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**DOCUMENTARY FILM FESTIVALS; PROGRAMMING
ISSUES AND ORGANISING PROBLEMS**

By

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Abstract

In this study I tackle the possible organisational problems of a documentary film festival from the perspective of its programming. The aim of this paper is to compare the overall present situation in France and Serbia, by focussing primarily on the oldest and most important festivals of this kind in each country respectively: *Cinéma du réel* (Paris, France), *Festival États généraux du film documentaire — Lussas Doc* (Lussas, France) and *The Belgrade Documentary and Short Film Festival* (Belgrade, Serbia). More precisely: 1) *Cinéma du réel* and *The Belgrade Documentary and Short Film Festival* are chosen for being the biggest and oldest festivals of this type in the two countries; 2) *Lussas Doc* being one of the most valued and influential French festivals outside Paris.

In this work I hope to offer a better understanding of the organisation of documentary film festivals by considering the specificities of the genre, context and approach. I start by presenting a brief history of the three festivals and by providing sketches of their most recent editions. In the body of the study I catalogue and analyse the phenomena that have presented themselves as the most important issues in programming practice. Documentary film festivals as a festival type are particularly neglected and to my knowledge no other theoretical work in Serbia has centred on the programming perspective.

Résumé

Dans cette étude je m'occupe des problèmes possibles d'organisation d'un festival de film documentaire du point de vue de la programmation. Le but de cet article est de comparer la présente situation en France et en Serbie, en se concentrant en premier lieu sur les plus anciens et les plus importants festivals de ce type dans chaque pays respectivement: le *Cinéma du réel* (Paris), le *Festival États généraux du film documentaire — Lussas Doc* (Lussas, France) et le *Festival du Film Documentaire et du Court Métrage de Belgrade* (Belgrade). Plus précisément: 1) le festival *Cinéma du réel* et le *Festival du Documentaire et du Court Métrage de Belgrade* sont choisis comme étant les plus anciens et les plus importants festivals de ce type dans les deux pays; 2) *Lussas Doc* étant l'un des plus prisés et influents festivals français en dehors de Paris.

Dans ce travail j'espère offrir une meilleure compréhension de l'organisation des festivals du film documentaire en considérant les particularités du genre, du contexte et d'approche. Je commence par présenter une brève histoire des trois festivals et en résumant schématiquement leurs dernières éditions. Dans le corps central de l'étude je classe et analyse les phénomènes qui se sont présentés comme les plus importants dans la pratique de la programmation. Le festival documentaire est un type de festival particulièrement négligé et à ma connaissance aucun autre travail théorique en Serbie ne s'est concentré sur le point de vue de la programmation.

La principale question qui guide la recherche de cette étude est: Quels sont les erreurs les plus fréquentes dans la programmation d'un festival de film documentaire et comment effectivement les éviter? Comment faire le meilleur usage possible de tous les facteurs qui affectent normalement le festival (situation géographique, dates, budget, mécènes, et autres)?

Depuis sa création il y a 30 ans, le festival français *Cinéma du réel* (fondé en 1978) a réussi à se développer en un des festivals les plus importants d'Europe. Aussi, en France, il est, avec le *Festival International du Film Documentaire de Marseille*, perçu comme l'un des festivals majeurs du genre, malgré le fait que la compétition est fort

ardue. Il projette 150 à 250 films chaque année, divisé en plusieurs programmes. La sélection bénéficie d'une couverture médiatique assez remarquable avant, après et durant l'événement. Aussi, avant l'événement les festivaliers sont informés des nouveaux films confirmés comme étant projetés par le festival. Le festival attire un assez grand nombre de spectateurs — cinéphiles, journalistes et professionnels du monde entier.

Malgré le fait que le *Festival du Film Documentaire et du Court Métrage de Belgrade* (fondé d'abord sous le nom du *Festival Yougoslave du Film* à Pula, en Croatie, en 1953) est presque deux fois plus vieux que le *Cinéma du réel*, durant les 55 ans de son existence il n'a pas réussi à se positionner aussi haut sur le plan des festivals européens que son équivalent français. Malgré le fait que le festival soit hautement apprécié, il n'attire pas un public important ou une très grande attention médiatique. En partie basé sur le fait que c'est l'un des rares, sinon le seul, festival documentaire dans le pays, le *Festival du Film Documentaire et du Court Métrage de Belgrade* est suivi avec une attention significative. Il est aussi mis en valeur pour sa longue histoire constituée de plusieurs phases, certaines douées de plus de succès que d'autres. Chaque année le festival projette approximativement 150 documentaires, courts métrages, films d'animation et films expérimentaux en compétition nationale et internationale et programmes spéciaux. La couverture médiatique est moyenne et commence quelques jours avant le festival. Et pourtant, trois semaines seulement avant l'événement, la seule information disponible sur le site Web du festival sont les dates de la prochaine édition.

Le *Festival du Film Documentaire et du Court Métrage de Belgrade* n'a pas encore atteint son plein potentiel et a un grand espace de développement restant devant lui. Utilisant le modèle assez positif du *Cinéma du réel*, j'essaie de savoir ce que les organisateurs du festival à Belgrade pourraient faire afin d'avoir le même impact que son équivalent français. Néanmoins, le *Cinéma du réel* lui non plus n'a pas atteint son plein potentiel — il y a encore des possibilités remarquables de développement, spécialement en comparaison avec les festivals des pays avoisinants la France.

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1. Introduction

Although documentary films have a history that dates back to the beginnings of film as an art form, documentary film festivals as a distinct festival type have only expanded during the past couple of decades. The number of documentary festivals, not always big or influential, is growing in both countries, in France much more rapidly than in Serbia. The expansion of documentary film festivals coincides with the enlargement of a number of festivals in Europe. On the other hand, with the number of various festivals growing, the percentage of bigger and/or widely noticed festivals is decreasing. The current situation in Serbia is particularly interesting because there are only two mainly documentary film festivals in the country — *The Belgrade Documentary and Short Film Festival*, an annual festival founded in 1953, and *The Magnificent 7*, a smaller event, also annual, screening 7 films, founded in 2005. Documentaries are thus integrated in other festivals, but in those cases they do not represent the core of a festival.

1.1 The Main Issues

The main research question of this study is: what are the most common mistakes in programming at a documentary film festival and how to successfully avoid them? How to make the best possible use of all the factors that normally affect the festival (location, dates, budget, sponsors and so on)?

Subsequently, some of the questions this study will handle are:

- What is a good, successful selection and how do we make one?
- What are the factors that influence our decisions in selection process? How to best benefit from those factors in order to improve our programme? (sponsors, politics, budget, expected audience, target group, friends and collaborators)
- In which grade should a festival take a risk with its selection?
- In which grade do the sponsors and their interests affect festival's selection and timetable (prime time screenings, opening, closing film)?
- What is an ideal number of films — festivals with dozens of films vs. festivals with only few films?

- Documentary, short, animated and experimental film festivals vs. pure documentary film festivals?
- How should one choose the right opening/closing film?
- How do we choose the topics for the off programme — non competitive programme, retrospectives, workshops and so on?
- What is a good and what is a lousy, non- functional timetable?

Up till now, the researched material has shown that the factors which affect programming are numerous, but first of all that documentary film festivals are rather special and that, in contrast to feature film festivals, they do not attract audience by definition.

By researching all the factors that influence the decision making process in programming a documentary film festival the text should provide the best possible solutions for deciding a successful theme, selection and timetable, all in all a programme of a documentary film festival.

1.2 The Relevance of the Topic

Since its creation thirty years ago, French festival *Cinéma du réel* (founded in 1978) has managed to develop into one of the Europe's leading documentary film festivals. Also, in France, it is, together with *International Documentary Film Festival of Marseille*, seen as one of the major festival of this genre, even though the competition is very arduous. It screens approximately 150 - 250 films each year, divided into several programmes. The selection has rather noticeable media coverage before, after and during the event. Also, prior to the event the audience is informed of the new films confirmed for projection by the festival. The festival attracts quite a big audience — film lovers, journalists and professionals from all around the world.

Even though *The Belgrade Documentary and Short Film Festival* (founded first as the *Yugoslav Film Festival* in Pula, Croatia, 1953) is almost twice as old as *Cinéma du réel*, during fifty- five years of its existence it has not managed to position itself as high on the European festival map as its French counterpart did. Although the festival is very much appreciated, it does not attract huge audience or vast media attention. Partially

based on the fact that it is a rare, if not the sole, documentary film festival in the country, *The Belgrade Documentary and Short Film Festival* is followed with significant attention. It is also valued for its long history during which it had different phases, some of which were more successful than the others. Each year, the festival screens approximately 150 documentary, short, animated and experimental films in national and international competition and special programmes. Media coverage is fair and it usually starts a few days before the event. Yet, only three weeks prior to the event, the only information available on the festival's webpage are the dates of the next edition.

The Belgrade Documentary and Short Film Festival has not yet reached its maximum potential and it has a huge space for further development before itself. Using the rather positive model of *Cinéma du réel*, I try to find out what the organisers of the festival in Belgrade could do in order to achieve the same effect as the festival's French counterpart has. Nevertheless, the Parisian *Cinéma du réel* has not reached its utmost potential either — there are still notable possibilities for development, especially as compared with festivals from countries neighbouring France.

2. Methodology

2.1 Detailed Methodology

I am using mixed methodology in this study, with the emphasis on the qualitative methods.

In depth interviewing — series of open ended question interviews with a loosen format, voice recorded and transcribed, conducted on several occasions in period Aug. 2007 - Aug. 2008. The first group of material consists of longer interviews with the directors of the three researched festivals. The second group consists of shorter interviews with festivals' staff and professionals in the field — professors at film schools, critics, directors, film students and culture journalists, all asked the same open questions;

Analysis of print material — festivals' catalogues, programmes, agendas, narrative reports, press clipping; as well as publications, articles and studies on management in arts and culture, festival management and documentary film;

Direct observation — field work: attending the festivals in question, getting a better understanding of context, cross- checking information, gaining new insights, discovering things beyond the interviews, taking photos;

Quantitative approach is included only partially — mostly in overviews of the previous festivals' programmes (numbers expressing: how many different regions films come from, different thematic, films in competitive i.e. non- competitive programme and so on).

The text analyses *Cinéma du réel*, *Lussas Doc* and *The Belgrade Documentary and Short Film Festival* through their most recent editions — with detailed analysis of 2008 edition of each mentioned festival, and sketches of the previous editions. Where

necessary, other festivals are also mentioned, but these are less important, side- examples (Rotterdam, Cannes, Locarno, Pesaro, Venice, Nyon: *Visions du reel*, Marseille, Pula, Belgrade: FEST, *The Magnificent Seven*, *Kustendorf*, and others — both documentary-included, pure documentaries and feature film festivals).

The focus of this text is on the information gained from the individuals, and hence, the directors and artistic directors of the main festivals in question are particularly important for this study — Marie-Pierre Duhamel-Müller (*Cinéma du réel*), Pascale Paulat, Christophe Postic (*Lussas Doc*) and Janko Baljak (*The Belgrade Documentary and Short Film Festival*). Moreover, the directors are the ones who make the decisions that the text analyses and that is the reason why the interviews with them are the starting point of this research. On the other hand, professionals from the field as well as other festival guests are the ones who benefit or not from the decisions made by festivals' directors and programmers. For this reason, and because of their experience within the subject, they make the second group of the interview respondents. Print material is the second most important source of information — newspaper articles, annual reports, catalogues and other texts provide all the other relevant information that is left out of the interviews. Print material is also significant because it can prove, or, on the other hand, contradict the information gathered from the interviews. The segments where qualitative approach cannot be applied are researched using the quantitative method.

The collected material consists of: interviews with festivals' directors, catalogues, timetables, films, newspaper articles, festivals' final reports.

2.2 Methodology Overview

- 3 festivals (Paris, Lussas and Belgrade);
- deep research of the last 2 festivals' editions (years 2008 and 2007);
- a reflection on the last 5 editions of each researched festival;
- a brief overview of festivals' development since their foundation;
- 3 festival directors and programmers interviewed, interviews conducted on several occasions during the year 2007/ 2008;

- 10- 15 professionals interviewed (directors, producers, distributors, journalists, professors);
- comparison of the data, identifying the crossing points of the collected material, studying the results of preceding work and making conclusions

3. Documentary Film Festivals & Programming — Who, What, Where

3.1 General Issues

How do we make a good programme at a documentary film festival? In how big a grade can the politics influence the programme of a documentary film festival? Why do we have feature films, documentaries, animation and experimental films in one and the same festival? Last but not least — how big a break between films should we have — is our audience satisfied if they just have a smoke and a cup of tea, or should they also have time to eat something in between the screenings?

When we have the funding, collaborators and sponsoring companies, when we have decided the place and the dates, when we have the jury, all the licenses and contracts, even when we have most of the films, this does not mean that our festival has been successfully organised — there is still one thing left — the programming, a serious and time-consuming work, based on various skills and techniques. Organising a festival is not only limited to fundraising. Interestingly enough, the results of our fundraising do, and they do too often, influence our programme — sometimes in terms of films being selected, sometimes even in terms of the timetable itself.

The biggest distinction between the festivals is the calibre of the festival — how prestigious a festival is, how long it has been around, how many people come, how much money a festival has, how many people invited from different parts of the world, how much media they draw, what prizes festival gives, who gives the prizes, what companies provide prizes, and so we have the most prestigious ones like Cannes and Deauville¹ in France, the least prestigious ones, and everything in the middle for different purposes.

¹ *Le Festival du cinéma américain de Deauville* founded in 1975 by Lionel Chouhan and André Halimi, dedicated to American film

3.2 Mapping the Festivals

3.2.1 France: Documentary Film Festivals Map

Most of the French (documentary) film festivals that are of any importance receive support, funding or are in one way or another held under the auspices of several governmental bodies. Institutions that take care of (documentary) cinema are numerous. The French government started this practice already in the 1940s when CNC, the *Centre national de la cinématographie*, a public administrative organisation, was set up as a separate and financially independent entity. The centre comes under the authority of the Ministry of Culture and Communication and it supports the film, broadcast, video, multimedia and technical industries. It also strives to the preservation and development of the film heritage in general. Other institutions are also regularly seen on the partners' list in festivals' catalogues — The Ministry of Culture and Communication, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, ARTE², SCAM³... The whole context is much different from the Serbian one. It seems that the official policy of the country is much more robust in protecting and cherishing its film industry. The institutional support is much more visible and stronger, the media are more interested in the matter, and it is generally a more important topic in society.

The situation is however far from ideal. Each society has its problems and this is also how in France we have a constant public debate about where documentary stands in public cultural policy and what are the advantages and disadvantages of the current mainstream. Christophe Postic and Pascale Paulat, the directors of *Lussas Doc*, emphasise that tensions are increasing:

“This said, the French audiovisual scene has nothing of an idyllic landscape and seems to look more and more like an industrial wasteland, or a coal mound on at least on one side of the hill, the other continuing to flout an indecent and dominating luxury. However,

² cultural TV channel, www.artetv.fr

³ French Multimedia Authors Society

amongst those of us working in the public service, times are tough where there has already been a drying up of the currents leading from the industry to the artisans.”⁴

The situation is also becoming somewhat harder in documentary distribution where often festivals and associations are the only outlets. On the other hand, compared to Serbia, where the problems in film industry are still so basic that this kind of debate is far from even being started, the situation in France is overall optimistic.

There are more than 200 film festivals in France. Mapping all the French documentary film festivals would be difficult, not only because those festivals are numerous, but also because they often appear in the form of compound events that present documentaries, but also feature films, experimental works, animation and/ or student films. Cannes is without doubt the most prestigious and major French festival. It also shows documentaries, but it is mainly a festival of feature fiction film. Moreover, it is a festival of a totally different kind than the festivals that will be analysed in this text. However, there are two documentary film festivals, that can be considered as vital, number one festivals, bearing in mind their size, importance and tradition. The first one would be Marseille film festival, with two decades of continuity, that attracts a huge audience, common people and professionals, not only from France, but from other countries as well; and the second one, *Cinéma du Réel* in Paris, as one of the oldest French, and one of the top documentary film festivals in Europe.

Cinéma du reel was founded in 1978 by the *Bibliothèque publique d'information*. It takes place in one of the greatest Parisian cultural institutions, the *Centre Georges Pompidou*, along with its associated theatres (*Centre Wallonie Bruxelles*, *MK2 Beaubourg*, auditorium of the *l'Hôtel de Ville de Paris* and so on), and in this way covering the wider metropolitan area. In the year 2008 *Cinéma du réel* celebrated its 30th edition with the programme consisting of some forty films in the main, competitive programme (traditionally divided into two categories: *International Competition* and *French Selection*) as well as the non- competitive section that in the year in question consisted of four programmes and additional, special screenings.

⁴ Pascale Paulat, Christophe Postic, *Editorial*, Catalogue 2008, États généraux du film documentaire, Lussas, Ardèche Image Association, 2008

During the past thirty years⁵ *Cinéma du réel* has shown thousands of films, created hundreds of special, non- competitive programmes, attracted countless numbers of people and developed into a major documentary film festival, a common reference event, and an event that confronts today's documentary filmmaking with the very best of documentary cinema history.

There are also so called *displaced* events, bigger or smaller festivals that take place in remote and small towns or villages. On the other hand, these festivals are not literally local, since they attract an audience from different parts of France (although Paris predominates) and Europe. *États généraux du film documentaire* is certainly among the most important ones.

États généraux du film documentaire, also known as *Lussas Doc*, is a film festival founded in 1989 and ever since taking place in Lussas, a small village in the Ardèche region, in South- Eastern France. The nearest cities are Marseille and Montpellier in the South, and the nearest train station is in the town of Montélimar, some 40 km to the East. It is a type of festival that occupies the whole place, as there is literally nothing else to do there but to be in the festival. The importance of *Lussas* however lies in the fact that the festival occupies other regions as well — meaning that this is the type of festival that brings people from other places to Lussas, exclusively for the festival. Neither is the festival organised strictly by the locals nor is the festival's target group the people who live in Lussas and the region, but wider audience, journalists and professionals from other parts of France. It is as if the whole of Paris has moved to Lussas for the film festival and for some other, less urban and less stressful atmosphere. The festival is not a competitive one.

Smaller festivals are perhaps the most numerous ones, both in France and in other countries. They are mostly, but not exclusively, of a newer date, and they often lack a sufficient number of films that are for one reason or another considered as prestigious. Moreover, as a rule they do not bring enough famous guests. Sometimes it is only their location or their profile (type and number of films that they screen) that prevents them from entering the highest status group of festivals.

⁵ the age that coincides with the history of the Pompidou Centre and the Bpi

In this category we can take for example the *Festival international des scénaristes* together with the *Rencontres européennes de l'écriture pour l'image*, both part of one event that takes place in Bourges, a small town in central France, South-East for Orléans. It regroups young screen playwrights both for the documentary and fiction field. The festival invites people to apply for: *Forum des auteurs de fiction*, *Forum des auteurs de documentaire*, *Marathon d'écriture du court métrage* and the *Master Class des bibles de télévision*⁶. This is an international event, which helps its participants develop and hopefully realise their projects. It is organised by people from Paris and the target group for the film projections is also the audience and professionals from Paris and other towns.

Festival des cinémas différents de Paris (Collectif Jeune Cinéma) takes place in Paris and it is one of the chief European events in the field of experimental cinema. *Festival des cinémas différents de Paris* is one of the rare festivals, exclusively devoted to a different, experimental, avant-garde, independent, personal, underground, new cinema. Although the festival in 2007 celebrated its 10th edition, the organiser of the festival, the distribution company *Collectif Jeune Cinéma* was created already in 1970 as a distributor for experimental and alternative films, so today it is the oldest French distributor of this kind of the surviving ones. Now it is not the biggest company anymore but it is most active with festival, regular screenings and other events.

Among other festivals in France, there are also: *Les Rencontres Cinéma de Gindou* (created in 1985, taking place in Gindou, a village in South France), *Belfort film festival Entre Vues* (created in 1986 to promote young cinema, both fiction and documentaries, in Belfort, a small town next to the Swiss border, near Basel), *Premiers Plans* (created in 1989, taking place in Angers, a small place in South-West France, near Tours in the North and Nantes in the South, presenting first feature films, short films, documentaries and animation; sometimes also the second film can be taken), *The Grenoble Short Film Festival* (in July 2007 celebrated its 30th edition), *Rencontres Paris-Berlin* (an interdisciplinary project started in 1997, taking place in Paris and Berlin, presenting all film and video formats, created to promote new cinema) and *Nyon Doc-*

⁶ Programme: 9^e festival international des scénaristes et 3^e rencontres européennes de l'écriture pour l'image à Bourges 2006; *Scénaroscope*, Catalogue du 10^e festival international des scénaristes et 4^e rencontres européennes de l'écriture pour l'image à Bourges 2007

Visions du réel: one of the three main festivals in Switzerland⁷ (along with Soleure⁸ and Locarno⁹), presenting all forms of currently produced *cinéma du réel* (experimental films, essays, diaries, family films, major reports, historical inquiries, epic or fragmentary stories).

3.2.2 Documentary Film Festivals Map — Serbia

The Serbian documentary film festival scene is practically made up of only two events — *The Belgrade Documentary and Short Film Festival* and the festival *The Magnificent Seven*. Some other festivals also screen documentaries, but they are far from what one could call a documentary film festival.

As already mentioned, *The Belgrade Documentary and Short Film Festival* is the oldest and most important festival of this genre in Serbia, maybe even in the Balkan region. It was founded over half a century ago with the intention of being *the official* documentary film festival of the country. Contrary to today's Serbia, the previous federative entity, SFRY¹⁰, was a *conglomerate* of six republics and it was considerably bigger than today's Serbia. Moreover, the festival is the most legitimate place in Serbia where an author can screen his/ her short film. Compared to other Serbian festivals of the short meter, which are rather alternative, *The Belgrade Documentary and Short Film Festival* is definitely the most prestigious place for short films. The other festivals that screen short films are as a rule smaller, often unconventional when it comes to their location and/ or selection, less expensive, with films that are low- fi, all in all — less influential than *The Belgrade Documentary and Short Film Festival*.

The Magnificent Seven (founded in 2004) is a seven-day festival that screens only seven films, all of them feature-length documentaries. The intention is to prove that the future of documentaries is not only at festivals, but also in regular cinemas, where documentaries can have their audience, the same way feature fiction films do. Each year, the festival tries to highlight the new European documentary production.

⁷ here taken because it attracts notable audience from France

⁸ *Les Journées cinématographiques de Soleure*; established in 1966

⁹ *The Locarno International Film Festival*, established in 1947

¹⁰ Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, formally dissolved in 1992

Alternative film/ video (first founded in 1982, with a break from 1990 to 2003), the festival of Yugoslav alternative film and video is oriented towards avant-garde cinema, all modes of alternative, experimental, art, short and radical film thinking. The festival is founded by and is being organised by *Academic Film Center* in Student City Cultural Center in Belgrade. The festival is noncommercial and it does not have significant media coverage. Student City Cultural Center also organises another film festival, namely BALKANIMA (founded in 2004), festival of animated video.

For many years one other alternative film festival, namely *LOW FI* festival, was gathering together the audience interested in low budget video and *trash* films. This project was started with the idea to give cinema amateurism in Serbia a new life. *LOW FI* video project does not deal especially with video art, but is primarily specialised for short fiction and documentary films, shot in non-professional and semi-professional conditions. It has a rather small target group.

Documentaries are also screened within the *Student Film Festival* (founded in 1999), an event run by students of The Faculty of Drama Arts in Belgrade. The festival shows films made by students at international Academies. Documentaries are included.

In addition, documentaries are integrated into the biggest and the most important Serbian feature film event, FEST, *The Belgrade International Film Festival*.

The International Documentary and Short Film Festival, Dokufest, the largest film event in Kosovo is organised annually, every August, in the town of Prizren. According to *New Kosova Report* the festival screens some 140 films, selected out of approximately 600 films from fifty countries that applied in 2008¹¹.

¹¹ Anonymous, *Kosovo Opens Documentary and Short Film Festival*, published in *New Kosova Report*, www.newkosovareport.com, Monday, 04 August 2008

3.3 The Three Festivals Involved In the Study — Short History

3.3.1 États généraux du film documentaire — History

In 1988, the organisation *La Bande à Lumière* united French directors and producers in order to fight for the recognition of the documentary within the production support mechanisms established by the CNC¹². The stakes were foremost financial, but they also concerned principles — documentary is a form of cinema!¹³ *La Bande à Lumière* created three events: *Sunny Side of the Doc* became a forum for the financial side of production, the *Lyon Biennial* later moved to Marseille to become the FID - *International Documentary Festival Marseille*, and finally the *États généraux du film documentaire* was proposed as a place of meeting and reflection on the forms of creation within documentary. The event is organised annually, every August. It is also known under the name of the Ardèche village where it is organised: Lussas.

The village is also known for offering education in the field of documentary cinema. *L'École du Doc* plays a significant role in creating the overall image of Lussas. It offers the following courses: *Master 2 professionnel documentaire de création*, *Formation à l'écriture documentaire*, *Formation à la réalisation documentaire* and other smaller courses and seminars. *Africa Doc* is an initiative started in 2003 by *Ardèche Images* (France), *Dakar Images* (Senegal) and *LX Films* (Portugal). It is a school and a production of creative documentary especially created in order to help young talents from Central and Eastern Africa to develop their projects. This is why each year the festival screens a selection *Africa Doc*.

La Maison du doc' is a resource center for the documentary, a database on French-language European documentaries, started in 1994. The aim of *La Maison du doc'* is to be a living memory and repository for films. There are also a bookshop (books

¹² Centre national de la cinématographie

¹³ P. Paulat, C. Postic, op.cit

and reviews mostly devoted to the themes and programming of the year, as well as a variety of DVDs and collectors' posters), video and DVD shop.

Lussas Doc is considered to be one of the bravest and most committed French documentary film festivals. It offers, among others, a selection that consists of “non-formatted” documentaries, which can despite their quality come across difficulties in finding broadcasters. The festival also holds debates and meetings between professionals, students and the audience. It discovers new forms of documentaries and invites renowned directors.

3.3.2 Cinéma du réel — History

In 1978 The *Bibliothèque publique d'information* in Paris, with the support of the *Centre for Scientific Research and the Ethnographic Film Committee*, set up a film festival at the *Centre Pompidou*. This was the festival *Cinéma du réel*, which was then called *The International Ethnographical and Sociological Film Festival*. Its aim was to promote documentary cinema. The event is organised by the *Bibliothèque publique d'information*, in collaboration with the association *The Friends of Cinéma du Réel*, created in 1984.

The members of the first international jury of the festival *Cinéma du réel* were Joris Ivens¹⁴, together with Assia Djebar, Inoussa Ousseini, and Colin Young¹⁵. Over thirty years, gradually, the festival has managed to develop into one of the chief events in the domain of documentary cinema. It is a good reference to have a film screened at the festival, competition is usually hard, jury members are renowned professionals in the field of cinema, and last but not least — the monetary awards are good.

¹⁴ Joris Ivens (born in Nijmegen 1898, died in Paris 1989), Dutch documentary filmmaker, a communist; best known for his early films, and a 10-minute film *Rain*. From 1971- 1977 worked on *How Yukong Moved the Mountain*, a 763-minute documentary about Cultural Revolution in China. IDFA, *International Documentary Film Festival in Amsterdam* also gives an award named after Joris Ivens. *The European Foundation Joris Ivens* was established in 1990 in memory of the life and work of Joris Ivens, and it has its office in his birthtown Nijmegen.

¹⁵ Fatima-Zohra Imalayen a.k.a. Assia Djebar (born in 1936), Algerian novelist, translator and filmmaker; elected to the *Académie française* in 2005, as the first writer from the Maghreb to achieve such recognition. Inoussa Ousseini, Nigerian filmmaker, former Minister of Culture in Niger, later also Ambassador of Niger in France; for years he was Director of the Cinema-section of the I.R.S.H., the *Institut de Recherche en Sciences Humaines à Niamey*; Colin Young, American filmmaker, ethnographic film from the 1960s

As the founder of the festival, *Bibliothèque publique d'information* each year gives one of the festival's prizes, namely *The Library Award (Prix des Bibliothèques)*, with the support of the *Direction du Livre et de la Lecture*, today €6, 000. The awards, their amount, as well as their credibility, also put the festival quite high on the European festival map¹⁶. Apart from *The Library Award*, the festival also gives: *Cinéma du Réel Grand Prize* €8, 000, *Scam International Award* (€4, 600), *Short Film Award* (€2, 500), *Joris Ivens Award*, attributed to a young filmmaker (€2, 500), the *Young Jury Award – Cinéma du Réel*, with the support of the *Centre Pompidou* and of the *Paris Townhall* (€2, 500), *The Intangible Heritage Award* (€2, 500), and other grants and awards.

The association *The Friends of Cinéma du Réel* was created in 1984 under Joris Ivens's honorary presidency. The association is supported and subsidised by several governmental bodies, ministries and institutions of culture of national significance¹⁷. The organisation is active through a network of correspondents¹⁸, both French and foreign¹⁹, and it helps the library with organising the festival.

“From the outset, the festival has been home to curiosity and research, in line with its founders' intent, and has shown unswerving care not to draw definitive frontiers between genres and forms of writing. A steadfast sign that the festival firmly belongs to the mission of the institution that upholds it, where practices and forms confront one another and combine anew for and with the spectators and public.²⁰”

Cinéma du réel tightly collaborates with other festivals worldwide. Collaboration with other festivals is always very important because in this way a festival can more

¹⁶ *International Documentary Film Festival Amsterdam, Joris Ivens Award* EUR 12, 500; *The Belgrade Documentary and Short Film Festival, Grand Prix* EUR 3,000

¹⁷ National Film Board, the Drac Ile-de-France, the Ministry of Foreign affairs, the Department of Culture (the Books and Reading Department, the French Heritage Trust - Mission to the ethnology), The Conseil Régional d'Île-de-France, Paris Townhall, the Procirep TV Committee, the Scam

¹⁸ Members of honor: Chantal Akerman, Margot Benacerraf, Bob Connolly, Vittorio De Seta, Judit Elek, Suzette Glénadel, Mani Kaul, Marceline Loridan, Michel Melot, Marie-Christine de Navacelle, Nagisa Oshima, Nelson Pereira dos Santos, Yolande Simard-Perrault, Frederick Wiseman and others. President: Sophie Goupil

¹⁹ Foreign correspondent members : Freddy Buache (Switzerland), Pankaj Butalia (India), Helena Koder (Slovenia), Pedro Pimenta (Mozambique), Helga Reidemeister (Germany), Mario Simondi (Italy), William Sloan (USA), Jacqueline Veuve (Switzerland), Colin Young (UK)

²⁰ *Cinéma du réel, Newsletter*, 16 Aug. 2007

easily achieve better results. Exchange with colleagues is sometimes the only way to get information about which films will be screened at other events in one particular year. Moreover, other festivals are exactly the place where we can find films for our festival. Over the years *Cinéma du Réel* has developed a considerable list of partner festivals, such as — *Doclisboa, The Lisbon Documentary Film Festival* (Lisbon, Portugal) *Il Festival dei Popoli, The Florence Documentary Film Festival* (Florence, Italy), *Dok Leipzig, International Documentary and Animated Film Festival Leipzig* (Leipzig, Germany), *One World, International Human Rights Documentary Film Festival* (Prague, Czech Republic) and others.²¹

Today, *Cinéma du réel*'s influence goes well beyond the borders of the country. The festival hosts guests from all over France; there are also international visitors and guests who come; and European press talks about it.

In a city like Paris, where every moment is saturated with cultural events, it is difficult to be noticed. *Cinéma du réel* succeeds in having its cinemas full, even so that for certain screenings there are always standby queues.

3.3.3 Belgrade Festival of Documentary and Short Film — History

The Belgrade Documentary and Short Film Festival originates from *The Festival of Yugoslav Film*, founded in 1953 in Pula, Croatia²². The first festival was held from June 24 to June 30, 1954 in Pula, SFRY, and there were shown both documentaries and fiction features — six Yugoslav features, one co-production, as well as sixteen documentary and short films, all Yugoslav production. The second festival in 1955 brings the name *The Festival of Yugoslav Film* as its official name. The second edition brings

²¹ *Bilan du Film Ethnographique*, Paris, France, *Infinity, Festival international du film d'Alba*, Italie, *Doclisboa*, Festival de documentaires de Lisbonne, Portugal, *Taiwan International Documentary Film Festival, Planet Doc Review, The Warsaw Documentary Film Festival*, Poland, *Docudays*, The Beyrouth Documentary Film Festival, Lebanon, *Il Festival dei Popoli, The Florence Documentary Film Festival*, Italie, *Duisburg Filmwoche, Festival du film germanophone de Duisburg*, Germany, *Dok Leipzig, Festival International du Film Documentaire et d'Animation de Leipzig*, Germany, *Internationale Kurzfilmtage Oberhausen, Festival International du Court Métrage d'Oberhausen*, Germany, *Docpoint Helsinki, Festival du film documentaire d'Helsinki*, Finland, *One World, International Human Rights Documentary Film Festival*, Prague, Czech Republic, *Corsica.doc, Rencontres du film documentaires d'Ajaccio*, France

²² Back then Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY)

the festival's rules and regulations, official jury, and the festival's award — Arena²³. Since its third edition, year 1956, the festival had been held under the auspices of the president of the Republic, Josip Broz Tito. Documentary and short films formed a special section — most of them were screened during the day inside a smaller cinema, yet few were screened prior to the main feature film projections, in the evenings in the main cinema, Arena.

Year by year, documentaries and short films were more and more numerous (number in the year 1959 increasing to 92 films). However, compared to the feature films, which were put in the centre of the festival's programme, documentaries were still an *off* programme. This is the reason why, in the year 1959, the board made the decision to create another festival devoted exclusively to documentary and short films, and at the same time to make the existing festival a pure feature film festival. *The Yugoslav Festival of Feature Film* stayed in Pula, Croatia, and *The Yugoslav Documentary and Short Film Festival* was started in Belgrade, Serbia. In the beginning, the main organiser of both festivals was *The Festival of Yugoslav Film*, a company especially created for this cause²⁴. The festival was held for the first time from 4 March to 9 March 1960 in Belgrade as, officially, *The Seventh Festival of Yugoslav Documentary and Short Film*. It was held in *Dom Sindikata* Cinema ever since, and it was first dislocated decades later.

The first turning point happened during the late 1970s when the films from abroad were cut off, number of guests was reduced as well as the number (and the quality) of special programmes, all as a result of lack of funds. The second turning point was definitely in the early 1990s and it happened together with the country's disintegration and war²⁵. The former Yugoslav republics started to ignore the festival and soon there were only films from Serbia and Montenegro. The political reality influenced the festival also in terms of the thematic of the selected films. In his book dedicated to the 50th anniversary of *The Belgrade Documentary and Short Film Festival*²⁶ Dejan Kosanović says that war topics did dominate the festival at some point:

²³ This is because the festival is held in the old arena in Pula.

²⁴ Company *Festival of Yugoslav Film* managed the festival until 1975 when it stopped existing. The festival was then managed by *Beograd publik* (1976 - 1981)

²⁵ War in SFRY 1991 - 1995, between the former republics: Serbia, Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina

²⁶ Dejan Kosanović, *Pedeset godina Festivala jugoslovenskog dokumentarnog i kratkometražnog filma* Knjiga Filma, Belgrade: Festival dokumentarnog i kratkometražnog filma, 2003

“Yugoslav documentary and short film was dominated by reportages and documentary films about war incidents and hard consequences of bloody arm conflicts, and therefore it was this kind of films that were — understandably — also a part of the festival’s programme. The directors of the selected films had different approaches and attitudes; some of them were clearly taking sides in the conflict, some concentrated foremost to human destinies and dramas in war circumstances, there was also a vast number of films with extremely anti-war orientation (...) Apart from numerous political pressures that were dictated by the epoch, in its essence the festival had kept not only objectivity in terms of selected films, but also one sensitive and anti-war course (which can be noted based on the awarded films)”²⁷

One of the most appreciated editions of the festival was the one in 1999. Even though Belgrade was being bombed²⁸ the festival was not cancelled. It took place from 14 to 19 April, 1999 and it was relocated from *Dom Sindikata* Cinema to the more secure screen of *Dom omladine*. At the time nobody really cared about the artistic quality of the selected films or possible gaps in the organisation process — the audience was truly grateful for having the opportunity to go to cinemas and theatres at all.

Soon after, the festival celebrated its 50th edition (2003). During more than half of a century of its existence it had its ups and downs and today it stands somewhere in the middle — in a slight disharmony with its considerable age and respect it has gained during the previous years.

²⁷ Dejan Kosanović, *Pedeset godina Festivala jugoslovenskog dokumentarnog i kratkometražnog filma* Kniga Filma, Belgrade: Festival dokumentarnog i kratkometražnog filma, 2003 | Translation: Dunja Jelenković

²⁸ NATO bombing of Serbia, 24 March – 9 June 1999

4. Present Situation — the Three Festivals Involved In the Study

4.1 États généraux du film documentaire 2008 Overview

Not only does *Lussas Doc* assess the state of contemporary documentary films but also the subjects and world affairs they cover. The festival is daring, it is always trying to offer something new and refreshing, sometimes even controversial and engaged filmmaking. The role of *Lussas* is the thought, the views, confronting the opinions... The festival is free, new and dynamic.

In 2008 the festival took place from 17 to 23 August with the following programmes.

- **On the Subject of Regrettable Searching — Body to Body, the Filmed Body** (seminar conducted by Nicole Brenez, a cycle of films exploring the body as a film motive through the history of cinema; committed films, feminist, homosexual, working-class, anti-imperialist, political issues, handicaps, violence, human rights and other questions; films: *Genet parle d'Angela Davis*, Carole Roussopoulos, France, 1970, 7', *F.H.A.R.*, Carole Roussopoulos, France, 1971, 26', *The Fall of Communism as Seen in Gay Pornography*, William E. Jones, USA, 1998, 19', *Diary of a Married Man*, Lech Kowalski, USA, 2004, 21', *San Francisco*, Anthony Stern, 1968, UK, 15', *Trixi*, Stephen Dwoskin, 1969, UK, 30' and others)
- **Forms of struggle and the struggle of forms — Traps of formatting or promises of form?** (another seminar, a cycle of films questioning the importance of form in filmmaking, the importance of form in expressing a thought; films: *Sur le passage de quelques personnes à travers une assez courte unité de temps*, Guy Debord, Denmark/ France, 1959, 18', *Misère au Borinage*, Joris Ivens, Henri Storck, Belgium, 1933, 28', *Ernesto Che Guevara — Le journal de Bolivie*,

- Richard Dindo, Switzerland/ France, 1994, 100', *Changer d'image — Lettre à la bien-aimée*, Jean-Luc Godard, France, 1982, 9' and others)
- **Doc History: Great Britain** (programme devoted to the country; documentary film movement, free cinema, documentary production by British television; directors: John Grierson, Humphrey Jennings, Michael Grigsby, Peter Watkins)
 - **Doc Route: Czech Republic, And a Detour by Slovakia** (programme devoted to the two countries, directors from FAMU Academy, Karel Vachek, Petr Václav, Jan Šikl, Martin Sulik, Kateřina Krusová and others; Slovakia: Milan Balog, Robert Kirchhoff, Daniela Rusnoková)
 - **Africa** (11-film programme devoted to the continent, African filmmakers and documentaries on Africa; a group of films that are a result of writing residences organised by *Africadoc* and Master 2 in Saint-Louis, Senegal; and a group of films by directors who are returning to Africa without wanting to live there)
 - **Uncertain Viewpoints** (contemporary documentaries from France, Belgium, Switzerland, and Luxembourg; the newest production; twenty-six films, all different in terms of themes and styles; directors: Carmit Harash, David Teboul, Lucia Sanchez, Emmanuel Vigier, Simon Backès, Nadia Kamel, Sylvain George)
 - **Fragment of a Filmmaker's Work: Thomas Ciulei** (programme dedicated to the Romanian filmmaker, most of his films co-produced with Germany where he studied cinema; all the films take place in Romania except the most recent one which takes us into a village in Moldavia; *Gratian*, 1995, 45', *Face Mania (Nebunia Capetelor)*, 1997, 86', *That's Life (Asta e)*, 2001, 92', *Le Pont des fleurs (Podul de Fiori)*, 2008, 87' and *God plays Sax, the Devil Violin (Dumnezeu la saxofon, Dracu la vioara)* by Alexandra Gulea, 2004 45')
 - **Fragment of a Filmmaker's Work: Michael Grigsby** (programme devoted to the British filmmaker; one of the first to interview veterans of the Vietnam war; films on social problems that affect the working classes, the films: *I Was a Soldier*, 1970, 40', *A Life Apart — Anxieties in a trawling community*, 1973, 65', *The Score*, 1998, 12', *Rehearsals*, 2005, 40')
 - **Fragment of a filmmaker's work: Stephen Dwoskin** (programme dedicated to the filmmaker with Russian origin, but born in Brooklyn (1939) and living in

- London; known for his poetical films and experiments with the form, with sound and the image; the films: *Dyn Amo*, 1972, 120', *Trying to Kiss the Moon*, 1994, 96', *Lost Dreams*, 2003, 20', *Dad*, 2003, 15', *Grandpère's Pear*, 2003, 4', *Intoxicated by my Illness* (Parts 1 & 2 "Intensive Care"), 2001, 45', *Some Friends (Apart)*, 2002, 25', *Dear Frances*, 2003, 18', *The Sun and the Moon*, 2007, 60')
- **Sacem Day** (programme proposed by Sacem, French Society of Composers and Musicians; homage to Olivier Messiaen, *Carte Blanche à Jacques Goldstein*, and the film *La Passion Boléro*, Michel Follin, France, 2007, 59' — awarded with *Prix Sacem du documentaire musical de création*)
 - **SCAM Day** (six new French documentaries that received funds from SCAM's fond *Brouillons d'un rêve*)
 - **Scam: Radio Night** (programme proposed in collaboration with Radio France, seven sound-fiction and sound-documentary works)
 - **Special Screenings, Outdoor Screenings, Workshops and other events**

In its regular programmes *Doc Route*, *Doc History* and *Fragment of a Filmmaker's Work* the festival presented films from Great Britain and The Czech Republic together with Slovakia, as well as famous directors Thomas Ciulei, Stephen Dwoskin and Michael Grigsby. The festival once again presented a panorama of films that are daring in questioning different social issues, historical rarities, the latest production, the cutting edge, and works that introduce us to different aspects of the history of documentary filmmaking.

The programme devoted to Great Britain proposed to introduce the audience to directors who, in connection with the cinematic trends of their time, permitted the documentary to become a genre in its own right.²⁹ The programme was a success. However, there was a problem with translation, and the organisers had to resort to live interpreting. This is not the first time in Lussas that the wireless headsets were missing, broken or available in insufficient numbers. What the organisers chose was to have a live voiceover feed on top of the film. For people who need or want the voiceover translation, this is adequate. However we must not forget that there are also people in the audience

²⁹ Kees Bakker, *Doc History Great Britain*, Catalogue 2008, États généraux du film documentaire, Lussas, Ardèche Image Association, 2008

who absolutely do not want to listen to a British dialogue read in French. Not to mention, that even for people who require the translation, the voiceover is a spoiler of the cinematic soundscape. A festival as significant as *Lussas* must overcome this problem and start using subtitles or soft-titles, even when it is an additional effort or cost.

Both seminars, *Body to Body, the Filmed Body* and *Forms of Struggle and the Struggle of Forms*, were very well attended, with people queuing around the block. There was a booking list for both seminars. Moreover, these two programmes presented films that are not only committed, but also alternative or pushing social norms, sometimes even extravagant.

The festival has been bringing Africa to the French countryside for years through the programme *Africa Doc*. This time the programme focused on two groups of films — films by students from Senegal, and in addition four films by European directors of African origin. The latter four, due to their background, have a rather specific approach to the topic. They are not totally European, and they are linked to the African culture, on the other hand they do not live there, which creates a unique distance, necessary for a passionate and involved yet distanced approach.

The French Selection, *Uncertain Viewpoints*, was inspiring thanks to the diversity in topics and styles exemplified in the programme. The organisers emphasise that the selected films cannot present an overall vision of documentary filmmakers today and that it is only their choice, based first of all on the ability of a filmmaker to not impose anything on the spectators, but to leave a space of liberty to their characters and to the audience³⁰. Thanks to a selection that keeps the audience glued to their seats both during the screenings and afterwards during the debates, we can say that the programmers succeeded in presenting the highlights of recent French production.

All in all, Lussas yet again did not disappoint. The festival is based in a remote location. It is not as big as Marseille or Cannes, but it is fairly old, well positioned, easily recognisable by its specificities and what is more, it is famous for its commitment and originality.

³⁰ Fleur Albert, Gerald Collas, *Uncertain Viewpoints*, Catalogue 2008, États généraux du film documentaire, Lussas, Ardèche Image Association, 2008

Last but not least, the festival was held (again) in a cheerful and vivid atmosphere of the village — with people mingling in the two streets, constantly moving from one cinema to another, and from *vidéothèque* to *l'Épicerie documentaire*, and then cafes, bars and restaurants of Lussas.

4.2 Cinéma du Réel 2008 Overview

A 10-day film marathon in the centre of a city whose art scene never sleeps in the year 2008 screened more than 250 films divided into seven programmes and projected in three cinemas of the *Centre Georges Pompidou* (together with one of its lobbies) and several other cinemas in the town; yet it occupied just a little part of the Centre. The audience included filmmakers and professionals, as well as journalists from dozens of companies worldwide, including BBC, Italian *Il Manifesto* and *Liberazione*, and also *The Hollywood Reporter* (USA), *Correio da Manha* (Portugal), *Radio Prague*, *Radio Deutche Welle*, *RFI*, *TV Arte*, *Libération*, *Le Parisien*, *Figaro*, *Le Monde*, *TV5 Monde*, *Canal +*, as well as *Le Monde 2*, *France Culture*, *Cahiers du Cinéma* (the latter three as media partners³¹). Sometimes it was difficult to find a spare seat, especially for the evening screenings in Cinema 1. In a vivid festival atmosphere, with people mingling from one cinema to another, the festival showed that it once again managed to attract a wider audience, aside from its regular visitors — its guests and professionals.

Cinéma du réel took place from 7 to 18 March 2008 and it consisted of the following programmes:

- **International Competition** (twenty-eight films from various countries (Brazil, Palestine, UK, Mexico, Poland, Germany, Singapore, USA, Russia, Lebanon, Romania, Argentina), mostly feature length or approximately half an hour long, all productions from 2007, one even a brand new 2008 production)
- **French Selection** (ten films, the majority 30' up to one hour, all from 2007, including one fresh 2008 production)

³¹ Media partners of *Cinéma du réel* 2008: France Culture, Le Monde 2, Cahiers du Cinéma, Courier International, Fluctuat.net, Positif, Critikat.com, Ulyse, Vocabale, Editions Bellefaye, Film-documentaire.fr

- **Americana** (tribute to American late 1960s and early 1970s cinema; *Hommage à Shirley Clarke*, *Hommage à Jim McBride*, Jonas Mekas's *Ciné-Journal (Newsreel)*, films by Howard Alk and Mike Gray, Saul Levine, Peter Gessner, Ed Pincus, *Winterfilm Film Collective*, Soon- Mi Yoo)
- **In South East Asia** (Homage to filmmakers: Lav Diaz (*Evolution of a Filipino Family*, 2004, 645', *Death in the Land of Encantos*, 2007, 540'), Amir Muhammad, Garin Nughoro, and Raya Martin)
- **Images/ Prison - Visions from the Inside** (a selection of films dedicated to life behind bars; product of workshops inside detention centres)
- **Figures of Tourism** (selection dedicated to tourist and tourism and interesting sights; more than fifty films, from the beginnings of cinema (Lumière "views") over the travelogues of the 1920s and 1930s, to modern films)
- **Special Screenings** (the work of famous Bernardo Bertolucci — *La via del pertolio*, a three episode film consisting of *Le origini*, *Il viaggio* and *Attraverso l'Europa*, all about *black gold*. The following films were also screened — *Staub* 90', 2007, by Hartmut Bitomsky, Ghérasim Luca, *Comment s'en sortir sans sortir*, 55', 1988, by Raoul Sangla, *Confusion*, 35', 1968, by Evald Schorm, *Les affinités électives*, 85', 1968, by Karel Vachek)
- **Seminars, Workshops, Debates, Feature Fiction Films**

In a hard, but fair competition the Grand Prix went to Volker Koepp for his beautiful film *Elder Blossom*. When we look at a Grand Prix winner at a festival, it always tells us a lot about the festival itself — its quality, the jury and its reputation, and about the films that were placed in context. A good film can easily win in poor competition. A bad film can only win in a middling competition. If a film is awarded at more than one festival it is usually a useful reference. However, it is likewise indicative which these festivals are — how large, important and prestigious they are.

Volker Koepp films children from Gastellovo village, Kaliningrad region, a Russian enclave within the European Union, between Poland and Lithuania. The village is half dead, children rarely see their parents, and almost half of the adult population are alcoholics. The children thus invent their own felicitous worlds where they play and

where their games and lives continue. Koepp films four seasons in the everyday life of a group of kids in Kaliningrad. It is astonishing how these kids in the film talk about their life and their family problems with ease. The film is also characterised by a special aesthetic, landscape shots and soundscapes. The thorough study of places is one of the central characteristics in the work of Volker Koepp, in this film as well. The landscapes serve as a mediator or a translator between the characters. The director sees a landscape as a figure that has over the centuries formed the people he is filming. The landscape has its influence on people themselves, and therefore it is not neglected in the film. The landscape almost becomes an additional character, which also helps the film achieve its uniqueness. Koepp focuses on details, on small, concrete things. The children he films easily and quickly seem close to us, the audience. Yet, Koepp succeeds in this without making his presence obvious. His documentary portraits are strong; he directs these characters almost as if they were characters of a fiction film. *Elder Blossom* is a Grand Prix winner that also acts as a favourable reference for the festival, not only the other way around.

It is interesting that French films also fall under the category *International Competition*. *The French Selection* however like no other took us to a journey through different cultural and geographical worlds. It is refreshing how one purely French selection can be diverse in terms of the countries it takes us to. Sometimes this selection was even exotic, which certainly contributed to the dynamism and interest of the entire festival.

The films from the programme *Americana* gave us insight into the American socio-political reality of the 1960s and early 1970s — through their content, as well as insight into the trends of the American art scene of the period — through the artistic stamp of the featured artists. It was definitely one of the most memorable non-competitive programmes of this edition of the festival. Where can we today watch the work of the celebrated Shirley Clarke³² on a big screen? *Hommage à Shirley Clarke* brings, among others, *The Connection*, *The Cool World — Harlem Story* and *Portrait of Jason*, her three most important films, or as Yann Lardeau would put it in his text *The Rampart and the Ramp* “(...) three feature films that imposed Shirley Clarke on the

³² Shirley Clarke 1918- 1997, dancer, choreographer and filmmaker

international scene and made her a key figure of the New York School on a par with Lionel Rogosin, Jonas Mekas or Robert Kramer (...)"³³

In addition, there were also *Tongues: A Collaboration by Sam Shepard and Joseph Chaikin* as well Agnes Varda's film *Lions Love (...and Lies)* (featuring Shirley Clarke) and André S. Labarthe and Noël Burch's *Rome is Burning (Portrait of Shirley Clarke)* in which the camera is circulating around an apartment in New York where Shirley Clarke is sitting with her friends and responding to questions of Jacques Rivette and Jean Jacques Lebel. *Portrait of Jason* was maybe among the key films of the non-competitive programme of the festival. For some, it represented just an additional screening of a film they knew very well. For some younger spectators however it was a unique opportunity to see the film that is according to many a masterpiece, but whose value has always been the subject of debate — it was marked both as yet another low-budget underground freak show (by American newspapers and magazines from the late 1960s) and as the most fascinating film ever (by Ingmar Bergman).³⁴

The aim of the selection *In South East Asia* was to present cinematography that is different from exotic visions and Bollywood-style clichés — an image Europeans often have when it comes to Asian films. The programme presented a cinematic journey through Malaysia, Philippines, Indonesia, Singapore and Thailand created by: Lav Diaz, the president of the international jury, Philippine independent filmmaker, then also Amir Muhammad, Garin Nugthoro, and Raya Martin. The emphasis of the selection was on two decade-long making films by famous Lav Diaz — *Evolution of a Filipino Family, 645'* and *Death in the Land of Encantos, 540'*.

At the end of the 80s, the prison administration signed an agreement with the Ministry of Culture, and opened the penitentiaries to artists. Among other artistic practices, cinema production workshops brought together prisoners and filmmakers. The programme *Images/ Prison* accompanied a selection of films produced by workshops inside penitentiary institutions. The selection tried to make use of the relationship between the realities of imprisonment and the history of its representation in television and cinema. This programme was proposed by Anne Toussaint who explains her choice

³³ Yann Lardeau, *The Rampart and the Ramp*, Catalogue Cinéma du réel 2008, p. 71 | Translation: Gill Gladstone

³⁴ Tom Sutpen, *Dancing and Dirging with Jason*, Bright Lights Film Journal, Issue 48, May 2005

by a desire to create a passage between the field of the intimate and the field of the social leading beyond the territory of the prison. Moreover she argues that behind walls, the liberty of the mental image becomes an anxious urgency, and a capacity to escape constant surveillance:

“In 1988 I walked into a prison for the first time, I worked with prisoners and they did not tell me prison stories. We made a short film: *Tatoo Zapper* which represents the televiewer. From this place and in the position of immobile observers, they view the world and speak to me of common enclosing. (...) The prison, an object of all kinds of fantasy- based projections, a location that has inspired numerous film directions, opened up from within to the prisoners’ ways of looking.”³⁵

With more than fifty films, the selection *Figures of Tourism* is definitely the most numerous at *Cinéma du réel* 2008, probably because the majority of films are short. The selection is an absolute delight for the reason that it charts a period of over 100 years — the newest films are from the year 2008, the oldest date even back to 1896. There is no doubt that there were people in the audience who had never seen a film so old before. The other films are from all the periods of cinema development — the early films from the very beginnings of 20th century (as for instance a feature-long documentary from 1904 *Au Pays du Christ* by Abbe Mulsant), then rarities like Films Lumière from the 1896 and 1897 (the first films: *Venise: Panorama du Grand Canal pris d’un bateau*, *Venise: Panorama Place Saint Marc pris d’un bateau*, *Venise: Pigeons sur la Place Saint Marc*, *Panorama pendant l’ascension de la Tour Eiffel*, and others). The selection also included modern works such as *The Moon, the Sea, the Mood* by Philipp Mayrhofer and Christian Kobald (2008), *The Cruise* by Bennett Miller (1998) and others. It was interesting to watch the work of famous Peter Kubelka (the 13’ film *Unsere Afrikareise*, a film made when Kubelka was hired to make a *safari film* in Africa in 1961, but instead he spent five years on a film far removed from his commission and focusing on filmic material, rhythm and texture). Moreover, this selection perfectly pictures the development of documentary

³⁵Anne Toussaint, *Filming in prison, questioning the frame*, Catalogue Cinéma du Réel 2008, p. 130 | Translation: Michael Hoare

filmmaking — starting with very old extremely short films, from the 19th century, (a reel was often not longer than a minute) and focused on a single event or scene. The selection also shows changes in the style of storytelling, but also the inevitable changes in technique — the use of newer cameras, lenses and sound recording equipment, from super 8 to DV Cam. This selection shows the history of documentary filmmaking from its very beginning to modern films, also from staged events to *real* documentaries.

Arty and old moving images that blink and twinkle on the big screen of the new and perfectly equipped *Centre Beaubourg*³⁶ is just what a festival needed to call itself complete. It provided the festival with a real cinema feeling with some *real* films.

All in all, the programme of course had its highlights and less interesting parts, but in every aspect of the selection it was serious. In all its different segments the programme parts corresponded well with one another. What is more, the impression is that we really have seen the best of the current production, together with a distinctive historical selection in a thoroughly planned special programme. What is the most important; the audience seemed to be happy.

4.3 Belgrade Festival of Documentary and Short Film 2008 Overview

In the year 2008 the festival was held at Belgrade Cultural Centre Cinema.³⁷ As advertised, it will probably remain there. The second cinema is in the Yugoslav Film Archive. The final evening — the closing ceremony and screenings of the awarded films — took place in the recently renewed Terazije Theatre. The traditional location, *Dom Sindikata* Cinema, at one point satisfactory, has recently proven itself to be too imposing for the today's festival. However, it is exactly *Dom Sindikata* Cinema that became a synonym for the festival. Some editions of the festival were more, some were less well attended. It is interesting to analyse the crisis years of the 1990s when the attendance was still quite good. Today, the evening screenings are popular; the matinees on the other hand empty, occasionally holding merely ten to fifteen people.

³⁶ Centre Georges Pompidou

³⁷ The festival was dislocated from *Dom Sindikata* Cinema only 2 times: financial and organisational reasons, Belgrade Cultural Centre, 1996, and bombing of Belgrade, cellar cinema of *Dom omladine*, 1999. In 2007 the festival was held both in *Dom Sindikata* Cinema and in Belgrade Cultural Centre Cinema.

The festival was held under the slogan *All Good Things...* and consisted of the following programmes:

- **National Competition Programme** (with the categories: Documentary, Animated, Experimental, Short Fiction; **Documentary**: twenty-one films, mostly by younger directors; **Animated**: six films, young directors, jury decided not to give an award in this category; *Raven* by Nenad Krstić did get the festival's diploma; **Experimental**: five short films; **Short Fiction**: ten films by students and younger directors)
- **International Competition Programme** (with the categories: Documentary, Animated, Experimental, Short Fiction; **Documentary**: ten films: Bosnia and Herzegovina, France, Iran, Czech Republic, Poland, UK, Italy; **Animated**: eight short films, UK, USA, Poland, Belgium, Spain, Russia; **Experimental**: three films from Romania, Croatia and France, including *Portrait of a Wedding Day*, Alix Didrich, France, 2007, 9' that was also shown few days earlier at *Cinéma du réel*, within French Selection, **Short Fiction**: films from diverse countries, mostly from Europe, but also Brazil, Ukraine, Australia and USA; diverse topics and different format, length and techniques)
- **VIP Europe** (the best (awarded) films from other European festivals, namely the films that got EFA PRIX UIP 2007 — European Film Academy, European Film Awards United International Pictures, at the festivals: Tampere (Finland), Ghent, (Belgium), Valladolid (Spain), Cracow (Poland), Rotterdam (Holland), Venice (Italy), Angers (France), Grimstad (Norway), Sarajevo (Bosnia and Herzegovina), Edinburgh (UK), Drama (Greece), Berlin (Germany), and Vila do Conde (Portugal))
- **Travelling Festival IDFA — The Best of IDFA** (films awarded at *International Documentary Film Festival* in Amsterdam: *Stranded*, Gonzalo Arijon, France, 2007, 127', *See If I'm Smiling*, Tamar Yarom, Israel, 2007, 59' and *The Tailor*, Oscar Perez, Spain, 2007, 30')
- **Adventure** (five approximately 30' films, dealing with the topics such as adventurous travels and nature)

- **Light** (two films: *All about Nikola Tesla – The research*, Michael Krause, 81' and *Putnik kroz vasionu i vekove*, Milutin Milanković and Dušan Vuleković, 41')
- **Waking Her up in Vain** (6 short films by Miloš Tomić, PhD student at FAMU Academy in Prag (total 32' 52'') and one film by Miki Stamenković, *Poetry Prince — Branko Miljković*, 57')³⁸
- **Walls, Wires, Borders** (five films that picture conflict zones and/ or the issues of perception of minority groups in certain areas, *The edge of hope*, Gerd Schneider, 50', *To build a wall*, Neta Efroni, 35', *Last bus stop*, Z. Boszormenyl, K. Solminen, 52', *A minority report*, Stefano Giantin, 53' and *Hanna*, Nikola Vukčević, 44'19")
- **The Goya Winners** (five feature-length documentaries, all of them awarded with Goya Awards³⁹, the most important Spanish award for the film art. The award is considered to be the Spanish equivalent to the American *Academy Awards*. The programme was selected by *Instituto Cervantes* from Belgrade and delivered to the festival. It was shown in Yugoslav Film Archive)
- **All the People are Born Equal and Free** (eleven films, short films that handle human right issues in different ways; high diversity in terms of where the films come from, even though *the Russian block* is quite represented — Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Ukraine, Poland, Czech Republic, Russia, USA, Israel and Germany. The programme was selected by *Goethe Institute* from Belgrade, and delivered to the festival.)

³⁸ C.f. Section 5.7 Diversity

³⁹ The Goya Awards, *Los Premios Goya*, established in 1987, a year after the founding of the *Academia de las Artes y las Ciencias Cinematográficas de España*. The first ceremony took place on 16 March 1987 at the *Teatro Lope de Vega*, Madrid. It happens annually in January, and awards are given to films produced during the previous year in the following categories: Best Picture, Best Director, Best Leading Actor, Best Leading Actress, Best Original Screenplay, Best Adapted Screenplay, Best New Director, Best Supporting Actor, Best Supporting Actress, Best New Actor, Best New Actress, Best Production Supervision, Best Cinematography, Best Editing, Best Original Score, Best Original Song, Best Art Direction, Costume Design, Best Makeup and Hairstyles, Best Sound, Best Special Effects, Best Animated Film, Best Animated Short Film, Best Documentary Short Film, Best Fictional Short Film, Best European Film, Best Documentary, Best Foreign Film in the Spanish Language, Honorary Goya Award

- **The Basque Films** (eight brand new short Basque films, diverse in technique, style and content; a good overview of what is going on in modern Basque cinematography of this particular genre. The programme was shown in Yugoslav Film Archive)
- **The Best of UNAFF** (two films from UNAFF, *United Nations Association Film Festival*⁴⁰ travelling collection — *A Minority Report*⁴¹ and *Gypsy Caravan*, documentaries by international authors dealing with the topics such as human rights, women issues, problems of children, refugees, homeless, then also racism, education, war, peace and so on)

In the year 2008, the festival had one of its best years — the selected films came from different countries, more or less they were also diverse in terms of their length, style, and format. The non-competitive programmes offered the opportunity to see some of the best national and regional films (the cycle of Basque films and the programme *Goya* — showcasing recent winners of *Goya*, the Spanish award for film art) or the cream of other festivals (programmes *VIP Europe*, *The Best of IDFA*, *The Best of UNAFF*).

Moreover, the festival is without doubt the most important festival of this genre in the country. Unfortunately it was somewhat disappointing to attend *The Belgrade Documentary and Short Film Festival 2008* having just arrived from *Cinéma du réel* festival. The daily screenings were more or less empty, the cinema house itself was pretty much old-fashioned, and the screenings were accompanied by the flagrant smell coming from the kitchen of the nearby restaurant. Whilst some other festivals are located at the most prestigious institutions and buildings in their respective countries, *The Belgrade Documentary and Short Film Festival* is located at a cinema accessible only by passing through a café and a restaurant. Yet this is one of the best (and few) remaining cinemas in Belgrade.

However, none of this would weigh so strongly if the quality of the films had made a stronger impression. Unfortunately, the films in the national and international competition programmes were of a more or less middling quality. In average, it was one

⁴⁰ Created by Jasmina Bojić, film critic and educator at California Stanford University, in 1998 in coinciding with the 50th anniversary of the signing of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

⁴¹ screened within the *Walls, Wires, Borders* programme

or two films per short film programme that were outstanding. It was exactly those films (excluding a few others) that won prizes and were highlighted at the closing night — by far the high point of the festival, showing an exceptional selection. If all the screenings had been like this, we would have had a good festival, a festival that could stand on the same footing with the best European festivals of the same genre. Sadly, exceptional films were exactly that — an exception. The largest part of what was shown was average, good and fairly interesting.

It was exactly one Serbian film from the *Documentary National Competition* that won the Grand Prix. Marko Jeftic's film *Fabulous Fairies*, a touching story about a music band whose members are a few old ladies certainly deserved the prize. After her husband's death Mrs Meri Galevska forms a sextet with her girlfriends in an old people's home where they are all housed. Playing in a band is not just another way to kill time — the band is very active, the ladies score a tour and the band leader is somewhat strict. According to many this film was definitely the very best thing we saw at the festival. The jury explained their decision saying that the story can also be a suggestion to staying alive:

“A very well told story of a group of optimistic ladies that, beyond the personal difficulties, found a way of keeping their contribution to society and self esteem, through music and sharing their life experience. The cinematographic approach and style served the story as a contemporary fairy tale on present society and reality.”⁴²

The film is a feelgood offering, partially due to the energy and optimism of the main character herself, Mrs. Meri Galevska, who unfortunately did not live to see the film at the festival.

The widespread impression was that the international selection of documentaries was dominated by films and topics from the ex-Yugoslav republics⁴³. Is it because the

⁴² Jury Decision On Awarded Films 55th Belgrade Documentary And Short Film Festival, the festival's website (www.kratkimetar.org.yu)

⁴³ *Ambassadors Learning Languages*, Semsudin Gegić, Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2007, 29' 59''; *Fantasy*, Aldin Arnautović, Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2007, 44'; *My Friends*, Lidija Zelović, Holland, 2007, 60' – Bosnian director, Holland production; *Pančevo – Dead City*, Antonio Martino, Italy, 2007, 27', Italian film but dedicated to the pollution problem of Serbian town of Pančevo

majority of authors who applied were from our ex republics? Is it because the festival is not prestigious enough to draw the authors from other parts of the world? How many filmmakers from other regions have heard of the festival? Or is it really because SFRY films were the best from a wide and numerous competitions?

National competition in experimental films is certainly the most controversial category within the festival. Generally, the term experimental cinema is highly contested today. This is felt keenly particularly in Serbia where this kind of cinema is mainly neglected since the downfall of the kino-clubs. Commonly one sees neither a historically informed filmic practice nor any great experiments. This selection consisted of five films, experimental nominally and in terms of the theme, less in terms of form itself, if experimental at all. Apparently there is a rule in the festival statute which prescribes a minimal number of experimental films (and generally a certain quota in each category). As long as this directive exists we will simply have to see experimental films at the festival, no matter how good or bad they were and no matter how experimental they were at all. The international experimental film selection did demonstrate much either.

The non-competitive programme was somewhat more interesting. It certainly consisted of films of a much more notable artistic quality than the competitive one. On the other hand, those films were mostly selected by implication to other festivals, meaning that they represented the best from other festivals, the films awarded at particular festivals, the films recommended by international cultural centres, curators and so on.

The programme *VIP Europe*, which was integrated into the festival for the fifth time, was interesting to see because it brought, if not the festivals, then at least some of their best films to a Serbian audience — spectators that probably did not have a chance to attend them. Providing this and similar kinds of panorama is a practice at quite a few festivals; among others this is the case with Belgrade festival FEST (*The Belgrade International Film Festival*, the biggest and the most important event of this kind in Serbia)⁴⁴. Some other festivals, on the other hand, prefer not to put this kind of emphasis on other festivals, but to have films awarded at other festivals integrated in their

⁴⁴ FEST: programme *Horizons* – cycle of films that were awarded at other festivals in the previous year (Cannes, Rotterdam, Toronto, Venice...)

competitive programmes. (*Cinéma du réel* for example through its newsletter regularly informs their audience of different festivals where films selected at *Cinéma du réel* will or already have participated at, also of the results those films achieve at other festivals, and generally of the *life* the films continue to have after the festival.)

Programme *Walls, Wires, Borders* is maybe the one with the most precise concept of all the programmes at the festival — completely compact, with five films that fully correspond with one another, this programme was screened with a good reason.

The main problem with this kind of selection (national and international competition) is that it does not bring enough of fresh ideas; it is good, but there is nothing outstanding about it. It is difficult to get away from the impression that the selected films were only the best films out of a not very good group of films that were received in application. The situation is much better when it comes to non-competitive programmes. Then again, there is a prominent impression that there is a lack of rare films, either if the criterion is the films' age, the number or copies, or simply the fact that they come from countries/ festivals that the Belgrade audience does not often have contact with.

The whole selection, especially the national one, was dominated by films from very young directors, many of them still students. The absence of older filmmakers was notable. The category *Short Fiction Films (National Competition)* included ten films by different directors, literally all of them of a younger generation, and more than half of them still students. Almost the same case was seen in the previous year, but with an important exception of two authors of a bit older generation⁴⁵. It seems that in today's Serbia short fiction films are of interest foremost to students, who are required to make them as part of their coursework. It is peculiar that there is literally not a single senior director represented in this category in the year 2008. Besides, for years this category has been dominated by student works and generally by films made by younger directors.

The timetable itself is worth discussing — the festival screens films in groups, their belonging to national vs. international competition being the only criteria for grouping them. Each projection lasts approximately 1h 30' (the duration of a feature film)

⁴⁵ Jelena Bošković (born in 1968 in Belgrade), former FAMU Academy student; in 1991 declared the student of the class and received the Czech literary and film fund scholarship; Puriša Đorđević, filmmaker since 1947, director of 19 feature films, member of the Writers Association of Serbia, for his films awarded in Pula, Venice, Prague, Belgrade, Moscow, Varna, Rome and other festivals

and it consists of some dozen short films. The only reference in the *title* of a screening is *National Competition* or *International Competition*. The titles of films themselves and their duration are listed below. Basically, without reference to a detailed programme or a catalogue nobody knows what we are about to see. The names of the films tell us nothing, duration however is information worth knowing, but all in all — The National/International distinction as a reference can be a reference to anything — short fiction, documentaries, experimental and animated films. And this is exactly what each screening is — a mixture of all the genres. For a vast number of viewers this is simply dissatisfying and confusing. For some, it is even irritating. On the other hand, the board and the director have their own reasons.

Furthermore, with such a vast number of programmes the festival can risk to lose its thread. It seems that there is a little bit of everything divided into lots of small programmes (some of them consisting of only a film or two), instead of having only a few programmes, that are not so numerous, but that are instead thoroughly planned, bigger and more compact.

To conclude, the final impression of the festival is favourable, but the selection is average, with only the recollection of the closing night giving us space to imagine the next edition which will be much better than this one.

5. Good Programming — the Chief Issues

5.1 What Is Good Programming And Why Is It Important?

Among hundreds of documentaries made every year, how do we choose the best ones? Among hundreds of films that are made how do we select those that are the best for our particular festival? What is an excellent choice for *Lussas* might not be a good choice for *Paris-Berlin Rencontres*. Among millions of films, how do we choose what is best for our particular festival? Special, non-competitive programmes often present different kinds of retrospectives and therefore they do not have to be the latest productions, which makes the choice wider.

Good programming is simply when your audience is satisfied. It is when in the end one can say that everyone could have seen everything they wanted to see. It is when people come to your festival because the films are good. Furthermore, it is when people are able to come to your festival, meaning that the festival is in an accessible location and that projections are at a time of the day when they have a chance to come. When we have decided the programme, even when we have selected the films, how do we put them in an optimal schedule? What is our head film/topic for that year? What do we do with it and how do we make the timetable for the part of the programme that is not directly relevant to it? Good programming is a jigsaw puzzle made up of films, special events and debates that relate to one another in a coherent time frame in a compact space. Without it, a festival usually fails.

Marie-Pierre Duhamel-Müller⁴⁶, the artistic director of *Cinéma du réel*, says that programming has to fit together and to reflect something in time, something people can connect to:

⁴⁶ Born in Paris in 1952, the new director of this festival as of 2005 (2005-2008); collaborated with the Lussas Festival, Lisbon International Film Festival, Venice Film Festival and many others

“Programming is like composing music. You have to have a vision. The world is a bit big. But you have to have some vision of what’s going on. You have to be free if you want to make a festival, to be free, to be firm, to be convinced, with your own position, and to be a good programmer. It’s a technique that you learn through the years and experience. It is not taught in the university, it’s learnt through practice.”⁴⁷

After seeing everything they could see, festival programmers should know for what reason they are showing what they decided to show. Each festival has its own specificity and purpose. In any given year, we have a number of films that are made and are projected at the festivals for about two years — that is usually the limit, and most festivals do not want films that are older than that. There is no shortage of films from which to choose, we just have to take the right decisions.

5.2 Special Programmes

Deciding the theme of special, non-competitive programmes is mostly random — the programmer notices a phenomenon that s/he concedes worth presenting, as for instance *Cinéma du réel*’s special programme *Figures of Tourism*:

“Farewell savages, farewell voyages” (C. Levi-Strauss. *Tristes Tropiques*). It may well be increasingly easy to bring back from “elsewhere”, images taken by “light” movie cameras, minute still cameras or image-capturing mobile phones... a commonplace. A central character haunts this ground of the commonplace: the tourist. Let’s be more precise: someone who travels in far-off, foreign places, in the state of vacation. The camera is a major attribute of the tourist; the guide inventories and enjoins; the postcard makes evident landscapes, monuments and the picturesqueness of the “others”.”⁴⁸

The choice to present a country or a filmmaker, a retrospective or homage is often random. We have seen that for example the festival in Lussas each year presents a

⁴⁷ Dunja Jelenković, Interview with Marie-Pierre Duhamel-Müller, taped in Paris, Aug. 2007

⁴⁸ *Cinéma du réel*, Newsletter, 16 Aug. 2007

filmography of a certain country through the programmes *Doc Route* and *Doc History*. Particular filmmakers are presented through a programme called *Fragments of a Filmmaker's Work*. It is a rather convenient decision to have a programme that is organised like this, around a few particular main lines. It makes *Lussas Doc's* programme easily recognisable and understandable.

These programming choices are often made when for example a person or country or event is attracting world's attention for one or another reason. This was for example the case in Lussas in 2006 and 2007⁴⁹. On the other hand, should we always choose a popular topic, or on the contrary, try to avoid repeating what others are doing — both at other festivals, but also the top stories in the news, stories that are so often discussed that they start to annoy the audience? If there is for example a crisis in a certain country, is it really the best decision to use these events as a topic at that very moment?

Some festivals have a different programmer for each of the non-competitive programmes. Smaller and younger festivals often have one programmer for all the programmes — this person (with an assistant) makes the preliminary selection, and then alone or with the director of the festival makes the final choice. This is the case for example for the *Festival international des scénaristes*, but Anne Maregiano, one of the organisers and programmers of the festival claims⁵⁰, taking San Francisco as an example, that it is often better when a festival has a special programmer for each of the programmes. On the other hand, even though *Cinéma du réel* is a huge festival, Marie-Pierre Duhamel-Müller says that she does all the programming herself and that the main criterion in selection is simply that the films are good:

“It's experience, only experience. Practice. Years of practice. And you have to have a good master. I learned with excellent masters. I did not invent my competence. I've learned it through the years with excellent masters — like in Rotterdam⁵¹, like Marco

⁴⁹ C.f. Section 5.3.1 Politics and Programming: Lussas 2006

⁵⁰ Dunja Jelenković, Interview with Anne Maregiano, taped in Paris, Aug. 2007

⁵¹ Rotterdam International Film Festival (www.filmfestivalrotterdam.com)

Müller⁵² in Pesaro and Locarno, and others. *I'm sure! I'm convinced! And then if people fight — it's OK!*"⁵³

The Belgrade Documentary and Short Film Festival has three selectors, aside from Janko Baljak who is the artistic director. The artistic director selects the films for the non-competitive programmes and the *International Competition*, while the three other selectors choose the films for the *National Competition*.⁵⁴ Each year the festival chooses new selectors, and they are being chosen based on their integrity and experience in the field. The selection committee for *The Belgrade Documentary and Short Film Festival* works independently from the festivals' authorities. Janko Baljak says that he does not want to put any pressure on the members of selection committee or to control them:

“When it comes to the *National Competition* they have absolute autonomy. The films they choose, I watch them to be informed of what they have done, but I absolutely do not control them, nor do I make any further selection. Sure, I could say that half of those films are worth nothing, and I could remove that half of the films... But this is a big problem with the *National Competition* — the choice is small, the production is small. This year we had 120 films, and the final selection was approximately 40 titles. This means that the ratio is 1:3, that every third film was selected.”⁵⁵

When it comes to the non-competitive programmes, the artistic director is the one who decides the topics, and eventually chooses the films. Some of the programmes were taken over from other cultural institutions, such as *The Goya Winners*, a kind proposal

⁵² Marco Müller: Director of the Venice International Film Festival (Mostra Internazionale d'Arte Cinematografica) (since April 2004), a critic and historian, is the director and writer of many documentaries on cinema. In the late 1970s, he created and directed the first large film festival in Turin. Followed by: International Exhibition of New Cinema (Pesaro) - programming manager (1983-1985) and festival director (1986-1989); Venice film festival - collaborated in selection (1980-1994), Rotterdam International Film Festival - festival director (1989-1991); Locarno International Film Festival - festival director (1991-2000); president of Downtown Pictures (Bologna) (2002-2004)

⁵³ Marie-Pierre Duhamel-Müller, op.cit.

⁵⁴ *The Belgrade Documentary and Short Film Festival* 2008, selectors: Nevena Daković, Jovan Todorović, Goran Mitrović, artistic director: Janko Baljak; 2007, selectors: Oleg Novković, Vladislava Vojnović, Srđan Vučinić, preselector for international programme: Ivana Kronja, artistic director: Vera Vlajić

⁵⁵ Dunja Jelenković, Interview with Janko Baljak, taped in Belgrade, April 2008 | Translation: Dunja Jelenković

from the *Instituto Cervantes*, then *All the People Are Born Equal and Free*, a programme obtained from *Goethe Institute*. Janko Baljak says that the offer is enormous and that creating the special programmes is the easy part:

“What is difficult is making the international selection, because I made it out of let’s say four hundred and chose some forty films, whilst my colleagues who were selectors of the *National Competition*, chose forty-three films out of 120. This means that I was a much stricter selector than they were. You have to strike some kind of balance; you have to make a programme where both national and international directors feel satisfied”.⁵⁶

Most of the films at the festival in Lussas are chosen by the festival directors, Pascale Paulat and Christophe Postic, with the help of several different collaborators every year, for the special programmes.

There is also another issue — whether we should be convinced that the film is good or we should be convinced that the audience will like it. What happens if we as selectors believe that a film is a good film, but at the same time we are not positive that our audience will share our opinion? When we make decisions about selecting a documentary, do we take into account a certain concept of a viewer, or do we also support projects that we see as important for the future, although they at the present time might have little potential for an audience? The IDFA team approaches the problem cautiously:

“The films that finish highest in audience polls — the crowd favourites — are not necessarily those most appreciated by authorities, fellow filmmakers and critics. Sometimes, it is precisely the films that fail to unite the audience in appreciation — but rather divide opinions — that are most interesting in terms of both content and style.”⁵⁷

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ IDFA website, www.idfa.nl

On the other hand, Marie-Pierre Duhamel-Müller stresses that the taste of selectors must be compatible with how the audience thinks. In other words we absolutely always must believe that the audience has good taste in cinema:

“I’m sure the film is good. And *therefore* I am sure that the audience will like it too. If I do not bet on that, what kind of a programmer am I? Do I not trust the audience? Is the audience inferior to me?”⁵⁸

There is a certain universality of the audiovisual language which we have to accept as true. This is also a question of dramaturgy: how does an author provoke the viewer’s curiosity, how does a filmmaker make accessible even more complex and difficult themes?⁵⁹ And it is also a basic question of what we think of our target group — if we underestimate them, how can we make any kind of choice for them at all?

5.3 Politics and Programming

There are different ways in which politics can interfere in decisions one makes when programming. In general, this issue is not much different from the issue of politics interfering in any other cultural activity, but in the case of documentary festivals there are two main possible cases of the problem — decisions that are made because of politics and politics as a film’s subject. That said, this interference does not necessarily have to be a minus — different political issues have always been an inspiration for filmmaking. We have seen some good examples in the *Americana* programme at *Cinéma du réel*, also in the programme *Body to Body, the Filmed Body* in Lussas.

5.3.1 Lussas 2006

Mostly, the organisers try to show high quality films. Moreover, they usually do not make any assumptions about other, non-filmic wishes of their audience, such as their political beliefs, sexual orientation or religious views. Janko Baljak, the artistic director

⁵⁸ Marie-Pierre Duhamel-Müller, op.cit.

⁵⁹ Vít Janeček, interview with Thierry Garrel, *Documentary Film and Totally Different Television*, IDF – Institute of Documentary Film, 6 February 2005 | Translation: Bara Stefanova and Keith Jones

of *The Belgrade Documentary and Short Film Festival* emphasises though that he always tries to choose thematic and films that could have some influence on the public opinion of Serbian people or make any other (positive) social impact. This is not rare. IDFA, the *International Documentary Festival Amsterdam*, stresses on their website that the festival is highly socially oriented:

“IDFA is unique for its international film programme, the variety of genres, its politically committed programme and the many European and world premieres featured each year. (...) The social relevance of a documentary is of great importance to IDFA. A documentary festival is the place to identify and analyse the changes taking place in our society, far from the daily media storm and protected from the superficial circus of pundits and sound bites, but nevertheless firmly rooted in the world.”⁶⁰

Sometimes just the fact that we select films from a particular country can be put in a political context. Topics films handle normally have their social role — such as in terms of the political attitude a director manifests through his film. Socio-political impact can come from different segments of festival-making — from the topic, through filmmakers’ attitudes, to even the regions we select films from. It seems more or less everybody agrees that the social role which a documentary festival has is what counts. Documentary film festivals are a place to confront opinions, not to merely entertain the audience.

However, the attempt of the team from Lussas to do just this in 2006 provoked an international scandal. It was a rather tricky situation, where the selectors had a possibly mistaken assumption tightly linked to the political reality of the period. The programme that had been announced, was suddenly changed, or more precisely — modified — as a reaction to the political situation in Israel and Lebanon. The key guests of the festival were supposed to be Israeli filmmakers and Israeli cinema should have been in the focus. When war between Israel and Lebanon started, the team from Lussas decided to shorten the Israeli programme, and instead, to integrate Lebanese and Palestinian films into the

⁶⁰ IDFA website, www.idfa.nl

programme, thus making also a retrospective of Lebanese and Palestinian cinema⁶¹. Some Israeli filmmakers pulled out and the press all over the globe started to accuse the organisers of being politically incorrect⁶². Whether we believe the press or not, moreover, whether we accept as true that Lussas team had the best intentions or not — they made a mistake. The decision to change the programme due to the political situation put *Lussas Doc*'s name in the headlines of the world press, but it considerably deteriorated the reputation of the festival, and was therefore, in my view, a mistake. For example:

“The SCAM (French Multimedia Authors Society) has long provided faithful support to the *États généraux du film documentaire*. Our faithfulness is that of a friend (...) It is in the name of this faithfulness that the Board of Governors of SCAM last year vigorously protested against the censorship, prudently dubbed deprogramming, practised against certain Israeli documentaries. (...) The SCAM regrets this fact and expresses the wish that the *États généraux* remain faithful to the promised programme and commit themselves to screening all the Israeli documentaries censored last year. (...)”⁶³

The official position of SCAM on this issue was also available in *La Lettre da la SCAM*⁶⁴.

Is what happened in Lussas a technical or a moral mistake? Everybody who works or in any way collaborates with the festival would guarantee that it was strictly a technical mistake. How much of a mistake? Rather important, but from today's perspective, the consequences were not that catastrophic actually. What happened is

⁶¹ Christophe Postic, *Route du Doc : Israel. In Hindsight*: "For the *Lussas Documentary Film Festival* this summer and within the programme selection entitled *Route du Doc*, Gaël Lépingle and myself selected three days of Israeli documentary films. When the war broke out in Lebanon and in Israel, questions arose within the Lussas team on the possibility of maintaining this programme unchanged. The decision was finally taken to reduce the programme of Israeli films from three days to two, and at the same time to programme a selection of Lebanese and Palestinian films and to organise a debate. Following this decision, several directors withdrew their films, reducing the programming from two days to one. The choice we made, envisaged and discussed collectively, can today seem subject to criticism, and I myself have criticized it."

⁶² Thomas Sotinel, *Cinéma: Polémique avant le festival de Lussas*, *Le Monde*, 19 August; Merav Yudilovich, *Jerusalem Not Politically Correct*, *Israel Culture*, 12 August 2006

⁶³ Guy Seligmann (SCAM); *Catalogue 2007, États généraux du film documentaire, Lussas*, Ardèche Image Association, 2007

⁶⁴ Martine Kaufmann, Stéphane Joseph, *Entretiens Marie-Pierre Müller et Pascale Paulat*, *La Lettre da la SCAM*, number 26, October 2006

that the final programme was different from what it was supposed to be, because a part of Israeli producers and directors decided not to show their films that particular year. What also happened is a furore. What is left of all this is just a memory of one rather unpleasant episode. On the other hand, the fact that the festival never lost its good reputation speaks for itself. The Israeli artists who pulled out in the year 2006 and left the space *open* for Lebanese guests did show their films in Lussas the following year — 2007. Probably the biggest compliment is that the artists themselves have only good words for the festival.

The epilogue of the *Lussas* story is that due to the mistakes from the year 2006, the festival in 2007 had two Israeli special programmes — presenting the work of David Perlov and presenting the work of Ram Loevy, the latter in the presence of the director. The screenings were followed by discussions, and the person in charge of providing us with a better insight into the Israeli cinema was Ariel Schweitzer⁶⁵, film critic. The festival was in 2007 so dominated by Israel that the joke was that the major language of people present at the festival for the first time wasn't French — but Hebrew.

The festival took place from 19 to 25 August 2007, and the programme was the following:

- **Doc History: Portugal** (documentaries and couple of fiction films, of an older date — the oldest ones created in the early 1930s, and the newest one in the 1980; the directors: Joao de Almeida E Sa, Jose Leitao de Barros, Manoel de Oliveira, Antonio Lopes Ribeiro, Alberto Seixas Santos, Fernando Lopes)
- **Doc Route: Finland** (Finnish documentary films, mostly of the newer date: 1990s to the year 2007, directors: Oliwia Tonteri, Antti Peippo, Reetta Aalto, Erja Dammert, Kai Nordberg, Susanna Helke, Virpi Suutari)
- **Uncertain Viewpoints** (French programme including also some films from Belgium and Canada; the most diverse programme; the directors: Monika Mrozek, Julien Colin, Fanny Dal Magro, Annie Saint- Pierre, Jean-Claude Riga, Dominique Loreau, Romain Rabier and others)

⁶⁵ Ariel Schweitzer: Film and TV Department, Tel Aviv University, Ramat Aviv, Israel; critic at *Cahiers du cinéma* (www.cahiersducinema.com); author of the book *Le Cinéma Israélien de la Modernité*, l'Harmattan, Paris, 1997, lives and works in Paris

- **Africa** (a special programme presenting the continent, 16 African and documentaries on Africa)
- **Fragment of a filmmaker's work: David Perlov**⁶⁶ (*In Jerusalem*⁶⁷ and all the six parts of the Perlov's video diary, taped in the period 1973 - 1983, and first published on DVD in 2006 (post mortal) by RE: VOIR Video⁶⁸ from Paris)⁶⁹
- **Fragment of a filmmaker's work: Ram Loevy**⁷⁰ (another Israeli filmmaker, presented with four films, both documentary and fiction, the oldest from the 1960s, the newest from the 2002)
- **Fragment of a filmmaker's work: Manoel de Oliveira** (a Portuguese director, recognised not only as the oldest major director active today, but also as one of the most imaginative and innovative filmmakers the cinema has ever known, 10 films, films from 1935 to 2001, both fiction and documentaries)
- **Sacem**⁷¹ **Day** (musical documentaries from Germany, Switzerland, France, Canada)
- **SCAM**⁷² **day** (like every year Scam presented an entire day of programme devoted to its *Brouillon d'un rêve* seed fund. Seven (French) documentaries that they supported financially were screened.)
- **Bosses** (2 documentaries and one fiction film, having the bosses- workers- labour relations as the theme, namely: *La Question humaine*, Nicolas Klotz, 2007, *Bienvenue à Bataville*, François Caillat, 2007, and *La voix de son maître*, Gérard Mordillat and Nicolas Philibert (1978))

⁶⁶ David Perlov: Israeli filmmaker (1930-2003), born in Rio de Janeiro, emigrated to Israel in 1958, his film *Diary* was being shot in over a decade, first in 16mm, then in video;

⁶⁷ 1963, a prize winner at the Venice Film Festival, considered as a pioneer of modern Israeli cinema

⁶⁸ RE:VOIR is a video publisher and distributor specialising in experimental and avant-garde film; founded in Paris in 1994 by filmmaker Pip Chodorov. RE:VOIR published *Diary* in late November 2006 as a boxed set of 7 DVDs, together with an 84-page book in English, French and Hebrew. The boxed set contains the six chapters of the newly restored *Diary* (1973-1983) plus the one-hour *My Stills* (1952-2002), and a three lingual book about David Perlov and his film — with texts by Ariel Schweitzer, Uri Klein, Talya Halkin, Dominik Blüher, interviews with David Perlov, a poem by Nathan Zach, as well as Perlov's drawings and photographs.

⁶⁹ Perlov's work was supposed to be screened at the festival in 2006. Some of the Israeli documentaries were reprogrammed in 2007, but not all.

⁷⁰ Ram Loevy: one of the most significant Israeli filmmakers alive; directed both fiction and documentaries; some of his work was grounds to huge public debates

⁷¹ French Society of Composers and Musicians

⁷² French Multimedia Authors' Society

- **Special Séances**

The programme was a real success. The programme dedicated to Manoel de Oliveira, Portuguese director best known for his intense questioning of the relations of cinema to other forms of expression, included his most renowned works. The cycle of Ram Loevy's films was shown in presence of the director. Ram Loevy has had great influence on the history of Israeli documentary and television, and therefore his presence at the festival was even more significant. Among other films, this selection included *Hirbet Hizaa*, the first film to focus on the evacuation of Palestinian villages in 1948. This film only owed its broadcast in 1978 to public pressure and a general strike of Israeli television leading to an interruption of transmissions on the only channel at the time⁷³. The screenings of David Perlov's *Diary* definitely was an extreme aesthetic pleasure — *Diary* is considered to be a masterpiece of Israeli cinema. The film pictures Perlov's family — his twin daughters Naomi and Yael and his wife Mira in their day- to- day life (1973 - 1983). All through this period of time Perlov also films political and other social changes in Israel, together with the dramatic events that were going on in Israel at that time. Yet we also view the changes in the authors approach to filming. The film, whose making lasted over ten years and consisted of ten years of shooting and some five years of editing, consists of six one-hour chapters. The production was backed by the British Channel 4, where it was first screened.

In the year 2006, some Israeli artists decided not to come, and some came. Among those who did not come there was Yael Perlov, the daughter of the late David Perlov, and Ram Loevy. They were invited again the next year (2007) and came. One of the producers, Yael Perlov⁷⁴, speaks about her decision to withdraw Perlov's *Diary* from *Lussas* 2006, and how she did not mind coming to the festival the year after:

“Yes, of course! Why not? But at this moment I decided to pull my films out. I didn't care. That's me! But then all the Israelis called me asking whether I pulled out the films. I said: 'I am doing it, you don't have to do what I do, I decided not to show my films there,

⁷³ Gaël Lépingle, Christophe Postic, *Doc Highway: Israel, 2006*

⁷⁴ After David Perlov's death, his daughter Yael Perlov and his wife Mira Perlov took over the promotion of the director's film legacy.

but you do what you want.’ But it was a long time ago. They asked me again and I said OK, why not? I don’t keep bad feelings. I’m not like that. I don’t keep my anger and write it down. We continue... They said OK, we forget it. I don’t care, time passes, they asked me again and I find it very nice that they asked me! I can tell you about Lussas, about what’s going on there... You bring youngsters to nature, they are there anyway, and it is a wonderful idea! To take them out of the big cities where they live in Europe, to put them in this *hole*, so they see films! It raises their curiosity.”⁷⁵

Christophe Postic, the artistic director of the festival, says that for him it was important to invite the directors who had decided not to come in 2006. Asked whether now he thinks that the decision they made in 2006 was good or bad, Christophe Postic says that today he thinks it was not the best decision:

“But anyway, it’s very important to consider the politics. Because for us, and not only for documentary film — it’s the same for feature film — a film is (in certain way of course, but), a film *is* politics. When you take a camera and you decide to make a film you will tell a story, you will have your point of view, you will imagine some characters and all these elements are built together... If there is story, the story is politics... When I say politics it is not the politics in the sense of wars etc. Even to tell a social story, you can have many ways to express it. And these different ways tell different ways to think about it.”⁷⁶

All the interviewees I asked agree that there is no more reason to discuss this story anymore. Marie-Pierre Duhamel-Müller says that what happened in the past should stay in the past, and that there is no more reason to return to the *Lussas* story. Moreover, she emphasises that people who work on the Lussas festival made a technical mistake:

“My opinion of that is that they made a mistake, a *technical* mistake, and not a philosophical mistake. When you have a philosophy coming into your job, you have to be

⁷⁵ Dunja Jelenković, Interview with Yael Perlov, taped in Paris, March 2008

⁷⁶ Dunja Jelenković, Interview with Christophe Postic, taped in Paris, March 2008

a good technician — a good technician deals with that. That's it. (...) I made a Syrian programme. You know Syria, how nice people think Syria is, and how happy they are to know what's going on in Syria and that region of the world. It's considered a *dangerous* country here. I made a Syrian programme and nothing happened — because I'm a good technician. And it's my job. I had pressure, I had everything, I had critics, I had everything, and everything went so smoothly, and was a big success, because I am a good *technician*. It's not about philosophy, it's about film programming technique and running a festival is a job for which you need to be skilled and trained. It's not a piece of cake.”⁷⁷

Moreover, one of the Israeli directors who were invited and who came to the festival found it very important for him to come — as if it was a way of building a bridge. Christophe Postic underlines that the Lebanese programme was not the programme *against* the first, Israeli, programme. Whatever decision we make in programming though, especially such a major one, there are always consequences. Asked whether in his experience this decision brought more damage or good, Christophe Postic says:

“*C'est fait*. There was some damage of course. I think personally that it was not the good decision, but I took this decision and it is not today for me something that is still ongoing... It's like this and ... The next year I invited Ram and Yael and they came. So I think that if they came it's proven that a lot of ... an important part of this polemic was not right. Because, you know we were accused of *censure*, sometimes even of anti-Semitism and so on...”⁷⁸

And it seems that it really is forgotten. When she was asked what her best festival experience with *Diary* was, Yael Perlov simply answered: “Lussas. There is enthusiasm and a lot of youngsters, which I love.”⁷⁹

This is of course not the first time that Israel found itself for one or another reason in the middle of a story about censorship⁸⁰. It happens rather often in different segments

⁷⁷ Marie-Pierre Duhamel-Müller, op.cit.

⁷⁸ Christophe Postic, op.cit.

⁷⁹ Yael Perlov, op.cit.

⁸⁰ Anonymous, *Une censure inadmissible à Cinéma du réel*, Liberation, 08 March 2004;

of the arts and culture, and in addition, at the same time as *Cinéma du réel* 2008 was happening in the *Centre Pompidou*, another major cultural event was happening in Paris, the *Salon du livre*. The fact that Israel was the guest of honour could not be left without a debate — the question that was posed was: “Is it a country that we invite as guest of honour or is it literature?” Famous Israeli filmmaker, Eran Kolirin⁸¹, says that unfortunately this is not a surprise:

“Our film was invited to the Abu Dhabi festival and I think this was the first time that a feature film from Israel was invited to the Arab world, and then they gave up a week or two before the festival. There is film and there are people and there are politicians. They are everywhere, in politics, in festivals... If someone tries to make a point it is very stupid, but you know it’s a part of life.”⁸²

The ideal is of course to have a festival that is totally free of politics, at least when it comes to politics interfering into selection process, but it is not always the reality. Political interests have always come first, especially in war troubled countries, but also in the West where people try to give their judgement on these cases sometimes out of best intention, but not always with the best result.

5.3.2 World Crisis and Films about It

There is also another way in which the politics can indirectly interfere into programming. The documentaries are a rather special kind of filmmaking — one way or another they picture reality. If a director lacks artistic touch in his filmmaking, then the reality can offer only limited number of themes. The point is probably to concentrate on details and then the repentance of topics is definitely avoided. The question is however

Yudilovich, Merav, *Edinburgh Film Festival: We'll Reject Israeli Sponsorship*, Israel Culture, 04 August 2006

⁸¹ Eran Kolirin, director of the film *The Band's Visit*, Cannes 2007: *Prix coup de cœur, un certain regard*; European Discovery of the Year (2007); Israeli Film Academy Awards: awarded in eight categories; also awarded at the festivals in Munich, Sarajevo, Copenhagen, Warsaw and others

⁸² Dunja Jelenković, Interview with Eran Kolirin, TV show *Yellow Cab*, TV B92, broadcast 3 February 2008

— how often it happens that after major (political) events, such as for instance Israeli crisis, war in former Yugoslavia, September 11th, how often does it happen that the following year we watch too many films with this thematic? How many September 11th films we saw in the year after the event?

A film that was screened in Lussas in 2008, *War Movie* by Israeli filmmaker Carmit Harash, had a dual importance — the film is from 2007, thus it was created only a year after the war with Lebanon, which is also the topic of the film. It is interesting to see how a young filmmaker reacts to the problems of history that is as recent as Lebanon crisis. Moreover, one of the questions discussed in Lussas in 2006 was exactly the necessity of having the time distance when we watch war films⁸³. It is also interesting to see how the audience reacts to it in the debate that is scheduled after the projection. Screening of this and similar films represents also a continuance of collaboration with Israeli filmmakers, which was a subject of a debate only a year earlier. The director, Carmit Harash who was present at the festival, explained that her intention was to present war in the way we do not typically observe it, but in the way war really is. This is also how she explains her long shots showing empty streets in a war troubled village. In her movie Harash makes a parallel between Israeli- Lebanon crises in 2006 and the Kippur war from 1973. It is often the case with Israeli films that they confront Israeli and Arab world. Making a story right after a particular event (or even during it) is not the rule in documentary filmmaking, but it happens. It is also proven by Carmit Harash's film which managed to bring Lebanon crisis to film festivals only two years after it occurred.

The opinions on this issue are somewhat dissimilar. On one hand, there are professionals who say that they did have some experience with this phenomenon, that it happens for sure and that the year after certain events we did have too many films about these events. On the other hand, there is another opinion, saying that among millions of films made every year, it is almost impossible to run into too many similar films. Marie-Peire Duhamel-Müller believes that the reality itself is so wide that the documentaries, even though they in a way picture our reality, can never be the same. Therefore festivals' programme cannot be too similar. More or less the directors of all the three festivals

⁸³C.f. Christophe Postic, *Route du Doc: Israel; In Hindsight*

agree on what can be the most frequent mistakes. Janko Baljak says that it is not the question of superproduction, but the question of film quality.

“There is no doubt that those are some issues that intrigue the filmmakers, but it is important how a story is being told. I know that when there was *Oluja*⁸⁴ or the bombing⁸⁵ or the Kosovo tragedy or the 5 October⁸⁶... I am not interested in films that deal with commonplaces, I am interested in some concrete situations, concrete stories about individuals who went through these events. It is not a question of superproduction. We all get easily inspired by these events. I live here, in Majke Jevrosime Street⁸⁷ in Belgrade and I remember very well what was happening on 5 October and how the policemen were taken out by people through the windows... For me it is much more interesting if I can choose one particular detail. I did not make a film about it, but that would be a much better film on 5 October than all the films that are made.”⁸⁸

Christophe Postic says:

“There is something very special in documentary and it’s that you need time. You need time to make your film, you need time to understand the situation, and very often... For example... *la guerre a Yougoslavie*... all the important and interesting films were made one, two, three and sometimes more years than that after the war. *C’est le sens du documentaire. Cela demande de prendre le temps et ce qui est aussi important — il ne s’agit pas d’actualités, ce n’est pas du reportage; pas un festival de reportages, même si les reportages ont leur actualité, mais je pense que le documentaire est un art.*”⁸⁹

It is also interesting how people from different countries and of diverse backgrounds react to documentaries on specific political issues. In Lussas in 2008 two films were screened in a row — *War Movie* by Carmit Harash, a story about Israeli wars

⁸⁴ a.k.a. Operation Storm, a Croatian military operation during the war in ex SFRY, 1995

⁸⁵ NATO bombing 1999

⁸⁶ 5 October 2000, the fall of Serbian president Slobodan Milošević

⁸⁷ There is a police station in this street.

⁸⁸ Janko Baljak, op.cit.

⁸⁹ Christophe Postic, op.cit.

and *J'ai un frère* by Emmanuel Vigier, a documentary about two brothers, Bosnian Serbs, who got separated by war and who had not seen each other for fifteen years. Both films raised quite a few questions, as it was seen from the discussion with the directors after the projections. And while questions posed to Carmit Harash, whose film has an obvious anti-war message, were more of a type how she sees the war and why she presents it in forms of shots of empty streets, Emmanuel Vigier's film raised some other questions. Vigier obviously wanted to tell a story about a relationship between two brothers. The story is partially put in a war context, but it is not a war story. The viewers however were eager to get some additional explanations, for example the filmmaker's attitude on who was guilty for the war. The Israeli filmmaker, Carmit Harash herself did not find it the most important issue of Vigier's film. It will be interesting to see how Vigier's film will be perceived in the Balkans — the area the two filmed brothers actually come from.

5.4 Journalism VS Documentary Filmmaking

Another very important issue, which is, as demonstrated, tightly linked to the previous one, is the difference between journalistic documentaries and art documentaries. The festivals try, more or less, to disregard journalism, because they are art festivals, and that is why they want for films with an obvious artistic value. Journalism is seen as the contrary of filmmaking and documentaries. On the other hand, there are various genres in mass media that have an obvious referential relationship to reality, and therefore they are sometimes easily mistaken for documentaries. Marie-Pierre Duhamel-Müller stresses the difference between arthouse documentaries and television programmes:

“We live in a country here and in the group of countries where actuality chases actuality away. One day Serbia, the next day it's Portugal. So don't ever think that Serbia was the top item each day — that's not true. Who remembers the war in Bosnia?! If you follow the headlines, you'll never programme. You'll never get to be an experienced programmer. Because you have to know that what is *on* one day, won't be *on* the next

day. So if you, in programme, if you stick to what is in newspapers and in the headlines — you're out. The cinema is not about headlines. Television is. Not cinema.”⁹⁰

And this is true. During the 1990s *Cinéma du réel* screened all in all some five to ten films with war in Bosnia as the topic. For instance, David Perlov's *Diary* started to go to the festivals first recently and Pip Chodorov, as the film's distributor says that it was “the right time to do it”⁹¹. Even though the film could have been shown anytime since 1983 (when the filming was finished), it was first shown now. What is important is that there is not so much discussion about the hidden political issues — this film draws attention because of its artistic value. Ariel Schweitzer, film critic, explains that documentaries are subjective vision of reality, not reality in itself. They do not picture reality, they are visions of reality:

“If the film has an artistic value, it's not the reality product. It's a kind of subjective, sometimes poetic... which means that the theme has a value which is not only the immediate informative value, but also kind of an artistic value. And this means that this film we can show, not only with link to the actuality, but also as an artistic and intemporal film. And I think if you programme film only with an immediate impact, this is not a programme that has a very important interest in the artistic point of view.”⁹²

In the interview given to Vít Janeček for *Dok.revue*, philosopher Václav Bělohradský talks about the difference between documentaries and “various representations of the world that are shaped according to more or less convincing patterns, strategies or preferences that have their own history and reasons”. Bělohradský stresses that documentary film is based on the reflection of its own prevailing views and points of departure:

“News and current affairs lack that meta-language even if I can imagine that there could be a current affair broadcaster — sometimes, some programmes by BBC might come

⁹⁰ Marie Pierre Duhamel Müller, op.cit.

⁹¹ Dunja Jelenković, Interview with Pip Chodorov, taped in Paris, Sept 2007

⁹² Dunja Jelenković, Interview with Ariel Schweitzer, taped in Paris, Aug. 2007

near — that would use such meta-language. (...) This type of dumb news machine was well portrayed in *No Man's Land* by Danis Tanović, in contrast to the Balkan chaos, strategy and chaos that work with terms such as prime time, are purely absurd.”⁹³

There are documentary film festivals that would never screen a journalistic video. It seems that this kind of material lacks the needed artistic value and that it would therefore be a bad programming decision to select it. Simply, journalism stories do not fit. This is what Christophe Postic said about journalistic documentaries within documentary film festivals:

“Never. Really never. But for example, Yugoslavia, we had a programme, I don’t remember the year, and we screened two ways to look at the problem. It was about Srebrenica and there was a TV programme, not very journalistic one, but it was really a TV programme. There was another film which is a creative documentary. And we invited the authors. It was a debate about the way to tell this particular story. So sometimes we can make an exception, because of the quality of the film — because of the way to tell a story, the way to look at the place where you will put your camera, the way to think about the reality!”⁹⁴

Speaking of weaknesses of the films that failed to enter the competition at *The Belgrade Documentary and Short Film Festival*, Janko Baljak explains that they can be different. Janko Baljak more or less succeeded in eliminating TV form from the festival’s programme or at least to make it less visible. TV shows have to be changed to more filmic videos in order to apply for the festival. Notable presence of TV programmes in the festival was a rather big problem a few years ago. In 2008 there was however one film that had already been broadcast on national television, namely the film *Pure Silence, Please*, by Filip Colović (2007, RTS⁹⁵, Serbia). This film nevertheless has another value

⁹³ Vít Janeček, Interview with Václav Bělohradský, *Documentary Films Turn Masses Into Audience*, Dok.revue, Literární noviny, IDF, Institute of Documentary Film, 09 May 2008

⁹⁴ Christophe Postic, op.cit.

⁹⁵ Radio Television of Serbia

— it is a cry of a young mother whose little daughter is sick with lung disease, cystic fibrosis. The film tries to make the problem of kids sick with this disease more visible in the society. Janko Baljak made a compromise when he finally decided to select this film. Moreover, the film had to be modified compared to what was seen on TV in order to enter the festival. According to the rules and prepositions a film that has already been broadcast on TV cannot be screened at the festival. However, here we have another *never- but* situation. Janko Baljak says:

“Never on TV. It is a rule. It is impossible. Now, since there are fifty or more channels on cable, I can only take someone’s word that it has not been shown. But that is why there is also the criterion that films must take the filmic form, not to be TV programmes.”⁹⁶

A programmer should really have a very good reason to select a TV programme for the festival. Normally, TV programmes are made for TV and not for festivals, whereas there is a vast choice of creative documentaries that can be selected. Moreover, TV programmes address themselves to an audience different from the one that comes to festivals. TV programmes address themselves to masses, while good festivals try to talk to individuals.

5.5 Mixed Festivals — Documentaries, Experimental, Animated and Fiction Films

Another interesting issue is the number of festivals that combine both documentaries, feature films, experimental video, in short: all kinds of films. It is a programming that can be risky, as it can get the festival into losing the focus, but on the other hand there are also some really successful *mixtures* of this type. The main question with this kind of programming is: “a festival of what kind of film is it then?”, but then again it can also just be called a festival of (quality) film. It happens also that a festival that is defined as a documentary film festival⁹⁷ screens some feature fiction films, as in Marseille or in Lussas. Ariel Schweitzer says that one should separate experimental and

⁹⁶ Janko Baljak, op.cit.

⁹⁷ in contrast to others that are defined as festivals of documentaries, feature films and animated films

documentary, as it is two too different genres, and putting them together can be dangerous, but he also adds:

“Lussas is defined as a documentary film festival. But we know today that the frontier between the documentary and fiction is sometimes very blurred. So, in order to enrich the reflection of documentary, they also show feature films — because it speaks a lot about the tension between documentary and fiction. So it’s one of the themes the festival deals with. I think we can have this liberty when we are really specific. You know, when we know what we are doing and the kind of film we are interested in, then, when we are sure of that, we can take the liberty to have some exterior vision, by showing other films.”⁹⁸

Some of the feature fiction films screened in Lussas in 2007 were parts of the programmes that presented certain directors (Ram Loevy, Manoel de Oliveira), and excluding those fiction films was not really necessary, on the contrary these films helped present the work of the chosen filmmaker better — if the filmmakers that we chose for our special programmes had made fiction films too, and if those films are important and they fit into our programme, they can only help the programme as a whole. This is the case for example with the Ram Loevy’s feature film *Hirbet Hizaa* (1978), one of the first Israeli films that focused on Palestinians, and which was a breakthrough in Israeli cinematography at that time (1978). As already mentioned the film only owed its broadcast in 1978 to public pressure and a strike on Israeli television. The film also fits into the programme perfectly because it handles the same subject as the other Loevy’s films⁹⁹ that were screened at the festival: Israeli- Palestinian relations, war and crisis. In Marseille festival, presence of feature films is thoroughly planned in advance:

“Fiction films from around the world will be mixed together in competition from now on with documentary films. It is a slight modification (in number rather than quality) but it is decisive nonetheless. Why take this step? When generalist festivals are increasingly including documentaries in their selections, we are choosing to reverse this tendency: it is

⁹⁸ Ariel Schweitzer, op.cit.

⁹⁹ *I, Achmad*, together with Avshalom Katz, documentary 1966- 67; *Bread*, fiction, 1986; *Gaza, Close, Closed, Closure*, documentary, 2002

our turn to welcome fiction, fully and entirely. It is a way of reaffirming the vigour of the documentary film, which does not need a reserved area to indicate its importance, and it does not give a hoot about boundaries to designate that this genre widely disseminates, and often for the better.”¹⁰⁰

Speaking of defining a festival as an event where the main criteria in programming is the quality of films, and not film genre, Marie-Pierre Duhamel-Müller also believes that there is no reason for strict avoiding feature films in a documentary film festival:

“Why not? If the choice is OK, if the selection is good, why not? Leipzig is like this, and it’s a rather good festival, no, it’s a good festival. Marseille has fiction and video art and documentary, it’s a very good festival.”¹⁰¹

Belgrade Documentary and Short Film Festival is exactly a festival of this type, and it is a mixture by its definition. It is a festival of documentary, animated, experimental, and short fiction films. Like everything else, this also has its advantages and disadvantages. In the *pro* group of arguments there is certainly the variety of films that this type of festival by definition offers. A festival of short films that shows as many types of short films as possible easily attracts audience. This kind of festival can easily be vivid, fast, dynamic and therefore interesting. The problem occurs however when the films that have applied are not so very good in all the festival’s categories; when for example there are excellent films in the category of animated films, but not so good ones in the experimental group. What do we do then? Some programmers would simply cut some programmes off. The idea is to show good films, and if there is, from one or another reason, not enough good films to choose from — then it is probably the best solution to show less films than it was planned, but to make sure that all of them really do deserve our attention. Some other programmers would firmly stick to the quantity, not wanting their festival to seem *empty*. This is pretty much difficult because we can always say that a festival with a lack of good films has an *empty* programme, no matter how

¹⁰⁰ Jean-Pierre Rehm for the Marseille festival website, www.fidmarseille.org

¹⁰¹ Marie-Pierre Duhamel-Müller, op.cit.

many films were actually screened there. *The Belgrade Documentary and Short Film Festival* is here trapped with another problem, which is a heritage from the previous decades and from people who were in charge of the festival before. Janko Baljak explains that the artistic director does not have a choice — according to the statute, films must be screened in all the categories.

“Well, I have inherited those rules and I will try the following years to change them — because I believe that some things we simply cannot succeed in. There is no such thing anymore as experimental film, and I *have* this category. Furthermore out of some nine *experimental* films (and this is a very difficult category, what is an experiment and what is not), out of nine experimental films, six were selected in order to satisfy the form, and I think that this is intolerable. I will try to make this go away. Experimental film as some special category... Most of the films were documentaries and that is good, the offer was bigger and that is OK, it functions... Production of animation in this country is very bad and sad and also here almost all the films that applied entered the competition. There were maybe only two or three that did not...”¹⁰²

Unfortunately, one does not have to be an expert to easily notice all the damages that this kind of *company policy* has been making for the festival. Having all the genres, no matter how good or bad the films that apply in these categories are, simply helps create a poorer image of the festival. This is especially obvious in the *National Competition*. In how big a grade can one or two not so good films harm the general image of the selection?

“As far as I am concerned, I am very rigid. These selectors, I do not have some great influence on them nor do I talk to them about the films — I respect their choice. I tell them ‘If you think that in *National Competition* there are only five or ten films that are any good, then select only those five films. It has been a case both in the world and in our neighbourhood when a selection committee decides to screen only one film in *National Competition*. It has always been a *two edged knife*, because at the same time you must

¹⁰² Janko Baljak, op.cit.

cherish the national production. You have to give a chance to the people who made those films, even if those films are really bad. And they are, a lot Serbian films that are shown in *National Competition* do not deserve in my opinion... I want them to see exactly — since I made a very harsh international selection — I want them to see exactly where they stand. In this way they might feel better and maybe the quality will be increased year by year. The easiest thing to do is to say ‘there are no good Serbian films.’”¹⁰³

This is how Yael Perlov comments the dilemma between purely documentary film festivals and festivals that mix genres:

“I’ll tell you what I don’t like. I don’t like lesbian festivals, homosexual festivals and so on. I do not like this segregation, it is not humane. I want the homosexuals to be a part of society, not a segregated group. Why do a homosexual film festival?! Why can’t they be like all others, who cares that they are homosexuals?! That is part of life and this is discrimination. This, I don’t like. I don’t like film festivals of segregation, of discrimination. But documentary and fiction films — I know that for *Diary* it is better not to put it in experimental, but in documentary, because my father’s discipline is rather documentary cinema and not experimental, not at all.”¹⁰⁴

A formatted festival can always have its audience, the same way a formatted TV channel or a radio station always have the audience. If we have a festival of for example animated films, then there is no doubt about what it is and people interested in animation, they come. On the other hand, a festival should not limit itself strictly to one genre. If there is a justified explanation to project something else, there is no reason not to do it. However, the programmers should always keep in mind that a festival must not lose its focus.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Yael Perlov, op.cit.

5.6 Reprises

Exclusivity is also a constant concern when it comes to programming. Festivals try to show films that have never been shown in the town, sometimes even in the country. The big ones also stream to having world's premiers, like Cannes for example. Repetition can be avoided among other things by communicating with other festivals. Everybody agrees more or less that the festivals communicate with one another and that even though there is competition that they try to help each other. The problem is if we have a festival scheduled more or less for the same time as another festival of the same profile, and not very far away from one another. This would mean that we would have to start organising and planning approximately at the same time, and that our festivals are targeted towards more or less the same audience. How do we attract audience? How do we make sure that we do not have the same programme as this other festival? Exchange is the only safe solution. We should also bear in mind that some directors would not apply for both festivals with the same film. There are several different factors, but in France, unlike in Serbia, it is really rare that two festivals come out with same programme, or parts of the programme. An important factor is the fact how big a town and/or festival is — this is important both for programmers who they are choosing the films, but also for the filmmakers who apply with their films. Often the festivals want to show premiers. Each festival has to be, in order to get funding from the government, has to be the top, the best festival, the most important festival. In that case, producers try to have their film screened at the festival where more world comes.

But then again, if we are avoiding to have the same film as another festival, or to have a film that has already been shown in the same town/region, sometimes even a country, under which circumstances do we not avoid having the same film our own festival had already had previous year(s)? This happened in Lussas 2007 for example, when they projected one of the Finnish films¹⁰⁵ for the second time, the second year in a row. In 2007 it was screened for the second time and it was a part of *Doc Route Finland*, a special programme about the country. And usually, when we have this repetition

¹⁰⁵ *Proxy*, Antti Peippo (1989)

situation it is mostly when a film appears again as a part of a special programme dedicated to a director (retrospective) or to a country. This happens extremely rarely though, at least when it comes to bigger festivals and/or festivals with good reputation. There are other situations too. In Lussas sometimes they decide not to show the film exactly because it had already been screened. Christophe Postic stresses that an exception can always be made:

“We can say — it is important because you can show a film many times and you will always of course have the audience — because this is an important film, *un film rare*, and it’s the same here — you can take a programme, for example, you can take the *Americana*¹⁰⁶ programme and you can show it next month and it’s also necessary because there are some very important, very beautiful films there.”¹⁰⁷

Ariel Schweitzer says:

“I think the most important criterion is the quality of the film; second one is to propose something new, which means films that are exposed for the first time in this city or in this country, and this is for me the main criteria.”¹⁰⁸

Exclusivity is one of the most important parameters of festival quality. If we do not try to be as exclusive as possible, if the audience already knows the films that we want to screen, then there is no point in making a festival. Even though exceptions are always made, as a rule it is a premiere that we are looking for. If the organisers for instance have to choose ten films for a thematic programme and they have eleven films of the same quality out of which there is a film which is very often screened at some other festivals, probably they will not choose it. The organisers of festival in Lussas as a rule select all the films by the end of June, a month and a half before the festival. Christophe Postic says that each year in the end of June he goes to Marseille festival:

¹⁰⁶ Programme *Americana*, *Cinéma du réel* 2008

¹⁰⁷ Christophe Postic, op.cit.

¹⁰⁸ Ariel Schweitzer, op.cit.

“Sometimes we decide to screen a film in the middle of July, but this is really the last moment to decide to programme one or two last films. The main programme is decided in March. But for example in Marseille very often I discover a film which is for me very important and we programme it even if it was in Marseille. There is no competition in Lussas. We don’t need the first screening. We don’t have this pressure.”¹⁰⁹

Maybe the only way to be original is to have a festival with a really original topic. On the other hand, even if we have the same or similar topic as some other festival, among hundreds of thousands of films that are being made, it is unlikely that we will have the same programme as our competition. Really famous films, many times awarded films, they can be a dangerous zone — a festival gains on prestige if it has them, but on the other hand, those films are something every festival wants (if they can afford them) and they will all fight for them. This makes the repetition more probable. This kind of repetition is often the case with Serbian festivals but those are mostly feature film festivals. In a constant race for exclusivity Serbian festivals rather ignore one another. However, repeating occurs foremost in the case of Serbian (feature) films. The reason lies in the size of the market which is really small and the production is small as well.

5.7 Diversity

It is interesting how a festival can be dominated by one filmmaker, even when there is no homage or retrospective of work of a certain filmmaker. A good example is *The Belgrade Documentary and Short Film Festival* which in 2008 screened eight films by Miloš Tomić, Serbian filmmaker, currently PhD student at FAMU Academy in Prague. Yet, Tomić never had a programme especially devoted to him.

If it weren’t for one film by Miomir Miki Stamenković, it would be fully justified to believe that *Waking Her up in Vain* is a programme devoted to the work of the promising Serbian artist, Miloš Tomić. The programme screens six films by Tomić, and one by Miomir Miki Stamenković. What puts the six Tomić’s films together with the one directed by Stamenković is yet not totally clear. Judged by the timing though both

¹⁰⁹ Christophe Postic, op.cit.

directors are equally represented, Miloš Tomić with six short films and Miomir Miki Stamenković with one feature length film.

In addition, Miloš Tomić was definitely the most screened director at this edition of the festival — apart from taking over almost the whole programme *Waking Her up in Vain*, one of Tomić's films from this programme also entered the *National Competition* in animation (*Spitted by Kiss*) and therefore had additional screenings. Furthermore, Miloš Tomić is the co-author of one more film at the festival — *TIME or the Place of Meeting* (Tamara Drakulić, Serbia, 2007, 6'40''). This film is about a father and a son, watchmakers, who both repair watches at the same place, but with the time difference of ten years. The material showing the father, filmed ten years ago, is the one shot by Tomić.

Tomić's 11-minute film *Spitted by Kiss* got a special mention from the jury. It certainly was one of the highlights of the festival. The film is made of several thousands photos and it, in a most unusual way, pictures a man who lives his life lying in the street and can only observe things from the ground perspective. Speaking of his film, Miloš Tomić emphasises that he does not use computer made special effects:

“It is a film that is shot in the street, entirely, this means on the ground, and it is a film about all these small things that we can find in the street. This means about water and about stains and about girls who walk by... There is also a little doggy *poopoo*. A little bit of everything! I animate people, objects, light, and I animate by my camera. Each thing has to be animated differently in order to open it, to destroy it, to move it... I prefer working outside where millions of things can surprise me — when they happen — out of the blue! You imagine something and suddenly things start to happen... It starts to rain. A car drives nearby. Something happens. Some horses appear. Once, it happened!”¹¹⁰

Tomić's films were definitely among the better ones at the festival in 2008. However, they were put in a rather strange schedule. This way it seemed as if there were only a few filmmakers to choose from, not as if it was a deliberate choice. Is the production so small

¹¹⁰ Dunja Jelenković, Interview with Miloš Tomić, TV show Yellow Cab, TV B92, broadcast 3 February 2008 | Translation: Dunja Jelenković

that one director can beat the others with so many films? Is the quality of other films so low that we had to take so many films by just one director? Or is this director really someone who interests us at this particular moment so much that we wanted to show his work no matter the achievements of other filmmakers?

The question of diversity can also be observed through the number of different countries films come from, and then there is also diversity in terms of issues films deal with, then length and technique used. Diversity is always seen as an asset, but as in all other segments of programming we should not try to make the programme diverse by any means. The most important task is to have good films, and then if the films are also diverse, it is an advantage.

5.8 Festival Size

How to draw a line between too many and not enough? Less is more? More is better? Basically, with a good schedule, even a festival with 300 films can be functional. Also, a festival with only a few films can be very interesting if it is enriched with good workshops, seminars and debates. Is it better to have a highest number of films and no reprises or to have a bare minimum of films with many of reprises? The main reason for raising this question is that it can happen, when a timetable is not efficient enough, that we hardly manage to see anything when there are too many films at a festival. This is one of the reasons why some people prefer smaller events. This is how Yael Perlov explains the phenomenon:

“No, I don’t like supermarkets. I like *contour*, artistic choice. I prefer to see Marie-Pierre Duhamell with her strict choices! Even sometimes you can find it less interesting or less... but at least you see a woman that has her own way! I prefer this. I was hundreds of times at supermarkets — you get this catalogue, this heavy catalogue, you are tired the moment you open it! You find nothing, and you are completely depressed! (Laugh) You are depressed the moment you open it! (...) I prefer artistic choice!”¹¹¹

¹¹¹ Yael Perlov, op.cit.

In the recent years in Lussas they have been trying to reduce the programme in order to have reprises. It is very hard to see everything if films are not screened the second time. And it is not the same thing to see a film in the theatre and to see a film on TV and *vidéothèque*. But it is equilibrium. An organiser for the festival is always to find this equilibrium between reflections and recent programmes. German director Fatih Akin, when he was a guest of Emir Kusturica at his festival *Kustendorf*¹¹² in Mokra Gora in Serbia, said that this kind of festival was exactly the kind he preferred:

“I mean, Cannes is great and loud and big, but you have to really put this out and this away to really... I believe that in the centre, in the core, the Cannes film festival is about movies, but there is so much around, like the red carpet and parties and Angelina Jolie and Brad Pitt, and cars and commercials... There is so much around that is confusing the essence of what is going on and here it is really about the essence. I don't want to judge these festivals because if it weren't for them I would never get to know someone like Emir Kusturica. If the Belgrade festival FEST did not exist I would never meet somebody like Hanna Schygulla and put her in the film¹¹³ — we met at the film festival of Beograd. The smaller the festivals, the more intimate they are, I think you are closer to the essence of what it is about and it is about cinema. It's always about cinema.”¹¹⁴

Kustendorf had more of a meeting atmosphere. Moreover, it was exclusive (for participants, guests, journalists and professionals), with limited possibility for attendance. Serbian director Emir Kusturica invited film students and a few of renewed directors¹¹⁵ to show their films in Drvengrad, a wooden village where he lives. Short student films were numerous; on the other hand there were not so many feature films by senior directors, only a few. Miloš Tomić, who also took part in *Kustendorf* festival, says that he prefers festivals with fewer films but with more reprises:

¹¹² Festival *Kustendorf*, founded by famous director Emir Kusturica, for the first time held in January 2008, in a small ethno village built and owned by the director.

¹¹³ *At the Edge of Heaven* (2007), awarden in Cannes 2007 for the best screenplay

¹¹⁴ Dunja Jelenković, Interview with Fatih Akin, *Haos, kvantna fizika i takve stvari*, Newspaper *Yellow Cab*, February 2008

¹¹⁵ Nikita Mikhalkov, Fatih Akin, Eran Kolirin, Christian Munigu and others

“Man gets scared of hundreds and hundreds of films and thinks — what now, where should I go, which film... If the selection is right then each film is worth watching, sometimes even two times, man can get to know the director, to talk to him, and there is much more to it...”¹¹⁶

Smaller festivals can prove to be just as significant as the huge, *top* festivals. The interest from audience and film professionals shows that there is a prominent need for smaller events with more focused aesthetic profiles. It is exactly these festivals that have the strength to form an independent view of European and world film production. Audience is fed up with the deforming tendencies where famous names are glorified in the hope of increasing the glamour and prestige of the festival and where political and other non-filmic factors seem to be too important in the selection process¹¹⁷.

5.9 Economy, Media, Politics

There is also one whole aspect of programming that has to do with economy, the media, and the politics. There is a whole range of questions about programming that do not come from the aesthetics of the film, or how you programme. Those are the questions of what protocol is and what is commercial. This is maybe not politics in terms of Israel and Iraq and war, but in terms of the politics of the film people.

As an illustration we could say for example that one is, as a coordinator of a festival, working with a company which is providing the festival with high definition projection equipment. They are setting up a room to show high definition. And the coordinator needs this because in Europe there are only three festivals that show high definition, and so you have to be one of them to be the A-level festival. Then festival director realises that a film that is coming out is being distributed by this company, and another one is not. And s/he wants to show the other one, but people from the company say: “show this one because that is our film”. Hence the director has to do it because he is working with them and he feels he needs them as an ally. There is a lot of “You have to

¹¹⁶ Miloš Tomić, op.cit.

¹¹⁷ Igor Pop Trajkov, *Survival, Continuity and Eminences Grise, The 2003 Skopje Film Festival*, Kinoeye, Issue 5, May 2003

do favours for people and you get favours back”, and one really needs to have people on his side in film world. There are all sorts of political things that happen between film companies. People are not really willing to talk about this, but then again, we, the audience, can easily detect this, with help of a bad or a confusing programme. Or even if we do not, it is often enough just to check the sponsors list in the end of a catalogue. Pip Chodorov says that this does not necessarily have to be bad but that it is definitely an influence:

“For example, if there is a retrospective in Cannes of films by Dario Argento, made in the 1970s, in Italy, and everyone gets excited: wow, I haven’t seen this film since it came out, it’s a psychedelic masterpiece — that’s one thing, that’s fine. When I proposed Perlov to Cannes, the person I know said: ‘You understand don’t you, that if we take this film, and we say yes, we don’t pay anything. You have to provide the film, you have to pay for your ticket and your hotel room, and you have to do everything. We just give you a badge, but we have no way to pay you and in exchange we give you this platform that is huge and everyone in the world hears about you because you are in Cannes’. So it is a give and take. That kind of politics, where I have to take the loss to show my film there, but — it is important for the film. They are providing a service. The audience has to deal with it! This is just reality.”¹¹⁸

Ideally the choices would be made based purely on what is the strongest or the most interesting thing to show, regardless of influences from the industry, government, countries that provide money, and sponsors. Festival in Lussas for example avoids any possibility of conflict by giving its partners a space within which they can project what they want. The SCAM, Civil Society of Multimedia Authors, within *The Scam Day* each year projects the films by filmmakers who were selected for the Scam’s *Brouillons d’un rêve* award. In 2008 all the films had one theme in common: the family. There is also *The Sacem Day*, when Sacem, French Society of Composers and Musicians, project the selection they made. This kind of collaboration does not interfere into the decisions of festival responsible; moreover it enriches the programme of the festival.

¹¹⁸ Pip Chodorov, op.cit.

5.10 Timetable — the Final Puzzle

5.10.1 The Right Order

When films have been selected, the real part of programming is yet just about to start. Composing music, as Marie Pierre Duhamel Müller defined it or, DJ-ing, as Pip Chodorov would say — programming is making a jigsaw puzzle out of the films and special sessions that we have finally decided to have. Making a schedule is extremely important because if we put, let's say all the films we have — at the same time, in 100 different rooms, then none of them will have audience. If we have too many reprises, then the festival can be boring. If we do not repeat films at all, the audience might get disappointed. If we put a blockbuster on Saturday morning, why did we in the first place decide to screen this film? We also have to think of the audience: do they need a pause, do they need a reprise, do they need something lighter now, and so on? If we have for example ten films and two of them are silent, and two black and white, they are diverse enough. We start with a couple of short ones and a long one, a difficult one, then we go back to easy ones, we make a nice programme. We do not put three *Irreversible*¹¹⁹ in a row. Pip Chodorov agrees:

“No, you don't. My dad once went to a recording session, a friend of his is a musician, and they recorded this song, and as soon as they got it right, his friend said: “side B, track four”. For him this song fits into that. It's like in baseball — you have your hitters and you have the heavy hitter... So you have three songs that are like this, the fourth song is like that, that's how you programme.”¹²⁰

We do not put the same film on Friday at 20.00, and on Saturday at 22.00, because each actual time and hour, those are prime spots. There are the spots where everybody will come, and then there are the spots where nobody will come. It is kind of a disservice to a film to show it on Sunday morning, but then screening the film on

¹¹⁹ *Irreversible*, directed by Gaspar Noe, 2002, featuring Monica Bellucci, Vincent Cassel; the film is known for one of longer and most brutal rape scenes in fiction film history.

¹²⁰ Pip Chodorov, op.cit.

Saturday at 20.00, it will attract many people. We have to decide what we want to promote most: what we want to show first and what we want to show last — a film that we show on Saturday at 20.00 is something we really think that it deserves major exposure. Saturday at 22.00 will be less because they will see the one at 20.00 and will be tired and will want to eat so there is less people, and Sunday morning — nobody. For instance, we could say that Sunday at 22.00 we will show film that will try to bring a certain kind of audience. Maybe we will spend the whole Sunday just on a *diary* film, which is a long film and people want to spend their Sunday on it. However Saturday night, we will show a really popular thing or just a thing that nobody knows.

Professionals who have run a festival for a few years have had experience and that is how they know when people come and when they do not come. More often than not it is the evenings and the weekends, so the weekend evening is the most frequented. Some festivals, it is different. In Tel Aviv, the weekend is not Saturday and Sunday, but Friday and Saturday. So Sunday is a work day. Everything is different and it really depends on where you are. In Belgrade for example, festival screenings can have 2000 seats completely packed, even if it is a work day.

Furthermore there is the relationship between the location and the target group. We have seen three different festivals — *The Belgrade Documentary and Short Film Festival* that is organised in Belgrade, the capital of a country that too often does not have enough time for culture, *Cinéma du réel* that is organised in Paris, the capital which is all about culture, and *Lussas Doc*, an event which is special since it is organised in Lussas, a tiny village with only two streets, where there is literally nothing else to do. The same rules for making a timetable will not be applicable for all the three festivals. What is a good choice for *Lussas*, might be a terrible decision for *Cinéma du réel*. In Lussas, we know that the audience is there strictly for the festival. There is nothing else to do in the village, they can just see films, and they are also a particular type of audience. And then we also have festivals like *Cinéma du réel*, in centre of Paris and it is sort of an *everybody-comes* event. What is the difference between programming this type of festival and *Lussas* where you in a way in advance know your audience? This is how Christophe Postic explains it:

“For us it’s possible to begin the festival with a film that has been already screened at other festivals. It’s possible. Of course we try to have a film that is shown for the first time but in Lussas what is very specific is that the first screening is also a very popular screening. A lot of people from the village and from the other village come to this screening in particular — because it’s outside. The entire programme that is outside, we try to think about the programme that is sometimes...not commercial, but... *qui est peut-être moins difficile*. But if you take all the programmes and have a look at this programme it’s really not the only criteria.”¹²¹

The target group in Lussas is people from Paris and professionals and film lovers from all over France, not the locals. The locals come, but they are not the main audience. The locals usually work during the day so they can go to the evening screenings and that is why Lussas team always tries to programme in the evenings something applicable, something this target group might also like. They also try to avoid serious debates about film issues, something that interests professionals, not the locals from Lussas and neighbouring villages. Sometimes also they can screen a film in the evening and the morning after come back to speak about it, and to have a debate.

Finally, never neglect one’s appetite. This time the question is not about appetite for films. A lunch break is very important, especially at dislocated festivals, such as Lussas, where people do not come straight from their homes to the screenings.

Shall I go to see a film I really want to see or go eat something after hours and hours of watching films? It is difficult to presume the result. Maybe if the film is extremely good, otherwise the lunch wins.

It is very particular in Lussas because there is a break during the lunch and a break during the dinner. The projections are even being referred to as the morning, afternoon and evening screening. The morning screening starts at 10.00 and ends around 13.00. The afternoon begins at 14.30, and ends around 19.00. Evening projections start at 21.00. This means that there are pauses, and it is not like at a lot of big festivals where there are screenings absolutely always.

¹²¹ Christophe Postic, op.cit.

Since Lussas is a small village with only two streets the meeting is very important. It often happens exactly during the breaks when the general audience and directors, critics and other professionals mingle during the lunch, coffee or aperitif break.

5.10.2 Timetable & Genre Issues

The Belgrade Documentary and Short Film Festival screens (short) films in groups. Each projection consists of some ten to twelve films, depending on their length. The films are grouped so that national and international films are separated, and this is the foremost criterion for placing particular films together. (The length is another criterion since the aim is to make a group with a total duration of films that would equal duration of a feature film 1h30' – 2h40'.)

The films sometimes simply do not fit. Another problem are people who come to the festival because of one or more particular genres — as a rule this would be documentary, the genre which dominates the festival. There are people who are simply not interested in experimental cinema or in animation, and they do not want to see that. They are bothered by that. And they usually end up stuck somewhere in the middle seats of the 12th row in the dark of the crowded cinema and they are thus in a way forced to see for instance an animated film, which is carefully put somewhere in the middle of the screening. In addition, there are people who do not know what they are just about to see. We also have to count in people who do not have the time to study the programme carefully, and who just randomly pick a programme of short films. They have to face a *salad* of different types of films. In other words, the projections that are not formatted often help loose your audience. On the other hand, Janko Baljak, the artistic director observes this kind of timetable as an asset. Baljak argues that this practice is a very good one, moreover that the festival absolutely should continue with mixing the genres:

“I opened the festival on purpose with one fantastic cartoon — *John and Karen*. Then there is one terribly shocking French documentary that tells a story about the revenge to French women who were suspected of being in collaboration with Nazis during the 2nd world war. Then there was one so-called foreign Dutch film, but a film made by a person from this region, Lidija Zelović's *My Friends*. This is a special kind of art — how to put

these programmes together so that they are interesting. My criterion is that — the opening: the best films (laugh). Then, the prime spots: the best films; then not so good films; then the least interesting films.”¹²²

Unfortunately, projections that consist of films of all the possible genres are too chaotic. It is difficult to find a spectator who wants to see all. People usually want to see something specific. Even if they want to see everything why not let them know when is what and let them watch different genres in different time. We cannot say for instance that if somebody wants to see only documentaries and no other genres that s/he should go to another festival, a purely documentary festival. This is too our audience. We can give them everything at one and the same festival — but in different timings.

¹²² Janko Baljak, *op.cit.*

6. Overview

6.1 The Most Annoying Mistakes

Festivals are diverse — programmes and the programming techniques differ from place to place, from festival to festival. They all bring something new, even though according to Marie-Pierre Duhamel-Müller, there are too many really bad, poor documentary film festivals¹²³. Speaking of which, the mistakes that organisers make can be various. The question posed for the end was: “What is the common or the most annoying mistake that, as you have seen, people make in programming at documentary film festivals?”

The researched material has shown that there are a few programming mistakes that stand out. The professionals who often attend film festivals more or less agree on what those mistakes are. Even though the list of possible problems goes from issues of politics and corruption over genre questions to simply problems such as insufficient number of intermissions between screenings, festival size proved itself to be one of the most important concerns. Ariel Schweitzer, also Anne Maregiano, stress the importance of number of films in relation to an adequate number of screenings. Anne Maregiano says:

“There are either too few or too many films — so you don’t get the chance to see them all, because there is not enough time. The films are not being repeated. So if you see it — you see it. I think this is bad, I think it’s bad if you have a festival with 400 films that nobody can get the chance to see. I really think it is better when you have fewer films, but people can see them, and that they also can be repeated. So if I cannot see something tonight, because I’m tired, or I want to see something else, or I want to do something else, so that I can see it tomorrow morning, or in couple of days or whatever. Having only one person in charge of all the programmes is also a mistake.”¹²⁴

¹²³ Marie-Pierre Duhamel-Müller, op.cit.

¹²⁴ Anne Maregiano, op.cit.

Ariel Schweitzer says:

“First, the main problem is either that there are not enough films to see, not enough interesting films to see, then it’s boring, and on the other hand, too many films too see, and then it becomes frustrating. You want to see everything and you don’t have the ability to see the film you want to see. It’s two sides of the same problem. A good programme in a festival of documentary, experimental films is to have enough films, not too many, and to give the possibility to see them, which means sometimes programming the same film a few times, so you can choose the time when you can see it.”¹²⁵

Another problem that stands out is directly linked to schedule issues — choosing the right opening i.e. closing film. The research has shown that a wrong opening film can spoil the whole festival experience. There are two possible consequences — a lousy film brings less people, and then the opening ceremony is empty. What is more often is that everybody comes since it is the opening night which is normally well attended, but then the audience gets disappointed. Pip Chodorov starts with criticising politics interference into programming, but then continues with discussing the schedule problems and giving possible explanations to it:

“Maybe something like that happened last year in Lussas where they censored, when they decided to change the programme because of the politics, and the people boycotted it. I mean that’s a stupid mistake, people resigned, there were a few people who didn’t want to come — filmmakers, and then critics, people were furious, and wrote scathing criticism of the festival and then they were in an embarrassing situation and they had to back out of it, it was a big deal. It was a big problem. That was stupid, I don’t know... As far as a mistake, the festival of Cannes often shows very bad films the opening and the closing day (like *Fatal Attraction* or *DaVinci Code*). They deny it, but I think it’s because they actually get money from the companies that want to promote these films, to have a big opening night and a big closing night”¹²⁶.

¹²⁵ Ariel Schweitzer, op.cit.

¹²⁶ Pip Chodorov, op.cit.

Fatih Akin says:

“The wrong opening film. The wrong programming. This sort of stuff, there are all sorts of stuff, the list is endless of what can go wrong with a festival.”¹²⁷

Finding the best way to group the films is also very important and it is closely related to the previous issue. This problem can be treated from different perspectives — from the perspective of three *units* different in their size: a screening, a special programme and a festival. The screening question is: “Which short films should be screened together and as a result form one screening?” The question of special programmes is: “Which films should be selected for one particular special programme?” In terms of festival as a unit the question is: “Which genres should we integrate into one particular festival?” Yael Perlov says that the most important thing is the choice, the programme — how people choose one film and not another one:

“This is what I am concerned about — the artistic *contour* of things. (...) The problem is the artistic choice, this is what concerns me. And sometimes very bad films are programmed. I prefer individuals, I don’t like groups in general — I don’t like *The Israeli cinema*, *The Korea*... I like individuality in my life. I think that art is individual; it doesn’t really take part in society. When I see a Korean film festival of Korean cinema, it depresses me. I want to know one artist and to go deep in his art, and not because he is a part of Korean cinema. It is interesting also, but it’s not me, it tires me.”¹²⁸

But speaking of the problems she faces in promotion and distribution of her father’s film *Diary*, Yael Perlov says:

”I don’t find problems — only good experiences. Those who like *Diary* programme it very well. I have other problems because *Diary* is a very special case — it is not really a documentary, it is not really a feature film, it is not experimental! So, what is it?! When it

¹²⁷ Fatih Akin, op.cit.

¹²⁸ Yael Perlov, op.cit.

is a documentary film festival it is easier. Once it is in international film festival with feature films it is much more complicated. There are not a lot of people there who come. Because it is a ... I understand it! Because when you are in feature international film festival, so you go to see feature films, not documentaries, it is a little bit aside.”¹²⁹

There has been a lot of talk about the difference between journalism and filmmaking¹³⁰. For some programmers, sometimes also for audience, mixing journalism and documentaries is even offensive. This is exactly the programming mistake Marie-Pierre Duhamel-Müller finds the most annoying:

“Confounding cinema and television! Confounding cinema and actuality! Confounding the topic and the form!”¹³¹

To conclude in an optimistic manner, Miloš Tomić concentrates on the very positive side of programming, the sense of going to festivals:

“Well festivals, they are like some island in a man’s life. You go away from home and simply somehow you run away from all your problems. You see exciting films, meet exciting people, drink, dance, and one way or another — all the problems are gone!”¹³²

6.2 The Biggest and the Most Common Programming Problems Detected

The research has pointed to several most obvious and/or most common mistakes in festival programming. Avoiding them can help improve the quality of a festival and help the audience to be more satisfied with the programme.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ C.f. Section 5.4 Journalism vs. Documentary Filmmaking

¹³¹ Marie-Pierre Duhamel-Müller, op.cit.

¹³² Miloš Tomić, op.cit.

- **Having only one programmer for the whole festival, for all the programmes:** The job is better done if it is divided among professionals experienced in particular subjects each. If a festival has a different programmer for each of the programmes, programmer will as a rule spend more time on and put more energy in selecting the programme. On the other hand, there are also big and successful festivals that rely mostly only on one person. Most of the *Cinéma du reel* programme is being selected by the festival director.
- **Commercialisation of the programme:** TV is a place to be commercial, festivals should present art. A festival that is too commercial risks loosing a part of its audience, the same way a too alternative festival does.
- **Ignoring the audience:** The audience is the measure of our success. Not taking into account anything of their wishes and needs would mean that we do not make a festival for people who come there, but for ourselves.
- **Not trying to build the public:** Programmes that educate the audience contribute among other to the originality of the programme. If we offer the audience something that maybe will not have an impact immediately, it may have an impact within a year or two.
- **Lack of quality:** Selecting bad films is the most obvious result of bad programming. Normally, there is no programmer who would do this on purpose. Much depends also on the quality of the applied films.
- **Lack of films (too few films):** If there is nothing to see, then festival is boring, and there is no point in making it. This is the other side of the next problem, in both cases — audience does not get to see what they want.
- **Too many films:** If there are too many films in a limited time frame, then the audience cannot see what they want to see, and this can be frustrating for them. This is the most mentioned problem of all, on the other hand, some festivals consider themselves better if they show more films than necessary, and some just want to use everything they had privilege to get, because the following year it might be too late.

- **Not having any reprises during the festival:** The audience does not have the possibility to choose. Everybody agrees that it is frustrating when you really want to see something, but you cannot. Why are you at a festival then?
- **The festival itself is a *reprise*:** The festival does not show anything new and fresh and it does not have a premier in the town/region/country. The expected result is that nobody will come. A festival should always try to manage to have a label: *NEW!*
- **(Too many) films that have already been shown in that town:** The festival loses credibility. Not so many people will come and fewer filmmakers will apply the following year. This happens rarely simply because it would be one of the most dangerous mistakes.
- **Repeating (too many) films from our festival from previous years:** This can be a bad programming decision because there are so many films made every year that a festival can always show new films. Films are screened the second time mostly as a part of a special programme, as for instance homage or a retrospective. On the other hand, if a festival does not make this kind of repetition too often repentance it is not necessarily a bad decision.
- **Having only old films in a festival:** The point with festivals is to offer something new. Rare, old films can be treated as *something new*, if they are too rare to be easily found. Otherwise, people do not want to go to a festival of films that can be seen at other places or that have already been seen either at earlier festivals on TV or DVD.
- **Lack of rare (old) films:** Those films are something people go to festivals for. It is important to make a distinction between old films from the category *up to 20 years old* — that can be found everywhere and old films that are older than that and therefore are very difficult to find.
- **Lack of diversity:** If all the films treat the same topic or come from the same country/ region¹³³ a festival is boring. This problem occurs rarely, since the choice of films is huge.

¹³³ If it is not a formatted festival, a festival of films from a certain country or dedicated to certain topic, such as a festival of Italian film, or a festival of gay/ lesbian films

- **Confounding TV and film (cinema), journalism and art:** If a festival turns into a TV show festival, instead of being a film festival, then it loses both credibility and artistic value. The organisers of all the big festivals are very careful about this issue.
- **Sticking to the newspapers: headlines equal festival:** What is today's top news will not be the top news tomorrow. Moreover, this kind of programming is uninteresting.
- **All genres at one and the same festival:** A festival (and its audience) can lose its focus. The opponents would say that "film is film", and that those kinds of mixtures only help prove this, and that they are therefore good. However, having too many genres at one and same festival is a too risky a decision. It can easily lead to confusion and disorder in a programme.
- **Documentaries and nothing else:** Every rule has its exceptions. Why wouldn't a programmer choose a film that would be excellent for the festival just because the film does not fit the genre? This is another side of the same problem as the previous one.
- **Not communicating with other festivals:** It is very important to know what other festivals are planning and working on. This is often the only way to avoid having the same programme as other festivals.
- **Not going to other festivals:** A good programmer goes to other festivals. This is considered to be a part of programmer's job.
- **Bad timetable 1 — putting all the big films at the same time and not offering any reprises:** The result is that the audience is *divided* and that there are not enough people at any of the projections. This happens extremely rare though.
- **Bad timetable 2 — uncertainty about what is the head film; opening/closing with a bad film:** This happened a couple of times in Cannes, for different reasons¹³⁴.
- **Bad timetable 3 — the head film not in the primetime:** This is extremely rare because then not enough people will see the film.

¹³⁴ The Cannes Film Festival Opening 17 May 2006, *The DaVinci Code*, Ron Howard

- **Bad timetable 4 — no pause:** The audience has other needs as well, and they will rather skip a film than not eat/smoke/go to the toilette during one whole day. Pause is especially important at festivals in remote places, like Lussas. In this case they usually want to see everything, but they also need to rest a bit.
- **Bad timetable 5 — too many, too long pauses:** People hate long waiting. They can furthermore lose a feeling that they are in a festival. Having more pauses than films can be interpreted as if festival did not have enough films to show.
- **Bad timetable 6 — having several extremely heavy or too funny films in a row, especially when it comes to too heavy films:** People might start going out in the middle of a film. We also have to take into account film's thematic and form — people usually do not want to see five mute, black and white long films in a row, especially not for example three rape-movies in a row.
- **Other issues that have to do with bad timetable:** A good timetable makes everything correspond well. A good timetable is an essential part of a good festival.
- **Projecting a film in a space not suitable for that particular film:** A small film in a too big a room, huge film in a space too small, and a great arty film, that we know cannot have an audience bigger than 800 in a room with 2000 seats, this is bad programming.
- **Not taking into account needs and expectations of the audience in that particular town:** Festival's location also influences some of the programming decisions. Lussas has different needs than Paris, which has different needs than Marseille and especially than New York.
- **Not taking into account habits and customs of the people in that particular town:** This is important for example when defining the primetime; what is primetime in Europe and USA might not be primetime in Asia.
- **Not taking into account work days, working hours, customs in a respective country:** This is very important for making a good schedule. Programmers do not want to show the best film when nobody will come.
- **Sponsors interfere in the selection process:** The sponsoring companies are not programmers. Their interests are the interests of their company and not of the

festival they are sponsoring. Moreover they usually do not know anything about film. This happens very often. Even when people do not talk about it, it is obvious, and even when it is not obvious, it is there.

- **Sponsors interfere in the timetable — time when a film would be shown:** The same as the above.
- **Not doing any favours:** Programmers need friends, collaborators, and people *on their side*. When you do not do any favours, you do not get any favours back, and the system of giving and taking favours is well developed in film world.
- **Censorship:** Censorship is old-fashioned. Festival gets bad reputation. Surprisingly enough it still happens from time to time.
- **Politics:** Too much politics is bad simply because these are film festivals. Festival gets bad reputation.
- **Not being sure of yourself:** This is important because then, if you are sure of yourself, even a bad decision can be defended!

6.3 Recommendations for the Belgrade Documentary and Short Film Festival

The most important Serbian festival of the documentary genre — *The Belgrade Documentary and Short Film Festival* has gone through different forms during more than half a century of its existence. With its new artistic director, Janko Baljak, who filled the position in 2008, the festival is presently at the beginning of a new phase of its development. Ideally, the entire course of the festival would resemble the closing night, when the awarded films are screened. Janko Baljak says that he has never been more satisfied, but adds that the steps that need to be taken for achieving this level of quality are numerous and that they go far beyond the festival itself.

“First of all, a documentary film market must be established in this country. In whatever shape or form! I do not know how right now, but at least a few alternative cinemas must be opened in Belgrade where these films could be screened throughout the year, so that they do not live their lives for only these few days during the festival. TV stations, first of

all those that have nationwide broadcasting frequencies, should be obliged to promote the documentary and short forms. A long time ago, it was an everyday practice in this country...¹³⁵

The entire context of when and where the festival is being organised should not be neglected. It is fair to say that the film industry, and more so the documentary and short form is not at all on the list of priorities in Serbian society today. However, there are some steps that the festival could take, regardless of the general socio-cultural context of Belgrade.

In terms of the programme itself those steps might include:

- Changing the rules and regulations according to which all the film genres must be included at the festival;
- Changing the way the screenings are organised; instead of grouping the films into national and international competition, grouping them based on their genre, such as: animated, short fiction, documentary etc;
- Collaboration with Yugoslav Film Archive in selection of films for special programmes;
- Having a few bigger programmes instead of having a large number of smaller programmes;
- Work on positioning of the festival — in media, then through the awards it gives; (fundraising), then also through the future editions of the festival (programme, guests, jury) which all further develops festival's reputation and therefore there will be more good films that will apply

There are also recommendations unrelated to programme, but which can help the programme issues. The first one is to move the festival from *The Belgrade Cultural Centre Cinema* to a more suitable place and to a better cinema, if possible. Another one is

¹³⁵ Janko Baljak, op.cit.

strengthening the collaboration with other institutions — media partners, ministries and other festivals.

Baljak emphasises that the festival is on a good path. It has a good atmosphere; more and more people are interested, especially young people.

7. Conclusion

Programming is one of the principal parts of organising a festival. It can even make a difference between a really poor and a brilliant festival. Programming is not over and done with when we have chosen the films. The factors that influence the programming are numerous; the list of possible traps is long as well.

As already mentioned there are many programming aspects to be cautious with: defining the topic, choosing the special programmes, the form and genre issues, quality of films, total number of films, number of films per category, number of screenings, reprises, diversity of selected films (countries films come from, year of production, films' thematic, style, technique used), schedule, as well as the possible external factors such as: sponsors, partners, founders, politics, economy, media.

We could divide the programming process into three parts: introduction — deciding the topic(s); body — selecting the films; and finish — working on the timetable. The reasons why programmers choose one topic over another one can be various, and even when the choice seems to be random, there is actually the whole list of possible factors that might have influenced this decision. These factors very often go beyond the reasons that have to do with art itself. Documentaries are a unique type of filmmaking. More often than not they are engaged filmmaking, and therefore documentary film festivals try to reflect a thought, an attitude, and a point of view. By fighting for or against something documentary film festivals try to present art from a certain angle, and not to be plain and simple with their selection. Film selection is definitely the chief part of programming, and basically it is very simple — people want to see good films, and programmers try to give them that. This is the main criterion. Even though making a timetable comes in the end, and here is defined as the *finish*, this does not mean that we have saved *the best for last* — making a schedule is a serious work. Good i.e. bad schedule can even equal good i.e. bad festival.

There is no such thing as a perfect festival. The research focused on three very good festivals, *Cinéma du réel*, *États généraux du film documentaire* a.k.a. *Lussas Doc* and *The Belgrade Documentary and Short Film Festival*. Using these three festivals as an

illustration, the research tried to show both the good aspects of these festivals but also everything that can go wrong with programming. The possible consequences of some mistakes can be predicted easily. On the other hand, some risks must be taken, and there is no way to know for sure what the result of a certain decision would be. Nothing is strict and firm in making a festival. All the rules are changeable, and various things are unpredictable — festivals must adjust to the location and point in time, and they face changes that reflect the changes of the context in which they are set. Praxis is thus the most important. Strictly technical tasks (such as deciding an ideal number of films in a festival, number of reprises, number of screenings per day, and so on) are an easier part of the job. There are some much more *fragile* problems, that are often much more difficult to solve than these technical assignments.

The research has shown that the most dangerous mistakes in programming come from too big a wish to make a festival fit into socio-cultural and political context of a country. Playing with political issues is always a risk. Politics disintegrates bigger groups, thus creating smaller ones that are *opposed* to one another. Confronting the opinions is the sense of documentary film festivals, but only as long as these confrontations stay within the film and art area. When it becomes an important factor in programming, politics create space for wrong assumptions, easily made accusations and misunderstanding. It is a risk each programmer should decide himself whether to take or not. Mistakes of this type though leave their tracks, and they can have their imprint on a festival long after they have occurred.

Documentaries are a rather special genre. They play with the reality. In their own way they make life into art, and therefore they have very important tasks before themselves. Each documentary film festival should have its own philosophy, it should show some attitude, it should confront opinions and at the same time it should stay charming. Only a festival imbued with *sole* is a good festival, but it is a good technician who makes this possible, not a thinker or a theorist.

A good festival is the one that is seen as an important meeting place for public, experienced professionals, young and talented filmmakers and journalists; a place that combines true art, new and rare quality films, world and international premieres, originality, imagination and good time. A good festival is open-minded, progressive,

innovative, and challenging. In order to achieve all this it must be well and thoroughly planned.

Bearing all this in mind, we come back to defining programming as composing music — putting all the puzzle pieces into the right order, so that first of all they all fit together, and then so that we can get a picture that makes sense, and that is even beautiful.

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RE:VOIR Video www.re-voir.com

Rotterdam International Film Festival www.filmfestivalrotterdam.com

UNAFF, United Nations Association Film Festival www.unaff.org

9. Vita of the Author

Dunja Jelenković, born in Belgrade (Serbia), 4 June 1981, graduated from Faculty of Philology, Belgrade University, study group: The Scandinavian Languages and Literature, Norwegian Language, in June 2006 with the average grade 8.17 (eight and 17/100) out of 10. In 2006 she enrolled the joint diploma programme at the University of Arts in Belgrade and Université Lumière Lyon 2: *Cultural Policy and Management* (UNESCO Chair).

She made her first step into radio journalism at the age of fifteen (1996), as one of the “kids” of the Belgrade radio station Studio B (radio show *Prekobrojni čas*), where she worked for three years. Afterward she also worked for radio B92 in Belgrade, and after that for TV show *Yellow Cab*, broadcast on TV B92 (2006-2008) where she covered stories on film, theatre, music and other events in culture.

The internship at RE:VOIR, video publisher of classic and avant-garde film, in Paris (2007) was the starting point of this study and it helped her enormously with this research.

She is fluent in Serbian, English and Norwegian, good in French, able to understand Swedish, Danish and Macedonian, and still learning. She lives and works in Belgrade.

10. Annex

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ANNEX 2: Cinéma du Réel, Timetable 2008

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ANNEX 10: Postic, Christophe, *Route du Doc: Israel; In Hindsight*, États généraux du
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