Teachers' Use of Film in the History Classroom: A Survey of 19 High School Teachers in Norway

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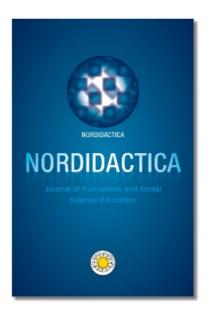# Teachers' Use of Film in the History Classroom: A Survey of 19 High School Teachers in Norway

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Abstract: This article explores the use of films by Norwegian high school teachers in history classes. Empirical data was collected through audio recordings of semi-structured interviews with 19 history teachers from the same urban area in Norway. The article addresses five main questions: To what extent, and how frequently, did they use films in the history classroom? What kind of films and which films did they use? For what purposes? How did they use films? Which challenges did they encounter? Apart from demonstrating a high level of commitment and enthusiasm, our study shows that the teachers' use of history films was frequent, purposeful and aware of time constraints. Although the teachers used both feature films and documentaries, they had a clear preference for documentaries. They used films for three main reasons: to illustrate content subject matter through an audio-visual resource, for variation, and to enhance empathy. In class, films were more widely used to support the content of lessons or textbooks rather than to promote high-order-thinking competencies. Finally, the informants singled out two major challenges: the lack of time and problems related to the selection of films and, interestingly, some uncertainty about the effect of films on the students' motivation. All these aspects seem to demonstrate that many teachers are bound by a scientific use of historical films. They would like films to give a "truthful" image of the past rather than considering history films as an interpretation of the past that can or should be questioned.

KEYWORDS: HISTORY, HISTORY EDUCATION, VISUAL LITERACY, FILM, HISTORICAL THINKING

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Introduction

Interest in film as an educational tool is not a recent phenomenon: it is almost as old as filmmaking itself. As a genre, historical film was seen early on as a privileged and popular means for education of the masses (Cuban, 1986, pp. 11-12; Donnelly, 2014, p. 4; Héry-Vielpeau, 2013, p. 1). However, the use of film in the history classroom has been growing, particularly over the last 20 years, and is now well established as one of the most frequently used resources in countries like Australia (Donnelly, 2010, p. 1); Canada (Boutonnet, 2013, pp. 108-109); France (Héry-Vielpeau, 2013, p. 1); and the USA (Marcus, Metzger, Paxton, & Stoddard, 2010, p. 3). This may be due to the accelerating digital revolution that, since the 1990s, has resulted in numerous, and easily available, audio-visual resources, and the fact that young people are spending more and more time watching these resources (Rideout, Foehr, & Roberts, 2010, p. 11). Scholars currently consider that historical films are one of the most influential media in shaping the conception of the past (Ferrer, 2015, p. 39; Metzger, 2007, p. 67; O'Connor, 1988, p. 1201; Rosenstone, 2006, p. 14; Wineburg, Mosborg, & Porat, 2001, p. 55) and a number of studies have explored how film can effectively be used to develop historical thinking among students (Marcus, 2007; Metzger, 2010; Seixas, 1994).

The growing influence of film and audio-visual products in our society has not gone unnoticed: the OECD has emphasized the importance of media and digital literacy as one the crucial skills of the 21st century citizens (Ananiadou & Claro, 2009).

We can assume that this situation is similar in Norway, a country where the digital revolution has been promoted and enthusiastically accepted, and which is as well advanced in education as it is in wider society. Norway was ranked as the 4th most digital-savvy country in the world in 2016 (Baller, Dutta, & Lanvin, 2016, p. 16) and as the second most advanced digital country in Europe in 2017 (Directorate General for Communications Network, 2017). In Norwegian high schools, general policy is also that every student has his or her own PC, subsidized by the state. Since the Knowledge Promotion Reform of 2006, contemporary history curricula and syllabuses in Norway aim to equip students with historical thinking, and media literacy, skills to meet the required competency for citizens of democratic and pluralistic societies in the 21st century (Johanson, 2015, pp. 3-4; Ministry of Education and Research, 2009). The 2015 report "The School of the Future" stresses the implementation of film and media literacy as a basic competence (Ludvigsen & al., 2015, pp. 8-10).

However, although studies of the use of film in the history classroom have been conducted in several western countries: Sweden (Hultkrantz, 2014, 2016); Germany (Wehen, 2012); France (Briand, 2005; Poirier, 1995); Canada (Sasseville & Marquis, 2015); Australia (Donnelly, 2010, 2014); Britain (Blake & Cain, 2011) and the USA (Marcus & Stoddard, 2007; Russell, 2007, 2012), no such study has been performed in Norway until now. The goal of this article is partly to fill this void by presenting the core results of a qualitative survey performed in 2014-2015 among 19 high school teachers from the same urban area, in Southwest Norway, about their use of film in the history classroom. We seek to shed light on Norwegian history teachers' use of film and aim to depict their practices, while illustrating our results through their own voices.

Theoretical framework

Teaching History with Film

Research in history has had different approaches to film and images. Film and images have been considered as valuable and specific sources about the past (Ferro, 1993), as historical agents[1], as vulgarisation of history and as an important contributor to the construction of individual and collective memories (Landsberg, 2004; Landy, 2001; Rosenstone, 1995). History film has been recognized as a symbolic and polysemic reconstruction of the past; a positioned historical discourse that also reflects the social and cultural context of production and reception of its own time; a reconstruction of the past driven by its own rules (Ferro, 1993; Rosenstone, 2006; Sorlin, 1980; White, 1988).

As the influence of film and audio-visual products in our society has been massively growing, school has been forced to try to teach students how to interpret, analyse and reflect upon visual media. The potential of film for teaching history has been acknowledged as going far beyond a simple investigation of historical accuracy. Film provides a meaningful context for the students and can be used to develop high-order-thinking skills of critical and historical thinking[2]: to visualize the past; as to gauge primary or secondary sources; to develop empathy; reflect upon controversial issues; to explore different historical interpretations (Marcus et al., 2010). However, it is believed that most teachers still use films as a "real" representation of the past (Poirier, 1995, p. 6), as textbooks or in non-optimal ways (Hobbs, 1999, 2006).

Until recently, few studies directly investigated the practices of teachers with film in the history class (Marcus & Stoddard, 2007, p. 305; Stoddard, 2012, p. 273). The goal of this study is to identify how a sample of Norwegian history teachers utilize films in their classes. Our approach is partly explorative as we intend to compare their alleged practices with those in the other international surveys mentioned in the introduction. On the other hand, we analyse them through the lens of a supposed effective utilization, implying that film can be used to promote deep historical knowledge and high-order-thinking skills that go beyond the acquisition of factual knowledge.

Our survey

We carried out interviews with history teachers from high schools offering the general curriculum, in the area of Stavanger. In that curriculum, history is offered in the second year (hereafter referred to as VG2) and in the third (final) year (hereafter referred to as VG3), over 2 and 4 hours a week, respectively. The second year covers the period from Antiquity to 1750/1800, and the third year studies the period from 1750/1800 until the present time.

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[1] A classic example is the analysis of the relationships between cinema and the mentality of the German population during the 1918-1933 period (Kracauer, 1947)

[2] Different terms and definitions have been used to refer to this notion: historical reasoning, historical inquiry, historical thinking, historical literacy. For an overview, see Van Drie and Van Boxtel (2008) and Maposa and Wassermann (2009).

After making initial contact with the department leaders, we recruited 19 teacher volunteers and conducted a semi-structured in-depth interview with each of them. We complied with the formal ethical considerations of confidentiality and personal data protection stipulated by the Norwegian Social Science Data Services (NSD). The participants volunteered freely and were informed that they were free to withdraw from the study at any moment and without notice, and that their interviews would be anonymized. Participants were selected following a convenience sampling exercise (Highhouse & Gillespie, 2009; Thagaard, 1998, p. 111). Out of five schools initially selected, one showed no interest in taking part in our survey; three individual teachers opted out, and one chose to volunteer of his own accord.

All interviews were conducted in Norwegian, following 24 set questions (see the English translation attached as the appendix) about how and why those teachers used film in the classroom. Following Sasseville and Marquis (2015, p. 3), we defined history films as diverse audio-visual documents, including feature films, documentaries and TV series. A semi-structured interview guide was designed, to allow the informants to explain and detail their practices as freely as possible, only redirecting the conversation when necessary to ensure that all of the set questions were answered. The duration of the interviews varied, with a shortest at 18 minutes, and the longest at 48 min. Most interviews lasted around 30 minutes.

All answers were audio-recorded, transcribed, and subsequently compared and analysed according to the set questions, to ensure a phenomenological hermeneutical approach (Kvale, 1997, p. 81; Thagaard, 1998, pp. 34-35). We coded and performed our qualitative data analysis using Nvivo11 software, following a constant comparative framework (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2013, p. 292) and using a conventional inductive content analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005, p. 1279; Zhang & Wildemuth, 2016, p. 319). We did not explicitly test hypotheses from already existing theories, but tried to ground our analysis in the topics in the data. We established a first list of coding categories based on the thematic questions we were interested in, and refined our categories within the course of the analysis, comparing each interview systematically within the same categories. An additional goal of this article is to let the voice of the interviewed teachers be heard, in order to illuminate the depth and richness of many answers. Their depth and richness were, naturally, very variable; consequently, we selected representative quotes, while also trying to show the answers' diversity and ensure that almost all the interviewed teachers' voices were heard.

Reliability

The former studies we have mentioned are of varying nature. Although only one of them can strictly be considered a representative quantitative survey, their samples differed significantly in the number of informants. In France, Poirier (1995) gathered answers from 314 history teachers from lower secondary schools and high schools across France, while Brau et al. (nd.) surveyed 186 teachers from different disciplines in Basse-Normandie. Donnelly (2010, 2014), Wehen (2012) and Russell (2012) interrogated respectively 203 history teachers, mainly from New South Wales, 260

secondary school teachers across a few Länder in Germany and 249 secondary school
teachers over the whole USA. Marcus and Stoddard (2007) collected information from
85 high school teachers in Connecticut and Wisconsin, while Boutonnet (2015) and
Sasseville and Marquis (2015) examined 75 and 52 secondary school history teachers
from Québec, respectively. In comparison, Hultkrantz' (N=8) or our study (N=19) must
be considered as strictly qualitative surveys.

Table 1 below provides information about the informants' gender and seniority level.
Our sample is a convenience sample that is geographically coherent but is
heterogeneous with regard to gender, with only 6 women and 13 men, and an average
seniority of 7 years for the female teachers and 13 years for the male teachers. However,
our study is qualitative and as such, not representative and generalizable, but meant to
give a deeper insight into 19 teachers' practices with film.

In addition, although we are aware that these interviews only reflect the teachers'
reported practices, we are confident that the openness and the face-to-face format of the
interviews have given us a fair picture of their beliefs. While these beliefs may not be
accurately reflected in the actual practices, they are still interesting as Norwegian
teachers' beliefs, to be compared to those from other countries.

TABLE 1

School, gender and seniority level of the interviewed teachers

School	Informant	Gender	Seniority
1	A	M	10
	B	M	8
	C	F	12
	D	M	38
2	E	F	2
	F	M	4
	L	M	6
3	G	M	7
	H	M	25
	I	F	14
	J	F	7
	K	M	22
	M	M	1
	S	M	13
4	N	F	4
	O	M	3
	P	F	5
	Q	M	30
	R	M	4

Main results

The interviews were analysed in order to answer five main questions:

1. To what extent, and how frequently, did our informants use film in the history classroom?
2. What kind of, and which, films did they use?
3. Why did they use film?
4. How did they use film? How was film integrated in the classroom practice?
5. Which challenges did they meet when using history films?

Frequency of the use of film in the history classroom

The first notable result of our study is that all informants reported using film in their history class, to varying degrees. This feature is consistent with the results of the other international surveys. It confirms that film is an unavoidable teaching resource, even for the most reluctant teachers.

Informant S, for example, chose to show just short documentaries and one feature film, chosen by the students themselves. He saw little use for film in the teaching of history: his reluctance was based on the lack of available time, and on the traditional criticism of historical inaccuracies of feature films (Rosenstone, 1995, pp. 45-46) :

> S: *The use of film takes up a lot of classroom time. Usually, the films are not professional, in so far as they are not made by professional historians. Documentaries are often overly dramatized. They are not historically reliable: if the actual history is detrimental to the artistic aspects, the filmmakers don't hesitate to sacrifice the historical.*

His equally negative attitude towards documentaries and feature films may be surprising, but this reticence may be linked to his specific, teacher-centric, style: when asked about what kind of resources he used in the class, he said:

> S: *The main resource I use is myself. Things I know, stuff I've heard on podcasts or read in professional updates. I rarely use the textbook: a little bit for exercises and assignments, although the exercises can also be found on the textbook's website. I use some internet resources, but not very much. I don't use Powerpoint, or museum visits, and I don't use guest lecturers. I barely use film. I prefer to talk. When I come in, the class calms down, then I start to speak. Today, for example, it was about the Russian revolution.*

However, even for the few teachers who expressed reservations, film was an inevitable resource in the history class. For example, informant H, who uses film regularly:

> H: *In one sense, film is a setback, because I wish that the students would only read. I think somehow that that would generally be better. Students acquire more knowledge and vocabulary, that way. Ideally, it would be better, and maybe learning would be increased if I managed to persuade the students to read, both during the class, and at home. In that sense, film is a kind of substitute: linguistic and reading competency are reduced, as well as their capacity to concentrate over longer periods of time.*

27

We specifically asked the teachers how much time they dedicated to film in each class. In VG2, the mode was 60 minutes per month, compared to 120 minutes a month in VG3. The average was 50 minutes per month in VG2 and 80 minutes a month in VG3. Given that history is taught 2 hours a week in VG2 and 4 hours per week in VG3, the answers reveal that teachers are very aware of the time they spend on films. In fact, some remarked that they used film twice as much in VG3, compared to VG2, because they had twice as much time at their disposal.

Other factors can include the availability of films related to the specific core subject of each class. As D expressed it:

> D: *I use a great deal of film in VG3, because so much more is available; both from YouTube, and from TV series, there is a great deal of usable film. We have less time in VG2, and not as much film material is available, but I recommend that students watch films in their own time if we can't do so at school.*

The informants' answers varied a lot when it came to frequency. As a rule, they made a clear distinction between showing feature length films and using only clips or shorter films. The number of full length films used varied, with some using none, and others as many as 10 films in a year, but the most frequent response was between 2 and 4 films a year. Many teachers referred to their use in class being weekly, or at least monthly. From an international perspective, this is extensive: not as frequent as the USA (Marcus and Stoddard (2007, pp. 308-309), where 93% of informants used film once a week or more, and where Russell (2012, p. 6) indicated that 79% used film twice a month or more), but higher than Canada (Boutonnet, 2013, pp. 108-109), France (Brau et al., nd., p. 25; Poirier, 1995, p. 48) and Germany (Wehen, 2012, p. 51).

Finally, the number of films cited by the teachers is notable. On average, informants used 6-7 films each (with a minimum of 2 and a maximum of 14). This generally included 3 documentaries (with a range from 0 to 6) and 4 feature films (ranging from 0 to 11), which brings us to the question of which films were used.

Types of films used in class

Almost all the respondents confirmed that they were responsible for the final selection of films used in class, although most were open to suggestions from students. Except for one respondent, who exclusively used documentaries, all used both documentaries and feature films. A large majority (16 of 19) used more documentaries than fiction films, and often used clips. This predominance of documentaries is consistent with the practice of German teachers (Wehen (2012, p. 58) signals a strong inclination for documentaries); Swedish teachers (Hultkrantz, 2014, p. 74) and, to a lesser extent, teachers in Québec (Boutonnet (2013, pp. 108-109) recorded a pronounced, and Sasseville and Marquis (2015, p. 9), a slight priority to documentaries), while the French (Brau et al., nd., p. 40; Poirier, 1995, p. 54) and American studies (Marcus & Stoddard, 2007, pp. 308-309) identified the opposite trend among the teachers in their surveys – a slight predominance of the use of feature films over documentaries. Documentaries are Norwegian teachers' preference for 3 main reasons:

1. The desire to utilize time effectively: feature films are longer than documentaries and often requires editing.
2. Feature films may divert students' attention.
3. Many informants considered documentaries to be more reliable and relevant than movies for educational purposes:

As Informant G puts it:

> G: *I try to find good documentaries: films, or preferably episodes of a series that don't take so long. I use feature films less and less frequently: mainly I use documentaries, to some extent because feature films take up too much time. We have some box sets at school, BBC products that last around half an hour: these are more focused and punchy. These films make it less easy for students to lounge around, which we sometimes experience with longer movies. I show these 20 to 30 min documentaries in their entirety. I don't often use longer movies: they take up too much time, and usually only small excerpts are directly relevant to our subjects, so I don't want to use excessive time. I used movies more in the earlier stages of my career, when I was not as confident about my lessons and use of time.*

Informant H expressed similar concerns:

> H: *I use documentaries, mostly. I try to avoid movies, because I think that although students might find documentaries a little boring, and prefer to watch movies, documentaries are more reliable, historically speaking. Many films are Hollywood movies with a historical backdrop, while documentaries give a more correct and reliable image of history. Usually, I choose clips from documentaries, from ten minutes to an hour, because I can't show them in whole.*

Given these reactions, it is a little surprising that, when identifying the films used, teachers named in majority feature films, rather than documentaries. Out of a total of 69 titles cited, 43 were movies and only 26 documentaries: it may be that the participants more clearly recalled the titles of feature films, even though they reported using documentaries more largely.

Moreover, the respondents acknowledged that they used the same films year after year, so long as they had "worked" well in class, but they also stated that they reviewed their choices from time to time. 50% of the named films were from 2005 or later, suggesting that films have a "shelf life" when it comes to use in class.

Table 2 below, which sets out the 25 most cited titles, shows the relative diversity of the titles used. Only 13 titles, out of 69, were used by 3 teachers or more. As was the case with the Australian, Canadian French and Swedish surveys, this list identifies a mix of American mainstream motion pictures, European mainstream films and specific national productions related to the relevant country's history. For Norwegian students, movies like Max Manus (Rønning & Sandberg, 2008), about one of the great heroes of the Norwegian Resistance during WWII; The Kautokeino Rebellion (Gaup, 2008) about riots among the Sami community in mid-nineteenth century Northern Norway; or documentaries about Norwegian history were used. As mentioned above, films may be considered "perishable", and are subject to frequent review, but some classics remain on the list. For example, Battleship Potemkin (Eisenstein, 1925), Spartacus (Kubrick,

1960), The Godfather (Coppola, 1972), or the French animated series Once Upon a Time… Man (Barillé, 1978): a classic film which many European generations have grown up with, although it remains little known in the USA. The Name of the Rose (Annaud, 1986) tops the list, illustrating this phenomenon. There is a noticeable diversity of theme, which reflects the breadth of the syllabus, from Antiquity to the present time.

TABLE 2

List of the 25 most cited film titles

Title	Year	Director	Country	Category	Topic/Period	Frequency
The Name of the Rose	1986	J.J. Annaud	F	Fiction	Middle Ages	6
Downfall	2004	O. Hirschbiegel	GER	Fiction	Hitler's last days	5
In Europe	2010	Geert Mak	NL	Doc	20th century	5
Searching for Norway 1814-2014	2014		N	Doc	Norway from 1814 to 2014	5
People's Century	1995		UK	Doc	20th century	5
300	2007	Zack Snyder	USA	Fiction	Persian War	4
Merry Christmas	2005	Christian Carion	F	Fiction	WWI	4
Rome	2005	Michael Apted	UK	Fiction	Roman Republic	4
13 days	2000	R. Donaldson	USA	Fiction	Cuba crisis	3
Crash Course World History	2006	John Green	USA	Doc	World History	3
Once Upon a Time… Man	1978	Albert Barillé	F	Doc	World history (animation)	3
Kingdom of Heaven	2005	Ridley Scott	USA	Fiction	Middle Ages	3
The Pianist	2002	Roman Polanski	F	Fiction	WWII	3
Engineering an Empire	2006		USA	Doc	World History	2
Elizabeth: The Golden Age	2007	S. Khapur	UK	Fiction	16th century	2
The Godfather	1972	Francis Coppola	USA	Fiction	Mafia in the USA	2
The Story of Norway	2003	M. Åkerblom	N	Doc	Norway from 1100 to 1814	2
The Kautokeino Rebellion	2008	Nils Gaup	N	Fiction	Northern Norway in the 1850s	2
Max Manus	2008	J. Rønning/ E. Sandberg	N	Fiction	WWII in Norway	2
Battleship Potemkin	1925	S. M. Eisenstein	RUS	Fiction	Russian Revolution	2
Spartacus	1960	Stanley Kubrick	USA	Fiction	Roman Republic	2
The Untold History of the United States	2012	Oliver Stone	USA	Doc	USA since 1945	2
Valkyrie	2008	Bryan Singer	USA	Fiction	WWII	2
Vikings	2012	Neil Oliver	UK	Doc	Middle Ages	2
Gladiator	2000	Ridley Scott	USA	Fiction	Roman Empire	2

Reasons for using film

We asked our informants several questions in order to map their reasons for using
film, particularly question 13 ("Why do you use films in the history class?"), question
16 ("What do you want your students to learn/achieve by watching films?") and
question 21 ("Do you use films to achieve concrete competencies and goals in the
history curriculum? If so, which ones?").

Almost all respondents (18/19) answered question 21 positively, and said that films
had to be used purposefully, and not purely as entertainment, reward, replacement or
for a break. A clear majority considered film to be an efficient tool for teaching history
(Question 20). This is consistent with the results of other international studies, and with
the teachers' concern to use the time at their disposal effectively. However, misuse may
be under reported, as teachers will not deliberately show themselves to be thoughtless
instructors (Marcus & Stoddard, 2007, p. 310; Russell, 2012, p. 8). However, many
respondents reported that the end of the semester was a good opportunity to watch a
movie, which may be interpreted as showing that motion pictures are still considered as
entertainment.

Drawing on previous studies and our interviews, we categorized the numerous
reasons given by the teachers for the use of film (Table 3 below). However, this can be
a complex issue. It is often difficult to categorize clearly: many reasons may be
intertwined, and the terms used by the teachers may be imprecise or refer to several
goals at the same time. As usual, each classification has its own limits and can be subject
to discussion.

TABLE 3

Reasons for using film in the history class

Why using history film in the classroom?	Frequency
Illustrate/visualize subject matter content	18
- Visualizing lesson content only	8
- Film brings also extra knowledge	6
- Vitalization/Evocation of the past	4
Variation (to enhance motivation and interest)	17
Enhance empathy	13
as perspective recognition	10
as caring (affective approach)	5
as simple insight	2
Develop historical and critical thinking	7
Motivation for the teacher	3
Film as a hook/ Introduction to a topic	3
Reward/Break/Replacement	3
Film is a central medium	2
An experience in common for the class	1

Among the numerous reasons teachers mentioned, two considerations emerged as prominent and closely connected: the illustration of the content of the subject matter, and as variation, in order to enhance motivation and interest for the lesson or history as a subject.

On one hand, film was seen as a way to illustrate and visualize the topics and periods taught in class. The audio-visual nature of film was able to elicit stronger impressions and help students to better understand and recall the content of the subject matter. Film, with sound and images, mirrors what has been said and read about in class. As informant G said:

> G: *The optimum situation is when film emphasizes what I was talking about and the knowledge we try to disseminate. That it is "spot on".*

The fact that film induces stronger impressions is traditionally related to the theory of dual-coding (Paivio, 1983, 2013). Using two different channels of perception (auditive and visual), a filmic experience generates better understanding and memory, as acknowledged, for example, by informants B and K:

> B*: It can generate strong impressions; impressions which can't be created by other means. A documentary can explain things more clearly than I can and makes [the subject] more explicit, by use of examples and through image and sound.*

> K*: You know from your own school experience that ten years later, you remember almost nothing. So (…) what we see can reinforce things, to increase understanding. Watching a film will not be THE solution, but it is a part of it. It can help them remember.*

In addition, six teachers saw film as a specific medium which adds something supplemental: it delivers something not supplied by traditional teaching. As H and M said:

> H*: [Film can] simply give a picture of the period or expand the knowledge of a topic. Knowledge that is not directly related to an evaluation or an assessment, or even the program, but simply provides a picture, and comprehension of a period.*

> M*: Film is an account that can deliver more depth. A book can never express that account in the same way as a good film or documentary.*

Finally, film as a visual experience was sometimes associated with "vitalization" or an evocation of the past. Film did not only illustrate the lesson; it was a way to "bring the past back to life". Implicitly, film is seen as a re-enactment of the past that can contribute to shape prosthetic memories (Landsberg, 2004), and lead to a form of empathy. However, the teachers in our survey did not articulate that view so precisely and abstractly, and expressed more that film created a different experience of the past, as stated by informant A:

> A: *[Film is used] to illustrate and animate history. To give the students a different experience of history. To read about the Black Death is one thing, to watch a film about people with buboes is completely different. Film can demonstrate information that textbooks can't.*

On the other hand, film constituted a variation in teaching and learning, which variation was considered a very important pedagogic tool. Watching and working with film was seen as a good opportunity for a change from working with written documents or listening to the teacher. For F, film was a means to achieve some balance between different teaching tools:

> F: *It is a change, because it can be harder to reach a good balance and variation in history than in other subjects. There are a lot of facts and knowledge to disseminate. We need to introduce some variation, and film is a welcome opportunity to do that.*

Many informants also underscored that it was a good opportunity to learn history in a different manner, and that it could help weaker students, as in informant I's case:

> I: *Many students are not that good at reading and working with text; many are more visual so understand better with film. So, it is simply a way to vary teaching and give the students a visual experience.*

However, the overall goal was to motivate students and to prompt their interest for history as a subject, to facilitate learning. Often, motivation was also associated with the entertainment value of film. As A stressed it:

> A: *I think that the entertainment value of film is important for students' motivation and drive. […] I think it's the fact that they see it themselves, combined with the fact that I select striking scenes that play on their emotions. Discussions and reflection go together. When I nail it, it's a bull's eye. Compared to reading textbooks and doing exercises, they are different worlds.*

The third main reason relates to empathy. Although the definition of historical empathy remains contentious and complex (Brooks, 2009, p. 214), our informants' answers could be split between the dichotomy of Barton and Levstik (2004); perspective recognition, as described by Foster and Yeager (1998), and a more affective approach of caring "with and about people from the past, to be concerned with what happened to them and how they experienced their lives" (Barton & Levstik, 2004, pp. 207-208). Out of thirteen teachers who asserted the enhancement of empathy as a goal, six referred to this form of taking perspective as a way to understand better the historical context and of certain decisions or actions. Only one teacher called exclusively upon the affective approach of caring and identifying with individual lives, while four teachers referred to both approaches. Finally, two teachers referred to empathy by using the imprecise term "insight".

However, our informants did not explicitly refer to the enhancement of empathy in order to promote democratic values (as underscored by Blake and Cain (2011, p. 94)), but related it to increasing students' interest for history or providing something more than traditional written resources, as stated by informants R and P:

> R: *I think of the students learning to have more empathy: an empathetic approach to film. Usually, films focus on one or several major characters and on how they thought, felt and lived. This more cultural historical research approach zooms in on individuals, to try to get an insight into how people lived at that time. I try to find films that I feel reflect that as much as possible. My own experience is that, if I'm successful and if the class is engaged, and if*

they develop more empathy and manage to conceive how these people thought, felt and lived, then I have sparked their interest in history.

P: *[Film] lets them get a feeling of how it was to live at that time. When you read books, you can't get the feeling a film can give. "Gladiator" is very good for that purpose, for example, when you follow the character as a warlord and really get to feel how it was in the Roman army, at least in some legions, and how it was to be a slave and finally a gladiator. You see many different social conditions within the Roman Empire. When you see it as a whole, it is an awfully good narration that overcomes books. There are many extra dimensions.*

Seven informants mentioned the use of film to open the door to historical thinking. Film was used as a historical source and reliability and narrative effects were subject to analysis and discussion. It may be surprising that a little more than a third of our informants used film for that purpose, but it is consistent with, or superior to, the results from other international studies. Some informants, like B, for example, focused on enhancing students' critical competencies:

B*: (...) in the first place, I want them to be critical of everything they watch. It underpins everything I do. I have a precise idea in advance about why I show them this.*

Other informants, like F, encompassed critical competencies in a wider explanation:

F: *It is one of the goals [critical competencies], and the other purpose is to let them investigate an historical problem with a relatively good professional judgement, so they can sort out facts from rubbish. (...) We look at what simplifications have been made, to the detriment of sound historical thinking, and why? What are documentaries' strong sides? And because one learns history more through watching TV and documentaries than reading books. Most of them get their historical understanding through history documentaries. To a large extent, dissemination of history has moved from book to film. That's why I want my students to be able to sift and handle that information (...) I want them to be critical of the representations made. Are they valid or not? I want them to read through. Is there a sender with a message, is it hidden or crystal clear, and what does it mean? They must learn that even if it is a documentary, it is not necessarily the way it is, it is still just one perspective.*

Finally, some few teachers advanced secondary reasons for using film: they admitted that film could function as an entertainment, a reward or a break for both students and teachers; some advanced the idea that it was interesting or motivating for themselves; they used film as an introduction to a topic, or because it was an important medium to confront students to, or because showing a film was a common experience for the class as a group.

The three main reasons for using film were associated with visualization, variation and empathy. Implicitly, they underpinned a desire to trigger students' interest and motivation. However, although considering these reasons is interesting, comparing them with the teachers' stated practices may be even more instructive.

Modalities of use

We asked our informants specific questions about their practices of using film in the classroom. In that respect, our results here present what they reported, and not what they necessarily did in practice. We did not observe them in class.

As for the conditions for the use of film in class, the first main result is that films were watched together, with the teacher, usually on the class projector. Watching film was not performed as an individual or group activity on PCs or IPads, although technology allowed for this. However, almost all informants encouraged their students to watch films on their own at home, but only very few set as homework integrated with class activities.

The active presence of the teachers during film viewing can be explained by the fact that they chiefly used film clips or short documentaries: approximately only a third of the informants showed films as a whole. Another explanation is the general impression of high degree of commitment given by most teachers in their interviews: they were mostly enthusiastic about using film, a majority used films from their own collection, reviewed their use, and were well aware about why and how much time they were using on film.

As a rule, most teachers used film as an introduction to a subject or as an integrated part of a lesson. Again, this is consistent with an effective use of time and the purposeful use of film.

Concerning the content-based use of films, almost all informants confirmed that they used film for a precise purpose and planned for specific activities. However, we distinguished two main groups: for approximately two thirds of teachers, typical activity comprised students taking notes during or after the film, in many cases with the help of a worksheet, in order to answer questions, which were then discussed in groups or in plenum. Informant G summarized his practice as followed:

> G: *It can be everything from specific questions to writing down keywords; finding five things they didn't know before. What is the main issue of the film? And then we discuss.*

The other third set tasks promoting more high-order-thinking activities related to the film: the students were challenged to assess the film as a historical source; to reflect upon the film's messages in the light of contemporary issues; to dwell upon the rhetorical effects of film as a specific medium; or to work on projects including a larger array of historical sources.

Informant J gave an example of the type of project work she expected from her students:

> J: *Last year, in line with WWI, we watched "Merry Christmas", and the students had to use the movie content to write a letter on behalf of each of the three main characters. They had to invent a little, and to use their own knowledge. In our project about WWII, they will assess a movie as an historical source. Can we rely on "Max Manus" and is it a realistic representation? They have to read film reviews, watch the movie by themselves, and read about it to find out. They will receive some assessment criteria and will finish with a presentation, working in groups or alone.*

The results from the other international studies regarding the practice with film in class are very heterogeneous and therefore difficult to compare with our results. We did not ask precisely when, and in which proportions, teachers used whole films or clips. Many other studies are also unclear on this issue (Poirier, 1995; Sasseville & Marquis, 2015; Wehen, 2012) or show differing results: while Marcus and Stoddard (2007, pp. 309-310) and Donnelly (2010, p. 62) noticed that a majority used whole films, Blake and Cain (2011, p. 91) Russell (2012, p. 9) and Hultkrantz (2014, p. 75) acknowledged a preponderant use of clips. We also generally found the same range of activities, but not in the same proportion. However, the predominance of worksheet-based activities, and discussions after watching the film, seems universally common. Since the use of a whole film or a clip will obviously have an important influence on the nature of activities in class, and will be critical to the time at teachers' disposal, this issue needs more research, probably supported by systematic observation in class, differentiating activities in relation to shorter clips and whole films.

Challenges when using film

We asked different questions related to challenges faced by teachers when using film (Questions 14, 15, 17 and 20). Contrary to the situation of some decades ago (Cuban, 1986), teachers no longer experienced technical problems. The digital revolution is well advanced in Norway and more senior teachers commented that using film was now much easier and quicker than had been the case at the beginning of their career. All classrooms of our informants were equipped with projectors or interactive blackboards and all had Wi-Fi connectivity. As a consequence, technical problems were rare, as in the other studies we examined, apart from Poirier (1995, p. 18). We found three major challenges.

The main challenge for teachers was time. This is consistent with all the other international studies. Film was seen as an extremely time-consuming activity, both upstream, when teachers considered the amount of time necessary to select, find, study a film, and prepare activities for the class; and downstream – to watch the film itself, and perform activities and discussions related to the film.

The second main issue was associated with the selection, and the work on, film. Some teachers mentioned difficulties in finding films that were suitable for their lessons: they were often very sceptical about the historical "reliability" of movies and expressed difficulties in assessing what was trustworthy or relevant to show to students. On the other hand, problems related to advisory content, or necessary parental authorization, were never mentioned, which diverges from the North American and Australian studies, where this concern was often raised.

The final notable problem involved the potential attitude of some students towards the use of film. Some teachers feared that film watching could be interpreted by some students as a non-purposeful activity, a good excuse to "chill out", become very passive and maybe even sleepy. Poirier (1995, p. 65) and Sasseville and Marquis (2015, p. 18) recognized the same problem. This issue is especially interesting, because it relates to

the students' motivation, one of the teachers' implicit reasons for using films as illustration, variation and enhancing empathy.

When asked precisely if they thought that films actually motivated students to learn more about history, one informant was categorically negative and the rest were almost equally divided: a little less than half was resolutely positive, while slightly more than half was unsure. Motivation is generally divided between two major categories: internal and external factors. For the negative respondent, the students' interest for history as a subject was essentially external. Film then functioned as a break and as sheer entertainment because the students felt that their lack of attention would have little impact on their final mark. On the other hand, the informants who were uncertain often felt that it varied, depending on the class dynamics, the engaging qualities of the film used, or the prior internal motivation of the students. Some of them underscored that film was especially motivating for lower performing students and that overuse of film could actually lessen its advantages as a tool.

Discussion

The findings of our study highlight two interesting and contrasted general features: a utilization of films in the history class that is very conscious and effectivity-oriented but also a utilization that is motivated by a scientific use and a positivist conception of history.

On the one hand, our informants' use of films in class was general, frequent, informed, purposeful, and they were aware of time constraints. They typically used film every week, or every two weeks. Use of film reached a monthly mode of 60 minutes in VG2 and 120 minutes in VG3, i.e. a mode strictly proportional to the number of hours at disposal in each history class (two hours a week in VG2 and 4 hours in VG3). The average monthly use of 50-60 minutes in VG2 and 80 minutes in VG3 was lower than the averages recorded in the USA (Marcus & Stoddard, 2007, pp. 308-309; Russell, 2012, p. 6), but greater than those from the Canadian (Boutonnet, 2013, pp. 108-109) European (Brau et al., nd., p. 25; Poirier, 1995, p. 48; Wehen, 2012, p. 51) and Australian (Donnelly, 2010, p. 1) surveys. This seems consistent with the high level of digitization of Norwegian society and supports the idea that film is an irresistible resource in the history class today.

Our informants chose films themselves, but were quite open to students' suggestions. This aligns with the Norwegian good results for participative and democratic practices in school (Schulz et al., 2016, pp. 150-151).

They also used films purposefully, as attention grabbers, an introduction to a topic or integrated in the middle of a lesson, combining it almost systematically with written or oral activities related to the curriculum. This shows the classical claim that teachers mainly use films as a reward or a replacement (Apkon, 2013; Stugu, 1991) or mostly in a non-optimal way (Hobbs, 1999, 2006) to be questionable or dubious.

On the other hand, although the teachers generally used both feature films and documentaries, they had a clear preference for documentaries, for three main reasons:

the belief that documentaries were more reliable and relevant for history classes; a more efficient utilization of time; and the intention to keep students' attention more focused. In that sense, many informants seemed engaged in a scientific use of history films: they usually wished films gave a truthful image of the past as "it (really) was", in line with the expectations of scientific history. This also suggests a positivist conception of history, which is supported by the predominance of documentaries over feature films and by two main reported reasons for using films: to illustrate/visualize the subject content matter; to enhance empathy as perspective recognition and insight.

In fact, this was even reflected in the activities attached to the films in class: they were mainly traditional content-based activities. Only a third of our informants used film to stimulate critical thinking and high-order-thinking skills: using and problematizing film as a historical source or as a powerful medium to elicit empathy as caring and to discuss controversial and moral issues; using film as a representation of competing interpretations of the past; or using film to introduce the idea of history as a scientific and collective construction. Few teachers ventured into letting students identify the inherent positioning and biases of feature films and documentaries to provide them with the critical historical competencies to read films, and even fewer prompted them to analyse the effects on the spectator of filmic means like the use of music, camera shots and angles, and editing. This positivist/scientific conception of History of the teachers is fully understandable. They usually lack education in visual media literacy and they have generally been educated within the paradigm of a positivist/scientific written history as ideal history. In other words, they do not use the full potential of film because they usually evaluate history films through the criteria of the long-lived positivist written history.

Similarly to the American (Marcus & Stoddard, 2007, pp. 318-319), Australian (Donnelly, 2014, pp. 11-12), British (Blake & Cain, 2011, pp. 96-97) Canadian (Sasseville & Marquis, 2015, pp. 20-21), French (Poirier, 1995, pp. 77-78) and Swedish (Hultkrantz, 2016, pp. 174-176) surveys, our study advocates an integration of visual media literacy in history teachers' education programmes, and a deeper awareness of the nature of history and the elements attached to teaching historical thinking.

Conclusion

The interviews we conducted with 19 Norwegian high school history teachers demonstrated, in the vast majority of cases, a high level of commitment and enthusiasm and a use that was general, frequent, informed, purposeful and aware of time constraints. The diversity of the films used reflected the scope of the syllabus, but it also revealed that the films used in the history class are either "perishable", i.e. new films that are subject to change, or films that are part of a collective memory.

Nevertheless, their preference for documentaries, their main reasons for using films (visualization; pedagogical variation; or enhancement of empathy) and the way a large majority of teachers used history films seem to demonstrate a positivist conception and a scientific use of history. Although a limited number of teachers used class activities

to develop the potential of film as a gatekeeper to historical thinking and meta-reflections about history, film was more widely used for worksheet activities and simple discussion to support the content of lessons or of textbooks than for enhancing high-order-thinking competency.

Subsequently, informants pointed clearly to two well-established challenges: the lack of time available, and the problem of film selection. A less frequently reported issue concerned the uncertain effect of film on students' motivation.

These results call for developing practical resources to help teachers provide their students with the critical film literacy competences they need as citizens of the 21st century, but also for an integration of visual media literacy and of a deeper awareness of history and historical thinking in education programmes.

However, further research seems to be needed in this field to demonstrate, through a representative quantitative study, whether these tendencies are corroborated on a national scale, and to study, more deeply, some aspects touched on in our survey. It would be interesting to have more precise data regarding the type of empathy and the aspects of historical thinking (as developed by Seixas, Morton, Colyer, and Fornazzari (2013)) favoured by teachers. It would also be interesting to examine further why teachers chose specific titles, and to investigate the detail of activities promoted by teachers, in accordance with their use of clips or whole films, either from documentaries or movies. Finally, it would be exciting to design a study about the students' sentiments about the use of films in the history class.

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Appendix. Interview Guide

0. General information: School, Gender, Seniority as a history teacher, Grade level
1. Which resources do you use in your history class?
2. Do you use film/movies?
3. What types of films do you use? And how do you use those different types?

4. When do you use film in relation to a topic, within a school hour and during the term?

5. Do students watch the film on their own? Or are you always there with them?

6. Where do you get access to the films you use?

7. Who chooses the films? You? The students? You, together with the students?

8. How many full-length films do you show yearly? How much time do you use on shorter films?

9. Can you mention some of the films you have used?

10. Do you use the same films year after year?

11. Do you have a purposeful plan around each film?

12. Is your use of films embedded in a wider teaching context/frame?

13. Why do you use films in the history class?

14. What are the advantages and drawbacks you see in using films in the history class?

15. Do you experience any pedagogical and practical challenges when using films?

16. What do you want your students to learn/achieve by watching films?

17. Do you feel that students are more motivated to learn history by watching films? Why?

18. Do you think that there is a connection between entertainment and learning effect?

19. Do you promote watching films as an extra-curricular activity?

20. How do you feel films work compared to other teaching resources? Do you think it is an efficient way of learning history?

21. Do you use films to achieve concrete competencies and goals in the history curriculum? If so, which ones?

22. What are your impressions about your students' abilities to be critical to what they are told and shown?

23. Do you use films as a tool to enhance and provide your students with source critical skills and competences? If so, how?

24. Do you have something else you would like to comment and talk about, related to the use of films in the history classroom?