

Film Festival „Womens Worlds“ by TERRE DES FEMMES

Workshop

„Human Rights in the Mirror of Film – the Passion of Changing Life Through Cinema“

with film directors Jasmila Zbanic from Bosnia
and Mohsen Makhmalbaf from Iran

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**Film Academy of Baden Wuerttemberg
in Ludwigsburg, Germany**

Introduction

Irene Jung: We are very happy to have been invited by the Filmakademie Baden Wuerttemberg to carry out in their film school this conversation round table with two renowned film makers, who have come as our guests to the TERRE DES FEMMES Film Festival Women's Worlds in Tuebingen.

There are to my right Mohsen Makhmalbaf, founder of the New Iranian Cinema and of an unconventional film school, the Makhmalbaf Film School. So this will be of special interest for you, I think. Unfortunately his wife Marziyeh Meshkini who directed the film *The Day I Became a Woman*, which we saw yesterday in Tuebingen, couldn't come to Tuebingen due to visa problems. And on my left, Jasmila Zbanic from Bosnia, winner of the Berlinale Golden Bear 2006 for *Grbavica - Esmas Geheimnis*, who presents her current film *Na Putu* at our film festival.

And together with them we want to speak about Human Rights - especially those of women - in the mirror of film and we hope to facilitate important insights and motivation for the treatment of Human Rights issues and also for your present and future film work.

You are very important to us for our work as a Human Rights organisation for women, as you are making the films or you will be making the films, which in the best of the cases can enlarge the sensitivity of an audience for these urgent issues and also motivate the spectators to active solidarity. Thus you may become part of an Utopia: that with film we can change reality for the better. I think we always have an utopia, that one is an important one for us. But in order to get closer to that Utopia, it's very important to see HOW a film is made, and for these questions Mohsen and Jasmila have many insights to offer.

To begin we have prepared a filmic introduction, which takes extracts from the film *The Day I Became a Woman*, for which Mohsen wrote the script together with Marziyeh and she directed it, a trailer of his own film *Kandahar*, also film extracts from *Grbavica* and the trailer from *Na Putu* by Jasmila Zbanic, as well as some extracts from conversations with Mohsen, Marziyeh in 2005 and the workshop with Samira Makhmalbaf in 2008 at our film festival.

The Filmfest-Book, you can recognise it when you see it in your videotheque, it should be there. This book, we wrote it in 2006 after a visit of Mohsen, Marziyeh and other guests and there are many of those conversations we had, also the ones about the film school. Also you have in your videotheque our DVD edition *The Mirror of Samira Makhmalbaf or the Magic of Capturing and Transforming Life through Film*. It has been distributed to film schools around the world. It should be also available in your videotheque.

So for the moment I would invite you to get into the beautiful images that we may see from both film makers and afterwards we could have this conversation, where I have some questions for them but then I'm happy if you also participate actively with questions or comments or your ideas.

(Screening of film extracts)

Mohsen Makhmalbaf: I would suggest that, before we start, we ask the participants, what questions they have for us. What do they want to know? If there is a question from them, it can help us to concentrate.

Jasmila Zbanic: And also: are the people from the directing department or other departments? Just to know.

Participant: I have a question for you. I understand that you don't live in Iran anymore. So how do you talk about social conditions and that it's important to change, how do you try to influence the situation of Iran?

Irene Jung: So could more of you say, what question you have for them? And we would also ask: Who are you? Who's participating in this workshop? So that we can get a better idea... Could you perhaps say a little bit about in which fields you are concentrating in your studies or work, and which special interests you have?

Participant: I'm Anna Hoffmann. Thank you very much for the chance to be here. I am a big fan of your films and I'm a film director. I received my diploma last year and I am just starting, making my very first steps. Originally I was born in Kazakhstan and I moved to Germany. My most urgent question is: How is your actual life as a director far away from the country you left and what motivates you to work so hard when they don't honour your work in your home country?

Participant: My name is Sebastian Mez and I'm studying at the Film Academy here. I'm also a film maker. I specialise on documentary film making and now it is my last year here, my graduate year. I discovered Iranian cinema just one year ago with one of my favourite film makers Abbas Kiarostami, so I'm very excited today to hear something new and to talk with you here.

Participant: I started documentary film making here at the Film Academy this year and I'm just very interested to be here today and listen.

Participant: I'm a student here in the career of film production. Before I've studied

film directing in Great Britain. I'm just curious to get to know more about two great directors.

Participant: I'm studying here film production since last year and I've come to hear. And this is my friend. We are from Croatia and Bosnia and it's really interesting for us to see Jasmila Zbanic.

Participant: I'm Paulo De Carvalho, director of the festival CineLatino in Tuebingen, I'm also a producer and am involved in co-productions in Latin America. I as well work for Leipzig film festival.

Participant: My name is Johanna Richter. I'm a film maker. I'm presenting my film about Female Genital Mutilation on Wednesday at the Film Festival Women's Worlds. I live in Berlin and I'm doing my Ph.D. in Political Sciences at the same time. So I'm both doing films and also researching about the outcome of my films.

Irene Jung: And here we have three of the team of TERRE DES FEMMES Film Festival. I'm from TERRES DES FEMMES Film Festival also. And we have another guest participant...

Participant: I'm from far away, from Bangladesh. We have a museum of our liberation struggle and we do a film festival every year on Liberation and Human Rights. Next January we will have a focus on war and women and we are very happy to be here with you and we would like to start a new project with film makers from everywhere.

Participant: I'm Katharina Fiedler and I'm studying at the Film Academy, I'm studying editing and I will be finished in March. This is my last year.

Motivations

Mohsen Makhmalbaf: I introduce myself, I'm Mohsen from Iran.

When I was seventeen years old I went to prison for four and a half years because of political reasons. At that time we were trying to change the political situation in Iran. But when the revolution happened in Iran I saw that most of my friends became ministers, president, but very soon they became fascists too.

I told myself that we have a problem in our culture, that we were just rebuilding again a dictatorship. We should change something in our culture, in the minds of the people. So I started story writing, and then I was writing scripts for cinema and then I made my first film. I used my film as a tool to fight against problems in Iran, like fighting against bad political activities that exist in Iran.

I use my film like a mirror in front of our society, to show the face of the people to themselves, to correct them by showing them to themselves. Little by little, I understood that it is not enough to make a film about the problem, but we could add something beyond making the film.

For example, my movie *Kandahar*, I made it in 2000, one year before the attack of the USA on Afghanistan. At that time nobody was talking about the tragedy of Afghanistan. The whole world had forgotten about it. I tried to inform my audience around the world what was going on inside of Afghanistan. Women could not go to school at all. Most of the women were in the prison of their house and they had no access to TV, nor to newspapers. There was only one hour of radio program, which was always used for religious news or praying.

At the same time the land was full of land mines. A lot of people have lost their legs because of these mines. I thought I have to do something for them. And the hunger was terrible. The United Nations announced at that time that 3 million people are nearly dying because of hunger and nobody knew that. So I used my film as a means of information.

If you look at my movie, it is full of information about a country that the whole world had forgotten. I wasn't going to make a fiction film, a feature film to make more money. I used my name at that time to inform my audience. Actually we always have to find ways to make our films more attractive. But my goal was to inform people. When I made this film, it was accepted in the competition of Cannes, and I remember that Le Monde newspaper wrote „We could not believe this film, it is very exaggerated and we prefer to see love stories instead of this kind of film.“

But three months later when September 11 happened, suddenly the film became famous and everywhere it was used to get to know what was going on in Afghanistan. So I told myself: it is not only important to **inform** about the tragedy. We have to **do** something for these people, some Human Rights activity. For example, in Iran we had three million Afghan children refugees, that couldn't go to school because they didn't have the necessary visa.

I made another film *Afghan Alphabet*, in one week with a handycam camera. UNICEF had asked me to do something for these children, but that they had no money. I signed an agreement for the symbolic price of one dollar. I, my wife and my two daughters went to the border, and in one week we made a documentary film, in one week we finished the film.

My goal was to change the mind of the Iranian government. First, I tried to make them cry about this tragedy, because everything was in their hands. When they saw the film, they accepted to change the law. And one day half a million children from Afghanistan arrived at the schools of Iran. I understood that films can change our world. If you are very serious, you don't need money. You don't need awards. If you are going to use your camera to fight for humanity, like others use a gun to kill the enemy of a human being, it's much much more effective than many other things. I use the digital camera to be faster, to have more freedom, although some people think and we are sometimes told that it is with money that you make a good film.

But the purpose of the film should not be to be shown at the film festivals of the Western countries, to let them measure their own happiness in the comparison: thank God we don't have this kind of problem. On the contrary we could give them a rare opportunity to know: there is a way out, if you are alone, if you feel your

loneliness, if you feel you are depressed because you lost the meaning of your life. You can do something for other persons. I personally understood that when I'm not alone, it is exactly the time to try to help someone not to be alone; when I'm in my happiness, it is the time to try to give happiness to other persons. I think, cinema can achieve something good in the relations between the Third World and the Western countries.

When you are making your movie for Africa, for Afghanistan, for Bangladesh or India, you will find a meaning for your life and you can give something to them. Especially when you teach them how they can make films. I was in Afghanistan. I told myself: it is not enough to make a film from outside of Afghanistan about Afghanistan. Should we not better let them know, how they can make films? I started to give classes for the young generation of Kabul. I started to teach young talented people. During two months I taught them how to use a camera, how to edit, how they could find images, how they could tell their story, how they could find even a little money from NGOs or other institutions. We gave them cameras and they started to make films. And after two months we had thirteen film-makers there. And they made films. We asked a new TV-station in Afghanistan if we could hold a festival through the TV-channel. We asked the people to decide about the films in competition and to vote by SMS. There were different ethnic groups that have killed each other a lot during the past thirty years. They started to fight by SMS to have their film-maker chosen as the winner. So we were able to change fighting with guns into fighting through SMS.

So we saw: if the hero of Afghanistan was Ahmad Shah Massoud and the motto: I can kill Russians, I can kill Taliban, I can kill someone else – then the whole young generation was very serious about being heroes with guns. But we made them into heroes of the arts. Nowadays you can see in Afghanistan how the girls are trying to be heroes by dancing. We can change the problems through many different activities.

At the same time we had some small Human Rights activities, for example I found 2400 children that were begging for money in the streets of Kabul. We tested them and we found different talents among them. One group had a talent for painting. We asked them that instead of begging, why would they not better sit here and create paintings. To paint. So they started painting. We provided them with a teacher for one year. And we bought from them their paintings. After one year we had paid only 9000 dollars but we had 168 pieces of their paintings. After one year we gave them back to them and we had an „Exhibition in darkness“ of their paintings. We invited the ambassadors of different countries to see the exhibition of the children of Afghanistan. They arrived in the darkness of the exhibition with sudden light, and in this light they could find each painter at the side of his or her painting.

After one year with 9000 dollars we were able to change the identity of fourteen children. We could change thirteen members of the young generation into film makers. Only with a little bit of money, the money that came from the benefits of our films. Because I think it is too bad when you made a film about the tragedy of Afghanistan for instance. and then you go to a restaurant and eat very delicious food and say „Ok, I'm very happy that everywhere I'm famous.“ This is my experience. I find my happiness through this kind of activity, making films, teaching talented

young people, while you are working on a film, not in class like now, but directly while we are working: when we are looking for an actress, they can be with us and see how we choose them. During the shootings they can see how we work. In editing, they can observe us; we choose some of them and we teach them. So we make films, we teach, and with the benefits of the budget we try to do something around the problem that we are talking about in the film. Today I met Johanna, a young woman from Germany, that I think is working exactly in this way and I'm so happy to see that. I'm finished. Thank you.

Irene Jung: Jasmila, perhaps you can also tell a little bit about your motivations, your goals...

Jasmila Zbanic: Yes, when I started writing for my first film, actually the idea for it or the pain for that came in 1993 when I discovered that mass rapes were happening in Bosnia. It was a friend of mine who was translating for the refugees who came to the elementary school next to my house and she told me what these girls had experienced. They were fourteen years old. And for me that was shocking. I was seventeen at that time and I was in Sarajevo, surrounded by the Serbian army. So that, first of all, it could happen to me and I was afraid and then it was for me horrible to know that I'm in my apartment with my parents and there are people in my school who don't have anything. So I went to meet these girls and they didn't want to talk about it, but at least we were able to have coffee with them and they felt a little bit accepted in this unknown city, as they were from Eastern Bosnia.

And since then I wanted to do something about it. I wrote a short story, a poem. I didn't know why, but I was poisoned by the fact that this is possible for men..., because you know, I thought about sex and when you're seventeen you think it's romantic, it's the climax of love between two people; but then suddenly you see that sex could be a weapon to humiliate women. And since then I have not been able to understand how it is possible that men could get an erection from hatred! Rapes were not happening because girls were beautiful but it was from hatred, to punish a woman, to punish her family, to humiliate her husband, her brothers. It was very often done in front of fathers and other members of the family to inflict more pain - and to refer to this mythology: very often these girls and women were saying that the Serbian army soldiers were raping them, saying „This is the revenge for 500 years of Turkish domination in Serbia.“ To have this mythology bigger than reality was totally shocking for me. And I was thinking: Should I make a documentary? But then I didn't want to put these women again through the pain. I was really very sensitive about the fact that many journalists came to Sarajevo and they were saying: „Just give me five raped women and you know five children without legs!...“ I was sure I didn't want to do that. And then I kind of left it but it was always on my mind.

Then I had my own child out of love in the year 2000 and I was thinking: „Uff, it's so complicated to have a kid. It's so many emotions that nobody ever tells you about. Always you read very romantic ideas about motherhood. But it's not like that, there are many, many things. Beautiful and strange and scary, many things.“ And I went on: But if for me it is so complicated now that I have my own kid, how is it for the women who were forced to deliver a baby? Because often they were kept in a prison

until they were six or seven months pregnant and then they would release them to another country so that they were not able to perform abortion. And since then I started thinking about: How is it to have a daughter from rape? And not a son because a son brings another set of emotions. But a daughter.

And then I started: between breastfeeding I was writing the script. And when I finished it I thought: No, it's too hard for me. I don't want to do it. I met these women and I thought: No, it's too hard. I took it so emotionally, I couldn't sleep. But after a while I felt I'm transforming these destructive elements and emotions into creation. And I felt it's necessary for my country, that we use this destruction and hatred and transform them into love somehow. That was my main force, my main fuel to make this film. And it took a long time to find money, to find all this technical equipment, because Bosnia was left with no cameras, no laboratory, so we had to import everything - but it was possible with the really good team that I have. My husband is a producer, so he was the one who really sacrificed everything in order to make this film.

So it was then, when I finished the film, that I sent it to many festivals. We didn't have a world sales and I knew a little bit about film festivals because as a student I used to work for Sarajevo Film Festival as an assistant. So I knew that it was very important to have it abroad in order for Bosnians to accept it. If I just showed it in Bosnia, it would be just pffff... Nothing important. But if it's been shown somewhere else, Bosnians will say: „Oh now it's interesting“. So I was really submitting it to every festival. And Berlinale was saying: „Oh, we'll have it in the Forum if you like.“ And I said: „No, it has to be in the main programme. You know, the world is such a shitty place and you cannot tell me that you will put instead some Hollywood film because the star will come to the red carpet and to just ignore this film“. Because some of the people who used to work for the Berlinale at that time were saying: „But it's no big budget, no English language, a language nobody speaks, no stars. It's a small film, too small for competition.“ So I really wrote a very angry letter, that this is not the way to treat the world and that films should change reality and not repeat the same things and business over and over.

And then finally these people that I wrote the letter to, showed the film to the director of Berlinale Dieter Koslick and immediately he invited the film. So that was really great because suddenly everybody in Bosnia was interested in the subject. Before that nobody was interested. If rape came as a topic it was on the bottom page because it's not new, sexy information. It's old, it's from the past. And I realised: „Ok, now I have all the media interested in me and I don't need it for myself.“ So I was thinking about how I could use the media for these women. At that time, they still didn't have any status in Bosnia. They were trying for ten years to be heard by Parliament and they were begging to be given the status as a civil war victim which they didn't have. But so did all the other members of the society: families of killed soldiers, wounded people, soldiers. They had money, health care, social care, everything. Because they were registered, they had status. But these women: nothing. They didn't exist. So we met with women's organisations and we asked what could we do.

The first idea was: ok, let's collect money, let's put a telephone number on our film posters so that, when people call this number, we get a bit of money from the tickets. But it's somehow: you get a little bit of money and you spend it. It doesn't really have a big influence. So we said: „Ok, we have to change the law“. And we made a huge premiere for the film, 5000 people came, and we took that money to make a campaign to collect signatures in every cinema and to go to Parliament, to talk to people and it was within three months that they changed the law. After all these ten years. But it was just this media attention, which suddenly made the people think: „This is cool.“ It's really strange: if I had the same film only shown in Bosnia, nothing would have happened. Nothing.

It's just because of this: „Oh, it's important, it is at the Berlinale...“. So anyway, we used it for a good purpose, the law was changed and women have now social care and health care, children have health care and so that was a good part. I can't say I made the film to change the law. That means, I was not aware of it when I started making the film. I had first of all to deal with this pain and at that time I was... I have this romantic idea of course that it is possible to change the world through films and for me it's such an honour to sit with Mohsen Makhmalbaf, because in one of his films there is a character, who says that he makes films to change the world, to make the world a better place - if I'm correctly citing him. And those words I put as the first lines in my exposé that I sent to the producers to get financing for my film. So for me it was really great to meet him now. I really believe, that first I'm changing myself, hoping that this has a meaning for other people.

I feel very responsible, because in order to make films in Bosnia, you have to import cameras, you have to have an international crew because there aren't many professionals. A film is very expensive in a poor country like Bosnia, it's very, very expensive. And I'm very responsible to say: „Ok, I'm going to spend one million Euro, which is the minimum cost of these films because they have to be developed in Germany, the sound must be done in Austria because of the conditions of the co-production, otherwise it's impossible to make it. So I have to know, to feel: is this obsession of mine only mine or does it belong to my country, region or world? Would other people care about it? I don't want to make a film just to entertain or to gain status. I have to have the deep feeling that I am changing something. I don't have maybe always the precise idea: Ok, this will result in this or that. But I really believe in it, because I'm being changed through films very much, films changed me, and I believe that this is really possible.

Irene Jung: Are there questions in the audience or commentaries now, with regard to this part of motivation or the possibility to change reality through film?

Jackie Branfield: Jackie Branfield from South Africa. I'd like to make a comment. I'm no academic and I don't say that to apologise. I just have a comment for both film makers that have spoken and I'm absolutely amazed at your passion for your subject. Kim Longinotto is also a film maker like you. Irene, this actual conference, sitting, listening, the questions from the students, it makes me realise, that there are guys with passion, not just you two, that this is being held to instill that passion in these people! Because I come from the other side of the fence.

I was the one being filmed and it's a very creepy feeling, you know and you forget the camera is there. So a lot comes out, that shouldn't come out. And when you're with a photographer, with film-makers like yourselves, and particularly Kim Longinotto, it's too late. You know if something comes out of your mouth that shouldn't come out, it's going to be in the film as such. I think what I loved about the little bit that I saw in your film was, that the sensationalism wasn't there, but the feeling and the guts was there and it takes somebody like me, who was filmed, who ran around every day with that horror, to recognise the greatness within you. Because when Kim filmed us, we forgot she was there half of the time.

You know we all of a sudden became very famous, and a couple of film-makers came to us and it was absolutely disgusting - and I hope there is not one film-maker like that in the room: They would come and say: „You know, that little boy just came in and told you about the rape. I didn't get the sound on it, could you get him to do it again?“ Well, women like the „Rough Aunties“, they went straight out the door, out! So nobody is allowed to film us, only people like yourselves and I'm just so thrilled to have sat in the same room with you guys. Really, what an incredible film festival.

Relationship between fiction and reality

Irene Jung: Thank you. Perhaps to explain: Jackie Branfield is here at the festival accompanying a film. It's a documentary film by Kim Longinotto, who has made many films about essential issues of TERRE DES FEMMES, like honour crimes and genital mutilation. She filmed in Iran and in Africa. So now the present film is *Rough Aunties* about an organisation which is fighting against child abuse in South Africa. Jackie is the founder of that organisation and accompanies the film. Therefore she is able to tell the story from the other side as she was filmed by Kim, and that's also one of my questions to the film-makers: often, as a film maker you have a huge responsibility. You intervene into the lives of people. Sometimes you take these real stories of people and sometimes even you film with them, you film them. In *The Apple of Samira*, it was a real story about these two girls that were imprisoned in their homes.

Mohsen Makhmalbaf: Let me say something about *The Apple*. My daughter Samira was very angry about the system of education. In Iran it's a very ideological education. She talked about suicide, she told me she didn't want to be alive in this kind of world, a lot of times. And I tried to help her survive by advising her something good. But suddenly she made the decision to work in film-making. So I started to teach her and my family cinema, to give them some hope somehow. One day Samira got aware that a TV programme informed about a father who kept his two girls in the prison of his house for eleven years. The girls were thirteen years old at that time but they had been eleven years in prison. As I was preparing a film in Tajikistan, after a lot of censorship, I got a camera and filmmaterial to make that film. But Samira told me: „You should give your camera and your film negative to me, I'm going to make a film about this subject.

At that time, Samira didn't know many things about cinema, except a few classes she had taken with me. So she started to make this film only with hope and serious

decision. In eleven days she made a feature film. With real people, like the girls that were in the prison of their father, with the real father. She tried not to blame the father, but to understand him. Her film was accepted by the official selection of Cannes. Jean-Luc Godard loved this film, he is always talking about the film. And he said several times: „If we could have one or two films like this each year, cinema is alive“. The film is very simple, the budget was very low, something like nothing. In those times with 70 000 US Dollars we could make a feature film with 35 mm. But this film was able to show what is the mentality of the Iranian people: when they are very religious, when they follow the old book, they can be aggressive towards the family. The father was trying to save his girls, for this world and the other world after this one. And he became the prison ward of his daughters.

In the film you were not to judge, there is not any judgment in there. If I would make this film, I would judge the father; Samira didn't, Samira just tried to understand. The Film became very famous everywhere. And it was able to change the situation of two girls. You will see that during the eleven days that the two girls participated in the film, they are changing. They started to understand many things around them. And then by the benefit of the film, because we sold this film, although very cheap, for 150 000 Dollars, with part of that budget Samira rebuilt their homes, sent them to school, provided medicine and doctors. Finally, on the same day that Samira married, one of the girls married too. And she had changed completely. The father, too. So you have to criticise the ideas in the mind of people, criticise the culture, not the humans, victims of this kind of culture.

Participant: I'm quite interested in the relation between fiction and reality. You both want to change reality with film and I'm interested in how you decide how much reality is in the film and how much is fiction or can fiction be a better way to change reality than a documentary or can you do both ways fiction and reality? Can you say something about this issue?

Jasmila Zbanic: I made before several documentaries and I really love documentaries, because you have to open yourself up completely and love the characters. At least I really want to work with people I love, I respect. I have to respect them, that they trust me, I trust them and we establish a very bold relationship. And in the end, I want them to really be happy with the film, that they would not say: „I don't want to see it.“ That's the rule. So going into fiction, was for me the possibility to show things I maybe wouldn't like to expose in the case of real people, because they would suffer certain consequences from the exposure. As I told you with respect to raped women: I didn't want to expose them again. They just found peace and I didn't want to break that peace by asking them to live again through this moment.

So fiction for me was based on long research, research based on books, about what happened, about psychology, other wars. But the best thing was talking to these women and being with them. I met a woman who had a child from the rape and she didn't tell the child that she was the result of a rape. I asked her to talk to me and I told her about which kind of film I wanted to make. She said: „I don't want to talk about it“. And I said: „Do you agree that I come to have coffee with you in your house from time to time? I will take you as my advisor, so the production could pay

you money," because she was totally poor. So the advice was just being there. We would sit and have coffee in her house and talk about TV series, wardrobes and actresses. Nothing about the past, nothing about the future, nothing about the kid.

And slowly she opened and talked about her problems and that was for me the body experience, to feel it in my own body of how it is to live with a child, who asks the question: „What do I have from my father?“ Because her child believed her father died as a hero. So this body experience in reality helped me make a fiction.

For the second film as well. I had to have my chemistry of the body changed through meeting these people, trying to feel the truth of them and then go into writing. And the same for my actors: I would put them in touch with those people, with locations, with the city, because in both of my films the main actors are not from Sarajevo, not from Bosnia. In the first film Mirjana Karanovic, who is from Serbia, had even bigger problems, because it was Serbs who committed the crimes in Bosnia. She's an incredible human being. She was always talking against the war and protesting during the war. So for her it had a double importance being Esma in the film. And for her to listen to these women - she was falling apart every time! I was really very afraid of how she would endure this psychologically, because she would feel guilt, as she belongs to these people, to the Serbs, and though she has nothing to do with it, she had to get rid of this guilt. So the film for her, for me and for other people was a kind of catharsis in our lives. So later when she was acting the role, she had this reality within herself and she was able to suggest lines, certain scenes and go through them.

Responsibility for the protagonists

Irene Jung: You already mentioned that when you make films with protagonists you can have a big influence, it can be good, it can also be bad. Jackie told us that it can also be a very uncomfortable experience when people take up your story and film it. Or we have had the example that you can change the life of people and this is also a kind of responsibility, as you just said: How will she take it psychologically during this kind of film work about a very hard issue? So it's also a question: what kind of responsibility you feel for your protagonists?

Mohsen Makhmalbaf: I always start my film with a big pain in my heart. For example to make a movie like *Kandahar* I went secretly to Afghanistan and for it I had to wear my beard, I was wearing the Afghan dress. I arrived in a land with lots of land mines and all my friends told me: „It's a very dangerous trip that you will take.“ I went to have enough pain and dreams for the country that I knew had a very specific situation. When I arrived in Herat city, two hours by car from the border to Iran, for a one week stay, I was shocked. Because I saw with my own eyes more than 20.000 people that were dying at the side of the street because of hunger. In front of my eyes - women dead, children dead, men dead. And I couldn't do anything for them. And you know at that moment I thought: „I hate cinema, if it could not do anything for them!“ This pain made my movie *Kandahar*, not me. You need a very strong energy and then every problem in your work turns to nothing. This is the main thing that I need.

Sometimes you will see a very big tragedy. Sometimes you will see many small things but their meaning is very big. It can be one girl, one boy, one child. For example I saw in BBC a news that affected me a lot. In Israel, some Israeli soldiers, afraid of something that appeared to be a bomb, asked two children, to go and touch it in order to find out, if it was a bomb or not. The children were crying and they made pee in their trousers. This has enough pain for me to make a film about it because imagine that you are a child and you know what is a bomb, because maybe your father died in an explosion. And someone asks you to do that so he would survive himself. First I need pain. And then I have to think: this subject, this pain, does it concern a lot of people or only one person? Because perhaps I can help one person to solve his or her problem. But if it is general, if it has a meaning for everyone everywhere, then I try to think as an intellectual, to calculate how much this pain belongs to all human beings.

Because finally human beings will watch our film. I will think: „Ok if my film will be 90 minutes long, if one million people will look at my film: 90 minutes multiplied with one million persons, than means 90 million minutes that I will have of the life of human beings. If you recount: some of us have a life span which is less than that! It means each film can spend two, three, four, five, sometimes a hundred times of the life span of a human being. You know here it is not the money that counts. We will kill the life of people with our mistakes in cinema. This is the reason why I calculate: how much of people's life time should I kill with my film? So I should care about the subject, how much of it has a meaning for people in other countries, other cultures.

In my experience I knew that in cinema you often could not believe in the acting, or how the subject was presented - the grip on reality is one of the problems! And cinema always will kill reality. Because you put big cameras, lots of lights and everyone knows: this machine has power. Everyone can look at you from everywhere, so you're afraid. Everybody looks at me. And some of the people have shame, they change in front of the camera. One of the challenges is to kill the camera.

For example, we asked children, who we picked as actors, as actresses from the street, to play with the camera, to look through the lense at the scene. And at some moment you say: „Ok this time you look and I will play with the camera“. We always play with children. And we try to use their reactions. For example I'm talking with you and I see you do something like this. I try to use your reaction. Everyone has different reactions, a different character. We try to catch different characters, we don't feed the real characters 100% with our story. This is the reason why I will write just a four page script like for the film you just saw in part; and then in the shooting, the film will develop itself.

There is a „Behind the Scene“ of the film „Blackboard“, and there you can see it: I wrote four pages for that script. And then my daughter was asking the real people, she gave them some advice whispering in their ears and she was waiting for the result. The dialogue is not from Samira actually. It is something that she advised and something she could catch - always mixing: the marriage of reality and your storyline can be fresh and real and at the same time you have the storyline. Because the audience wants a subject to concentrate on. They are waiting for some suspense. But very limited suspense. As a line to not loose your concentration.

We will find our actors and actresses among real people in the real locations. When I need a poor child. Ok, I have to find one poor child. Why should someone else have to act like a poor child? We even use most of the time their dress or we give them some dress of which we like the colour, so they would use it one month and then they get used to it and then we shoot the film. The real location, real people, a real dress. Always real light. We wait for the real light, sometimes we wait for the light to be better for us. Light can kill.

This kind of mixing reality and our storyline became a style in nowadays cinema. As you know in Iranian cinema the style is now known to be a mixture between reality and the story. By the way this kind of film-making was started by a guy who was living in Germany, Sohrab Shahid Sales. He's the father of our cinema. Especially Abbas Kiarostami is very influenced by his films. He got the Berlinale Award forty years ago for two of the great films he made. And when Iranian cinema was very famous everywhere, he was sick here, nobody helped him. Nobody mentioned that he is the father of our cinema. And finally he passed away in USA without any name.

And shame on us, because some great people started and founded something, that others used, you know, and then he is forgotten. So this is somehow to show respect to his name. Sohrab Shahid Sales. He has made two big films, and if you see them you will be shaken. Another film maker that has influenced us very much: Forough Farrokhzad, a poet; she passed away in a car accident, at thirty two years of age. Her film was screened at Oberhausen Film Festival 47 years ago, called *The House Is Black*. She taught us how we could make films, although she has made only one film. This is the best short and documentary film that we had in Iran and there it was censored. Against the prohibition I gave it to Marco Mueller's (Festival Director Locarno, later Venice) and to other festivals to show it there and now it is a famous film. We learned from this film.

Forough arrived to film in a house for patients with leprosy and you will choke when you see the first images. But the film asks you to wait. And she will show you how you could find a deeper understanding of life and the beauty of life in a very tragic situation. After a few minutes you will see: they marry each other, they love each other. The beauty from dirt in Iranian cinema comes out of this film. With a small budget, only with a good philosophy, with good eyes, you could create cinema. Not with a lot of money and with lots of facilities. I think, all of you can be famous film makers, effective film makers - if first you believe in yourself.

And let me tell you something about my style in teaching my family. I told them: you need to believe in yourselves, if you are going to make films. I for instance said: ok, let's learn to cook. If you are going to learn about cooking: If you can cook very well, you can be a good film maker. How? Concentrate one day on one food recipe. After twelve hours you can make one good food for yourself. In thirty days you will have the experience for cooking thirty different meals. So now you are a cook. The next class will be riding bicycles. If you concentrate, after two weeks you can ride 50 kilometres. My wife, my children, all of them, couldn't ride bicycles. After two weeks all of them could ride 50 kilometres per day. How? I told them: „You should concentrate on **one** thing only.“

If you learn how you can write a story: forget everything from the morning, when you wake up until you go to sleep: you only read a story and try to write a story. After 40 days you will see: you have become a lot more of a story writer. If you concentrate on one thing. The problem in our schools is: Geography two hours, History two hours, Literature two hours, Mathematics two hours. And we always have to shift. I found out that to concentrate on one thing during one month, two months changes you a lot. If you love something and you concentrate, you will find out: I have a talent for something. I think, Cinema is like, you know, driving. You can learn it nowadays by digital camera in two, three months maximum. But you should have dreams and pain and responsibility to change something. I think then everything will be in your favour.

Irene Jung: We have talked about, what you both were saying: one moment you have to allow your body, your feeling, your intuition to react to situations, to grab you, and to motivate you to make your film. Also you have to have the other moments, where you have to say: „I have to think about 90 minutes of the life of how many people“, or you have to ask: „For whom could it be important or meaningful?“ On the other hand, when you're writing a script, you are also very responsible of investigating reality. Perhaps you can tell us a little bit about how you deal with this task, when you are starting to make a film like *Na Putu*; when you go into a real situation, how do you try to get not only information about something but also to get the feeling about the situation - and not only you, also your team, how do you try to immerse all your team into this reality?

Jasmila Zbanic: Oh, yes. I need research to go deeper into the subject and also to get rid of my prejudices. When I started writing *Na Putu...* I have to explain a little further: Bosnia is now after the war a secular country, but religion soon started to be very important. For the first time it went into the school system, even into kindergardens. And it's now almost a shame to say that you are not religious, then you are like excluded from the mainstream. And that could be a reaction to socialism where religion was considered opium for the masses, and it was not popular at all. It was never forbidden, as politicians say now. I have my grandparents who were going to the mosque freely. It was never forbidden, but it was not supported by the state.

So I wanted to explore a subject starting with something, that really hurt me, which was the fact that there was a man at my friends house who didn't want to shake hands with me. He said: „Sorry, I'm not shaking hands with women“. Although I had been in other countries, I was in Iran, where women do not shake hands with men, but it had never happened to me in Bosnia. And as a woman I was insulted. And I didn't know why I felt insulted. This man didn't say: „You are a horrible person“ or something like that. But I was really deeply insulted by the fact. And I realised there is a whole movement of Wahhabies that I know nothing about. They live in my city and every day, they are passing by my side. I read in the papers that they are always connected with terrorism. But I never took a closer look on them. And I asked myself: why I'm so angry and why I'm afraid and what is behind these human stories? And suddenly many questions opened up for me.

But for me the first thing was to get rid of prejudices. Because as a feminist and atheist I'm so much against religion, that I could become a militant, like you

mentioned, which is dangerous. That was for me the first thing to say: „No, I should not judge, I just need to open myself to human beings and understand why they are like that. Even though rationally, I cannot agree with anything they say“. So I was working very much on myself because I am very passionate and always say what I think. Which for these people was a big wall. And luckily I met a man who wanted to talk to me. He was recommended by a friend of a friend; he was Wahhabi and he wanted to talk to me. And when I sit with him, I realise: I know this face, but I couldn't remember from where. We slowly talked about life before the war, and then he told me he was dating my friend from my school class and suddenly I remembered him as the wildest, craziest guy, and more on drugs than any of us! He was really a pain in the ass in the clubs. Always most violent, most – how should I say – crazy. So I expressed my surprise: „Oh that's you and now you are not shaking hands with women and you are doing this!“ and he said: „Yes, I've realised: I now have a truth to hold onto.“

That little connection with the past gave me the courage to say: „Look, let's talk openly.“ So I could ask him anything and he would answer. Later he introduced me to the community and to the chief, who didn't want to talk to me. In the end I persuaded them to talk, but they were not looking at me, which was really hard for me: to talk to somebody without looking into the other's eyes. So, what I'm saying is, that I had to suppress and get rid of my normal reaction as a woman and a citizen of Bosnia, where I would say to somebody: „Please look into my eyes when we talk, please look at me.“ And to try to understand from which position they are coming, from which experience of pain they're coming from and why they're doing what they're doing. Not justifying, not saying this is bad or wrong. But just to say: „It is a reality in my country.“ For me, my task was to make a metaphor, not to say „Ok let's do a documentary, to show this is how people live, this is how they're dressed“ etc. For me it was important to tell a story, which was painful for me.

Irene Jung: I have looked at the clock and we have thought of making a short break, if it is ok.

(Break)

Conversation with the participants

Irene Jung: So a little bit time is left and I think I'm speaking for all of us that we are very curious to also find out what you from the audience are curious about. If you want to put questions in German it can be translated. So we should make one round and take up the questions from the morning.

Participant: Ok mine was, for Mohsen: you are in exile at the moment. How do you try to influence the Iranian society from outside?

Mohsen Makhmalbaf: I have two answers for that. First I made films in five different countries, like India, Afghanistan, Tajikistan, Turkey and Iran. As my films will release everywhere, my audience is not only the Iranian people. And I have a pain from different parts of the world. I don't feel exactly like I am only the Iranian

film maker and my responsibility is only for the pain of a part of the world. Nowadays when there is a new tragedy in Afghanistan or in Tajikistan, again I have a new pain in my heart. But at the same time I'm Iranian, I made films in Iran, I was born there. I have many things from Iran and always I'm worried about the situation of the Iranian people.

Five years ago I moved away from Iran. I was in Afghanistan, India and finally since last year I am in Paris. Actually I stay in Paris, mostly because of the Iranian political situation. After the election day, after the coup d'état made by Ahmadinejad in Iran, I had a lot of political activity, I had a lot of meetings with many different governments to describe the situation of the Iranian people for them, to try to correct something in their minds about the Iranian people, about the things that they need.

Because Western governments are always thinking about how to control the atomic bomb. They are able to forget about freedom, about Human Rights, about democracy in Iran. If they only could control the atomic bomb, they will continue their deal with the Iranian government forever. So we should change something in their minds. And I used myself for a while, for eight, nine months like an ambassador of the Iranian people without a government. I used my name to open some doors to talk about this situation. And I can also add: during the last year we have gotten very beautiful images and very profound images by mobile phone, that young Iranians took during demonstrations, during the fights with the police. And these kind of images have played a greater role than all of the Iranian history of cinema, to change the image of the Iranian people in the eyes of the people of the world. Before these images, everybody could think: Ok, the Iranian people are someone like Ahmadinejad. But after these kind of images, we could break this image totally, so they would understand: the Iranian people are something, the Iranian government is something else.

I worked with this kind of activity. For example, the very first day of the protests we managed for one crew to have these images from Iran and we used all our contacts with all the media of the world that we had since long time for our cinema production, for sending them these kind of images. And you could see that lots of television channels could transmit them. We thought we could manage to do something more, as we could not get the images very fast everywhere. So Hana was sitting in the house and each of the next days we could get 200 to 300 of these mobile phone images, and she used a link with which she was sending them everywhere.

I can say during the last year I was something like a Human Rights and political activist for the Green Movement. But we can also make films from outside even to be seen inside of Iran. Of course we can use some places that are similar to Iran and make a film about the subject. And even when I was making films in Afghanistan or in Tajikistan I was thinking about my nation too. I made a film called *Sex and Philosophy* in Tajikistan. It is not a sexy film but it talks about sex. I was trying to break the taboo around sex in my society. The film raised questions about the relationships between men and women throughout different angles, to find out: can love be an answer for the loneliness of the human being or not? Something like that.

But it uses dance, which is taboo in Iranian cinema and is talking about sex.

I made another film in India. An Iranian couple goes to India for their honeymoon, and they talk about everything that is taboo in Iran. And they criticise everything that you could not mention in Iran. You break many Iranian taboos, but the couple is filmed in India. We could do something through film; but still better is to take into account the new technology of the Internet. The Iranian people are educated people. Most of them have access to Internet. They can go throughout even the non-political section of the Internet and find many informations for their life. I think times change. Tomorrow for example, I have a meeting with some of the leaders of Google and I am going to suggest them that there could be a film festival on Google. Can you imagine the young generation of the world could participate in one important film festival in Google? Once a year and dedicated every year to a different country. For example who has made the best film of Kasachstan? And then another competition, to make something more attractive, get more attention for it.

Participant: You were talking a lot about the political level, but I'm quite curious, for what I sense in Iran is that people have to understand on a further level what the nature of democracy is. I feel very often that they mistake capitalism or consumerism for democracy. It's the nature of democracy here in Europe, but there is no clear understanding for that.

Mohsen Makhmalbaf: You know democracy is a name for many things, it doesn't mean everywhere the same thing. The Iranian people are under the pressure of an ideological regime. They need freedom to talk about themselves, to describe themselves, freely. The young generation needs jobs, they need relationships with others, for example girls with boys and boys with girls. This is even more important for them than democracy. Because they are under the pressure of their sexuality, but they can not do anything. Therefore Iran has lots of prostitutes in the streets. Not, because they prefer prostitutes, but there is no way except that one. Can you imagine: Iran calls itself an ideological regime in the name of God - and in the political prisons they rape prisoners? We have thousands, thousands, maybe a hundred thousand prostitutes in the streets. Then suddenly one woman was taken by the government for that reason and was killed through stoning. What a crazy situation we have!.

The Iranian people need to have more freedom. If we want to fulfill 100% of the dreams of the human beings, ok we will become depressed. But if we think that we can change our situation 1% for the better, step by step, in each step, we are not going to become depressed again by another revolution, as we did before. They are thinking: how we can succeed to improve the situation 1%? and I think they are on the way. Even when they poured into the streets of Iran and shouted or were silenced: if three million people protested in the streets of Paris or in the USA, you would see a lot of violence; but three million Iranian people arrived in the streets, and not even one glass broke! Then after a few days the government attacked. People nowadays are educated I think. They are intellectual people, they are ready for democracy, because they had enough experience under the pressure of this ideological regime; and it is the best thing to have knowledge, for the things that you want to achieve.

But it is different nowadays compared with thirty years ago when we had the other revolution. In that time we knew that we didn't want the Shah. But we didn't know exactly: what do we want? Nowadays the young generation know better than before, what they want. They need love, they need jobs, they need freedom, they need to vote. It is not important what is the result of the vote. Actually they want to have real elections, including the right to make their own mistakes. They aren't going to vote for a government and allow someone else to take over. No! Let me make my own mistakes! This is the process of reaching democracy – but what democracy? Is it a German democracy? Is this a humanistic democracy? No! There is a big economic deal between Germany and Iran even for torture facilities. You know, all the machines that control our telephones, are bought from Germany. The mines that explode in Afghanistan are made in France. Is this democracy if democracy is defined by overall humanistic values? No!

You see, democracy means we can vote and then a Berlusconi can come out of it. This is democracy. Democracy is not our last call. It is one of a series of steps that we have in our lives, that we should challenge! As our friend told us: we need a new Europe, we even need a new democracy. Because for example, if you say we are going to vote, will every outcome from our vote be perfect? No! We can vote for Hitler again. What is democracy? Democracy is one technique of having an experience of majorities, not reaching for the paradise for human beings. Yes, Iranian people don't know what is democracy, but they know exactly what is fascism. They know, what is the pressure of an ideological regime. And they know they need love. Love is very simple, everyone can feel it in their hearts. But it's forbidden. Sometimes a smile is forbidden. You know the children when they are born, they have a smile. They didn't learn not to smile. But sometimes the law in Iran, it doesn't allow you to have a smile.

Irene Jung: How is that?

Mohsen Makhmalbaf: It is because you are a very bad woman if you smile at men you don't know. And they can even arrest you for it.

Irene Jung: Oh, I understand.

Participant: I was last year in Berlin and I think you, Jasmila, were two years ago in Berlin.

Jasmila Zbanic: Four years.

Participant: Oh, ok. I was with a Croatian friend and we were in a restaurant near the festival, talking about how your film was and how touching, and there was a Serbian journalist who suddenly joined into our conversation. And she rejected your film as a propaganda movie. And my question is now: how is the perception of your film in the Balkan region outside Bosnia? How relevant is the film for them?

Jasmila Zbanic: Well, when we had *Grbavica* in cinemas, half of Bosnia with a majority of Serbian population didn't allow the film to be shown in their cinemas. The reason was mainly because they hadn't see the film. They just knew that I said at

the Awards Ceremony (of the Berlinale) that the war criminals Mladic and Karadzic who were hiding in Serbia should be captured, because they created the strategy of war, where it was allowed and welcomed and rewarded to rape. So I used this opportunity of the closing ceremony of the Berlinale, where everybody was watching, to mention something which was crucial in my life in Sarajevo. If war criminals are not in prison, life would always feel as if I am a victim and I hate the feeling of being a victim. It's a very dangerous condition, it's too emotional and too manipulative. I hate it. And that's very often the feeling of many people in Bosnia, this victimisation. So in order to change it, the first thing is to have the war criminals in the prison.

Just for imagination: can you imagine that 20 years after the Second World War, Hitler was free? It's out of sense! And the Serbian government was supporting the war criminals and that was the reason why the people in Serbia didn't want to see the film. They said: it's against Serbia, it's against all Serbs. Which is for me totally ridiculous: that because you are Serbs you would identify with war criminals! You know, for me that shows the level of conscience of people. I mentioned Mirjana Karanovic who said: because my people did this, I am supposed to be louder than anybody else condemning these things, not protecting them. Most of the people in Serbia still protect these war criminals. According to statistics, more than half of Serbia believes they are war heroes. You have (film director) Emir Kusturica who comes to Munich with the music band *No Smoking Orchestra* and they're singing the song of Radovan Karadzic being a hero! Yes, you could read this a few days ago in *Die Zeit*. It's totally crazy.

It's this mythology, which I mentioned before, which makes people crazy, not seeing the reality. They see something else. And we had Mirjana Karanovic who lives in Belgrade, and she was attacked. There were a lot of threatening letters. She should leave Serbia, that she is a Muslim whore, that she should never work in Serbia and so on. And we decided to show the film there to give people the opportunity to see that there is nothing against Serbs, Serbs are not mentioned in the film. The only time that something is mentioned is „Chetnik“. Chetnik is the name for these fascist organisations that are proud with what they have done. There is a web page of Chetniks where you can see that they are very proud, they say they liberated Srebrenica. That was the thing that was mentioned and they took it very personally.

So we showed the film and before, there were two attempts to stop it. One woman came in and screamed in front, that there were many bad things said about the Serbs, you know, trying to stop the screening. And there were 100 boys with t-shirts of Karadzic and Mladic coming into the cinema. For me this was really painful because these boys were 20 years old. It means that before, when the war started, they were seven years old. They have nothing to do with the war, they were not responsible, they don't know the facts, they have nothing to do with it. It's a system and their parents give them this lesson in mythology, that this is good, that this is good for them, to believe that these people are heroes. And what was great in Belgrade was that the cinema audience kicked these people out and we had the screening.

And it was really emotional, because of course not everybody had agreed with the war back then - there was a strong movement in Serbia against the war, they tried

hard for the truth to come out, to reach especially young people. So these were the facts. I really didn't expect the reaction, as I didn't make the film to condemn somebody or to say: Serbs are bad. It was for me important and I expected that people would feel with this woman, that they were able to identify with a human being who suffers, no matter what's the name of the people in question. And then afterwards, the film was forbidden in a part of Bosnia but it was on the black market with pirate DVDs and it was a bestseller. I didn't get any money, but I was really happy to have it there. And there were lots of discussions in forums. People saw it and were saying: why the hell did they forbid this film? Why are they thinking we are stupid people? What is wrong? What has this woman said? Nothing. There were lots of people who didn't agree with the film, but those people were not in TV, not in the media, not creating general opinion. Just a few voices in the forums. So it's general politics that is still very much pro-criminals and very much hiding the truth. That's sad because I think the healing process will start when the truth is on the table and we see how we deal with this truth, not when it's under the table, behind our mind.

Participant: I have one question for both of you: since you expose yourself a lot to terrible things and constantly deal with huge problems of your people, and as you said that you can take only little steps to improve the situation: is there a danger for yourselves to get frustrated, do you have to develop strategies against depression and frustration or are just the results of your work enough to keep your own mental health?

Jasmila Zbanic: I had the same question for Mohsen because I met him and he is so calm and generous. And I thought: how can you be like that? Because you cannot go back to your country! I was fascinated, so maybe you say, how...

Mohsen Makhmalbaf: Yeah, when I was in Afghanistan three years ago with one of our films, the Iranian government sent terrorists and they exploded bombs at our set. Twenty persons were injured hardly, one person died. We thought: Ok what can we do. I was visiting one of the injured in the hospital, a ten year old boy had 40 holes in his body. I was crying and I was asking him: „Please forgive us, they were going to kill me, but instead they injured you.“ He told me: „No, I don't excuse you.“ He couldn't understand, that I didn't do that. That someone else was going to kill me, but it happened to him. He said: „No, I don't excuse you, I hate you!“

I became depressed. We asked ourselves: do we have right to continue our work here? Where it is not safe for us and maybe something will happen again? And at the same time we were telling us: if we stop our work, we let the terrorist government be the winner. We finished this film by changing locations every couple of hours. One shot here, one shot in another city to finish the film. Not let them be the winners. But, nowadays it is very difficult for me to return to such a kind of location, as I am worried that a bomb could kill other people. When you look at someone who is dead and you feel: If I was not here, he could be alive, you become deeply depressed. And at the same time, when you have a lot of pain, and you cannot transform it into creation, the pain will kill you from inside.

When I made my movie *Kandahar*, after that I had thousands of interviews about Afghanistan's situation everywhere. I had written a book that was translated in

different countries to describe their pain, but I became deeply depressed. One day I was talking in front of a TV channel in Greece, I fainted, I was in the hospital for two months. I was like this. They brought me from Greece to my home and it took time to rebuilt myself. Because I was always thinking about 20 000 people that were dying in front of my eyes. Yeah, sometimes it's not enough to make a film. That was the reason that I started to engage in several humanitarian activities, because it is not enough to talk about the problems, you should change the problems! To make you happy not only for yourself but also for the others. It is a mixed benefit. Sometimes I and my family are so depressed! But we use this kind of depression as energy, to change it into hope.

There is one sentence in *Kandahar*. One character says: if we could have one candle each, there is no need for sun. Sometimes we try to lit one candle, with a little light you have hope. Depression can become less and less, but how you could be very relaxed, when exactly you are in a lot of problems....

Jasmila Zbanic: There are lots of periods of giving up and anger and depression but again I think we have this one life which was given to us as a performance to come and make the best out of it, not to our own benefit, but for everyone.

Sometimes we see films, that seem to have everything, enough budget, good camera, wonderful actors, you know, everything. But then I feel, the film is there to hide the truth, to leave us in the same system, which is to the benefit for few people not for everybody. And I cannot stand the film, I immediately react to it. Because it doesn't want to change the world and life, it doesn't want to go into some new field, which is not yet explored, but keeping us stable on the seats. So I'm trying when I'm in these bad feelings, which is happening quite often to me, to find a reason to laugh, to love, to go further. And it sounds maybe depressing when we talk about, it but my friends from Germany when they come to Bosnia, they have the best of fun. Because people there laugh a lot, you have a really good time. Maybe because of this pressure of life you try to use the best out of it.

Irene Jung: And I will also add something from the film festival because as a Human Rights organisation that is dealing with really terrible issues, with respect to Human Rights of women, we also often have this question for us. For one thing, for us personally as I have to see so many horrible images, that sometimes I say I can't see them anymore, I have to make a pause, somebody else has to see it. But also for our experts, who are dealing with realities, if for instance there is a person being stoned or 1200 girls being circumcised and mutilated in a country in Africa and then they are trying to do something and perhaps it's very difficult, normally it is very difficult and you have to have personal strategies to survive this. One strategy is for sure to discuss this in a collective, to be together, to share laughter and black humour, whatever we can do.

But for the film festival it is also the question: if we want to be effective, if we want to make people really want to see the film, that they want to be touched and sensibilised by it and they want to do something about the problem, there have to be a **certain kind of** films. And we have seen that it is important that they should not be films with exaggerated violence, as then people don't want to look at it or will

shut off their empathy because they don't support it. But furthermore: when we want to motivate people to show solidarity in action, they have to find some hope. We always see that we have to have hope in our films about these problems and really the best thing is to see women who are fighting against social injustice; like last year when we had such an impressive woman. The film talked about the most terrible things that happened in the war in Liberia, but there were these women dressed in white, who for years stood up to the dictator and summoned forces and summoned more forces, between the Christian churches and then they got the Muslim churches together. They were innovative, inventive, creative, like something we see now also in Stuttgart 21. By the way I have talked to Mohsen about Stuttgart 21, he is very fascinated by it.

Mohsen Makhmalbaf: Why don't you make films about it? (*Laughter*)

Irene Jung: Yes, he says you have to make films about that. And so when we saw these women, this gave us such a positive feeling. This carries you on and then you forget about horrible things, because it's just so motivating. And for us another thing, which pushes us, is that incredibly enough in a horrible war, where the most horrible things happened between neighbours and people who knew each other, that these women accomplished the impossible.

They did something that no African intervention force, no blue helmet troops, nobody could and dared to and wanted to do, to go in between the forces in conflict, and they did it. And so what happened? Nobody in the world got to know about that, because the media boycotted totally this information. Not one of the international media who were informing the world from within Liberia, nobody informed about this. So the film-maker who did this great great film *Pray the Devil Back to Hell* - I recommend it for all the documentary film makers - she came to Liberia and she tried to make this film. So she looked for photos, for footage. She didn't encounter anything! So the only footage she got was from the personal cameraman from the dictator, Charles Taylor. And because the women in white had appeared in front of the dictator and they had given him their petition and they had insisted: „This war must end and you have to negotiate peace!“ - incredibly enough because this guy was such a horrible guy that people didn't want to look at him. Not even look at him! And so she got this footage, and she was totally astonished. Because you had hundreds and hundreds of footage hours of guys with guns and blood and victims and horror, but not one of these women.

So she asked a photo journalist, an international journalist: „Do you understand why I don't get any footage or fotos? Have you not seen these women?“ He said: „Yes, but I didn't want to take photos of them, they were too pathetic for my taste.“ So this was what really made me furious. It made me so furious that now we filmed all these discussions with the leader of the Women in White, Leymah Gbowee, we had a special discussion with a journalist, who was also shocked about the fact that she had not known anything about this and she is specialised in Africa and in development policies! And we will put it on our home page and it will go into the DVD edition from the EZEF – Evangelical Center for the Development of Filmworks. We **really** want to do something so that the media should confront themselves, they should react, they should reflect about it. What is it that leads them to ignore such a thing?

On the other hand - and that was also what made me furious - to create images from those people with guns, which was like in a position of power, in a position where people perhaps like to identify with these guys, bloody guys with these guns - I want to question it, and also for what we see in television. The images we have about wars are really horrible. Because in these wars they show images which make people shut off their empathy, getting like: it's every day the same, I am used to it, why should I care? And they **don't** show the people who do so incredible things like these women in Liberia. So that makes me furious and that's also something against depression and suffering. So much with respect to the film festival.

Jasmila Zbanic: I have a question for Mohsen. How do you see the future of cinema? Because the numbers show that less and less people are going to cinema. How do you see that it will develop?

Mohsen Makhmalbaf: The images continue, but the form of the release of the film actually will change. It will be changed by the digital format; because before that we used the celluloid negative, now we can make films with digital techniques. Then we made it in digital format and later transferred to 35mm for a while. But now you will see that everywhere it can be shown by digital techniques. So the facilities become smaller, the budget can become smaller and the freedom of the artist grows. And the internet can offer a different kind of cinema. For example, you can show a film on a screen in your city, but everywhere at the same hour around the world we could see one film for example.

Why Google or Yahoo or Youtube couldn't offer a different kind of cinema? You will give your film to Youtube for example and all theatres of the world on Tuesday at 5pm will show your film. I think that these kind of things will change. But cinema as cinema itself will continue, I think it will actually develop, like other art forms that develop. But cinema won't die. Why? For example food, we can have food in our house, but we go to a restaurant. We need to share food with other people. You can pray, if you are a believer, in your house but you will go to the mosque, you will go to Mecca. You need the energy of other humans. We need to share images with other people. This is the situation of cinema, why we go to some place like cinema, It is exactly the same reason why we go to a mosque or to a restaurant.

Jasmila Zbanic: Cinema is between mosque and restaurant.

Mohsen Makhmalbaf: Yeah. This is about being in the society with other people. It is something like making love with another person. Ok, you can do something with yourself, but why don't you do it? Because you need the other energy. Cinema is something made for the relationship between different images and different minds of the human beings. This will continue. But the form will change much. Cameras will become small, the audience can see films in different ways, but cinema I don't think will die.

Irene Jung: And what do you think?

Jasmila Zbanic: Very similar. Not to repeat but really very similar. I think it should be also a transformation of the institutions, of how they function. Because now you

have world sales and world sales are selling to distributors and distributors are giving it to cinemas and I have friends who are from the music sector. They had the same system and they cut it completely. Nowadays they immediately publish their CD on internet for people to download it for free. Where they get money and audience is in concerts. So something in this chain also has to change. I'm still trying to think how and what, but this system is not good at all anymore I think. World sales - distributors - cinemas, something is very rotten in this structure. So maybe Google...

Mohsen Makhmalbaf: Like the New Wave cinema in France: they produced for a show, like Lumière. He made a film, he was releasing it by himself. And no one was in between, you know. Like the art painter who is the seller of his own works. We should shorten somehow the way between film-maker and spectator, because many things change through the distributors, the theatre directors.

Jasmila Zbanic: Also you know I made a film one year and half ago and I waited for Berlinale and Berlinale showed it. And now it starts in France in February. And I'm supposed to come there and talk about it and in my mind I am already in my new film. For me it's past. I'm a different person, I have another passion and of course I could talk about it and it is nice, especially in this kind of form. But I want that film to be shown immediately. I was really dying that people see it. That's my food when I have a reaction from the audience. And that's because of this very slow system of how films get shown today.

Irene Jung: I think we're out of time, it's 2:10 pm, and we have to go to the airport. So I thank everybody very much, to the participants for your interest. Jasmila and Mohsen for coming. To the translator who gave us security, for the technical support and the people behind the cameras who guarantee, that these moments do not just pass like that, but that we can make them available to other people. And I'm also very happy to be here first time in the Film Academy, and I hope it will not be the last time. Our thanks to the Film Academy, it was great that we could be here with you to hold this workshop.

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