In this chapter Hjort traces the development of a transnational, transgeneric, transmedial Dogma movement which, through linking metaculture and public criticism in a unique way, succeeds to mobilize a diverse network of counterpublics, committed in various ways to challenging dominant social practices.

What Hjort identifies as a movement, began with:

**Dogma 95/Vow of Chastity presented by von Trier at the conference celebrating the centenary of cinema on March 20, 1995 Odeon cinema in Paris**

The Manifesto was signed by: LvT, Thomas Vinterberg, Søren Kragh-Jacobsen, Kristian Levring

The main goal of Dogma is to challenge Hollywood manner of producing and distributing films by providing an accessible, low-cost alternative. (34) (Unlike Hollywood produced movies, Dogma films do not rely on stars, special effects, high distribution costs.)

Since 95, a total 35 Dogma films have been produced (Festen, 1998 being the first one). *Dogma* has also grown to include films that only partly adhere to the rules. At the same time the concept of *dogma* has been applied to other areas of artistic production: such as dance, theatre & computer games design, as well as to politics.

If *Dogma* has expanded relatively quickly and across various artistic/social practices, it has not always been enthusiastically received by critics/filmmakers. E.g. Lange (2003) posits that *Dogma* is a marketing trick. While Hjort does not attempt to argue that it is not, she insists that no single univocal intent can be used to explain Dogma and that precisely the absence of such intent makes the movement both interesting and influential (36).

She therefore seeks to approach *Dogma* from a variety of perspectives in order to show that:

1) Dogma emerged as a small nation’s response to Hollywood-style globalization
2) Dogma is an instance of Appadurai’s “grassroot-globalization” (as opposed to the homogenizing type of globalization governed by the dynamics of global capital)

*The Significance of Rules for Small Nations and Minor Cinemas*

How limitations can stimulate artistic production:

Jon Elster (political theorist)
- technical and temporal limits can stimulate creative problem solving
- self-imposed constraints (invented/chosen);
- constraints are arbitrary; their goal is to enhance creativity (37)
(E.g. Perec)

The constraints imposed by the rules of Dogma 95: invented, self-imposed constraints
Are they arbitrary? – Hjort: no, but reflect the directors’ understanding of what is basic in
their film-making practice.

Hjort: they do not only stimulate creativity, but redefine film-aesthetics (39) so that
“citizens from small states” can participate.
Lars von Trier: protest against authority. i.e. Hollywood.

Dogma: counterpractice that changes the **conditions/requirements** for participating in
filmmaking (40)

“Inasmuch as Dogma 95 is informed by a concept of small nations, it presents itself as a
national moment in the logic of globalism/localism that globalization unleashes” (42)

Impact within Denmark: inspired alternatives models of production: “Director’s Cut”
initiative by Nordisk film

*The Globalization of Dogma 95*

Appadurai distinguishes between different forms of globalization (from above and from
below).

“Inasmuch Dogma 95’s global reach has been driven by opposition to runaway capitalism
as well as by commitments to equality and inclusion, it is by no means far-fetched to
think of it in terms of Appadurai’s notion of grassroots globalization” (43).

How do we “measure” globalization:
Ulrich Beck
1) extension in space
2) stability over time
3) social density of the transnational network

Dogma is a festival phenomenon. It employs a large, existing, global, stable network
through which it affords an impact on both aspiring and established filmmakers (44-45).

*Dogma and Metaculture*

Dogma 95: response to and an instance of globalization (46)

“… the manifesto helps to generate, in what is a characteristically performative manner
[in Austin’s sense], the very publics towards which it gestures in anticipation of a
cumulative effect that somehow warrants the designation “movement.” (46)
As the Manifesto is highly publicized, it serves as an initial framework for interpretation and assessment of Dogma films. Because of this built-in interpretive framework, Dogma films are likely to spark discussions/stimulate reflections about “second-order”/meta questions connected to origin, legitimacy of certain cinematic norms etc. Publics are invited to take a metacinematic stance. (46-47)

Dogma 95 is thus very much about invoking publics. What is significant is that Dogma relies primarily on a set of constructed formal procedures to spark public interest, rather than on assumptions about the existence of a shared “deep” culture. Hjort contends, however, that, interest is also inspired at least in part by the subject matter of the films (stories that take place here and now).

The Effective History of the Dogma Concept
“Dogma 95 has served as a fascinating vehicle for precisely the kind of ‘public criticism’ that theorists of democracy consider central to vibrant and effective civil societies (49)” E.g. by stimulating discussions around questions of access and voice in the world of film.

The way Dogma has been parodied:
- Initially not taken seriously
- after the success: parodies feed on the paradox of promoting the self by subscribing to politics of self-effacement inherent to Dogma

Interartistic extensions
“… by virtue of its oppositionality, the original Dogma concept can be construed as a potentially effective vehicle for protest in other contexts, which in turn fuels the concept’s global circulation.” (51)

Here Hjort offers an overview of how the Dogma concept has been appropriated in the following areas:

- theatre (one of the early appropriations): In the Danish context the tension b/n Danish Royal Theatre/provincial theatres replicates the Hollywood/minor cinemas dynamics
- Dance films (Dogma Dance Manifesto 2003): challenges the dominant genre dance-film to produce an alternative, hybrid genre. Stresses the importance of the dancer (Frazer’s disempowered point of view)

Public criticism
The extension of the concept of Dogma to apply to various fields across national borders guarantees turns it into a real vehicle of publicity in Denmark (offentlighet). It has acquired the status of an “ethos of politically motivated oppositionality” (54)
It thus becomes relevant for non-artistic practices as well (55) e.g. Article in Jyllands-Posten criticizing the “election-driven” Danish politics.

Discourses of Disability and Democracy: Dogma’s Contributions to Public Debate
The Idiots (Lars von Trier)

- departs from a specific and existing set of prejudice against the disabled
- impact on censorship laws in both Britain and Norway
- sparked debate around issues of disability
- Channel 4 showed it together with two documentaries: Forbidden Pleasures, focusing on issues around disabled person’s sexuality and a Playing the Fool, conceived as a commentary on von Trier’s film
- provoking a “complacent” society to recognized and reconsider its conceptions, ideologies and the institutional practices that reflect them

The question that emerges is:

Does it have to be a Dogma film to achieve that?

Hjort argues that it is precisely the combination of good acting, controversial subject, extremity, disturbing social dynamics and the Dogma label that make the film effective (60). The label she insists provides a sort of “ready-made” publicity. This publicity, she elaborates, is comprised of a network of various overlapping counter-publics (61).

“Dogma 95 effectively mobilizes and forges links between a series of counterpublics that are committed in various ways to challenging dominant arrangements” (64).

Questions:

Hjort’s text is organized partly as a history of the Dogma movement and its reception and partly as a response to some of the critical points raised against the movement. One of her goals is to assert/restore its political potential. To my mind she very much succeeds to do so with her fine and well-argued account. Here are the questions I still have left:

- Do you find Hjort’s response to the question whether Idioterne necessarily has to be a Dogma film satisfactory? Would not an auteur film provide a similar “ready-made” publicity? In fact, are von Trier’s films auteur films? (see the discussion of Playing the Fool)
- Throughout the text there is a continuous dissonance between Von Trier and Hjort (and she points to it on one occasion) when they talk about the “people” that the Manifesto rules enable to participate in filmmaking. Hjort talks about citizens, Von Trier about independent filmmakers. To what extent is the inclusive character of the manifesto constructed post-factum?