there is an over-reliance on the workshop), a wider variety of interactions between
the character and others in her milieu, scenes where she is not present (and focus on
her children for example), expand on her family circle etc. But comments like these
are terribly unfair. After all, this is the film that the director wanted to make and to
desire another film is inappropriate on two instances. This is a vision of the world
that the director wishes to put ‘out there’ and viewers must be humble enough to get
on board this vision. Secondly, the viewer is unaware of the circumstances in which
the film was made – how much time she spent getting to know the place and the
characters, how much access she managed to negotiate etc. All things considered,
this is a good exercise, an honest attempt at fashioning a compelling narrative out of,
what seems to be, a short period of fieldwork.

Carlo A. Cubero
Tallinn University

*Doing this is Great!* Dir. and prod. Kadri Koop. 11 mns. Chinese with English

This short ethnographic movie is an invitation to reflect upon the less-known side
of China’s spectacular economic boom. As the country witnesses rapid urbanization,
hundreds of thousands of Chinese workers have been flocking to megalopolises.
Beijing, where the documentary was shot, is home to over 20 million people, many of
whom came recently from the countryside when the prospects for work diminished.
Although the urban centres do not offer jobs for this incredible amount of people,
the newcomers often find market niches in services, learn a new job and set up their
own street workshops.

The film is structured around three figures, who have migrated to Beijing in the
last decades: Master Du – a street barber, Feng Shi Xiang – an owner of a tiny repair
workshop, and LiuWan Sheng who repairs bikes. We can see their tiny work places
and various tools as well as the workers’ interactions with their clients. Each men is
approached by the film-maker and asked some basic questions, such as: when and
why they came to Beijing, how old are they, how do they get along with working
at the street during cold winters. The workers do not complain at all at their work
conditions or at the weather. Actually, LiuWan Sheng admits at the end that ‘doing
this is great’, which became the film title and presumably the main point of the
documentary. He does not understand the questions about his hobbies and free time.
When the voice behind the camera (we can assume that it’s the film director’s voice)
asks repeatedly what does he do when there is no work, LiuWan Sheng is confused.
For him the idea of leisure is meaningless, he wonders whether she is asking about
having another job. ‘There’s nothing else to do, repairing bikes is great’, he replies.
Street workers’ relationship with their work is the topic number one and could be
explored further.
Kadri Koop’s project could potentially give a new perspective on the rural-urban migration topics and on the strategies employed by migrants to cope with the new urban realities. She has found an important anthropological topic worth exploring. Besides, she knows the language and is not afraid to use it even though confronted with various accents of people coming from different provinces. What’s more, she manages to persuade people to answer her questions in front of a camera.

Regrettably, the questions asked do not display any coherent structure. There is no background information on people presented in the documentary. No context is given, no conclusion. Viewers are left with a feeling that much more could be said about these workers’ lives and work and their confrontation with an urban setting. Having a clear research anthropological project and more in-depth narratives would add much value to this visual record of street work. Many questions turn up as we are confronted with the film’s figures. What are their biographies? What about their families? What plans do they have for their children? What changes have they experienced since moving from a rural community to an anonymous big city? This documentary is an informative, but introductory project for an understanding of the contemporary poor urban street workers.

Dobroslawa Wiktor-Mach
Cracow University of Economics.

*Flowers From the Mount of Olives (Olimäe Oied)*. Dir. Heilika Pikkov. 70 mns.

The camera of Heilika Pikkov allows the viewer to enter inside a Russian monastery on the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem. Her purpose is to disclose the life story of an 82-year-old Sister, Ksenya, a nun who, perhaps, will take the path of the Great Schema, the vow of silence. However, while focusing her attention on Ksenya, the director provides a portrait of monastic life as well. The first minutes of the documentary reveals the environment of the monastery, a place that seems isolated in space and time. The camera slowly follows the nuns going for prayer until it spotlights on a hunched-back figure, Ksenya.

Ksenya’s life, reviewed through a flow of black and white photos, is disclosed to have been multifarious but marked by a broken family and a conflicting relationship with her mother that made her detached and introverted. When she was 16 years old she got the opportunity to leave Estonia for Germany for a job as a translator in the army. Her life changed dramatically at the end of the war. The ‘naughtiness’ of her life began, with a marriage arranged by her mother, a fast divorce and another marriage that saved her from addiction to morphine but that did not last for long as the man died. Ksenya was at that time in Australia, where she got a degree and became an oncologist and a researcher. She married again but this marriage was unsuccessful.