

The rupture in Hong Kong cinema:

Post-2000 Honk Kong cinema(s) as both a transnational cinema and a national cinema

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Abstract

This paper traces artistic and ideological discrepancies between the young generation of Hong Kong filmmakers and their predecessors – the established generation who contributed to the glory days of Hong Kong cinema during its economic boom. By tracing studies of national cinema and transnational cinema in the last three decades, the author argues that current Hong Kong cinema has split into two: a transnational cinema represented by the established generation of filmmakers; and a national cinema that is driven by the emerging generation who struggles for better preservation of Hong Kong local culture and their own cultural identities. To conduct the research, 47 people were interviewed including 13 established filmmakers, 16 young filmmakers and 18 film students from 3 universities in Hong Kong. The three groups of respondents generally represent three perspectives: that of the established film practitioners, who have a vested interest in the current co-production era; that of the emerging young film practitioners, who above all crave a flourishing local film market and whose productions exhibit stronger Hong Kong cultural identities; lastly, that of the, who were predominantly born in the 1990s and have the most extreme views against mainland China and whose filmmaking ideologies and practices foreshadow the future of the industry.

Keywords

Hong Kong SAR New Wave; Film Industry; Transnational Cinemas; National Cinema; Hong Kong Cinema.

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A ruptura do cinema de Honk Gong: cinema (s) pós-2000 em Hong Kong como um cinema transnacional e um cinema nacional

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Resumo

Este artigo traça discrepâncias artísticas e ideológicas entre a geração jovem de cineastas de Hong Kong e seus predecessores – a geração estabelecida que contribuiu para os dias de glória do cinema de Hong Kong durante seu boom econômico. Ao traçar os estudos do cinema nacional e do cinema transnacional nas últimas três décadas, o autor argumenta que o atual cinema de Hong Kong se dividiu em dois: um cinema transnacional representado pela geração estabelecida de cineastas; e um cinema nacional dirigido pela geração emergente que luta por uma melhor preservação da cultura local de Hong Kong e suas próprias identidades culturais. Para conduzir a pesquisa, 47 pessoas foram entrevistadas, incluindo 13 cineastas estabelecidos, 16 jovens cineastas e 18 estudantes de cinema de 3 universidades de Hong Kong. Os três grupos de entrevistados geralmente representam três perspectivas: a dos profissionais de cinema estabelecidos, que têm interesse na atual era de coprodução; a dos jovens praticantes de cinema emergentes que, acima de tudo, desejam um mercado cinematográfico local florescente e cujas produções exibem identidades culturais mais fortes em Hong Kong; por fim, as que nasceram predominantemente nos anos 90 e têm as mais extremas visões contra a China continental e cujas ideologias e práticas cinematográficas prenunciam o futuro da indústria.

Palavras-chave

Nova Onda da RAE de Hong Kong; Indústria Cinematográfica; Cinemas Transnacionais; Cinema Nacional; Cinema de Hong Kong.

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Hong Kong cinema in the recent two decades has featured two intertwining yet contradicting powers: the domination of Hong Kong/Mainland co-productions and the emerging of many critically successful local productions. The two forces of power are led by two generations of Hong Kong filmmakers separately – the established generation whose career started from the 1970s to 1990s and the young generation who entered the film industry after the 2000 when Hong Kong cinema has gradually turned to the co-production era. Szeto Mirana May and Chen Yun Chung term the rising cinematic impact as the “Hong Kong SAR New Wave,” wherein the directors are seeking an alternative route out of the hegemonic co-production ecology and dedicating to the production of local films (SZETO; CHEN, 2012). When compared to their predecessors, the younger generation of filmmakers after 2000 shows greater engagement with civic issues, less consideration of the mainland market and capital, and stronger desire to tell local Hong Kong stories. Particularly, a sense of anti-mainland sentiment and a “Chinese takeover fear” are also commonly embedded in their film texts.

It is intriguing to investigate how precisely the young generation formed film making ideologies entirely different from, or even opposite to those of their predecessors. The generational gap will be scrutinized from three major dimensions: economic, cultural and political.

Economics as a fundamental difference

It took only about 100 years to turn Hong Kong from an unknown fishing village to a bustling cosmopolis. The established generation of filmmakers was mostly born in the 1950s and 1960s, and worked actively from the 1970s to 1990s. During their childhood and adolescence, millions of mainland Chinese refugees were fleeing to Hong Kong to escape the Communist regime, bringing an abundance of cheap labour to support the local manufacturing industry. Yet most residents were still experienced poverty and substandard living conditions due to the city’s difficulties in coping with the booming population, especially in terms of housing, medical services and education. From the late 1960s to 1990s, Hong Kong’s surging economy made it one of the “Asian Tigers” by taking advantage of the transfer of labour-intensive industries from developed countries to developing ones. The heyday of the Hong Kong film industry in the 1970s to mid-1990s also bought numerous career opportunities. It was not uncommon to see first time directors make their first feature film in their early 20s, as well as freelancers working for multiple projects at the same time or without a

gap between two back-to-back job offers.

The current generation of young filmmakers being examined here were primarily born in the 1980s and 1990s. In their early lives, Hong Kong was a cosmopolitan Asian financial centre that boasted great wealth and privilege. After the handover and following the 1997 Asian financial crisis, the 2003 SARS epidemic and the 2008 Great Recession, the economic growth of Hong Kong slowed dramatically. Hong Kong's significance to the world has also been eclipsed by the rise of mainland China. As Hung (Interview 16, Young director) laments, "20 years ago, everyone knew about Hong Kong when I talked about it overseas. Nowadays, you are more popular when you say you are from China." As a matter of fact, China's speed of economic growth is so astonishing that Hong Kong is now ranked only fourth in terms of gross GDP, surpassed by Shanghai, Beijing and Shenzhen in 2017.

The handover has brought economic benefits to the banking and tourist industries, but it has not favoured the cinema business. The annual production had plummeted from around 200 films in the 1990s to around 50 in the 2010s, including co-productions. Hong Kong movies were also facing a weakening overseas appetite due to the popularity of Hollywood films and rising competitors from Mainland China, South Korea, and others (CHEUNG, 2016). Working in the local film industry has also been getting tougher. From 1991 to 2000, the number of film-related companies fluctuated between 1000 to 1100, but employment in these organizations fell from 7,025 in 1991 to 5,535 in 2000. A survey conducted in July 2002 shows that only 36.3% of film practitioners were consistently employed, while 21.9% of them found it difficult to obtain enough working opportunities, 23.7% were between jobs and 18.1% chose to leave their film career (FEDERATION OF HONG KONG FILMMAKERS, 2012). With the help of the booming Hong Kong/ mainland co-production business, the number of film practitioners increased to 9,000 in 2014 (CHEUNG, 2016).

It was not hard to imagine the frustration of emerging filmmakers living and working in this economic context. For most young film practitioners, working opportunities are scant, the gaps between jobs are long, and therefore their material conditions are generally unsatisfactory. Hong Kong has never been a cheap place to live. For years, Hong Kong has been ranked in the top 5 cities for the highest cost of living, and ranked number 1 among cities in China. In 2018, Hong Kong was the 4th most expensive city following Singapore, Paris and Zurich, and 11% more expensive than New York (MING PO, 2018).

The income of film practitioners has always been extremely polarized. The top ones are usually established filmmakers who have shifted their work to Beijing or

Shanghai. Their remunerations per project can vary from millions to tens of millions of Hong Kong dollars (around USD 127,000 to 12.7 million), with different means of profit sharing. At the bottom however, workers earn much less; for example, an entry-level production assistant makes only 6,000 to 12,000 Hong Kong dollars (around USD 765 to 1,530) per month.

To explain the many social issues in Hong Kong, most local young people point their fingers at mainlanders. Their grievances towards the high-handed and seemingly unstoppable power from the other side of the Shenzhen River focus on one main culprit: the implementation of the One-way Permit Scheme, which the aim of it is to allow Mainland residents to come to Hong Kong for family reunions. The daily quota of mainlanders who could come to Hong Kong to reunite with their relatives rose from 75 in 1983 to 105 in 1993, and levelled off at 150 in 1995 till present (HO, 2017). The scheme itself has been seen as the root of all evil by many Hong Kongers who believe that the immigrants are making no contribution to the society but plundering the limited resources of the island. Liu complaints that:

Hong Kong is truly a small city, when the resources are not even be able to meet the demands of local Hong Kong people, we have 150 immigrants per day to fight with us for them. Other non-locals, such as Filipino domestic workers, they have to work 6 days in a week. Hong Kongers cannot live without them. Many mainlander immigrants just sit at home and ask for CSSA [Comprehensive Social Security Assistance]. What are their contributions to our society? --- Interview 41 (Liu, Film student)

The implementation of IVS in 2003 has further intensified this antagonism. If the influences of the One-way Permit Scheme did not immediately impose on each local person, the IVS then changed the overall picture and impacted every single Hong Konger's daily life. As a result of these changes, the application procedures for visiting Hong Kong has been greatly simplified. Mainlanders who used to be required to join tour groups were then allowed to travel individually. Before the launch of the scheme, about 6.8 million Mainland tourists travelled to Hong Kong each year. The number surged to 34.91 million in 2012. In the first half of 2013, the cumulative number of Mainland tourists under the IVS passed 100 million (COMMERCE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT BUREAU, 2013).

The complaints about the mainlanders focus around their violation of social norms and codes of civility, whereas the IVS gave strong stimulus to the local economy after its pummelling from the SARS outbreak in 2003. Meanwhile, it has also caused many to questions Hong Kong's ability to receive such large numbers of tourists. Mainland travellers, on the other hand, are increasingly diverted to other

tourist destinations such as Japan or South Korea as Hong Kong is losing its status as a shopping paradise due to growing anti-mainland sentiment, a strong local currency, and high rental and staff costs (SUN, 2016).

The IVS has had a deeper impact on Hong Kong society than the abovementioned inconveniences imposed on local Hong Kong residents. The great numbers of Mainland tourists with increased buying power pouring into Hong Kong has changed its urban landscape. The local business that catered to underpaid Hong Kong residents were elbowed out by luxury stores that meet the shopping demands of mainland travellers. Unquestionably, the real estate owners were more than happy to increase the rent to push out the local shops with their meagre profits and offer the locales to richer renters. Hong Kongers, especially the younger ones who do not benefit from the booming retail business, have bemoaned the neglect of their own needs and the disappointing transformation of their communities. This is compounded by concerns that essential products, such as milk powder or diapers, and public resources, like hospital beds for pregnant women in labour, all being snatched by mainland outsiders.

The current economic situation has prompted strongly negative emotions among the youth. Compared to established filmmakers, the lives of their emerging young counterparts are full of frustrations caused by the overall economic downturn, the weakening of their local industry, and the imposition of mainland economic forces. It is no wonder that these sentiments are reflected in their films. Beyond that, differing cultural affinities of the two generations have also contributed to the discrepancy of their filmmaking styles.

Different cultural affinities with mainland China

Hong Kong is historically a city of immigrants. Most people from Hong Kong are descendants of mainland and diasporic Chinese immigrants, with non-Chinese ethnic groups making up only 8% of the city's population (POPULATION BY-CENSUS, 2016). New immigrants from Mainland China have been the major source of its population growth (NGO *et al.*, 2016).

In the 1950s and 1960s when the established filmmakers were born, Hong Kong was not considerably wealthier than Mainland China. Having the kinship bonds with their mainland relatives, they visited the Mainland often, mostly in areas that in the vicinity of Hong Kong, such as Guangdong and Fujian provinces. After the Open-Door Policy was put into effect in 1978, the generation became more economically engaged with mainland China, spearheading new business opportunities. The trend

of China's reform and opening up coincided with the formation and development of the Hong Kong New Wave Cinema. Many of its members, including Tsui Hark, and Ann Hui, pioneered Hong Kong/ mainland China co-productions, and are still the most active and significant participants today. As Chu (2003) explains well, the shared cultural tradition with the mainland encouraged Hong Kongers of that generation to regard China as a motherland. Their imagining of themselves as part of the Chinese national community can be seen in their generous donations to mainland China whenever there were natural disasters, their cheering of Chinese Olympic athletes, their protests against the Japanese claiming sovereignty of the Diaoyutai islands, and their strong support for the Beijing students during the Tiananmen Square protests of 1989. Chu describes it as a dual cultural identity – equal parts Hong Kong and China (CHU, 2003).

Born in the 80s and 90s, the young generation has a stronger sense of belonging to Hong Kong and a limited understanding of history, especially Chinese history. For these two reasons, they are becoming increasingly alienated from a sense of Chinese identity. Whereas this sense of belonging is lacking for the older generation simply due to the fact that Hong Kong was a place of refuge to most of them (LI, 1988), young people today have had little contact with China, knowing it primarily from their elder's memories, media coverage, and their imaginations.

Some young people expressed how difficult it is to communicate with their mainland peers. Language is one of the issues, as they point out. Even the Cantonese used in Hong Kong is different from that of Guangdong province. They are proud of their mixture of English and Cantonese in the same way that they are proud of the uniqueness of Hong Kong culture and its merger of East and West. Mandarin, the major language used by mainlanders, is harder for them to learn, partially because of its great linguistic variation due to the numerous Chinese dialects. Additionally, few Hong Kongers can master standard Mandarin without their Cantonese mother tongue tinting their accent. Thus, smooth communication is hard to achieve. Some respondents further added that, "we just cannot identify with (mainlander's) culture" (Interview 2, Crystal, production assistant). The culture she refers to is the social order built upon personal relationships that outweighs agreements, regulations or laws. This is one of the considerations of young film practitioners to take into account when they weight their options and consider working on the mainland.

Another contributing factor to the communication barriers, according to the young Hong Kongers, is how different their worldviews, values, and beliefs are from the ones held by mainlanders.

Hong Kongers and mainlanders receive completely different information regarding what China is. We know what the 1989 Tiananmen Square protests, the “tofu engineering” scandals, and the Charter 8 PRC pro-democracy petition of December 2008 are as well as the work of human rights activists like Liu Xiaobo. We’ve been receiving this information since we were kids, and mainlanders are being blocked from it. --- Interview 32 (Chun, Film student)

I do not understand how Mainlanders can keep being happy without freedom? Facebook, Google, WhatsApp...Everything is blocked! Can’t they even feel they are being coerced? On the other side, they think their country is strong and life is happy, and our life is too stressful for them. I just cannot communicate with them! --- Interview 33 (Wai, Film student)

Not only do many young informants conclude that the cultural gap between Hong Kong and Mainland people is huge, they are also concerned about the invasion of mainland culture into their language, lifestyle, and core values. With the inpouring of mainland tourists and immigrants, and the increasing influence of the Chinese political power around the globe, the shape of Hong Kong culture has been stealthily changing. It can be seen in every aspect of life, including the more frequent use of simplified Chinese, the replacement of traditional English/Cantonese pidgin terms with mainland terms, the greater popularity of mainland movies, TV shows and mobile games, but most importantly, the adoption of mainland technologies such as mobile payment methods and other apps. Accusing young mainlanders of not attempting to adapt to and blend in with local culture, Hong Kong youth are agitated by the mainland counterparts’ cocky attitudes, though one acknowledged “there is a sense of jealousy in there” (Interview 33, Wai, film student).

The weakening of kinship bonds with mainland family members, the estrangement from a shared history, and the current economic boom of China are casting young Hong Kong people spiritually adrift from the mainland, although geographically the distance is being shortened via bridges, metros, and high-speed rail connections. Furthermore, the increasing clout of mainland culture is regarded as an encroachment on the uniqueness of Hong Kong culture that people here have always been proud of. In this milieu, two realities are becoming clear. The first is that young filmmakers lack interest in subjects dealing with history and are turning their attentions to contemporary Hong Kong society; and secondly, they resist mainland Chinese culture and see the appeal of preserving Hong Kong local culture.

Political contexts are the key

The 150-year colonial history has left a complex legacy in Hong Kong. Lee

(2013) summarized it as an aggregation of “a civic culture that is averse to radical politics, a polity of law-abiding and complacent citizens, and a pragmatic, versatile and non-unionized labour force at the service of a capitalist economy,” and above all, explained that it produced a weakened sense of nationhood in the local people (LEE, 2013, p.5). The great disparities between the current capitalist system and the future governance by a socialist regime cause worry among Hong Kong residents about their own destiny after the handover: namely that their freedom, democracy, and personal rights might be infringed upon. These anxieties have caused waves of mass migration from Hong Kong, primarily to developed Western countries such as the U.K., Canada, and Australia. Those who could not afford to migrate feared less, as they “did not have much to lose anyway,” (KE, 2017) while those who chose to stay were optimistic about the transition of sovereignty, as “they knew Mainland China well, so they were not afraid” (KE, 2017). Cultural affinities, a familiarity with China’s politics, and most of all, kinship bonds with the mainland endowed this group of people with a tolerance for and understanding of the perennial political conflicts between mainland China and Hong Kong. They believe the relationship between Hong Kong and mainland China should be like that between a father and son in a traditional Confucian society.

Humiliating your own country is like humiliating your own parents, and it has to be punished. I do not understand why the younger generation is against its own country. They could choose to migrate to other places if they are unhappy. Shackles are not put on them by China. If they choose to stay, then respect the rules. When one is not supporting his own country, it’s like a family that gets broken. Without a secure and peaceful home environment, how could you develop yourself well? --- Interview 22 (Ping, focus puller)

The belief that one should respect the Chinese rules has been a repeated theme in the interviews with established filmmakers regarding their activities on the mainland. This stems not only from their law-abiding colonial legacy, but also out of a sense of connection with mainland China that drives them to minimize its political downsides and simultaneously be proud of its rapid progress.

On the contrary, lacking cultural affinity with and kinship bonds to the mainland, young people are more assertive of their own identities as Hong Kongers, without attachment to the country of China. As a consequence, this estrangement has brought about a more aggressive political attitude towards mainland China as compared to their elders. However, their overall political dissatisfaction with present-day Hong Kong society is two-fold: they both see mainland China as a malicious enemy, and the Hong Kong government as a useless puppet.

Having lost a sense of closeness to the mainland and being increasingly unwilling

to set foot there, China is very much demonized in young people's minds. Throughout the 1980s, China did not much impress the people of Hong Kong. Between 1982 to 1984, Hong Kong wasn't granted a voice in determining its own future during the handover negotiations. From 1984 to 1988, Hong Kong people fought against both the Chinese and British governments over changes to their government's political structure. In 1983, China's decision to build the Daya Bay Nuclear Power Plant near Hong Kong worried its residents over the possible risks. Finally, the drafting of Hong Kong's Constitution of the Basic Law between 1985 and 1990 did not leave a good impression either. Most of all, how Beijing handled the 1989 Tiananmen Square Protests ruined its image and reinforced many Hong Kong people's view of China as a barbarian country (CHU, 2003). People born in the 80s and 90s do not remember the incidents first-hand, but by learning this history, have negative perceptions towards mainland China permanently ingrained in their minds. Later in adulthood, they have continued to hold these views partially due to their unwillingness, or lack of opportunity, to visit China in person. In the interviews, young people who claimed to be aware of the economic progress China has recently made assert that its political system has changed relatively little.

While most ascribe Hong Kong's political problems to the intervention of the Chinese government, and its economic recession to the invasion of "locusts," as some Hong Kong people call mainlanders (BBC, 2012), a part of the young people's anger is also directed at their own semi-autonomous local government. The election of the first chief executive of the Special Administrative Region, Tung Chee Hwa, was widely believed to be directed by Beijing. Soon after his inauguration in 1997, the Asian financial crisis erupted and the 1990s ended with discontent from the people of Hong Kong with Tung and the government he led. The 2003 SARS Crisis then severely crippled people's confidence in both Beijing and their local governments due to the fact that both attempted to cover up the severity of the outbreak. Major social issues, including skyrocketing housing prices and widening income inequality, are thought to be the result of having a corrupt government who only serves the interests of powerful businesses. Since the year 2000, Hong Kong people's awareness of political affairs has increased dramatically (CHU, 2014). Political protests have erupted one after another, and the Hong Kong government is seen as inept at handling the crises these protests present. One of the arguments young people make is that the government is failing to defend Hong Kong as its freedom and democracy are being encroached on by the Communist Party of China. The backlash of being accused of acting as a puppet government can be significant. Every chief executive of the SAR has been widely

criticized for overly ingratiating themselves to the mainland government.

Szeto and Chen (2015) have likened the 30 years since the signing of the Sino-British Joint Declaration in 1984 to a mid-life crisis, in which “all other planes have departed, but passengers of flight Hong Kong are still in the transit hall waiting.” The younger generation living through such a crisis, is “embarrassingly inhibited by blocked horizons and anxious about not moving on.” Accordingly, filmmakers of this era have “decided to take on Hong Kong’s anxiety in all sorts of new ways” (SZETO; CHEN, 2015, p. 89). The division of the current Hong Kong cinema then lead to the question: is it a national or a transnational one? The study of the young generation of film practitioners shows that the question is overly simplistic. From a historical point of view, Hong Kong cinema has experienced a transition from a transnational one, to one that featured both national and transnational characteristics.

Conclusion: Hong Kong Cinema(s) as Both a Transnational Cinema and a National Cinema

In Stephen Crofts’ categorization of seven varieties of national cinemas, Hong Kong was considered to be one that ignores Hollywood and successfully builds a culturally specific cinema thanks to its popularity in the domestic market (CROFTS, 1993). In scholarly discussions, whether Hong Kong cinema is a national or a transnational is a much-debated question.

Despite the fact that it was previously a British colony, or its present unique states as an autonomous administrative region within China, Hong Kong has never gained the status of being an independent nation-state. In studying Chinese cinema, both Sheldon Hsiaopeng Lu and Zhang Yingjin have pointed out the inappropriateness of subsuming Chinese cinema within the paradigm of national cinema due to its cultural and geographical complexities (LU, 1997; ZHANG, 2004). The fact that China constitutes three territories, including the mainland, Hong Kong and Taiwan, as well as the intricate historical relations between them not only make it difficult to analyse China’s cinema under the umbrella term of “Chinese cinema,” but also raised disputes over the discussions of Taiwanese or Hong Kong cinema respectively. Such territorial concerns, as Zhang argues, “have occasioned a similar designation of national cinema status for Hong Kong and Taiwan” (2004, p.1)

Lacking the actually political status of being a nation-state, thus theoretically, Hong Kong cinema does not comfortably fit into the framework of national cinema. Nevertheless, both Chu Yingchi and Stephen Teo argue a de facto status of Hong

Kong cinema as national cinema even though Hong Kong has typically not been considered a full-fledged nation (CHU, 2003; TEO, 2004). For Teo, the cinema of Hong Kong has manifested significant distinctions from that of mainland China in terms of both aesthetic style and ideology. Additionally, after the 1949 establishment of the People's Republic, Hong Kong replaced Shanghai as the centre of Mandarin feature film production, which operated in parallel to the Cantonese film industry. The fact that Hong Kong cinema produced films spoken in the national language (namely, Mandarin Chinese) constituted part of its qualifications as Chinese national cinema. But more crucial to Teo is its ability to consistently use the Cantonese dialect, produce this dialect features on a commercial basis, and successfully export them to a transnational market that truly enabled it to be considered a national cinema in its own right (2004). For Chu, several characteristics exhibited by Hong Kong cinema categorize it as national cinema, these are: the roles Hong Kong cinema has played in creating domestic job opportunities; its ability to absorb foreign investment and gaining export earnings; its contribution to the tax base; and its fostering the construction of a Hong Kong cultural identity (2003).

However, in other cases, Hong Kong cinema has been argued as a transnational one. As Lu contends, for decades, "Hong Kong cinema has been a regional and transnational cinema in a way that Mainland cinema could not be" (LU, 1997. p.15), particularly due to the fact that its fandom stretches across the global and the contributions that overseas box office revenues made to the Hong Kong film industry. Therefore, it is misleading to see Hong Kong cinema as merely a local one (LU, 1997). Zhang further points out that a transnational imaginary was essential to Hong Kong cinema in the 1990's, not only as it was embedded in most of its film texts – stories happen in other countries as well – but the trans-Pacific movement of a number of high-profile Hong Kong film artists, and the demonstration of multiple languages in films, added to the global image of Hong Kong cinema (ZHANG, 2004).

Is Hong Kong cinema a national or a transitional one? The definitions of both national cinema and transnational cinema are nebulous, diverse, and controversial at present, with scholars arguing whether they are useful at all. Opinions on their relationships, either one being superseded by the other, or their coexistence, have also differed. Though as complicated as they may seem, Berry has aptly pointed out a line of thought that could be beneficial in investigating cinemas that are difficult to categorize into a national/transnational binary. He stated that, the problem does not only lie with discerning what kinds of cinema can be called transnational, but also the historical periodization of "transnational cinema" (BERRY, 2010).

From a historical perspective, Hong Kong cinema has experienced a shift from being a transnational cinema to one that possesses features from both national and transnational cinemas. Hong Kong cinema prior to the domination of mainland/ Hong Kong co-productions is more clearly a transnational one, echoing what the established generation of filmmakers have proudly said of themselves. Its transnationality has manifested, not only from the production end (with filmmakers and artists' cross-continent activities, foreign artists in Hong Kong films, cross-national stories and the shooting on foreign backlots.), but also the consumption end (namely the circulation of Hong Kong films worldwide, a global fanbase, and presence in international film festivals). And above all, the filmmaking ideologies of the established generation concerning the various tastes of world audiences and a willingness to adjust their filmmaking practices accordingly. The transnational side of Hong Kong cinema has persevered even after the entire industry entered the co-production era, with the established filmmakers' attention shifted to the mainland Chinese audience. Some have integrated into the mainland cinema, commissioned to make co-productions that primarily target mainland audiences (for instance, *American Dreams in China* [2013] and *Operation Red Sea* [2018]); while, some have continued to include Taiwanese and Southeast Asian audiences in their box office ambitions by casting more foreign artists and crafting stories with an international appeal (such as *The Crossing* [2014], and *Helios* [2015]). The other filmmakers have propelled current Hong Kong cinema into one that is increasingly exhibiting features of a national cinema. This trend can be analysed from three dimensions.

Firstly, as Higson contends, “the concept of a national cinema has almost invariably been mobilized as a strategy of cultural (economic) resistance – a means of asserting national autonomy in the face of (usually) Hollywood’s international domination” (1989:37). Roughly since 2010, local Hong Kong filmmaking has gradually begun manifesting an intentional resistance, though not one that primarily targets Hollywood blockbusters, but rather the domination of co-productions. This force, mainly driven by the young generation of film practitioners, has indicated some oppositional filmmaking ideas, in which the young people pick up what the established generation has discarded in order to cater to mainland censorship requirements, audiences, and investors. They purposely choose the genres that are not favoured by mainland audience or censors (political films, erotic films, realistic dramas, etc), while employing film techniques that traditional Hong Kong cinema was not renowned for (such as fast-cutting montages in action or martial art films), and subject matters somewhat estranged from mainstream audiences (for example, depicting poverty,

sickness, the subaltern and the downtrodden), as well as rejecting mainland capital in favour of producing projects with smaller budgets. As the young people have contended, they make films for a Hong Kong audience that has long been overlooked by the established generation.

On the consumption side, the circulation of these films made by the young generation has mostly been limited to the local market, even though some have attended film festivals within Asia. It is unlikely that they will obtain overseas distribution and the domestic box office revenues are negligible compared to those of co-productions. Most important of all, a majority of these films are produced with subsidies from the SAR government, indicating an important feature of a national cinema, that state policies are used to contribute to the resistance of foreign films (in this case, co-productions). Another feature of national cinema is exhibited by Hong Kong's current shift towards collective acts of defiance against the co-production dominated film ecosystem and the increasing clout of the mainland on the part of the young generation. Preserving the local culture and thus the cultural identity of Hong Kong in the face of mainland's efforts at integrating the island city has become mission that young filmmakers' feeling obliged to shoulder.

Lu has famously spoken of Chinese cinemas in the plural due to its transnational complexity. In a similar vein, the term "Hong Kong cinemas" could also be pluralized, not only for its historical transformation from a relatively uniformly transnational cinema to the current situation of bifurcation, but also because the fact that both transnational and national features coexist within the filmmaking practises and consumption on the island. In the case of Hong Kong, particularly during the period in which the young generation emerged, the national/ transnational binary in film studies has proved to be untenable. Not only can they coexist, but they can evolve with each other, and in ways even more complicated than those abovementioned.

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