

Petrivision KULTUR, Reihe WURZELN, 5. Nov. 2016

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Rolling Images in Business Startups,
Film på Gotland

Ali, an Afghani boy, maybe 12-13 years old, stands before the camera, dressed in a t-shirt with the Afghani flag on. He takes a step to the side and the stop motion animated film suddenly shows him in a t-shirt with the Turkish flag. Cut to a t-shirt with the Greek flag. Then cut to a t-shirt with the Italian flag. And so on. 13 different t-shirts and 13 different flags before he dresses in the Swedish flag. Sweden is his new home, at least for the moment until the migration officials have made their final decision whether Afghanistan is a safe place for him or not. By the way - Afghanistan is a country where he never set his foot, he was born and raised in Pakistan.

Mubarak, another afghani boy is hiding under some plants in a corn field in Turkey, waiting for the police to go away and the smuggler to come back. He's not sure of what is the most scary thing. The spiders and snakes in the field or the yelling and torchlight from the Turkish police. His stay put and seven months later he arrives in Sweden. Later on he makes a short film about this particular part of his long journey - from the corn fields in Turkey to the Greek shore on the other side of the river. I ask him. How could you survive? You had no money. You were just a kid. He answers laconically; one day by another. Here and there someone helped me, people from my country. I had to learn how to separate helpers from abusers very quickly. And I prayed.

Mubarak's story paints out a net, an infrastructure all across Europe. An infrastructure of smuggler roads, black markets, two-room flats housing 50 refugees, day-to-day-jobs for food and accommodation. It's like the cellar of Europe, a place where we stack the goods we don't need. As we never have to take the stairs down there, we live safely in the rooms upstairs. About his film Mubarak says: "It's my diary of feelings. My therapy. My memory. And when I won a prize for it my mother was proud. That does not happen very often..."

Today we can see fragments of all those stories in the cinema theatres. Michael Winterbottoms "In this world", "The crossing" by George Kurian, "Simsha" by Rebecca Cremona, "Fire at sea" by Gianfranco Rosi, "Terraferma" by Emanuele Crialese and many others. Some are fiction, some are documentary. They are made with empathy, respect and carefulness. But they are normally not made by people with own refugee experience. Not yet. It takes time.

The full esthetic potential of the film media is also an empathic potential. The film media has a unique ability to give the voiceless a voice, and to force us living safe lives to see what we hardly can bear to see, to feel what we hardly can bear to feel.

Yes, we have to see and listen. And we have to take action. One way of doing that is to give room to our newcomers in the public and political culture life. Give the talented ones education, equipment, encouragement enough to become directors of their own stories. Take a step back from our positions to give those with other experiences room and power over the cultural agenda.

It takes time. One of the best swedish films this year is "Sami blood" by Amanda Kernell. She is telling the story of her grandma who left the sami land she was born into as a young girl, and didn't get back until she was an old women. For 70 years she denied her origin. This is a film that makes me understand the swedish oppression of our minority people. I knew a little about it from school. But now at least I have one sami womens' destiny in my veins and my heart forever. Thank you Amanda. And thank you film art.

I have favorite quote, not sure who said it first. It goes something like this: Art never means anything of importance. Until it does. And you can never tell when that is going to happen. Thank you!