

TOPIC: “Filmmaking”

Designed by Open Media Group

Objectives of the paper act

Objectives of this paper act are:

- Providing to the teachers/trainers broader framework for teaching filmmaking to the specific target group – Roma people
- Providing teachers/trainers with suggestions on methodology and examples how to implement it
- Providing teachers/trainers with useful practical tips
- Providing teachers/trainers with basic rules for the group work when possibly dealing with trauma (it can surface during the whole workshop)

while keeping in mind the overall objectives of the project:

- ✓ To examine and moderate different art methods and techniques to support social tolerance practices and inclusive adult education for Romani community in different artistic fields.
- ✓ To empower Romani community to uptake an active role in their POSITIVE image across EU.
- ✓ To incorporate Roma artistic expression in the framework of mainstream EU cultural agenda (in national, regional and local cultural activities).

Therefore, at the end of the lessons, there should be a decent AV product that shows positive image of the Roma people and communities.

General preparation

When working with budding Roma filmmakers, teachers/trainers should be aware of different background, culture and experience of exclusion the students are coming from., as well as representation of Roma people in the industry. So, some background of Roma people is below, as well as the list of recommended films to watch.

It is important to be aware of:

- ✓ Roma are often described as a subclass, as an isolated and marginalized group that has little chance of coming out of the vicious circle of poverty and social exclusion. It can also be linked to a culture of poverty. The poor develop their own value system and a culture of poverty characterized by low expectations and various forms of socially unacceptable behaviour. Once formed, the culture of poverty is passed from parents to children and thus becomes an accepted value pattern of poor communities (UNDP 2006).
- ✓ They struggle to maintain power relations that majority groups give preference. It is based on the one hand, on imaginary fears, negative stereotypes and myths, and on the other hand on denial of the long history of discrimination against Roma from public consciousness (Nicolae 2006). Therefore, it is not unusual to testify that even those who have never had a personal encounter with the Roma will still be able to describe in detail how they live, how they look and how they behave because they are used to the most obvious stereotypes and prejudices of the majority social group.

- ✓ Nevertheless, the Roma are not only the passive detainees of such a process, nor they are solely responsible for the difficult entry into the world. It should be pointed out that some historically, structurally and socially produced inequalities are in existence. The deep imprint of discrimination associated with racism and ideology of racial superiority greatly influenced stereotypes and prejudices about Roma in the past and today. Historically, across Europe, there were Jews and Roma, two highly discriminated minorities on the basis of their presumed ethnicity inferiority. Both groups experienced persecution and mass extermination during The World War II and suffered under almost all other regimes before and after it. However, while anti-Semitism is condemned today at all levels of society and politics, anti-Gypsyism is generally neither recognized nor acknowledged as a socially conditioned phenomenon and a way of creating and spreading deeply ingrained prejudices and distance from Roma communities. Therefore, it is habitual and not thoroughly condemned. Romaphobia or anti-Gypsyism is a complex social phenomenon that manifests itself in different ways: hate speech, violence, exploitation and discrimination. One of the definition views anti-Gypsyism as a particular kind of racism, an ideology of racial superiority and the form of dehumanization and institutional racism that feeds the historical discrimination and prejudices.
- ✓ Furthermore, some of the indicators of social ills and the characteristic exclusion of Roma from many institutions of the wider society are also found in theories based on the social development and human rights. The most often expressed negative attitudes and prejudices are against Roma, the Roma population compared to the rest of the population can be conceptually and empirically described in categories of extreme form of deviation and multiple deprivation in almost all areas of life.
- ✓ The disadvantaged position of the Roma communities is partly the result of their ignorance of the social codes the rest of the population use. Insufficient knowledge of surrounding culture, tradition, language and art is often conditioned by distrust, aversion, different kinds of discriminatory treatment and suffering, primarily as a result of negative stereotyping, and not as a reflection of Roma unwelcomes, traditional way of life or mentality.
- ✓ Another important characteristic of the Roma communities is their spatial isolation and segregation of majority population. Since arriving in Croatia, the Roma have mostly settled in the peripheral parts of the settlement, which is partly due to economic deprivation, and partly to legal provisions. Such a way of life leads to very little or no contact of the Roma population with members of the majority groups.
- ✓ Roma people have a different view on the key components of their identity. The most important is language at 84.4%. Traditional Roma music is also important at 74.3%. At the third place were traditional Roma crafts, although 26.4% claimed that they are not important at all. When it comes to age groups, statistically significant differences in the average importance of individual components of Roma identity were identified in four features of the Roma way of life. Traditional Roma dances, traditional Roma music, playing instruments and old Roma crafts are at least important to young people aged 16 to 30, and most important to those over 66.

- ✓ All that has a bearing on personal lives of all members of Roma community and has repercussion on the communication habits and value system, as well as the level of distrust that can be expressed to “white community members”.

The teachers/trainers should watch at least some of the movies recommended. On the list there are documentaries and feature movies with professional or amateur actors and actresses. Nobody is expecting that something similar will be produced at the end of this lessons, as filmmaking is rather expansive team effort. But, they are good to get familiar with the body of relevant movies, as well as recommendation for students.

The Ciambra (2017)

Jonas Carpignano’s film *The Ciambra* is a neorealist fable about a young boy growing up in the Italian region of Calabria, part of a secluded neighbourhood of Romani people. In a nation where highly publicised hate crimes against Gypsies and Travellers have been relatively recent, *The Ciambra* looks at the mistrust with which the GRT (Gypsy, Roma and Traveller) community regards the rest of society. As the young protagonist Pio’s grandfather tells him: “It’s us against the world.”

Sky West and Crooked (1966)

[Sir John Mills’](#) pastoral drama [Sky West and Crooked](#) is an open-minded portrayal of the travelling community in rural Britain. Its central focus is an oddball romance between Brydie ([Hayley Mills](#)), a troubled West Country teenager, and Roibin ([Ian McShane](#)), a broodingly handsome young man from a nearby travellers’ site. Examining small-town prejudice and siding firmly with its two outsiders, Mills’ film intelligently portrays the mistrust between the settled community and the travellers and underlines how foundational fear of the unknown is when it comes to racism. Kids under the age of 10 parrot that they’re “scared of gyppos”, clearly never having interacted with anyone outside their country village. With poignant empathy and a smattering of real Romani words, Mills’ film attempts to bridge the gap between communities in a heartening way. Considering this was made in the 1960s, it’s shocking how few British films since have come with such a progressive perspective.

An Episode in the Life of an Iron Picker (2013)

A Bosnian festival favourite and winner of the Berlinale Grand Jury Prize, [Danis Tanović’s](#) upsetting [drama](#) is played out by a non-professional cast who genuinely experienced the events of the film. Filmed in an unobtrusive style, the title describes Nazif and his wife Senada, who have two children and live on Nazif’s scrap-dealing income. Because of their ethnicity, the two are refused admittance to their local hospital after Senada suffers a miscarriage. They are then forced to undertake a painfully long journey while Senada grows increasingly desperate and in need of medical care. The shocking endemic racism shows its ugly face while Roma people are turned away by the institutions that they are most in need of.

I Even Met Happy Gypsies (1967)

Aleksandar Petrovic's *I Even Met Happy Gypsies* has the distinction of being one of the earliest internationally released features to be made in the Romani language. Because of the tendency of nomadic people to pass down culture orally, it's a language that has long struggled to be recognised and written into the annals of linguistic history. Soundtracked by genuine Gypsy melodies and unafraid of depicting the shocking poverty of isolated traveller sites around what was then Yugoslavia, Petrovic's story is one of small-time dramas and family machinations, filmed with a heightened black and white realism that gives it a stylised documentary feel. The subject matter, too, is ultimately fitting – ritualised courtship, elopements, domestic strife and a girl seeking to escape the cruelty of a domineering stepfather – all feel deeply relevant to the close-knit, family-oriented community.

Where Do We Go from Here? (1969)

This short documentary comes in at just around the 60-minute mark, but its activist intentions are as vital today as they were almost a half-century ago when they were filmed. This BBC doc attempts to shed light on the enigmatic lifestyles of British Travellers, particularly at a time when more traditional nomadic habits were being displaced by an increasingly industrialised nation and pressure to find a fixed abode.

Time of the Gypsies (1988)

As Serbia's arthouse director du jour, [Emir Kusturica](#) has dealt glancingly with the Romani community in Eastern Europe for many years. Often, this is in the mode of magical realism, which presents certain questions about the superstition around Gypsy people, and the claptrap associations with the mystical attributed to them. [Time of the Gypsies](#) doesn't help much on that front: its main character, the bespectacled Perhan, is telekinetic. But what Kusturica lacks in cliché-busting he makes up for in other ways: he is masterful in his tragi-comic sensory overload-style depiction of Roma life. Squawking chickens, muddy-faced children and noisy encampments seem to overwhelm the characters within, and their response to that impoverishment is what one might expect: denigration, crime and outright begging on the street. The magical powers might be a foolhardy touch, but the rest of the picture is unfortunately accurate.

Latcho Drom (1993)

Tony Gatlif – a prolific European Romani filmmaker who almost exclusively makes films in the Romani language – perfectly married form and content in this French film. Its title means 'safe journey', referring to the fabled ancient migration of Romani people from India into the nations of Europe. The film is a quasi-historical documentary that meets with the far-flung Romani diaspora in various countries and examines their cultural practices and differences.

Pedagogical tips for the Trainers

The most important tips for teachers/trainers are:

- Be aware that the film story is not yours, it is participants' story and whatever you think about your powers of empathy, you are not living in their shoes.

Make sure that you are just a facilitator, taking care about the group processes, securing that everybody feels safe and everybody has a space and time to express themselves. Do not impose your agenda to the group.

- Be aware of your own prejudices, because you have them. Some of the participants behaviours may enforce them.

Make sure that you have awareness that you have individuals in the group and that they behave differently. If the behaviour of one person is reinforcing your prejudice, the others behaviours are shattering it. Be aware of that your participants are coming from different culture with heavy burden of personal exclusion and marginalization.

- Do not try to blend into the group by mimicking their behaviour and cultural habits.

It is demeaning. Respect their culture, let them express it. Do not comment on it, but stay who you are. Your students know that you are not Roma and that you probably do not understand them fully.

- Encourage the team spirit. Filmmaking is all about the team.

The skill of the team work can be rather beneficial in everyday life.

- Depending of the age of the participants, be aware that they are not too much into traditional music, dance and crafts. The idea of their own identity may be rather different than yours.

The people are living in 21st century and everybody is abandoning the old ways. Do not force your participants in the area that is already left behind for good.

- Whatever the story will be, use your professionalism to help them shape the story.

The script of the video has to be understandable to general population. Discuss with the group who will be the audience and what message they want to send.

- Try to assign the tasks according to the participants preferences.

It is not needed that everybody scouts the locations and all deal with costumes or hair. It is not needed that all are part of writing the script or taking care of filming or sound. Try to emphasize that all the roles are important and make sure that all the roles and names are at the closing roll out.

- Do not encourage happy go lucky attitude. The participation in the project will not solve their everyday problems and will not heal them.

If we are lucky, the project can unleash their creativity and help them to better express themselves. Out of over the 100 youth that Open Media Group worked with on production on videos about their lives, only one young woman went to the Academy and finished as photography director.

- And once more, work with the open mind without any kind of agenda including one of promotion of Roma creativity.

The creativity is there, you just have to unleash it and nurture. Whatever they want to make, it is ok. If they want to address problems in their community showing their strengths, it is ok. If they want to address discrimination, that is ok. If they want to sing, dance, run in the rain, it is ok.

- Be aware that you need a lot of organization to shoot a movie. Plan well ahead.

Think well in advance on the equipment, software, costumes etc. that you will need at certain phases of the course.

Good luck and enjoy experience.

Course introduction and welcoming the learners

The welcoming and introduction is the first activity you are going to perform. It is rather important and sets the tone. It is highly improbable that everybody will know everybody. So the introduction of participants should be easy, fun and gentle.

Name with the Adjective

Make sure that participants are sitting in the circle. Ask all of them to think of the adjective that starts with the same syllable as their names. Start with yourself (e.g. I am magic Martina). In the first round everybody will have to repeat all the names with adjectives from the start.

Introduction of Course

Briefly describe how the course will look like. Explain in brief the processes important for video production. Emphasize that they will choose the story and different roles that they will carry. Make sure that all participants understand that it is a 40 hours long process. Explain what will they do over the time and when.

Rules, rules, rules

The participants are going to do a lot of negotiating and team work. It is important to establish the rules of conduct during the course. Let them brainstorm and negotiate the rules they want to keep. Make sure that some of your rules important for work is there, also (e.g. violence is forbidden, discrimination is forbidden etc.) Keep the rules at hand. Everybody can invoke them.

Warm up exercises

Snake of life

This exercise can be rather heavy, and can end up in emotional turmoil. So, if you are not sure that you can deal with it, choose the alternative described below. Ask the participants to think about their lives. From the beginning to now. Ask them to draw on the big piece of paper their ups and downs marking the most important experiences. After 20 minutes, ask participants to share their life snakes if they want to. The exercise is bringing out discrimination events, traumatic events, but also joyous events. It can be bonding and is really good to generate common narratives.

What makes us happy

This is also the exercise for active listening. Pair up participants, and each one is talking for two minutes about what makes them happy or content. They switch. Each one is presenting the other person from pair to whole group. Also, good exercise to elicit narratives for the video.

Brainstorming together with the learners around choice of subject and materials, what to think about during the lesson

During the lifetime of the course there are several important benchmarks that teachers/trainers have to prepare themselves for:

- Main theme of the video and script writing

The decision can be built upon the previous warm up exercise. The teachers/trainers should summarize the previous discussion, propose several themes that come out and ask participants to add additional. After facilitated discussion, the participants negotiate one theme in small groups. When they have decided on the theme, the small groups are merged and new round of negotiation is going on, until the final negotiations are done in big group. The theme is decided and explanation on the process of script writing is explained, as well as process of preparation.

- Role assignment

The film crews have very clear role assignments. It is important to assign roles to the group members. Put the roles on the wall or flipchart, explain who is doing what and ask participants to sign themselves under the desired role. Negotiate final assignment trying to respect participants' wishes whenever possible.

- Preproduction, production, postproduction

Show the participants the time frame and tasks. Start to work on preproduction, production, postproduction.

- Celebrate each phase of the video making.

How to end the lesson

As the course is long and will have several workshops, it is important to end each meeting in the same way.

Provide the opportunity for each participant to shortly tell what is most important to her/him by asking a question (e.g. How do you feel; What have you learned; What was bothering you etc.).

At the very end of each meeting, the teachers/trainers should repeat what should be done by participants until the next meeting and what tasks will be done at it (e.g. location scouting, shooting, sound editing etc.).

Suggestions for follow-up activities

Follow-up activities will be geared towards the distribution of the video/documentary.

The teachers/trainers and respective organizations should take care of official distribution (TV networks, cable networks, film festivals). Nevertheless, the participants should be encouraged to share their video within their networks. Together with respective organizations, the efforts to organize the campaign for boosting the visibility of video should be carried out.

Assessment of the impact

The evaluation should be done twice during the course. The first evaluation should be done in mid-term, at the end of preproduction phase and beginning of production, and the second one at the course end.

Prepare the questions for the both evaluations. They should not defer greatly. Ask about the methodology of course, teachers'/trainers' attitudes and practices, organization of the workshop (premises, breaks, equipment).

Ask the usual questions: what was the best, what was the worst, what was the most useful, what have they learnt. Ask about the meeting of expectations, the general feel during the course, possibility to express themselves, the group dynamics. Also, make sure that you get some future projections: are they going to use the skills they get in the future, will the experience help them professionally or privately, do the plan to continue to develop their skills in the industry.

All questions can be shaped within the questionnaire (digital or paper), but some, less intrusive can be discussed in the group using following exercise.

At the floor put the papers few meters apart with the answers (false, true, do not know; or some sort of scale). Ask the question and tell participants to congregate around the paper that shows their answer. Discuss within the group why they choose that answer. As it is filmmaking course, you can shoot the evaluation, as it is well of data that can be easy analysed latter on.

Go through the evaluation. It is important for the future.

