



# **Fighting stereotypes and empowering Roma youth through participatory film**

A case study based on a participatory film project conducted in  
the Roma community in Glasgow, Scotland

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## ABSTRACT

The Roma community has long been subjected to negative stereotypes and misrepresentations in the public sphere, leading to discrimination and prejudice. Roma youth in Glasgow, Scotland, supported by the Roma-led organisation Romano Lav, have taken an active role in challenging these negative portrayals through a participatory film project. One of the aims of this research is to explore how young Roma filmmakers are utilising cinematic storytelling to challenge harmful stereotyping of their community. The other one is to investigate the impact of participatory video projects on the film creators and their community. The study fits within the field of Communication for Development by addressing the transformative and empowering aspect of a film project. It aims to fill a gap in knowledge regarding self-representations of Roma and the role of participatory video in their community accounting for cultural specificity. It also adds an insight into the Romani youth's attitudes and values, contributing this way to a broader knowledge of Scottish Roma while suggesting solutions for social change.

By employing qualitative research methodologies, critical visual analysis and interviews, the study seeks to understand the experiences, perspectives, and motivations of the teenagers involved in the project. It is grounded in Paolo Freire's theories linking participation and empowerment and Stuart Hall's constructivist approach to representation. The analysis finds that the Roma youth use personal narratives, cultural traditions, and everyday experiences to construct new representations that challenge stereotypes. Moreover, it highlights the transformative impact of participatory video on the empowerment of the participants, its influence on strengthening communal identity and social bonds, and the film's educational role in building a more equitable society. This study found that participatory video harnesses great potential for Roma self-representation and empowerment.

**Keywords:** Roma, young people, participatory video, self-representation, stereotype, community, transformation, empowerment.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

*April 17th*, a short fiction film produced in 2022 in Glasgow's multicultural area of Govanhill, claims to be the first film made by Roma in Scotland. It was produced and supported by Romano Lav, a Romani-voice community organisation in Glasgow. The film is a result of a collaboration between two local filmmakers and five Roma teenagers and is based on the girls' experiences growing up and living in the area (Glasgow Times, 2022). When talking to the makers and producers of the film about its purpose, a few common threads emerged: fighting stereotypes, community and representation.

Roma people have always been considered the radical Other (Corradi, 2019, p.xv; Gay y Blasco, 2008, p.299; Tremlett, 2013, p.712), viewed as foreigners in their own countries (Jorge, 2022, p.115; Gay y Blasco, 2008, p.300), and subjected to prejudice, discrimination, and persecution. Roma is currently the most marginalised ethnic group in Europe, often "excluded from mainstream social, economic, cultural, or political life" (Cook, 2008, p.495). There is a binary contradiction in Romani representations: on the one hand, they are romanticised; on the other, they are vilified. The image of a Gypsy has been routinely exploited by writers and film directors, providing an exoticised dramatic character to play out Western fantasies (Hancock, 2002; Iordanova, 2003; Imre, 2003; Pasqualino, 2008; End, 2017) as a colourful nomadic dancer, fortune teller, or a musician. In contrast to that, the media and politicians often have been using an image of Roma as an ill-adjusted criminal or a scrounger. As Lucie Fremlova (2020) asserts:

*"Misrepresentations of Roma have been instrumental in generating and maintaining distorted, often negative portrayals of Roma. Non-Roma have often associated Roma with romanticising images of nomadism, unchained freedom, passion, voluptuousness and exoticism or with vilifying images of criminality, deviance, backwardness, inadaptability, anti/asocial behaviour, threat, risk,*

*conspiracy or invasion. Yet, all stereotypes are inaccurate, even the positive ones" (Fremlova, 2020, p.1).*

In recent years, there has been a rising interest in mainstreaming multifaceted representations among Roma and non-Roma activists, artists, and researchers. One of the examples is *Dosta!* (meaning *enough* in Romani), the Council of Europe campaign, run from 2006-2009, focused on combating prejudice and discrimination against Roma by raising awareness among non-Roma about Romani culture and history (Council of Europe, 2023). The 2022 Venice Biennale, one of the most prestigious art events in the world, featured work by Roma or about Roma in two of the pavilions. It included a Polish Roma artist, Malgorzata Mirga-Tas, the very first Roma artist in the history of the Biennale to take over the whole pavilion (Webber, 2022). In 2019, Lucie Fremlova, a non-Roma pro-Rom activist and researcher, organised an exhibition in Portsmouth, UK, that focused on self-representations of LGBTQ+ Roma and challenged typical visual representations (Fremlova, 2020). I will expand on this project in a further chapter.

The film project I analyse in this study is part of an ongoing conversation about Romani representation. The study finds that participatory video projects empower Roma youth to challenge stereotypes through personal and subjective stories. Inclusion of traditional elements in the film aims to educate the audience about Roma and contributes to understanding and acceptance of marginalised communities and a more inclusive society. The participatory nature of the project builds confidence and skills and provides a platform for expression, contributing to the empowerment of the Roma community.

## **TERMINOLOGY**

Before dwelling further into the subject, defining the language used in this work is crucial. As the study is positioned in the British context, it is necessary to mention that although Roma, Gypsy and Travellers belong to different groups, the term

*Gypsy, Roma and Travellers* (or GRT) was used until 2021 to describe one ethnic category.<sup>1</sup> The term *Roma* refers to new migrants, mainly from Central and Eastern Europe (GOV.UK, 2022). I use the terms Roma (a noun) and Romani (an adjective) throughout as ethnic and cultural identification markers. Roma is also used in reference to the community in Glasgow following the guidance of Roma-led organisations and the individuals and community in question. The first World Romani Congress in London adopted the term Roma in 1971 (Fremlova, 2022, p.10). *Roma* is a generalised term and might include people from various cultural, religious or linguistic communities. There is a consensus, though, that *Roma* is supposed to reflect shared origin, heritage and culture and express "cultural dignity and distinctiveness of an oppressed but also resisting people" (Gay y Blasco, 2008, p.298). Many groups come under the umbrella of Roma, including Sinti, Kale, Manouches, Romanichels and others (Corradi, 2019, p.xviii). However, this thesis only has space to mention the diversity within Romani communities briefly. I use the terms Gypsy, Gitano, Tsigan and others when these are either self-referential or when the author uses those terms on purpose. These words can be problematic and have been generally rejected "as an exoticising and derogatory term that reflects the world-views and oppressive practices of the dominant population" (Gay y Blasco, 2008, p.298). Hancock adds that *Gypsy* is a word created by non-Romani people and derives from a misinformed theory about the Roma identity as Egyptians (Hancock, 2002, p.xviii). Across Central and Eastern Europe, *Gypsy* or *Tsigan* is considered a slur word associated with racism and practices of discrimination, although official institutions used it up until 2005 (Corradi, 2019, p.xvi). However, in the UK, *Gypsies and Travellers* is a widely recognised and accepted term of cultural self-identification (as per Corradi, 2019), and Romani communities in Spain often identify themselves proudly as Gitano (Gay y Blasco, 2008, p. 297). A capitalised and italicised word *Gypsy* is used in this work to signify a stereotyped construct or an object of phantasy created by

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<sup>1</sup>In the 2021 Census, these ethnic categories were separated into *Gypsy, Irish/Scottish Traveller*, and *Roma* (GOV.UK, 2022). The Council of Europe considers Irish and Scottish Gypsy and Traveller groups specific to these localities (Hay et al., 2021, p.49). These terms are still commonly confused in public discourse.

non-Roma (Hancock, 2002, xviii) used in public discourse, film and media that does not reflect real-life Romani people.

## **BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT**

### **Roma in Europe**

There are an estimated 10-12 million Roma, Gypsy, and Travellers in Europe, constituting the largest combined ethnic minority in Europe (Hay et al., 2021, p.48). There is a consensus that migration of the ethnic group we now call Roma started from India around the 9th-10th century. This theory is supported by the fact that the Romanes language originated from Sanskrit (Corradi, 2018, p.xxv; Fremlova, 2022, p.12; Hancock<sup>2</sup>, 2002, p.2). From as early as the 15th century, Roma were enslaved in the Balkans and, later on by the British in the overseas colonies, expelled from the Holy Roman Church in the 16th century. Anti-Romani laws regarding movement, trade, and other social activities were introduced across the continent throughout the following centuries (Corradi, 2018, p.xxvi; Fremlova, 2022, p.12). During the World War II *Porrajmos* or the Great Devouring, took place – a wave of mass ethnic cleansing orchestrated by the fascists, when over half a million (some estimates say one and a half million) of Romani people, staggering three-quarters of the whole population, were killed including those exterminated in concentration camps (Corradi, 2018, p.xxvii; Fremlova, 2022, p.14; Hancock, 2002, p.48; Iordanova, 2003, p.11). The suffering of Roma during the Holocaust was never properly acknowledged and compensated (Iordanova, 2008, p.311; Hancock, 2002, pp.48-49).

The following decades did not bring much change in terms of the treatment of Romani people, and especially in the Soviet countries, the states implemented anti-Roma practices. "Some of the policies and measures included coordinated dispersal, resettlement, (...) social engineering; eugenics in healthcare (especially

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<sup>2</sup> Hancock, as a Roma academic, seems rather sceptical of the theory.

the coercive sterilisation of Romani women without proper consent); segregated schooling, including special schools; and labour through state enterprise" - explains Fremlova (2022, p.15). Nomadic Roma were forcibly moved to the cities in an effort to assimilate them. Similar practices took place in Western Europe, like the resettlements of thousands of Gitanos in Spain in the early 90s and then in the 2000s to what practically constituted ghettos on the outskirts of Madrid (Gay y Blasco, 2008, p.300). Gay y Blasco cited very poignant words from one of her interviewees: "*The Gadge* don't want us to put down roots" (ibid.). Even though there is evidence that Roma people are connected to their place of residence in a social, political and emotional sense, too often, the states deny them the privilege of belonging.

### **Roma in Scotland**

The Roma community in Scotland consists primarily of new migrants from Central and Eastern Europe. While some Roma arrived in the UK after 1989 as asylum seekers, the most significant number of arrivals was counted from 2004 when the European Union expanded to the East, including the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Poland, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia and Slovenia, and then Romania and Bulgaria in 2007 (Poole, 2010, pp.245-6). The Roma immigration influx in Scotland has been noticeable in the last few years (Hay et al., 2021, p.52). It is difficult to provide exact numbers for the moment of writing, as the latest data I could find are from 2013 when an estimated 4,000 migrant Roma resided in Glasgow (The Social Marketing Gateway, 2013).

This project concerns the migrant Roma community, which concentrates in the area of Govanhill in the Southside of Glasgow, a city of over 1.5 million. There are contrasting opinions about the Govanhill area. On the one hand, it is celebrated as the most ethnically diverse neighbourhood in Scotland, where 40% of residents belong to ethnic minorities representing 52 nationalities and speak 32 languages. On the other hand, Govanhill is considered a "problem area" (see Mullen, 2018) as one of the most densely populated areas in Scotland, which is attributed to a rise



in population numbers due to migration and high levels of occupancy (Govanhill Thriving Place, 2022). According to a Glasgow-based researcher and a creative director of Romano Lav, Ashli Mullen (2018), the area became subject to "territorial stigmatisation", with many problems there commonly attributed to Romani immigration (p.206). She asserts that "Roma were constructed as the archetypal problem neighbour" (ibid., p.212) and that the "consequence of this racialisation of space is the exacerbation of inequalities, the obscuring of common experiences that Romani people share with other residents, and the creation and exacerbation of divisions, in which Roma are simultaneously subject to and blamed for harsh local conditions" (ibid., 206).

In 2021, the Scottish Census added Roma as a separate ethnic category (Scotland's Census, 2021), a necessary step in acknowledging Roma's existence in the country. However, this action has a two-fold effect. While acknowledging the presence of Roma and aiding the group's visibility in statistics, policymaking, and social life, it also brings the ethnic difference to the forefront. This can contribute to creating a clear distinction - and division - between Roma and non-Roma people who originate from the same country. Roma can be subjected to a multilayered marginalisation: as immigrants in Scotland, as Roma in Scotland, and as Roma versus other migrants from their countries of origin. My own experience shows that many immigrants from Eastern Europe do not see Roma from the same country through a common denominator, and they too easily reproduce prejudices brought from their country of origin.

### **About the project**

Established in 2013, Romano Lav is a community-based organisation started by a Slovak Roma woman, Marcela Adamova, in Govanhill. The organisation includes Roma and non-Roma committed to amplifying the voices of Roma in community decision-making, which is in line with the meaning of the words Romano Lav, which translates to *Romani Voice* in the Romanes language. The organisation is Roma-led and, in particular, shaped by the voices of the youth who, through street work, engage with their communities to identify their needs and concerns. The

organisation's primary goals are to promote intercultural dialogue, inclusion, and social justice and to fight against the racism and discrimination experienced by Roma in Glasgow. Romano Lav's fundamental ideas are for the work to be Roma-led, benefit Roma communities, and empower Roma voices. They focus on youth-led participatory programmes, educational, artistic and cultural events and activities (Romano Lav, 2023).

The *April 17th* film project was run under the wings of Culture Collective, a network of grassroots-led projects focusing on participatory arts and community engagement (Culture Collective, 2023). Both Romano Lav and Culture Collective base their activities on citizen participation, which Tufte (2017) sees as transformative programs where citizens engage in envisioning change (p.56). Participation is directly linked to voice, agency and empowerment (Arnstein, 1969; Freire, 1996; White, 2003), and one of the tools used to achieve these is participatory video (a term which I later use interchangeably with its abbreviation PV). Even though traditionally participatory video is associated with anthropological or documentary film, I still consider the *April 17th* film within the terms of PV. *April 17th* is a fiction film which production and ethics run parallel to participatory video ideas. If PV is an activity involving a group or a community working together creatively to record and explore the issues in the world around them and tell their own stories (Lunch & Lunch, 2006, p.10; Shaw & Robertson, 1997, p.1), the Romano Lav's project perfectly fits the description. The participants took part in a series of workshops facilitated by two filmmakers, in which they learned filmmaking and storytelling techniques and explored the issues important to them together. From generating the idea to filming and editing, the process at each production stage was participant-led with careful guidance from the facilitators. It resulted in a 5-minute fiction film based on real-life events.

## RESEARCH

### Study aims and objectives

This research looks at the project from a perspective of participatory filmmaking and explores two aspects of the project: a site of narration and a site of production. The textual aspect of the film is analysed using a framework of critical visual methodologies and looking at symbolism, tropes and narratives. Interviews with participants and project facilitators allow us to understand the intended meanings of the film and the production process, and uncover the creators' positions, motivations and potential impact of the project on the community.

The objective of the study is to find answers to the following questions:

- 1. How are Roma youth fighting stereotypes through film?**
- 2. What is the role of participatory projects in the Roma community?**

The study positions the project within a cultural, social and theoretical context. It provides a deeper understanding of how participatory film can challenge stereotypes, contribute to a convivial environment, and affect Romani youth. The study is framed within theories connecting representation, participatory video, and Paulo Freire's (1996) ideas of empowerment through participation. Stuart Hall's ([2], 2013) constructivist approach emphasises the active role of cultural and social processes in creating representations. The focus on Freire's ideas highlights the significance of participatory video as a platform for marginalised communities to represent themselves on their own terms. Post-colonial discourse, employed as a lens through which I look at the project, is used here not because Glasgow Roma come from a colonised country but because of the othering practices that Roma experience, similar to those experienced by the colonial Other. Challenging stereotypes and creating self-representations play a part in decolonising the discourse and practices that evolved from or were justified by it.

## Relevance for ComDev and the field

The short film was created *by* the community, *with* and *about* the community. Its participatory aspect and the aim of challenging stereotypes by drawing voices from inside the community make it an interesting case for Communication for Development, especially given that this is the very first fiction film created by Roma in Scotland. Cinema is an integral part of communication as it takes part in the construction of representations and discourses (Turner, 2009, p.59) and "intervenes in the real" (Jorge, 2022, p.117). It brings to life new stories which can become a part of the creation and transmission of new values, social standards and attitudes (Turner, 2009, p.59; Tufte, 2017, p.21; McEwan, 2019, p.192), which are important for social change. Participatory video can play a significant role in community development as a fully democratised film practice involving groups and communities in video production (Montero & Domínguez, 2015; Lunch & Lunch, 2006, p.10; Mitchell & Lange, 2011, p.169). Its action-oriented character (Milne et al., 2012, p.1) and its transformational and empowering role (White, 2003; Montero & Domínguez, 2015; Lunch & Lunch, 2006) makes it an important tool for social change.

My research aims to fill gaps in the academic literature concerning Romani representation. First of all, there is a plethora of literature on stereotypical representations of Roma and films made *about* Roma (see Imre, 2003; Homer, 2006; Iordanova, 2003 & 2008; Hadziavdic & Hoffmann, 2017; Rucker-Chang, 2018 and many others), however, very little on Romani self-representation which was also noticed by Ustuk and Cox (2020). The four studies I found are presented later (Tremlett, 2013 & 2017; Ustuk & Cox, 2020; and Fremlova, 2022). There is a lack of investigations on films made by Roma, excluding films directed by Tony Gatlif (see Homer, 2006). I also noted an absence of literature about Roma youth and their engagement in social change. Locally, most of the research about Roma in Scotland is from nine or more years ago and might not address the current situation in the community. Those who may have arrived here with their parents as children in the first decade of the 21st millennium are now young adults who grew

up in the UK. Therefore, the social and cultural landscape of the Roma community here must have undergone significant changes. The existing literature addresses social and administrative challenges (see Poole & Adamson, 2008; Poole, 2010; The Social Marketing Gateway, 2013; Clark, 2014; Mullen, 2018) but provides few solutions for change and grassroots engagement. Instead of spotlighting negative aspects, my study centres on positive change and how the community can be empowered and take charge of their own representations and their future. The focus on Roma in Scotland is not intended to emphasise their difference but rather look at how Roma is forging an equal space for themselves within a multicultural society.

## **STRUCTURE**

The following section, the Literature Review, presents selected studies divided into three themes: Roma as the colonial Other, Roma as an object of representation and Roma as a subject of self-representation. Next, the Theoretical Framework section is based on a discussion of concepts that support analysis of the findings, focusing on two strands: the constructivist approach to representation theory and participation and empowerment. Afterwards, in the Methodology section, I describe the methods used for the study and present any limitations and ethical considerations I encountered. The next chapter contains an analysis of the research divided into three parts: Site of image, Site of Production and Impact of the project. Conclusions and recommendations for further research follow.

## **II. LITERATURE REVIEW**

This section provides an overview of concepts and studies that position this research in a wider context. The first part locates Roma as a postcolonial subject and looks at a relationship between the construction of an oriental Other and the Romani stereotype. The second part explores the position of Roma in the

dominating discourse and presents a selection of common misrepresentations of Roma media and cinematic portrayals. Finally, the third part is an overview of the recent studies concerning Romani self-representations. It shows how Roma in other communities present themselves when they are in charge of their portrayals.

## **ROMA AS A POSTCOLONIAL ORIENTAL OTHER**

*If the East was the Orient outside of Europe,  
Roma became the Orient within it.*

Ken Lee, 2000

There are various reasons why Roma can be considered a postcolonial subject. Historians and academics find it difficult to agree on the origins of Roma, a subject of multiple myths and theories. The ambiguity of the origin story and the connection to the Indian subcontinent, what, in colonial terms, was considered The Orient, can be some of the factors contributing to orientalising and othering practices directed at Roma. There is an assumption that Roma do not belong anywhere. Nomadism and the perceived inability to put down roots is one of the most persistent myths and visualisations about Roma contributing to their *otherness*. This has had profound political and social consequences, especially since today the majority of the Romani population is sedentary, and even in the past not all the groups were nomadic (Gay y Blasco, 2008, p.299).

Racialized oppression of Roma in Europe started significantly before the colonial era and never really ended. Discrimination, ethnic cleansing, enslavement, control over the bodies of the Other, and systemic exclusion from participation in society are common denominators of a colonial attitude. In this case, the colonisation did not happen externally, in a far foreign land, but internally; Roma “*have been forced to settle on the land of the colonisers, and by that, they became subjects of a*

*special form of colonisation - colonisation of people, rather than of land"* (Ashton-Smith, 2010, n.p.).

Orientalism, as per Edward Said (1976), is a system of thought that assumes the cultural, social and political inferiority of the East (versus the superiority of the West) and allows for the creation of the *Orient* as backward, uncivilised and exotic. The *Orient* is not grounded in "empirical reality but by a battery of desires, repressions, investments, and projections" (Said, 1976, p.8; see also p.4). Orientalism derives from positioning the West in the centre of culture, history and politics, norms and power (ibid. p.7). The colonised are rendered as inferior objects standing in opposition to those norms (Rucker-Chang, 2018, p.855). The construction of Roma's racialised *difference* caused them to be viewed as "objects" of postcolonialism only in reference to the dominant culture (ibid., 854).

The construction of the Romani *difference* became a justification for discriminatory discourse. Racist rhetoric among the population and within public organisations and media, scapegoating by politicians, attitudes of fear, hate speech, as well as violent xenophobic attacks that Romani people are often victims of, are all part of antigypsyism, also called Romaphobia (Corradi, 2018, pp.xxviii-xxix). Antigypsyism is a form of racism specifically targeting "Roma, Sinti, Travellers and others who are stigmatised as 'gypsies' in the public imagination" (Alliance Against Antigypsyism, 2017, p.3). In 2018 the ECRI<sup>3</sup> of the Council of Europe described antigypsyism as:

*"a specific form of racism, an ideology founded on racial superiority, a form of dehumanisation and institutional racism nurtured by historical discrimination, which is expressed, among others, by violence, hate speech, exploitation, stigmatisation and the most blatant kind of discrimination"* (European Commission, 2018, p.3).

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<sup>3</sup> European Commission against Racism and Intolerance.

The ECRI also recognised antigypsyism as "one of the root causes of the social exclusion and inequality" affecting Roma (ibid.). Racism towards Roma is widespread, and discriminatory language or actions are still socially accepted, believed to be justified and legitimate (Alliance Against Antigypsyism, 2017, p.3). Romaphobia is by many considered the last acceptable form of racism in Europe. This shows how deeply antigypsyism is ingrained in cultural and social norms. "Antigypsyism is the norm rather than the exception in public discourse" (ibid.) and needs to be addressed as "an ideological structure, a system of knowledge" (End, 2017, p.680).

At the core of antigypsyism sits a racialised and exoticised imaginary *Gypsy*, an ideological construct that does not have its reflection in reality nor in the self-definition of Roma people (End, 2017, p.670). That imaginary construct is the stereotype, "a visible face of antigypsyism" (Jorge, 2022, p.115). Lippmann<sup>4</sup> specified three dimensions of a stereotype: as a shortcut, as a reference and as an ordering process (Dyer, 2002, p.11). The stereotype as a shortcut implies a condensation and reduction of meanings to essentials (Hall [1], 2013, p.237) in a simple and easy-to-grasp form; the stereotype as a reference acts as a code pointing to something that exists in the world; and, finally, the stereotype as an ordering process helps us categorise and understand reality (Dyer, 2002, pp.12-13).

Homi K. Bhabha (1994) looks at the stereotype through the lens of colonial discourse as one of its strategies, as a form of knowledge and identification and a form of exercising power over the representation of the Other. Its objective is to manufacture knowledge—or systems of representation—about the colonised to justify colonising practices (Bhabha, 1994, pp.64-84). When knowledge is linked to power, as in the case of a relationship coloniser-colonised, this knowledge then becomes the truth (Hall [1], 2013, p.33), an *always-already* known, commonly agreed expression of the visible and the real. A stereotype as a "primary point of

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<sup>4</sup> Walter Lippmann coined the term *stereotype* in the 1920s (Dyer, 1999, p.11)



objectification” depends on the fixity of colonial discourse, an unchanging order that constructs cultural, racial and historical difference (Bhabha, 1994, pp.67-80). Stereotype signifies political and cultural inferiority, creates an object of discrimination and is part of the knowledge that power uses to institutionalise discriminatory practices (ibid., pp.80-83). Bhabha also points to a link between stereotype, phobia and fetishism; he sees a presence of a conflict in a colonial discourse between "pleasure/unpleasure, mastery/defence, knowledge/disavowal, absence/presence" (ibid., p.75). Orientalism and stereotypes are not only sites of knowledge production and power but also sites of "fantasies, dreams, myths and obsessions (of The Imaginary)" (ibid., p.74).

## **ROMA AS AN OBJECT OF REPRESENTATION**

Cultural texts and media are linked to the dominating discourse and often perpetuate harmful stereotypes. This is true in the case of Romani representations: "misrepresentations of Roma have been instrumental in generating and maintaining distorted often negative portrayals of Roma" (Fremlova, 2022, p.15). There is a general lack of authenticity and a significant disparity between Romani representations in mainstream discourses and their lived experience (Tremlett, 2017, p.733). More often than not, Roma have been represented by others in a way that emphasises their ethnic and cultural difference, with non-Romani being a *norm* and Romani representing the *difference* (Fremlova, 2022, p.15). The image of a *Gypsy* inhabits collective European imagination; one might even say that the West is obsessed with a *Gypsy* - but it is not about looking for authenticity in this decades-long obsession but rather a fascination with the *always-already-known* construct (Gay y Blasco, 2008, p.297).

Since the 14th century, when the first known depictions of Roma were found, Romani visual representations have remained mostly unchanged across the continent. These are somewhat contradictory: on the one hand, there is a free and colourful “noble savage” who remains in touch with nature while the world moves

away from it (Hancock, 2002, pp.64-65); on the other hand, a "dangerous outsider" (Gay y Blasco, 2008, p.298), suffering from poverty and backwardness or engaging in criminal behaviours (also see Imre, 2003, p.17). One is celebrated as an object of cultural appropriation, and the other is a subject of pity or vilification (Tremlett, 2017, p.720).

These dichotomous portrayals of Roma seem to be used in the Western discourse as the code for *difference*, defining the essence of Western identity. "Difference is essential to meaning; without it, meaning could not exist" - as Hall proclaims (Hall [1], 2013, p.224). As a producer of dominant discourse, the West projects the image of a *Gypsy* through its own ideas and expectations in reference to itself (Hancock, 2002, p.61; Mariushakova-Popova & Popov, 2017, p.1; Rucker-Chang, 2018, p.859). That exoticised projection of Roma as exuberant, free and colourful is a fantasy "of something that the subject does not possess but what it projected into the object" (Homer, 2006, p.190). Roma as *the Other* becomes an object of desire and undergoes a process of projective identification - an "unconscious projection of an unwanted part of the self into another and then denying those feelings" (Homer, 2006, p.189 & 191).

Film is a projection of desire (see Mulvey, 1975) and cinema worldwide is not short of films featuring exoticised portrayals of Romani people, to refer to just a few most famous ones: Disney's "The Hunchback of Notre Dame", vivacious "Time of the Gypsies" by Emir Kusturica, or a 2000 romance "Chocolat" starring Johnny Depp and Juliette Binoche. However, few films are created by Roma (the exception being films by a Romani director Tony Gatlif). Most cinematic representations of Roma are created by others and do not look for authenticity but feed on overused tropes that ignore the reality of Romani life and culture (Iordanova, 2003, p.7). They provide a stylised version of Roma people that fulfils a specific narrative role fit for Western audience's consumption. Iordanova even talks about a "Gypsy genre" that encompasses stories of passionate and obsessive love, usually between a poor free-loving Gypsy and a white person, set

in a background of "spectacularly beautiful magical-realist visuals" of colourful celebrations with Gypsy music and dance (Iordanova, 2003, p.8 & 2008, p.306).

On the other spectrum lie representations of Roma perpetuated by mainstream media. These are far from romanticised images and focus on negative stereotypes like "dirty", "thieving", or "parasitic" (see End, 2012). Especially after the Eastern European countries joined the EU, part of the British media was responsible for spreading fear among their viewers about a flood of economic migrants, including Roma. Roma are often still presented as "parasitic, delinquent and predatory, lured by the beneficence of the British welfare system which they aimed to exploit, and as therefore ultimately undeserving and to be kept at bay" (Gay y Blasco, 2008, p.299).

Visual representations often feature dirt and mess, even though many Roma are committed to the idea of cleanliness, or *rendes*, to counteract that stereotype (Tremlett, 2017, p.731). Another visual sign of *Gypsyiness* is visible poverty, including overcrowded and run-down houses, also linked to geographical markers - with some areas associated with the Roma community more than others (End, 2012, pp.673-4). Images of women are frequently used in Roma representations - possibly to symbolise emotionality, irrationality and threatening mysteriousness, as opposed to men's supposed rationality symbolising the dominant Western discourse, as End suggests (*ibid.*, p.675). Another visual trope is images of children, alone or in groups shown without adults, that feeds the idea of Roma children being left to themselves and lacking parental and social control (Tremlett, 2017, p.728; End, 2012, p.677). Also, images of children (not only Roma), so often used in the development sector, portray vulnerability and victimhood to elicit sympathy in the viewer (Tremlett, 2017, p.728). Tremlett warns that imagery that talks about poverty and racism, while useful for charities and NGOs to raise funds and awareness, instead can perpetuate the stereotype "of hapless, parasitic Roma", something that Roma activists themselves are opposing (Tremlett, 2017, p.735).

## ROMA AS A SUBJECT OF SELF-REPRESENTATION

Through my research, I have encountered few studies on Romani self-representation out of which three are based on photography and only one on video. Because of the analogical character of the medium (in the way that film relies on still images), the conclusions from photographic studies can be translated to the area of film. Photography projects might lack linearity, narrative, and the added layer of audio storytelling compared to a film. However, they are both tools of visual representation thanks to their ability to mirror the world.

The construction of non-stereotypical Roma imagery is a focus of Annabel Tremlett's (2017) study *"Visualising Everyday Ethnicity: Moving Beyond Stereotypes"*. The research is based on two sources of images, one from an anti-stereotype Roma photo competition and the other from an ethnographic research in which Roma participants created photographs of *the everyday*. Tremlett noticed that when the focus was on ethnicity, as in the first source, some stereotypical elements were still present when people were asked to present themselves as Roma. Because the imagery in this case resembled portrayals of Roma life repeating *known* stereotypes, similar to those that we see in the media—like impoverished environments, children without parents, but also Roma as musicians and so on—Tremlett asserts that "*Roma* [as in the symbolic representational sense - as the author of this thesis understands it] is still weighted in an archaic notion of ethnicity based on racist, essentialist ideas" (Tremlett, 2017, p.721). On the other hand, the everyday self-representations, when ethnicity was not at the centre, produced different, *non-stereotypical* images (ibid.). People in the photographs were shown in more active roles, caring for their house, spending time with family, resting or laughing together (ibid., p.729). Thus, picturing the everyday without an emphasis on ethnicity seems to create representations that question and bypass prevailing "norms" of Roma portrayal (ibid., p.735). "Moving away from stereotypes is not an oppositional process" - explains Tremlett (ibid., p.722). It is about creating a new quality of

self-representations that neither stigmatise nor romanticise, but depict Roma as "active agents in their own lives and circumstances" (ibid, p.734). According to Tremlett the concept of *the everyday* can be utilised in ethnicity studies to move beyond "the rhetoric of 'nationally framed, fixed and abstract models of identity'" (Tremlett, 2017, p.723).

In Lucie Fremlova's photographic project from 2022, the visual self-representations created by LGBTQI+ Romani visual artists and activists challenge dominant misrepresentations of Roma and increase the visibility of queer Roma. These representations disrupt and go beyond established visual discourse and binary representations of Roma, allowing alternative readings and extension of both Roma and queer identities. As Fremlova explains, the self-representations of queer Roma "*represent a symbolic trajectory from indoors to outdoors; from the personal/private to the public/political; from the past to the present; from the 'Gypsy' myth to the reality of Roma's lives*" (Fremlova, 2022, p.16). Here, like in Tremlett's study, non-stereotypical representations do not necessarily rely on the production of the opposite and do not avoid incorporating stereotypical visualisations (ibid., p.16). Representations can be done in many ways, as Fremlova's research showed, and they can be considered non-stereotypical just by drawing on personal experiences (ibid., p.13). One way of constructing representations is by positioning the self-representation in a social, cultural and historical context via visualising a difference between a *mythical* and modern-day Roma (ibid., pp.10-11). This can be achieved by using existing myths, misrepresentations or stereotypes and merging them consciously with reality. Another way is creating a new artistic quality that can function on a symbolic level (ibid.16) or portraying the mundane, everyday life (ibid., p.12). The most crucial aspect is that the Roma themselves produce these representations.

The only participatory video project concerning the Roma community I came across in my research was conducted in Turkey by Ozan Uştuk and Ayça Tunç Cox (2020). It was a transformative action research project with the Romani people in the Sira district, Izmir, Turkey (p.509). In practice, the researchers used

participatory video methods, acting as facilitators, while the participants took complete control over the filming and editing (ibid., p.511). The motivation for the participants was multifold: to talk about their experience of discrimination and exclusion, to challenge the stereotypical portrayals in media, and to highlight their poor and precarious living conditions (ibid., p.512). As a result, they produced an auto-ethnographic documentary film. The researchers stressed the fact that because the amateur filmmakers were in charge of the film structure, they were able to bypass traditional methods of documentary filmmaking and intuitively use methods of self-expression that were close to them culturally, and through that reinforced "resistance against the dominant strategic narrative" (ibid., p.515). What stands out in the film is a conscious reproduction of stereotypical imagery and narratives that exist in the Turkish public sphere by the Roma participants and their acceptance of the role of "entertainers" as musicians and dancers. The Roma filmmakers used the language of dominant discourse and intercepted it with their own means of expression to make their voices more visible (ibid., p.515-16).

### **III. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

In this section, I outline theoretical concepts that provide a framework for the thesis. First, I focus on the ideas of representation, particularly a constructivist approach to representation based on Stuart Hall's work. Then, I look at definitions of participatory video and conceptualising its impact on the community and individuals, connecting PV with Paulo Freire's ideas of empowerment through participation.

#### **REPRESENTATION THEORY AND CONSTRUCTIVIST APPROACH**

Representation is a concept with a dual meaning: representation as a likeness or depiction of the same thing, and representation in a symbolic, conceptual sense when a thing stands for something else or when the thing carries meaning for something else (Hall [2], 2003, p.2). Following Stuart Hall, I will refer to the second

definition of representation, which he defines as "the production of the meaning of the concepts in our minds through language" (ibid., p.3.). Language, in the case of this study, stands for the language of visual media. The word *production* immediately points to something constructed. Hall specifies three different theories of representation: reflexive, intentional and constructivist (some use the term *constructionist*). The reflective approach suggests that the representation mirrors what exists in reality. The intentional approach emphasises the speaker's or author's intent in the meaning-making process. Finally, the constructivist approach assumes that meaning is not innate to objects, people or ideas but is constructed (ibid., p.10). This approach highlights the active role of individuals and social processes in creating, interpreting and communicating representations.

Hall states that "representation is a symbolic practice" (ibid., p.10). These words, objects or images that carry meaning are *signs* organised into a system of meaning or a shared language. Through that system/language we can communicate concepts and ideas that constitute our culture (ibid., p.4-5). In the constructivist approach, the meaning cannot be fixed either by the thing itself (the sign) or by the author, the user or a viewer (ibid., p.11). Instead, as Hall explains: "meaning depends on the relation between a sign and a concept which is fixed by a code. Meaning, the constructionists would say, is 'relational'." (ibid., p.13). The codes do not have one meaning. However, we can only read codes that we have access to culturally as they are embedded in cultural norms. They refer to reality and affect it, but are not reality - they are unfinishable and dependable on power relations and those with power control representations (Dyer, 2002).

The constructivist approach to representation highlights the fact that if representations are constructed, they are not fixed and can be re-constructed anew. It provides a lens through which this study understands the construction and an innate instability of a stereotype that has a potential to be dismantled once the power of representation is in the hands of the stereotyped. The representation theory also provides a broad framework for interpreting the film itself as a piece of

visual media. The film is a coded assemblage of visual signs that all carry meaning and must be interpreted in the context of society and culture (Hall [2], 2013, p.5).

## **PARTICIPATION AND EMPOWERMENT**

Empowerment and participation, defined as "the equalisation of power relations between privileged and non-privileged actors in formal or informal decision-making processes" (Carpentier, 2016, p.72), go hand in hand. There is a clear link between participatory video and ideas of empowerment grounded in the work of Paulo Freire<sup>5</sup> (1996), as individual and social transformation and empowerment are two critical processes defining PV (White, 2003). Freire asserts that the oppressed groups cannot be liberated without their reflexive participation (Freire, 1996, p.47). As only they have the knowledge and experience that can allow them to make their lives better they need to take charge of *naming the world* (ibid., pp.69-70). *Naming the world* means exploring and critically analysing the world around us, a collective creation of knowledge necessary for full participation and empowerment (Freire, 1996, p.51; White, 2003, p.104).

PV grants communities power to share their stories using their own voice (White, 2003, p.64), something that Homi K. Bhabha (2014) calls the "right to narrate" - a fundamental human right to express and communicate, but also the right to be heard, acknowledged and represented. By telling stories, we not only give voice to our experiences but also contribute to the collective understanding. Collective critical awareness, or *conscientização* - the term that Freire uses, involves understanding the relationships between discourse and power, dominance and dependence (Bhabha, 1994, p.67) and is necessary in the process leading to social change (Freire, 1996, p.90). "Reflection—true reflection—leads to action", says Freire, stressing at the same time that transformative action can happen only *with* the people and not *for* the people (Freire, 1996, pp.48-49).

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<sup>5</sup> Paulo Freire's ideas gathered in "Pedagogy of the Oppressed" had a fundamental impact on education and development work (Plush, 2015, p.2)



Stories are part of communication, but not only in terms of *transmission* as in the dissemination of knowledge and ideas (Carey, 2009, p.4) but also as *ritual* (ibid., p.5). The definition of communication proposed by Carey is linked to the root of the word - *commonness*, *communion* - which implies sharing, participation and togetherness, a ritual that brings people together, physically and symbolically. From this perspective, the PV method helps build relational awareness and strengthen community bonds at the same time (Matarasso, 1997, pp.26-28; White, 2003, p.64; Mitchell & Lange, 2011, p.172 & 183; Montero & Domínguez, 2015, p.6). Moreover, PV can work on a symbolic level both as a process and a product. Carey asserts that every product of collective creativity, whether it is a play, dance, or video in this case, is a "projection of community ideals and their embodiment in material form" that "creates symbolic order" (Carey, 2009, p.5). Construction of a film then is equal to an active construction of knowledge (Mitchell & Lange, 2011, p.174). A film can also be also a vehicle for constructing, sharing and maintaining cultural and social meanings, which serve to maintain—or change—society (Carey, 2009, p.5).

PV has the potential to impact the participants through collective empowerment and also empower and transform them as individuals. On a practical level, participation can support self-development: gaining new skills and creating a new film can enhance confidence and self-respect and elevate the person's status in their community (White, 2003, p.64 & p.107, also see Matarasso, 1997, pp.14-22). Through the reflexive process of developing a video with a group, sharing ideas and connecting over similar experiences, a person can strengthen their sense of identity and belonging (White, 2003, p.64, also p.66). Using one's own voice in an equal and democratic way can enhance a feeling of agency and visibility (as an individual or as a group) and validate one's reality (ibid., p.64). It can build strength and self-confidence to advocate for themselves and their community (Plush, 2015, p.6).

The theories mentioned above are helpful in this research as a reference point regarding the different roles of the participatory video. They provide an excellent

background for looking at the processes of transformation and empowerment in the community. The theories of empowerment through participation will assist with analysing the project's impact among the Roma youth and the community at large.

## **IV. METHODOLOGY**

### **CRITICAL VISUAL METHODOLOGY**

The main framework for my qualitative research is critical visual methodology following Gillian Rose (2016), which involves looking at visual practices and representations. It comes with the presupposition that visual representations affect society; they take part in the production of meanings, the "production of social subjects", the production of "social inclusions and exclusions", and the "negotiation of social conflicts" (Rose, 2016, p.12). Rose argues that images are always constructed and presents a set of methods that aid in deconstructing their meaning. The critical visual methodology allows us to analyse the meanings of images through technological, compositional and social modalities at three different sites: the site of the image, the site of production, and the site of the audience (ibid., p.13).

Here, I will be looking at two sites: the site of the image and the site of production. I use a graph Ownby (2013), adapted from Rose, to inform the analysis structure (Fig.1). The site of the image involves textual analysis and semiotics as a study of visual and storytelling elements as codes and symbols. The site of production involves analysis of the genre (compositional modality), interviews with the creators to uncover their positionality and motivations (social modality) as well as to understand the process of making the film (technological modality). It was necessary to omit the site of the audience, as I could not gather data from the film's viewers. So far, there has only been one screening with a limited audience in 2022, and there is no record of audience reactions.

Rose's methodology is helpful in this study as it allows us to look at the image (a film in this case) from a broader perspective, beyond only the visual aspects of the image. Considering the intersection of power, knowledge and representation, it is essential to include social aspects of the image in the analysis to answer questions of who, when, why and for whom the image is made.

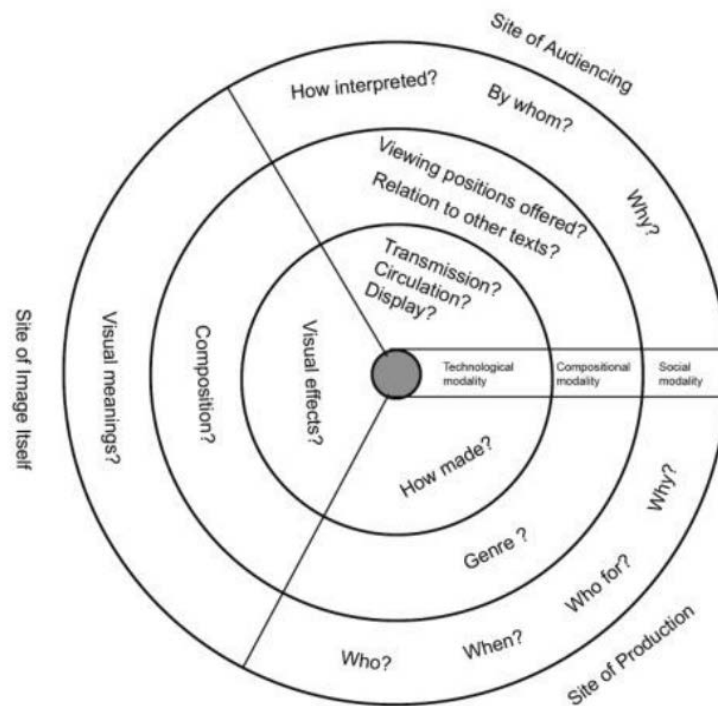


Fig.1  
(Image source: Ownby, 2013, p.6)

## INTERVIEW

The author is not dead, as proclaimed by Roland Barthes (Rose, 2016, p.19) and giving voice to the filmmakers is vital in this case. A qualitative interview provides a great insight into a person's life story or views that can be less self-censored than a written statement. The main concern with the interview is whether the questions can be "non-directional and unbiased" and ensure objectivity, validity and reliability of the knowledge produced via an interview. Some researchers propose to treat an interview as "an active meaning-making process" rather than uncovering already

existing information (Brinkmann, 2008, p.472; Warren, 2011, p.83). In the interview process, I follow a feminist approach to research that validates emotions and values as essential aspects of knowledge-making (Hesse-Biber, 2008, p.336).

I used a semi-structured interview method with a prepared set of questions; however, I also wanted to stay flexible towards any interesting insights that might steer the conversation in an unexpected way. The questions are open-ended to exclude any bias as much as possible. I asked the participants different questions according to their roles in the project (see Appendix.1) When transcribing interviews, I realised that there was a need for more follow-up questions to get more insight into the research. They were shared with the participants via email since it was too challenging to organise additional live sessions. I conducted six interviews in total: with Romano Lav project coordinator, Toni Bruce, one of the film facilitators, Meray Diner; and the young filmmakers: Adela, Monika, Paulina and Patricie. Initially, I intended to organise in-person interviews. However, this did not happen because of the participants' holidays, school and personal commitments, and eventually, I resorted to conducting interviews online. These were recorded and then transcribed.

Transcribing an audio recording is an interpretative process (Poland, 2008, p.884 & Brinkmann, 2008, p.471) as it translates the oral speech to a written text, and sensitivity to differences between the two is needed to stay true to the participants' statements and maintain a personal style of speech. There is a risk of making the participants sound less articulate as an effect of transcription, which can have potentially adverse consequences, i.e. reinforcing stigmatising stereotypes in marginalised groups (Poland, 2008, p.885). To maintain participants' control over their interviews, the transcripts were sent to the participants so they could double check whether what I transcribed was true to their own words.

An interviewer holds power over the interpretation of the statements (Brinkmann, 2005, p.165), therefore, I was careful in my approach. I used the inductive method of analysing transcripts (Fox, 2008, pp.429-430), starting with thematic content

analysis. I identified common themes and keywords to find common patterns across the interviews and draw more generalised conclusions. I also used narrative analysis to highlight important points of the interviewees' stories that correlate with other research aspects.

## **ETHICS**

### **Positionality and power relations**

Following a feminist approach to research, which questions neutrality and objectivity of research practice (Fremlova, 2018, p.105 and Haraway, 1987), it is essential to talk about my positionality towards the knowledge this thesis is trying to uncover and the subject of that knowledge. "There is no annunciation without positionality", says Hall (1990, p.18). Rose (1997) also stressed that reflexivity and understanding of one's positionality are crucial aspects of ethical practice and help avoid an illusion of neutrality in the research (p.306). Positionality involves examining the researcher's privilege and relations of power between them and the subject (Fremlova, 2018, p.101, and Rose, 1997, p.306) and situates that knowledge within particular limits (Haraway, 1987, p.587).

I approach this work from the position of an outsider ally. I am a white non-Roma; therefore, I do not have a direct insight into the lived experience of Romani people. I grew up in a provincial area of Eastern Poland, where Roma were the only ethnic minority at that time. Romani families lived in buildings also occupied by the non-Roma population, so there was no localised segregation. However, social segregation could be felt on many levels and Roma were stigmatised in everyday life. My interest in Roma culture might stem from trying to validate the youth's perception of unjust treatment that Roma received in my community.

Being an outsider affects how I enter the area or community, my obligations as a researcher towards the community, the nature of our interactions, and the level of trust (Sherry, 2008, p.433). My point of access was Romano Lav, who

enthusiastically agreed to collaborate. Working alongside the organisation allowed me to access the community with which they had already established connections. The organisation played the role of a gatekeeper and a contact link. When talking to the young Roma participants, I wanted to bridge the gap between us to establish trust and a shared experience of being an Eastern European immigrant to Scotland helped in this. To minimise the impact of the power relations between a young person and a researcher, I helped the participants feel more like partners in the research rather than interviewees. I hoped to achieve that by creating a space for them to ask me any questions, making sure they were aware of the process and their rights, and sending them the transcripts for a review.

### **Consent and confidentiality**

Four of the interviewees were under 18 years old. Working with minors requires written consent from parents or guardians. However, people over 16 have a legal right to make independent decisions. All the participants or their legal guardians gave informed written consent regarding the aim of the research, the consequences of taking part in it, and confidentiality beforehand. Additionally, at the beginning of each session, I reiterated the conditions of consent and participation as well as the research's aims before they verbally consented to the interview. I also asked each person about their preference for using their real or made-up name in my research results. In order to create a safe environment for the young people, Toni, who knew the participants, was present at each session.

### **Weaknesses and limitations**

This study focuses on a small group of young people around the same age and with a similar history of immigration, therefore the findings might not reflect the attitudes of the whole Roma community in Glasgow. However, the girls' stories and experiences are common across many people of their age in their community, so I find it representative across that particular demographic. Saying this, I did omit to mention gender, as I did not see it as relevant to this particular topic.

Being able to organise more than one session with the participants would have allowed me to reflect on their answers and ask follow-up questions during subsequent sessions to elicit more information. It would also have allowed participants to reflect on the conversation between sessions, even though they had received interview questions beforehand. As a researcher, I had to identify underlying assumptions, differences and similarities (Sousa Santos, 2016, p.22). I also had to let go of any presuppositions and expectations I might have had and had to open myself to learning new ways of looking.

## **V. ANALYSIS**

In this section I present the research findings in order to answer the questions posed in this thesis. Firstly, I analyse the textual aspect of the film (site of image) to uncover the meanings contained in the visual and compositional layers of the film. This allows us to look at how the young filmmakers constructed representations, explore the role of stereotypes in the piece, and ultimately find out what tools they used to fight stereotypes. Secondly, I look at the site of production based on the interviews. I focus on social and technological modalities guided by the questions: how the film was made, who made it, why and for whom (see Ownby, 2013, p.6; also Rose, 2007, p.13) to investigate the impact of the project on the young participants and the community as a whole.

### **SITE OF IMAGE**

#### **Film analysis**

The film starts from a scene where one of the girls writes in her diary about the events that took place on Easter (Fig.2). Diaries usually serve as a core material for documentaries, they connect to a lived memory, and therefore carry a sign of authenticity. The use of diary in the story suggests that the viewer is about to witness a personal and subjective experience. Freire emphasises the importance

of individual perspective and personal experience in the process of bringing about change (Freire, 1996, p.32). By using her personal voice, the girl is exercising her *right to narrate*, an innate right belonging to people (Bhabha, 2014).



Fig.2. *April 17th* film still

Through a cross-dissolve transition from the introductory scene, we enter the memory of one of the girls, as she recollects the events, and we join a group of teenagers relaxing on a sofa in front of a TV. They are interrupted by a group of boys who enter the room with water guns and twigs. Throwing water at each other on Easter Monday is an Central-European tradition, a symbol of purification for the new season, widely practised also among non-Roma. The boys are then given colourfully painted eggs, which is another Easter tradition known across that part of the continent. Featuring elements of tradition can play multiple roles here. Firstly, they can function as a marker of time, to position the film in a certain social environment. Secondly, they can fulfil an educational role for the viewers as a showcase of Romani customs. And thirdly, on the one hand, they can play a role of a visual code marking the cultural difference and an expression of identity; on another hand, these traditions common for other countries of the region, position



the community within a broader context of belonging to a Central-European culture.



Fig.3. *April 17th* film still

The kids in the film are typical teenagers, spending time together at the front of the TV, having fights boys vs girls, and spending time in groups on the streets. I see this as the turn to *the everyday*, as explored by Tremlett (2017). Just as in the later scenes, there is no ethnic clothing or house decor, which defies potential viewers' expectations (Fig.3). The interiors are far from a lavish, exuberant, flowery, over-the-top style that is often associated with Roma style (as per Tremlett, 2013, p.718), on the opposite: they look minimal and neat. The lack of traditional Romani visual elements can suggest that these either are not part of *the everyday* or that the young filmmakers made a conscious decision not to include those. The same can be said about the stairway in the typical Glaswegian tenement building and the street - they are clean, in contrast to what the neighbour proclaims in anger.

The next scene takes us out onto a typical Southside Glasgow street with tenement blocks. A middle-aged woman, who the girls call a *Karen*<sup>6</sup>, is carrying her shopping, and the boys are playing in the house with an unused nappy. The nappy eventually flies out of the window by accident and hits the woman walking on the street. Enraged, she storms up the stairs to knock on the door of the suspects. The door is opened by an adult woman, presumably a mother of one of the boys, who, seeing that the woman was carrying a microwavable meal-for-one from the shop, instead of being annoyed by the insults she heard from the neighbour, invites her inside to join an Easter party.



Fig.4. *April 17th* film still

The room is full of people who are raising glasses, dancing and laughing. The neighbour is shy and unsure at first, but because of friendliness and welcoming attitude of the family, she joins the festivities. The camera filming the scene is handheld and in constant movement, placing the viewer in the centre of celebrations as if inviting them to take part (Fig.4 & 5). The scene of the festive

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<sup>6</sup> Karen is a slang word for “*an angry, entitled, sometimes racist white woman*” (<https://www.dictionary.com/e/slang/karen/>).

celebration reminds of typical Romani representation present in cinema: a room filled with people laughing, drinking and dancing is a scene existing to a bigger or smaller extent in almost every film featuring Roma and representing the jovial, colourful *Gypsiness*. Here though, the scene serves a double role: as a scenery for the neighbour's redemption and as a symbol of Romani hospitality and openness to strangers.



Fig.5. *April 17th* film still

The end scene shows the girls walking hand-in-hand into the distance (Fig.6), this stylistic motif is usually used in the film to suggest the characters walking towards the future. The narrator says: “She learned not to judge Roma people, and we learned not to judge a book by its cover, even a *Karen*”, suggesting that the learning here was mutual, and the girls also had to face their own preconceptions about the neighbour.



Fig.6. *April 17th* film still

The *17th April* film is not void of elements deemed as stereotypical: children running on the streets, traditions, dancing and a festive fete scene. As children's guardians only appear at the end of the film, it echoes the trope of children being left to their own devices (see Tremlett, 2017, p.728; End, 2012, p.677). However, the parent when she appears plays a crucial role in the film, as she invites the neighbour into the house, representing the caring and hospitable nature, and willingness to build bridges between people in the community. As the literature review suggests, the conventional imagery is here woven into *the everyday*; it is about creating a new quality of self-representations that neither stigmatise nor romanticise (see Tremlett, 2017, p.734).

By presenting the story in this particular way the authors take the stereotypical portrayals of Roma (as the messy, causing trouble children) and the racist neighbour (as an angry woman who is exaggerating small incidents) and show that both of these exist only because people do not know and do not understand each other. As stereotypes are imaginary constructs fixed in culture rather than in their nature and depending on social conventions (Hall [2], 2013, pp.8-9), they are

not stable and a subject to change. The position of the neighbour changes once she accepts the invitation: the stereotypes about Roma she harnessed in her imagination crush and dissolve together with the social conventions keeping non-Roma separated from the Roma community. The lack of fixity of representation provides a space for individuals and groups to reinvent their images, identities and positions on the shared conceptual map. There is a close relationship between how people or groups are represented, perceived, and treated, hence here the young filmmakers construct an alternative representation to influence the perception and treatment of Romani people.

## **SITE OF PRODUCTION**

### **Introducing the participants**

#### ***Who made the film***

Introduction of the project participants is needed, as it gives a sense of who are the authors of the film. It is also important for reading the following parts of the analysis.

All the participants live in Govanhill, Glasgow, and are between 14-16 years old and are still attending high school. Most of them immigrated to the UK with their parents from the Czech Republic when they were little, and only one of them was born in the UK. All of them appeared to be related. They identify as Roma first, then Czech; their identity as Scottish is ambivalent to them. However, Govanhill, where they live, is home for the girls, and they point to strong community and family ties that makes them reluctant to even imagine living anywhere else. Govan, as mentioned in the Introduction, is an area in the South part of Glasgow famous for its multi ethnicity and multiculturalism. There are a plethora of festivals and celebrations happening in the area, including many Romani events in which the girls like to take part, proud of being able to participate and showcase their culture. Most of the girls previously took part in other Romano Lav projects:

journalism, photography, community catalyst and community calculus course, and two of them are now teaching younger kids about human rights, climate justice and Roma culture. They were already interested in filmmaking and wanted to try to make a film in a more professional way. There is an element of passion for film showing through their responses. Their participation was also encouraged by the fact that their cousins were taking part in the project.

## **Participation and voice**

### ***How the film was made***

The project was facilitated by two locally-based filmmakers: Meray Diner and Ciaran Pasi, both with a previous experience of working with communities. The programme was not designed a priori, as the idea was for the young participants to lead the project in an organic way. The pre-production started from discussions about the genre of choice, and followed by writing workshops after which the girls on their own decided to rethink the story. This is how the facilitator describes the process:

*“I was asking them questions about what do you really want to talk about, you have a platform, this is a film you're gonna make and people are gonna watch, what do you want to say. And they are very smart and active and very passionate, so just asking this question was almost enough to just trigger the whole process. It's from there where we openly talked about the identity and the community and the place that we live in.” (Meray)*

The final story and the message of the film were inspired by conversations about the girls' experiences. Drawing on their frustration about experiences of Romaphobia and misrepresentation, they made a film touching on their identity and community. The girls decided to tell the story in a lighthearted, humorous way and all of them pointed out the fun aspect of the project. They were taught and assisted to use professional cameras and sound equipment and each was able to try different roles and tasks during the process, while also being responsible for

their own role specific to their interests. All asserted that the atmosphere during the project was supportive and they had lots of creative freedom:

*“I liked how they told us to do whatever we want to, said this like a hundred times. That’s our film and like, we’re the one who are going to be into it. They’re just helping us. And that I really liked how they were chill about it and that although they did give us instructions, did tell us how to plan it, but basically all of the ideas were ours.”*

(Patricie)

The words “*freedom*” and “*we could do whatever we wanted*” appeared in the interviews multiple times. The role of the facilitators here was to teach the necessary skills, guide asking the right questions and support, but the conceptual, textual and creative decisions were all in the hands of the young filmmakers. The facilitators were there to remind the girls that the film is their own platform to share their own message, as Meray firmly asserted: “*It’s not our film, it’s not our voice. It’s their voice*”. She highlighted the importance of strong core ethics among facilitators of participatory projects. They need to fully understand the relationships of power and commit to supporting the participants in taking control and being in charge of their own stories.

## **Project objectives**

### ***Why the film was made***

When asked about project objectives, Toni, the Romano Lav coordinator mentioned a few. The first practical goal was for the young people to learn new skills and familiarise themselves with the process of filmmaking. The second goal was to have a finished product at the end—a film that can be shown to other people. Both of these objectives were achieved and resulted in a film that was screened in front of a large audience, and already makes history as the first film made by Roma in Scotland. The more intangible goals are closely linked with Romano Lav’s organisational objectives: nurturing a sense of ownership in young

people, and strengthening and increasing Roma youth empowerment. Both of these aspects are connected to White's (2003) and Matarasso's (1997) participatory work objectives and are analysed further down in this thesis.

## **Impact of the project**

### ***Why and for whom was the film made***

In the process of uncovering potential and actual impact of the study, a few different strains emerged that are expanded on in the next paragraph:

- a. Fighting stereotypes
- b. Educating others about Roma culture
- c. Inspiration for other Roma people
- d. Visibility as Roma and importance of self-representation
- e. Strengthening of sense of identity
- f. Community bonding
- g. Personal development

They echo both White's (2003) transformational and empowering approach to participatory video, and Matarasso's (1997) social impact of participation.

#### **a. Fighting stereotypes**

In the interviews all of the girls expressed their experience of racism, and Romaphobia in particular. They talked about unfriendly neighbours (like the one in the film) who complain about small or non-existent issues and send police on Roma families, as well as about bullying in school and the negative effects of ethnic bullying experienced by Roma children and their education:

*"They [some of the Roma schoolchildren] don't want to go to school because they don't feel like they're a part of that school because some people would be like, Oh, you're Roma, you're gypsy."* (Patricie)

According to the girls, the story of the nappy flying out of the window is based on a real event that happened to one of the girl's cousins. The incident in which the



neighbour blamed the girl's family for being dirty just because they were Roma got stuck in the young filmmaker's memory and inspired the film.

The girls, when asked about media or film representations of Romani people or culture, were not able to bring any examples (although two of them mentioned that there is an active Roma representation on TikTok and Instagram). However, they do notice that there is a lack of Roma representation in film: *"we really wanted to put Roma into [the film] because we didn't really see any Roma films"* (Patricie). They are conscious of the negative and untrue stereotypes that constitute the general representation of Roma in the public sphere. They also pointed out that Roma are often a subject of misidentification being confused with the Travellers community or Romanians. As one of the girls, Adela, explains when asked about the message of the film:

*"The message was that as the Roma community, we do get literally like myths. There's so many things that aren't true about the Roma community. We're kind of shown as bad people. They show us like these types of people who are travellers or they're like dirty people when in fact we're the same as anyone else."* (Adela)

One message to the audience that is the most prominent in every interview is *"don't judge a book by its cover"*. The girls feel like they are being judged negatively when others recognise them as Roma, and the film's storyline is supposed to show that the generalised assumptions are untrue. This is also the reason why they wanted to explicitly feature the Roma community in the film: *"we mostly put Roma people in it because we feel like everyone gets judged"*. They see the film project as part of fighting those harmful misjudgements and representations. *"The best way to fight stereotyping is by taking representation onto one's own hands"* (Iordanova, 2003, p.7) and the girls are doing this by writing a story in which they focus on Romani hospitality and kindness towards those who seem to be against them:

*“I wanted to say [through the film] that many people judge Roma people by their looks. But when you get to know them, you see their true selves. [...] So this whole film was about Roma people getting together, how kind they are, and for people to not judge them before meeting them.” (Monika)*

#### **b. Educating others about Roma and their culture**

In the participants' opinion, what is to be blamed for others making negative judgements about Romani people, is people's ignorance and a lack of knowledge about Romani culture. They understand that the best way to get rid of harmful preconceptions is to get to know people from another culture and learn about each other:

*“Showing that Roma people exist, that they're out there and they're struggling with racism with people's judgement, but the culture is basically the same thing. Like I said, you have to get to know people. Then when you get to know them, that's when you actually see who they are, who Roma people are.” (Monika)*

There is a clear appreciation for the power of cinema that comes through the interviews; the girls understand that a film can be a way of educating people about Roma culture, as well as building awareness about stereotypes and their falseness. As Meray, one of the facilitators explains, the girls initially wanted to write a revenge story. However, after having some more conversations, they decided that they did not want to show their community in a bad light, but rather show the Roma being more friendly, open and inclusive than it might look from outside.

The girls featured some Roma traditions in order to give the viewers a glimpse into their culture, and also point out that their culture is the only thing that differentiates them from the rest of the population:

*“And I feel like that if you’re Roma, it doesn't make it different from anyone else. We just have different traditions to other people.”*

(Patricie)

That difference though seems to be not something that necessarily separates Roma from the rest of the community, but it is to be celebrated and shared with others. The girls talked about Roma festivals with dance and music that take place in Govanhill area gathering the whole multiethnic community, an important opportunity for others to learn about Romani culture and meet Roma people. The same applies to other activities that they are taking part in:

*“[Projects like this] do help people understand who we are. Romano Lav had festivals for the Roma Community where everyone comes even though they are not Roma, Roma Represents are on Magazine showing who we are as people.”* (Adela)

### **c. Inspiration for others**

When the participants were asked about the importance of the film, it is apparent from the responses that they see the film as not only important for themselves. Instead, they are aware of the potential benefits it can have on the community as a whole. They pointed to the fact that the film can serve as an inspiration for other Roma children, who seeing a film made by Romani youth, people who are like them and come from the same background, would feel inspired and encouraged to participate in such projects too. It seems that setting an example for other people is very important for the girls:

*“I think it's important because it's the Roma and the young people that made the film, we've accomplished making the film. (...) Like, for other Roma kids, if we can do it, then they can do it as well.”*

(Paulina)

*“It'll make them more confident, they'll watch the films and us, the younger people, showing our culture. So they might say: "Oh, let me do this in the future so they won't be scared.”* (Monika)

They also actively talk to other young people to encourage them to join the Romano Lav programmes. There is a sense of pride among the girls associated with doing creative or activist work, and they do want to motivate others to do it too.

Looking through the lens of Carey's view on communication at this and the previous point, the film here plays a role of transmission (Carey, 2009, p.4). It becomes a vehicle carrying information both about Romani culture via its textual level, and, as a piece of creative work, information about what young Roma can achieve.

#### **d. Self-representation**

When asked whether they think projects like *April 17th* are benefiting the Roma community and why, all the girls were clearly aware of the ways that their community can gain from such projects. First of all, there is a consensus among the girls that the film and other projects that they are part of contribute to people's sense of pride in their own identity and culture.

*"I feel like these projects actually help mostly Roma people. They help Roma people because some Roma people are scared to tell other people that they're Roma because they will get judged by them because they're Roma. I feel like it gives so much power and bravery to people to talk about their culture."* (Monika)

Seeing yourself on the screen and seeing one's culture represented has a significant impact on the confidence of the whole community. Being visible as Roma is helping people embrace their own identity with pride:

*"We are making the Roma realise they are worth more than what people say."* (Adela)

#### **e. Strengthening the sense of identity**

It became evident that participation in the project, including other activities with Romano Lav, had an impact on the girls' sense of identity and belonging. Being

able to celebrate their own culture, learning more about it through workshops and teaching younger children and peers about, and ultimately producing a film based in the Roma community seemed to awaken and strengthen their Roma identity:

*“Before I was with Toni and participated in her stuff, I wasn’t really sure about my culture myself. I knew some stuff, but I didn’t know all of it. (Patricie)*

*“When I was growing up in the UK, I didn’t really know what Roma or Gypsy were, that there were Roma people in my community. Until I was maybe 12, I started realising I’m Roma, I’m part of the Roma community. Romano Lav taught us so much about the Roma community and with so much education.” (Adela)*

#### **f. Community bonding**

The film brought people together during the production process, as the girls invited friends and family to act in the film. This creative process strengthened the bonds between the makers and their community:

*“All of us felt really proud of making the film. I believe the film brought us together stronger and to understand each other more.” (Adela)*

The screening of the film was an occasion to celebrate the achievement. The audience was mixed with around half Roma and half non-Roma. Such events create great opportunities as a *ritual* (Carey, 2009, p.5) to enhance intercultural dialogue by people experiencing other cultures and strengthening community bonds (Montero & Domínguez, 2015, p.8). As Carey (2009) proclaims: “Communication is “the most wonderful” because it is the basis of human fellowship; it produces the social bonds, bogus or not, that tie men together and make associated life possible” (p.7). Sharing thoughts and creating stories opens space for connection around a shared experience, effectively engaging the community in imagining solutions (Mitchell & Lange, 2011, pp.173-174). This experience can play a part in building *conscientização*, or the collective critical awareness (Freire, 1996).

### **g. Personal development**

The girls recognise the value that participation in the film project brought to their lives. Most of them mention that learning new skills and going through the whole process of production made them more confident and enhanced their self-esteem. There is a prevailing feeling of pride and accomplishment, and all of them mention how proud their families are of them:

*“When people watched us they were proud, they couldn’t believe that a girl group who were Roma put such a storytelling movie together (...) my family kept asking questions about the film, it made us really proud. Showing off to people that we made a film for the Roma community makes us feel very BIG.”* (Adela)

The young filmmakers say that they are now able to tell other people about the film, a fact that potentially can change their peers’ attitude towards them. One of them specifically mentioned a practical impact of making the film: she realised that she can now include filmmaking and photography on her resumé with a prospect of this experience helping her in the future:

*“And it has changed [my life] a bit because now I can show my mentor in school or on my paper or my resumé that I’ve actually done filmmaking and photography. And it actually also changed me because I can tell other people that: Oh, I have this film that I made.”* (Patricie)

Other girls enjoyed the filmmaking process so much that they decided to take part in another project facilitated by Romano Lav, which is this time a documentary film. All of the participants talked about how their parents, families, friends were proud of them for making a film. This recognition of skills and creative efforts form the whole community instilled in the girls a sense of personal confidence and empowerment. Referring back to White’s theory of impact of transformative role of participatory video on individuals, it is clear that this participatory project works to support personal development of the girls by either ensuring them in their interests

or showing them new pathways of personal and professional growth (Matarasso, 1997, pp.14-15 & pp.22-24).

## **VI. CONCLUSION**

By employing a qualitative research methodology, this study seeks to understand the experiences, perspectives, and motivations of Roma youth involved in participatory film projects in Govanhill. The film presents the personal experiences of Roma teenagers, showcasing their everyday lives and traditions. The analysis of the project's textual and social aspect provides insights into the research questions that this thesis has sought to answer:

1. How are Roma youth fighting stereotypes through film?
2. What is the role of participatory projects in the Roma community?

This chapter will provide answers by summarising the study's findings and discuss their implications for future research and practice.

### **Summary**

The study found that Roma youth in Govanhill are aware of the stereotypes and misrepresentations of their community and are eager to challenge negative portrayals. They use personal narratives, cultural traditions, and everyday experiences to deconstruct old and construct new representations that challenge negative stereotypes. A participatory film offers them a space to creatively explore the themes important to them on their terms and with their own voice. They recognise the importance of other people learning about their culture in defying and preventing discrimination and prejudice against Roma. The young filmmakers are motivated by the fact that their participation in creative projects has the potential to inspire their peers to engage in social change. Furthermore, featuring the local Romani community culture and traditions asserts young people's identity, encourages other Roma people to embrace their identity, and challenges the

notion of Roma people as a homogeneous group. Finally, through the process of creating and sharing their films, the young participants gain valuable skills in media production and storytelling, which can be applied in other areas of their lives and contribute to their personal and professional development, which can have a significant impact on their empowerment and transformation into more conscious, skilled and confident individuals.

To summarise, the role of the participatory film in the Roma community is as follows:

- Challenging stereotypes and creating alternative self-representations
- Educating non-Roma about Roma culture to promote inclusivity
- Inspiring other Roma people
- Providing visibility as Roma and means of self-representation
- Strengthening the sense of identity
- Building connections within the community
- Personal and community development

These findings are compatible with the transformative and empowering impact of participatory projects described by Matarasso (1997) and White (2003) and fulfil project objectives set by Romano Lav.

### **Positioning the study in a wider context**

In the context of the current climate of Romaphobia and antigypsyism, with hate crimes and discrimination against Roma communities still common in many countries, Roma's engagement in taking charge of and creating their representations is crucial. The film's positive representation of Roma traditions and community may serve as a counter-narrative to the negative and exoticised stereotypes perpetuated by mainstream visual culture and media and contribute to challenging discriminatory attitudes towards Roma. Furthermore, the research highlights Romani youth's attitudes and values, contributing this way to a broader knowledge about Scottish Roma. Participatory activities can empower people to



promote a more accurate representation. However, it is essential to recognise that these projects alone cannot address the systemic issues of social exclusion, poverty, and discrimination that Roma communities face. There needs to be a concentrated effort to promote equal rights and opportunities and address the root causes of social exclusion. In this context, it is essential to continue supporting and promoting projects that empower Roma of all ages as active agents in social change.

Communication for Development (ComDev) is a field that seeks to understand and harness the power of communication in promoting social change and development, with a focus on participatory and community-based approaches. The analysis presented in this study aligns with the principles of ComDev by highlighting the importance of participatory approaches in empowering Roma youth to tell their own stories and challenge negative stereotypes. Additionally, the study highlights the potential for participatory video projects to contribute to community development and promote social justice and equity. By examining the impact of participatory video on the Roma community, this research contributes to the broader conversation within the ComDev field on the potential of communication to promote social change.

### **Recommendations for further research**

The analysis presented in this study provides insights into the role of participatory video in the young Roma community and contributes to understanding of Roma engagement in social change in Scotland however, there are still areas requiring further investigation. One area for further research is the impact of participatory video projects on the broader Roma community, supporting diversified expressions of identity and self-representation and contributing to awareness about the heterogeneity of Romani identities. Another area for research is the potential of using the films produced in these projects as a tool for policy change and social justice and exploring strategies for integrating participatory video into broader community development initiatives in Roma communities. Research in these areas

would contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the impact and potential of participatory projects for Roma communities while accounting for cultural specificity and localised concerns.

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## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX 1. Information letter

#### Information letter

<b>Project title:</b> Young Roma voice in challenging stereotypes through a fiction film. A case study based on a short film project conducted in the Roma community in Glasgow, Scotland.	<b>Date:</b> 27th April 2023
<b>Study manager:</b> Kat Dlugosz  <b>Contact e-mail:</b> dlugosz.kat@gmail.com	<b>Studying at Malmö University, Faculty of Culture and Society, S-205 06 Malmö</b> <b>Phone +46 40 665 70 00</b>  <b>Education:</b> Communication for Development <b>Level:</b> Masters
<p>– <b>Who’s the interviewer:</b> My name is Kat Dlugosz and I study a masters course at University of Malmo in Sweden. I’m Polish and have lived in Scotland for 14 years.</p> <p>– <b>Aim of the study:</b> To present the film project <i>April 17th</i> to the wider audience as an example of the participation of young people in challenging stereotypes, and to highlight the importance of including voices from the community in filmmaking.</p> <p>– <b>How the study will be carried out:</b> I will interview the group of young people who created the film, facilitators of the project, and project coordinators from Romano Lav. The questions I would ask you are listed at the end of the document. The interview will be recorded on an audio device and then transcribed later. Let me know if you prefer your interview not to be recorded.</p> <p>– <b>The confidentiality:</b> I want to guarantee confidentiality in the study in that no unauthorised person may have access to the interview material or your personal data. Your name can be changed or not included at all if you wish. The audio material won’t be published anywhere and will be deleted at the end of the study.</p> <p>– <b>Right of use:</b> The degree project will be stored in the University of Malmo database.</p> <p>– You are asked to take part in the study as one of the creators of the film. <b>Your participation in the interview is completely voluntary.</b> You can stop participating at any time and no explanation is necessary.</p> <p>– Feel free to ask me any questions if you have doubts or need anything explained further.</p>	

## APPENDIX 2. Consent form

### Informed consent

<p><b>Project title:</b> Young Roma voice in challenging stereotypes through a fiction film. A case study based on a short film project conducted in the Roma community in Glasgow, Scotland.</p>	<p><b>Date:</b> 19/05/2023</p>
<p><b>Study manager:</b> Kat Dlugosz</p> <p><b>Contact e-mail:</b> dlugosz.kat@gmail.com</p>	<p><b>Studying at Malmö University, Faculty of Culture and Society, S-205 06 Malmö</b>  <b>Phone +46 40 665 70 00</b></p> <p><b>Education:</b> Communication for Development</p> <p><b>Level:</b> Masters</p>
<p>I have been verbally informed about the study and read the accompanying written information. I am aware that my participation is voluntary, and that I, at any time and without explanation, can withdraw my participation. The person/-s leading the study will strive to guarantee confidentiality in that no unauthorized person may have access to the material. The gathered material will be stored properly and used for research purposes only.</p>	
<p>I hereby submit my consent to participate in the above survey:</p> <p>Date: .....</p> <p>Participant's name and signature: .....</p> <p>Participant's parent/guardian's signature: .....</p>	

### **APPENDIX 3. Interview questions**

#### **Questions for the participants:**

- Have you been involved in a project run by Romano Lav before? What did you do?
- What was your experience working on a film project before?
- Why have you decided to take part in the project?
- Tell me about the role you had in making the film, what did you do?
- What are your thoughts on the process of making the film? How was working with the facilitators?
- Can you describe the film in your own words, what is the film about?
- What did you want to say through the film?
- What do you think makes this film important?
- What changed in your life after making the film? How did you feel after making the film?
- How did people react after watching the film?
- Can you say something about the new film project?
- Would you want to be involved in projects like this in the future?
- What do you think about living in Govanhill?
- What do you think about living in Glasgow?
- What do you think about media/film representation of Roma?

#### **Additional questions for the participants:**

- Have you experienced yourself or do you know anyone who has experienced being stereotyped as Roma by others? If you can/want, would you like to describe that situation? What happened?
- How do you think the projects with Romano Lav are helping others understand Roma culture better?
- How do you think the film projects you've done with Romano Lav are helping the Roma community?

### **Questions for the Romano Lav project coordinator:**

- How are you connected to the Roma community in Govanhill?
- How did the organisation support the project?
- What was the initial goal of the project? Was it achieved?
- How were the participants selected?
- How were the facilitators selected?
- How was the film disseminated?
- What was the community's reaction to the film?
- What do you think makes this project important?
- What do you think about media/film representation of Roma?

### **Questions for film facilitators:**

- How are you connected to the Roma community in Govanhill?
- What was your role in making of the film?
- What was your motivation for working on this project?
- Can you describe the process of making the film?
- Can you describe the film in your own words?
- What do you think makes this project important?
- What do you think about media/film representation of Roma?