

Every Seventh Person

A film by Elke Groen and Ina Ivanceanu

Austria/Luxembourg 2006 |75 mins| 35mm|Colour| Dolby stereo

Chinese and Naxi (with German subtitles)

Production Minotaurus Film (Luxembourg) and Virgil Widrich Film and Multimedia

Production (Vienna) in cooperation with Amour Fou Film Production

With the support of the European Commission - Directorate General Research / Inco, Austrian Film Institute, ORF Film/Television Agreement, Film Fund Luxembourg.

Distribution in Austria: Pool Filmverleih

Premiere: Viennale 2006, 24 October 2006. 6.30 p.m. Urania



Short Synopsis

Every seventh person in the world is a Chinese farmer. Between 2002 and 2005 the filmmakers Elke Groen and Ina Ivanceaneau carried out numerous interviews in three Chinese villages documenting everyday life – without any censorship whatsoever. At the same time the inhabitants of the villages shot their own short films about their surroundings, their hopes and their dreams – short films that have become part of “Every Seventh Person”. The result is an exceptional documentary film that provides insight into life in China away from the urban and industrial centres – a life between socialism and market economy in which the villages become the testing grounds for democracy and self-determination.

Contents



Every seventh person in the world is a Chinese farmer: 800 million people in China live in one and a half million villages and that is more than half the population of the “Middle Kingdom”. The farmers of China have formed and influenced Chinese history and cultural landscapes for millennia. It was they who took part in the birth of Communist China in 1949 and in Mao’s Revolution and it was they who, during the famine of the late 50’s, paid a high price for that revolution. Today the era of the People’s Commune is in the past and land has been divided fairly between village inhabitants. But now the Huko system which guaranteed the families of Chinese farmers land (and thus sustenance) is also undergoing change. The arable plots are becoming smaller and smaller and in the meantime between 150 and 200 million former farmers are on the move from city to city looking for casual work.

“Every Seventh Person” was shot in three Chinese villages – where censorship makes access particularly difficult and where the great majority of Chinese people live. What does the future of the Chinese village look like? What hopes do the inhabitants have and what do they imagine? Why is that the villages have been made the test grounds for democracy in China? Between 2002 and 2005 Ina Ivanceanu and Elke Groen carried out research and filmed in Beisuzha, San Yuan and Jiangjiazhai:

Beisuzha (1592 inhabitants; located in the province of Hebei, 400 km. south of Beijing) is a model village of communist organisation and planning; the village

committee, elected by all the inhabitants determines the fair allocation of arable land, schooling and the use of cash resources – and controls family planning.

San Yuan (502 inhabitants, located in the province of Yunnan in south-west China in the Himalayan foothills) has only been accessible by surfaced road since 2003 and now an entrepreneur is planning a tourism project: a deer park for which the community has sacrificed a lot of arable land is to offer visitors from the surrounding cities rest and relaxation. Here the inhabitants do not speak Mandarin but Naxi and their almost-forgotten writing and water gods are rediscovered here.

Finally, in Jiangjiazhai (1774 inhabitants located in the province of Shaanxi in central China) “Socialism with a Chinese face”—i.e. the Chinese form of capitalism—determines events. The inhabitants are either casual labour in faraway cities or build up micro-enterprises. Since the biggest experimental zone has mushroomed out of nothing only 10km away and Nestlé has simultaneously pushed milk production, the number of cows in the village has increased over the last four years from 0 to 420 – even though traditionally no milk is drunk in China.

Away from any censorship control, the filmmakers were able to conduct long interviews with village inhabitants that make conceivable and visible the situation and developments in China far removed from the urban and industrial centres. During the making of the film, sequences were also made by village inhabitants themselves dealing with their everyday life and their dreams. These are also a component of “Every Seventh Person” and were shown in the villages themselves in an open air presentation while the film was being made.

“Every Seventh Person” is a film about the farmer state China today: between industrialisation and subsistence economy, between turbo-capitalism and socialist structures, between self-determination and heteronomy.

Bio/Filmography Elke Groen



Studied architecture and photography in Vienna.

Films:

“Tito Material”, Austria 1998, 16mm, 6min. Over 40 international festivals, Special award of the Federal Chancellery 1999, 2nd prize at the Hamburg Short Film Festival, special mention at the Ann Arbor Film Festival (USA).

“Austria in Autumn”, compilation of documentary material, Austria 2000, Beta SP, 40min. Festivals: Visions du Réel Nyon, Pesaro Film Festival, Diagonale, Festival International du Documentaire/Fictions du Réel – Marseille, Cinema Nova – Brussels.

Programming for “Der Kunst der Stunde ist Widerstand”, prize for innovative cinema at the Diagonale 2000.

“Bunica” (together with Ina Ivanceanu) documentary film, S-16mm/Digi Beta, Austria/Luxembourg 2005, Festivals (selection): visions du Réel Nyon 2005 (competition), EU-XXL 2005, Diagonale 06, Thessaloniki 06.

Bio/Filmography Ina Ivanceanu



African and Development Studies in Vienna and Leiden (NL).

Numerous research trips to Africa, Asia, Eastern Europe.

Freelance scientist specialised in participation, journalist (Ö1, FM4 etc.) and works in the field of culture (Vienna Festival/New Crowned Hope etc.)

Films: "Bunica" (together with Elke Groen, documentary film, S-16mm/Digi Beta, Austria/Luxembourg 2005, Festivals (selection): visions du Réel Nyon 2005 (competition), EU-XXL 2005, Diagonale 06, Thessaloniki 06.

“Every Seventh Person” – Crew

Script + Director: Elke Groen & Ina Ivanceanu

Camera: Elke Groen

Sound: Chang Pang, Carlo Thoss

Editing: Pia Dumont

Sound Design: Dietmar Schipek

Sound Editing: Regina Höllbacher

Production **Organisation** and Interviews: Ping-Xiu Rehm, ZHAO Liang, HE Zhi Wie

Scientific consultants: Heidi Dumreicher and the project team of the research project

SUCCESS, Susanne Weigelin-Schwiedrzik, Felix Wemheuer, Wu Yunchuan

Production Management: Alexander Dumreicher-Ivanceanu

Producers: Bady Minck, Virgil Widrich

“Every Seventh Person” was made in cooperation with the EU research project “Success” and Oikodrom – The Vienna Institute for Urban Sustainability.

Production: Minotaurus Film (Luxembourg), Virgil Widrich Film and Multimedia Produktion (Vienna) in cooperation with Amour Fou Film Produktion.

Supported by: European Commission / research project SUCCESS, Austrian Film Institute, ORF (Film and television agreement), Film Fund Luxembourg

Austria / Luxembourg 2006, 35 mm, 1:1,85, Stereo, Colour, 75 Minutes.

Further information and photos: www.pooool.at (*Download*)

First screening:

24. Oktober 2006, 18.30 Uhr, Urania, as part of the Viennale 2006

CONTACT

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