

EKSMISJA / RESETTLEMENT

PRESS TEXT ENGLISH



SYNOPSIS by the KRAKOW FILM FESTIVAL

A marriage of two members of Poznan intelligentsia, both retired, learn that they need to leave the apartment they have lived in for several decades. They can neither afford the rent demanded by the new owner of the building nor the purchase of a new flat. Their grandson, who lives in Austria, comes to accompany the grandparents in difficult moments. This poignant family story is a record of the socio-economic transformation happening in Poland as well as a testimony to the radical change in mentality, which is the most difficult to accept for the representatives of the elder generation.

ABOUT THE FILM - A VIEW FROM OUTSIDE

The idea for this film's narrative starting point became more concrete after watching the Austrian film "[The End of Neubacher Project](#)" by Marcus Carney. It's a story about a young auteur-filmmaker going back to the home and history of his Carinthian grandparents, discovering their unbroken Nazi-attitude. In this case I wanted to make **a filmic journey in the opposite direction** and to film a story about the life of my Polish grandparents. Since I emigrated to Austria twenty years ago, this is also a 'homecoming story'.

When our family received the message on the end of the tenancy of Maria and Tadeusz, we had to realise that a place we had called "Home" is in danger - a place where not only most of our family grew up, but a place that had hosted our childhood time and many good and bad moments. It was the place we had grown 'into' and that had become attached to us as nothing else - **we had to come to terms with the fact that this place could possibly vanish for ever**. This feeling was unacceptable.

My mother and I had already moved out from that flat many years ago, but for our oldest ones, Maria and Tadeusz this place meant not only up to 66 years of memories - it was truly present in their life every day, ever since.

It became clear to me, there were two points that had to be portrayed. First of all I had to document our home with all its personal history attached, and secondly I had to try to change up the mind of the new landlord. **It all started in August 2010.**

The initial concept for the film was for a **documentary essay** of 30 minutes. But as unknown family-stories from the past unveiled during the shoot, it became clear to shift the initial concept towards a more classic documentary narration that could be accessible to a wider audience, although some off-text-based parts were kept from the initial phase of the film.

The shoot was an on-going endeavor and in 2011 it was possible to rise funding through the Austrian Ministry of Art and Education, that was open to support a Poland-focused project dealing also with the **Austrian past** in a rather direct way.

In-between my own investigative approaches to find out who the new owner was, progressed, but to talk to this person's conscience proved simply impossible. The (wealthy) **polish householder** (with a German name) was hiding behind her company that consisted only of a post-box and some attached lawyers. These ones effectively protected her from any kind of confrontation by executing her will to the extremes. Therefore it was never possible to confront her with the consequences of her actions - that two people might lose their health or even life through her psychological pressure and the missing of any kind of empathy towards them - two old and sick, helpless people.

Having grown up and being educated in **socially protective Austria** since 1990, I am still polish while having an outside perspective on Poland itself. I was wondering how could people of this age get thrown out from their apartment? Of course there is a law for tenant protection, but it is made in a way, that **if somebody wants to evict another person, he can do that**. One of quibbles is to state that the owner himself wants to live in the flat. In this case he has to provide a substitute flat to the tenant - but there is no clear rule when he has to do that, regarding the end of contract. He can basically show up on the last day of the tenancy with a **substitute flat of the size of 10m2 per person** and if one hasn't cleared the flat yet, a court case for expulsion can follow. It is obvious that this is not acceptable for the sensibilities of old people. Especially taking in consideration that many old people in Poland are so poor, that affording a lawyer is just a totally abstract concept.

During the polish **socialist period** flats were distributed centrally by the state, same as Maria received her flat. There was private property, but one didn't have any rights for it. So for example the owner of a house couldn't live in his place. People were used to their homes as a security for decades. **In the 90s** the rights were turned around and ownership is highly protected now. This led to a highly **aggressive situation** between fresh owners and old tenants.

There are also reported cases where (old) tenants are being passively harassed by the owners by methods that put their health and life directly under risk. For example by flooding freezing water on the staircases in winter, or by shutting down with no explanation the water and electricity, or by grotesque renovation methods making life impossible, etc. In any case: People are executing their will **inside a legal basis**.

There must be a fault in a system that allows these actions to take place to this extent without real-life protective laws. Only a broken society is lacking the instruments to re-charge responsibilities and to make such actions clearly **intolerable** and punishable.

After being part of this struggle for months I could directly observe the loss of health and energy Maria and Tadeusz faced in the end. Sometimes it seemed that history is repeating itself and we could be glad to have made the right choice in the: **To take a step back and to be able to afford it**.

But what about other people who don't share the same luck?

F. Malinowski, May 2012

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT - INTO THE TOPIC

Every day, we are forced to ask ourselves what choices to make. How to live in a self-centered world where everybody has to look after himself? How to advance and balance instances of competition and the wish for social harmony?

"Do people really wish for equality and fairness in regards to other human beings?" This was a driving question in **Kieslowski's** Decalogue film-series and in his later trilogy. Although it is hard to accept, the answer was over and over negative.

Since the downfall of the **eastern-block Socialism**, with its ideals backed by a **dictatorship**, we have learned that equality can't be forced by any kind of system. In fact, it must be the individual's responsibility to

practice modesty and the free choice of 'taking less' in order to 'gain more'. But still the question remains: Where does the **'winning zone'** end and where does loss begin?

If a state based on a **free market** is the answer to our deserved wish for individual freedom and it is considered the most 'democratic'-approach to adopt to people's needs in opposition to a dominant state - why haven't we become a society of social peace? Does the constant pressure to grow, gain and exploit in a free market already occupy our minds and sense of responsibility?

With these questions in mind, the film does not only follow the actual tragedy of a home being ruthlessly taken from two old people, it traces a personal story of inequality that began **even before 1945** when Maria Malinowska (born Konieczna) moved into the flat after serving forced labour as a child during the Nazi occupation of Poland.

Both Maria's and Tadeusz's characters couldn't be more opposing embodying the extremes of optimism versus pessimism. Nevertheless they were both deeply influenced by injustices and the discriminating violence they suffered during former fascist rule. Their legacy of experience and reflexes is our **personal history**.

In a dialectic parallel structure the film tells three intimate personal stories about individuals who regardless of the system of rule they lived under, had the free choice to use their current power over other people for, or against humanity.

During **Nazi occupation** society was divided through racial lines. After that in the **Stalinist Regime** a small political elite controlled whole countries forcing them to adopt their narrowed visions of a 'better society'. In today's capitalist Poland the distance between the powerful and the powerless - the lost generations of the radical **Chicago-style** transformation in the 90s- is still shocking. Life is measured and people are divided by the quantification of material wealth and thus for many this seems the main and often only goal to achieve granting security and stability in life.

Following the film we've to realise that in a society having a **'Laissez-Faire'** attitude towards people that take anti-social actions in the name of 'economical freedom', there will always be victims. **Neo-libertarian** politicians can't hope for individual modesty to prevail in a hard-edged materialism-driven society. In the same way many people couldn't overcome their primal and selfish instincts during the occupation. For **Friedrich von Hayek** the Austrian economic philosopher of the so called Austrian School "a social free market, will be never a free market and and a social democracy won't be a democracy." Hayeks fear of a totalitarian state either fascist or communist is similar to the unpopularity of socialist political parties of central european, former east block countries. Nevertheless, It needs to be economically and politically reconsidered if a socially united and equal society isn't more "wealthy" and vital, then the richness of a privileged class on the cost of the bottom line people.

If this film and the characters presented can **influence** anybody to see more clearly what choices in life are worthless and help point out the ones that really count, it would have reached its goal. It would be great if this got through. Thus, as references, I would like to mention "**Un question humaine**" by Michael Klotz shown at the Viennale Film Festival and the theatre play "**(A)Pollonia**" by Krzysztof Warlikowski co-produced and shown by the Wiener Festwochen, that both influenced my view on this project - thank you.

CV OF THE DIRECTOR

Filip Antoni Malinowski was **born 1982 in Poznań**, Poland. 1989 he moved from Poznań to Vienna, Austria. Studied Film- and Media Science and was a student of Harun Farocki in the film class of the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna. Resettlement is his first feature documentary. He lives and works in Vienna and is a co-owner of the Viennese film production company **Soleil Film GmbH** focusing on documentary and auteur feature films. Together with writer/director Carlo Pisani he is currently working on a new documentary project with the working title "Alternative Lives"

See more: www.resettlement.pl