

**FROM, WITH OR ABOUT Sinti and Roma?**

**Reflections on Antigypsyism and Film**  
**A brochure for educators and filmmakers**

Published by the Central Council of German Sinti and Roma and the 'Educational Forum against Antigypsyism' of the Documentation and Cultural Centre of German Sinti and Roma as part of the European project Chachipen.

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Berlin / Heidelberg, 2023

Financial support:

This project is funded as part of the project "Chachipen - Paving the way for Truth and Reconciliation Processes to address antigypsyism in Europe: Remembrance, Recognition, Justice and Trust-Building" (led by CEPS, ERGO Network, Central Council of German Sinti and Roma) and supported by the European Union's Rights, Equality and Citizenship (REC) Programme (2014-2020). The content of the project's outputs represents the views of the author only and is his/her sole responsibility. The European Commission does not accept any responsibility for use that may be made of the information it contains.

The project is co-funded by the German Federal Programme "Democracy Live!" of the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth (BMFSFJ), and the Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and the Media (BKM).

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## INTRODUCTION

What films can you think of that are about Sinti and Roma? In which of these films are the Roma characters lawyers, teachers or booksellers? And in how many of the films does the Holocaust of the Sinti and Roma play a role?

In European (feature) film, there is little room for stories that take a differentiated, innovative look at the lives of Europe's largest minority. All too often, clichés are reproduced instead by focusing on poverty, criminality, the supposedly exotic, or the “outsiderness” of Sinti and Roma. This is hardly surprising, because in Europe, antigypsyism is part of social normality and therefore also of the normality reproduced through film. The reproduction of exclusionary, discriminatory stereotypes in film and television reinforces and legitimizes social exclusion *per se*.

While antigypsyism is now receiving somewhat more attention in social science and cultural scholarship debates, and while it is officially recognized as a specific form of racism, the topic remains virtually invisible to the general public. A public confrontation with discrimination of Sinti and Roma and with its underlying ideologies and structures is barely happening. This lack of awareness of the manifestations and scope of antigypsyism makes it difficult for society, and indeed filmmakers, to deal with the issue (self-)critically.

That is where this brochure comes in, examining antigypsyist images in (feature) film, common narrative patterns, and structural obstacles to critical engagement with these issues in the environment of film production. By absorbing this analysis, filmmakers will be able to not only address their own prejudices, but to also address established forms of the representation of Sinti and Roma in film, regardless what role they play in film production or release.

Behind every film, no matter how short, is not just a lot of work and research, but also the pressure of raising financing and achieving success. A correspondingly large number of people are involved in the creation, distribution and reception of film. As highly collective works of art, films also provide information about socially widespread attitudes and knowledge. The aim herein cannot be to criticize individual filmmakers, therefore. Rather, it is to show how deeply anchored antigypsyism is in society, how it is reflected in film production, and to thereby raise awareness of this issue among filmmakers. To that end, following the work of cultural scholar Dr. Radmila Mladenova, the brochure examines the work of screenwriters, cinematographers, costume designers and directors, as well as the tasks of editors and festival juries. Instead of giving recommendations, each section concludes with questions, because we do not want to prejudge artistic decisions, but rather invite filmmakers to reflect on their own work in this context.

This brochure is also intended to inspire educational work both in and out of school settings. When working with films on this topic, it is important to train one's own eye to see the danger of reproducing antigypsyist images in film. The recommendations in the appendix can also help to find films that can be used in educational work to question Roma and Sinti stereotypes that have traditionally gone unquestioned.

## **The RomaRising project**

Image source: [www.romarising.com](http://www.romarising.com)

Chad Evan Wyatt in: RomaRising - A Project History:  
[www.romarchive.eu/de/politics-photography/politics-photography/romarising-history/](http://www.romarchive.eu/de/politics-photography/politics-photography/romarising-history/)

"So I undertook this project also as a tribute to the Black Civil Rights Movement in the USA, in which my parents were involved. It was also a response to the clear call of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., who dreamed of a day when people would be 'judged not by the colour of their skin but by the content of their character'. Doctors, bankers, businessmen, people from all kinds of professions came to our apartment in New York during my childhood. So I was determined to find and portray Roma who had completed degrees, lived 'normal' lives and paid their taxes."

### **National minorities**

Today Sinti and Roma are citizens of countries which their ancestors have called home for centuries. In many European countries, Sinti and Roma are now officially recognized as a "national minority". The most important basis under international law for this recognition is the Council of Europe's Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, which came into force in 1998. The prerequisites for this status are, among other matters, that such groups have historically lived in their home countries and that they have their own cultural heritage, language and history. Their identity is to be preserved. To this end, the Framework Convention provides for the right of such minorities to publish their own media as well as other rights.

### **Recommended reading:**

Fings, Karola: *Sinti und Roma. Geschichte einer Minderheit*. 2nd, updated edition, Munich: C.H. Beck, 2019. [Sinti and Roma. History of a Minority]

### **Exonym ("Gypsy") vs. endonym (Sinti and Roma)**

The endonyms (self-designations) of "Sinti" and "Roma" mean quite different things and do not always correspond to the designations that majority societies ascribe to these minorities. Many such individuals also have diverse, multiple identities. Since the first International Romani Congress in 1971, a large part of the international emancipation movement has used the endonym (the self-designation) "Roma". In the German-speaking world, the term "Sinti and Roma" is customarily used when talking about this minority. Sinti live mainly in Central and Western Europe, while Roma live mostly in Southern and South-Eastern European countries. Overall, there are many different Sinti and Roma groups with their own further self-designations (for example, Kalé, Kaldarash, Manusch or Lovara). These groups are strongly influenced by the history and culture(s) of their respective home countries. Sinti and Roma are citizens of their home countries, are represented in all social strata, pursue a wide variety of professions, belong to different faiths, and shape their lives individually. The endonymic terms "Sinti" and "Roma" are proper names from the Romani language.

The exonym "gypsy/Gypsy" has been used by majority societies to stigmatize, exclude and persecute Sinti and Roma for centuries. The vast majority of Sinti and Roma in Europe reject this term as discriminatory and offensive. In German-speaking countries, the equivalent German term has a particularly strong negative connotation based on the history of the National Socialist extermination policy because this minority was systematically persecuted and murdered through the use of this racist designation. Sinti and Roma should not be referred to by this exonym today. Where this word occurs in this brochure, it is intended to name and critically analyze such stereotypes and clichés in order to contribute to the social sanctioning of antigypsyism. At no point does the word refer to real persons. By always placing it in quotation marks, the authors clearly distance themselves from it.

### **What is antigypsyism?**

This brochure follows the definition of antigypsyism developed by the European Alliance against Antigypsyism in its "Reference Paper on Antigypsyism". The definition is intended to make visible the structures behind long-held "Gypsy" stereotypes and to help the reader better understand antigypsyism's different manifestations. Antigypsyism as a specific form of racism is reflected as behaviour, as ideology, and as structure, combined with the concomitant enforcement power of society. For centuries, antigypsyism has been the basis for and legitimization of the exclusion and persecution of the Roma and Sinti. The historical low point of these processes was the National Socialist genocide of Sinti and Roma in Europe, which claimed an estimated 500,000 such victims.

Antigypsyism is a historically constructed, persistent complex of customary racism against social groups identified under the stigma “gypsy” or other related terms, and incorporates:

1. a homogenizing and essentializing perception and description of these groups;
2. the attribution of specific characteristics to them;
3. discriminating social structures and violent practices that emerge against that background, which have a degrading and ostracizing effect and which reproduce structural disadvantages.

It is important to emphasize here that these attributions are majority societies’ racist projections onto Sinti and Roma, not accurate descriptions of concrete persons or their everyday actions. It must be made unmistakably clear that Sinti and Roma themselves are not the “cause” of this ideology. Rather, antigypsyism is the cause of the social exclusion and discrimination of Sinti and Roma. Complex interactions arise between their social exclusion, the resulting lower levels of their social and cultural participation, limited economic opportunities, and the lack of social recognition of Sinti and Roma.

Contemporary antigypsyism is deeply rooted in our societies and has been throughout history. Discrimination and persecution in the past have ongoing negative effects on the social, economic and psychological living conditions of the people concerned in the present. A great danger comes from right-wing extremist groups, which often pose a real threat to the physical integrity of those affected by their prejudice. However, antigypsyism is not limited to right-wing extremist groups; many antigypsyist prejudices find support in almost all of European society. They must therefore be understood as part of general knowledge, spread through everyday language and through cultural products such as music, films, literature, the mass media and political debates. Antigypsyist ideology is also part of supposedly “positive” attributions, which on closer examination turn out to be romanticized clichés.

**Recommended reading:**

Alliance against Antigypsyism: “Reference Paper on Antigypsyism”, 2017. More information: [www.antigypsyism.eu](http://www.antigypsyism.eu)

International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance: “Working Definition of Antigypsyism”, 2020. More information: [www.holocaustremembrance.com](http://www.holocaustremembrance.com)

**Staged foreignness.  
Antigypsyism in the history of cinema**

"It is high time to address the normality of cinematic antigypsyism in cinema and television."

Image Source: *Das Schminken in Theorie und Praxis*. Berlin: Eigenverlag, circa 1910, published by the *Bund deutscher Barbier-, Friseur- und Perückenmacher-Innungen*

[*Makeup in Theory and Practice*. Berlin: self-published, circa 1910, published by the Federation of German Barber, Hairdresser and Wigmaker Guilds]

"It is high time to address the normality of cinematic antigypsyism in film and television. I therefore want to focus on the phenomenon of 'Gypsy' films; to show that 'Gypsy' feature films represent a distinct, highly influential film genre; that they occupy a central place in national cinemas in Europe and the US; and that they have done so since the very beginning of film! What is specific to these films? 'Gypsy' films assume that certain groups of people labelled as 'Gypsies' are different in some inherent, objectifiable way, that these films claim direct access to this truth for themselves, and that they give the viewer 'authentic' (!) access as well.

What is revealed by analysing their form? The analysis of cinematic means and conventions reveals that the 'Gypsy' heroes are portrayed in a realistic mode - and at the same time in a metaphorical sense - as 'non-white'/'black'. Accordingly, the 'Gypsy' figure is staged as an embodiment of darkness, shown in connection with shadows, night, bright and/or black (clothing), and a 'dark' skin colour. Of all the groups with an ethnic label in Europe, the Sinti and Roma are the ones who are aesthetically scapegoated to this day through the language of the dominant medium of modernity, film, in both its black and white and colour versions."

Mladenova, Radmila/Reuter, Frank: "Inszenierte Fremdheit. Antiziganismus in der Geschichte des Kinos". In: Ruperto Carola. *Forschungsmagazin der Universität Heidelberg*, 18 (2021). [Staged Foreignness: Antigypsyism in the history of cinema]



## **STARTING POINT: ANTIGYPSYISM AND FILM**

Films are both expressions and contemporary documents of our social conditions, regardless of whether they are comedies, musicals, social dramas or art films. As with all other forms of culture, filmmakers design and edit their material based on their own world views, ideas of history and the present, relations in society, or current artistic conventions. Despite the legal anchoring of a ban on discrimination in the EU Member States, antigypsyism and its resulting discrimination are still widespread. Directors, screenwriters and producers are no more immune to racist stereotypes than are the authors of this publication. The aim of the following sections is, therefore, to question the foundations on which antigypsyist representations are (re-)produced again and again in our society.

### **Stereotyping in films confirms and deepens prejudices**

A thorough look at the representation of Sinti and Roma in film and television reveals the following: Often the stories and their protagonists are similar, and they correspond frequently to the racist clichés that have been handed down intergenerationally. The motifs of poverty, criminality, homelessness, closeness to nature, a special musical talent, and living a “free” life without coercion are, to varying degrees, the basis of the stories and characters in such films. A negative image is not always conveyed: Especially through musical themes, such characters are portrayed as sympathetic, talented and - in terms of their musical ability - successful. Nevertheless, the impression remains that the Sinti and Roma are the 'Others'. The focus is more on their supposed group affiliation and less on character sketches of them as individuals or on their concrete circumstances. This affiliation dominates and defines the actions and development of such characters, limiting their narrative development and their relationships to other characters. Classic subjects are still in vogue today, and whether in the Italian social drama “Pio” (France, Italy, USA, 2017) or the French comedy “With Open Arms” (original title “*À bras ouverts*”, France, Belgium, 2017), the alleged poverty and deviance of the Sinti and Roma remain at the centre of such stories.

The supposedly socially critical, often documentary-like thematization of poverty and exclusion forms a sub-genre of its own in the representation of Sinti and Roma. Often the focus is on such protagonists belonging to the minority, which serves as an apparent explanation for their situations.

Such framing is how Sinti and Roma are ultimately blamed by the majority society for their own discrimination and for such situations. All too often, the social mechanisms and actual effects of antigypsyism in the real world are rendered invisible through such filmic narratives.

Through this schematic representation in film, the racist image of Sinti and Roma is solidified. Such stereotypical images do not reflect reality, but representational relationships.

That is all the more reason for this brochure to take a critical look at the conventions and cinematic devices that contribute to this distorted image. Instead of simply dismissing stories as “false”, “inauthentic” or “untrue”, the following sections aim to sharpen our view of how stereotypical images of Sinti and Roma are created and what function they serve for the films and the societies in which they appear.

### **Historical image memory**

In current films as well as in older productions, certain figures are made visible as “Sinti and Roma”. These filmic representations draw on a historical image memory that has long codified stigmatizing, stereotypical images and representations of Sinti and Roma. What we recognize today as supposedly “typical” of Sinti and Roma has been shaped and produced by a long history of literary, photographic and artistic models. Attribution of “Sinti and Roma”-ness therefore works even without explicitly

naming these stereotypes. Hardly any medium can do this better than film, which comes closest to our everyday human perception through its moving images.

The majority society is both the originator and the recipient of such images, and its perception of the supposed “reality” of Sinti and Roma is reproduced this way. In a few cases, self-representations by members of the minority also find a larger audience and can thus create their own, new images. This is not to say that it is only possible for Sinti and Roma filmmakers to tell innovative, reflective stories about themselves. The real problem is not authenticity or the lack thereof. For example, the fairy-tale fantasy figure of a Romani woman can be used to explode stereotypes (“The Little Gypsy Witch”, Croatia, 2011), while a factually correct, historical reappraisal of the story of the boxer Johann Trollmann, who as a Sinto was persecuted and murdered by the National Socialists, can also fall back into antigypsyist patterns (“*Gibsy - Die Geschichte des Boxers Johann Rukeli Trollmann*” [Gibsy – the story of the boxer Johann Rukeli Trollmann], Germany, 2013). It is crucial to juxtapose and examine the representations of Sinti and Roma in film with this historical image memory and with our memory of such previous stories: When is a film telling a story about individuals and real people, and when does it just reproduce stereotypes?

### **Guiding principles for analysing, producing and reflecting on film**

The following guiding ideas provide a brief overview of the common, prejudiced forms for the presentation of Sinti and Roma and their structures, and are intended to stimulate reflection and analysis.

What does “antigypsyism in film” mean anyway? Instead of asking “What is allowed and what is not?”, we want to encourage people to critically examine the foundations of their own filmmaking and viewing. The starting point is the observation that in an antigypsyist society, films are made that take up and reproduce antigypsyist images because firmly anchored ideas of a supposedly homogeneous “us” and the supposedly equally homogeneous “others” are part of the inventory of the European self-image and that of individual nations. Antigypsyism in film reflects the perceptions, the interpretive power, and the projections of these majority societies.

How can antigypsyist patterns be identified in film? The chapters to follow give concrete indications of film industry mechanisms and cinematic techniques which can produce stereotypical representations of Sinti and Roma. There is no “authentic” or “correct” costume or storyline that could solve this problem. Antigypsyist patterns express themselves in many ways and rely on structures of thought such as homogenization, exoticization and essentialization. Old stereotypes can therefore appear in updated forms and continue to have the same effect. Conversely, if filmmakers contextualize, question and deconstruct such familiar patterns, our entrenched viewing habits and thought patterns can be challenged.

What are the opportunities to avoid antigypsyist patterns in film? At the end of each thematic section, this brochure compactly lists the most important questions filmmakers should ask in order to recognize and thereby avoid such stereotypes. The basis for this, however, is the critical examination of one's own ideas of society, belonging and difference, as well as one's own internalized prejudices. These suggestions cannot serve as a concrete guideline but are primarily intended to encourage people to question their own views against the background of this new information.

Can films against antigypsyism be made?! Considering the widespread dissemination of stereotypical images, much is already achieved if such images are avoided as a result of critical reflection. In fact, the medium of film also offers the potential to actively question antigypsyist stereotypes and contribute to overcoming them. At the end of this brochure there are references to initiatives, structures and films that pursue such questioning.

## WHAT STORIES ARE TOLD?

### Image politics for a better future

Source: [www.romarchive.eu](http://www.romarchive.eu)

André Raatzsch in: Bilderpolitik [Politics of Photography]- RomArchive:  
[www.romarchive.eu/de/politics-photography/](http://www.romarchive.eu/de/politics-photography/)

"Reality is increasingly equated with what is portrayed in the media, film and photography. Whether this is actually reality, however, may be questioned. It is our responsibility and our democratically granted right to decide what we see in such images: Do we see 'strangers', or do we see our 'fellow citizens'?"

Will there be a European image politics through which we can better explain the complex interrelationships of our society and history? An image politics in which the medium of photography can serve to restore our own self-image - one that promises us a future?

We need photographs that represent us in a humane way, that make our memories, repressed and lost from the collective memory, visible to all; pictures about Sinti and Roma which link to the lost knowledge about the history we experienced together in Europe and bring our common fate to the foreground. Will the arresting gaze of dominant representation strategies be changed for once, and will an image politics be created in which photographs of Roma and Sinti are used for equality and human dignity?

All those who create media, who make images, who view images and who are photographed face the great challenge of designing a common image politics that promises a better future for us all."

Self-organizations of Sinti and Roma, as well as filmmakers from the minority, repeatedly demand that new, different stories be told today. The deficit that these critics have identified can be found in many film and television productions: Where members of minorities (and not just Sinti and Roma) are shown, they are often very clearly marked as representatives of their group and do not appear as individuals. This is done by having them speak a foreign language or speaking the majority language with an accent, or through their clothing and other aspects of their appearance (see the chapter "Who and what can be seen?"). Apart from such "equipment", stereotypes and clichés are above all conveyed through plotlines, character drawing, and the homogenization of keywords.

Stories featuring Sinti and Roma are conveyed and presented in the form of constellations of meanings. This makes it all the more important to take a critical look at the stories which are told about Sinti and Roma, because beyond such characters' group membership, there is often little room made for individualized traits. Instead, such characters' ethnic origins are always the driving force behind their decisions as well as the conflicts in the story and drive the plot around these characters. Such characters, stories and plots are therefore culturalized and ethnicized (through essentialization). They serve as counterfoils to the normative, unmarked, 'white' characters.

Be that as it may, it remains important for members of minorities in particular to be visible in politics, society, art and culture – but only as diverse, complex, fully-fledged plot carriers of a story, not as rigid stereotypes of the 'Other'."

## **The representation trap: antigypsyist attitudes from society are also found in film**

In order to avoid this representation trap, it is necessary to focus much more on which stories are told about Sinti and Roma in the first place. Recurring patterns emerge in the storylines surrounding Sinti and Roma figures. It is striking that documentary films and feature films barely differ from each other in the way the stories about this minority are told. This is hardly surprising, as the frame of reference for such images, stories and characters is the same for both genres: The antigypsyist attitudes which are widespread in the majority population and are therefore relatable.

Which themes or plots are assumed to be relevant to the representation of Sinti and Roma? The stigmatizing narratives of poverty, closeness to nature, nomadic life, homelessness, criminality or lawlessness, "parasitism", dirt, instability, a supposedly "different" culture perceived as threatening, and an anti-social relationship to property and work are the predominant motifs - not just in cinematic representations, but also in journalistic and literary ones. These include the Roma characters in "Nelly's Adventure" (original title "*Nellys Abenteuer*", Germany, 2016) (insert footnote below), who are drawn by the screenwriters as criminal (though ultimately sympathetic), or the "Gypsies" in *Sherlock Holmes: A Game of Shadows* (USA, UK, Switzerland, 2011), who are introduced as cunning and close to nature. At first glance, not all such stereotypes appear to be negative; the supposedly special love of music and the alleged freedom of a vagabond lifestyle are cited again and again in particular, containing supposedly positive elements which promise an escape from Western societies and are always portrayed as the opposite of such societies. However, all these subjects have one thing in common: They mark their characters as fundamentally "different" and distinguish them from the assumed viewers, who predominantly belong to the majority society. It is not similarities between the majority and the minority, but precisely their differences that come to the fore here. In this form of supposedly "positive" romanticization, musical or artistic abilities are not conveyed as acquired skills, but as supposedly "natural" qualities. Yet it could be precisely a great, positive task of film to deconstruct these notions of "otherness" and to narrate such stories from multiple perspectives. In this sense, film should not be about showing "what is real", but about showing how we come to perceive something as "real" or "typical".

Many depictions in the productions from this field typically make claims of alleged authenticity with regard to Sinti and Roma characters. Even fictional material, when Sinti or Roma characters appear, is repeatedly told in quasi-documentary style. This can involve a majority-society narrator processing such characters' "otherness" for the audience (see the section "Who is allowed to talk, who is talked about?"). In some cases, however, minority narrators are also used to reproduce and legitimize antigypsyist discourse.

### **Insert footnote to Nelly's adventure:**

The children's film "Nelly's Adventure" and the debate on the antigypsyism in it has received a lot of public attention following criticism of the film by the Central Council of German Sinti and Roma. An English-language summary of the debate is published here:

Brunssen, Pavel: "When Good Intentions Go Bad: The Stereotypical Portrayal of Roma Characters in the German Children and Youth Film 'Nellys Abenteuer'", in: Mladenova, Radmila et al. (eds.): *Antigypsyism and Film / Antiziganismus und Film*, Heidelberg: Heidelberg University Publishing, 2020. <https://doi.org/10.17885/heiup.650.c9921>

### **Narrative patterns**

Typical patterns for the representation of Sinti and Roma in film can also be found beyond the content-related motifs mentioned above. Already at the level of the narrative, separate majority vs. minority worlds are established and a difference between 'them' and 'us' is constructed. In relation to time, for example, a separation into day and night often emerges - one world exists in the light, is transparent and known, while the other exists in the dark, full of secrets and threats. The consequence of such separate worlds is that in the everyday life of the characters who are non-Roma, figures who are Sinti and Roma just appear on the margins as a disturbing factor, a threat, or an exotic element. Instead of sharing non-Roma everyday life and equally pursuing everyday activities, Sinti and Roma figures are usually just presented through actions that do not happen every day, through deviant behaviour, or merely as being temporarily present. Here, too, it becomes clear how this "otherness" is constructed.

Another recurring motif is the supposed restlessness of these imagined "travelling people". Beyond the promises of exoticism and adventure - as in *Chocolat* (UK, USA, 2000), for example - that make this motif so interesting for many films, another aspect is important: The "Gypsy" image, as the racialized "Other", is important to the formation of the European nation-states, since it has represented and still represents a facet of the "Other" that is so important for national identity formation. Characteristics that seem to be the alleged opposite of the national identity, and the modernization of the world of work that is inextricably linked to such an identity, are projected onto Sinti and Roma in many ways, from their alleged "habit of wandering" that transcends national borders to their lives lived allegedly beyond the bourgeois standards of society.

All these narrative and action patterns can be found in different forms with various motivations in the majority of films that deal with Sinti and Roma characters. As a rule, the narratives manage this without further explanation or contextualization. The criminality of the protagonists in "Nelly's Adventure" (Germany, 2016) does not need to be explained because the audience already "knows" criminality is a central, unchangeable characteristic of "the Roma" based on their ancestry. Such supposed characteristics have been established in stories about Sinti and Roma for centuries. Things get complicated precisely where a particularly realistic story is supposed to be told through a socio-critical emphasis on majority-minority grievances. Precisely because poverty and lack of opportunities are so firmly anchored as motifs of the Sinti and Roma, their portrayal often remains almost completely one-sided. Such portrayals do not reflect "reality", but rather the common patterns of the representation of Sinti and Roma in the films of the majority society.

### **No history in the narrated world**

The historical emergence of social conditions is ignored in the narrative patterns shown through these films. This has to be opposed, especially where post-1945 films address the poverty and exclusion of Sinti and Roma without naming the cause. The Holocaust of 500,000 murdered Sinti and Roma in Nazi-occupied Europe is still little known and rarely addressed in public. This is perhaps even more true of antigypsyism's persistence in Europe after the end of the war. Systematic, institutionalized, structural discrimination and persecution are not being named as the causes of disadvantage for Sinti and Roma in almost all areas of life. This ahistorical narrative transpires in the context of a society and a politics which for decades has ignored or often denied the Holocaust against Sinti and Roma, as well as antigypsyism as a specific form of racism. It was not until 1982 that then-West German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt politically recognized the National Socialist persecution and genocide of the Sinti and Roma, and only after almost four decades of energetic protest and political pressure from the Sinti and Roma civil rights movement. The European Parliament did not recognize this genocide until 2015, when it designated 2 August as the European Holocaust Memorial Day for Sinti and Roma. The history of the German civil rights movement and the emancipation movement of Sinti and Roma throughout Europe, as well as their forms of resistance, resilience and self-assertion against oppression, have received little attention from the general public so far.

The foundations for the racist persecution and murder of Sinti and Roma during the Nazi era are also often left out, and not just from the cinematic discussion. The genocide was able to build on centuries of persecution and stigmatization in Europe. Sinti and Roma have been subjected to massive persecution and discrimination in many countries up to the present day. From a Western European perspective, the flight of Roma from the countries of South-Eastern Europe who are affected by such discrimination, is often not reported at all, or when it is, it falls under catchphrases such as "poverty immigration".<sup>1</sup>

Without contextualization, the often-precarious living conditions of many Roma in Europe remain in the collective memory as a supposedly super-historical feature of this minority, as if a life in social exclusion and marginalized situations is inherent to their character and not a consequence of their discrimination and exclusion by majority societies.

<sup>1</sup> See End, Markus: *Antiziganismus in der deutschen Öffentlichkeit. Strategien und Mechanismen medialer Kommunikation*. Heidelberg: Dokumentations- und Kulturzentrum Deutscher Sinti und Roma, 2014. [Antigypsyism in the German Public Sphere. Strategies and Mechanisms of Media Communication]

English abridged version available online (as of May 2023):

[https://dokuzentrum.sintiundroma.de/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/150000\\_Kurzfassung\\_Studie\\_Antiziganismus\\_Englisch.pdf](https://dokuzentrum.sintiundroma.de/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/150000_Kurzfassung_Studie_Antiziganismus_Englisch.pdf)

### **Who is allowed to talk and who is talked about?**

One important aspect has not been addressed so far here: Who is endowed with the authority to tell stories? Who is allowed to tell them, and whose stories are told? Where members of the minority appear as equal protagonists alongside members of the majority, the question must be asked: From whose perspective does the story unfold? Which audience is addressed by such character sketches and storylines? Where Sinti and Roma narrators appear, is it also the majority society that is addressed, to whom the supposedly strange rituals or activities of the minority are explained?

These questions touch on the problem of the power of definition: The audience is usually offered "white" figures with whom to identify, and these then function as the lens through which the audience looks at the "Others". The behaviour of these "Others" is viewed and evaluated from the "white" norm. Foreignness and "otherness" are created in such constellations of figures precisely because an "ethnological" explanation is provided instead of allowing the differences between individuals to stand on their own. This also includes the common motif of a non-Roma entering a village where Roma live for the first time - the audience follows his/her gaze or his/her exploratory tour and discovers a seemingly completely "different" world.

### **Questions for reflection**

About which different groups is the film's story being told? Is the narrated world divided into Sinti and Roma on the one hand and the majority society on the other, or do the characters differ as individuals? Do Sinti and Roma characters develop during the course of the story, or do they remain static in their initial situation?

Who introduces the audience to the narrated world? Which characters are given interpretative authority over what is shown, from whose perspective is the story told?

Do the Sinti or Roma characters act as self-determined subjects? How do they bring their own perspective to bear? Do Sinti and Roma characters have a speaking role?

Are Sinti and Roma portrayed as part of an “us” or a “we”? How are differences between the characters explained or created?

### **The case of “Maria” – the worldwide stigmatization of Roma**

Source: Photo below: Florian Schuh/ Picture Alliance  
[The image above is an artistic intervention into the photo below].

“At the end of October 2013, news organizations around the world reported on the case of Maria in Greece. A picture of the child even made it onto the front page of the *New York Times*. Maria's mother, a Bulgarian Roma woman, had given her into foster care with a Greek Roma family shortly after her birth. However, Maria was not officially adopted by her foster family. The child's appearance, her blond hair and fair skin, led the Greek authorities to suspect that she had been abducted. As a result, the child was removed from her foster family by police and placed in state care. Media reports of the case started stacking up in short order.

On November 5, 2013 the Central Council of German Sinti and Roma held a national press conference entitled “Stolen Children? Roma in Europe pilloried – the responsibility of the media” in the House of the Federal Press Conference in Berlin. This brought press and television coverage across Germany (including the public broadcaster ARD's nightly news show, *Tagesschau*). The Central Council of German Roma and Sinti emphasized in the press conference that it is the job of the police and state authorities to take action against every instance of human trafficking and illegal adoption. However, it is unacceptable to produce images in public which rouse and reinforce racist prejudices. The Central Council thus called on the newly constituted *Bundestag* to set up a commission of experts to document and measure hostility towards Sinti and Roma in Germany, and submit a report on the topic to the German *Bundestag* once per legislative cycle.” The Independent Commission on Antigypsyism was finally established in 2019 and delivered a comprehensive report to the government and parliament in 2021.”

Jara Kehl in: “The case of 'Maria' - world-wide stigmatisation of Roma” - RomArchive:  
<https://www.romarchive.eu/en/politics-photography/politics-photography/case-maria-worldwide-stigmatization-roma/>

First published in 2014 by the Documentation and Cultural Centre of German Sinti and Roma.

## WHO AND WHAT CAN BE SEEN?

### Always the ones who are different - and always in the same way

"Act One." "Gypsy music." After these intertitles, the following image is the opening scene of the film: At the centre, two women in long skirts and white blouses are sitting on the grass with two small, naked children. In the background, bushes and a covered wagon can be seen, as well as two other women dressed similarly, one of them smoking. The women are surrounded by uniformed policemen and men in suits.

Thus begins "*Das Mädchen ohne Vaterland*" (Urban Gad: "The Girl without a Fatherland", Germany, 1912). Early in film history, at the turn of the century, images are being staged that, even before the invention of "talkies", make the sitting figures easily identifiable as "Gypsies". One such image is of camping in the open air: The appropriate setting is evoked by open campfires, wagons and blankets; the figures sit on the ground, and in their close-ups, sections of a wagon wheel in the background suffice to frame them.

This "space of alterity", as media scholar Hilde Hoffmann calls it, can be evoked entirely without dialogue and with just a single camera shot because long before the invention of film, there was already a fixed idea of who and how "Gypsies" are. Unlike literature, however, film conveys information on several levels at once: music, costumes, set design, camera work and editing are cinematic means of bringing the audience closer to the characters in a certain way. Established antigypsyist ideas can therefore be evoked through just a few bars of music, or by a female figure in a long, colourful skirt. Accordingly, the reproduction of antigypsyist stereotypes also already happens at either the audio or the visual level without protagonists or narrators having to explicitly name it. Costumes and props are not apolitical objects, but are charged with certain meanings that are recognized by the audience. The following section deals with some of the cinematic means through which such ideas are invoked even without dialogue.

### Costumes and masks

When is a costume element actually motivated by the individual character being drawn, and when is it used to essentialize the figure as emblematic of a group? Antonia Schmid describes the problem as follows: "When filmmakers begin [...] to mark [social] affiliations visually, they are already walking a fine line. Collectives are quickly constructed this way with characteristics attributed to them."<sup>2</sup>

It is precisely the most common stereotypes - poverty, permissiveness and dirt as the central antigypsyist motifs - that can be implemented particularly easily and effectively by costume design. Such images are not new - on the contrary, such figures have also been appearing in paintings and photographs wearing torn, dirty, incomplete or revealing clothing. Over the course of film history, especially in costume design, an aesthetic canon has developed that integrates such precursors and re-conveys them through film. If you compare the character of the "Gypsy" played in 1912 by Asta Nielsen in "The Girl without a Fatherland" with the female "Gypsy" characters in "Nelly's Adventures" 100 years later, the costumes of the Sinti and Roma in both films are basically interchangeable - even though the latter film is set in the present-day 21<sup>st</sup> century.

As for makeup, it has long been common practice to give actors portraying Sinti and Roma characters a "dark" skin colour, or to create such darkness through the use of lighting or the colour scheme of the film. The casting process must therefore also be asking: Which actors are chosen to portray Sinti and Roma, and according to which supposedly "ethnic" categories – are they skin and hair colour?

<sup>2</sup> The quotation comes from Antonia Schmid's commentary on the conference "Antigypsyism and Film", published in the proceedings. Antonia Schmid: "Conference Commentary: Film is a commodity with great influence". In: Radmila Mladenova et al. (eds.): *Antigypsyism and Film / Antiziganismus und Film*. Heidelberg: heiUP, 2020, pp. 276-279, here p. 276.



## Music

When one looks for the seemingly “positive” attributes of the supposed “otherness” of these cinematic representations of Sinti and Roma, one quickly finds a special musicality and allegedly unique sounds being referenced. It is all the more easy to mark their group affiliation at the audio level or through the film’s music. Yet the compositions and interpretations of Sinti and Roma musicians are and have primarily always been expressions of local styles and have also influenced both classical and contemporary musical styles. Romani musicians of the Balkans (including the Western Balkans), Romania or Hungary have had a decisive influence on the national music there, just as the Romani virtuoso Django Reinhardt shaped an entire musical genre in contemporary jazz. Nevertheless, apart from the attribution of special musical talent to Sinti and Roma characters, just a narrow musical range is used in these cinematic performances, a slightly folk-like instrumental music with guitar and accordion. An avant-garde electronic soundtrack or hip-hop, on the other hand, would hardly be imaginable in a “setting” of Sinti or Roma characters. These tendencies are closely related to the cinematic linking of Sinti and Roma with campfire romance and street music.

## Language

Language is a central stylistic device to mark the origins, affiliation, social status or (supposed) intelligence of characters in these films. Whether that be the use of dialect in the *Heimat* movies (films about homeland and national identity that can also increase the stigma of “the other”) or the Anglicisms of unsympathetically-drawn manager characters, the combination of such dialogue and its pronunciation contributes to this representation. Deviations from perceived “normal language”, i.e. a Sinti or Roma character speaking in local dialect when all the other characters speak without dialect, or displaying mannerisms such as seemingly old-fashioned phrases, are particularly striking in these films.

In addition to marking such characters’ difference from the majority society, the question always arises, especially with foreign characters: Does the majority of the audience even understand them at all? For example, are the Italian-speaking characters in German films subtitled, or do they speak German with Italian accents, or is there no translation of them at all? Are the characters (and their behaviour) therefore more difficult or even impossible to understand? Can the other characters communicate with them at all? At the linguistic level, film also uses these means to decide whether and how the audience (and the other characters) can build relationships with such foreign characters.

## "Light and dark": camera and lighting

For the audience, camera work and lighting are perhaps the most powerful and most subtle cinematic means of drawing characters. Whether a figure is shot from above or below, how the face is lit, or whether there are sharp contrasts between light and dark in the frame - all this contributes to the viewer’s perception of the character. For most viewers, however, it is difficult to assess the effect that these means have on them and on their perception, because they do not normally think about these techniques when watching a film (or hardly at all).

The precise allocation of light and dark spaces is one of the simplest techniques used to create a sense of belonging or “outsiderness”, sympathy or mistrust. The illumination of close-up faces is also of enormous importance. Whiteness in film is always a question of the use of light: In the film “Papusza” (Joanna Kos-Krauze & Krzysztof Krauze, Poland, 2013), “normal” three-point lighting is used for the non-Roma characters. The audience is used to figures being visualized this way. Such lighting contrasts with the depiction of the Roma poet Papusza in the film’s opening scene. Her face is framed in a penumbra and shot in profile rather than frontally as the non-Roma characters are. This contrast makes it clear to what a great extent camera work and lighting can be used to either mark figures as “Other” or to assign them to the “normal population” at the level of the visual as a whole.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup>This analysis follows the remarks on the film “Papusza” by Radmila Mladenova (Dies.: “Über ‘Zigeuner’-Filme und ihre Technologie der Wahrheitskonstruktion”. In: Dies. et al. (eds.): *Antigypsyism and Film / Antiziganismus und Film*. Heidelberg: heiUP, 2020, pp. 29-46, here pp. 33f.). [“About ‘Gypsy’-films and their Technology of Truth Construction”]

### **Editing**

At the level of editing or montage, one aspect in particular stands out: The juxtaposition of the supposedly Sinti and Roma world on the one hand, and “normal” bourgeois society on the other. Abrupt cuts, such as from caravans in a natural outdoor setting to a residential street or apartment interior, for example, mark the incompatibility of these two worlds. This is equally true for activities of the same kind (shared meals, celebrations) in each world that are then juxtaposed. In the French film “*A bras ouvert!*” [With Open Arms, 2017], these alleged contrasts are presented particularly effectively in a confined space, namely, on the same plot of land. In terms of narrative continuity, both kinds of sequences - that of the “uncivilised” Roma and that of the educated, wealthy French politician - refer to each other, establishing the contrast through the jump cut.

In addition to the sequencing of scenes, editing also creates a sense of rapidity or slowness. When Roma appear in the film, a kind of romantically-enhanced liveliness can often be detected at the editing level – the scurrying, breathless characters are constantly in motion, reacting to every impulse, and seem to have no long-term goals (as in the film “Black Cat, White Cat” by Emir Kusturica, 1998).

### **The “Gypsy” Mask**

According to Radmila Mladenova, such cinematic techniques produce a “Gypsy” mask. Conventions in terms of lighting, costumes, props and so on do not create concrete, individual figures, but construct a “mask” that conveys the traditional ideas of “the Roma” which are already firmly anchored in society. Moreover, the relationship between such a representation and the individual character is not to be questioned at all: The intended realism of such films functions precisely because it meets the audience’s preconceived notions (and the audience is assumed to be mainly majority-society members). Even films that claim to be socially critical, such as “*Pio*” (2017), must therefore be critically questioned as to which cinematic means are used to convey a sense of ethnic belonging and why such means are chosen. The desire for “authenticity” and the use of the common techniques presented above obscure the fact that the very ideas of such “realism” are shaped by the deeply-anchored antigypsyist images of the broader society.

### **Questions for reflection**

What does a Sinti or Roma character have to look like in order to be recognized as such by the audience? Above all, why does he/she have to be assigned to a group at all (through clothing, skin colour, or props)?

Which filmic means - lighting, music, dialect or foreign language use, costumes - primarily serve to contrast explicitly Sinti and Roma figures with the other characters? Why is this contrast created?

How are different action spaces or worlds created for the Sinti and Roma characters? How are these life-worlds introduced on film?

## WHO MAKES FILM?

### For a democratic media politics and media culture

Source: Fortepan Image Archive, licensed under: CC-BY-SA 3.0

Raatzsch, André: "An Ethics of Seeing and Showing: How Democratic is Our Media Politics?" In: Radmila Mladenova et al. (Eds.): *Antigypsyism and Film / Antiziganismus und Film*. Heidelberg: heiUP, 2020.

"Films, photographs and reporting should inform us and point out how certain social values and norms are being justified. They can show how the relationship between a minority and what appears to them to be the majority is formed, where this relationship can lead, and where it should lead in a democracy. In the context of the conference 'Antigypsyism and Film', Peter Nestler said very aptly in his introductory speech:

*Without a moral stance, filmmaking is worthless [...] Since my first films, I have always tried to take the shortest route to what I have set out to do, to get to the heart of the matter, to what I feel is true. This truthfulness is the common goal of many filmmakers and image-makers, despite their different styles. And there are resistances that have to do not just with the commodity character of our products, but also with fashion. There is a mostly unspoken demand to adapt to bad habits, to submit to them.*

*Critical self-reflection by the producers of such realism is therefore urgently needed to create the awareness that an ethical and moral stance should be at the centre of filmmaking, photography and journalism. This awareness is central and urgently needed for the democratic and humanistic values of media culture and media politics. In addition to image-makers, filmmakers and journalists, citizens should also take action in this regard."*

Every film that an audience finally gets to see is the result of a long process involving many people. The roles of director, screenwriter or set designer are particularly significant. Without public funding structures, film festivals, programming commissions and film distributors, however, these films would find no audiences and in most cases would never even get produced in the first place. The structure of the filmmaking field, therefore, has a direct impact on what the audience gets to see at all. That makes the next question all the more important: With what preconditions, and under what assumptions, are such films being produced, promoted and shown?

### Public and state film funding

The promotion, realization and distribution of films are all organized very differently in various European countries and depend on national or regional structures. The conditions according to which funding or inclusion in television programming is decided are correspondingly different as well. There is also the broad field of private, commercial film distribution and production companies. State and public bodies, however, have a cultural and social mandate above and beyond the criteria of content and possible sales figures or audience ratings. In Germany, for example, these goals are formulated for public broadcasters by the Interstate Broadcasting Contract. Broadcasters are required, among other things, to "promote social cohesion" and to "meet the democratic, social and cultural needs of society". Especially with regard to the media representation of minorities, there are also binding contracts that formulate these abstract demands in more concrete terms.

### Structural obstacles

What do such guidelines mean in practice? Like other social groups - such as the Christian, Jewish and Muslim communities and associations, LGBTIQ organizations, trade unions, nature conservation and

women's associations, or journalists' organizations - Sinti and Roma in Germany also formulate their own claims for representation on broadcasting councils and programming committees. In Germany, this has so far only been achieved in two state-level broadcasting corporations.

What are the effects of the fact that Sinti and Roma in Germany are practically not involved in the design of most public service television programming? The perspectives and experiences as well as the cultural expertise of the members of this national minority that has been at home in German-speaking countries for more than 600 years are missing. Inclusion of this minority is important because film and television can be central instruments to counteract social exclusion, discrimination and prejudice. The promotion of emancipatory film projects would be a first step here. The same question of representation can be addressed to the programming commissions of TV stations, film festivals and funding agencies.

Without question, the mere presence of Sinti and Roma on such a heterogeneous body does not guarantee cultural participation. However, it is an important step that is also required with reference to the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, Article 15 of which states: "The Parties shall create the conditions necessary for the effective participation of persons belonging to national minorities in cultural, social and economic life and in public affairs, in particular those affecting them."

Appointments to such bodies are not based on artistic considerations, but on political decisions. On the basis of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, such processes must be rethought and supplemented. Antigypsyism also manifests itself through a lack of participation by Sinti and Roma in funding agencies, committees and programming commissions. In the field of film production, the result is that content reinforcing antigypsyist prejudice and stereotypes continues to reach large audiences because of public funding and public broadcasting.

### **What does the audience want to see?**

Programming commissions, festivals, and public funding agencies each have their own, partly internal, partly publicly well-known criteria which they apply to the films or projects they support. The selection processes deciding which films are produced or shown on television are correspondingly different. One opportunity to find a common approach here, despite all the differences, would be the question of assumed audience interest.

The process of making a film also includes - at all levels - a look at who its audience will be. Preferences and interests measured by surveys, test screenings and audience ratings are important indicators for production companies and the designers of television programming alike. Quota pressures and the required tailoring of film projects to the programming schemes of public broadcasters can become a problem, especially when film projects try to break free from common narrative patterns.

What are the assumptions behind the decisions to tell or to broadcast clichéd, stereotypical stories about Sinti and Roma? Where there is little knowledge about antigypsyism and its manifestations, a one-sided, distorted image of the minority persists. The consequence of this is that interest often only focuses on what is already known. Therefore, instead of asking which stories the audience wants to see, the basics of such questions should be reconsidered. Which stories are new, which forms of representation will shake up our view of the world? Which stories are worth telling? How do the stories we tell affect the actual lives of people who are affected by discrimination and exclusion?

### **Reflective structures produce good films**

There are structures that produce diverse, exciting films without necessarily having to create a separate programming track for them. This includes, for example, the goEast Film Festival (in

Wiesbaden, Germany), which in 2019 dedicated an entire section to the examination of the representation of Sinti and Roma in film. (Further information: [www.filmfestival-goeast.de](http://www.filmfestival-goeast.de)).

The RomArchive has also been online since January 2019. In this "Digital Archive of the Sinti and Roma", such artists' contributions to culture are made visible and available. Currently, in addition to works from the visual arts, photography, dance and music, 35 films (so far) can be accessed online there at any time. The section called "Image Politics" also goes into detail on the composition and the effect of images in the media portrayals of Sinti and Roma ([www.romarchive.eu](http://www.romarchive.eu)).

The online platform of the Roma Cinema Resource Centre, initiated by the filmmaker and Roma activist Sami Mustafa based on his many years of experience in the Rolling Film Festival (in Kosovo), presents a large selection of thematic films and provides suggestions for educational work. (Further information: [www.romacinema.org](http://www.romacinema.org)).

The *Ake Dikhea*? Roma Film Festival in Berlin, Germany is also curated by members of the minority themselves. Here the focus is on the question of which films Sinti and Roma curators feel represent them well. Film proposals from Sinti and Roma filmmakers can be submitted from all over Europe. (Further information: [www.roma-filmfestival.com](http://www.roma-filmfestival.com)).

The *Bildungsforum gegen Antiziganismus* [Educational Forum against Antigypsyism], an institution in Berlin that is part of the Documentation and Cultural Centre of German Sinti and Roma, initiated a series of events in 2017 for the critical examination of antigypsyism and film under the title "Facts/Fictions: People in the Lens". This was followed by the first international academic conference on "Antigypsyism and Film" in February 2018 under the auspices of the Educational Forum against Antigypsyism, the Central Council of German Sinti and Roma, and the Society for Research on Antigypsyism in cooperation with the Antigypsyism Research Centre at the University of Heidelberg and the goEast Festival. That conference was decisive for many of the developments mentioned here. The conference proceedings, published partly in English and partly in German, were the basis for this brochure. The Berlin-based Educational Forum against Antigypsyism continues to offer workshops on "Antigypsyism in Film and Television". (Further information: [www.gegen-antiziganismus.de](http://www.gegen-antiziganismus.de)).

### **Questions for reflection**

Which criteria are applied to such films? On what basis is a decision made about their funding or inclusion in television programming?

What does the film programming of a festival or a television channel want to convey about Sinti and Roma through its selections?

Where could a central, high-profile space be created for extraordinary, courageous and convention-breaking films in this regard?

How is the cultural participation of Sinti and Roma in the environment of film and television being promoted?

## Recommended reading

**Mladenova, Radmila/von Borcke, Tobias/Brunssen, Pavel/End, Markus and Anja Reuss (Eds.): *Antigypsyism and Film / Antiziganismus und Film*. Heidelberg: Heidelberg University Publishing, 2020.**

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Mladenova, Radmila: *The 'White' Mask and the 'Gypsy' Mask in Film* (Antiziganismusforschung interdisziplinär - Schriftenreihe der Forschungsstelle Antiziganismus, Band 3). Heidelberg: Heidelberg University Publishing, 2022. <https://doi.org/10.17885/heiup.989>

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## Film recommendations

The Documentation and Cultural Centre of German Sinti and Roma runs its own page on the YouTube video portal with numerous videos commemorating the victims of the Nazi genocide of Sinti and Roma, civil rights work, and various current affairs topics.

Link: [www.youtube.com/user/Dokuz100](http://www.youtube.com/user/Dokuz100)

## Feature films

### Aferim!

(Director: Radu Jude, Romania, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, France, 2015)

"Eastern Europe, 1835: Two horsemen in a stony landscape in the middle of Wallachia. They are the gendarme Costandin and his son. Together they are looking for a 'gypsy slave' who has run away from his *boyar* and is even said to have had an affair with his wife. [...] A parable based on historical documents and songs about late feudal Europe, its power relations and hierarchies, the peoples' image of themselves and others, the treatment of minorities, and the conflicts that arise from this. A Balkan Western in black and white that brings the cacophony of the time to life and draws the thematic arc right up to our present day." (Source: [www.berlinale.de](http://www.berlinale.de))

### Django

(Director: Etienne Comars, France, 2017)

"France 1943, during the German occupation. Every evening, the guitarist and composer Django Reinhardt delights Parisian listeners with his 'Gypsy Swing', a music full of *joie de vivre* and wit. While many other Sinti were persecuted for racial reasons and killed in concentration camps, Django lulled himself into a sense of security because of his popularity - until representatives of the Nazi propaganda apparatus ask him to go on tour to Germany [...] In his directorial debut, Etienne Comar portrays an unconventional artist and free spirit whose life is as improvised as his music. Faced with the question of whether to allow his art to be abused politically, he must make an existential decision." (Source: [www.berlinale.de](http://www.berlinale.de))

### An Episode in the Life of an Iron Picker [*Epizoda u životu berača željeza*].

(Director: Danis Tanović, Bosnia, France, Slovenia, 2013)

"Danis Tanovic's quasi-documentary film 'An Episode in the Life of an Iron Picker', which was celebrated at the Berlinale 2013, shows the everyday life of a Roma family in Bosnia-Herzegovina. It's winter, it's cold, soon the electricity is cut off, soon the car won't start. Nazif earns a living by dismantling scrap cars and selling the iron parts. Senada takes care of their two daughters, cooks, bakes, and does their laundry in the bathtub. Their neighbours are helpful, the authorities indifferent. The electric company workers who reconnect the family's power are on familiar terms with them, they already know each other. This didn't have to be a Roma family, any other socially disadvantaged minority could have been portrayed through this short, hard-hitting film that uses documentary means to turn simple, everyday life into a fierce indictment of an indifferent society." (Source: Christina Tilmann, *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 19.09.2013)

### The Rubbish Helicopter [*Sophelikoptern*]

(Director: Jonas Selberg Augustsén, Sweden, 2015)

"In the silence of the night, only the rubbish helicopter flies from gate to gate. It is piloted by an anarchic poet from the future, condemned for life to collect the silt of fantasy. This surreal image by the Swedish poet Gunnar Ekelof opens a no less idiosyncratic journey: An old Roma lady longs for her wall clock, which has been at the watchmaker's for a year, so she calls her granddaughter, and a little later a Saab sets off on a trip. On board are the clock, three passengers, one of whom is passionate about crossword puzzles, a roll of bubble wrap, and a system that warns them of lightning. The static, black-and-white photographed shots capture moments of an



almost endless journey that leads right into the bizarre side of Swedish society - and at the same time subtly reveals many things about its treatment of minorities." (Source: *Nordlichter Filmverleih*)

### **Gipsy Queen**

(Director: Hüseyin Tabak, Germany, Austria, 2019)

"As a woman, a Romni and a single mother, Ali has been dealt a triple hook by life in Romania. Her father teaches her boxing so she can fight for money for the family one day. And Ali is good at it, very good indeed. However, after the birth of her second child Ali's father disowns her, and Ali moves from Romania to Hamburg. Germany will give her and her children Esmeralda and Mateo a chance, she is convinced of that." (Source: Majestic film distribution press booklet)

### **Just the Wind [Csak a szél]**

(Director: Bence Fliegauf, Hungary, 2012)

"The news is spreading like wildfire: A Roma family has been murdered in a Hungarian village. The perpetrators have escaped, no one wants to have any idea about who committed the crime. Another Roma family living close to the crime scene sees their latent, painstakingly repressed fear confirmed. The father of the family is far away in Canada; he wants to catch up with his wife, children and grandfather as soon as he can. Threatened with racist terror and abandoned by the silent majority, the family tries to survive the day after the crime. In the evening, as darkness falls over the village, they move even closer together in bed than usual. However, their hope of escaping the madness turns out to be deceptive. Based on a real series of murders that claimed eight victims in Hungary in little more than a year, Bence Fliegauf depicts the pogrom atmosphere from which violence against minorities arises. The camera stays right on the characters' heels and makes their increasing breathlessness physically tangible." (Source: *Peripher-Filmverleih*)

### **Korkoro [Liberté]**

(Director: Tony Gatlif, France, 2009)

"A Roma family travels the French roads during the Second World War, followed by Little Claude, a young boy seeking a new family after his parents 'left and never returned'. Upon reaching a town where they traditionally stop for a few months to work in the vineyards, they learn that a new law forbids them from being nomadic. Theodore, the town's mayor, and Miss Lundi, the schoolteacher, still protect and help the Roma. Despite this, they are arrested and placed in an internment camp. Theodore manages to rescue them and gives them a piece of property where they have to settle. However, their deeply-ingrained thirst for freedom makes this sedentary lifestyle difficult to bear. After Theodore and Miss Lundi are arrested for their resistance, the family decides to resume living on the road in order to remain free. 'I'd wanted to make a film about the Holocaust of the Romani people ever since I started working in cinema (...), to understand why a man or woman decides one day to save some Roma'. This is how Tony Gatlif ended up making *Korkoro*, which won the Grand Prize of the Americas at the latest Montreal Film Festival."

### **The Little Gypsy Witch [Duh babe Ilonke]**

(Director: Tomislav Žaja, Croatia, 2011)

"The Little Gypsy Witch is a children's film that portrays the everyday life of an urban Roma family living on the outskirts of a big city as seen through the eyes of the main protagonist, a nine year-old Romani girl, Manusha, who witnesses her parents' everyday struggles and troubles whilst herself undergoing the painful experience of not being accepted by her peers in school." (Source: *Formula Film*)

### **Peaky Blinders**

(TV series directed by Colm McCarthy, Tim Mielants, Otto Bathurst and Tom Harper, UK, 2013)

"Birmingham, England, 1919: A gang of gangsters called Peaky Blinders controls the industrial and poverty-stricken district of Small Heath. Three traumatized brothers, Tommy, Arthur and John Shelby, who have returned from the war form the core of the group, which specializes in manipulated horse

betting, together with their Aunt Polly. Tommy - played magnificently by Cillian Murphy - is the most intelligent of the brothers and the boss of the gang. [...] The Shelbys live on the 'Edge of Town', an area beyond the railroad tracks that Nick Cave sings about in the series' theme song. They are Roma, are called 'gypsies', and have to go illegal to gain recognition. Tommy proves to be a highly intelligent strategist, he would be the perfect leader of a successful business, but his path is blocked because he belongs to the wrong class. Nevertheless, the Shelbys' business is going well and the gang is expanding its sphere of influence. They are not interested in earning as much quick money as possible by any means, but in one day being able to run a legal business and leave violence behind." (Norma Schneider, *Jungle World*, 15.06.2017)

### **The Deathless Woman**

(Director: Roz Mortimer, UK, 2019)

"The Deathless Woman is a ghost story for the 21st century. This haunting and magical hybrid documentary interweaves fantastic re-imaginings of buried secrets with a haunting narrative and testimonies from survivors of historical and current crimes against Roma in Poland and Hungary. A Roma woman buried alive in a forest in Poland during the Second World War returns to haunt us and to reveal the history of atrocities against Roma in Europe. She is the 'Deathless Woman'. Motivated by rage, she rises from her grave to draw our attention to the persecution of Roma from the 1940s to the neo-Nazi hate crimes of the present." (Source: *Ake Dikhea?* Roma Film Festival)

### **Documentaries**

#### ***And-Ek Ghes...* ["Eines Tages... AND-EK GHES..."]**

(Director: Philip Scheffner and Colorado Velcu, Germany, 2016)

"*AND-EK GHES...* (ONE DAY...) is the refrain of this film's title song in which a boy promises his lover a future in Berlin, Germany if only her love will be strong enough to follow him. The song was written by Colorado Velcu, a charismatic, multi-talented, single father of seven children who is the heart, motor and chronicler of an extended family from Fața Luncii in Romania. *AND-EK GHES...* is the continuation of an extraordinary collaboration based on the trust and friendship between co-directors Philip Scheffner and Colorado Velcu, which began with the film *REVISION* (Berlinale, Forum 2012). That attempt to open up a shared cinematic space between protagonists, filmmaker and audience is continued now, three years later. The camera duplicates itself, the filmmaker's is joined first by one, then two, then three other cameras that move from hand to hand. Not only he, but also we are let into a world in which humour, chutzpah and cohesion compete with poverty and exclusion. It is a world in which the Velcus reinvent themselves again and again, contrary to everything that others project onto them. It is a world in which Berlin begins to glow in the shimmering colours of Bollywood, a world in which reality and fiction are sometimes just a laugh away from each other." (Source: *pong Film*)

#### **The Wrong Word: Reparations for Gypsies (Sinti) in Germany? [Das falsche Wort. Wiedergutmachung an Zigeunern (Sinti) in Deutschland?]**

(Director: Katrin Seybold, Screenplay: Melanie Spitta, Germany, 1987)

"Katrin Seybold and Melanie Spitta's film was the first time in the history of the Federal Republic of Germany that the persecution of the German Sinti during the Nazi era was shown in a coherent way - told from the perspective of Sinti. Melanie Spitta herself was the child of survivors. 'Unpublished police files, photographs taken by researchers of 'race', and documents of the total overall process of the capture and registration of the victims are the most important parts of our evidence,' say the filmmakers. The Wrong Word is both calm and stirring, Spitta's voice - commenting off-camera on the photos and documents - is insistent and unyielding, as this is about the whole of the immeasurable injustice in the Federal Republic's treatment of those who were murdered and about the continuities of their persecution up to the present day. On the question of reparations, the filmmakers came

across previously-withheld material. Spitta: 'This evidence, meticulously collected by the perpetrators, was not allowed to be made public so they would not have to confess to the genocide against us. Instead, the perpetrators were heard as expert witnesses in our compensation proceedings, for which we then had to become the criminals. The courts believed the perpetrators, not us, the victims.' " (Source: *Remake. Frankfurter Frauen Film Tage*)

### **Dui Roma ["Dui Roma - Zwei Lebenskünstler"]**

(Director: Iovanka Gaspar, Austria, 2013)

*Dui Roma - Zwei Lebenskünstler* is an extraordinary documentary film that tells the story of Hugo Höllenreiner, a Sinto from Germany, a concentration camp survivor, and a victim of Dr. Josef Mengele. He conveys those experiences to the young Roma composer and student Adrian Gaspar, who was born in Pojejena (Romania) and now lives in Vienna. The latter deals emotionally with what he hears and his first symphonic, 45-minute work for orchestra, choir and bass is created: the 'Symphonia Romani - Bari Duk'." (Source: ERSTE Foundation)

### **A Hole in the Head [Diera v hlave]**

(Director: Robert Kirchhoff, Czech Republic/Slovakia, 2016)

"A small art gallery somewhere in Serbia where only works by Roma are exhibited. Isn't Bill Clinton also a Roma? The gallery owner is not so sure, but knows that Antonio Banderas is Roma, and so is Yul Brynner - they just didn't dare to admit it publicly. This touching scene of cultural self-assurance is part of a narrative about the Holocaust against the Roma which has largely been erased from European memory, the steps of which the director meticulously traces. This is a film against forgetting.

We get to know people from France, Serbia, Germany, the Czech Republic and Poland who fell into the clutches of the Nazi murder machine as children. Rita was not even three weeks old when SS doctors performed horrific experiments on her in a hospital in Würzburg. Her twin sister died, but she survived with a 'hole in her head'.

Raymond, a 90-year-old extremely alert Rom, recalls that it was the French gendarmerie who rounded them up back then, not the Germans. Today, the same police invade his caravan without a warrant and arrest three of his sons for coming to his aid. So what has changed? A question that arises anew at every stop on this journey of remembrance, forcing us to take a stand and get rid of our ideological rubbish." (Source: Matthias Heeder, DOK Leipzig)

### **Injustice and Resistance [„Unrecht und Widerstand – Romani Rose und die Bürgerrechtsbewegung“]**

(Director: Peter Nestler, Germany, 2022)

For more than eight decades, German Sinti and Roma have experienced injustice. The documentary film *Injustice and Resistance - Romani Rose and the Civil Rights Movement* tells the story of Romani Rose's family, their resistance, and their insistence on justice. It is the painful story of a minority trapped between trauma and self-assertion, who have suffered violence and harassment by the authorities throughout the post-war period up to the present, and who only gained recognition thanks to the civil rights movement. Thirteen close relatives of the Roses were killed in the Nazi camps. Romani Rose's father Oskar was in hiding at the time and was wanted by the Gestapo. The film reports on his courageous actions, his futile attempt to ask Cardinal Michael von Faulhaber in Munich for protection for the persecuted in April 1943, and the risky liberation of his brother from the Neckarelz Concentration Camp. Exclusion, poverty and harassment by the authorities were part of everyday life for Roma and Sinti who survived the genocide. In Germany, the Holocaust against Sinti and Roma was not officially recognized until 1982. In his new documentary, Peter Nestler describes the long road from lawlessness and discrimination to the civil rights movement. The tireless commitment of the Sinti and Roma testifies to their civil courage and civic-mindedness, to their determined commitment to the coexistence of diverse cultures, and to their forward-looking understanding of democracy. The film works with diverse archival materials and commentaries and is

held together through a conversation with Romani Rose about his family history and his experiences as a civil rights activist.

### **The Open View - Sinti and Roma Artists**

#### **[Der offene Blick - Künstlerinnen und Künstler der Sinti und Roma]**

(Director: Peter Nestler, Germany, 2022)

This film presents Sinti and Roma artists who shape the trauma of their persecution and their very personal experiences in their works. They use a wide variety of forms and means of expression, but what they all have in common is an "open view". Peter Nestler succeeds in making this view tangible by encountering the artists without any cultural codification, looking them straight in the eye.

Gitta Martl and her daughter Nicole Sevik read short texts commemorating the Sinti and Roma in the Upper Austrian "Gypsy Detention Camp" Weyer.

Ceija Stojka (1933-2013) was an Austrian writer, painter, singer, activist and survivor of the Nazi concentration camps at Auschwitz, Ravensbrück and Bergen-Belsen. Her paintings are exhibited in museums and galleries worldwide. She created her own forms of expression, shaping her memory and trauma into a painterly oratorio against forgetting.

In this context, the film scholar Radmila Mladenova makes an excursus into the subject of antigypsyist clichés in film history since D. W. Griffith, contrasted with photographs characterized by an "egalitarian gaze" in the portrayal of Sinti and Roma.

The artist Lita Cabellut spent her childhood in precarious circumstances in Aragon, Spain. At the age of 12 she was adopted by a Catalan aristocratic family, moved to the Netherlands in 1980, studied at the Gerrit Rietveld Academy in Amsterdam, and has since lived in The Hague. As a painter, she uses a modern fresco technique, creating opera sets and costumes.

In recent years, things have changed for the better for these artists. For example, the *Kai Dikhas* Gallery and Foundation, directed by Moritz Pankok, offers them a continuous forum with more than a hundred exhibitions to date. Parts of the collection can be seen at this year's "documenta fifteen".

Jovan Nicolić tells of his childhood in a Yugoslavian family of musicians through his poetic short stories. The film is framed by excerpts from a concert of the Roma and Sinti Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Riccardo M Sahiti.

### **Judgement in Hungary**

(Director: Eszter Hajdú, Hungary, 2013)

"In 2008 and 2009, right-wing extremists attacked several Roma villages in Hungary. Six people died, including a five-year-old child. Charges were brought against four suspects. The film documents the trial, which lasted two and a half years. Only rarely does the camera leave the small courtroom where the defendants and the victims' relatives face each other in a very confined space. A highly intense chamber play unfolds that tells us a lot about the widespread resentment against Roma and Jews in Hungary. In the course of the hearings, blatant investigative errors come to light. Were these the result of mere bungling, or deliberate manipulation? The judge presents himself as an impartial hardliner of order. Quickly irritated, he insists on the authority of the court, gives many warnings and reprimands. The emotionality of the Roma witnesses is a thorn in his side, as is the cold-bloodedness of the defendants. However, the longer the trial drags on, and the fewer people there are in the visitors' gallery, the more self-confident the defendants seem. They invoke their supposed support among the population and make blatant threats. More and more often, the judge is put on the defensive. Do the Roma have to fear for their rights?" (Source: goEast Film Festival)

For her intensive documentation and commitment to this subject, filmmaker Eszter Hajdú was awarded the Special Prize of the European Civil Rights Prize of the Sinti and Roma in 2016.

### **Kenedi Goes Back Home [Kenedi se vraća kući]**

(Director: Zelimir Zilnik, Serbia, 2004)

"Kenedi Goes Back Home is an account of some Yugoslavs who left their war-torn country in the 1990s and lived for over 10 years as refugees or in asylum in Western Europe. In the second half of

2002, the EU began sending many of these people - most of them Roma - back to Serbia and Montenegro, believing there was no longer any reason for them to stay abroad. Entire families were deported overnight, without regard to the fact that many of their children had been born in the west and had already been fully integrated into that new environment. The main characters of this inhuman story are Kenedi Hasani, a friendly, shrewd, resourceful and almost pathologically optimistic drifter, and his young friend who has spent his whole life in Germany and is now forced to search for his parents in the Serbian slums." (Source: [www.film.at](http://www.film.at) )

### **Lindy. The Return of Little Light**

(Director: Ida Persson Lännerberg, Sweden, 2019)

"Lindy Larsson grew up in a small paper mill town in southern Sweden. He was never accepted for who he is. He was always different. As a little boy he was skinny, girly, and had no friends. He escaped into a fantasy world of his own and became a superhero character he created, Little Light - a boy who could radiate light. Lindy and his family are Roma Travellers, a minority group that has lived in Sweden since the 16th century. Even today, Roma Travellers are discriminated against by Swedish society and experience abuse and structural racism.

Lindy says in the film: 'You are not worthy of having children. You would pollute the Swedish population. That's what they told my family, some of them. No wonder you're afraid to say who you are, or ashamed of who you are, or try to keep it a secret.' To protect his family and the people he loves, Lindy decided never to talk about his origins.

Today, Lindy Larsson is a celebrated performance artist on the verge of an international breakthrough. The film shows him not just searching for his own identity, but also taking his first steps on the international stage. When the Maxim Gorki Theatre in Berlin wants him to tell his own story onstage, he hesitates - can he do it without hurting the people he loves? Thirty years after creating Little Light, Lindy is forced to reveal his true identity onstage and becomes a Roma Traveller activist. He came out as gay more than 20 years ago in almost the same way. Ida Persson Lännerberg's debut feature follows Lindy during this evolving phase of his life in a film about identity, shame, and finding the courage to stand up for yourself." (Source: [www.roma-filmfestival.com](http://www.roma-filmfestival.com))

### **A People Uncounted.**

#### **The Untold Story of the Roma**

(Director: Aaron Yeger, Canada, 2011)

"This documentary not only comprehensively deals with the cruel extermination of Sinti and Roma during the Second World War, but also examines the mechanisms of genocide and ethnic cleansing. The documentary features well-known Roma scholars and representatives discussing Roma stereotypes. The discussions are convincingly complemented with visual material creating a refreshingly realistic narrative voice. Some experts see a clear historical continuity in which discrimination against Sinti and Roma is expressed in different ways, such as in the current romanticization and exoticization of Sinti and Roma in pop culture. The portrayal of the characters in the documentary builds closely on the testimonies of survivors as well as on the richness of oral history and research by the experts.

It is important to note that the Holocaust did not begin or end with the Second World War, but that it has far-reaching historical causes, and its legacy is still in effect today. The Holocaust occurred under specific social, economic, political and cultural conditions that led to the horrific mass extermination of Sinti and Roma, Jews and other victims. The documentary combines eyewitness accounts from survivors, interviews with experts and scholars, and historical as well as contemporary footage to warn about contemporary racism against Sinti and Roma." (Source: [www.romarchive.eu](http://www.romarchive.eu))

### **Phral Mende - About Us ["Phral mende - Wir über uns"]**

(Director: Tayo Awosusi-Onutor, Germany, 2018)

"*Phral mende - Wir über uns* is a documentary that shows the perspectives of Sinti and Roma in Germany. This is not a film ABOUT Sinti and Roma, but one that centres them and highlights a range of topics such as the civil rights movement, memory culture, and contemporary everyday racism. The

director, Tayo Awosusi-Onutor, who is herself a Sinti woman (Sintizza), shows through this film the diversity of Sinti and Roma and at the same time opposes racism against Sinti and Roma and advocates for language that is critical of racism." (Source: [www.tayo-online.de](http://www.tayo-online.de))

### **Revision**

(Director: Philip Scheffner, Germany, 2012)

"A documentary film becomes a cinematic REVISION. It reconstructs the circumstances that led to the death of two men in a field near the German-Polish border in 1992. With increasingly oppressive density, Scheffner weaves a web of landscape and memory, witness statements, files and investigations.

On 29 June 1992, a farmer discovers two corpses in a grain field in Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, Germany. Investigations reveal that the dead are Romanian citizens. They were shot by hunters as they tried to cross the EU's external border. The hunters claim to have mistaken the people for wild boars. Four years later, their trial begins. Which of the hunters fired the fatal shots can never be proven. The verdict: acquittal. Deutsche Presse-Agentur reports: 'No one from Romania came to the sentencing.'

The files contain the names and addresses of Grigore Velcu and Eudache Calderar. Their families did not know such a trial had even happened. With REVISION, a legally-closed criminal case is subjected to a cinematic revision that links places, people and memories and creates a fragile mesh of the versions and perspectives of a 'European history'."

(Source: [www.revision-film.eu](http://www.revision-film.eu))

### **Roma: Second-class Citizens? [Roma: Bürger zweiter Klasse?]**

(Director: Samuel Lajus, France/Germany, 2017)

"The bad image of Roma is dominant throughout Europe and has existed for centuries. Why does the majority population encounter this minority in particular with so much hatred and mistrust? The filmmakers go all over Europe to find out why clichés and prejudices against Roma persist to this day. Political mistakes, populism and xenophobia - the story of the Roma is symptomatic of a problem that affects the whole of Europe.

'The situation of Roma in EU countries today is worse than under communism,' says Georges Soros, the US billionaire of Hungarian origin. So despite the billions invested by the EU into inclusion measures, nothing has changed. On the contrary: since the fall of the Berlin Wall, the situation seems to be getting steadily worse. How could the European institutions fail so miserably? Why did more than 15 per cent of all Romanians leave their homeland after the fall of Nicolae Ceausescu? In 2014, the EU Commission initiated infringement proceedings against the Czech Republic to provide Roma children with better access to education. Why do a quarter of all Roma children there attend schools for people with mental disabilities, leading to their social exclusion? In Miskolc, Hungary, the Fidesz - Hungarian Civic Alliance party, headed by Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, won voters with a clear promise to get rid of a Roma ghetto to make the city more liveable - but the Roma were not resettled, they were simply chased away. Dubious treatment of the Roma minority is also not just an Eastern European phenomenon. In Italy, France and Sweden, too, evictions of Roma camps, discrimination and exclusion are the order of the day. Only in Berlin, Germany, where the Roma are as numerous as they are in the whole of France, do they seem to have found their place in society. What happened differently here than with Germany's European neighbours?" (Source: ARTE)

### **The Roma and Sinti Philharmonic Orchestra. A conductor and his dream**

#### **[Die Roma und Sinti Philharmoniker. Ein Dirigent und sein Traum]**

(Director: Margarete Kreuzer, Germany, 2015)

"There are many symphony orchestras, but none like this one in all the world: All the members are Sinti or Roma, and all are professionals - classically trained musicians who play in professional orchestras in Germany, Poland, France, Russia, Hungary, the Czech Republic and Romania. They come together as often as possible for joint concerts to act as ambassadors for their people against prejudices and clichés, against expulsion and against forgetting.

The documentary accompanies the orchestra during the preparations for a concert and repeatedly leaves the musical universe to follow individual musicians and gain an insight into their private lives. The film focuses on the conductor Riccardo Sahiti, founder of the orchestra and its passionate *spiritus rector*. His dream: He wants to make the Roma and Sinti Philharmonic Orchestra a permanent institution so that it no longer has to fear for its existence. Sahiti, who is involuntarily also the orchestra's manager, speaks about this everywhere, from the Foreign Office of the Federal Republic of Germany to the Central Council of German Sinti and Roma and the European Parliament. ARTE also accompanies him on a very emotional journey to his homeland, Kosovo, where he experienced war and expulsion; at the remains of his birthplace and at his mother's grave, Sahiti tells the story of his family, which stands for what many Kosovo Roma experienced. The result is a portrait of an unusual orchestra that also approaches a serious subject from an unusual perspective. Thanks to the sympathetic and passionate protagonists, this succeeds with surprising ease." (Source: ARD)

### **Safet Dances. [„Safet tanzt“]**

(Director: Insa Onken, Germany, 2015)

" 'I'm just a little Roma who just does his thing,' Safet Mistele says about himself. The family came to Germany from Kosovo a few years ago, the father died of cancer. Their single mother ekes out a living with her five sons in Wuppertal. As a passionate break dancer, Safet is sent to an audition by his secondary school, believing it is for hip-hop, but it is an audition for a dance piece by Pina Bausch. That was his entry into a completely new world. When Safet tells his brothers he will study dance and also dance ballet, their position is quickly clear: They will not allow it. Ballet is not for men. But Safet's mother stands up to her sons: Safet should dance!

How does his background influence his life as a dancer? There is something else, too: Safet is a Muslim. Strictly speaking, he should not be dancing at all...

We accompany Safet on his exciting balancing act between these different worlds." (Source: ARD)

### **Sinti and Roma: A German History [Sinti und Roma. Eine deutsche Geschichte]**

(Director: Annette von der Heyde, Germany, 2019)

"Abused as 'Gypsies', persecuted, murdered by the Nazis and marginalized to this day: ZDF-History looks at the history of the Sinti and Roma in Germany through moving biographies. Seventy-five years ago they resisted their imminent extermination in the so-called 'Gypsy Camp' of Auschwitz. They were able to postpone it, but not prevent it. On the eve of 3 August 1944, almost 3,000 Sinti and Roma were murdered in the gas chambers there.

Dotschy Reinhardt tells of her family's fate as a young representative of the great Reinhardt musical dynasty. Rita Vowe-Trollmann recalls her father, the boxer 'Rukeli', who was stripped of his championship title by the Nazis for his 'un-German' boxing. Romani Rose tells of his father Oskar, who appealed in vain to Cardinal Faulhaber in Munich for help for his people. The musician Janko Lauenberger remembers his relative Erna. *Ede und Unku* is the name of the book about her that was required reading in schools in the German Democratic Republic [former East Germany]. The father of singer Marianne Rosenberg fought in the uprising against the SS in Auschwitz in May 1944. He survived and urged his daughter to keep quiet about her origins. The documentary also shows how Sinti and Roma fought for compensation and recognition after the war, and that antigypsyism is still widespread." (Source: ZDF Press Portal)

### **Taikon**

(Directed by Gellert Tamas and Lawen Mohtadi, Sweden, 2015)

"This cinematic portrait by Lawen Mohtadi and Gellert Tamas describes the life of Katarina Taikon, one of the most important Romani women in modern history. The directors spent years understanding Roma culture and Taikon's character. The protagonist, who initially struggles with various forms of marginalization and poverty as a young Romani woman and develops into a charismatic, empowered person, completely breaks with the usual representations of Romani women in film. This documentary is therefore important to the emancipation movement of Romani women by depicting the struggle for equality through the life of a Nordic Romani woman.

Sequences with footage of Katarina Taikon herself and actual interviews with people who were close to her paint a comprehensive picture of this extraordinary woman, who did pioneering work for the rights of Swedish Roma. Her personal development from an illiterate woman to a prominent writer, political activist and fighter for all issues affecting the Roma is impressive. The documentary gives a human, realistic picture of her life and describes it in chronological order, from her traumatic beginning to her death." (Source: [www.romarchive.eu](http://www.romarchive.eu))

### **Trapped by Law [NAKHINO]**

(Director: Sami Mustafa, Kosovo, 2015)

"The film tells the story of two Roma, Kefaet and Selami, two brothers and rap artists who grew up in Essen, Germany where they had been living as asylum seekers since 1988. Kefaet was born in Prizren in Kosovo and his parents brought him to Germany when he was four years old. He married there and had two children: Djelan and Djihan. Selami was born in Essen and has never been to Kosovo. In March 2010, the brothers were deported from Germany to Kosovo, a country that was completely unknown to them, separated from their parents, their older brother, and Kefaet's children, who all stayed in Germany. In Kosovo they are suddenly like tourists in their "own" country, meeting new friends and living on state aid from Germany for the first six months. They meet family members whom they had only heard about in Essen, but instead of help and support, they experience nothing but rejection. They are desperate and see little possibility of surviving in the long run. [...]

Director Sami Mustafa followed Selami and Kefaet with his camera over a period of more than three years. The result is an intimate portrait of two brothers who have lost their old home and have not yet found their new one. A film about home, family, flight and the feeling of living between two worlds." (Source: [www.trappedbylawmovie.wordpress.com](http://www.trappedbylawmovie.wordpress.com))

### **Being a Gypsy [Att vara zigarne]**

(Director: Peter Nestler and Zsóka Nestler, Sweden/Germany, 1970)

"This film is based on pictures by the painter Otto Pankok portraying Romani people from the 1930s which tell of their experiences in the Third Reich and the post-war Federal Republic of Germany, gripping accounts of persecution, discrimination, and exclusion, of a life as second-class people which continues unbelievably up to the supposedly democratic present of the film, as they live in inhumane conditions in barracks on the fringes of cities and society and are not recognized as Nazi victims. In long, almost uncut shots, the people and their stories are given space. That's all it takes." (Source: Grit Lemke, DOK Leipzig)

### **The Long Road of the Sinti and Roma [Der lange Weg der Sinti und Roma]**

(Director: Adrian Oeser, Germany, 2022)

Based on the personal life stories of activist Julie Halilic, Auschwitz survivor Zilli Schmidt, musicians Manolito Steinbach and Romani Weiss, and activist Gianni Jovanovic, this film emotionally and impressively traces the history of Germany's largest national minority and makes previously untold perspectives visible. The individual stories and previously rarely-shown archival footage take us into a time when Sinti and Roma continued to be discriminated against and when they finally fought back. Among the historical footage from the archives of Germany's public broadcaster ARD, the author of this film, Adrian Oeser, found many scenes that make clear how strongly racism against Sinti and Roma continued after 1945 – and how it was also repeatedly fuelled through public broadcasting. The film also shows that a reappraisal is still necessary in many areas of society today. Until the 1980s, state criminal investigation offices and researchers all over Germany continued to work with the files produced by the racial hygienists from the Nazi era in order to systematically keep track of the Sinti and Roma. It was only civil rights activists who were able to uncover these files in the 1980s. Impressive archival material shows them holding the documents of their persecution in their hands for the first time almost 40 years after the liberation. Realizing that the systematic stigmatization has lasted so long still burdens civil rights activist Rudko Kawczynski today. The Long Road of the Sinti and Roma is a film about a history that is not closed, a time that continues to have an effect today. It is a film about yesterday for today.



## Short films, clips, media contributions (in alphabetical order)

### **Change Is Coming! Roma Youth Voices!**

(Director: Delfin Lakatosz, Poland/Germany, 2020)

"On 12 October at the Digital Conference for the new EU Roma Strategic Framework until 2030 we made sure the demands of #RomaYouth are heard through our video! It shows how on International Roma Day - 8 April 2030 - Europe celebrates the success of the EU Strategy for Roma Equality. Back in the year 2020, a generation of young Roma faces a world in crisis but takes the lead for radical change. Change is coming whether you like it or not!"

Online at: <https://www.youtube.com/@dikhhenabister8336> (YouTube channel of *Dikh He Na Bister* with numerous other videos)

### **Remember [Пам'ятати... / Pamyataty]**

(Director: Petro Rusanenko, Ukraine, 2016)

"The 2016 short film '???'...!' / *Pamyataty*' (Remember) by Petro Rusanenko, a young Ukrainian Roma, is based on historical facts and tells the story of two courageous women during the Second World War. It is the director's first film. Lyalya, the only survivor of her Roma community, escapes the Nazis and finds refuge with a young Ukrainian woman, Maria. The story is told by Maria, who remembers the events in old age and vividly describes them to her granddaughter. The film impressively tells of female courage, compassion and passion, conveyed through the story of this brief friendship between two young women. Maria actually did not want to hide Lyalya in her house because she is a 'gypsy'. Lyalya's simple and earnest enquiry fundamentally changes her attitude: 'What makes us so different? I was given life just like you.' " (Source: [www.romarchive.eu](http://www.romarchive.eu))

### **The European Holocaust Memorial Day for Sinti and Roma 2020**

"On 2 August, we commemorate the last 4,300 Sinti and Roma in the German Nazi concentration camp of Auschwitz-Birkenau who were murdered by the SS on that night in 1944 despite their fierce resistance. In memory of all 500,000 Sinti and Roma murdered in Nazi-occupied Europe, the European Parliament declared this date the European Holocaust Memorial Day for Sinti and Roma in 2015."

Online at: <https://www.youtube.com/@holocaust-memory-sinti-roma> (YouTube channel for the European Holocaust Memorial Day for Sinti and Roma with numerous other videos)

### **Letter of Forgiveness [Bilet de iertare]**

(Director: Alina Serban, Romania, 2020)

"The historical drama LETTER OF FORGIVENESS, based on a true story, is set in Romania in 1855 - one year before slavery, from which a large number of Roma suffered, was officially abolished. Enslaved people could be freed by what was called a letter of forgiveness. Maria, played by Alina Serban, has such a letter, but wants to give up her own freedom for that of her son, Dinca. The lady of the house, however, refuses her this, as she does not want to give up the young man's presence under any circumstances. There are dozens of slaves as servants, a huge estate, sumptuous meals, pompous dresses, and these two destinies."

(Source: [www.berliner-filmfestivals.de](http://www.berliner-filmfestivals.de))

## **Lety**

(Director: Viola Tokárová, František Bikár, Renata Berkyová, Czech Republic, 2019)

"In 2018, the Czech state bought the industrial pig farm in Lety u Písku that overlapped the site where a concentration camp for Roma and Sinti was established during World War II and served as a transfer camp for transport to Auschwitz from the AGPI company for almost 373 million Czech crowns.

The amount paid for this purchase still arouses emotions, as does the topic of the relationship of Czech society to the Roma. The documentary depicts moments from more than 20 years of efforts by many organizations and individuals to remove the industrial pig farm and acquaints the public with the hitherto-unknown facts of the struggle and its main actors. Through the story of Roma activist Cenek Ruzicka, the film describes the feelings of those left behind, who even today have to endure the reluctance of the country's inhabitants and political leaders to remove the stinking pig farm from the place where their ancestors died, which has become a symbol of the Czech inability to come to terms with its own guilt in the genocide of the Roma."

(Source: [www.roma-filmfestival.com](http://www.roma-filmfestival.com))

## **Silas Fights for the Rights of Sinti and Roma [Silas kämpft für die Rechte von Sinti und Roma]**

(KiKA, Germany, 2017)

Get to know Silas! This short video by the children's channel KiKA was produced as part of the thematic focus on "living together". About that focus: "The coexistence of different cultures is a field of tension in which we all move. KiKA poses socially relevant questions: What do we give children so they can live together in a good, respectful way? How do we awaken mutual curiosity and promote understanding for others so that diversity in our society is perceived as enriching? Parents and educators will find suggestions here for daily life and for the classroom." (Source: KiKA)

## **Sinti and Roma: A family has something to tell [Sinti & Roma: Eine Familie weiß zu berichten]**

(Kreativ Labor, Germany, 2019)

"Sinti and Roma have experienced rejection over the centuries, been persecuted, and were considered an 'inferior race' during National Socialism. The survivors of Nazi terror had to live in 'Gypsy quarters' until well after 1945. In 2012, the Sinti and Roma were recognized as a national minority in Schleswig-Holstein, Germany. Pupils of the Theodor-Storm-Schule Husum have been dealing with the history, the present and the future of Sinti and Roma in Schleswig-Holstein. This film was created from the animated film workshops and discussions held with Anna and Matthäus Weiss from the Association of German Sinti and Roma e.V. - Landesverband Schleswig-Holstein, which was supported by the State Commissioner for Political Education. The film "Sinti and Roma: A family has something to tell" can be used for educational work in or out of school."

Available at the State Representative's Infothek for Political Education Schleswig-Holstein: [www.politische-bildung.sh/infothek.html](http://www.politische-bildung.sh/infothek.html).

## **A Day in the Life of Romani Chaji [Ein Tag in Romani Chajis Leben]**

(RomaniPhen, Germany, 2019)

"A film by the girls' group *Romani Chaji*, part of the NGO *RomaniPhen* e.V. The girls, aged 12-18, worked together on this project. From January 2018 to August 2019, the girls' group of the feminist archive *RomaniPhen* met regularly under the leadership of Éva Ádám, Estera Iordan and Gabi Zeki on this project. In the film, the main character, also named Romani Chaji [Romani Girl], talks about her struggles with discrimination against Roma."

Online at: [www.romnja-power.de/filme/](http://www.romnja-power.de/filme/) (*RomaniPhen* website with more videos)

## **Yo no soy trapacero**

(Eng.: I Am Not a Cheat)

(Fundación Secretariado Gitano, Spain, 2015)

Both female and male Romani youths read aloud a Spanish dictionary entry for the word "*Gitano*". The short video experiment invites a change of perspective and is intended to raise awareness of the fact that new discrimination always arises from discriminatory definitions.

Spanish video with English subtitles, online at: <https://www.youtube.com/@GitanosOrg> (YouTube channel of the *Fundación Secretariado Gitano* with numerous other videos).

### **The Audition [Das Casting]**

(Director: Willi Kubica, Germany, 2022)

A satirical short film about the media's reproduction of antigypsyist prejudices.

A director is looking for actors for his new film about "travelling people on the outskirts of the city" - the characters should be as "authentic" and "taken from life" as possible. Actors who are Sinti and Roma are therefore invited to the audition, but they do not at all correspond to the director's antigypsyist prejudices and expectations.

A production by Montavia Filmproduktion GmbH on behalf of the Goethe-Institut Schwäbisch Hall in cooperation with the Central Council of German Sinti and Roma, the Documentation and Cultural Centre of German Sinti and Roma, the Research Centre for Antigypsyism (University of Heidelberg) and the Filmakademie Baden-Württemberg GmbH.

*(Text for the back of the brochure)*

### **About this publication**

This brochure is based on the presentations and results of the conference "Antigypsyism and Film", which was organized by the Central Council of German Sinti and Roma, the Documentation and Cultural Centre of German Sinti and Roma, and the Society for Research on Antigypsyism in February 2018 in cooperation with the Research Centre on Antigypsyism at the University of Heidelberg and the goEast Festival of Central and Eastern European Film.

The conference papers were published in this anthology: Mladenova, Radmila / von Borcke, Tobias / Brunssen, Pavel / End, Markus / Reuss, Anja (Eds.): *Antigypsyism and Film / Antiziganismus und Film*. Heidelberg: heiUP, 2020. The volume is available free of charge as an Open Access publication in PDF and HTML format from the publisher heiUP.

The illustrations for the individual chapters and the associated quotations were compiled by André Raatzsch and are based on his reflections from the Image Politics section of the digital archive RomArchive. The illustrations are not intended to simply illustrate the text of this publication, but are quite deliberately an interruption. They call for not simply repeating the usual images of Sinti and Roma, but for questioning common patterns of representation, constituting a contribution to the development of a democratic, innovative image politics.

<https://doi.org/10.17885/heiup.650>