the movement. See also the Preface in Lu (2003*) Jilu Zhongguo: Dangdai Zhongguo xin jilu yundong* as well as Lu's (2010) "Rethinking China's New Documentary Movement: Engagement with the Social".

frightened and asked Zhu to destroy all festival posters printed with the museum's name so as to erase all evidence that the museum had supported the event, even for just two days.[9] Zhu was informed of these conditions by the curator, but received no explanation personally for the termination, and has been unable to contact the museum curator since that time. Fortunately, DOChina 2004 had also scheduled screenings in other cities in China, so that even though the screenings in Beijing were terminated, scheduled screenings in the cities of Shanghai and Nanking were maintained.

The lack of continuity in venue partners proved to be a major obstacle for Fanhall's ability to organise its festivals. The proposed 2005 edition of DOChina was cancelled due to the lack of venue and funding support. During the following year, Zhu was invited by teaching staff at Anhui University to organise DOChina on their campus. Thus the location for DOChina 2006 shifted from Beijing to Anhui Province. Fortunately, the fluctuating location of the festival eventually ceased in 2007 after Zhu and Fanhall settled in Songzhuang. DOChina 2007 was held in the Songzhuang Art Museum, and has received support from Li Xianting's Film Fund since then. Li's interest and concern for independent films in China has even seen a part of the museum reconstructed as a movie theatre. After they met, Li invited Zhu to be his film fund's director, which resulted in the development of a close working relationship between Li Xianting's Film Fund and Fanhall Films.

### After settlement in Songzhuang

Since the establishment of this co-operative relationship, both the festival and Fanhall Films have experienced steady growth. In 2008, Fanhall Films built its own movie theatre close to the Songzhuang Art Museum. The building is a complex of Fanhall offices, a café and the movie theatre in the basement. Since this time, the primary venue of the festival has shifted from the museum to the theatre, although major events, such as the opening ceremony, are still held at the museum.

[9] Interview with the organiser, Zhu Rikun, 4 May, 2010.

The number of screened works and categories has also increased. DOChina 2007 screened 24 independent Chinese documentaries, which were divided among the categories of competition, non-competition and 'Diversity & Multi Culture'. Both the competition and the non-competition programmes were devoted to recent independent Chinese documentaries and were instituted as regular programming for the festival, making DOChina famous as a festival showcasing the latest independent documentaries. In the following year's edition, DOChina co-operated with the Japan Yamagata International Documentary Film Festival (YIDFF) towards the curation of a retrospective of the Japanese documentary filmmaker, Ogawa Shinsuke, whose films are rarely able to be seen in China but upon whom the influence of Chinese documentary filmmakers has been "particularly strong" (Nornes, 2007b, p. 227). Since this edition, retrospective programming of particular filmmakers has been curated annually, with filmmakers featured in the programme ranging from the Belgian Henri Storck in DOChina 2009 to the Korean Kim Dong-won in DOChina 2010.

Since settling down in Songzhuang, DOChina has been mostly scheduled during the Chinese national public holiday week for the celebration of Labour Day in early May, also known as the May Day Golden Week. In 2010, the seven days of the festival began on May Day. The festival lasted seven days to conform to its Chinese name as a 'communication week'. A total of 44 films were screened in two locations: the Songzhuang Art Museum and Fanhall Theatre. Attendance at the festival numbered around 700 guests, with each screening accommodating an audience of from 100 to 300, depending on the film's popularity. There were eight curated programmes of which three were devoted to the latest Chinese independent documentaries, namely competition, non-competition and 'Rude Cut'. Both the competition and non-competition programmes were open for submission as regular programmes, while 'Rude Cut' was a special programme that screened the latest work in rough cuts by the established documentary filmmaker Cong Feng, who had been awarded the Directors Guild of Japan Award in YIDFF 2009. In addition, retrospectives of specific filmmakers and of subject matter focusing on specific regions were programmed. Those

programmes devoted to specific filmmakers drew attendance from the filmmakers themselves: Wu Wenguang from China, Kim Dong-won from Korea and Hara Kazuo from Japan. The two programmes of documentaries concerning specific regions, centred on Switzerland and Singapore and representative filmmakers from these nations were also invited to join the festival. As a result, most of the directors of the screened works attended the festival and took part in Question and Answer sessions.

The festival's annual budget since its institution in Songzhuang is roughly 100,000 RMB, with Li Xianting's Film Fund serving as a major and continuing support.[10] Additionally, individual corporations have taken part in supporting the festival. The Basis Group, a business-to-business marketing and brand development agency which invests in the creative industries and supported early DVD distribution for Fanhall, has maintained a support of the festival since 2008. Non-regular support also comes from local and foreign institutions. The local institutions are mostly from sectors within the creative industries, such as the LDX Contemporary Art Center and fashion brand Donoratico, while the foreign funding mostly comes from the film programme devoted to the corresponding region. So, in 2008 the Japan Foundation sponsored the Ogawa retrospective and in 2010 Swiss Films sponsored the Swiss programme.

Despite facing numerous obstacles, DOChina insists on the development of Chinese independent film as its central goal, and this manifests in particular organisational aspects of the festival itself. After settling down at Songzhuang, DOChina aimed at enhancing its independence by sourcing most of its funding and venue support from individual non-government parties. As a festival which is self-alienated from the state and from dominant (zhuliu) Chinese political power, DOChina is not merely a film festival showcasing independent films, it is a profoundly and intrinsically 'independent festival'.

[10] The film fund is supported by individual Chinese artists, including Feng Lijun and Hai Bo.

## Independence and the underground in film festivals

In academic discussions of independent films in China, two concepts are often employed for the purpose. Naturally, the notion of 'independence' enters any discussion, but, and especially when discussing what is known as the Sixth Generation of Chinese filmmakers, the term 'underground' is also often employed (Zhou, 2007; Pickowicz, 2006; Reynaud, 2003). Although these terms are employed similarly and often to describe independent films in China in general, scholars tend to be reluctant to actually define what it is that they mean by each term unless they are specifically pressed into providing such a delineation. Pickowicz (2006) argues in his article "Social and Political Dynamics of Underground Filmmaking in China" that the term "Underground Film" is preferable to "independent film"" because "many Chinese filmmakers choose to use it themselves… [i]t is part of their identity" and because it captures "the unofficial nature of the work and the clear intention of these young artists to resist state control" (pp. 2-3). However, Zhang's (2006) article in the same volume states that for "political reasons, most young directors refuse the term 'underground' and prefer 'independent'", since the term independent "best describes the *alternative* modes of production and circulation of their works [emphasis in original]" (p. 26). These concepts represent different dimensions of contemporary independent Chinese film. Although, as indicated here, some filmmakers and scholars tend to decide which concept can best represent the particular circumstances upon which they are focused, and use it in preference over the other, others regard the two terms as part of a process in which one concept transforms into the other: the title of the volume containing the works cited above, edited by Pickowicz and Zhang, *From Underground to Independent: Alternative Film Culture in Contemporary China* (2006), displays such a preoccupation. The authors state in their Preface that "the dynamics in question may point to a direction away from 'underground' and toward semi-independence or 'independence' in the new century" (p. vii). In other words, the concepts preclude each other and represent different "directions" in contemporary Chinese documentary filmmaking.

This study argues that in the context of the non-state film festival in China,[11] these two concepts are in fact co-existent and represent simultaneous but different dimensions of the festival. These two concepts – independence and the underground – are discussed here through the lense of the organisational aspects of DOChina; they are revealed as not merely descriptive of the structures of the festival, but as the central ambition and pursuit of the organiser. They serve the ultimate purpose of consolidating the development of Chinese independent filmmaking.

## Independence in DOChina

Esther Mee Kwan Cheung (2007) encountered several possible definitions of 'independent' in an interview with critics from China and Macau on the issue of Chinese independent cinemas. Independence was posited as "low budget"; as the production of work "not funded by a major film studio"; as works in which "directors have to be responsible for the whole production process and the thought expressed in the film"; as a film which "doesn't intend to pander to mass taste" and which "is not designed for mass distribution"; and as a film which does not partake of the "star-driven system". The critics whose opinions Cheung canvassed approach the definition of 'independent' from different perspectives, and provide no overall consensus in their ideas, which fail to converge into any single cohesive concept.

An alternative interpretation is provided by Chuck Kleinhans (1998), who says that the term independent "has to be understood as a relational term – independent in relation to the dominant system" (p. 308; Berry, 2006, p. 110). And Chris Berry (2006) declares that in the Chinese context, this dominant system can be understood as the state system: "the system [tizhi]". So, 'independence' in China refers to works "not made within 'the system' (tizhi)… [that are] not part of the approved internal annual production schedule of either a state-owned film studio or television station" (p. 111, translation in original). This is a similar position to that suggested by Pickowicz (2006): "[I]n the Chinese case the concept means independence

[11] The non-state nature is specified here because there are film festivals in China that are supported by the Chinese government. These festivals represent a totally different phenomenon in comparison to other, non-state-supported or state-related film festivals: examples of these "public [minjian]" film festivals include the Yunfest and CIFF.

from the Chinese state rather than independence from the sort of powerful private conglomerates that have dominated Hollywood" (p. 3). And Zhang (2006) further consolidates reference to the state by holding that 'independence' for Chinese filmmaking is,

> if not entirely independent of state institutions (for nominal affiliation was required in some cases), at least *independent of official ideology*. Their 'independent' status, accordingly, is defined not in relation to the private sources of their funding (increasingly from overseas, which means they are not finically independent) but with reference to their lack of approval by the government.
>
> (p. 26, emphasis in original)

To summarise then, independence in China should be understood as a form of *independence from the state system*, in which the state is clearly the Government of the People's Republic of China (PRC), and 'the system' constitutes stated-own sectors and the government ideology that guides them.

## Independence as film selection criterion

DOChina presents both regular and occasional programmes. The former are devoted to those independent Chinese documentaries that have been produced within the previous year and are divided into competition and non-competition sections, screening films which are mostly submitted by their directors rather than having been invited by the festival. Submission is advertised on the Li Xianting Film Fund and Fanhall websites and in some of the popular web fora in China. Although no regional restrictions are placed on submitted films, there are rarely films that have not produced by the PRC filmmakers.[12] According to DOChina's organiser, Zhu Rikun, there were between 60 and 70 submissions to the 2011 edition, representing a significant number of works in terms of Chinese independent documentary filmmaking (Lin, 2011a). Submissions are assessed by the members of the festival juries, including Zhu, which in addition to passing cinematic/cinephilic judgement on the films, also consider the *independence* of the works, which is to say their individual affiliation (or lack thereof) with the state system.

[12] One exception being a film produced by J. P. Sniadecki concerning the aftermath of the Sichuan earthquake, which screened in DOChina in 2010.

## The state system and New Documentary Movement

Occasionally submissions are received from state-owned television, a situation which Zhu says, comes about because the submitters either do not know much about DOChina or relate the idea of being independent to business and commerce (Lin, 2011a).The juries prefer not to select these films: firstly because the organisers wish to select works that match the festival's emphasis on independence in filmmaking; and, secondly, because these state-supported films already receive more opportunities for screening than the independents. This serves to illustrate that the interpretation of 'independent' by DOChina's organisers complies with that discourse of independence from the state system mentioned previously: state-owned television programmes are excluded from DOChina on the basis of their dependence on the state.

The independent nature of DOChina is reflected in its affiliation with the New Documentary Movement, which is regarded as a "must" starting point for any understanding of the contemporary visual arts culture in China (Berry & Rofel, 2010a, p. 4). Lu (2010) regards the New Documentary Movement as a "cultural phenomena in contemporary China" (p.15) and recounts the movement's emergence from a casual meeting between independent filmmakers, which sparked "rebellions both inside and outside the dominant media system, especially against the "special topic programme (*zhuantipian*), the model of traditional Chinese television propaganda program" (p. 16, translation in original).

In the wake of the 1989 Tiananmen Square Massacre, filmmakers, independent and state-supported alike, produced works that "reflected the weight of that historical moment" – including independent filmmaker Wu Wenguang's *Bumming in Beijing: The Last Dreamers* (1990) and *Tiananmen* (1991) by Shi Jian and Chen Jue, which was produced by the China Central Television (CCTV). According to Lu (2010), "the roots of the New Documentary Movement can be found both inside and outside the system" (p. 20), and so "some television programs should be included in the New Documentary Movement" (p. 15).

So, the New Documentary Movement in China, according its chief chronicler, encompasses not only independent production, but also state television programmes that comply with the movement's preoccupations. Yet, the selection process for DOChina precludes television programmes on the basis of their preference for independent productions. For DOChina organiser Zhu (2010a), in the article "The Overview of The Chinese Independent Documentary", Chinese independent documentaries should be distinguished from, firstly, stated-owned television, and, secondly, any productions designed to accord with the film censorship imposed by the PRC government. That is, such television programmes may be associated with New Documentary Movement yet still not be desirable films to DOChina. Still, there have been cases where a film that is partially supported by state television has been programmed. One such film is *Shattered* (2011), the latest work of the independent filmmaker Xu Tong (a frequent participant of DOChina) and partly funded by a Shanghai television station. Its inclusion demonstrates that DOChina's seemingly clear distinction between independence and the state television funded programmes can become tangled.

As Lu (2010) points out, filmmakers subscribing to the New Documentary Movement "had various private and formal relationships with the television station[s… and m]any were actually working within the television system" (p. 20). According to Lu, "since the 1990s, documentary production within the system has become more diverse and less constrained" (p. 30). Berry (2007a) similarly holds that,

> the market sector is dependent on the state sector in the economy as a whole, the independent documentary makers cannot operate without reference to the state sector. Indeed, for the most part they were trained within and worked within the state-owned television sector for years.
>
> (p. 130)

As a result, to be "independent from the state system" is actually to be operated in a diverse number of ways. Some documentaries are fully supported and initiated by television stations, while others receive only partial support. There are productions that stand on their own, however, and display institutional, financial and ideological independence from the state

system. Thus judgements of a work's independence are not simply based on that work's *mise-en-scene*.

The diverse relationships which occur between the state system and independent filmmakers, shows that independence cannot solely be determined by a work's subject matter; the funding for the work produced and the filmmaker's background must also be taken into account. In the film selection process of DOChina, in addition to the cinematic quality of the works, preference is given to works produced independently in terms of their funding.[13] This can be illustrated with reference to self-funded productions by non-professionally trained filmmakers, such as *Martian Syndrome* (2009) by Xue Jianqiang, who was previously a miller, as well as a hairdresser. *Martian Syndrome* (2009) is Xue's first feature length documentary and concerns "a young man, coming from Mars, arrived Beijing, lived a fugitive life" (DOChina, 2010), and was wholly self-funded.

Although some cases might have an ambiguous background to their production, DOChina tends to give way to those works that can clearly demonstrate their independence across a range of different measures; funding sources and production background, for instance. It is this kind of film which DOChina regards as independent, and which distinguishes the works in its film selections from state-supported productions. Although different juries rate the criteria differently, it is primarily the qualities noted above which contribute to the judgement of a work's overall independence

In the 2010 edition of DOChina, around half of the filmmakers were making their first appearance in the festival.[14] Providing screening opportunities to up and coming young filmmakers who work independently is a great concern of the festival. These are independent films which would in all probability be rejected for screening by the state-owned television

[13] The funding sources and background of the filmmakers is as diverse as the topics of the works. The funding can range from the support of friends or a local production company, to foreign foundations or institutions. While the backgrounds of the filmmakers are varied – university lecturer, theatre performer, poet and miller – according to Zhu (2010a), the first film for most of these filmmakers was self-funded, and a majority of the filmmakers was not trained in the cinematic profession during their studies (p. 11).

[14] Preface by Zhu in the DOChina 2010 Catalogue.

station and ordinary cinemas because of censorship issues and a lack of affiliation with state production. In fact "almost all are considered as illegal" (Foxley, 2006), and so public screenings, as well as events organised by film clubs and film festivals, and via the Internet and DVD distribution, become the major channels for their broadcasting (Fanhall, 2010). Indeed, public screening is often the only choice for filmmakers wishing to interact with audiences personally. It is precisely such an interaction process that DOChina has adopted in order to encourage communication between the filmmakers and their audiences.

### Independence as communication and discussion

DOChina is a festival devoted to independent documentaries; the selection of films affirms an emphasis on independent production. By selecting particular films and further, by inviting the filmmakers to participate in DOChina, the festival can serve as a platform for communication among and between filmmakers and their audiences. However, the communication that Zhu would like to facilitate is not simply a "shared social experience",[15] but involves a discussion that may result in inspiration. According to festival organiser Zhu, the "happiness and warmth from the gathering among filmmakers during the festival cannot in itself actually generate anything productive, it merely makes a good impression on the filmmakers, and film [festivals] become a party". Instead, Zhu aims at enhancing such interaction at a conceptual level, and at bringing about vehement discussion, in order to ultimately serve the goal of DOChina: the enhancement of Chinese independent documentary filmmaking (Lin, 2011a).

These efforts in facilitating communication and discussion are aided by the setting up of Fanhall Café, located above the movie theatre. During intermission and after screenings, audiences and filmmakers gather there to extend their conversations. The café serves as a central meeting point for the guests (and occasionally some evening parties) and discussion fora are organised there after the last screening of the day. These were only occasional events during the 2010 edition, but were scheduled more frequently during the festival that followed,

[15] See also the section on the creating and sharing of festival community at YIDFF in Chapter Two.

the 5th Beijing Independent Film Festival (BiFF), also organised by Fanhall.[16] Although no restrictions are placed on who may attend, most of the people who stay for the gatherings are filmmakers. As a result, it becomes an occasion for filmmakers to network and exchange ideas, lubricated by free beer and snacks. In this way the Fanhall Café is much like the Komian Club at Yamagata Independent Film Festival (YIDFF) which enables filmmakers to gather and to meet each other as a form of "bridging network" (Putnam, 2000).[17]

Although no official fora were held in the 2010 edition of DOChina, the four fora held in the subsequent festival also organised by Fanhall, the 5th BiFF, serve to illustrate the potential facilitation of communication that such events may address across a broad range of topics. The topics of the BiFF fora centered on 'Broadcasting and Curating', 'Creation and Academia', 'Fiction and Documentary', and 'Animation'. Several speakers were invited to participate in the panel discussions and any guests were also free to participate. The format is based on discussion and the encouraging of a free flow of ideas between participants, rather than prepared speeches or lectures. By setting up occasions for discussion of topics, an open atmosphere is gradually building within Fanhall Films and it intends to further extend this to other events which it organises.

### Independence as school and DVD distribution

In addition to these efforts in stimulating discussion to inspire the participants, energy is expended in the cultivation and distribution of independent works, further supporting these segments within the cycle of independent filmmaking. As Zhu points out, his initiation of film projects always stems from a response to circumstances: to fill in the gaps (Lin, 2011a). The lack of an independent filmmaking school in Beijing resulted in the founding of the Li Xianting Film School in 2008. It is a school devoted to the education of independent filmmakers and is supported by Li Xianting's Film Fund. The school provides short courses

[16] BiFF is scheduled during October, and is programmed with both fiction and documentary films, as well as animation works.

[17] See also the chapter on YIDFF in this study, specifically the section on creating and sharing of festival community.

lasting from between one and six weeks, divided into fiction and documentary streams. About 15 students live in dormitories at Songzhuang and attend daily classes concerning film (and even, more generally, art), related knowledge and practical film production. After the course is finished, students are encouraged to produce a work under their teacher's consultation. The teachers are themselves renowned independent filmmakers and practitioners, such as Ying Liang, who directed *Good Cats* (2009), and the well-known actor from Jia Zhangke's *Xiaowu* (1997), Wang Hongwei. The film school is unorthodox when compared with the state run Beijing Film Academy; the latter offers diplomas upon completion, while the former does not. Rather than certification, it is independent thinking [duli sikao] that is the school's emphasis and the aim is to create "an open environment that encourages students to explore the possibilities of filmmaking as a tool for articulating their individual attitudes towards society" (Shaffer, 2011). As one of the instructor-filmmakers, Wang Wo, suggests: "We're not going to tell you what 'independent thinking' is, or that you have to think more independently; we simply offer a place for students to explore, and then see how they respond to the opportunities that this environment creates" (Shaffer, 2011). The Li Xianting Film School's three stated objectives – "Spirit of Freedom [ziyou zhi jingshen]", "Independent Thinking [duli zhi sikao]" and "Ability to Realise [shijian zhi nengli]"[18] – are implicit significations of the school's drive towards the cultivation of future independent filmmakers.

In addition to these efforts to cultivate independent filmmakers through schooling, Fanhall expends much effort on the distribution of independent film as another segment in the cycle of independent film production. Fanhall has been distributing independent films as DVDs in public markets and online since the early years of Zhu starting that business. Since settling down in Songzhuang, Fanhall has gradually developed its distribution scale to encompass ten films annually. The films which Fanhall distributes as DVD are some of those independent works that have screened during the festivals they curate. Because of the un-

[18] The official website of Fanhall and Li Xianting's Film Fund has been shut down, but some of the information still remains on public fora, the cited information can be found at http://site.douban.com/widget/notes/1361549/note/129026261/

official status of independent films (and, in fact, their technical illegality), these are films which cannot be broadcast on television or screened in commercial cinemas. A report conducted by Fanhall concerning the conditions surrounding independent film distribution found the DVD to be one of the major channels for the viewing of independent productions, next to public screenings and Internet resources (Fanhall, 2010, p. 79). The DVD distribution of independent films in China is one of the major channels for these films to reach the public in China. It furthermore provides a revenue stream for filmmakers and for independent film organisations like Fanhall, thereby supporting the sustainability of independent filmmaking.

Independence is a concept which requires further elucidation in the Chinese context. According to Zhu, spiritual pursuits are regarded as relatively unimportant in China and to make a living the primary concern of life, and this entails the making of money; more intangible notions, such as independence, are not given much credence (Lin, 2011a). It is an act of criticism of such a phenomenon that is revealed in DOChina's explicit selection of works that are produced independently; an act which on one hand emphasises the discourse on independence as a contrast to the materialistic way of life that is becoming dominant in China, and on the other hand, provides a demonstration of what it means to be independent. According to Zhu: "every art should be independent, no matter where it is… if it is something intrinsically served to praise someone, some institutions or some ideology, I am not interested in those things" (Lin, 2011a).[19] By providing a working *definition* of independence in films and filmmaking, and through the *cultivation* of communication among the filmmakers, its film school and DVD distribution networks that support independent filmmakers, DOChina uses its independence as a form of defence against encroachment by 'the system'. Yet, this is passive resistance that makes little headway when attempted in the light of such an overbearing state political system, and so, like many political actions (explicit and implicit

[19] The original Chinese reads: "Wo juede suoyou yishu yinggai dou shi duli de, zai wo kan lai bu guan zai na dou yiyang… Ni zuo yixie dongxi benlai jiushi weile quyue mou xie ren, mou xie jigou, jiazhi dehua, wo dui nayang de dongxi meiyou xingqu."

alike) which aim to undermine the status quo, it is likely to turn into an underground movement.

## DOChina from underground

In Berry's analysis of independence, he cites Kleinhans's understanding of independence as implying "that in defining oneself against something, one is also simultaneously caught up with it and shaped by it, even if only in resistant sense", and thus the term 'independence' can also understood as "in *dependence*" (2006, p. 111, emphasis added). This is especially relevant to the context of independent film festivals in China, since the very pursuit of independence in a film festival is actually a *form of resistance* to the dominant power there: the state system. DOChina requires adaptive strategies to fulfil its aims and some of the resultant acts by the organisation to further these aims are regarded as 'illegal', and can thus be designated as 'underground'.

Underground, in the context of Chinese cinema, is regarded as an "opposition" (Lu, 2010, p. 30; Berry, 2007, p. 128), as "subversive" (Pickowicz, 2006, p. 4), and as an attempt to "resist" the state system by the "unofficial nature of the work" (p. 3). The term 'underground' is often the "prevalent notion" employed by Western critics when describing the Sixth Generation" of Chinese filmmakers (Zhen, 2007, p. 34).[20] However, the "oppositional dimension" sometimes extends beyond a mere disapproval of the state-owned film institutions, and instead becomes an active resistance to the "state's and the party's domination of political life" (Pickowicz, 2006, p. 4). This can be dangerous for filmmakers, especially when such resistance has the potential to lead to accusations of the crime of being "counter-revolutionary [fan geming]".[21] As a result, "film critics in China prefer to de-emphasise the heretical implications of the term 'underground film' by using alternative

[20] The term Sixth Generation filmmakers is used to describe the generation of Chinese filmmakers which included Jia Zhangke, Zhang Yuan and Lou Ye. Their works bear "the badge of independence" as their chief attribute (Zhen, 2007). See also Reynaud, B. (2003).

[21] One of the most serious crimes in the People's Republic of China (PRC). The 2010 recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize, Liu Xiaobo, was sentenced for just such crime because of his involvement with the Chapter 08, a document regarded as subversive by the PRC. The law is regarded as a violation of the right to freedom to speech which exists in most Western democracies.

references" (Mo & Xiao, 2006, p. 145), and both independent fiction and documentary filmmakers "resist" such labels, passively insisting that "independence does not necessarily equate with opposition to the state, the Party or the government" (Berry, 2007, p. 128).

Indeed, any "video production outside the state-owned system is [and] has ever been in itself either illegal or forbidden by regulation" (Berry, 2006, p. 114). To undertake any video production officially requires the filmmaker to obtain a 'License for Film Production' which must be approved by the municipal film administrative office [Zhixiashi renmin zhengfu dianying xingzheng bumen] and thus, ultimately, the Film Bureau of the State Administration for Radio, Film and Television (SARFT).[22] This means that no matter whether they are labelled as independent or underground, any films non-licensed can be regarded by the system as illegal at any time. However, because of gradually increasing co-operation between filmmakers and the PRC government[23] the 'illegality' of these works has been shifting towards a measure of "legitimacy" and some films are "legally available as a VCD or DVD" even though they "have not been passed [by the government censor] for exhibition in the movie theatres" (p. 115). The touchstone for illegal status then is not based on the violation of the production regulations imposed by the government – such as the alienation of state-owned television station and refusal to submit to censorship – but is to be found in "the issue of content" (Pickowicz, 2006, p. 6). Any content that confronts, or even criticises, the state is taboo and contravenes a "foundational ground rule" that filmmakers "generally accept" (p. 6).

Although political criticism is taboo in China, underground works which confront the official ideology of the PRC government – the euphemistic "harmonious society" (hexie shehui) – are emerging, especially in the area of independent documentary. DOChina does not hesitate in screening independent works that are of great cinematic quality, despite the fact that they may be deemed sensitive by the government. The notion of being an underground film can actually be understood as being a consequence of the film's

[22] See Chapter Two on film production. http://www.sarft.gov.cn/articles/2007/02/16/20070913144431120333.html

[23] See also Mo and Xiao (2006).

independence; as a defensive expression of independence through disapproval, that results in an underground status requiring subtle, under-the-radar strategies to maintain its presence. In DOChina, these strategies manifest as *forms of resistance*, both passive and active.

## Title of the festival

DOChina's Chinese and English titles are very different, especially regarding the use of the very words 'film festival'. The event's English title is simply the Documentary Film Festival China (DOChina) and clearly contains the appellation 'film festival'. However, in the Chinese title, no such equivalent words directly refer to the event as a 'film festival' and, instead, the words 'jiaoliu zhou', which literally stand for 'communication week' (or alternatively 'exchange week') are used. And this is because any event named as a 'film festival' falls under the supervision of SARFT, the "bureaucracy overseeing cinema – as in celluloid – and must-ask authorities for permission to organise" (Nornes, 2011a, p. 105). The SARFT "claims jurisdiction over" (Berry, 2009) all events named as film festival and requires any such event to "submit to full censorship proceedings" (Nornes, 2011a, p. 105) before it can be approved by the state. Indeed, to screen films without gaining a 'License for Public Screening' from SARTF is considered to be an offence.[24] It is only a film festival which enjoys the government's full support that can be officially named as a "film festival";[25] however, by replacing the festival's Chinese title with 'exhibition' or 'week', the event falls under the auspices of the Ministry of Culture, a less restrictive "bureaucracy that oversees DVDs" (p. 105). Still, this renaming of DOChina to 'communication week' in the Chinese is not simply a case of diversionary semantics accomplished by the "virtue of verbiage" (p. 105), since an emphasis on communication is indeed a key pursuit of the festival itself. The festival serves as a platform for communication that aims at the enlightenment of its participating guests. So it is through such a naming that the festival simultaneously expresses its ambitions towards facilitating communication and dodges the troublesome regulations of the state, while still

[24] See also Article 58, http://www.sarft.gov.cn/articles/2007/02/16/20070913144431120333.html

[25] Interview with the organiser, Zhu Rikun, 4 May, 2010.

retaining, and demonstrating, its ambitions as a film festival to the rest of the world through the use of those very words in its English title.

## Guerrilla screening

Although DOChina does not require that the films it screens be sent to the state censorship authority for vetting, this is not to say that state officials are ignorant of the event and its content. So, for example, in April 2010, a film screening and music performance was scheduled to celebrate International Children's Day. It was organised by Fanhall, and the blind folk singer Zhou Yunpeng was invited to perform. The singer dedicated one of his songs to the child actors who had died in an accidental fire during a performance in a theatre at Karamay, a town in Xinjiang in China.[26] It was also planned that a film concerning this incident, entitled *Karamay* (2010) and directed by Xu Xin, would be screened. The issue was extremely sensitive because the death of the children was actually related to the order in which the VIPs and government officials in the audience had escaped the blaze. That is, the VIPs and state officials had been given priority over the child performers and the resultant deaths numbered in the hundreds. On the day of the event at DOChina, state police arrived to confiscate a number of DVDs produced by Fanhall.[27]

Zhu admits that Fanhall Films is an organisation of 'concern' to government officials, and plainclothes police take part surreptitiously in its events so as to gather information.[28] In view of its continual pursuit of independence, as well as the maintenance of the operations of its festivals, Fanhall requires strategies to respond to such circumstances. One of these strategies is the 'guerrilla screening'.

Unlike other festivals that undergo little or no censorship pressure from government institutions and where the festival schedule is usually distributed at least a week before the festival starts, in the case of DOChina the screening list and schedule are announced only a

[26] See also the music video of the song http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UDSk_4l1vOg

[27] See also Zhu Rikun, (2010b). The 7th DOChina I have experienced. *Contemporary Art & Investment*, 44.

[28] Informal conversation with the organizer, Zhu Rikun, 3 July, 2011.

few days before the festival commences. Of course, this information will still be noticed by the officials concerned, but a late announcement is one way of maintaining a low profile that serves to prolong what in effect becomes an 'underground film festival'. Nornes (2011a) relates such an experience at DOChina 2008:

> One night at the 2008 edition, an unusual number of people milled around the theatre after the last film. Everyone had the same hushed question: 'Is it on?' They soon shuffled back into the theatre. The festival director, Zhu Rikun, inspected the audience to ensure only invitees were seated. Then he locked the doors, and showed a film they knew could get them in trouble.
>
> (p.105)

This is a screening method designed for those works that have attracted the state officials' attention. Occasionally, such a work will not even be included in the festival catalogue, but news of its screening time will circulate through the festival community through (Chinese) whispers. In DOChina 2010, the contentious film *Karamay* (2010) mentioned above was scheduled for screening on a night after all other scheduled screenings had finished, and was not included in the catalogue. Guests 'spread the word' after the final 'scheduled' screening and no entries to the theatre were permitted after the film started.

The situation was much more tense when DOChina first arrived in Songzhuang in 2007. A group led by officials from the Ministry of Culture camped near the screening venue, the Songzhuang Art Museum, and interrupted the screening of any film the officials deemed inappropriate; requests were also sent to stop the festival. In reality the officials had no legitimate right to act in this way since, due to the naming issue indicated above, the 'communication week' is technically legal (or at least technically not illegal). As a consequence, Zhu refused to terminate the festival and argued with the officials. In response to their pressure, Zhu re-scheduled three times the screening of a film that touched the raw nerves of officialdom: *Street Life* (2007) directed by Zhao Dayong. The film portrays marginalised people who make a living by "collecting garbage, stealing, begging, and singing" in a "hustle and bustle" city street of China (DOChina, 2007, p. 22). Zhu eventually rendered the screening a private event by posting on the venue door an announcement of "internal

discussion, invitation only [neibu yantao ping yaoqing shenjia]".[29] In addition to *Street Life* (2007), another film not included in the catalogue was surreptitiously screened: Hu Jie's *Though I Am Gone* (2006), which relates the story of the first dead during the China Cultural Revolution.[30] It is rumoured that the cancellation of the Yunfest in 2007[31] was due to the involvement of this film[32]. Although no explicit 'requests' were received for its withdrawal, the filmmaker Hu Jie did not wish to induce any trouble for the festival and so, instead of screening it in venues known to be fully monitored by state officials, DOChina organiser Zhu decided to move the screening to a room in a hotel located in a remote area.

Guerrilla screening is an effective, reflexive response that resolves the immediate obstacle. Although it is merely a reactive response to the problem at hand and only serves as a short term strategy, it demonstrates DOChina's insistence on defending its autonomy. Still, in such a "cat-and-mouse game" between the government and the independent documentary scene (Nornes, 2011a, p. 105), the "mouse", can actually do more than just scurry from one hiding place to the next; active resistance provides one way in which the mouse may defend its territory.

## Active resistance

In the DOChina 2008 Catalogue, Li Xianting asks "Where does legality [of independent films in China] come from?". The answer, according to Li is that "You must strive for it, it is not given [by the state]. The reason why contemporary art has continued developing till today was thanks to people fighting for it" (p. 4). In the context of Chinese independent cinema, legality is something that must indeed be striven for; partly because some of the regulations governing independent production are unclear. As Pickowicz (2006) comments, "the state refuses to spell out in any detail what is acceptable and unacceptable in terms of subject matter [of the content of the films]", yet at the same time "the state clearly 'allows'

[29] The information concerning this incident in DOChina 2007 is gathered from an interview with Zhu Rikun, 4 May, 2010.

[30] See also Cheung (2012).

[31] Concerning the cancellation of Yunfest 2007, see also Nornes (2011a).

[32] http://politics.dwnews.com/big5/news/2007-04-03/2811219.html

underground films to be made" (p. 6). As a result, some filmmakers will test and confront decrees over which content is 'allowed', sometimes even to the point of breaking the rules regarding criticism of the state power.

DOChina presents its resistance to the state in a subtle and minimalist way: through the use of language. Although the official Chinese language used in the PRC is Simplified Chinese, surprisingly, the language used in the official DOChina Catalogue (as well as the catalogues of other festivals organised by Fanhall Films) has, since 2008, been Traditional Chinese. According to Zhu, this is simply a gesture to resist the "cultural tyranny [Wenhua baozheng]" of the Communist Party of China.[33] Although a refusal to employ the official state language could be seen as a gesture that merely implies resistance, it is in fact a further concrete manifestation of the festival's ambition of resisting the cultural hegemony of the state's power.

Admittedly this subversion of language use might not seem practical enough to count as a determined resistance, yet the programming of the festival reveals DOChina's active oppositional status more explicitly rather than merely reactive responses to government oppression. The standards necessary for a work to avoid state censorship and the requirements necessary for content to be permitted to be screened are unclear and unpredictable. So, for example, although content which references the Cultural Revolution is indeed nothing new for Chinese cinema,[34] some films obviously touch the state's nerve. *Petition* (2009) is an example of one such film. The film was screened at the Cannes Film Festival in 2009 and concerns citizens from different parts of China who travel to Beijing to "petition the Government for a redress of grievances" regarding the injustices they have faced; some of the cases are related to the illegal behaviour of government officials (Scott, 2011). The director, Zhao Liang, spent 12 years documenting the lives of these petitioners, who not only have a very low chance of successfully appealing their case, but are also blocked or intimidated by

[33] Email conversation with Zhu Rikun, 16 July, 2011.

[34] *1966, My Time in the Red Guards* (1993) by Wu Wenguang and *Fengming, A Chinese Memoir* (2007) by Wang Bing had also explored the subject of the Cultural Revolution, yet the perspective of the films is less investigative than *Though I Am Gone* (2006), and the reaction to the latter from the government was significantly greater.

people who are ordered by municipal officials to obstruct them.[35] It is a film which comments on a facet of contemporary Chinese misgovernment and so is obviously anathema to the PRC, which does not wish to admit publicly that such things could happen. As a result, information about the film, especially information available on the Internet, was censored and in some cases erased by Chinese officials in accordance with the "harmonious society [hexie shehui]" promoted by the government. Amusingly this has given rise to a euphemistic alternative to the word 'censorship': to be "harmonised [hexiediao]".[36] Advertisements for DOChina 2009 were subtly managed by the organisers, who kept an especially low profile when advertising via the Internet. The screening of the film ran quite smoothly, until police came after the festival to conduct an "investigation". The officials, who were mainly associated with the Ministry of State Security of the PRC, asked for the contact details of the filmmakers; Zhu, of course, did not pass this information.[37]

And there are films and filmmakers that voice open criticisms of the PRC Government. Ai Weiwei is one of the internationally known figures who produces documentaries and art that addresses the hidden side of social issues under PRC government rule. He is under constant supervision by the state; plainclothes officials surround his studio and his Internet communications are often censored. His documentaries investigate social issues related to Chinese misgovernment, and are regarded by the public as an act of self-defence of his civil rights [weiquan]. His film *LaoMa TiHua* [*Stewed Pork*] (2009) addresses the case of Chinese lawyer Tan Zuoren, who fought for justice for the students who died in the Sichuan earthquake because of the poor quality of construction of their schools.[38] During BiFF 2010, Fanhall Films curated a programme devoted solely to films produced by Ai. Three films were shown and a forum was scheduled at which plainclothes police swelled the number of

[35] See also the interview with Zhao Liang, http://dgeneratefilms.com/critical-essays/zhao-liang-interviewed-about-petition

[36] The euphemism "harmonised [hexiediao]" is further punningly rephrased, based on its Chinese pronunciation, by the Internet users in a popular forum in China as "héxiè", which literally means river crab.

[37] Email conversation with the Zhu Rikun, 7 August, 2011.

[38] Ai's films have been uploaded into *Youtube*, and can be viewed through the website of Dgenerate Films. http://dgeneratefilms.com/academia/ai-weiweis-documentaries-available-on-youtube/

participants. Originally, Ai was also invited to the forum, but he was unable to attend on that occasion. Later in the month, Fanhall organised another round of the forum, and eventually Ai managed to make an appearance.

### Shrinking free space for DOChina

Nornes (2011a) states that independent documentary "is playing a cat-and-mouse game with the government. The latter has opened up a measured free space, the limits of which are constantly tested by filmmakers and festivals alike" (p. 105). Filmmakers test these limits by producing films that are critical of the notion of politically prohibited content, and festivals like DOChina test, and strive to extend the limits of 'measured free space' by their film selection and programming. DOChina actively involves films that will draw attention from state officials in an act that demonstrates their insistence on facilitating the production of quality independent films in spite of any trouble that may ensue. This insistence reflects the emerging use of documentary as a medium to portray social-political issues. Such documentaries are increasing in number, and works produced by Ai Xiaoming, Hu Jie and Xu Xin, for example, all touch upon areas in which the state power is most sensitive. It seems that in such a cat-and-mouse game, the cat has learned that it must, to a certain degree, at least, tolerate the evasive and subversive tricks of the mouse. As Nornes (2011a) states:

> Obviously, the government hardly needs this kind of troublemaking to turn the new wave of contemporary documentary to still water. Film history shows that a key arrest or imprisonment is all it takes to shut down cinematic rabblerousing. For now, however, the Chinese government has opened up a zone for independence, and documentary film culture is flourishing.
>
> (p. 105)

But is such a seeming equilibrium really maintained between the filmmakers and the state? According to Nornes (2011a), "a key arrest or imprisonment is all it takes to shut down cinematic rabblerousing" (p. 105). In 2011, that is just what happened. Ai Weiwei was arrested by state police and detained from 3 April until 22 June, 2011, on charges of non-payment of taxes,[39] which government officials stated had "nothing to do with freedom of

[39] See also http://www.guardian.co.uk/artanddesign/2011/jun/28/ai-weiwei-tax-bill-china

expression".[40] The detention sparked concerns around the globe, including protests of various scales in Beijing and Hong Kong.[41] Moreover, the proposed DOChina 2011 in May was cancelled. Government officials explicitly told Li Xianting that "this was not the right time for an independent organization to screen Chinese films that the state has not authorized", and thus announced that "the Film Fund organizers, unwilling to have their films vetted in advance, chose to call off the festival" (Kraicer, 2011). Social conditions in China proved to be very sensitive in 2011. A series of "sporadic, low-key Sunday afternoon 'walks' in crowded districts of major cities" took place, inspired by the recent Tunisian pro-democracy revolution, which the Chinese people somewhat whimsically named the Jasmine Revolution (Kraicer, 2011). The detention of Ai Weiwei served to remind the people just who was in control of the country. In this light, the cancellation of DOChina 2011 can be seen as something more than the result of an unfortunate coincidental timing with the 1st annual Beijing International Film Festival.[42] So, although the 'cat' (the PRC government) has opened up free spaces for the 'mouse' (the independent documentary scene, and other art forms), everything in the game, including that free space, is still under the cat's supervision and control. Indeed, the cat may pounce and devour the mouse at any time.

In the context of Chinese documentary filmmaking then, to be independent in the sense of Berry's (2006) "artist model of independence" (p. 116) is to be potentially driven underground. To actively pursue an ideal of independence from the dominant the state power in China is to be regarded as a dissident (Ai Weiwei was named as such) and can result in persecution. As a consequence, independent artists feel the need to stay underground, resisting both actively and reactively to maintain a low profile for their works. In the other words, the independence that DOChina regards so highly and pursues with such determination is something alienated from the state and results in the festival being driven

[40] See also http://www.guardian.co.uk/artanddesign/2011/apr/08/weiwei-detention-economic-crimes-china

[41] See also http://www.guardian.co.uk/artanddesign/2011/apr/05/ai-weiwei-detention-china

[42] Ironically, the short form of Beijing International Film Festival (BIFF) is basically the same as the Beijing Independent Film Festival (BiFF), but in a difference of capital I or small letter I, "**I**nternational" versus "**i**ndependent".

into an underground position. As Zhu points out, no discussion of independence can be situated within the state framework; the films and the production backgrounds there are so very different, that truly independent works are readily identifiable.[43]

For those living in such a heavily-monitored underground 'free space', active resistance is the only way to make significant progress towards independence; to run around dodging attention is indeed merely a reactive tactic for the short term. For DOChina 'striving for change' is not merely a slogan, but is manifested clearly through its active and reactive responses to the obstacles it encounters. Still, as Zhu pessimistically notes on the future of DOChina (Lin, 2011a), the "free space" is obviously not free enough.

## Unwarranted, veiled criticism

In his analysis of "film clubs" in Beijing, sociologist Seio Nakajima (2010, p. 119) takes as his focus the activities of a "film club" he calls "Studio Z". He writes of a crackdown on one of the events organised by the club, during its "film exchange weeks [dianying jiaoliuzhou]" in 2004. He provides a background for the pseudonymous "Studio Z" (p. 119), including details of the educational background of its organiser and its early history as a VCD store. From this information, correspondences can be seen between the "Studio Z film club" and Fanhall Film as discussed here. The background of Fanhall matches neatly with Nakajima's "Studio Z": the organiser graduated with a finance degree from Beijing University and opened a VCD store; there was a termination of the event (festival) because of problems with the curator of the venue in 2004. And a photograph used in the article on "Studio Z" actually captures Zhu on the stage conducting a Q&A session (2010, p. 121). Any suspicion that "Studio Z" is intended to refer to Fanhall Films seems well-founded.

Nakajima (2006) describes "Studio Z" as "an artistic, commercial film club" (p. 176) implicitly criticising the fact that it "has not found a stable position between art and commerce" (p. 179) as if this were a measure of its independence. As the communication-

[43] Email conversation with Zhu Rikun, dated 6 August, 2011.

driven endeavours of DOChina examined above, and indeed other activities organised by Fanhall demonstrate, the efforts of Zhu towards independence through different means – through legal definition, film circulation, filmmaker cultivation and political resistance – seem incontestable. While these efforts certainly require a flow of capital to sustain them, especially since there are obviously no government supports for independent filmmakers and organisations, and which thus becomes a further obstacle to be tackled on the underground road to independence, it seems unfair to imply such commercial motives to Fanhall. None of its events or efforts at facilitation is staged for mere profit. To couch such criticism – which, in its binary view of film festival organisation according to artistic and commercial lines, resembles and is as similarly limited as Peranson's (2009) "ideal" business and audience models – in terms of an "anonymous" analysis that is far from being anonymous, seems diversionary, mischievous and does little to contribute to a discussion of the important issues raised by DOChina and Fanhall with respect to independent filmmaking in China.

## Conclusion

Marijke de Valck (2007) speaks of film festivals as "effective means within political struggle to make under-represented cinemas visible and Third World filmmakers heard" (p. 27). Although at first sight there appears to be no visible political struggle in China – partly because of the 'harmonisation' of anyone attempting to waver publically from official policy – there is in fact a rising, if low-key process of political resistance, as evidenced by the Sunday afternoon 'walks' mentioned previously, and the increasingly open criticism of the PRC government in Internet fora. DOChina is distinctively a film festival that puts effort into supporting under-represented (or even unable-to-be-represented) cinemas and marginalised independent filmmakers. As a film festival aimed at truly independent filmmaking, DOChina is acutely aware of the importance of its film selection and preference is given to the works of those filmmakers who rarely have a chance to show elsewhere; works made in a truly independent way, resisting the state system institutionally, financially and ideologically. It is a definition of independence that is alienated from the state system.

The cultivation of independent production through its film school and DVD distribution network is another way that Fanhall aims to create a sustainable independent film milieu; however, to embrace such a high degree of independence is a dangerous act in the Chinese context. Unofficial film festivals like DOChina, which present unorthodox selections of films risk touching a raw nerve, and becoming regarded as subversive, oppositional resistance to the state. As a consequence DOChina is rendered an underground film festival in terms of its technically 'illegal and unofficial' nature. In response to its underground status, DOChina does not merely react in the form of hosting guerrilla screenings and practising linguistic tricks in festival naming. DOChina actively resists the cultural tyranny of the PRC government through its subtle bending of language and the screening and programming of works that obviously aggravate the state; the screening of the films *Petition* (2009) and *Karamay* (2010) provides an example. By organising such a film festival in opposition to the prevalent cultural hegemony, DOChina is in fact resisting the consolidation of the ideology purveyed the PRC government; it is also acting to oppose those festivals that support, or which indeed are organised, by the state to promote the 'harmonious successful' China, such as the Beijing International Film Festival, whose presence serves to stifle others who may oppose such an ideology. In the other words, DOChina's very existence is an opposition to the use of film festivals which act as mere propaganda tools, something which can be traced back through the history of film festivals to the first ever (regular) event, which occurred during the time of Italy's fascist government in 1932. According to de Valck (2007), "Mussolini believed that the film festival would give him a powerful international instrument for the legitimization of the national identity of Fascism" (p. 47). DOChina is a film festival resisting the hegemony of the state system and is aimed not only at the issue of freedom in film, but at the building of a civil society in China.

As Zhu states, "every art should be independent" (Lin, 2011a), and this is especially true for the organisation of a film festival devoted to independent films. It is for this reason that DOChina and Fanhall have taken a stand in resisting the state system through various

aspects of their organisation. However this independent status can sometimes force the festival and its parent organisation into allowing interference from parties it may be co-operating with, such as the partnership with the government-supported museum that resulted in a termination of the festival on 2004; being independent has not necessarily resulted in an influence-free environment in China. Because state power and ideology permeates all of the many different levels of Chinese society, there are very few entities lying absolutely outside the influence of the state. Still, Fanhall and DOChina strive for such a near-impossible goal: according to Li Xianting, when asked about the future of the film fund in DOChina 2008 Catalogue, one should endeavour to follow "a Confucius' life attitude of doing what one knows is impossible" (DOChina, 2008, p. 5).

However, in the wake of the cancellation of its 2011edition the future of DOChina, and of Fanhall Films, remains up in the air, even though Zhu has said he would like to continue the festival somewhere. After the cancellation Zhu resigned from his post as director of Li Xianting's Film Fund and returned south to his hometown in the Guangdong province, where he has become a farmer. "DOChina was neither revolutionary nor radical," says Kraicer (2011). And this may be so, but being truly independent in China is crime enough.

## CHAPTER FOUR: Taiwan International Documentary Festival (TIDF)

### Introduction

The focus of this chapter shifts to a festival held in another Asian region sharing a complicated relationship with the government of the People's Republic of China (PRC), namely, the Taiwan International Documentary Festival (TIDF). The festival was launched in 1998, the second film festival devoted to documentary to launch an edition within the East Asian region after Japan's Yamagata International Film Festival (YIDFF).

Unlike DOChina, where resistance toward governmental intervention is obviously maintained, at TIDF affiliation with various government departments has been an intrinsic element of the festival's organisation since it began. Since its transformation into an event organised by the government-supported National Taiwan Museum of Fine Arts (NTMOFA) in 2006, TIDF has served as one of the events on the Museum calendar.

Being physically situated in the museum space contextualises the festival as an arm of the museum itself, and the festival receives regular funding from that quarter that ensures its existence. However, the museum's support also tends to restrict the festival's ability to develop, by imposing continual changes in curation. The festival serves as an example of how a government-run museum setting can be at once both constructive and restrictive.

As the sole film festival devoted to documentary in Taiwan, TIDF showcases the most recent Taiwanese-produced documentaries, inviting renowned filmmakers from local Taiwan , such as, Yang Lichou, the director of the Taiwan Golden Horse award-winning documentary, *My Football Summer* (2006), and the co-directors of the Taiwan box office hit, *Let it Be* (2004), Yen Lanchuan and Juang Yitseng. The festival has also invited internationally-renowned filmmakers, such as Heddy Honigmann from the Netherlands, who was invited to the festival to attend a special programming of her work at the 2010 edition of TIDF under the title 'Director-in-Focus'. The festival is keenly aware of its position as the second documentary film festival in the East Asian region and is striving to catch up with YIDFF.

And in 2008, at least in terms of its 65,000 participants (Liu, 2011a), TIDF did indeed outscore YIDFF and proudly declared itself the second largest documentary film festival in Asia.[1]

This chapter is divided into two parts: the first provides a context for the festival, including its historical background and an examination of the intentions of the festival organisers. Additionally, an examination of a number of institutions that played important roles in the development of documentary filmmaking in Taiwan prior to the setting up of the festival is conducted. These institutions employ education programmes as their preferred method for disseminating filmmaking initiatives across Taiwan: the Graduate Institute of Sound and Image Studies in Documentary offered by the Tainan National University of Arts, and courses offered by The FullShot Video Workshop. The chapter ends with an analysis of those aspects of the festival that underpin its performance of a function akin to that of the exhibition space within a museum. This governmental support and setting for the event serves as both a constructive influence on the festival, by providing the event with *raison d'être*, and as a restrictive force governing the event's aspirations and self-sustainability.

This analytical section discusses aspects of the festival's organisation and aspirations in terms of the different roles ascribed to museums. That is, the festival as collector, exhibitor and educator. The role of collector is reflected in the festival's assemblage of films in an archive as a method of preserving cultural artefacts; the role of exhibitor encompasses not merely the exhibition of the films by simply projecting them onto a screen before an audience, but also considers how the films may, or should be combined with other settings within the festival location in order to provide a 'museum-like experience' for audiences; and the content that the curator of the festival would like to provide to the audiences is a form of education, which raises the issue of how the educational activities are to be carried out in connection with this role. In summary, the roles ascribed to museums in the context of museum studies provide an aid to understanding how a film festival such as TIDF may be

[1] http://www1.tidf.org.tw/2008/en/about.php

constituted within a government museum setting, which without doubt facilitates its ambitions for future expansion; however, as we shall see, as an ostensible government entity, restrictions are also imposed on the festival that limit its growth and potential sustainability.

Taiwan's status as either an autonomous nation-state or a province of Greater China is still undecided. As John F. Copper (2009) points out, despite Taiwan's "very high" ranking in terms of global trade, foreign investment and travel, it remains "the world's most isolated nation (if it is a nation) […] ranking last in memberships in international organisations and second to the last in the number of foreign embassies it hosts" (p. xi). Although the position of Taiwan among the nations of the world is "thought [to be] perilously close to [… that of] an independent nation" (Yip, 2004, p. 3), its status as an autonomous nation remains ambiguous, and has even been rejected in some quarters. The Taiwanese Republic of China (ROC) Government has not been officially recognised as a member state of the United Nations since 1971, at which time its official status as a Chinese representative within the United Nations was subsumed by the mainland Chinese PRC government. Due to its status as an unrecognised nation, Taiwan, which was once under the dictatorship of the Kumintang (KMT) after its retreat during the Chinese Civil War against the Communist Party of the PRC Government of the 1940s, has had to seek alternative ways of fostering recognition and of building a Taiwanese cultural identity; amongst these has been the production of films.

## Background of the festival

The Taiwan International Documentary Festival (TIDF) is a biennial film festival established in 1998. The festival was initially staged in Taipei City, Taiwan's capital, and relocated after its fifth edition in 2006, to the National Taiwan Museum of Fine Arts (NTMOFA) located in Taichung, in the less densely-populated central area of Taiwan.

The festival was initiated, with the support of the Taiwanese Governor, by author and Member of the Legislative Yuan of Taiwan Mr Wang Tuoh, and so the festival falls under the auspices of the Taiwanese government. Primary responsibility for the festival lies with the

Council of Cultural Affairs (CCA)[2], which is the "nation's highest institution for the planning and oversight of the country's cultural establishments".[3] While the oversight of the festival during its first three editions fell to non-governmental institutions – a local public organisation, namely the Taiwan Documentary Development Association, undertook the organisational responsibilities – for the first two editions and Image-Movement Cinematheque for the third edition; the fourth edition in 2004 was overseen by the Chinese Taipei Film Archive. Since its fifth edition in 2006, the festival's execution has settled in the hands of the National Taiwan Museum of Fine Arts where a team of museum staff is dedicated to the handling of the festival. Also taking part in the festival's organisation is a team led by a guest curator, such as Jane Hui-chen Yu for the fifth and sixth editions, and Angelika Geng-yu Wang for the seventh edition.

In addition to promoting documentary filmmaking to members of the Taiwanese general public, and providing them with educative initiatives to instil an appreciation of the genre (noble objectives in their own right), the motivations behind the inauguration of the festival can be identified according to three issues. First, TIDF serves as an archive for films documenting the "social, political and cultural" changes in Taiwan since the 1980s in response to the lifting of Martial Law in 1987.[4] Second, by subtitling the festival as a "return to Asia [Huigui yazhou]", TIDF displays its concern towards the the "cultural identity [Wenhua Rentong]" of Taiwan.[5] Further, through the programming of issue-related films to local audiences, such as the 'About the Island: Taiwan Documentary Retrospective' in TIDF 1998, and 'The Past 99' in TIDFF 2010, a concern for local Taiwanese identity is delineated in the festival's agenda. Third, TIDF serves as a launching point for the promotion of specifically Taiwanese documentaries, further enhancing the development of documentary

[2] The Council was "upgraded to the Ministry of Culture as part of a larger governmental reorganization" since May 20, 2012. See also the webpage of the Ministry of Culture, http://english.moc.gov.tw/MOC_en/Code/History.aspx

[3] The previous webpage of CCA has been upgraded to the Ministry of Culture, although an introduction to CCA can still be found at: http://www.ipiworldcongress.com/index.php?id=741

[4] http://www.tidf.org.tw/2004/english/main6_about/about1.htm

[5] http://www.tidf.org.tw/2002/c_about.html

filmmaking there. Through the issuing of invitations to, and the screening of works by internationally-renowned filmmakers, TIDF seeks to "stimulate the exchange of perspectives, promote interactions and dialogues between international and Taiwanese documentary filmmakers"[6], and, further, to bring to Taiwanese filmmakers a "global vision [Guoji shiye]"[7].

As the country's sole film festival devoted to documentary, TIDF has gradually taken on a leading role in showcasing Taiwan documentaries, such that it is now ranked highest among all film festivals in Taiwan for the number of locally-produced documentaries screened (Liu, 2011a). Inclusive of the sixth edition in 2008, the festival has screened 245 locally-produced documentaries, for an average of 40 films per edition (p. 70). According to Liu, the total number of Taiwanese documentaries being screened at other festivals in Taiwan increased from around 80 in 2002 to around 100 from 2006 (p. 70). Over the same period, film submissions rose from under 100 for the festival's first two editions, to 124 for the third edition and to 142 for the fourth edition (Lin, 2006). This is a clear demonstration of a growing trend towards documentary filmmaking in Taiwan and, by undertaking to screen these documentaries TIDF's crucial role in this proliferation cannot be underestimated.

To realise its ambition of a reaffirmation of Taiwanese national and cultural identity, TIDF applies much of its efforts to two organisational features: the Taiwan Award and the theme adopted for each edition of the festival. Competitive programmes have featured since the first edition, at which the 'International Competition' programme was divided into two sections based on the production medium of submissions being either film or video. This continued until the third edition, when the criterion became dependent on film duration; feature length and short films have been awarded since the fifth edition. In addition to those awards specifically named for the individual programmes, awards are also given to non-competition film entries, including, and especially, the Taiwan Award. The 'Taiwan Focus' competition programme was introduced for the third edition and charged with presenting the

[6] http://www1.tidf.org.tw/2010/about/about_en.html

[7] http://www1.tidf.org.tw/2006/about/

Taiwan Award; the programme was originally entitled 'Image·Taiwan'[8] and showcased only Taiwanese-produced documentaries.

The festival also applies a thematic approach to each edition. Some past themes have been specifically related to Taiwan, such as the first edition, which was themed as 'Back to Asia'; this was followed by 'Farewell to the Era of Passion in Taiwan' in the third edition and culminated in the theme for the seventh edition, 'Free Memory', which cohesively showcased historical footage of Taiwan.

During the seventh edition of the festival in 2010, 140 films from over 40 counties were screened in Taichung City. Scheduled in late October, the festival took place over ten days, offering screenings at six locations, four of which were located at the National Taiwan Museum of Fine Arts (as the major venue), with another in the auditorium of the Cultural Affairs Bureau, Taichung City, immediately adjacent to the Museum. The final venue was located about two kilometres away in commercial premises – the Wonderful Cinema Theatre. An average of five films was scheduled per day, beginning at around ten in the morning and proceeding until late evening.

Twelve programmes – both competition and special programmes – were curated for the seventh edition. There were four programmes with titled awards, namely the 'International Feature Length Competition', the 'International Short Film Competition', 'Asia Vision' and 'Taiwan Focus'. An additional eight special programmes were curated: 'Panorama', showcasing international works; a retrospective programme each for the work of two filmmakers, Heddy Honigmann and Kidlat Tahimik; 'Doc Art' and 'Special Screening: DOC EXIT', on artistic and experimental documentaries; 'The Past 99', which featured "more than 20 government-produced documentary films from the past 99 years" (Kuo, 2010, p. 145), and was programmed to acknowledge 2011 as the centenary of the Republic of China (ROC);[9] 'Generation Next' focused on the issues of youth and generational differences; and, finally,

[8] The name of the programme was changed to 'Taiwan Focus' after 2006. Another award competition programme devoted to Asian documentaries was introduced in the fourth edition.

[9] ROC is the name given to the KMT in Taiwan.

'Special Screening: China CCD Workstation', which had as its focus works produced in relation to the Workstation, an artist collective in Beijing, headed by Wu Wenguang (and mentioned in Chapter Three on DOChina). To augment these numerous screenings, the festival also organised seminars, workshops and exhibitions over its ten-day period. Five seminars were organised, at which the featured filmmakers, Honigmann and Tahimik, shared their experiences with an audience. Two workshops specialising in the technical aspects of documentary filmmaking were also provided. And the benefits of the festival venue, the National Taiwan Museum of Fine arts, were utilised to full effect by exhibitions on the theme of 'Memory', curated and facilitated right next door to the screening venue.

## Education as a step towards the popularisation of documentary filmmaking

According to the Introduction on the festival's website:

> Documentary [has] emerged as one of the most important media to witness these crucial moments of the history of the island. In an initial effort to archive, preserve, and promote these historical documents, Taiwan International Documentary Festival (TIDF) was thus founded in 1998 by the Council for Cultural Affairs of Taiwan to answer the call of popular interests.[10]

The festival, then, was explicitly and specifically organised in response to a perceived need to "archive, preserve, and promote" historical, Taiwan-related media. The emergence of the use of documentary to chronicle Taiwanese contemporary history can be traced back to the 1980s, when a number of activist groups, such as, the Green Team [Luse Xiaozu] and The Third Video Taiwan [Di San Yingxiang], adopted documentary as a tool to address unwelcome political incidents and to further oppose the authority of the government.

The rise of such activist groups, in conjunction with the popularisation and eventual ubiquity of portable video camera devices, has been cited as the determining factor in the genesis of independent documentary filming in Taiwan (Lee, 2007). Additionally, during the 1990s, and prior to the setup of TIDF, a widespread promotion of documentary filmmaking was conducted by two film education organisations which further served to popularise

[10] http://www.tidf.org.tw/2004/english/main6_about/about1.htm

documentary filmmaking in the minds of the general public. According to the statistics provided by Liu (2011a), the number of Taiwanese documentaries produced from 1990 to 1999 was no more than 195, or less than 20 annually over the decade. From 2000 to 2008, however, that total soared to 827, an average of over 90 documentaries produced per year (p. 64). In Lee's estimation, the Graduate Institute of Sound and Image Studies in Documentary and The FullShot Video Workshop, the two film education organisations just mentioned, played a crucial role in this development and in bringing about the current proliferation of Taiwanese documentary filmmaking.

## School for documentary filmmaking

Until the early 1990s, training for documentary filmmaking in Taiwan was served, generally, by merely a single stream in the Filmmaking course offered within the formal school system. In 1996, however, the inauguration of the Taiwan National University of Arts saw that institution become the pioneer of Taiwanese documentary filmmaking by establishing the first school in Taiwan – indeed, within the whole East Asian region – devoted to training up-and-coming filmmakers in documentary filmmaking as a distinct discipline: the Graduate Institute of Sound and Image Studies in Documentary. The Institute's opening was response to the social changes in Taiwan after the 1980s, and documentary came to serve as an important tool with which to cast a critical eye over the social problems of the time. Indeed, the Institute regarded documentary filmmaking's contributions to contemporary Taiwanese society as essential, according to Jiing Yngruey, Dean of the Institute, and one of the founders of the school (Chen, 1998).

The graduate course in documentary filmmaking offers a degree of Master of Fine Arts to about ten students annually for a three-year course of study. In addition to units on practical documentary filmmaking, the Institute also provides training in documentary theory and research methods. The diverse range of courses enables students to adopt documentary as not merely a form of video production, but as a complete methodological approach to filmmaking, by addressing research, creative and practical components, and thereby further

consolidating documentary as a distinct discipline.[11] The courses are conducted by established documentary Taiwanese filmmakers, such as Chang Chaotang, a renowned photographer and documentary filmmaker, and Wu Yiifeng, director of the biggest box office hit of Taiwan cinema of 2004, *Gift of Life* (2003).[12]

One of the requirements of the course is the undertaking of a production unit in documentary film for which students are required to produce one documentary per year; a total of 187 films was produced from 1997 to 2003 (Lin, 2006, p. 62). Lin also notes, however, that the topics of the films were mostly sparked by the personal experiences of the students themselves and were subject to the limited resources available to them. Thus, there is an absence of keen social awareness in some of the works which resulted in the Institute being tarnished, somewhat unfairly, it would seem, with an overall image of "favouritism [Dan yang hua]", "self-indulgence [Zi ni]" and "pretended sorrow [Qiang shuo chou]" (p. 62). Yet, there are also works that have been selected to screen at various festivals around Taiwan; a tacit affirmation of their value and of the values they portray. *The Spirit of 8* (2003) is one such film. Directed by Li Chiahua during his study at the Institute, it captures Li self-reflexively and pointedly training his camera at his memories of his own childhood as a schoolyard bully, standing over other kids. The film screened at both YIDFF 2005 and Taipei Film Festival 2004, at which it won the Special Mention and Best Documentary awards respectively.

Documentaries produced by the students and graduates of the Institute have appeared often at TIDF since its inauguration. For example, the previous executive director of the Documentary Media Workers' Union, Yang Li-Chou, screened *Fire Brigade* (1997), a work produced during his period of study at the Institute, in the 'International Competition' programme of the first edition of TIDF; and *I Love (080)* (1999), also produced by Yang, was likewise selected for the 'International Competition' programme in the following edition of

[11] http://documentary.tnnua.edu.tw/releaseRedirect.do?unitID=197&pageID=8199

[12] http://taiwanpedia.culture.tw/web/content?ID=21682

TIDF. Further examples include Tseng Wenchen's *Spring: The Story of Hsu Chin-Yu* (2002), awarded the Taiwan Award in TIDF 2002, and the more recent *Hand in Hand* (2010), produced by Yen Lanchuan and Juang Yitzeng, which was also presented with the coveted Taiwan Award. These appearances and award successes can no doubt be attributed to the deserved acclaim that these filmmakers have enjoyed from their filmmaking, be that as students or as graduates, but credit should also be given to the Institute, which has indeed played a significant role in educating documentary filmmakers in Taiwan.

In order to provide an annual showcase for its students' work, the Institute also organises a film festival devoted to their output for the given year. The Wushantou Film Festival began in the second year of the Institute's existence and is organised by staff and students. Presently, around 30 films are screened at the Institute campus, and a peripatetic screening tour around Taiwan is scheduled immediately after the festival.

## The FullShot Video Workshop

Even before the setting up of the Graduate Institute of Sound and Image Studies in Documentary, another organisation was performing an important role in bringing documentary filmmaking to the Taiwanese public. FullShot Video Workshop[13] provided courses in documentary filming at different locations across Taiwan, from the capital Taipei to the sparsely-populated eastern mountain areas of Hualien County.

The Workshop began in 1988 and was led by the renowned Taiwanese director mentioned previously, Wu Yiifeng, with three of his friends, Chen Yafen, Li Zhongwang and Xu Fujin. The FullShot Video Workshop was initially established to undertake commissioned documentary production projects, producing work such as the *Renjian Denghuo* [*Lights on earth*] (1990) series that was broadcast by local television channels, and *Moon Children* (1990), which became a major local theatrical success, touring Taiwan's cinemas for at least 400 screenings (Lin, 2006, p. 37).

[13] The name has changed in recent times to the FullShot Communication Foundation, and production has become less of a priority for the group, which now concentrates on organising screenings and production courses.

Pertinent here, of course, is that in addition to film production, the members of the workshop, beginning in 1991, conducted various short courses in film training, all free of charge. In 1995, the Taiwanese Council for Cultural Affairs (CCA) initiated a "Difang jilu sheying gongzuo zhe xunlian ji hua [local documentary worker training project]" which it cultivated as part of the reaction to the government agenda of "indigenization" under post-Martial Law.[14] As Lin (2006) relates them, the objectives of this project were originally to configure a recognition of Taiwanese national identity and to further emphasise an awareness of indigeneity. Yet, inadvertently, this nationalistic endeavour significantly facilitated the development of Taiwanese documentary (p. 53) by selecting the Fullshot Video Workshop to oversee its commission. From 1995 to 1998, then, the Workshop organised film training courses in four different areas of Taiwan – Taipei, Taichung, Hualien and Kaohsiung – and invited participants from across the full spectrum of the Taiwanese population; from local residents to established filmmaking professionals. As well as serving to promote documentary, the members of the workshop also desired to popularise the use of documentary to serve a social agenda and to further draw the Taiwanese public into a "citizens' video movement [Guomin sheyingji yundong]" (p. 38). Without doubt, the FullShot Video Workshop has played a seminal and "indispensable [Buke huo que]" (p. 38) role in Taiwanese documentary's development since the 1990s.

## The Museum and the Film Festival

From the fifth edition of TIDF in 2006, it was decided by the CCA that the festival would relocate from Taipei to Taichung where it would fall under the supervision of the National Taiwan Museum of Fine Arts (Lin, 2008a). As one among a series of events conducted by the museum, TIDF can logically be understood as constituting an exhibition space organised by the museum; thus, it would seem a propos to examine the field of museum studies in order to gauge its relevance to any assessment of TIDF, a museum-organised film festival. Although the term film festival, as Alex Fischer (2009) confirms, has no "formalised definition that

[14] See also Yip (2004).

identifies particular characteristics" and is, rather, a term applied to events according to an "accepted understanding" (p. 17) by those in the field, film festivals do share some fundamental similarities with the roles, motivations and techniques that define museum exhibitions. Julian Stringer (2003) describes a film festival as, "ostensibly exist[ing] to show films or at least audio-visual products", claiming that, in order to "exhibit [a festival] requires a (physical or virtual) space within which to operate" (p. 18). In effect, the film festival's function as an exhibition space is strikingly equivalent to that of the exhibition space within the museum. This is particularly so in the case of TIDF, which actually occupies a museum's physical exhibition space. This fact itself would seem to justify an examination of the field of museum studies with an eye to understanding the specificity of TIDF in this regard. Certainly Museum Studies is a vast disciplinary area and it is not the intention here to be reductionist. Yet it is hoped that as the discussion proceeds it will be seen to be appropriate to examine the ways in which the general functions and purposes of museums can illuminate the operation of this festival which takes place firmly within in a museum context.

## About the museum

Contemporary museums "are no longer built in the image of that nationalistic temple of culture" (Hooper-Greenhill, 1992, p. 1) which has served to demonstrate the 'success' of the colonial agendas of particular Western nations. They are diverse institutions that "vary enormously" in their different aspects, from the size of the actual museum spaces to their specific and specialised purposes (Ambrose & Paine, 1993, p. 6).

The Museums Associations of the United Kingdom defines a museum as "an institution which collects, documents, preserves, exhibits and interprets[15] material evidence and associated information for the public benefit" (Ambrose & Paine, 1993, p. 8). This is similar to Hilde S. Hein's (2000) declared function of the museum as "typically concentrated" on "collection, preservation, study, exhibition, and education" (p. 4). Among these different,

[15] As Hein (2006) points out, "many in the museum world preferred to use the term 'interpretation'", because education is seen as in some sense "implying obligatory, formal, fact-laden information transfer". So the terms education and interpretation are employed within the field of Museum Studies to address a similar issue.

stated purposes, it is the educational role that is regarded as the "major" (Hooper-Greenhill, 1992, p. 2), "long-standing and well-established" role (Hooper-Greenhill, 2000, p. 1) of the museum, and that has seen the curation of museums "mature […] into an acknowledged profession" since the Second World War (Hein, 2006). Museum authority Sharon Macdonald (2006) is careful to point out, however, that another important underlying impetus should be ascribed to museums: "Collecting – including the assembly, preservation, and display of collections – is fundamental to the idea of the museum, even if not all… directly engage in it." These understandings provide the foundation for further discussion within the context of proposed synergies between the museum as an institution and the film festival. This discussion will address three of the correspondences between the relevant social spaces as identified here: the motivations to collect, to exhibit and to educate.

As an event conducted by a government-supported museum in Taiwan, TIDF has been much facilitated in its performance of roles akin to other museum exhibitions housed within the same venue; and, to a very large extent, *because* of its being housed in that same venue. Such a governmentally-overseen setting can, however, also be observed to have simultaneously restricted the festival's operational structure, so that, for example, the curatorial term for the festival is open for tender, which has resulted in a limiting of much sustainable development from within the festival itself. In other words, TIDF provides a demonstration of how a film festival organised within a governmental setting faces both constructive and restrictive forces in its endeavours to exist and to perpetuate itself.

## TIDF as exhibition

According to Hein (2000), "the showing of objects" has historically constituted a central purpose of museums – that is, to exhibit, or place objects "on view" (p. 5) for an audience, has been a fundamental undertaking of museums. As Hein also points out, however, "the museum today is no longer unequivocally an object; objects have been reconstituted as sites of experience, and museums increasingly hold themselves accountable for delivering experiences" (p. 5). Thus, exhibitions provide a the "means to experience, rather than […]

ends in themselves" (p. 71). The "museum experience" is a "synthesizing experience" that relies on 'presentation' by the exhibitor, to "provide more interesting options and more opportunities for people to undergo generative experiences sensitively and with discrimination" (p. 86).[16] In the context of TIDF, then, films become the objects on show. The presentation of the films is not simply thought of in terms of the screening of a film; rather, it is concerned with the manner of their 'presentation'. The four methods that TIDF has adopted to facilitate the audiences' experience are: the rearrangement and utilisation of screening sites for thematic purposes; the encouragement of audience participation in a festival award; the provision of supplementary exhibitions; and the curation of thematic film programmes.

## Sites of screenings

Since the National Taiwan Museum of Fine Arts (NTMOFA) assumed responsibility for the organisation of TIDF in 2006 and the festival location's consequently shifted from Taipei to Taichung, the museum itself has served as the major screening venue; previously screenings were distributed among commercial cinemas, art cinemas, a lecture hall in a corporate building, and even a coffee house, in the densely-populated capital of Taipei. In contrast, the screening sites since the festival's relocation are situated mostly at the museum, and at a government site right next door. Such a location facilitates a sense of togetherness with the audiences that is extremely difficult to achieve with the high population flow and audience turnover that occurred when the festival was scheduled across Taipei city. The concentration of venues provides a platform from which audience interaction is made possible, thus further stimulating the 'festival' atmosphere of the event. This is a similar strategy to that employed by YIDFF and DOChina, where the physical location of the festival also enriches the sense of togetherness experienced by audiences.

Since the 2006 edition of TIDF – the first edition after the festival's relocation to the museum – an outdoor screening has been programmed. A grass plot next to the museum, almost the size of a football pitch, is scheduled with a daily evening screening, with the space

[16] See also Hein (2000).

also serving as the location for the Opening Ceremony, and for the opening and closing screenings of the festival. This outdoor screening programme – the 'Starlit Screenings' – is situated in an open space and access is not only freely available to anyone wishing to enter the space, but is also free of charge (other festival screenings cost 30 Taiwan dollars). Films from Taiwan and foreign films selected for the festival are screened, including a film series commissioned by TIDF itself, 'Doc Taichung III', which served to open the 2010 edition.

Such locations as this open outdoor space provide audiences with an experience of what Haidee Wasson (2005), in her pioneering work entitled *Mannered Cinema/Mobile Theaters*, terms "nontheatrical exhibition" (p. 35). This experience differs from the "theatrical experience", that "common" notion of the "movie theater [as a] large, darkened space where we sit and watch feature-length narrative films in silence", which derives from "the success of Hollywood in restricting the definition of what precisely constitutes a movie theater and thus the act of going to a movie" (pp. 35-36). The "nontheatrical exhibition" offered by TIDF is a deliberate rearrangement of space that violates the conventional movie-watching experience and enables an experience quite different to that afforded by going to a commercial cinema. The 'Starlit Screenings', especially, provide the rare experience of viewing films publicly and openly under a star-filled night sky; a viewing experience that combines film and the environment in a unique manner.

## Audience participation in a festival award

After its relocation to Taichung, the festival's organisers commenced the presentation of a series of awards primarily decided by the vote of the festival audience itself. Three audience choice awards are presented in the 'International Feature Length Competition', the 'International Short Film Competition' and the 'Taiwan Focus' programme. Audience members are given ballot sheets before screenings of the films, and votes are collected afterwards. This increase of audience participation in the awards offers a dimension by which audiences can actually take an active part in the festival, instead of merely sitting and passively watching a film. Of course, it would be naive to infer that a simple vote can provide

audiences with a full participatory influence within or experience of the festival (a cynic would imply that the motivation for voting is simply to win the prize given to a lucky voter in the raffle drawn at the screening's end), but such a voting system undoubtedly enhances their involvement. The participatory experience audiences partake in by casting their vote can be seen to, in effect, serve as a contribution made by the audience to the festival itself, above and beyond the simple watching of films, that makes the experience fundamentally different to conventional 'theatrical exhibition'.

### Supplementary exhibitions

During the time of the festival, art exhibitions, such as the Taiwan Biennial which ran during the 2010 edition, are organised by and in the museum. Additionally, the TIDF curatorial team also curates exhibitions based on the theme of that particular edition. The theme for TIDF 2010 was, as indicated above, 'Free Memory', and to echo this theme the curatorial team devised a series of exhibitions at the open area inside the museum grounds: the conceptual art installation Family Box vs. Video Art invited 40 high school students from across Taiwan to use a wooden box to exhibit their family history; the My Doc exhibition featured work produced by eight schools involved in the 2010 Junior High and Elementary School Media Literacy Education Promotion Achievement; the Memory Exchange Salon invited audiences to bring a DVD to exchange with others; while the Memory Doc Project - My Photo, Our Wallpaper asked audiences to bring along a meaningful image and to have their picture taken, with the resulting photograph to be displayed on a wall accompanied by the individual audience member's explanation of the image's significance.

While these supplementary exhibitions consolidate the thematic basis of the festival itself and provide a different angle from which to approach the issue under consideration, they also serve to provide the festival audience with "more interesting options and more opportunities" to engage with the festival, thus contributing to their festival experience (Hein, 2000, p. 86).

## Film programmes

As with most film festivals across the globe, films at TIDF are mostly presented within a programme that catalogues films based according to their different qualities – length, genre, content or country of origin, for instance – rather than presenting them in isolation or without context. As Czach (2004) states, programming "is precisely about taste-making" (p. 84). Apparently echoing Pierre Bourdieu, he claims that

> we can never escape taste, and all matters of taste have political dimensions and consequences. Thus, all programming decisions and questions of taste have inherent politics, but national spotlight cinemas appear to have an agenda while other programs may appear to be driven only by the agenda of quality.
>
> (p. 85)

Cinematic taste, then, is guided by the decisions made when films are selected for a progamme so as to provide a "synthesizing experience" (Hein, 2000, p. 86); to guide the viewing experiences of the audience according to the manner in which the different films in the programme foreground the festival theme. In the other words, film programming provides a "generative experience" that links the experience of watching a single film to other films in the programme (p. 86). By programming films with similar qualities together, the issues raised by the programme can be further articulated. (Of course, some programmes *are* curated solely according to procedural purposes, such as the Opening and Closing films, and the division of competition programmes based on film duration.) TIDF has adopted a film programming strategy for every film involved in the festival and, through such programming, the isolated film watching experience shifts towards an interrelationship with the experience of viewing other films in the same programme. This provides an extra layer of meaning that also enables audiences to reflect upon the issues in question.

## TIDF as education

By performing an exhibition role, TIDF, as a museum event, is simultaneously performing an educative role. The museum, according to Hooper-Greenhill (1992) has been regarded as an educational institution since at least the early nineteenth century, and Hein (2006) notes that it has carried on that major function and intention to the present day. Such a role is different to

that found within formal education institutions, such as schools and universities, in that the museum experience can form part of "life-long learning" (Hooper-Greenhill, 2000, p. 2) as a component of "free-choice learning – learning that is intrinsically motivated and reflects the learning individuals do because they want to, rather than because they have to" (Falk, Dierking & Adams, 2006). The learning models adopted by the museum and underlying this educative role can be delineated as the behaviourist learning model and the constructivist learning model.[17]

In the behaviourist learning model, museum exhibitions are an "educational intervention" that enables the visitors to "know" the issues that the curator has "chose[n] for them to learn". In other words, the behaviourist model "focuses primarily on the acquisition and retention of new information", on participants who are "assumed to be virtual blank slates" prior to their learning (Falk, Dierking & Adams, 2006);[18] according to Black (2005), "The curator teaches, the visitors learn" (p. 130). While this can be regarded somewhat negatively as a "didactic approach" – one in which audiences are positioned as "passive" (p. 130) receivers of information – it is a methodology that facilitates visitors' easily grasping the at-hand, ready-made, "fact-based knowledge" to be found inside the museum's walls.[19]

Still, the behaviourist model has been argued to be "didactic and instructor-centered", as well as neglectful of the "individual's personal, socio-cultural, and physical contexts"; all crucial dimensions of the learning process. Instead, some prefer a constructivist approach to this educative function, since "learning in and from museums is not just about what the museum wishes to teach the visitor; it is as much about what meaning the visitor chooses to make of the museum experience" (Falk, Dierking & Adams, 2006). The learning process supported by this model regards the 'teacher' as merely a "facilitator" of the "active [learning] process" of the visitors. The teacher assists with the formation of knowledge by utilising not

[17] See also Falk, Dierking and Adams (2006).

[18] This behaviourist learning model is similar to the "banking" concept of education proposed by the Brazilian educator Paulo Freire (2007), in which he indicates the relationship between teacher and student as that of active authoritative narrator and passive absorbent listener.

[19] See also Falk, Dierking and Adams (2006).

just learning materials but also the visitors' "current and past knowledge" (Black, 2005, pp. 140-141); this approach sees "learning [as having] been revealed to be a relative and constructive process" (Falk, Dierking & Adams, 2006). Unlike the behaviourist model, the constructivist model does not simply offer factual information for absorption, but rather presents *concepts* to the visitors, who are believed to be able actively to construct their own knowledge by contextualising the museum exhibition within their own range of personal knowledge.

As an event organised by the National Taiwan Museum of Fine Arts (NTMOFA), TIDF demonstrates an educative dimension through its organisational aspects. As the mission statement of the museum explicitly states: "The NTMOFA is dedicated to the education and promotion of visual arts".[20] And this educational mission was reaffirmed following the festival's relocation to the museum in 2006.[21] The organisational aspects of TIDF are ripe for examination when perceived in relation to this educational goal. The learning approaches adopted within these aspects can be identified as aligning with both the behaviourist and constructivist approaches mentioned above. In what follows, the film programmes and exhibitions are discussed in relation to the constructivist model, while the workshops and talks, and the festival newspaper and school tour are discussed, as is appropriate, with reference to the behaviourist model.

## Constructivist learning model in the organisational aspects of TIDF

Film programming can be regarded as inherently constructivist in its methodology. A film programme consists of films curated according to: the particular subject matter that they aim to articulate; film duration (shorts or feature-length); the country of origin; or the films' topic(s). Thematic programming aligns different films displaying a relevance to a particular issue or issues that the curators wish to highlight. Each film remains a separate and individual work, of course, but the juxtaposition of films within a programme that aims to address

[20] Official website of NTMOFA, Introduction, http://www.ntmofa.gov.tw/english/CP.aspx?s=96&n=10154

[21] It is mentioned that continuing education has been a dedicated focus of TIDF since the 2006 relocation to the museum. http://tidf02.pixnet.net/blog/category/2466537

different dimensions of a common issue, provides audiences with material through which they may gain a more complete understanding of that issue. In the other words, it is the curator of the film programme who, by "providing several different interpretations of an object" (Hein, 2006) through the programming of particular films, addresses the subject matter of the programme. That it is the individual audience member's free choice as to which films they watch (and consequently accept into their personal range of knowledge), is a sign that this is a learner-centred process.

Of the different types of film programming, it is those film selections that address issues of nationhood and nationality that contain the most significant educative value. TIDF puts much of its energy into screening film programmes devoted to Taiwanese documentaries and to conceptual ideas like the 'Generation Next' programme in TIDF 2010. Films in the programmes approach the subject matter in diverse ways. In addition to serving as a valuable exhibition site for the local filmmakers, for example, the Taiwan programme also serves as an educative tool that promotes and informs the nationalistic celebration of 'Taiwan-eity' mentioned previously.[22] The 'Generation Next' programme raised the issue of youth culture by presenting films examining young people's lives in different regions of the world. This curation served as a reference point from which audiences could examine Taiwanese youth culture, and also shows film programmes to indeed correspond to a constructivist learning model by their provision to audiences of a variety of films offering different interpretations of the same subject.

The constructivist learning model can also be observed in the exhibitions curated during the seventh edition of TIDF in 2010. As has been mentioned, four art exhibitions were curated adjacent to the screening venues in the museum as a response to the festival theme of 'Free Memory'. Of the four exhibitions, two displayed works produced by different community projects – the 'Family Box vs. Video Art' display and the 'My Doc' display –

[22] See also the case of Taipei Film festival in which the author Chen (2011) touches upon on the issue of Taiwanese identity in relation to the global-local structure of the festival.

while the two other exhibitions – the ‘Memory Doc Project’ and the ‘Memory Exchange Salon’ – relied on visitor interaction.

These exhibitions demonstrate different approaches to the theme of memory: family history formed the basis for the ‘Family Box vs. Video Art’; personal history was central to ‘My Doc’; the ‘Memory Doc Project’ focused on immediately-created images and the stories behind them; and ‘Memory Exchange Salon’ employed a commodity exchange to examine interactions between people. The issues explored by these exhibitions are approached conceptually rather than through repositories of factual information. Through these displays and their attendant interactivity, the curators offered visitors different lenses through which to view the film festival’s theme. The two interactive exhibitions facilitated visitors’ attempts to “construct their own meanings” from their experience (Black, 2005). Such a meaning-making process, utilising both interaction and multi-issue exhibitions, is evidence of further correspondence with a constructivist learning model.

### Behaviourist learning model in the organisational aspects of TIDF

A more didactic, behaviourist educational approach was also adopted by the festival. Forums and workshops on a variety of topics were curated throughout the festival. Because these topics and the instructors who presented them covered such a broad spectrum of subjects in a variety of ways – some speakers, such as Kidlat Tahimik at TIDF 2010, employed audience interaction to explicate their theories of documentary filmmaking – it would be presumptive to imply that all of the seminars and workshops conducted the learning process in a didactic manner. Yet many of the seminars, including the forums conducted by Wu Wenguang, were indeed lectures conveying factual information, and from the lecturer’s point of view. Similarly, the ‘DOCumentary DOCtor Workshop’ provided a technical ‘clinic’ that attempted to respond to questions raised by the attending participants regarding documentary film and filmmaking. These activities conveyed practical information effectively through an instructor-centred approach, a fundamental attribute of a behaviourist learning model.

A more obvious example of the behaviourist learning model, however, can be seen in the guided tour for 'which-film-to-pick' that is held at universities and high schools in the city of Taichung and surrounding areas. Since the 2006 edition of TIDF, the guided tour has been organised to provide students with information to help them select which films they will view at the festival. These talks were previously given by the curator of the festival, but as of TIDF 2010 that responsibility has shifted to the festival programmer with the assistance of filmmakers, critics and film educators involved in the event. As an audience development strategy, these talks given to the students are factual and clear, so that the students can grasp the ideas easily. Ideally their interest in going to watch the films is enhanced as a result.

## TIDF as archive

Collection is "[c]hief among the activities traditionally attributed to museums" (Hein, 2000, p. 4), but collecting is not simply the amassing of objects, but also includes "the assembly, preservation, and display of collections" (Macdonald, 2006) so amassed. When defining itself within a global context, the NTMOFA notes that it "places great emphasis on collecting works by Taiwanese artists".[23] The museum's collection "centers on art of all media types… with a focus on prints, contemporary photography, modern water, ink landscape painting, and contemporary art";[24] however, despite having expanded its areas of research to include "photography, multimedia arts and all forms of filmmaking" and even launching The Media Art Center "to meet the general public's increasing interest in documentary films"[25] in 2007, documentary is not a specific form or genre that appears in the museum's collection.

Although TIDF's "initial effort" was "to archive, preserve, and promote" documentary films and filmmaking, especially Taiwanese examples, the task of collecting is not one that has been obviously undertaken by the museum. There is a library associated with the museum, located within the museum grounds, that is open for public use. A specialist art library, it collects art-related "books, periodicals, electronic archives, multimedia material, and others",

[23] Introduction to the official NTMOFA website, http://www.ntmofa.gov.tw/english/CP.aspx?s=96&n=10154

[24] Collections page from the official NTMOFA website, http://collectionweb.ntmofa.gov.tw/eng98/about.aspx

[25] http://www.ntmofa.gov.tw/english/CP.aspx?s=96&n=10154

especially literature and materials related to Taiwanese art; publications related to the exhibitions of the museum are the focus of its collection.[26] Among the multimedia materials, the collection houses a sizable number of documentaries – most of them produced as adjuncts to the museum exhibitions, as well as documentaries broadcast on television channels, and corporate commissioned works. Interestingly, independent productions are seldom collected by the library. This is the case, even for productions such as those from the Graduate Institute of Studies in Documentary and Film Archiving that have received international accolades and awards. The film *Someday* (2005), produced by Lin Haoshen, a graduate of the Institute, was awarded the runner-up prize at the Chinese Documentary Festival 2008 in Hong Kong for instance, but that film is not to be found in the museum library. So it seems fair to say that the museum library is not actively involved in collecting documentaries produced in Taiwan, and that no systematic effort is being made by the museum to create a documentary archive.

## The plight of TIDF

In her recent article on the Taipei Film Festival (TFF), Chen Yun-hua (2011) identifies several factors that have resulted in organisational disruption and sustainability problems for that festival, including its "short preparation time" and "a lack of a sustainable organisation in charge of the event" (p. 149). Similar obstructions face TIDF, where the central problem lies in providing sustainable support to the festival's curatorial team.

Although TIDF is a governmental initiative, there are no specific government departments or offices with the specialist knowledge required to handle the festival adequately. As a result, it has been necessary to hand the organisation of the festival to other professionals parties (Lin, 2011b). Since the second edition of the festival, its management has been subjected to a process of open tender (Lin, 2008a), so that the organising party, or, to rephrase, the contractor changed for each edition from the second to the fourth. The high budget of the festival – between 14 and 18 million Taiwanese dollars – attracts parties who merely "covet [Jiyu]" the cash (Lin, 2011b). In response to this situation, the Council for

[26] Introduction of the library website, http://www.ntmofa.gov.tw/chinese/CP.aspx?s=37&n=10060

Cultural Affairs (CCA) appointed the NTMOFA to undertake the running of TIDF in 2005 (Lin, 2011b), which sparked the festival's relocation; however, as Lin points out, the situation is not much changed by this, since the NTMOFA, like the government, does not employ film festival professionals, and so has to invite a specialist curatorial team to oversee the event. The tendering process for the contract was altered from an open tender to an 'invited tender' system in which the curatorial team was 'lined up' by the contracted festival director prior to the next edition; Jane Hui-chen Yu was the festival director for the 2006 and 2008 editions, and Angelika Geng-yu Wang oversaw the 2010 edition (Lin, 2011b).

There have already been six changes of curatorial team since the festival's first edition. This lack of sustainability results in a loss of TIDF-specific knowledge between editions that would be vital for maintaining and advancing the festival's success; there are no obligations for the contracted party in charge of an edition to convey their experiences and advice to the next curatorial team. Despite there being a team of NTMOFA staff ostensibly in charge of the festival, the major tasks in organisation are handled by the contracted curatorial team, which leaves the museum with no continuous practical experience for running the festival. This results in circumstances where the festival cannot maintain the sustainable development process so necessary for a film festival (Fischer, 2009). Without a sustained and sustainable organisational body, such run-of-the-mill festival activities as long term collaboration with other film festivals is not possible, or at least is extremely difficult. It cannot even provide an on-going, consistent strategy for the support of Taiwanese documentaries, its *raison d'être*. The festival was even criticised by its volunteers as being a very cursory event, and a tiring, un-respectful volunteer experience (An, 2009). Jean Perret, a previous Festival Director of the Vision du Reel Film Festival who was invited to be a jurist for TIDF in 2006, similarly addressed this issue:

> The Government, the Ministry of Culture and other public institutions has [*sic*] to understand that an international festival has to fulfil some professional standards. That means for the festival to improve its projects with a permanent structure and collaborators and all the tools necessary to be part of a network.[27]

[27] Jean Perret, Jury statement, TIDF 2006, http://tidf2006.tidf.org.tw/2006/news/?lang=en&id=000045

Both the festival director and the programmer of TIDF 2010 were vocal in criticising the tender process' effect of diminishing the value of a specialist team as the contractor basically enters into a subordinate relationship with the NTMOFA, rather than establishing a collaborative partnership (Lin, 2011b; Jiang & Xu, 2010). According to Lin (2011b), the contract assesses the organisation of the festival mostly by quantity, so that, for example there are contractual requirements for exactly ten press conferences. Much advertising for the festival is centred on individual films and screenings, which in turn serves to downplay the curatorial work as a mere "project". There is, moreover, limited time allocated to conduct the "project"; because the tender contracts are often signed only four to seven months before the start of the festival in October, the team has to curate the festival in an extremely restrictive period of time (Jiang & Xu, 2010).

The documentary scene in Taiwan is comparatively more diversified than that elsewhere in the East Asian region, despite it being similarly difficult for Asian documentary filmmakers to make a living (Lee, 2009). In addition to the school for documentary filmmaking mentioned above, there is also a Documentary Media Workers Union which was launched to protect the rights of documentary filmmakers in Taiwan; the union publishes an online magazine devoted to articles concerning Taiwanese documentaries. Additionally, the Taiwan Public Television channel hosts the programme *View Point* which broadcasts and commissions local documentaries productions. Local documentaries are successful in commercial cinemas in Taiwan in terms of tickets sold, despite the limited number of films that can reach such distribution channels. Recently, subsidised programmes devoted to documentary filmmaking have been provided by the Taiwanese National Culture and Arts Foundation.

All of these developments suggest that the documentary scene in Taiwan is energetic, and that the screening channels for documentary are not limited solely to the festival circuit, but can also include television and commercial cinemas. As a result, TIDF must constantly refine and define itself in order to maintain its unique position within the Taiwanese

documentary scene. This requires that the festival somehow achieve a sustainable long-term vision of its place in that scene, a plight that will see it balancing its acclaimed role in disseminating Taiwanese documentary films and filmmaking with external assistance from governmental, institutional and organisational factors that tend to confine and limit its potential for innovation and sustainability.

## Conclusion

As an event organised by a government museum, TIDF coheres with the general intentions and pursuits of a museum, that is, to exhibit and to educate. The festival incorporates the museum site itself into the festival's offerings, so as to provide a diverse festival experience for its audiences through such things as complementary art exhibitions and outdoor screenings. Indeed, certain aspects of TIDF are similar to those of other festivals mentioned in previous chapters: the film programmes curated around diverse issues and the retrospectives and regional show reel from YIDFF and DOChina, as well as programmes devoted to the local filmmakers, exhibitions and workshops also curated by YIDFF. These two festivals have even opened public libraries; this is something TIDF has yet to accomplish.

So what is the difference between this government museum-organised festival and other film festivals? Certainly, the organisational aspects undertaken by the festival are similarly conducted by other festivals; however, a crucial difference lies in the critical management structural issues mentioned above, that is, the lack of sustainability reflected in the constantly changing curatorial team. Other festivals mentioned here maintain an enduring curatorial team to undertake the running of the event; Zhu Rikun has been the festival director of DOChina since its inauguration, for instance. The sustainability issue is not due directly to the festival's affiliation with the museum, which can constructively offer the festival both funding and the space in which to present a variety of interesting and educative adjuncts to the film festival itself. Instead, the difference lies in the fact that TIDF is effectively a contracted event where the contractor changes between editions. This draws attention to the sustainability of the curatorial team.

The sustained and sustainable employment of a curator or curatorial team allows a festival to develop through the accumulation of "festival knowledge [Yingzhan zhihui]" specific to that event. This includes the festival's curatorial team amassing knowledge of the practical execution of the festival, as well as an accumulation of knowledge of the local documentary scene, that can be employed to further actualise the event (Lin, 2011b). Documentary has indeed become an acquired 'taste' in Taiwan, with its popularity being built upon the constant exposure of audiences to this genre.

Curating a festival cannot be an operation for contractors; it requires a sustained development team to execute its mission; whatever that mission may be. As Fischer (2012) states regarding the informational potential of human rights film festivals that is equally applicable to all such events, "film festivals should not be confined to performing as sites of exhibition alone, but should also be capable of producing knowledge and shaping opinions within contemporary film culture and society at large" (p. 263). This is a long term mission that requires expandability, a sense of continuity and a long term vision of the festival's role and future that extends from edition to edition. Being supported by the largest art museum in Asia,[28] TIDF is simultaneously constructed upon and restricted by its reliance on government oversight. It is obvious that the festival is sustained by this assistance, both financially and through the provision of venues. Yet film festivals are more than just celluloid and cinema seats. TIDF's operational resemblance to the functions ascribed in the literature to museums, means that it must aspire towards sustainability and stability if it is to continue to perform its self-assigned museum-like taste-making role: the dissemination of an appreciation of documentary filmmaking (especially Taiwanese documentary filmmaking) among the Taiwanese people. However, because the continued existence of the festival relies on a contracted organisational team, and because the festival is treated, in effect, as a single event in the *museum* calendar, TIDF's future is neither predictable nor assured.

[28] http://www.ntmofa.gov.tw/english/CP.aspx?s=96&n=10154

## CHAPTER FIVE: Chinese Documentary Festival (CDF)

### Introduction

Any discussion of Chinese cinema from a regional perspective must inevitably count Hong Kong as one its most important centres of production and influence; the vibrant studio system that has existed there since the 1950s has earned the city a reputation comparable in the region to Hollywood,[1] especially for the production of fiction feature films in distinctive and original genres from the martial-arts and Kung-fu films of the Shaw Brothers to the more recent proliferation of gangster movies.[2] In contrast to the diversity of feature fiction film production, documentary production is rarely undertaken either commercially and independently in Hong Kong. The former editor of the Hong Kong International Film Festival (HKIFF), Maggie Lee (2004), regards documentary in Hong Kong as "a struggling genre", which receives less attention either internationally or locally in comparison to works from the nations that have formed the basis of the previous case studies, Japan, China and Taiwan. Yet, despite possessing a less developed documentary scene than that of mainland China and Taiwan, in 2008 a film festival devoted to Chinese documentary was launched in Hong Kong: the Chinese Documentary Festival (CDF).

Although it is the only film festival devoted to documentary film in Hong Kong, CDF focuses on films produced in the Chinese-speaking regions of East Asia; chiefly productions from mainland China and Taiwan with an occasional production from Hong Kong. Its annual schedule enables the festival to access a regional showcase of contemporary documentaries. Some of the high-profile works screened since the festival's recent inception include the Hong Kong box office hit, *KJ: Music and Life* (2009) produced by Cheung Kingwai, the Yamagata International Documentary (YIDFF) Ogawa Shinsuke Award-winning Chinese documentary *Bingai* (2007)[3], and the Taiwanese documentary *My Fancy High Heels* (2010),

[1] See also C. Chang (1989).

[2] See also Bordwell and Thompson (2003).

[3] The Ogawa Shinsuki Award is named after the founder of YIDFF and is bestowed on works produced in the Asian region under the programme of 'New Asian Currents'. See also Chapter Two on YIDFF.

previously screened in the Taiwan International Documentary Festival (TIDF) in 2010. Despite the comparatively small scale and relatively young age of CDF, its welcoming air to directors from countries who share the Chinese language is most appreciated: "I feel like I am coming back home during CDF [Wo juede zai zheli jiu xiang hui daojia yi yang]" said Feng Yan, the director of *Bingai*, when she was awarded the First Runner-up in the 'Features' category at CDF 2009 (Chen, 2009). The festival benefits from Hong Kong's status as a travel hub within the East Asian region, and has ambitions to extend its reach by becoming a major regional documentary film festival for Greater China.

Hong Kong's Chinese Documentary Festival, then, is the focus of this chapter. The discussion is divided into two parts in a manner similar to the discussion of TIDF undertaken in Chapter Four. The first part of the discussion provides the details of and factual information related to the festival: contextual information surrounding the Festival's beginnings, such as the growing attention paid to documentaries in Hong Kong; and the efforts that have been made in connection with independent documentary filmmaking by a particular leading figure in the genre, who is also the organiser of CDF, Tammy Cheung. This is followed by a recounting of the history of the festival since 2008 (up to the time of writing, four editions of CDF have been organised); those facets discussed in previous chapters in relation to a festival's organisation are again examined here in relation to CDF in order to provide a concrete understanding of the festival and its functions.

The second part of the chapter adopts the key concepts discussed in relation to those film festivals previously examined – *communication* in the case of YIDFF; *independence* as discussed in relation to DOChina; and the issue of *education* discussed with regard to TIDF. By analysing CDF through the lenses of these concepts – communication, independence and education – the ambitions and potential development of the festival can be further appreciated and assessed. Indeed, this analysis of CDF, the only Hong Kong documentary film festival specialising in documentary, represents a portrayal of the circumstances of the city's still 'struggling' documentary scene.

## The Chinese Documentary Festival (CDF)

The Chinese Documentary Festival is an annual festival established in 2008, making it the youngest festival under discussion in this thesis. The festival is held at the Hong Kong Arts Centre located in Wan Chai, one of the most densely populated business districts of Hong Kong. The Hong Kong Institute of Contemporary Culture's Lee Shau Kee School of Creativity served as another venue for the 'Special Selection' programme of the 2009 festival. As an annual festival, CDF is still working towards a fixed schedule for each edition. The first edition was scheduled in January, the second edition was re-scheduled to May from February because of "venue and resources problems",[4] the third and fourth editions were scheduled around the middle of June to early July, while the forthcoming fifth edition is scheduled in October, 2012, due to the Hong Kong Arts Centre's renovation. Films shown during the festival have typically been programmed over an average of twelve days with, on average, sixteen films being shown in each edition of the festival. The films have mainly been programmed into two competition programmes based on the films' duration.

### *About Tammy Cheung*

The initiation of the festival occurred in the hands of a leading figure in Hong Kong's documentary filmmaking scene, Tammy Cheung. After years of curatorial experience as the founder of Chinese International Film Festival in Montreal, Cheung returned to Hong Kong in 1994 (Cheung, Kempton & Lee, 2011) and became involved in different fields, both film-related and non-film-related. Having managed to secure a small budget for the making of her debut documentary, she produced *Invisible Women* (1999) concerning the lives of three Indian women living in Hong Kong as a portrayal of minority groups there. Despite her dissatisfaction with this early film, Cheung found her interest in documentary filmmaking (Yang, 2011) to have been consolidated. After spending the next two years employed in the banking sector, she managed to earn enough to cover the production costs for her next film,

[4] Email from Visible Record, titled「華語記錄片節 2009」五月舉行 [CDF 2009 will be held in May], 2 December, 2008

which repaid her by becoming a critical and competition success: *Rice Distribution* (2002), a short documentary won the 2002 Grand Prize and Open Category Gold Award from the most prestigious video competition in Hong Kong, The Hong Kong Independent Short Film & Video Award. In the same year, Cheung also produced her first feature-length documentary, *Secondary School* (2002), which also enjoyed considerable success at various film festivals. Despite this, in a 2010 interview, Cheung expressed her opinion of "Hong Kong people [of that time as] very unfamiliar with documentaries", and this unfamiliarity was shared by those film festivals and movie critics she usually regarded so highly (Cheung, Kempton & Lee, 2011, p. 158). It was a situation that made the screening and distribution of her works particularly difficult. As a result, she started to think of a way to "promote documentary films and to handle [their] distribution in Hong Kong" (p. 159). In 2004, Cheung established Visible Record, a non-profit organisation charged with handling documentary distribution, training workshops and, importantly for the discussion here, CDF itself.

According to Cheung, the festival's director, the initial inspiration for the festival came after watching many Chinese documentaries and realising that some of those quality productions were rarely seen by the public. By screening works that "focus on China and the Chinese diaspora" (2008a, p. 2), CDF aspires to introduce Hong Kong people to documentary filmmaking and to promote an understanding and appreciation of the form as "an input of artistic spirit into the materialistic[ally] dominated Hong Kong society[5]" (p. 1). The ultimate goal being the "grouping [of] films in Chinese languages together, thus creating a "collage" of records of contemporary Chinese lives, we [Cheung and her colleagues at Visible Record] encourage better communication among different communities as well as strengthen our cultural heritage" (p. 2). The objectives of CDF 2009 are summarised in the festival literature along three lines of intent: the facilitation of cultural exchange among the Chinese speaking regions; the presentation of the social contexts of particular regions; and the promotion of documentary filmmaking to audiences.

[5] The original Chinese reads: "Shi women zhege zhi jiong wuzhi de shehui, duo yidian yishu qixi."

## Background to CDF

Since its first edition in 2008, CDF has displayed a fluid schedule. The first edition was held in January, while the second edition moved to May, before settling, seemingly, for the third and fourth editions, on a period stretching from the middle of June to early July. Screenings for the first two editions were a daily scheduling event, lasting seven full days for the 2008 event and increasing to 17 the next year. However, the scheduling has not retained daily screenings since CDF 2010 (which ran from 19 June to 4 July of that year). During CDF 2011, the total festival period ran from 18 June to 9 July, although daily screenings were only scheduled for the period 25 June to the 3 July, bringing the total screening days during the festival to around twelve.

This increase in screening days corresponds to an increase in the films now being shown at the festival: in the first edition of the festival this totalled 12; there were 21 for the second edition; 14 for the third edition; and 18 for the 2011 edition. The films are divided into two competition programmes based on their duration (films lasting 60 or more minutes are regarded as feature length films, while those of a lesser duration are designated short films) with Champion, First Runner-up and Second Runner-up prizes being awarded in each programme. A few other invited films are categorised into a 'Special Selection' programme. So, unlike the festivals mentioned previously, which present a diversified programming, at CDF the two competition programmes take up the central focus of the festival and most of the works screened are submitted rather than invited films.

In addition to film screenings, CDF also curates seminars during the festival period. Three or four seminars have been organised during each edition. Some of the topics are based on the issues raised by particular films – pollution issues in Taiwan were discussed in CDF 2008 in the seminar 'Fever: What Could Hong Kong People Do?' in response to the Taiwanese film *Lake-Cleaning People* (2007) by Huang Meiwen. Other seminars were based on more general issues, such as 'Female Perspective and Creation' held during CDF 2010 and 'The Freedom of Creativity on Documentaries in China' during CDF 2011, which addressed

matters of regional artistic concern. The films' directors form the panel for the seminars and share their experiences of that particular discussion issue.

## Funding sources

Visible Record, the body responsible for the festival's organisation is a non-profit organisation and, so, is required to seek sponsorship from both governmental and private sources to increase its available capital. Four non-governmental sources sponsored the first edition of the festival in 2008: Tiong Kiuking from the Ming Pao Enterprise Corporation Limited; Shun Hing JVC limited; the Universities Service Centre for China Studies from the Chinese University of Hong Kong; and *Muse*, a local cultural magazine. In the subsequent edition, CDF invited sponsorships from the Dawei Charitable Foundation which had earned a reputation as a supporter of cultural events by sponsoring a number of art events in Hong Kong. The festival also applied for a project grant from the Hong Kong Arts Development Council (ADC), "a statutory body set up by the Government to support the broad development of the arts in Hong Kong".[6] The ADC allocates grants to organisations or projects which it deems able to "contribute to the overall arts development in Hong Kong"[7]. Since the second edition, Visible Record has successfully applied for one-off project grants of around HK$170,000 for each edition. Additionally occasional sponsorship has been supplied by enterprise foundations, such as the Lee Hysan Foundation (which is operated by the eponymous, renowned Hong Kong entrepreneur), as well as by Roundtable Community, an academic network. It is fortuitous that CDF has been able to locate these additional forms of sponsorship since the total budget estimates for the festival have gradually increased with each edition. The total budget estimated for CDF 2010 was HK$420,000, and this rose to HK$550,000 for the following festival. The proposed budget for CDF 2012 is at least HK$650,000.[8]

[6] http://www.hkadc.org.hk/en/content/web.do?page=aboutADC

[7] http://www.hkadc.org.hk/en/content/web.do?page=MultiProjectGrants

[8] Email conversation with Augustine Lam (co-organiser of CDF), 6 February, 2012.

Calls for submissions for the fourth edition of CDF in 2011 produced around a hundred entries, mostly from China, Taiwan and Hong Kong. The twelve days of screenings took place at the Hong Kong Arts Centre, which serves as one of the few art house cinemas in Hong Kong, and up to three screenings were scheduled there during the day. In total, eighteen films were selected: eight films from China, five from Taiwan, four from Hong Kong and one production from the USA. Although there are occasionally films that are categorised into the non-competition 'Special Selection' programme, most films are divided into two competition programmes based on their duration, namely the 'Shorts' and 'Features' programmes. Tickets cost $HK50 for each screening – a common price for a cinema ticket in Hong Kong – and CDF 2011 attracted an attendance of 2450.[9] In addition to these screenings, four free-entry seminars were curated at the Art Centre addressing 'Economic Development and Environmental Protection', 'Creative Freedom in China Documentary', 'Gu Qin and Chinese Traditional Culture', and 'Style and Development of Taiwan Documentary'.

## Screening documentaries in Hong Kong

As the only Hong Kong film festival devoted to documentary, CDF provides a prominent platform for the genre's screening in the region. Other festivals provide similarly high-profile opportunities for screening; however, they do so with objectives other than those with which CDF organisers are explicitly concerned. Before attempting an analysis of the unique role played by CDF in promoting documentary film production and appreciation in Hong Kong, an exploration of the context of documentary exhibition in Hong Kong will serve to demonstrate how local audiences currently access documentaries, and furthermore, how documentary filmmakers manage to screen their works to the wider public. This section identifies the various exhibition platforms based on their periodicity. That is, these platforms are deemed here to be *regular* when reference is made to other film festivals programming documentaries and also to television programming, while those platforms regarded as *occasional* include independent and isolated theatre and community screenings.

[9] Personal communication via email with the festival organiser, 5 February, 2012.

The regular screening platform then refers to those channels of documentary screening that accord to a fixed periodic schedule: TV programmes and other film festivals in this case. In Hong Kong, there are indeed a number of documentaries programmed weekly on the television service, which form a visible source of documentary screening. Television Broadcasts Limited (TVB) is Hong Kong's major broadcast service and programmes much diverse content among its channels, including documentary programmes. Indeed, the company's Cantonese-language channel, Jade Channel, broadcasts documentary programmes almost daily. The works are usually either produced by TVB itself or by the government-funded Radio Television Hong Kong (RTHK). The latter produces the programme *Hong Kong Connection*, which has been broadcast since 1978, and had reached one thousand episodes by June of 2002, making it the oldest documentary presentation in Hong Kong (Wei, 2011, p. 39). The programme addresses a specific social issue within half hour episodes. Because of its short duration (as well as concerns about its ability to be comprehended by the general public which have caused Tammy Cheung to opine that the "position" of the programme "needs to be neutral" (Cheung, Kempton & Lee, 2011, p. 163)) the show has been criticised by the members of a local documentary group, Video Power, for its "lack of standpoint [Wu lichang]" (Wei, 2011, p. 43). Familiarity with this truncated and simplified form of documentary leads the public, it is claimed, to expect documentary to be "very boring, lecturing the audience, telling other peoples [what to think of] the dark side of this world" (Cheung, Kempton & Lee, 2011, p. 158); and because it is screened on television there comes, too, the expectation that documentary is something to which "they [Hong Kong people] can have free access" (Lee, 2004).

Almost every documentary programme broadcast via television is either a government production or a commissioned work. Independent productions rarely get a chance to be broadcast through television (Lee, 2004). The exception that proves the rule involves the RTHK's part-sponsorship and curation of a programme showcasing works by university students. The works ranged across the genres of fiction, animation and documentary, and the

half-hour programme was entitled *First Movie*. The programme lasted for two seasons – 2007 and 2008 – and screened a total of fifteen works, five of them documentaries. The programme ended after the second season, and there have been no similar programmes curated since.

### *Film festivals as a regular platform for documentary exhibition*

As regards other outlets for non-commissioned works or works not produced by institutions – in other words, independent films – it is film festivals that are the platform which reaches out towards achieving a greater public attention to documentary. Seventeen film festivals are currently organised in Hong Kong[10] and some – the earliest and largest film festival in Hong Kong, the Hong Kong International Film Festival (HKIFF) for instance – have displayed significant concerns for documentary.

Initiated in 1977 by the Urban Council during the British colonial era of Hong Kong, HKIFF was previously a governmental activity that "underwent corporatisation and officially left the administration structure in 2005 to be managed by a new non-profit, non-government corporation, the Hong Kong International Film Festival Society Limited" (Cheung, 2011, p. 196).[11] The total expenditure for this festival, the "largest cultural event" (HKIFF Society, 2011, p. 7) in Hong Kong, has risen to HK$36,575,371 for its 2011 edition. Grants which had previously been handled by the ADC were supported by the Commerce and Economic Development Bureau and amounted to HK$10,910,000 (HKIFF Society, 2011, p. 170). An attendance of nearly 135,000 for the 527 screenings of the 32th edition of HKIFF in 2008 (HKIFF Society, 2008, p. 8), means that it accounted for 72.89 per cent of the total audience numbers attending the film festivals and Independent/Feature Screenings events as surveyed by the ADC (2011, p. 114).[12]

[10] The list provided in Film Festival Yearbook 3, numbers eleven festivals, while the Hong Kong Annual Arts Survey Report 2008/09 indicates fifteen festival events. Integration of both lists by the researcher results in a list of seventeen film festivals in Hong Kong as listed in Appendix 1.

[11] For more on the history and corporatisation of HKIFF, see also Cheung (2009).

[12] ADC stated there were 185,000 audiences attended the film festivals in Hong Kong during the section of 2008 to 2009, including the 32th HKIFF. The percentage is calculated through the attendances suggested by the HKIFF Society and the ADC survey.

Since its first edition, HKIFF has hosted regular programmes devoted to documentary; a special programme curated solely with documentaries was offered at HKIFF1998 and titled 'History in the Making: Hong Kong 1997'.[13] Yet despite this curation of specifically documentary productions, the number of works selected that have been produced by local directors has been limited; some years no selection of local documentaries was made at all.[14] On average, three locally-produced documentaries are screened by HKIFF every two years. Maggie Lee (2004), the former editor of HKIFF, has observed the documentary scene in Hong Kong closely and she notes that "for years, feature-length documentary productions have only averaged about one a year".

### *Other film festivals*

Other festivals feature a more significant number of documentaries. With a stated ambition of reflecting the conditions of local Hong Kong social issues through the medium of video,[15] The Hong Kong Social Movement Film Festival (SMFF) primarily programmes documentaries that present the various social movements to be found both locally and in foreign countries. Launched in 2004, the SMFF is organised annually by the Hong Kong Social Movement Resource Centre (also known as Autonomous 8a) and by the local art/activist group V-artivist. Among the SMFF documentary selections are a significant number of local documentaries. The first edition of SMFF screened ten local documentaries, and the festival has worked hard to maintain that number, so as to achieve a relatively high screening rate, averaging five local productions in each subsequent edition.

The Hong Kong Independent Film Festival (HKIndieFF) also selects a consistently high proportion of local films into its programming. Organised by an independent filmmakers' organisation – Ying e Chi – the HKIndieFF was launched in 2008 following a disagreement between Ying e Chi and Broadway Cinematheque, a distribution company with which the

[13] See also Appendix 2 for a list of HKIFF programmers devoted to documentary.

[14] See also Appendix 3 for a list of feature-length documentaries produced by Hong Kong directors that have been selected in the HKIFF 2000 to 2010.

[15] See also V-artivist (2011).

filmmakers had previously collaborated in the curation of a different film festival.[16] Since that time, the HKIndieFF has screened, on average, two locally-produced documentaries in each of its annual editions;[17] a dedicated documentary selection was programmed in the first three editions. The efforts of these organisers in the service of documentary filmmaking can also be seen in the section curated in the HKIndieFF 2011, which showcased a retrospective programme of the work of Ogawa Shinsuke, the renowned Japanese documentary filmmaker and the founding organiser of YIDFF mentioned in previous chapters.

### Occasional screening platforms

Screening platforms for local documentaries that function on an occasional basis are those platforms that do not have a fixed schedule for the screening of documentaries; commercial cinema exhibition is one of such platform. Documentary screenings are an exception to the usual fare found in the fiction film-dominated commercial cinemas of Hong Kong. As Tammy Cheung (Cheung, Kempton & Lee, 2011) says:

> The theatres definitely will not pay attention to documentary films! Hong Kong people are very unfamiliar with documentaries... Even the buyers are not used to watching these types of film, so it is very difficult for our films [i.e., documentaries] to hit the big screens.
>
> (p. 158)

Cinema circuits will, on occasion, introduce renowned or critically-acclaimed foreign documentaries for screening in theatres; Davis Guggenheim's *An Inconvenient Truth* (2006) and Michael Moore's *Fahrenheit 9/11* (2004) are two instances of such distributions. Local documentary production is rarely conducted by an established studio. An exception is the documentary *The Unbelievable* (2009), which was based on an investigation into supernatural phenomena and was familiar to audiences as a TV show. The film was produced by

[16] A Hong Kong art house cinema was handled by Broadway Circuit under the auspices of Edko Film Limited. Ying E Chi collaborated with a festival named the Hong Kong Asian Film Festival that launched in 2004. Broadway Cinematheque established the Hong Kong Asian Film Festival Society and took over as the sole controlling party of the festival. See also http://yingechi.blogspot.com/2011/06/blog-post_8302.html and http://hkxforce.net/wordpress/1515 for more information on this conflict.

[17] See Appendix 5.

Sundream Motion Pictures Limited and received a surprisingly successful box office return of almost HK$3 million after screening for eighteen days.[18]

Because of the weaker distribution support that independent documentary filmmakers receive in comparison to studio productions, theatrical releases become very difficult. When a local documentary is released to the cinemas, the box office receipts are seldom expected, even with the greatest of hopes, to balance the cost of production, let alone return a profit. Wong Chunchun's *Women's Private Parts* (2001), for instance, was released in theatres in 2000 with funding from the commercial film studio Mandarin Films Limited; however, even the HK$300,000 box office revenue could not cover the total production cost of around HK$1 million (Wei, 2011). Despite the pessimistic perception of the theatrical release of independent local Hong Kong documentaries, there is again that rare case to provide the exception. *KJ: Music and Life* (2009), which received almost a hundred screenings in Hong Kong's Broadway Circuit over a continuous five-month period, is a rare case indeed for Hong Kong independent documentary.[19] With an average attendance of 95 per cent of the house for each of the screenings, *KJ: Music and Life* received ticket revenues of $HK650,000.[20] The film was also awarded three titles at the 46th Golden Horse Award in Taiwan, including the Best Documentary, Best Film Editing and Best Sound Effects, making it the most awarded documentary in the history of the Golden Horse Award.[21] The film was funded by Chinese Next (CNEX) – a non-profit foundation devoted to the funding of documentary projects for Chinese filmmakers – with an amount of less than HK$90,000. Director King Cheung, documents the growth and development of a young pianist, Wong Kajeng (the protagonist of *KJ: Music and Life*), from the age of eleven. The success of *KJ: Music and Life* has marked it as a milestone for independent documentaries in Hong Kong (Wei, 2011, p. 53).

[18] http://www.hkfilmart.com/weeklyboxoffice.asp?wbid=561&go.x=27&go.y=9

[19] http://www.cnex.org.hk/cnex_all.php/42.html

[20] http://news.sina.com.hk/cgi-bin/nw/show.cgi/2/1/1/1350636/1.html

[21] http://www.cnex.org.hk/cnex_all.php/42.html

In lieu of a theatrical release, some documentary filmmakers, especially independent filmmakers, choose to screen their films as ad hoc special screening events. The screening locations are mostly organised at informal locations, such as lecture rooms at universities, bookstores or restaurants and cafes.[22] For example, King Cheung, the director of *KJ: Music and Life*, partnered with a social workers' association to organise screenings of his film in an outdoor area of So Uk Estate, a Hong Kong public housing development. This type of screening is a special event organised for a specific occasion to augment the screenings across the cinema circuit.

Some filmmakers, however, choose to screen their films primarily as special events, in effect shunning the commercial distribution circuits. Journalist and writer Kong Kingchu, has produced a number of documentaries – *Why Ma Kwok Ming?Why Benjamin?* (2006), *La Revolutionnaire* (2009) and *Running On Conviction - Leung Yiu Chung's Political Marathon* (2010), for instance – and chooses to "share" her works as a form of "community film" that can "directly communicate with the audiences in issues related to social movement and [the] idea of documentary filmmaking".[23] Having screened at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, the site of the Association for the Advancement of Feminism and of the Arts, and culture-oriented bookstore named Aco Books, which is located at one of the most prominent artist village-buildings in Hong Kong, Foo Tak Building[24] (the same building occupied by the offices of Visible Record, in fact), Kong follows no fixed schedule or even venue location, but instead shows her films by entering into short term collaborations with venues. As ad hoc events, such special screenings can often provide a valuable alternative and occasional screening platform for filmmakers; certainly, few filmmakers adopt a more direct approach towards reaching their audiences.

[22] The locations can be regarded as venues of "nontheatrical exhibition" as termed by Wasson (2005), a term which was also adopted in the discussion of the outdoor setting in the chapter on the Taiwan Independent Documentary Festival (TIDF). See also Wasson (2005).

[23] http://revolutionw-screening.blogspot.com/

[24] See also http://www.cnngo.com/zh-hant/hong-kong/life/foo-tak-building-wanchais-hidden-artist-hub-091153 for a feature article on this building.

## The Hong Kong independent documentary scene reflected in CDF

According to Louisa Shiyu Wei (2011), the Hong Kong film industry as a whole is, in comparison to Taiwan and China, the most "mature and developed [Chengshu, fada]" (p. 16) in the region; however, this superiority is regarded as the precise reason why the current Hong Kong documentary milieu has fallen well behind the same scene in China and Taiwan. Wei makes this statement in relation to the Hong Kong film industry as whole; the domination of the fiction feature film – the dominant genre of the entire film industry worldwide – means that both the production and reception of documentary films in Hong Kong is limited. Even such successful films as *KJ: Music and Life* are, when compared to box office feature blockbusters, relatively unpopular in the eyes of the general public.

It is left for film festivals to provide the major platform for the screening of documentary film in Hong Kong. The development of Hong Kong documentary relies on CDF in a two-fold manner: not only because it is a film festival, but also because it is a festival devoted explicitly to documentary. Unlike other festivals that serve documentary films as a single course of their programming, or dish out documentary to address an agenda or issue, for CDF the documentary form is embraced as a form of film art that fills every item on the festival menu.

The festival's three stated aims are: to facilitate cultural exchanges among the Chinese speaking regions, to present the social context of these particular regions and to promote and further encourage documentary filmmaking to the audiences.[25] What follows is an analysis of these three objectives that draws on the concepts raised in the previous case study chapters on other regional documentary festivals. These concepts are relevant here because of the different emphases that are placed on particular ideas in relation to the ambitions of CDF.

First, the concept of independence discussed centrally in the chapter on the Documentary Film Festival China (DOChina) is linked here to the stated ambition of presenting the region's social contexts, and is examined in relation to the selection of films

[25] http://www.visiblerecord.com/zh/festival/11/

that CDF screens. Second, the concept of *communication*, raised primarily in the chapter on Yamagata International Documentary Film Festival (YIDFF), can be linked with CDF's ambition towards cultural exchange, and this is examined here in relation to how and towards whom such an exchange was attempted and executed in the actual festival setting. Third, the discussion of an *educational dimension* to film festivals that took place in Chapter Four on TIDF is linked here with the promotional efforts of CDF and Visible Record. Through adapting these ideas to the discussion of CDF, the efforts that CDF has made towards achieving its ambitions can be assessed. Ultimately, the analysis of CDF through the lens of these ideas generates a descriptive overview of Hong Kong's documentary filmmaking milieu itself.

## Independence in CDF

In the first Chinese publication devoted to Hong Kong independent documentary, one of the editors, Chow Si-chung, explains that the selection of independent films included in the book was made as an exercise in preference for productions not produced by the television stations and other broadcasting institutions (2011, p. 8). Similarly, Chris Berry (2006) also regards productions that do not form "part of the approved internal annual production schedule of either a state-owned film studio or television station" (p. 111) as independent works in the Chinese context. However, the focus is not directed simply at the film studios or television stations, but also at the "state-owned" system. Berry adopts his idea of 'independence' from Chuck Kleinhans (1998) who holds that the term "has to be understood as a relational term – independent in relation to the dominant system" (p. 308). The dominant system in the Chinese context is the state system: "the system [tizhi]" includes the state-owned studios and television stations (Berry, 2006, p. 111). And then the very term 'state-owned' forms an important distinction in this discussion, especially with regard to television station production. It is appropriate to refer to mainland Chinese television productions as being productions of the state since the television channels there are indeed state-owned. In Hong Kong the situation is different, as television stations are not part of the state sector, but are private

corporations. As a result, the television station productions cannot be identified as part of the dominant system in the Hong Kong context, and this is particularly true for documentary. Chow explains that the festival preference for denying selection of productions from television stations and other broadcasting institutions is based on the belief that initiatives and goals linked to independence should not be based on merely meeting the schedules of broadcasters or on maintaining a salaried job (2011, p. 8). That is, Chow is pointing to what filmmaker Julian Lee (Kempton, 2011) regards as "the essence of independent film": the "director's autonomy" (p. 104).

In her analysis of Hong Kong independent cinema, Esther Mee Kwan Cheung (2010) states that independence in the Hong Kong context does not necessarily display an obvious resistance to the dominant system: the film industry. Instead, Cheung provides for the possibility of independence as a function of the interaction between the independent sector and the mainstream. Filmmakers such as Ann Onwah Hui and Herman Laito Yau are noted for "wandering around the edges [Bianyuan youli]" of the film industry and yet still manage to produce works that display an "independent spirit [Duli jingshen]" (Cheung, 2010, p. 21). As a result, independence in Hong Kong cinema can be observed as lying along a "spectrum [Guangpu]", at one end of which there is an insistence on the director's autonomy, while at the other end there is an attempt to explore the director's autonomy within the industry (p. 24). The film selection of CDF, as displayed in the variety of documentaries screened, similarly demonstrates this spectrum of independence. Works from both within and outside the dominant system(s) – the film industry and the state – are all included in the festival. Given the film festival's approach to selection – along a spectrum – an analysis of CDF is warranted. One question worth asking is: What is the impact on the festival of this approach?

Some of the documentary festivals mentioned in previous chapters base their selection criteria for what are to count as preferred films on a clear agenda – DOChina, for example, prefers films with no affiliation whatsoever to the state system, and YIDFF prefers films that are able to manifest clearly the relationship between the filmmaker and his/her subject, as

compared with “drop-in-and-start-shooting” films that are “aimed exclusively at domestic audiences” (Yano, 2008, p. 6). In contrast, there is no formal publicly visible agenda governing the film selection for CDF. As Tammy Cheung states, the festival’s preference is for a group of juries from different backgrounds to be in charge of the selection process, rather than a single person. Thus she invites experts and authorities from different backgrounds to participate in the process: from film critics to photographers. In this way the selection can bring forth and display different styles and points of view (Fanhall, 2009). As a result, the films selected portray a different degree of independence, one aligned with Esther Cheung’s (2010) observations on Hong Kong as featuring a spectrum of independence.

In 2011, CDF screened eighteen films, divided among two competition programmes and a special selection programme. The films’ funding was derived from a variety of sources – for example, *Mirror of Emptiness* (2010), directed by Ma Li, was partly funded by a mainland Chinese television station, and this contrasts with *The Sandstorm Intrusion* (2010), a self-funded project by Weng Wenming. If Hong Kong’s version of independence can be regarded as a continuum running from complete directorial autonomy to film industry affiliation primarily focussed on the funding sources of films, then even this thin slice of CDF’s film selection portrays it well. As an example of films standing towards the end of directorial autonomy, *This Pair* (2010) demonstrates how a number of Hong Kong independent works get produced. As Lee (2003) puts it, “the majority of documentaries made in Hong Kong tend to be shorts, of which many are student projects”. And *This Pair* (2010) is indeed a project by a graduate student, Wong Yeemei, at Hong Kong’s City University. The lonely life of a grandmother, an Alzheimer’s disease sufferer in mainland China, is documented through the lens of her granddaughter-director’s camera. Originally, the director had not intended to screen the work publicly; it was to serve only as a personal record. But because of her teacher’s encouragement, she submitted the work to the 15th Hong Kong

Independent Short Film & Video Awards (IFVA)[26] and was awarded with the Gold Award in the Open Category. Being a student project, it is usual that the director should have maintained close and authoritative control over the project. Certainly there may have been constraints on, or perhaps guidance provided in relation to, Wong's project by the supervising teachers or by the school itself in the form of practical support, such as film and editing equipment which would have at least made the project feasible. Still, the director's autonomy is expressed through her control of the project financially and ideologically. As a self-reflexive documentary,[27] recording the life of the director's own grandmother, *This Pair* explores a sub-genre of documentaries that stands in clear contrast to the documentaries aired in programmes like *Hong Kong Connection* which are broadcast via television – the most familiar form of documentary to Hong Kong people (Cheung, Kempton & Lee, 2011) – and which are expected to maintain a neutral position in terms of subject matter.

Lying at the other end of this proposed spectrum of relative independence is *The Warriors of Qiugang* (2009). Also screened in 2011 event, this is a film that betrays a close relation with the film industry. The film's Hong Kong-born director, Ruby Yang, immigrated to the USA in 1977,[28] becoming an Oscar winning director in the 2006 Academy Awards Documentary Short Subject category with her documentary *The Blood of Yingzhou District* (2006). Her *The Warriors of Qiugang* (2009), according to the film's production company-produced press kit, recounts "how a group of villagers put an end to the poisoning of their land and water by a local chemical factory".[29] In addition to its affiliation with Chang Ai Media Project – the production company just mentioned – and with the online current affairs analysis magazine, Yale Environment 360, and having been produced by the Thomas Lennon Film Company, the film was also realised by funding from subscriptions from individuals and

[26]The most prestigious independent film competition in Hong Kong was established since 1995 by the Hong Kong Arts Centre. Tammy Cheung, Vincent Chui from the Ying E Chi and Jia Zhangke among the Sixth Generation Chinese filmmakers are also the awardees of the competition.

[27] Self-documentary referring "to a work in which a visual artist films himself and records facts in his personal environment" (Hisashi, 2005). It is a mode of documentary similar to that which Nichols termed as performative documentary. See also Hisashi (2005) and Nichols (1994a).

[28] CDF 2010 booklet.

[29] Press kit of The Chang Ai Media Project, http://www.campfilms.org/media/presskit.html.

foundations; from philanthropists Walter and Shirley Wang and The Fledgling Fund for instance. The Chang Ai Media Project is an "independent production company in Beijing" initiated by filmmakers Thomas Lennon and Ruby Yang that aims to "promote public health in China through the creative uses of film, television and the Internet".[30] The pair had previously partnered with the Ministry of Health in China and the USA's National Basketball Association's (NBA) 'Entertainment & Basketball Without Borders' initiative in the launching of a media campaign. So, with support from a diverse group of parties and with a sophisticated production team – plus a highly-developed online advertising connection – *The Warriors of Quigang* is a film for whose production the responsibilities can be seen to fall squarely into an area different to the minimalist, simplified and often limited sponsorship and production process of independent films noted above.

Some films selected and screened by CDF have been challenged in terms of their claims to independence. For example, the film *3.1415…* (2011) was produced by an associate professor of Television and Film Arts at Communication University of China, Qin Yuming, in collaboration with a Master's student at the school, Gao Pan. The film concerns the working experiences of three producers of a China Central Television (CCTV) programme, the *3.15 Evening Show*. One of the jury members, the organiser of DOChina, Zhu Rikun, derided the film, saying that "despite its claims to be an independent documentary, *3.1415*[…] is merely another CCTV programme masked as a documentary" (2011, p. 65). This criticism from a judge and independent festival curator as experienced as Zhu, clearly demonstrates that resistance to state system control is seen by some commentators as the defining condition of independence; it also demonstrates the differences in the understanding of the term 'independence' across the various regions under discussion. It is exactly this kind of controversial selection – a controversy that examines the nature of independence itself – that serves to broaden CDF's spectrum of independent film screening.

[30] Press kit of The Chang Ai Media Project, http://www.campfilms.org/media/presskit.html.

When questioned on the definition of independent film, Tammy Cheung replies that she neither regards herself as an indie director, nor does she imagine her documentaries to be indie films in intent; instead, she says, she "was forced to be independent" (Cheung, Kempton & Lee, 2011, p. 156) because of the impossibility of pitching a documentary project to established film studios. As a result, despite the fact that she could choose to work in corporate-backed film production – the Industry – her desire to shoot documentaries in her own way, "forced" her to become independent.[31]

As Tammy Cheung states, documentary is a film genre that is "very unfamiliar" (Cheung, Kempton & Lee, 201, p. 158) to the Hong Kong public, to some film practitioners, film festivals organisers, movie critics, distributors and film retailers. As such, the very act of choosing to start a documentary film project is an act of independence in the context of Hong Kong filmmaking.[32] Despite there being no explicitly stated agenda in CDF's screening of independent works – just as Cheung refuses explicitly to state that she and her own works represent independence – by the very act of screening a genre that is unfamiliar to the public, and particularly unwelcomed by a film industry concerned chiefly with financial return,[33] CDF can be regarded as a film festival that has been forced to be independent; its independence manifests itself across the spectrum of independence.

## Communication in CDF

According to its own literature, CDF 2009 aimed to facilitate cultural exchange among the Chinese speaking regions. As its name suggests, the Chinese Documentary Festival, while specialising in documentary film, exclusively programmes Chinese productions. The festival's selection of Chinese documentaries produced in different regions sees it programme together productions from China, Taiwan and Hong Kong, with a few coming from Singapore

[31] See also Cheung, Kempton and Lee (2011).

[32] 'Documentary film' here, encompasses films to be screened through channels not linked to television, as compared with television documentaries that are produced primarily for broadcasting on television channels.

[33] The Government-run Hong Kong Film Development Council, for instance, was established with a view towards "the promotion and development of the film industry, as well as the use of public funds to support the industry". Yet the Film Development Fund's brief to "support projects conducive to the long-term development of the film industry in Hong Kong" was exclusively limited to the production of "drama film" projects. See also Hong Kong Film Development Council webpage, http://www.fdc.gov.hk/en/home/index.htm.

and Macau. Jury and DOChina organiser Zhu Rikun regards the viewing experience engendered by grouping documentaries from China, Taiwan and Hong Kong together as a "very refreshing experience" (2009, p. 49). And it is a viewing experience that is further enhanced by the extension of invitations to all of the responsible filmmakers to attend and meet together at the festival. In other words, cultural exchange is a form of communication that is actualised first through the selection of films and then further enriched by the presence of the filmmakers. Film selection and the way the festival accommodates its guests are crucial with regard to the festival's facilitation of cultural exchange.

In the previous chapter (Chapter Two) dealing with the Yamagata International Documentary Film Festival (YIDFF), the section regarding film programming discussed how that festival's programming demonstrated a concern for the issue of the 'local and regional', by advocating topical films to its audiences whilst facilitating networking among the attending filmmakers. Such networking was further enhanced by the activities that YIDFF organised to accommodate those people involved in the festival, activities that served as a platform for that shared experience that can result in 'concrete human relations'.[34] Similarly, the cultural exchange which CDF aims to facilitate is accomplished, first, through the selection of films; it is further assisted by the networking the festival encourages and then enhanced by activities organised towards that specific end. In the following section, CDF's ambitions to facilitate cultural exchange between the various Chinese regions are examined through the festival's film selection and the activities it organises that encourage community.

### *Local or regional: a film selection perspective*

Around one hundred films have been submitted to CDF for each of its editions, most having been produced in China, Taiwan or Hong Kong. According to one of the selection jurists, Law Kar (2009), a pioneering Hong Kong film critic, who has commented on the first two editions of CDF, most of the submissions came from mainland China, with Taiwanese submissions in second place and only a few coming from Hong Kong. Seemingly in

[34] See also Chapter Two on YIDFF.

accordance with the old saying 'love well, whip well', local documentaries submitted to CDF were also subjected to repeated and disproportionately critical comments by local juries in comparison to productions from other regions. Tammy Cheung (2008) commented on her disappointment with Hong Kong productions, which had "dropped considerably behind their counterparts from China and Taiwan"[35] in terms of the quality of their films (p. 30). Another Hong Kong film critic, Fung Kaming, somewhat harshly, judged the limited entries from Hong Kong as indicating that "Hong Kong documentary film manufacture at present really does not amount to anything, when compared with Mainland China and Taiwan" (2009, p. 48). Law Kar commented further on the same edition of the festival, saying that there were rarely Hong Kong documentaries "with vision and of significance" (2009, p. 57). Even the latest edition of the festival in 2011 was met with criticism from photographer Leong Katai (2011), who felt that "the quality [of Hong Kong documentaries] has room for improvement" (p. 69). Certainly the number of Hong Kong-produced works selected for the festival up until the most recent years has been small: until the latest edition of CDF in 2011, there had been just four Hong Kong documentaries selected in the competition programmes and not a single selection of a Hong Kong documentary took a place in competition programmes in CDF's first three editions.[36]

It is obvious that Chinese documentaries have dominated the selection process in each of CDF's editions, with Taiwanese documentaries consistently maintaining second place; productions from elsewhere in the Chinese diaspora were few, with productions from Hong Kong being particularly noticeable by their absence from the competition programmes of the festival's first three editions. Still, three highly-regarded Hong Kong documentaries did screen in the 'Special Selection' programme of the 2009 CDF, including *KJ: Music and Life* (2008) by King Cheung and *Election* (2008) by Tammy Cheung. The jury is still out, then, on whether the reason for this absence of Hong Kong documentaries is because the Hong Kong documentary film scene really does not amount to anything, or whether, as has also been

[35] The original Chinese reads: "Ling ren nanguo de shi, Hong Kong de zuopin dada di luohou yu zhong tai."

[36] See also Appendix 5

suggested, local film producers and students "choose not to participate, or simply do not know of this competition" (Fung, 2009, p. 48). It is to be hoped that such a resounding whipping as that which the local documentary film scene has received does indeed signify a great love; a love that will turn more constructive and nurturing in the future.

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A film festival is fundamentally concerned with the exhibition of films. As Julian Stringer (2003) notes, "every film festival in the world ostensibly exists to show films or at least audio-visual products" (p. 18). The films screened at a festival take a leading role in representing the festival. So when the film selection of CDF is made notable by the absence of local Hong Kong documentaries in its programming, it is important to look at this fact from a point of view which regards the festival as not being intended to work merely with and from a local Hong Kong perspective. Previous mention has been made of the festival's lack of a specific agenda in its film selection and programming. Instead, CDF is primarily regional in its scope and regionally Chinese in particular. It should be no surprise that the name of the festival, the Chinese Documentary Festival, indicates the event's devotion to documentaries produced from the various Chinese regions. In the other words, the stated ambition towards cultural exchange is primarily undertaken from, and in the service of, a Chinese regional perspective. Despite the festival being organised and held in Hong Kong, there are no explicitly stated impetuses on the part of the organisers to develop or sustain local documentaries in their film programming. Hong Kong, in terms of the film programming at CDF at least, is merely another Chinese film production centre rather than the festival's feted host city and its primary source of local films.

### *The chance to gather at the festival*

Unlike YIDFF and DOChina, which offer almost daily social activities for their attendees in an effort to nurture communication – the Komian Club at YIDFF and the after-screening parties at DOChina, are examples of such activities – CDF does not offer regular occasions for gathering (although a few informal dinners are organised exclusively for the benefit of

invited guests). Certainly this is related to some extent to the scale and limited budget and manpower of CDF, which somewhat limits its potential in regard to the pursuit of networking; however, the organiser of CDF, Tammy Cheung still maintains that pursuit on a personal level. Feng Yan's statement that she feels as if she has returned home when returning to CDF (Chen, 2009) is testament to the bonding between the guests that is nurtured by Cheung's efforts. In addition to the social events for the invited guests, Cheung will sometimes take on the role of tour guide for some, an effort which drew great appreciation from the Taiwanese director of *Someday* (2005), Lin Haoshen, who took part in such a trip with a number of other directors during CDF 2008. Despite the dinners and the trips being exclusively for invited guests, which means that audiences do not normally have a chance to access the events, there is still a degree of 'bonding' being nurtured between the attendees.

Robert Putman (2000) describes the measure of human relationships, or, "human capital", as consisting of what he terms "bonding social capital" and "bridging social capital" (p. 22). It is the "more inward looking" bonding social capital that is being practiced by CDF with Tammy Cheung at the helm. Bonding social capital has, according to Putnam, "a tendency to reinforce exclusive identities and homogeneous groups", which results in an "under-girding [of] specific reciprocity and mobilizing [of] solidarity" that functions like a "sociological superglue" (pp. 22-23).[37] In the case of those activities that encourage people to gather together at CDF, there is without doubt, a form of bonding social capital that results from such personal interactions. The restriction of such gatherings to invited guests may limit, but certainly does not preclude, this type of human capital exchange. As a result, the festival's stated ambition towards facilitating cultural exchange among its guests is achieved through these small scale personal social activities.

## Education in CDF

Another stated ambition of CDF is the promotion and further encouragement of documentary filmmaking, and the enhancing of audiences' appreciation of documentary. Summarised in

[37] See also Chapter Two on YIDFF.

this way, such an ambition can be regarded as a form of education, akin to that which underlies the purposes of museum and is discussed in the previous chapter (Chapter Four) focusing on TIDF. An emphasis by CDF on education in connection with documentary filmmaking is important in the Hong Kong context because generally the public reception of documentaries is based on its familiarity with the more traditional, journalistically expository type of documentaries broadcast via television.[38] Such weekly productions as *Hong Kong Connection* portray an image of documentaries as "an educational or informative medium" (Lee, 2004), that has been regarded as didactic and boring (Cheung, Kempton & Lee, 2011, p. 158). Chen Zirong (2009) further describes the public reception of documentary as displaying "indifference [Mobuguanxin]". By launching a film festival devoted exclusively to the screening of documentaries, CDF becomes a promotional tool in service of its own attempts to enhance audiences' receptiveness of the documentary form; there are aspects of CDF and Visible Record, Cheung's non-profit distribution outlet, that specifically address this mission.

As has been identified in Chapter Four regarding TIDF the educational process can be viewed through two different lenses: the behaviourist learning model and the constructivist learning model which stand as the two fundamental structural approaches to educational activities. A behaviourist learning model "focuses primarily on the acquisition and retention of new information" (Falk, Dierking & Adams, 2006), on "passive" (Black, 2005, p. 130) audiences, and is "more didactic and instructor-centered" (Falk, Dierking & Adams, 2006). In contrast, the constructivist learning model regards the instructor as a "facilitator" who contributes to the "active [learning] process" of the participants. In other words, the

[38] The expository mode of documentary asserts itself upon the spectator directly; this means that it provides a didactic "impression of objectivity, and of well-substantiated judgment" through the use of a voice-over commentary (Nichols, 1991, p. 35), and this voice-over is often presented by an omniscient narrator as if it were the 'Voice of God'. Thus, Bruzzi (2000) regards this mode of documentary as "narration-led documentary" (p. 56). The documentary programs broadcast on television channels often adopt this expository mode, especially those produced by Hong Kong television channels. The classic documentary program *Hong Kong Connection*, which has been broadcast since 1978, is a narration-led documentary which explores in each episode a social issue through an extra-diegetic narrator who adopts an (apparently) objective stance towards the issue in question.

'instructor' serves to assist the participant to *construct* new knowledge based on his/her "current and past knowledge" (Black, 2005, pp. 140-141).[39]

The seminars organised during each edition of CDF provide evidence of a behaviourist learning model operating at some level at the festival. So, at CDF 2008, a seminar treating the issue of environment protection in Taiwan, which was presented by representatives of international ecological organisation the Friends of the Earth and by Huang Meiwen, the director of the film *Lake-Cleaning People* (2007), conveyed information and opinions about contemporary environmental concerns in Taiwan. These are activities which convey practical information effectively and accessibly through an instructor-centred approach, a fundamental attribute of a behaviourist learning model.

Visible Record organised a public documentary workshop, charging a fee for a six-week course open to anyone who could afford to attend. The workshop took place once a week, with training concerned mainly with practical documentary production. Students were required to finish a short documentary project by the end of the course, under the guidance of Tammy Cheung and her film partner Augustine Lam. Despite the practical section of the course being structured according to a behaviourist instructor-centred approach, the latter part of the workshop shifted to an assisted approach that facilitated students' abilities to complete their own projects. Importantly for this study, the workshop can be regarded as actually encouraging participants to engage in documentary filmmaking, which further and explicitly actualises CDF's and Visible Record's ambitions to promote and encourage documentary production.

## Implications of the festival's competitive nature for the local scene

According to Fung Ka-ming (2009) and noted earlier, there seem to be two possible explanations for the limited number of local, Hong Kong submissions to CDF. Either contemporary local documentary productions actually "do not amount to anything", or "film producers and students choose not to participate, or simply do not know of this competition"

[39] See also Chapter Four on TIDF.

(p. 48). The discussion above concerning the exhibition platforms available for documentaries notes that it is rare for documentary films to be screened on television or in cinemas in Hong Kong. Yet still they find outlets via the other platforms, such as the Hong Kong Social Movement Film Festival (SMFF), which has maintained, with its screening of local documentary films, a constant presence in the documentary scene, in spite of the total absence of local documentary films in the 2008 and 2010 editions of CDF. It only seems logical that there should be at least a small number of local documentary films produced annually that reach a standard that makes them acceptable for screening at different festivals and at those ad hoc screening events mentioned above; that local documentary films do, at least, amount to 'something' both qualitatively and quantitatively.

It is tempting to interpret the dearth of local works in CDF's programmes as due to, and as suggested by Fung, their directors choosing not to submit such works to CDF or to their ignorance of the event. The alternative is that those local works that were submitted to CDF – and there are "not actually many" works (CDF, 2009, p.47) so submitted – were rejected by CDF juries because the 'quality' of the submissions did not reach 'the standard' required of them. Certainly the first explanation that directors' choose not to submit works to CDF could be accounted for by various factors, such as the relatively small scale of the festival, or even the hostility towards the festival fired by the screening of the film *Wheat Harvest* (2008) and its portrayal of a Chinese prostitute.[40] It is the latter explanation that is most likely, however: that is, the rejection of local submissions by the CDF's juries is undoubtedly linked to the competitive nature of the festival programming.

The festival is mainly comprised of competition programmes involving submissions from other Chinese-speaking nations in the region, with the result being that local works have

[40] The social activist group Autonomous 8a in union with V-artivist, producers of a number of documentaries concerned with social issues, who also supported the Hong Kong Social Movement Film Festival , protested against CDF 2009 because of the screening of the film *Wheat Harvest* (2008) by Xu Tong. The film revealed personal details of a number of prostitutes in Beijing, and there were fears that the information may result in criminal charges against the prostitutes portrayed. The group protested against the screening of the film by using a spotlight to obscure the faces of those prostitutes that they thought to be at most risk. The organisers eventually sought assistance from the police in response to the protest, and this resulted in a serious rift between Visible Record and other social activist groups. For more detailed information see also http://docuethics.blogspot.com and http://leila1301.mysinablog.com/index.php?op=ViewArticle&articleId=1737325.

to compete with China and Taiwan, each of which has enjoyed a certain international reputation on the documentary stage. And because of its competitive nature, there is no chance of imposing any Hong Kong-favourable curatorial agenda on the selection of submissions to the festival. The local submissions to CDF in 2008 were described as "trivial and superficial" (Cheung, 2008b, p. 30) and it was maintained that their producers "can do better" (Leong, 2011, p. 69), even though the submissions were accepted; Tammy Cheung, in the first edition of CDF commented that local works had "dropped … behind their counterparts from China and Taiwan" in terms of their quality (2008b, p. 30).

The competitive nature of CDF currently precludes a curatorial agenda aimed at promoting specific issues, which serves to distort the film festival into a wholly competitive event. In other words, the competition programmes paint the festival as a non-topical event, which limits the deeper articulation of any issues or topics and serves to push local Hong Kong documentary films further to the periphery. If the festival is to reflect the 'spectrum of independence' manifested in the contemporary Hong Kong independent documentary scene, and to redefine the future of Hong Kong independent documentary films, it should employ a policy of proactively supporting local filmmakers. This is what is needed if CDF is actually to address the accusation that the local scene does not really "amount to anything" (Fung, 2009, p. 48).

## Why local?

Competitive programmes need not disadvantage a film festival, since awards provide an easily managed form of advertisement and are conducive to attracting submissions to help perpetuate the event.[41] Indeed the festivals detailed elsewhere in this study have adopted

[41] Alex Fischer, in his dissertation *Conceptualising Film Festival Operation: An Open System Paradigm* (2009), refers to the bestowing of certain awards as the provision of 'participation-based incentives' (p. 132) in order to provide a festival with an 'identifiable function' (p. 114). That is, such awards serve as an incentive to filmmakers to submit their works and to promote the festival's stated function of furthering Chinese documentary filmmaking in the region.

Such attention to detail in attracting films to the festival by attending to the requirements of the festival's environment (by providing assistance to documentary filmmakers in the Chinese-speaking nations of East Asia) aligns with Fischer's recommendations on maintaining a constant flow of resource inputs to an event in order to combat the operational 'entropy' that can ensue should a festival lose favour among its participants. Entropy can spell the end of a festival.

competition programmes; but they have done so in conjunction with other, topical programming that provides opportunities for less accomplished (or at least less celebrated) filmmakers to take part. A film festival that is primarily and chiefly composed of competition programmes detracts from its fundamental function as a site of exhibition (Iordanova, 2009). Instead, public perception – and the perception of local filmmakers and their audience especially – turns the festival into a site of competition and its attendant awards.

Despite the fact that there is no explicit naming of Hong Kong in CDF's three stated objectives,[42] concern for the local Hong Kong public is, nevertheless, according to Tammy Cheung (2008), one of the reasons that the festival exists. This is itself persuasive evidence that CDF indeed has the aim of nurturing the local Hong Kong documentary scene among its ambitions. Indeed, as Stringer (2003) asks of the Shots in the Dark film festival, "*whose* festival" (p. 255) is the China Documentary Festival? As a festival on a similarly limited scale as Shots in the Dark, CDF relies almost exclusively on local Hong Kong audiences to fill its venues. If it hopes to fulfil its ambition of promoting and encouraging the acceptance of documentary filmmaking to these local audiences, then the current dearth of local Hong Kong films screened should be addressed. To do otherwise would be to risk the festival's connection with the local. The *festival identity* should assure the local public that CDF is organised for them, as locals, while simultaneously extending the audiences' appreciation of documentary films from the mostly 'foreign' (or non-local) fare to a broader locally-inclusive selection of works. The signs are good, but even with funding from the public sector aimed at providing "support [for] the broad development of the arts in Hong Kong",[43] CDF is still groping to find a format that will assist it in providing support to the local documentary scene while still positioning it between an all-encompassing 'Chinese' festival and a 'Local Hong Kong' event.

[42] http://www.visiblerecord.com/zh/festival/11/

[43] http://www.hkadc.org.hk/en/content/web.do?page=aboutADC

## Conclusion

As the title of the festival suggests, the Chinese Documentary Festival is a festival devoted to documentary works that "focus on China and the Chinese diaspora" (Cheung, 2008a, p. 2); the host city, Hong Kong, is merely a part of a big picture which aims to portray a heterogeneous Chinese region through the works it exhibits. However, works from China and Taiwan tend to dominate the festival, because the competition style of its programming favours the more numerous and more polished works from those two nations. As a result, works from other areas are rarely involved, including those from the host city, Hong Kong.

The two ambitions of CDF, namely the facilitation of cultural exchange among the Chinese-speaking regions and the presentation of the social context of these particular regions, require an additional agenda that focuses on profiling works from other 'documentary-developing' regions, if they are to succeed. An increased presence of works from different parts of the Chinese diaspora, from Greater China, would mean that the 'Chinese' filmmakers can gather together – without borders – to furnish that cultural exchange which the festival promotes. If such a scenario eventuates, CDF will truly become a home to which local and regional documentary filmmakers can, like Feng Yan, return each year, and from which all the regions of Greater China may be served with important and influential documentary films.

# CHAPTER SIX: On 'local-ness' and the 'locals': A summary

## The local in film festivals

In her article "The Film Festival Circuit", Dina Iordanova (2009) insightfully refutes the notion of distribution as the *raison d'être* of film festivals; film festivals should be maintained as "discrete exhibition sites" (p. 24), and conduct the "business of showing films" (p. 25). And thus festivals mostly work independently of each other. "It is only after a festival is established locally," says Iordanova, "that the issue of its relationship with other festivals in what constitutes a loose network comes about" (p. 26). That is, even the loosest of networks only develops after a festival has consolidated its position in the local area. This serves to not only emphasise that the network of film festivals, or festival circuit, is indeed a loosely connected one, but also introduces a crucially important issue for the development of the individual film festival: its sense of localness.

This concern for the local is also raised elsewhere by Iordanova (2011), in an article on East Asian film festivals, as one of the "inherently dual function[s]" (p. 2) of festivals in the region. She summarises this duality of East Asia film festivals as being, first, to "showcase films from the Asian region for foreign programmers and buyers" and, second, to "bring in acclaimed foreign films to local cinéphiles who might not get the chance to see them otherwise" (p. 2). Each of these functions converges upon the same issue: a festival's sense of the local, of 'local-ness'.

The festivals examined in the case studies in this thesis are consistent in their support of the idea that "festivals are not in the business of distribution" (Iordanova, 2009, p. 25); no effort is made to insert any market-oriented organisational aspects into any of these festivals. Indeed, as YIDFF organiser Ogawa Shinsuke (2007) has explicitly stated, that festival has maintained a clear opposition to being seen as "merely a place looking for patrons [Bing bu danchun shi xunzhao chuzi ren de changsuo]" (p. 235).

Iordanova's observation on the importance of acting locally is very relevant to this study and to the various organisational aspects of the various festivals it examines. Although these festivals approach the issue in different ways and through the employment of different strategies – be they with film programmes that emphasise the local habitants of an area, via active involvement with local institutions and schools or through film training that specifically serves local people – all reveal attempts by the festival organisers to develop the local capacity of their event that are linked with the festivals' ambitions to develop a local documentary film milieu. This is not to imply that the festivals have restricted themselves to operating as mere community festivals as they simultaneously expand their scope of operations to other regions. Collaborations with foreign filmmakers and festivals not only bring to the local film milieu inspiration from other regions, but also facilitate the formation of networks among and between the film festivals and filmmakers. Certainly the network is loosely connected and retains no formal agenda, but a belief in the cultivation of a regional documentary film milieu serves as a coherent and cohering shared ambition.

This chapter summarises those aspects of festival organisation examined in the previous chapters with the central aim of proposing that these documentary film festivals in the East Asian, and especially the Greater Chinese regions, all function with a similar emphasis on 'acting locally'. Yet these festivals also aim to reach out and involve other regions, particularly those neighbouring areas that constitute and contribute a shared Asian or Chinese identity. The collaboration between the 'local' and 'foreign' fosters a sustainable network among the festivals. Instead of following the logic of the "festival-circuit-as distribution" rightly challenged by Iordanova (p. 24), the festivals examined here provide a logic of the 'festival-circuit-as alliance'.

## What and where is the local?

The Oxford English Dictionary (2009) defines *local* as "belonging to a particular place on the earth's surface; pertaining to or existing in a particular region or district". Such a definition provides an understanding of the word as something related to a sense of a

particular *physical* space. But where is this particular space? For John Schofield and Rosy Szymanski (2011), in their essay "Sense of Place in a Changing World", the local is a place of rural community; a space occupied by people who "have lived there for generations [and] will inevitably feel a sense of ownership of 'their' place" (p. 4). But the local can also specifically refer to any place with which people feel a connection, a sense of "belonging" and "ownership" at a personal level, so that for Schofield and Szymanski, "Home is the ultimate in local" (2011, p. 4); in this sense then, the 'local' can refer to a place that is maintained as a home-base; a place of familiarity and safety from which to reach out to other places and to the world.

This is to say that within the context of film festivals, that place which hosts and serves as the home-base for the event can be regarded as being local to the festival. The local areas for the festivals included in this study are those places which play host to the individual events: Yamagata is local to the Yamagata International Documentary Film Festival (YIDFF); Beijing to the Documentary Film Festival China (DOChina); Taichung to the Taiwan International Documentary Festival (TIDF); and Hong Kong to the Chinese Documentary Festival (CDF). However, and simultaneously, the notion of *local-ness* is expanded by these festivals to include their hosting nations, and by so doing to inclusively encompass their sense of 'nationality' or ethnicity. In this sense, Japan is being addressed by YIDFF, China by DOChina, Taiwan by TIDF, and Chinese ethnicity by CDF. The concept of hosting a festival is extended to include regions with shared geographical connections: the 'Asian identity' that is the concern of YIDFF and the 'Chinese identity' addressed by CDF are used here to illustrate this extension.

The sense of 'local-ness' – of the local – presented by a festival, is not confined merely to the portraying of a sense of itself as a representative of its host city; the hosting nation or the identified ethnicity are also reflected. Indeed, the idea of the *local* is intricately related to *cultural identity*. According to Simon During (2005) "individuals don't have a single identity, they have identities, and they do so just because identities are based on partial

traits" (p. 146). The 'individual' film festival similarly holds various multiple identities. For example, YIDFF is a festival that simultaneously aligns itself with the regions of Yamagata, of Japan and of Asia. For sociologist and anthropologist Bruno Latour (1993), "the words 'local' and 'global' offer points of view on networks that are by nature neither local nor global, but are more or less long and more or less connected" (1993, p. 122). That is to say that, here, the sense of local-ness is a relative term that can also extend the relative location of what is regarded as 'home'. In the context of film festivals, this local-ness can be reinterpreted as being representative of the *range of hosts with whom the festivals identify* rather than of any particular and confined geographical space. In terms of the different representations of local-ness mentioned above, there are three types of local-ness which extend from what will here be termed the 'local-habitat', through the 'local-nation' and encompassing the 'local-region'.

The local-habitat refers to the immediate locale of the festival that is host. It is the 'habitat' that the festivals rely on to survive and thus performs a habitat's functions. Here, the 'local-habitat' refers to the small community-sized areas, such as a village, street or district, and ranges to include a district, province or prefecture, though not reaching to a national extent, that are contiguous with the venue of festival.

Extending from the local-habitat, the local-nation takes on a minimal identification based on the territorial boundaries between autonomous nations. The boundaries define the geographical territory of the nation, although the objectives for the festivals with an emphasis on the nation need not be solely reduced to nationalism.

Peter J. Katzenstein (2005) summarises the approach to defining the notion of regions according to three "theories", namely "materialist, classical theories of geopolitics; ideational, critical theories of geography; and behavioural theories" (p. 6). The 'local-region' to which this thesis refers trends towards those "ideational, critical theories of geography", which emphasise "the relative fluidity of spatial borders", since "space is not given in nature. It is a social construct that people, somehow, invent" (p. 9). Such fluidity is exemplified by

those aspects of the festivals examined here that transcend national boundaries and reach out with a supranational agenda.

## Ambitions of the festivals

Before identifying those organisational aspects of the festivals that illustrate the various types of local-ness, it is worthwhile to refer once again to the festivals' ambitions, which serve as the principles according to which the festivals are constituted and are intended to function. The events' local dimensions are addressed through these ambitions – a further consolidation of the role of local-ness – and they provide a focus for the festivals.

In the chapter addressing YIDFF (Chapter Two), the impetus behind the institution of that festival was seen to be the organisation of the first documentary film festival in Asia, thereby positioning Yamagata City as "a significant site in the Asian independent film sector" (Nornes, 2007b, p. 222). As a celebration of the centennial of Yamagata Prefecture, the festival engaged with the prefecture's citizens in the lead up to its inauguration in 1989. In addition to touring the prefecture promoting documentary film by organising screenings, the festival also aimed to create a local volunteer network to support the event. The network welcomed ordinary citizens and film practitioners from the prefecture to join, eventually becoming the Yamagata International Documentary Film Festival Network. Former chairman of the Network, Takahashi Takuya (2008), recalls of the festival's promotional touring that it was YIDFF director Ogawa Shinsuke's "idea that young film lovers living in the prefecture should, *more than anyone else*, play a positive role and support the film festival" (p. 8, emphasis added). Initially consisting of around 200 local Yamagata citizens (Tanaka, 2008a), the number of volunteers increased to more than 450 during the 1990s (Takahashi, 2008), all gathered in response to Ogawa's call and all actively undertaking supporting roles in the festival's operation, including organising promotions and festival newspaper publications.

Another key concern for the festival is that it should play a part in serving the Asian documentary film milieu. The catchcry uttered by Ogawa and his supporters during YIDFF's

tours of the prefecture was a resounding: "Documentaries to Asia!" (Lizuka, 2008, p. 11), demonstrating passionate and direct ambitions for documentary films in the region. This concern for an Asian documentary milieu is further reflected in the organisation of an Asia Symposium in the festival's first edition. By inviting and screening the works of filmmakers from different regions of Asia – chiefly East and Southeast Asia – the notion of an Asian documentary milieu is explicitly and actively addressed as a particular focus of the festival; and the Network established in the prefecture can then extend to filmmakers from these different Asia regions.

This is not to imply that the host *nation* of Japan is omitted from, or even side-lined by this picture of YIDFF. As an Asian country itself, Japan is an obvious resource for films: renowned Japanese filmmakers participated in the festival's symposium, such as the late Noriaki Tsuchimoto, director of the acclaimed series of films concerning Minamata disease and, along with Ogawa, named as one of the "two figures [who] tower over the landscape of Japanese documentary" (Nornes, 2011c, p. 2). A programme devoted to Japanese films was planned for the festival as early as the preparatory stage of the first edition (Tanaka, 2008a). In one of the stated goals of YIDFF – "To impart the appeal of documentary, by allowing as many people as possible to see the world's best documentary cinema in Japan, where opportunities for viewing are few and far between"[1] – Japan is explicitly addressed as the event's locale. Through its incorporation and representation of these three regions to which is YIDFF connected, the festival presents a sense of the local, of local-ness, that operates in a threefold manner – Yamagata-Japan-Asia – and is concerned with each of these areas.

In the case of DOChina (see Chapter Three), the concern tends towards addressing festival matters at the national level. Festival curator Zhu Riken, in response to a question regarding the core values or initiatives of the festival, replied explicitly that his most important consideration in organising the festival is to lift the standard of the "local [Bentu]" filmmaking (Lin, 2011a). The local to which Zhu refers here is not merely the festival's

[1] http://www.yidff.jp/faq/faq-e.html

location, Songzhuang in Beijing. The peripatetic history of the festival, which did not have a fixed location in its early editions, has left it with connections to the China as a whole, so that the local referred by Zhu and the festival becomes, in fact, the nation, China. The very name of the festival – the Documentary Film Festival China – betrays the fact that its chief concern is for things Chinese. Indeed Zhu's previous festival, a precursor to DOChina, was devoted to the Sixth Generation Chinese filmmakers, emphasising Zhu's attention to a sense of the local for DOChina that centres on the home nation of the festival, China.

The case of TIDF is rather similar to that of DOChina. As has been detailed in the case study presented here (Chapter Four), the concerns of the festival are primarily national; Taiwanese. The Introduction to the festival's website emphasises the festival's role as an archive of the "social, political and cultural" changes that have occurred in Taiwan since the 1980s as a result of the lifting of Martial Law in 1987.[2] It is the festival's ambition, through this archive to "build up an individual system [Jianli qi ziji de tixi]" of Taiwanese documentaries, so as to present the "land [Tudi]" to the world.[3] Ultimately, the festival is intended to serve as a reaffirmation of the "cultural identity [Wenhua rentong]" of Taiwan.[4] As with DOChina, the location of TIDF has shifted a number of times – from Taipei during the early stages of the festival, to Taichung from the fifth edition. This relocation affects the development of a sustainable connection with the host city. The name of this festival, too – the Taiwan International Documentary Festival – spells out the host nation explicitly as the festival's subject. That is, the festival is aligned with the idea of the nation of Taiwan; the sense of local-ness for TIDF comes with acclaim of the Taiwanese national identity.

The name of a festival is a significant demonstration of how it interprets the idea of its own sense of local-ness. In the case of Hong Kong's *Chinese* Documentary Festival (CDF), for example, it is that which is 'Chinese' that is being presented as the festival's focus. However, the term *Chinese* here does not point directly at geographical locations, but instead

[2] http://www.tidf.org.tw/2004/english/main6_about/about1.htm

[3] http://www.tidf.org.tw/2002/c_about.html

[4] http://www.tidf.org.tw/2002/c_about.html

refers very much to ethnicity: to being (or at least speaking) Chinese. For the festival organiser, Tammy Cheung (2008a), CDF "is a unique cultural event showcasing outstanding Chinese documentary films and giving special recognition to talented Chinese documentary filmmakers whose works focus on China and the Chinese diaspora" (p. 2). Here, 'Chinese-ness' is not defined geographically, but instead, by the Chinese language. Indeed the Chinese name of the festival can be more accurately translated as the 'Chinese language documentary festival' [Huayu jilupian jie], and entry requirements for the festival explicitly state that the dialogue of any film should be at least 50 per cent Chinese.[5] The festival screens together works produced in various Chinese speaking areas, from China itself, to Taiwan, Singapore and even a Chinatown in the United States, "thus creating a 'collage' of records of contemporary Chinese lives", which ultimately serve to "encourage better communication among different communities as well as strengthen our cultural heritage" (p. 2). This use of the phrase 'our cultural heritage' is a tellingly ambivalent reference to not only Chinese people generally, but also to Chinese cities and to the hosting city, Hong Kong, as particular concerns of the festival. Festival organiser Cheung has been explicit in detailing her ambitions of promoting an understanding and appreciation of documentary to Hong Kong audiences, and further, of enriching what she sees as a materialistically-dominated Hong Kong society with a greater artistic spirit (p. 1). In this sense then, the stated aims of the festival are infused with a sense of 'local-ness' that connects it to both its host city, Hong Kong, and to its intended Chinese ethnic audience.

## On the local-ness of the organisational aspects of the festivals

A film festival is fundamentally a site of film exhibition. As a result, film programming lies at the core of film festival composition and provides a significant representation of how a festival is 'positioned'. According to Czach (2004) film programming, and especially national spotlight programming, is a kind of "canon formation" that serves as a "tastemaking" exercise at the "individual, national and international level", while simultaneously revealing

[5] http://www.cdf.asia/

the "taste" of the programmer (p. 84). By extension then, the taste 'made' by the programmer also accounts for the taste of the festival; that is, film programmes implicitly represent the taste, or ambitions, of the film festival. If maintaining a sense of the local is a concern for festivals, then their film programmes become the feature that manifests such a defining ambition.

Local is a relative term and when used in a geographical sense its application depends on the place that is to be identified as 'home'. In the case of film festivals, the word local can serve to describe merely where the physical placement of the festival occurs. Yet that which is *local* is not restricted simply to the discrete hosting location, but can be also be an epithet for other regions with which the festival identifies, across and adjoining its actual physical location. This range of meaning implies the need for a typology of sorts to facilitate an understanding of the various senses in which the concept of hosting is identified by film festivals; as such, three types of the local are referred to here and are delineated as the 'local-habitat', the 'local-nation' and 'local-region'.

## On the local-habitat

Although the notion of a film festival as primarily a site of film exhibition requires little further elaboration, note must be made here that in order to serve this purpose a festival inevitably relies on an interaction with its physical location to perform its exhibition purpose. The location of the screening venue is termed its 'habitat' here in that it represents that place where the festival "grows or lives",[6] and from which the festival performs its functions. The close connection with its hosting location breeds a significant intimacy in terms of a festival's geographical location. The local extent of such a 'habitat' indicated here is restricted to small community-sized areas, such as a village, street or district, and ranges to include a district, province or prefecture, though not reaching to a national extent. Those film festivals under discussion here that exemplify this local-habitat are YIDFF and TIDF, which

[6] Habitat. (2009).

curate film programmes specifically addressing their local areas by their respective programming of 'Films About Yamagata' and 'Doc Taichung'.

As YIDFF film programmer, Saito Kenta, mentions in the festival's 2007 online catalogue:

> It will soon be twenty years since the Yamagata International Documentary Film Festival was first held. However, there have been few opportunities to let everyone know about our host, Yamagata. That being the case, we want you to gain a better appreciation, through films and their images, of the character of Yamagata and the people who live here. With this thought as the genesis, 'Films about Yamagata' was born.[7]

The motivation for curating a programme devoted to the *host* region of the festival, Yamagata Prefecture, lies in the fact that the 'local-habitat' was, to an extent, side-lined among the festival's organisational facets. By screening films related to Yamagata, YIDFF attempts to "draw the citizens of Yamagata to this festival" and assist them in gaining "a deeper understanding of this region while enjoying the festival" (Saito, 2007, p. 3). To this end the programme 'Films about Yamagata' has been curated each year since the 2007 edition.

'Films About Yamagata' is a cluster programme that is divided into between five and eight parts according to various themes related to the prefecture. The themes are of four types. First, a focus on historical footage related to Yamagata, which took the form of the 'Natco Hour' in the 2009 edition and 'A Look at Prewar Yamagata' in the 2007 and 2009 editions. The 'Natco Hour' consisted of a selection from a series of educational films produced by the government's Civil Information and Education section during the Allied occupation of Japan after World War II; such films were widely screened across post-War Japan, including in Yamagata Prefecture.[8] In contrast to this official, governmental local voice, the programme 'A Look at Prewar Yamagata' presented a showcase of Yamagatan home movies. Through a film excavation project announced by the festival, historical footage produced by ordinary families living in Yamagata was unearthed and invited to

[7] http://www.yidff.jp/2007/cat075/07c075-e.html

[8] http://www.yidff.jp/2009/cat105/09c109-e.html

screen in the festival programme. Films such as *Adachi Household Cinema*, a 'home video' from circa 1935 produced by the father of Adachi Hideo, who had once served as Mayor of the town of Sagae in Yamagata Prefecture, were shown. The film documents traditional ceremonies and the Mayor's travels, "along with fiction films starring the children of his extended family"[9] in a fashion similar to that of the Lumière brothers.

The second theme addressed by the festival programming comes with works produced by emerging filmmakers and film students from within Yamagata and is explicitly named as a regular part of the programme: 'The Future of Yamagata and Film'.

Films produced by local Yamagatan directors or performed by local actors form the third thematic section of the festival's programming. So, 'Yamagata Venusography' featured the Yamagatan actress Tatsuta Shizue, while 'The Man Who Shot Godzilla: Honda Ishiro Retrospective' centred attention on the local Yamagatan director of the original renowned Japanese sci-fi movie franchise. The Monster with the Atomic Breath took a backseat during this homage to director Honda and the celebration of his Yamagatan identity and cinematic achievements.

A fourth theme – the celebration of the prefecture itself and of its magnificent scenery – is reflected in the festival programming by such sections as the 'Yamagata Odeon' and 'The Man Who Shot Zao: Tsukamoto Koji' from the 2007 edition. The former programme featured fiction films shot using Yamagata as a location, such as the 1941 feature *Horse*, directed by Kurosawa Akira.

In a manner similar to the programming of 'Films About Yamagata' at YIDFF, TIDF also curates a programme that focuses on what is termed here the 'local-habitat' of the festival, namely Taichung City, in a programme rather predictably named 'Doc Taichung'. Beginning with the fifth edition of the festival in 2006 the Taiwanese festival has invited a number of filmmakers to produce short films for each edition that, according to the producer

[9] http://www.yidff.jp/2009/cat105/09c112-e.html

of the second edition of the programme, Lin Tayjou, "observe, document, reflect, and discuss issues relevant to metropolitan Taichung".[10]

In this second edition, held at TIDF 2008, six films were screened in a series entitled 'Doc Taichung II: Taichung Through Different Eyes' that opened the festival. The individual films depict Taichung from different perspectives: *Fading* (2008), produced by Shen Koshang, is a portrayal of the communities of military families living in Shuinan near the Taichung Airport. Because of the development plan for the airport, the residents in these areas were forced to leave the homes where they had lived for 50 years; Jiing Yngjaw's *Ink Dance* (2008) focuses on an individual local rather than on a community – an 80-year-old painter who "lives alone in Taichung and has devoted his entire life to the art of Chinese painting".[11] A further programme, the 'Doc Taichung III: Aqua Taichung' in 2010, curated by Chi Wengchang, observed Taichung through the area's rivers, illustrating the close connection maintained between the natural environment and the region's citizens.

Despite the difference in scale between these two programmes – YIDFF's and TIDF's – the concern each expresses for its respective local-habitat is a similar one. By explicitly addressing their host cities, the physical locale of the festivals, through their programming, the events increase their appeal and this can only assist in increasing their attendance figures, especially among the local citizenry.

As was mentioned in the chapter dealing with YIDFF (Chapter Two), programming that addresses the local-habitat is a form of 'site specificity'; the films enable the audience to become aware of and to know more about the relationship between the films and the area surrounding where the screenings take place. Such programming further *contextualises* the films and the festivals that screen them by providing information about the host cities, such as with the historical footage screened in the 'Films About Yamagata' programme. And,

[10] http://163.29.219.145/doc_taichung_2/

[11] Synopsis of the film , http://www1.tidf.org.tw/2008/ch/f01_01.htm

ultimately, it strengthens the sense of *connection* which the festivals and, importantly, their audiences feel towards their local-habitat; the sense of being at home.

## On the local-nation

This sense of the local, of local-ness, is not restricted to the level of a community or city; an identification of home can also be extended to encompass the nation. This is especially the case for Chinese-speaking people for whom the close relationship between the concepts of *nation* and *home* is manifested in the Chinese word 'Guojia' that literally means *nation*. The characters of which the word is composed literally mean *state* [Guo] and *home* [jia]. The word implies, in approving tones, the close relation between the state and the home. However, this idea of the connection of the nation with home is a source of scepticism for scholars such as Benedict Anderson (1983) who challenges the very concept of the nation as a community by calling it "imaginary", in the sense that the members of such an extended community would "never know most of their fellow-members" (p. 6). Although, for Anderson, "the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship", it is still an "imagined community" (p. 7). Not only does the imaginary construct of the nation open itself to challenge, but any sense of identification with or of belonging to that nation similarly operates in the realm of the imaginary. As a result, despite the formalised and conformist notions of 'comradeship' fostered among the 'nation's people', the nation itself can be still conceived of differently by each individual.

Nationalism in one form or another can serve as a principle impetus for the emergence of film festivals. As Marijke de Valck (2007) points out, the world's oldest film festival, the Venice International Film Festival (La Mostra Internazionale d'Arte Cinematographico) was underwritten by Italian dictator Benito Mussolini in the belief that "the film festival would give him a powerful international instrument for the legitimization of the national identity of fascism" (p. 47). Ideas of the nation and of nationalism in relation to film festivals, especially with regards to their diasporic characteristics, have been examined by Iordanova (2010). For her, the film festival is a "face-to-face", "live" event that is able to "practically

suspend the ‘imagined’ element of the community” and thus invite a “mental image of affinity” and foster a “very real togetherness” for the programmers and their audiences (p. 13). Such film festivals enable the “nation building process” (p. 13) to take place by, in effect, spotlighting the nation.

The curation of ‘national spotlight’ programmes can serve to address the different needs of a film festival’s local-nation and these can deviate from the official nationalistic ideology. So, approaching nationalism through, for example, the building of a national identity is merely one possible avenue of approach. National spotlight programmes aim to draw attention to the *films produced by the nation’s filmmakers*, so as to fulfil the exhibitory role of the festival. And the festivals further provide a screening platform for those filmmakers with whom the festival is most closely connected: local filmmakers. Ultimately, the platform serves as an attempt to strengthen the local, that is, national – the local-national – filmmaking milieu. Three programmes are curated by the film festivals which form the basis for this thesis and display such an exclusive concern on the local-nation’s productions. These are the ‘Taiwan Focus’ curated by TIDF, the ‘New Docs Japan’ by YIDFF and DOChina’s competition and non-competition Chinese film programmes and they offer the participant filmmakers (from an imagined community in the form of their respective nations) the chance to embody their meetings in ‘face-to-face’ opportunities that transcend an imaginary togetherness. Through the real, physical embodiment of a gathering of filmmakers at the festivals, a national network of filmmakers can be further developed by these national-spotlight programmes. Embodied connections can only occur when filmmakers participate, at which point the community of this particular group of filmmakers shifts from being imaginary, and aligns with the festival’s ambitions towards the cultivation of documentary filmmaking by fostering connection and communication between and among a network of filmmakers.

As is noted above, TIDF is firmly rooted in Taiwanese cultural matters and concerned with things Taiwanese. Since its inception, the festival has curated programmes devoted

exclusively to Taiwanese documentaries in each edition. The first two editions of the festival featured Taiwan-themed programming: 'About the Island – Taiwan Documentary Retrospective' and 'Taiwan Focus: Landscape of Life', respectively. The programming was then transformed into a non-themed selection for the next two editions of the festival, before reverting to Taiwan-focused programming with 'Image·Taiwan' during the third and fourth editions; the obviously Taiwan-centric programme 'Taiwan Focus' has been in place since then. In an article on the 'Taiwan Focus' of TIDF 2010, 'Taiwan's Image Inventory', programmer Kelly Yang (2010) regards the programme as having contributed to "shining a light on the history of Taiwanese images", and further serving as an "inventory review" of the "local images" of "each era" (p. 72). One of these contributions is *Hand in Hand* (2010), produced by Yen Lanchuan and Juang Yitzeng, which portrays the history of Taiwanese democracy since the 1960s through a love story between a Ms. Tian Mengshu and her mentor Dr. Tian. The "local image" referred to here by Yang is that which is signified by the title of the programme, the local-nation host of TIDF, Taiwan. Rhetorical and repeated emphasis on Taiwan-ness comes in the form of, for example, an emphasis on Taiwan-ness that permeates the festival's literature as well as the regular curating of a programme devoted to Taiwanese documentaries. Amongst its internationally-based programmes, the Taiwan-focused programme of TIDF remains the avant garde of its Taiwanese identity-building exercise.

A programme devoted to Japanese documentaries has also been the mainstay of YIDFF since its first edition, but with a purpose quite different to the development of a national identity. From the festival's beginning a retrospective programme devoted to the historical development of Japanese documentaries was curated and continued for each of the first five editions. For example, in the first edition 'The Dawn of Japanese Documentaries' addressed Japanese documentaries produced before 1945, and in the third edition the programme 'Japanese Documentaries of the 1960s' examined productions from that decade. Since its fifth edition, the festival has expanded with another programme that serves to

promote contemporary Japanese documentaries. Originally entitled 'Japanese Panorama', this selection was renamed to its current title, 'New Docs Japan', at the eighth edition, but, unlike the Taiwan-centric programming at TIDF, which maintains an emphasis on depicting and promoting Taiwan-ness, at YIDFF there is no explicit agenda for the upholding of either Japanese nationalism or a national identity. The programmer of the first edition's 'The Dawn of Japanese Documentaries', Yasui Yoshio (2008), recalls that YIDFF organiser Ogawa Shinsuke told him that, in addition to the 'International Competition', his hope was that the festival would present "a retrospective screening programme, like they do at Berlin" ( p. 18). The films selected for that first programme were not borrowed from the supporting governmental organisation because Ogawa "seem[ed] to be opposed" to such a dependent course of action. Instead Yasui was pushed to programme films that he "had on hand or could borrow from film companies and individuals" (p. 18). The retrospective programme can be seen to emerge from an imitative agenda rather than any particularly strong calling for nationalism. The sense of 'nation' that is intended to be portrayed is not one sourced from the official archives, but comes from the public sphere; rather than celebrating the nation *per se*, the Japanese programmes of YIDFF serve to uphold local Japanese *documentary films and filmmaking*.

According to film critic Watabe Minoru (1992), despite the "long history" of documentary film in Japan, "the turnout of Japanese films" among "the list of films entered and accepted for the Competition Divisions of the previous Yamagata International Documentary Film Festivals" was "regrettably rather weak" because "the current situation remains that large film companies rarely back documentaries and the number of theatres that will screen documentaries is limited" (pp. 5-6). It is YIDFF's intention to provide a screening platform for the further promotion of the local-nation's Japanese documentary filmmakers across the globe. "Through Yamagata," says renowned Japanese documentary filmmaker, Kawase Naomi (2008), "I connected to the world" (p. 20).

Programming that begins by spotlighting the local-nation through the presentation of historical film retrospectives before gradually shifting focus to contemporary productions is a shared practise among the documentary film festivals examined in this thesis. DOChina has evolved in just such a fashion. Instituted in 2003, DOChina manifests its concern for national documentaries through the programming during its first edition of 50 Chinese documentaries, including productions from the China Central Television (CCTV) dating back to the 1980s as well as independent productions, such as Wu Wenguang's *Bumming in Beijing: The Last Dreamers* (1990). After relocating annually during its first years of operation, the festival eventually settled down in 2007 in Songzhuang, a suburban area of Beijing, since which time the programmes devoted to recent Independent Chinese documentaries have been further categorised as competition and non-competition. Submissions are not restricted to Beijing, but come from many other provinces across China: *Mouthpiece* (2009) by Guo Xizhi documents peoples working in a television station in Shenzhen; *Spiral Staircase of Harbin* (2009) by Ji Dan concerns the lives of two families from Heilongjiang Province; and *A Song of Love, Maybe* (2009) by Zhang Zanbo is a love story about a girl working in a karaoke box in Hunan Province.

Still, neither the idea of inciting a sense of Chinese nationalism, nor of celebrating China is the purpose for curating such a national spotlight programme. As a film festival that embraces independent filmmaking, DOChina maintains a respectful distance and, further, actively resists the official national ideology offered by the Chinese government. Some of the films selected for screening by DOChina are acutely attuned to the political sensitivities of the PRC government: *Karamay* (2010) by Xu Xin and *Petition* (2009) by Zhao Liang have been noted as displaying an "oppositional dimension" to the state government in the earlier chapter on DOChina in this study, and such 'problematic' films challenge the state-accepted "canon" (Czach, 2004, p. 78) of works dictated and censored by state ideology. Even so, subversion and opposition are not the purpose for the selections and programming, but form part of the process of defending the central mission of the festival: the enhancement

of independent filmmaking in China. Curator of DOChina, Zhu Rikun, asserts that every form of art should also be independent (Lin, 2011a) and by curating a programme devoted to films produced independently by national Chinese filmmakers – that is, by local filmmakers – the festival is able to achieve the aspirational goal declared in its Chinese name by creating a *communication week* for local Chinese documentary filmmakers.

Despite the programming strategies for national spotlight programmes displaying a similar pattern among festivals – with historical retrospectives and the movement to contemporary showcasing of the nation – the ambitions that drive these initiatives are vastly different. For example, TIDF programmes with a spotlight on the local-nation in order to further an agenda of national identity-building, intertwining the emphasis on Taiwan-ness with the active political issue of whether or not Taiwan can pursue status as an independent nation-state or will be subsumed as simply another province of China that has been long under negotiation by the governors of the two lands.[12] The respective national spotlight programmes of TIDF reaffirm the *identity* of Taiwan, while avoiding any explicit articulation of its ambiguous national status. Compared to the Japanese spotlight programmes of YIDFF, the national initiatives of TIDF are not particularly strong. Because the event is an example of a "cinéphile festival" (Iordanova, 2011, p. 2), cinema is their primary concern, especially documentary cinema. As a result, bringing the local-national cinemas into a devoted programme does not serve a nationalist agenda, but is instead aimed at serving those *films produced by the nation's filmmakers*. Certainly the concepts of nationalism and the nation's products are an intertwined issue, yet the primary ambition of YIDFF is clearly cinéphilic.

The idea of a nationalism that praises the nation above the primacy of documentary film is further challenged by DOChina. As a festival devoted to independent cinema that is not officially recognised by the Chinese government, DOChina is a "subversive" (Pickowicz, 2006, p. 4) event. The subversion, as a process in defence of the festival's independence, is actively manifested in its selection of politically sensitive films, films which bring

[12] See also the publication devoted to this issue by Copper (2009.

unwelcome attention and pressure from the government. On a few occasions DOChina has insisted on screening works to local audiences, regardless of the fact that the films may touch a nerve in the central government, and thus receive oppressive treatment. The local-nation is the place or space in which the Chinese directors want to show and share their work with their fellow local filmmakers and remain true to the festival's Chinese name by fostering *communication* among them. These national spotlight programmes show concern for the respective local-nations of the festivals, but do not merely serve to laud those nations. Exhibition lies at the core of all film festivals, and what grounds these festivals is indeed the cinéphilic: the love of local cinema and its proponents and the desire to bring that cinema and its makers to the world.

### On the local-region

The idea of local-ness can be further extended beyond the national in much the same way that, for Tim Bergfelder (2005), the term "'European' functions less as the signifier of a specific culture, and more as an abstractly supranational, and quasi-ethical framework of cultural practice" (p. 317); not as a "a stable cultural identity or category, but rather as an ongoing process, marked by indeterminacy and 'in-between-ness'" (p. 320). And this broader concept of an Asian region can serve as an "impetus to new film funding and film-making initiatives" (p. 316) for the creation of a pan-regional production milieu. In Iordanova's (2010) studies of the film festivals of 'diasporic' nations sharing such an agenda, the connections between the nations were "often linked to a shared geographical space or linguistic practice" (p. 22); that is to say, local-ness can be seen to be embedded in geographical and linguistic contiguity. The film festivals studied here conform to such an observation and perform variations on such a supranational agenda by employing these two features. The festivals identify themselves as being part of a common geographic and linguistic supranationality, even though the ambitions driving each event differ from the "promotion of political and identity agendas" (p. 22) that takes place in the cases of the film festivals of transnational 'diasporic' nations. Instead, the supranational impetus is primarily

directed towards the promotion and cultivation of documentaries and documentary filmmaking in the local-region.

In the case studies presented in this thesis, the film programming of two film festivals in particular illustrates this model. First, there is the concern devoted to Asian – that is regional, or local-regional – documentaries as one of the central ambitions of YIDFF; a film programme devoted to Asia documentaries has been curated there since YIDFF's first edition. And second, despite the competitive form of CDF's film programmes, it is a festival devoted to Chinese documentaries and showcases documentaries exclusively in Chinese.

As the publication for its 1989 Asia Symposium (Erikawa, Teo & Yano, 2007) explains, the first edition of YIDFF was expected to attract quality documentary works from Asia, yet

> a lot of submissions were cultural films or promotional pieces. Most weren't the kind of documentary film we [YIDFF] were in search of, and couldn't be screened. We decided to invite Asian filmmakers for a symposium about why documentary film wasn't developing within Asia […] Works by participating filmmakers were also screened during the festival.
>
> (p. 1)

The film programme showcased works by participating Asian filmmakers and was the predecessor of YIDFF's Asian programme. After this Asian programme in the first edition, a programme devoted to Asian documentaries has been presented in each of the following editions, and a prize awarded in Ogawa Shinsuke's name for the "most promising work" (Fujioka, 2008, p. 23) since the third edition. The English name of the programme was changed to 'New Asian Currents' in the fourth edition, while the Japanese title, which translated literally as 'Asia: A Hundred Flowers Blossoming in Entanglement', was revised to 'Asia: A Thousand and One Waves' in the following edition. These titles suggest a specific focus on Asian works, and the metaphor of a tangle of blossoming flowers provides a beautiful image of the support and cultivation of rising artists that the festival hopes to encourage; the move to representing the programme as waves can be seen as an indication of

the inevitable force of Asian documentary filmmaking that the festival organisers perceive and wish to channel and ride.

During his speech at the Asia Symposium (Erikawa, Teo & Yano, 2007), Stephen Teo bemoaned the fact that "because of certain budgetary and technical problems" there were "many countries in Asia which should be [represented] here but are not" (p. 6). So the organisers limited their invitations to "Japan's nearest neighbouring *region* which is East and South-east Asia" [p. 6, emphasis added]. However, it was still Teo's hope that "the next YIDFF will have more comprehensive participation from Asia" (p. 6). And this hope was realised when, as the former programmer of 'New Asian Currents', Fujioka Asako (2008) recounts, "the number of works, filmmakers and *regions* represented in the program kept growing" (p. 23, emphasis added). Indeed, the festival is extending from East and South-east Asia into the regions of the Middle East and South Asia, procuring such films as *Work and Work* (1996) by Fuad Afravi from Iran and *The Labyrinth* (1996) by Dolon Chowdhury from Bangladesh.

For YIDFF, Asia is not restricted by national boundaries, and the festival takes an extensive view of what constitutes the Asian region. The film *Season of the Boys* (1999), which featured in the festival in 1999, was produced by Hong Kong-born, Canadian-educated director, Ho Tam. The work tells of a basketball tournament in New York City, where the protagonists are a group of Asian teenagers. Another example of this broad outlook is the film *Public Blue* (2007) produced by Anke Haarmann, a German director, who focuses her camera's attention on the homeless people of Osaka in Japan. Such examples as these show that the sense of Asian-ness that YIDFF wishes to present is not simply limited to the Asian regions, but also to the Asian diaspora that encompasses regions as distant as that depicted in *Season of the Boys*; this Asian-ness is not restricted to the nationality of the director, but extends to film content which involves Asian people and their experiences as its defining feature.

Katzenstein (2005) quotes Gavan McCormack's summation of Asia, as an "imposed identity: a fantastic ideological construct without racial or cultural meaning" (p. 78). This extended view of what it is to be Asian enables the programme to encompass works from regions that would not usually be regarded as Asian; and further, to gather together the work of filmmakers who examine Asia and Asians. This understanding of what it is to be Asian is performed in YIDFF's programming, where the festival aspects further display the "fluidity of spatial boarders" of region, and where Asia deemed is to be the regions affiliated by the films' contents (Katzenstein, 2005, p. 6).

The Korean filmmaker Byun Young-joo describes Yamagata as "my school" (Fujioka, 2007, p. 11), hinting at how the Asian programme of YIDFF provides a platform from which filmmakers may teach and learn from each other and, further, foster a network of filmmakers that meets the aspirations of those Asian filmmakers who gathered during the Asia Symposium. As a festival within a Japanese city, YIDFF performs a supranationalising agenda in the local-region, and its reputation as a local purveyor of Asian cinematic documentary excellence, is evidenced by the city being regarded as "Asia's Yamagata" (Fujioka, 2007, p. 11).

The entry requirements for CDF programming state that films should contain at least 50 per cent Chinese dialogue.[13] That is, the festival declares that the Chinese-ness of a documentary is not defined by the nationality of its production personnel or its funding, but by the Chinese language. As a result, the source of films for selection at CDF encompasses many Chinese speaking regions. Productions from the Greater China region have maintained a constant appearance since the first edition of the festival, with Chinese productions such as *Dream on the Wall* (2010) by Huang Mingming and Gao Luli and *The Poisoned Sky* (2010) by Chi Wenchang from Taiwan. Yet the Chinese language criterion has meant that other diasporic Chinese regions are also included: *A Moment in Time* (2009) by Ruby Yang which

[13] http://www.visiblerecord.com/main/?page_id=10

takes place in San Francisco's Chinatown is one instance of a United States production being selected for the programme.

Language is a defining feature of ethnicity[14] and, in a Chinese context, scholars such as Chan Kowkbun (2005) have concluded that "the ability to speak one of the Chinese dialects" is one of the definitions in defining the "Chinese" ethnicity (p. 42) outside Greater China. By stressing language as a requirement for the film entry, the Chinese-ness of CDF is indeed capable of interpretation from an ethnic perspective. As has been mentioned, using language as a requisite for inclusion enables the film selection to reach beyond the local-nation of China, and to involve films from other Chinese ethnic groups in distant geographic locations. A shared language not only facilitates a sense of belonging for visiting filmmakers – Feng Yan has told of her feelings of returning "home [jia]" to CDF (Chen, 2009) – it also enables communication among the festival community, especially the interaction between filmmakers and between filmmakers and their audiences. In addition to the exchange of cultural goods that enables the festival to function as a marketplace,[15] there is also a cultural exchange that is driven by the festival's ambitions to provide for professional communication which underscores the importance of filmmakers to CDF and serves to contrast the event with the two "ideal" film festival models suggested by Mark Peranson (2009, p. 25). Through their shared language, guests are able to directly communicate with other festival-goers, further fostering a sense of connectedness among the festival community. Despite the fact the Chinese-ness of CDF is, in a sense, a Chinese ethnicity, the festival as a whole is neither a tribute to such a Chinese-ness, nor is it a consolidation or imposition of this or any particular ethnic identity. The requirement for Chinese language use would tend to exclude films produced by non-Chinese populations living in the Greater China regions, for whom the direct translation from Chinese language into Chinese ethnicity is indeed limited by this imagination of Chinese-ness. However, in a manner similar to

[14] Carmen Fought (2006) devotes an entire volume entitled *Language and Ethnicity* to the exploration of the complex relationship between language and ethnicity, which is regarded as the "epitome" of sociolinguistic studies (p. xi).

[15] See also the section devoted to cultural exchange in Iordanova (2011).

YIDFF, CDF still works for the cultivation of documentary filmmaking by employing a supranationalising agenda that extends notions of the local beyond the immediate locale of the festival and beyond the national boundaries of the host nation to encompass a local-regional agenda, where the festival is a platform serving both the local Hong Kong Chinese and a supranational Chinese-speaking diaspora.

## Think globally

Before concluding this chapter, it is important to clarify that the festivals do not simply restrict themselves exclusively to local audiences and participants and close the door to the rest of the world. On the contrary, many access points are open to foreign regions and guests and examples of the festivals' out-reaching agendas can be seen in the festivals' organisational aspects and in the cooperation that takes place between them. Most of the films screened are subtitled in English and festival catalogues are all printed in bilingual formats with English translations. YIDFF especially has maintained a bilingual policy that covers all of its official events, including the Question and Answer fora after each screening and discussion. Such a bilingual policy offers those foreign guests who are not familiar with the local language a channel through which to comprehend the films and the festival as a whole. This is especially crucial for foreign film distributors who come to the festivals seeking new works for their own home audiences. This language policy, then, not only benefits the filmmakers in terms of possibly widening their market reach, but also makes the festival more accessible to foreign guests.

The link to foreign regions is also evident in the festivals' programming endeavours. Leaving aside CDF, which undertakes no significant selection of foreign films because of its competition format, the film programmes of the other three festivals examined here all incorporate foreign films. The international film programmes curated by YIDFF and TIDF are the obvious examples, although all three festivals have also curated special feature programmes on foreign filmmakers, such as the 'Guy Debord Retrospective' curated in YIDFF 2009, the featured programme on Heddy Honigmann in TIDF 2010, and the Kim

Dong-won retrospective programme curated in DOChina in 2010. Certainly this programming of foreign films provides the 'local' filmmakers with inspirational examples of their genre from other parts of the world and it also serves to promote the festivals themselves; but most importantly it showcases the 'local' productions.

Another act of outreach comes with the collaboration engendered between festivals. Such collaboration ranges from a whole-of-festival to a more personal level. Collaboration between festivals is not a common practise. Festivals are "discrete exhibition sites" (Iordanova, 2009, p. 26) and "coordination" between events is "usually a matter of good will of individual arrangements and not a matter of principle" (p. 33). Although there are no obligations for the festivals, or their curators (who operate as what Iordanova calls a kind of "sole trader" (p. 33)), to coordinate and cooperate with other festivals, still those documentary film festivals with similar ambitions have indeed joined forces. As the oldest and foremost documentary film festival in the Asia region, YIDFF has cooperated with and helped DOChina in the curating of film programmes concerning Japanese documentaries. This particular partnership resulted in two retrospective film programmes in DOChina, the 'Ogawa Shinsuke Retrospective' in DOChina 2008 and a retrospective programme on Tsuchimoto Noriaki the next year. Both programmes were curated by a partnership of the two festivals, the programmers of each festivals working together.

At the personal collaborative level, DOChina's curator Zhu Rikun has been assisting CDF by serving on its film jury since its 2009 edition, and the curator of TIDF, Jane Hui-chen Yu, conducted a talk in CDF 2011. Tammy Cheung from CDF has visited Zhu at DOChina for a Hong Kong film programme curated by Zhu's film company. For Iordanova, this kind of networking is "truly dependent on the existence of this class of cinephile freelancers who keep the festival treadmill going" (Iordanova, 2009, p. 33).

While it is true that a festival network relies on individual networking, it is also the case that the festival 'treadmill' operates as a sort of *relay* among sole traders. This means the network is not sustained by the presence of a single uniting individual (as may be the

case for individual festivals), but is instead maintained through a relaying of responsibilities and actions from individual to individual, festival to festival. The connection forged between YIDFF and DOChina is an example of this: Fujioka Asako has been the coordinator for the 'New Asian Currents' programme since YIDFF 1995; she has also curated two film programmes for DOChina and been a feted visitor at that festival. Her successor at YIDFF, Wakai Makiko, has sustained this network and continues to visit DOChina in search of promising new Chinese works. Such a network does not function according to formal agreements, however, but through that "good will of [the] individual" of which Iordanova speaks. And this need not be merely a form of 'helping-a-friend', but can extend to recognition of a commonality of professional and cinematic pursuits and the aspirations of the festivals concerned. The network of festivals is indeed maintained as an informal alliance, which is grounded in the common ambition of cultivating a documentary filmmaking milieu and recognises the efficacy of collaboration.

## Conclusion

As Darrell Davis and Emilie Yeh (2008) suggest in *East Asian Screen Industries*, "Asian pictures might be *de-localised* in terms of higher quality, especially in marketing, while concurrently *re-localised* in subject matter, stars and genres" (p. 5, emphasis in original). Localism does not operate as an isolated dynamic within the film industry of individual countries in the region but functions between the local and regional. Davis and Yeh perceive a "local production employing resources specific to given markets" (p. 18) while maintaining a trend "towards regional integration and corporate tie-ups in media finance, distribution and marketing" (p. 64); this the authors term a "new localism". From the perspective of the documentary film festivals examined here, the local is never omitted and, once identified, has its different dimension of the local further emphasised through various festival organisational facets. The different categories of 'local' posited here indicate which places and spaces a festival identifies as its 'home' as a function of its connection to that place *instead of the others*. Such boundaries guide the central mission of the festivals, whether

*intentionally reinforced*, or *inadvertently enacted*, to create a unique 'local' position for each festival among the enormous and growing number of film festivals around the globe. That is, while YIDFF, for example, intentionally addresses a uniquely Asian agenda as an alternative to the more sophisticated documentary milieu of the Western world, the stated mission of DOChina to enhance Chinese documentary filmmaking serves also to inadvertently define a unique niche for the event.

At the same time, these emphases on the various forms of the 'local' implicitly indicate whom it is that the festivals serve. Unlike the business model suggested by Peranson (2009), none of the festivals here emphasises a marketplace; as has been noted previously, the organiser of YIDFF flatly rejects the notion of that festival as "merely a place looking for patrons [Bing bu danchun shi xunzhao chuzi ren de changsuo]" (Ogawa, 2007, p. 235). The festivals examined here do tend towards the 'audience festival' model in that audiences are a major concern of the events. Particular festival facets exemplify this concern, such as TIDF's institution of a prize awarded by audience selection, and the Yamagata film programme screened by YIDFF which was aimed specifically to garner the attention of the citizens of the immediate Yamagata Prefecture area. It is important to note, however, that none of the festivals dismiss the importance of filmmakers, an interest group that is ranked as the least important in each of the festival models suggested by Peranson (2009, p. 28). In fact these festivals regard filmmakers as playing significant contributory roles of glamour by filling the red carpet, or to increase the festival's status by appearing smilingly on the covers of trade magazines: their presence is about *film and filmmaking*. They embody such interaction during the festivals by, for example, gathering independent filmmakers in the case of DOChina, and by TIDF's facilitation of the festival experience through its museum setting. And these efforts are not directed solely at audiences or incidental participants, but also provide the filmmakers themselves with a chance to learn from and interact with other participating filmmakers. It is a form of supranational *communication* which is deliberately

intended, through the fostering of ideas and the free flow of information, to provide the filmmakers with inspiration.

Ultimately, communication between filmmakers and other participating documentary film practitioners at film festivals can help to create alliances and partnerships in pursuit of common goals. When these goals echo the shared ambitions of the festivals, the cultivation of 'local' documentary filmmaking can result. If the usual business logic sees film festivals according to a form of 'festival-circuit-as-distribution' mode, then the festivals examined here present persuasive evidence that film festivals can be maintained according to a 'festival-circuit-as-alliance' agenda, where the force that binds the events together is not devotion to dollars but to *documentary*.

# CHAPTER SEVEN: Conclusion

## Introduction

Marijke de Valck and Skadi Loist (2011) correctly state that "in order to reach a deeper understanding of the processes of film festivals it is necessary to also look at smaller festivals" (p. 288). If by 'smaller' is meant limited in international reputation and attended only by a limited number of people, then four of these 'smaller festivals' form the precise focus of this thesis.

The festivals examined here then, are not the "A-list festivals" referred to by de Valck and Loist (2011, p. 288), such as Cannes, Berlin and Venice, but are instead, more modest festivals that retain a 'local' perspective within their very structures, even while they simultaneously reach out to share their productions globally. It is the examination of the emphasis placed on 'local-ness' by such events that forms one of the chief objectives of this thesis.

This project incorporates empirical investigations of four film festivals devoted to documentary in the East Asian region, namely the Yamagata International Documentary Film Festival (YIDFF) in Japan, the Documentary Film Festival China (DOChina) in Beijing, the Taiwan International Documentary Festival (TIDF) in Taichung, Taiwan, and the Chinese Documentary Festival (CDF) in Hong Kong. Through the investigation of these four documentary film festivals in the East Asian region, this study delineates the local context of the festivals through the theoretical lenses of three separate concepts: communication; independence and the underground; and the museum. Although these concepts are relevant to all festivals to varying extents, these particular festivals have been selected in order to illustrate how these festivals particularly serve as an impetus for the cultivation of a 'local' film milieu. Discussion of these 'smaller festivals' can bring light to the academic discussion of the documentary-specialised film festivals; the festivals examined in this thesis display an alternative to the market-orientated strategies usually attributed to film festivals.

The study turns first to the first documentary film festival in Asia, with a case study examining the Yamagata International Documentary Film Festival (YIDFF) in Japan. By examining the festival through the theoretical lens provided by the concept of "epideictic discourse" (Condit, 1985), the *communication* dimension of YIDFF is illustrated as proceeding according to particular understandings of 'local and regional', of the 'creating and sharing of a festival community' and by 'sustaining extensions'. Organisational aspects of YIDFF are categorised according to their applicability to these three categories to reveal YIDFF as not merely a site of exhibition, but also as a site of *communication and connection*, which forms and is formed by an agenda aimed at the cultivation of a local documentary filmmaking milieu.

The second case study shifts attention to China by focusing on the Documentary Film Festival China (DOChina). The concepts examined in this chapter stem from this outsider's position are the notions of *the independence and the underground*, which continually appear in discussions of independent Chinese cinema. As DOChina receives no official governmental recognition, the independent nature of the documentary productions with which it is concerned mean that the festival must, in effect, go underground to sustain itself. But, the festival is no mere passive entity that bends to the command of government restrictions, or cowers from the claws of the cat like a frightened mouse, for DOChina offers active resistance. Some of its subversive acts may be regarded as trivial, yet the festival survives; and not only does it provide a form of protection to, but also serves to uphold the principles of, the independent Chinese documentaries it insists are its *raison d'être*.

The next chapter is devoted to the Taiwan International Documentary Festival (TIDF) in Taichung, Taiwan. Since transforming itself from a primarily public organisation into a government-backed event under the auspices of the National Taiwan Museum of Fine Arts the festival has come to serve as one of the foremost events on the Museum calendar. A close connection between the festival and the museum exists not merely in an administrative context, but also in the manner in which the festival approaches its exhibitory impulses. This

makes the employment of concepts drawn from Museum Studies particularly relevant to an analysis of this event. Museum Studies is a vast area of expertise and specialist knowledge and it is not the intention of this thesis to in any way imply that the approach taken here is all-encompassing; however, by basing the analysis on what can be understood to be three of the chief *purposes of museums*, that is collection, exhibition and education, it is hoped that a measure of generalisability will be accepted. By identifying these purposes among the particular aims of this particular event, it is hoped that not only can TIDF be further understood, but that aspects of other festivals may profit by being viewed from within the context of a Museum Studies setting.

The fourth case study is focused on the Chinese Documentary Festival (CDF) in Hong Kong and comprises Chapter Five. As stated by the festival organisers, its aims are: first, to facilitate cultural exchanges among the Chinese-speaking regions; second, to present the social context of these particular regions; and third, to promote and further encourage documentary filmmaking to its audiences. These ambitions echo the sentiments and efforts of the previously examined film festivals. The concept of communication previously raised in relation to YIDFF is linked here to CDF's ambitions towards providing cultural exchange, while the concept of independence discussed in the relation to DOChina is mirrored by CDF's desire to present the region's social contexts to its guests. The concept of an educational purpose similar to that of the museum-affiliated festival TIDF is to be found here expressed in the efforts that CDF expends in promoting documentary filmmaking to its audiences. These connections illustrate the applicability of these concepts among the various festivals here and hint at their generalisability across the spectrum of such events, exemplifying film festivals as the multi-dimensional entity suggested by Stringer (2003).

The sixth chapter is a summary of the festivals examined by the thesis and an attempt at synthesis of the issues discussed. The investigations converge into a concern towards a sense of the local, or what has been termed here 'local-ness'. Indeed, the idea of local-ness determines the focus of these festivals to a large extent. Instead of merely regarding as local

the immediate, surrounding geographic locale of the festival, the term should be understood as a relative term that depends on what the festival (through its organisers and participants) identifies as its 'home'. As a result, there come extensive understandings of what it is that is 'local' to these festivals. Three types of local-ness are differentiated, in the forms of the 'local-habitat', the 'local-nation' and the 'local-region'. Importantly, though, concern for the 'local' is not manifested through the provision of capital, funding or access to markets, but is instead centred on the filmmakers who attend these festivals, through the building of connections and the development of the communication that results, so as to create a network or alliance of film practitioners that will ultimately foster the cultivation of documentary filmmaking across Asia and beyond.

### Think globally, act locally

In his article, "Global Image Consumption in the Age of Late Capitalism", American film critic and academic Bill Nichols (1994) pioneers the discussion of film festivals in terms of the intertwined relationship between the local and global dimensions; it is a discussion that underpins the argument of this thesis. For Nichols, festival-goers adopt a local perspective from which to understand the foreign films that showcase in film festivals. The festival circuit "allows the local to circulate globally, within a specific system of institutional assumptions, priorities, and constraints. Never only or purely local, festival films nonetheless circulate, in large part, with a cachet of locally inscribed difference and globally ascribed commonality" (p. 68). So not only does the local become globalised, but the global becomes localised. In just this way, the film festivals analysed in this thesis can be seen to operate along a continuum that stretches the notion of the local from their own immediate locale to encompass the wider world.

So, the festivals here all similarly stress a concern for what they regard as the local. And this idea of the local has been seen to extend beyond the environs of the hosting city and, elastically expand to encompass that which the events identify as 'home'. Still, it is not as if these festivals close their doors to 'foreign parties'; they are only too aware of the

international arena in which they are performing and actively attempt to draw in global audiences (and sometimes productions), through, for instance, creative programming and bilingual policies.

These local and global aspects, as well as the stated ambitions that underlie the organisation of these festivals, actively represent that vision and positioning among the various locals (i.e., local-habitat, local-nation and local-region) and the global that ultimately constructs the *identity of the festival*. Instead of understanding the notions of 'local' and 'global' as representing a polarity, these film festivals exemplify the view that these two concepts can lie along the same line and can be simultaneously presented and approached to greater or lesser degrees depending on the intent of the particular event. However, the emphasis of these festivals is indeed placed on the importance of recognising 'local-ness', and this can further serve to consolidate their positions in the world of film festivals. Sociologist and specialist in Global Studies, Jan Nederveen Pieterse (2001), in his monograph *Development Theory*, describes the "the local as strategy, device, ruse. Its 'truth'[…] is as much without as within: in the construction and negotiation of external boundaries" (p. 64). Boundaries, then, are fluid and often blurred, and the manner in which they are approached, as a "strategy" or "device", can serve to define a festival to the world beyond; but if, within these extensible boundaries, it is the 'local' that is being defined, then this concern becomes apparent, drawing the attention of local audiences to the conclusion that the festival is addressing them in particular. And with this personal appeal will come not merely the potential for increased attendances – always a priority for festivals – but also increased interest and accomplishment in the documentary genre itself.

The focus on a smaller local rather than on a bigger global is a distinctive if somewhat paradoxical vision in this globalised era. As global and international imperatives become the norm for many cities, so that when the Hong Kong government, for example, wishes to present tourists with "the sophistication of an international city, cultural diversity and

cosmopolitan lifestyle [that] are at the very core of Hong Kong's attractions",[1] it is as if no one actually called anywhere home anymore; as if the place is not also something else, something qualitatively different, though equally, if not more valued by those people who actually live there and who do call it *jia*.

Because of the comparatively niche market available for documentary, the documentary film festivals examined here seek an alternative to untrammelled expansion, proclaiming instead the importance of the local, by employing it as path along which to define themselves and offering it as a possibility for others to follow. Most importantly, the festivals identify local filmmakers as one of their crucial constituents, and approach their relationships with film practitioners in a way that shuns the idea that these professionally committed individuals merely attend festivals for a "vacation" or to "do major publicity" as Mark Peranson (2009, p. 28) dismissively posits. The clearly-stated ambitions of the festivals and the manners in which they are organised make it plain that they are aimed squarely at the cultivation of the 'local' documentary filmmaking milieu.

## Not market but screenings… and connection and communication

Film festivals, generally, are one of the major screening channels for independent documentary, and so the role of dedicated documentary film festivals becomes even more crucial for the presentation of this non-mainstream genre of film. Independent documentaries (defined here as those works not commissioned by television stations and government sectors or produced by major studios) rarely have a chance of successful distribution within the commercial cinema circuit in the same way that fiction films enjoy such dominant box office attendances.

This limited availability of screening opportunities for independent documentaries, means that any festivals that do offer extensive documentary programming, especially those that reflect a preference for local productions, offered the filmmakers much valuable support in getting their works out to a wider audience. Additionally, the formal workshops and

[1] http://www.tourism.gov.hk/english/welcome/welcome.html

informal gatherings offered by such festivals enable filmmakers to gain professional and artistic insights from each other. It is important to note though, that this support of filmmakers is not undertaken in commercial terms, such as with the setting up of a marketplace within the festivals that takes place at the Busan International Film Festival or the Hong Kong International Film Festival, for example. Despite the fact that distributors and potential patrons do attend the festivals examined here, commercial aspects are not in any way part of their official (or even their unstated) agendas.

The absence of marketplaces means that the filmmakers attending these festivals can concentrate their attention on alternative varieties of support that are just as vital to their craft as are economic considerations. Connection with other filmmakers brings with it, then, not an increase in sponsorship or distribution channels for their works, but the establishment of a communicative atmosphere that instead allows these practitioners to work together on the intrinsic technical and aesthetic properties of their films: on *misé-en-scene*, on film structure or on the filmmaker's stance for instance.

## Communication is the way

The method that the festivals adopt to accomplish this can be summarised simply as *communication*. Communication is physically embodied in these festivals and direct communication is facilitated by their organisational aspects, which involve inviting different groups to participate in a *festival community*.[2]

The Question and Answer sessions after screenings, the provision of gathering spots like YIDFF's Komian Club, the concentration of screening venues within a single complex as at the museum for TIDF and the workshops and seminars organised by these festivals, all actualise connection and communication towards creative ends. This support for, and cultivation of, the documentary genre in Asia reaches full bloom in prerogatives such as TIDF's 'DOCumentary DOCtor Workshop' and in the 'China-Japan Documentary Dojo'

[2] See also Chapter Two on YIDFF where more extensive discussion of the communication aspect of the festival takes place.

organised by YIDFF that invites Japanese and Chinese filmmakers to co-operate for a collaborative and educational exercise in film production.

Certainly, the communicative impulse stretches across all facets of life and any events entailing the slightest human involvement necessarily entail dimensions of communication. However, what is being stressed here is the importance of communication that extends beyond the bureaucratic, hegemonic structures and processes that can institutionalise humanistic communication.

These festivals remind us that there is an alternative to the financial dimensions of film festivals, an alternative that is fundamentally concerned with *film*. By rooting the festivals firmly in the fertile ground of connection and communication, these documentary film festivals represent an active philosophy, an ethical approach to the cultivation of local documentary filmmaking; filmmaking which, after Ogawa Shinsuke (2007, p. 36), seeks to 'capture' the essential relationships between humans. That is to say, if documentary filmmaking is concerned with capturing the relationships between humans on film, then documentary film festivals are the site where the facilitation of human relationships based on a shared passion *for film* can and must take place.

To conclude then, the research here uncovers not only the differences, but also the similarities between these festivals. Each festival faces fundamentally conditions under which it operates and thus requires the researcher to employ different concepts and approaches in order to understand the particular complexities applicable to a particular event. Any understanding of film festivals is contextual and requires the researcher to adopt a multi-dimensional approach to their observation. However, what becomes apparent from the research here is the similarities displayed by these festivals, not least being the importance they all place on the role of filmmakers. The film festivals examined here provide much evidence to support the contention that documentary film festivals, and especially independent documentary film festivals, desirous of cultivating *local* documentary filmmaking, are fundamentally dependent on the participation of *local* filmmakers.

## APPENDIX ONE

## Filmography

| Director | Title in Original Language | Title in English | Year of Production | Countries of Production |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Ai Weiwei | 老媽蹄花 | LaoMa TiHua [Stewed Pork] | 2009 | China |
| Anke Haarmann | 関西公園～Public Blue | Public Blue | 2007 | Japan / Germany |
| Chan Tat Nin | 怪談 | The Unbelievable | 2009 | Hong Kong |
| Cheung Hung, Tammy | 看不見的女人 | Invisible Women | 1999 | Hong Kong |
| Cheung Hung, Tammy | 中學 | Secondary School | 2002 | Hong Kong |
| Cheung Hung, Tammy | 選舉 | Election | 2008 | Hong Kong |
| Cheung Kingwai | 音樂人生 KJ | KJ: Music and Life | 2009 | Hong Kong |
| Chi Wenchang | 遮蔽的天空 | The Poisoned Sky | 2010 | Taiwan |
| Davis Guggenheim | An Inconvenient Truth | An Inconvenient Truth | 2006 | USA |
| Dolon Chowdhury | Chakkar | The Labyrinth | 1996 | Bangladesh |
| Feng Yan | 秉愛 | Bingai | 2007 | China |
| Fuad Afravi | Kar o Kar | Work and Work | 1996 | Iran |
| Guo Xizhi | 喉舌 | Mouthpiece | 2009 | China |
| Ho Chao-ti | 我愛高跟鞋 | My Fancy High Heels | 2010 | Taiwan |
| Ho Tam | Season of the Boys | Season of the Boys | 1999 | Canada / USA |
| Hu Jie | 我雖死去 | Though I Am Gone | 2006 | China |
| Huang Meiwen | 淨湖人 | Lake-Cleaning People | 2007 | Taiwan |
| Huang Mingming / Gao Luli | 畫在牆上的夢 | Dream on the Wall | 2010 | China |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Iizuka Toshio | 映画の都 | A Movie Capital | 1991 | Japan |
| Ji Dan | 哈尔滨旋转楼梯 | Spiral Staircase of Harbin | 2009 | Japan |
| Jia Zhangke | 小武 | Xiaowu | 1997 | China |
| Jiing Yngjaw | 筆歌墨舞 | Ink Dance | 2008 | Taiwan |
| Kawase Naomi | 垂乳女 | Tarachime | 2006 | Japan / France |
| Kong Kingchu | why 馬國明？ why Benjamin？ | Why Ma Kwok Ming？Why Benjamin? | 2006 | Hong Kong |
| Kong Kingchu | 革命・女 | La Revolutionnaire | 2009 | Hong Kong |
| Kong Kingchu | 就是一場馬拉松 - 梁耀忠的社會參與 | Running On Conviction - Leung Yiu Chung's Political Marathon | 2010 | Hong Kong |
| Kurosawa Akira | 馬 | Horse | 1941 | Japan |
| Li Chiahua | 25 歲，國小二年級 | The Spirit of 8 | 2003 | Taiwan |
| Lin Haoshen | 某年 | Someday | 2005 | Taiwan |
| Lin Wanyu | 山林的記憶 | The Lost Honor of Mountain | 2000 | Taiwan |
| Lone Scherfig | Italiensk for begyndere | Italian for Beginner | 2000 | Denmark / Sweden |
| Ma Li | 無鏡 | Mirror of Emptiness | 2010 | China |
| Michael Moore | Fahrenheit 9/11 | Fahrenheit 9/11 | 2004 | USA |
| Ogawa Shinsuke | 日本開放戦線 三里塚の夏 | The Battle Front for the Liberation of Japan – Summer in Sanrizuka | 1968 | Japan |
| Ogawa Shinsuke | 日本解放戦線・三里塚 | Winter in Sanrizuka | 1970 | Japan |
| Ogawa Shinsuke | 三里塚 第二砦の人々 | Narita: The Peasants of the Second Fortress | 1971 | Japan |
| Ogawa Shinsuke | 三里塚 辺田部落 | Sanrizuka – Heta Village | 1973 | Japan |
| Ogawa Shinsuke | ニッポン国 古屋敷村 | Nippon: Furuyashiki Village | 1982 | Japan |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Ogawa Shinsuke | 1000年刻みの日時計 牧野村物語 | The Sundial Carved with a Thousand Years of Notches – The Magino Village Story | 1986 | Japan |
| Qin Yuming / Gao Pan | 3.1415… | 3.1415… | 2011 | China |
| Robert J. Flaherty | Nanook of the North | Nanook of the North | 1922 | USA / France |
| Ruby Yang | 潁州的孩子 | The Blood of Yingzhou District | 2006 | China / USA |
| Ruby Yang | A Moment in Time | A Moment in Time | 2009 | USA |
| Ruby Yang | The Warriors of Qiugang | The Warriors of Qiugang | 2009 | USA |
| Shen Koshang | 小城 | Fading | 2008 | Taiwan |
| Shi Jian / Chen Jue | 天安門 | Tiananmen | 1991 | China |
| Sun Zengtian | 最後的山神 | The Last Mountain God | 1992 | China |
| Tseng Wenchen | 春天: 許金玉的故事 | Spring: The Story of Hsu Chin-Yu | 2002 | Taiwan |
| Tsukamoto Koji | Mount Zao [蔵王山] | Mount Zao | 1935 | Japan |
| Wang Bing | 鐵西區 | Tie Xi Qu: West of Tracks | 2003 | China |
| Wang Bing | 和鳳鳴 | A Chinese Memoir | 2007 | China |
| Weng Wenming | 黃沙已上白雲間 | The Sandstorm Intrusion | 2010 | China |
| Wong Chunchun | 女人那話兒 | Women's Private Parts | 2001 | Hong Kong |
| Wong Yeemei | 那雙眸 | This Pair | 2010 | Hong Kong |
| Wu Wenguang | 流浪北京 | Bumming in Beijing: The Last Dreamers | 1990 | China |
| Wu Wenguang | １９６６：我的紅衛兵時代 | My Time in the Red Guards | 1993 | China |
| Wu Yiifeng | 月亮的小孩 | Moon Children | 1990 | Taiwan |
| Wu Yiifeng | 生命 | Gift of Life | 2003 | Taiwan |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Xu Tong | 麥收 | Wheat Harvest | 2008 | China |
| Xu Tong | 老唐頭 | Shattered | 2011 | China |
| Xu Xin | 克拉瑪依 | Karamay | 2010 | China |
| Xue Jianqiang | 火星綜合症 | Martian Syndrome | 2009 | China |
| Yang LiChou | 打火兄弟 | Fire Brigade | 1997 | Taiwan |
| Yang LiChou | 我愛 080 | I Love (080) | 1999 | Taiwan |
| Yang LiChou | 奇蹟的夏天 | My Football Summer | 2006 | Taiwan |
| Yen Lanchuan / Juang Yitseng | 無米樂 | Let it Be | 2004 | Taiwan |
| Yen Lanchuan / Juang Yitzeng | 牽阮的手 | Hand in Hand | 2010 | Taiwan |
| Ying Liang | 好貓 | Good Cats | 2009 | China |
| Zhang Zanbo | 戀曲 | A Song of Love, Maybe | 2009 | China |
| Zhao Dayong | 南京路 | Street Life | 2007 | China |
| Zhao Liang | 上訪 | Petition | 2009 | China |

*listed in alphabetical order of directors

## APPENDIX TWO

### Film festivals in Hong Kong

1. Hong Kong Asian Film Festival.
2. Hong Kong Independent Film Festival.
3. Hong Kong Chinese Documentary Festival.
4. Hong Kong Independent Short Film & Video Awards.
5. Hong Kong International Deaf Film Festival.
6. Hong Kong International Film Festival.
7. Hong Kong Jewish Film Festival.
8. Hong Kong Lesbian and Gay Film Festival.
9. Hong Kong Summer International Film Festival.
10. InDBear International Film Festival.
11. InDPanda International Film festival.
12. KINO German Film Festival.
13. Spanish Film Festival.
14. French Cinepanorama.
15. New Zealand Film Festival.
16. Australian Film Festival.
17. The Hong Kong Social Movement Film Festival.

# APPENDIX THREE

## Interview Schedules and Participant Observation Sessions and Timetables

**List of all interviews**

| Festival | Interviewee | Position in the organisation | Date | Location | Mode of interview |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **YIDFF 2009** | Daisuke NARA | The Manager of Asia House | 8, 14, Oct, 2009 | Yamagata, Festival venues | In person |
| | Daimon Akira | Volunteers | 9,13, Oct, 2009 | Yamagata, Festival venues | In person |
| | Hsiao Shu-Yii | Interns | 8,10, Oct, 2009 | Yamagata, Festival office | In person |
| | Hama Haruka | Programme staff | 11, May, 2012 | | email |
| | Wakai Makiko | Programme Staff for New Asian Currents | 12, Oct, 2009; 5, May, 2010 | Yamagata, Festival venues; Beijing, Li Xianting's Film Fund Office | In person |
| | Kimuro Shiho | Volunteers (Daily Bulletin) | 10,11, Oct, 2009 | Yamagata, Festival venues | In person, email |
| **TIDF 2010** | Wood Lin | Programmer | 22, Oct, 2010 | National Taiwan Museum of Fine Arts | In person, email |
| | Angelika Wang | Festival Director | 23, Oct, 2010; 6, May, 2010 | Festival Office; Beijing, Li Xianting's Film Fund Office | In person |
| | Isabelle H.J. Yang | Coordinator | 22, Oct, 2010 | National Taiwan Museum of Fine Arts | In person |
| | Lai Yu-Chang | Writers & Selection Committee | 24, Oct, 2010 | National Taiwan Museum of Fine Arts | In person |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **DOChina 2010** | Zhu Rikun | Program Director | 5, 7, May, 2010 | Fanhall Films cafe | In person, email |
| | Wang Ling | Festival staff | 2,3, May, 2010 | Fanhall Films cafe | In person |
| | Wang Wo | Graphic Design | 6, May, 2010 | Fanhall Films cafe | In person |
| | Zhong Sujuan | Festival staff | 6,7, May, 2010 | Fanhall Films cafe | In person |
| **CDF 2011** | Tammy Cheung | Director | 18, June, 2011; 5, Feb, 2012 | Hong Kong Arts Centre | In person, email |
| | Augustine Lam | Programme Coordinator | 1, July; 5, Feb, 2012 | Hong Kong Arts Centre | In person, email |
| | Gigi Wong | Programme Manager | 18, June, 2011 | Hong Kong Arts Centre | In person |
| | Michelle Ho | Publicity & Events | 2, July, 2011 | Hong Kong Arts Centre | In person |

**Interview schedule for semi-structured interview**

| **Festival** | **Event** | **Venue** | **Date** | **Targeted Interview Parties** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **YIDFF** | Casual meeting place | Komian Club | 8-13, Oct, 2009 | Filmmakers and film practitioners |
| | Opening ceremony | Yamagata Grand Hotel | 8, Oct, 2009 | Volunteers and staffs |
| | Farewell, Muse! | Theater Muse | 12, Oct, 2009 | Volunteers |
| | Closing ceremony | Yamagata Grand Hotel | 14, Oct, 2009 | Filmmakers and film practitioners |
| | Asia House café lounge | Asia House | 8-15, Oct, 2009 | Volunteers and staffs |
| **DOChina** | Opening Ceremony | Songzhuang Art Center | 1, May, 2010 | Staffs |
| | Casual meeting place | Fanhall Films café | 1-7, May, 2010 | Filmmakers, film practitioners, staffs and volunteers |
| | Closing party | Fanhall Films | 7, May, 2010 | Filmmakers, film practitioners, staffs and volunteers |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **TIDF** | Opening Ceremony | National Taiwan Museum of Fine Arts | 22, Oct, 2010 | Staff |
| | Closing party | Kuang San Sogo Department Store building | 30, Oct, 2010 | Filmmakers, film practitioners, staffs and volunteers |
| **CDF** | Award Ceremony | Hong Kong Arts Centre | 2, July, 2011 | Filmmakers, film practitioners, staffs and volunteers |
| | Festival party | 71 Club | 2, july, 2011 | Filmmakers, film practitioners, staffs and volunteers |
| | Festival dinner | Tai Wing Wah Restaurant | 1, July, 2011 | Filmmakers, film practitioners and staffs |

**Sessions for observation participation**

| | **YIDFF 2009** | **DOChina 2010** | **TIDF 2010** | **CDF 2011** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Public events | Film screenings | Film screenings | Film screenings | Film screenings |
| | Seminars/field visit | Opening ceremony | Seminars | Seminars |
| | Komian Club | Fanhall Films Café lounge | | |
| Private events or space where invitation only | Opening & closing ceremonies | Closing party | Opening/Closing Parties | Award ceremony |
| | Festival office | Festival office | Festival office | Festival office |
| | Asia House resident | Film Archive | Casual gathering with film practitioners | Pre-festival gathering |
| | Casual gathering with film practitioners | Film School construction site | Casual gathering with film practitioners | Casual gathering with film practitioners |
| | Film booth for review festival films | Casual gathering with film practitioners | | Post-festival celebration party |

**APPENDIX FOUR**
**Festival Organisation Details**

| | **YIDFF 2009** | | **DOChina 2010** | | **TIDF 2010** | | **CDF 2011** | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Organisation** | Yamagata International Docuemntray Film Festival (NPO) Board | Tanaka Satoshi (Chair) | Li Xianting's Film Fund | Li Xianting (Artistic Director) | National Taiwan Museum of Fine Arts Organizer Office | Huang Tsai-Lang (Chairperson) | Visible Record | Tammy Cheung (director) |
| | Yamagata Office | Takahashi Takuya (Festival Director) | Fanhall Films | Zhu Rikun (Program Director) | 2010 TIDF Office | Angelika Wang (Festival Director) | | Augustine Lam (Programme Coordinator) |
| **Number of full time staff** | 17 | | 3 | | 10 | | 3 | |
| **Number of part time staff** | 171 | | 4 | | 10 | | 5 | |
| **Number of volunteers** | 243 | | 15 | | 135 | | 8 | |
| **Balance (Full time: Part time: Volunteer)** | 1: 10: 14.3 | | 1: 1.3: 5 | | 1: 1: 13.5 | | 1: 1.6: 2.7 | |

## Festival Architectures

| **YIDFF 2009**<br>**Yamagata International Documentary Film Festival 2009** | | **DOChina 2010**<br>**The 7th Documentary Film Festival China** | | **TIDF 2010**<br>**Taiwan International Documentary Festival** | | **CDF 2011**<br>**Chinese Documentary Festival 2011** | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Programme Name** | **Programmer** | **Programme Name** | **Programmer** | **Programme Name** | **Programmer** | **Programme Name** | **Programmer** |
| International Competition | Kobayashi Mizuho | Chinese Film (Competition, Non-competition, Rude Cut) | Wang Hongwei, Yiang Liang, Zhu Rikun | International Feature Length Competition | Non-specify | Shorts | Augustine Lam |
| New Asian Currents | Wakai Makiko | Wu Wenguang's Documentary Album : Private Portraits | Zhu Rikun | International Short Film Competition | | Features | |
| New Docs Japan | Mabuchi Ai | Swiss Documentary | Zhu Rikun | Taiwan Focus | | Special Selection | |
| Islands/ I Lands – Cinemas in Exile | Hama Haruka | Retrospective of Kim Dong-won | Zhu Rikun, Kim Heejung | Asia Vision & AND (Asian Network of Documentary) | | | |
| Against Cinema – Guy Debord Retrospective | Tsuchida Tamaki | Singapore Program | Philip Cheah | Panorama | | | |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Tomorrow's a Day Away | Fujioka Asako | Special Screening : Hara Kazuo | Wu Wenguang, Abe Mark Nornes | Director in Focus: Heddy Honigmann | Non-specify | |
| Films About Yamagata | Saito Kenta, Saito Hisao, Miyazawa Hiraku, Tomitsuka Masaki, Oki Masaharu | | | Retrospective of Kidlat Tahimik | | |
| Jurors' Films | Non-specify | | | Doc Art | | |
| Special Invitation Films | | | | Generation neXt | | |
| YIDFF Network Special Screenings | | | | The Past 99 | | |
| | | | | Special Screening: China CCD Workstation | | |
| | | | | Special Screening: Doc EX!T | | |

Index: Main programmes curated regularly in each edition are shaded with grey. Sidebar programmes are non-shaded

## APPENDIX FIVE

## On Submission

| Festival | Programmes involved a call for submission | Eligibility | Procedure for submissions | Number of submission (approximate) | Selection procedures | Preliminary Selection | Final Selection |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **YIDFF** | International Competition | International | Filling in online registration form and shipping DVDs to the office | 1141 | reviewed by individual members | Selection Committee (Japanese), advisors and Yamagata Citizens Selection Preview Group. | Japanese and International jury |
| | New Asian Currents | Works by artists from or living in Asia. | | 655 | | | |
| **DOChina** | Chinese Films | Works by Chinese artists | shipping DVDs to the office | 70 | reviewed by individual members | Programmers (Chinese) | Chinese and International jury |

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **TIDF** | International Competition | International | Filling in online registration form and shipping DVDs to the office | 1500 | reviewed by individual members | Selection Committee (Taiwanese) | Taiwanese and International Jury groups |
| | Asia Vision | All Asian films of any length or those that aimed at Asian themes | | | | | |
| | Taiwan Focus | All Taiwanese films of any length or those that aimed at Taiwanese themes selected | | | | | |
| **CDF** | Shorts and Features competitions | Chinese language productions | shipping DVDs to the office | 100 | reviewed by individual members | Selection Committee (Hong Kong) | Chinese and International jury |

## APPENDIX SIX

## Production origins of the films selected in CDF competition section

| Year | China | Taiwan | Hong Kong | Others |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2008 | 6 | 5 | nil | 1 (Singapore) |
| 2009 | 11 | 4 | nil | nil |
| 2010 | 10 | 1 | nil | 2 (USA and Macau) |
| 2011 | 8 | 5 | 4 | 1 (USA) |

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