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Dare to Record! The Ethics of Decision Making in Fieldwork Documentary Practice

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ABSTRACT

The ethics of documentary practice is often brought into discussion after the screening of the film, when the production is already finished. Except for a minimum formal requirement of consent, there is no standard set of rules that filmmakers are compelled to follow during fieldwork, regulating their relationship with the people in front of the camera. Viewers make ethical judgments based on cultural expectations regarding consent, disclosure, motive, and structure. The diversity of fieldwork situations is considered the main reason for the lack of formal guidelines in this practice. Fieldwork behavior is shaped by the responsibility the practitioners assume towards the people filmed, the other team members, and their personal professional goals based on their own set of moral standards.

Grounded in my experience as a cinematographer for a documentary shot in a Cortorari Roma community in a Transylvanian village, the article discusses the ethical challenges I faced in the decision-making process while filming on location. Accounting for the particularities encountered during this fieldwork—from the language barrier, secrecy and rumors to tensed conversations and open conflicts—I discuss the factors that influenced my choices. The analysis aims to reveal how the perception of responsibility and power roles that emerged in this context determined when and what was to be recorded and made available for editing and disclosure.

KEYWORDS

Documentary film, documentary practice, visual anthropology, ethics.

"Dare!" said Costică cutting the air with his hand like an ax, when he saw me hesitating to have a glass of wine. "If you want to be here, you have to dare!" It was the only thing he asked me to do during my time in his house. He wanted me to be direct about what I wanted and not be elusive. He was referring to food and drinks, but his imperative urging has come to embody for me the quandaries of being in the field and of how power roles are played when filming on location. Daring stands on the thin line between being bold and being defiant, having the courage to overcome one's fears and insolently overstepping or intruding. Recording the realities of people's lives is a daring engagement. The fieldwork of documentary filmmaking is a process during which there is an ongoing negotiation of the boundaries between the ones in front and the ones behind the camera. Unless the subjects are involved in decision making during editing and postproduction (i.e., a reflexive mode of engagement), filming on location is always a collaborative process. So, how does a cinematographer dare to create video records of real people? What are the ethical challenges that arise in the decision-making process? How can intimacy and trust be developed, and what are the implications of the openness and acceptance that come along with this? Using an autoethnographical approach, I will discuss my involvement

Anthropologist and filmmaker Cătălina Tesăr chatting with one of her long term friends from the field, one of the main characters in the film, Băra. Photo credits: Ileana Szasz.

DOP and visual anthropologist Ileana shooting a foal immediately after its delivery. Photo credits: Cătălina Tesăr.

as a cinematographer in the production of a documentary[1] shot in a Cortorari (Tent-Dwellers) Roma community in Transylvania.[2] I intend to describe and create a reflexive analysis of my personal experience (Ellis 2011) in the wider frame of the ethics of documentary filmmaking. In the absence of an articulated, formal frame of conduct norms within documentary production, what are the inevitable ethical dilemmas that arise in the decision-making process on a daily basis?

Throughout the years as a practicing filmmaker the camera has granted me the privilege of entering people's lives and being a witness and sometimes a participant to their experiences. Documentary film director Albert Maysles (2011) has compared the camera to "a passport for travel and experience." But the power of such a tool does not lie only in that it can give the person who controls it access into an unfamiliar world, but also in that it allows one to capture and bring back strips of the realities one encounters. Like the practice of photography, cinematography multiplies the world and fragments its continuity (Sontag 1977). The possession of these images creates possibilities of control over the representation of this world. Being aware of such possibilities brings forth the question of the responsibility for the effects and the role of the filmmaker's presence in the life of others (MacDougall 1991). What are then the implications of using such a "passport" and of the complex interplay between access and entitlement? What responsibilities fall on the cinematographer during fieldwork and what does the cinematographer hold herself accountable for?

The study of the decision-making process in fieldwork documentary practice is limited by the scarce possibility of making observations of the on-site interactions during the shooting of a film. In most cases, with the exception of big budget television productions, documentaries are independent initiatives that explore private lives or small communities, relying on developing intimate and trusting relations. For these reasons, most of the times, shooting on location involves minimal equipment and small teams of no more than three people. The chances of having more people accompany the film crew are therefore very slim. Discussions about the ethical challenges of documentary practice are often based on the analysis of the final products of the projects, the completed films (Gross et al. 1988, 2003; Rosenthal 1988; Nichols 1991, 1994). Yet another possible undertaking is gathering data drawn from interviews with the filmmakers as Patricia Aufderheide has done in her 2012 study of the common ethical challenges in US documentary filmmaking. Yet another option to tackle the subject is the case study analysis of the embodied experience of the writer. David MacDougall has discussed extensively questions of power imbalance and truthfulness based on his experience as a practicing filmmaker (1991, 1992, 2000). Similarly, this article will discuss ethical judgments and their implications by considering a case study from my own professional practice.

The ethics of documentary filmmaking refers to the implementation of general, culturally accepted moral standards in the filmmakers' practice. With the exception of the signed agreements for the right to use their image, there are no other institutionalized forms of regulating the relationship with the people filmed. In most cases, ethics is called into question when the film is presented to audiences. This debate is premised on claims of documentaries being an honest and truthful representation of actual facts, of "saying something honestly about something that really happened" (Auderheide 2012: 362). The relationship between filmmakers and subjects is judged based on notions of consent, rights, and power (Ruby 1988: xiv). Obtaining consent is one of the basic norms of documentary practice, and the option to grant it or not is a legally guaranteed right. Having this choice does not however dismiss the

1) Provisional title: *The Chalice. Of Sons and Daughters* (currently in postproduction). A film by Cătălina Tesăr; Camera: Cătălin Muşat, Ileana Szasz, Cătălina Tesăr; Editors: Dana Bunescu, Ciprian Cimpoi. Funded by a Fejos Postdoctoral Grant of Wenner Gren Foundation.

2) For written analysis of the Cortorari community, see Tesăr (2012, 2015, 2018).

A secondary male character, Nina's grandfather, resting on a haystack in front of his sheep pen. Photo credits: Ileana Szasz.

concerns of third parties about whether the rights of the people filmed have been protected or not. When put under scrutiny, the ethical standards of documentaries are judged based on four criteria: consent, disclosure, structure, and motive (see Katz, and Katz 1988: 119–34). In spite of the legal framework that regulates consent, suspicion and doubts are being raised about the level of information the subjects have received and if the agreement has been voluntary.

The process of documentary filmmaking is one in which none of the people involved knows exactly what the end result will look like. There is limited knowledge about the development of the story, how the film will be structured during editing, and what the effects of the distribution will be. To what are the subjects then consenting to? How can they decide "how much, to whom and when disclosure about oneself are to be made" (Pryluck 1976: 24)? The production team can inform the people they film

only about their intentions. Having people signing agreements based on anticipations often implies strategies of reassurance or imposing a point of view that the viewer is not aware of. Two of the most common questions from the public during Q&A sessions are if the people depicted have seen the final product and if they have agreed to being filmed in certain vulnerable situations. These questions are about knowing the level of control the subjects had over the way they were portrayed and avoiding feeling complicit to an invasion of privacy.

If how the story is being structured and the motivation of telling it are mainly in the hands of the director, during the fieldwork activity, controlling the camera places the cinematographer in a position between the director and the subjects being filmed. This grants her the power and the responsibility to mediate and directly negotiate the limits of what the camera records. As my role in the production of the film mentioned at the beginning of this article was that of the cinematographer, I will discuss the decision-making process at those moments that highlight how consent and disclosure were negotiated between me and the people who had agreed to be a part of this film.

Establishing roles, anticipating concerns, and preemptive planning

By the time of my involvement, the film was in a late stage of production. The director, Cătălina, had been working for two years on this documentary about a Cortorari Roma community in Transylvania, where she did her PhD field research. I knew very little about the subject, but I had some ideas about the struggles she was going through trying to create a filmic portrayal of some aspects of the lives of the Cortorari. We had had a previous discussion about my coming to work as a cinematographer on her project. At the beginning of the project, she had worked with a male film director, and together they had done the camera work until that moment. As tensions started to build up in their team, the production seemed to be stuck. Cătălina was looking for someone committed to filming. But her experience so far had revealed some concerns about being able to suddenly bring someone new on board and just pass on the camera task. First and foremost, there was the question of access and the level of trust and intimacy that a new crew member would have to achieve with the

subjects. Cătălina had been engaging with the members of the community for over a decade. Additionally, the male co-director had been successful in developing close relationships with the Cortorari men he had been filming by getting involved in common practices of entertainment.[3] When I came on board and went to film on location, their co-directorship work had already covered one and a half years, and the film seemed to be almost finished.

3) Cortorari Roma are characterized by high gender sensitivity, and both in everyday activities and at ceremonial events men and women do not intermingle.

With the male director no more part of the team, and most of the rushes already edited, our goal was to shoot some parts that were missing in the construction of the narrative. The film follows the story of a young married couple, Nina and Peli, who are trying to conceive a baby boy in order to comply with local customs related to the inheritance of some male putative objects, chalices. Chalices come from the forebears and are passed on ideally from father to son. When a man gets married, his family entrusts their chalice to the bride's parents until the newly wedded couple gives birth to a boy. Then the chalice is passed back to its original owners. At that time, Nina and Peli only had one daughter, and hence the chalice had not yet been returned to Peli's family. The depiction of their story would end with the couple's decision to terminate a pregnancy out of which they would have had another daughter. The filmic account of the two characters' experience was to be completed by footage of local practices that would provide a better understanding of the community life and customs, some descriptive shots that would create a clearer description of each of the protagonists and the space they inhabited, and an oral narration of their story by a supporting character that would help explain the intricacies of their lives.

The concerns discussed during the preparatory meetings I had with Cătălina were not cleared away, if anything, some more concerns were added about the obvious replacement of one crew member. During the previous shootings on location, Cătălina would film the women and the ex-co-director, the men. This was the case not only because daily activities in the community are deeply gendered and seldom overlap, but also because the characters would open up more in front of the camera when handled by someone of the same gender. As exclusive male activities were not a priority in the storyline, and with Cătălina taking on the role of director, we decided that mostly I would be the one handling the camera. We planned to stay for two weeks and chose the time of Easter celebrations for two main reasons. First, it was on this occasion that all family members returned from Italy where Peli and his parents earned an income from begging activities. Second, with most community members at home, the chances of them engaging in communal practices seemed to be higher.

Entering the field and introducing the camera

Documentary fieldwork fragments the lives of its practitioners and often requires overnight adjustments to the lives of others. Filming on location impacts their lives, but at the same time it impacts and disrupts the lives of the ones being filmed. The latter become part of the film but the process becomes part of their biographies too. Like the film itself, the filmmakers are not "outside the situation [they] describe," they are also "inside someone else's story" (MacDougall 1991: 8). The "fly on the wall" claim can be achieved through the film language by asking the subjects to ignore the camera and then editing for an apparent unawareness of the camera's presence. However, such a position does not describe the actual relationship between the film crew and the people filmed. Their interactions shape and structure the events recorded.

Although I had had previous experiences filming in rural and ethnic communities,

it was my first engagement with Cortorari Roma. The shooting locations were two households in a Transylvanian village. One belonged to Nina's family and the other one, where the couple was living, belonged to Peli's family. In spite of our concerns, my presence there did not stir up discussions, only some questions about the absence of the former director.

I decided to have the camera with me at all times. First because I wanted to create a clear statement of my role and intentions there, and second to make the camera become a familiar object, an extension of my body, and not an exceptional device to be activated in exceptional situations. As Sontag (1977) noted, when you point the camera at someone or something, you make a statement that your point of focus is important, that it matters. This type of statement often triggers reactions from the people in front or around the camera. What I wanted was to make everything exceptional so that my filming would become banal and I could blend into this new domestic dynamic. Though sometimes ignored, pointing the camera at an event also generates responses. Either questions are raised regarding my interest for ordinary activities, or direct requests to stop filming are made when tense situations occur, or people make visible behavior adjustments and jokes when they become aware of my filming. Here the situation was no different. As one of my goals was to record a visual description of the households and individual depiction of the characters in their domestic environments, I would get questioned about or even made fun of for wanting to shoot what seemed trivial, like house chores. But although my interest for the seemingly banal caused some stir, it was not the only thing that would determine what I could get on camera. Trying to get a heads up or establish an appointment for filming daily activities turned out to be not realistic and eventually sabotaged my desire to anticipate shots.

Staging and reenacting trivial activities, or sometimes even more important events, is "part and a parcel of documentary

A secondary female character, Nina's mother, busying herself with two recently slaughtered veals. Photo credits: Ileana Szasz.

filmmaking process" as long as "it doesn't distort their lives" (Auderheide 2012: 377). Although I had previously engaged in this type of practice, I considered the current situation to be not quite an appropriate context for this. In the past, I had asked people to enter a room, pour a glass of water, watch TV, or do other small activities for the purpose of creating shots. But this was either when I was under extreme time constrains– I would have only one day for shooting, for example–or when I had more time and I had developed such a relationship with the people filmed that I would consider this for mainly esthetic purposes. The context in which I was filming this time did not require or even allow such an approach. My intention was to interfere as little as possible in the daily lives of the two households. The two weeks' time I had seemed enough to get the descriptive shots I planned without asking the people I filmed to stage any activities. Moreover, as I considered that previous rushes by Cătălina and the former director had been made without a high commitment to esthetics (the movement of the camera was shaky, some shots were out of focus or not straight, etc.), the pressure was actually to find a compromise in my filming technique so as to avoid it clashing with the overall style of the film.

Language, rumors and unpredictability

The upfront challenge was to observe and film people who most of the times were communicating in a language (Romani) I did not understand. My initial concern was that I would not be able to make out the relevant discussion topics and so I would not know when to start recording. Not only the language itself, but also the tonality and pace of their speech were hardly giving me any clues on the subject matter. Raised voices and fast talking were not an indicator of quarrels as I was accustomed to. Apparent hassling and spontaneous outbursts were common features of interaction. If in the beginning, I was relying on the director's mediating role and her subtle signals to start recording, this dependence faded away as I started to become familiarized with the nonverbal language of the Cortorari families. This apparent impediment in the end contributed to the acceptance of my sudden intrusion in the domestic privacy of the two households. As I had no idea what the people were talking about, they didn't refrain from engaging in conversations in my presence. I sometimes seemed to get ignored to the point of the "fly on the wall" feeling. But this also brought forth questions about consent and disclosure. A level of privacy could be preserved by the language barrier in my presence, but it did not guarantee the same for the presence of the camera. Playing out my strategy to make the camera become a common object incorporated in their domestic world and thus to make them not aware when it was recording meant that they had no control over what they were willing to disclose. But if they were oblivious of the camera, not only as a device per se, but also of its function as a tool for sharing what it had recorded with strangers, how could consent be guaranteed? Initial consent is based on the information one has of the director's intentions. Still, even if truthfully presented, the director can only predict to a certain extent the development of the reality she/he wants to represent in the final outcome. The decision and negotiation of what was being recorded was, in this case, delegated almost entirely to me. Between my unawareness of what I was filming and the Cortorari's unawareness of when I was turning on my camera, the power over what was being disclosed was left to the editing process.

Planning ahead to film a certain activity was initially "sabotaged" by my lack of understanding of the gap between *what the people were saying* and *what was they were actually doing.* The discrepancy between

Anthropologist and filmmaker Cătălina Tesăr sharing a meal with the female characters. Photo credits: Ileana Szasz.

the original speech act and the spontaneous way of acting required of me a higher degree of vigilance when using my camera. In my previous experiences, whenever I would begin filming in a new location, I would observe people's routines and discuss with them and try to anticipate their actions. This helps me prepare my shots and have the camera ready while diminishing my interference in their activities. For several days I tried to be present when either Nina or Peli went to feed the animals and clean the stables in the morning. I would ask about the time they planned to do that in the morning and showed up with my camera ready. As it turned out, predictability was not something I could rely on. Although I did not expect them to change their schedule to accommodate me, their routines turned out to be quite flexible, so it took me some time to "catch them in action." Some mornings I would be there at seven, and they had already finished, or they postponed for different reasons, and I would miss it because I was shooting something else. The unpredictable character of their daily activities and the uncertainty of acting on the verbalized intentions, made it difficult to anticipate what I could film.

Recording the shots became an act of watching out for the unplanned. But the stakes were not as high for the domestic activities, because, as unpredictable as they might be, they still had a repetitiveness on which I could rely. What actually required a keen observation of what and if something was about to unfold were the negotiations for marriage arrangements and the display of a chalice. The negotiations for marital alliances are a practice that Cortorari engage in with no warning or planning whatsoever. It involves members of two families starting to discuss and negotiate, most of the time surrounded by witnesses. It is a complex ritual that we wanted to record as it seemed it would create a deeper understanding of the community Nina and Peli were a part of. Rumors of upcoming betrothals existed the whole time we stayed there, but they never materialized.

The chalice, the central symbol of the film, the one that triggers the tensions in the development of the couple's story, became the "white whale" of our time there. The director had known the community for ten

years and had never seen a chalice. As far as we knew, the tension between the two families was high due to the fact that the chalice was not to be returned to Peli's family until he begot a son. The couple had been married for several years, and Peli's father Costică kept on asking Nina's parents to let him see the chalice. It was never clear to me why and how that would reassure Costică, and why Peli's parents-in-law were refusing to do so. Cătălina warned me that at family gatherings, the subject of revealing the chalice would be brought into conversation. Rumors circulated about this while we were there, as the celebration of Easter would bring the two families together. This gave Băra, Peli's sister, a feeling of unease, as she was married to Nina's brother and living with his family. She was worried that she might suffer the repercussions of such a situation. The conflicts between the in-laws had had consequences on Băra's wellbeing in the past. As she confessed to Cătălina, her husband's family had retaliated many times by mistreating her in different ways. Hence, we became aware of how our hope to be able to catch a (recorded) glimpse of the chalice could come at high costs for the people involved.

However essential it might have been to the storyline, filming the reveal of the chalice was clearly not something we could stage by asking them. We had to rely on reading into the rumors and statements that implied that this event was imminent. Even though this might not occur, I tried to capture on camera conversations about the chalice that would create a clear picture of the implications this object had for the lives of the Cortorari community and the lives of the two families. In the film narrative such dialogues overshadow the development of relationships, the interactions and decisions of the characters. Although the public might never see the chalice, still one could understand its role and the tension generated by its alleged existence.

Hearsay, statements that implied something was happening or about to happen and intentions never acted upon seemed almost like a parallel reality to the one I was able to record. Thoughts and ideas about events and people were sometimes concealed to others and spoken of in whispers or private conversations with third parties in the presence of the camera. Sometimes they would contain relevant information for the film's story. As I didn't understand the language, I was limited to deciding whether to turn the camera off rather than on and to rely on people's agency to ask me not to continue recording. Not asking me to turn off the camera still did not mean that their passive consent was based on their awareness of how the content of the images would be used. A preemptive protective attitude was based rather on reading the body language attitude towards my presence.

Recording disclosure of things concealed

The question of disclosure in documentary filmmaking rests on the subject's willingness to disclose. It implies that the subject's consent to sharing information or an event she/he is experiencing is not only voluntary but also evident. Filmmakers are often condemned by audiences when the people they portray don't seem to have power over what they want to reveal. But what if someone doesn't want some aspects of their lives to be revealed by someone else? What are the implications when someone is pressured into not disclosing?

One of the main things we planned on filming was an interview with Băra, Peli's sister, which was to be used partly as a voiceover narration that would help untangle the complexities of the story. She had been previously recorded in an unplanned interview, which revealed her powerful ability to tell the story of the two families and depict the community. Unfortunately, it was poorly shot, and the image was unusable. The reshooting faced a double challenge. First, as it often happens when shooting a planned interview, there

were no guarantees that she would engage the same emotional force and depth. When going through the story or description the second time, people might become more detached, they might not allow themselves to become emotional and try to be more in control, they might be in a different state of mind or just change perception of how they see things. The second challenge was to have the chance of a private talk with Băra. Filming her when no people from her husband's family were around seemed an impossible task. They wanted to have control over the things she might disclose about Nina's story, so they made sure Băra was never left alone with me or Cătălina. Sometimes I would follow her and start shooting while she was doing house chores. But it always took just a few minutes before one of her husband's relatives walked in. Băra and Nina's narratives about the tense relationship between the two families were divergent. In the aftermath of quarrels or disputes Nina complained to her parents and grandparents about the hard time she was having living with her parents-in-law, mostly due to Peli's father heavy drinking. Băra on the other hand criticized Nina for playing the victim and considered her to be privileged on the grounds that she didn't suffer any verbal or physical abuses as she herself did. The previous recording of her contained confessions about being pressured into having a sex selective abortion, about the backlash she faced whenever the families would get into conflicts, and so on. Getting Băra through this process again implied a (re)consideration and negotiation of the limits set by herself, by her husband's relatives, and of our own self-imposed boundaries.

In the quest to get the disclosure of concealed information or experiences on camera one must consider the potential consequences the people involved might have to face. Our active pursuit and the prior knowledge of the content and emotional weight of such an interview required a higher awareness of our responsibility towards Băra. Even if the information is shared voluntarily, still the very act of engaging in this might inflict pain. This time it was not to be a spontaneous confession, but we were asking her to recollect and go through the stories again knowing how it might affect her. Moreover, the whole process implied a form of deception of her husband's relatives, which could expose her to a certain risk. How can such choices be then justified? The purpose of the interview was not only to help the film's narrative, but also to create an opportunity for Băra to present her uncensored point of view. It was a chance for her to have a voice and for us to hear her voice in her own depiction of the realities of the Cortorari community. While filming her, we didn't take the chance of initiating an inquiry while other people from her household were in the proximity and might have overheard her. The precautions we took almost made it impossible to make the interview. It was only an hour before our departure that we accidentally found her alone in her parents' house, with no one around, and seized the opportunity to sit down and record her story. We've had plenty of time to go through all the things from the previous interview. However, although the content of the stories was similar, her state of mind, the way she spoke, and her emotional involvement were not the same. The spontaneity of the first interview could not, of course, be reenacted. In the previous interview, her swiping the floor while telling the story created a feeling of detachment from the presence of the camera. During the seated interview on the other hand, it seemed she was more engaged with the camera and more detached from the things she was saying. It is hard to give an interpretation of the difference in attitude. She may have been in a different state of mind. Or maybe having prior information of our intentions had an impact on her attitude. Certainly, her consent to be interviewed was explicit this time, and her disclosure of information was not conveyed by the same disclosure of emotions.

Negotiating the presence of the camera in tense situations

On Easter day the two families gathered for lunch in the courtyard of Nina's family. Tension was high as everyone feared that Costică would ask to see his chalice, which was held in trust by Nina's family. Although we did nothing to directly or indirectly encourage or stimulate Costică's actions, our hope for that to happen felt seemingly ungrateful. Professional goals and the sense of responsibility towards the people we were filming came into conflict. On the one hand we hoped to have the chance to get the mythological object on camera, on the other we wanted that the people who welcomed us and our camera into their lives to have an enjoyable Easter celebration.

I had one eye on the camera and the other on Cătălina who understood the conversations around the table. After a couple of hours, the tension faded, and it seemed to turn into a peaceful afternoon with people having a good time. I relaxed and joined the table, considering I got all the shots I needed of the atmosphere and dynamics of the people. As I was randomly playing with the camera, I heard a beer bottle loudly breaking. I reframed on the pieces of glass on the floor when another bottle got smashed right in my shot. Costică bitterly asked to see the chalice. Nina's family refused. In just a second a fight broke out. I got out of the way and up on a chair and continued shooting. I stayed there until Nina's brother (Băra's husband) shouted out while clenching Costică's shirt telling me to turn off my camera. Had I dared too much? Had my attitude proven inappropriateness of being keener on recording than on waiting, as everyone did, for things to calm down? My brief decision to keep rolling came as a need to get into the convention of my role there. Although I was more exposed, I also felt it was a refuge into my comfort zone from the unpredictability of the conflict. There were no quandaries about good composition, just the focus on subject material. I have made the choice to film and hence engage in the first step of disclosing something over which they had no control up to a point. Was their initial consent valid in this kind of unpredictable situations? Even though I was asked to stop, in the aftermath of the conflict, none of the family members requested that the images be deleted or kept out of the film. Moreover, Nina's mother asked me to forgive her son's impulsive attitude.

Conclusions

The conditions of fieldwork practice in documentary filmmaking are diverse just as they are unpredictable. Therefore, standard conduct norms are hard to implement. The circumstances of producing this documentary filmed in the Cortorari community have created a new context for discussing unquestioned professional standards. As in many cases, the decision-making process relied mostly on individual choices. By bringing forth my experience working as a cinematographer on this documentary, I endeavored to illustrate the dilemmas I was confronted with while creating records of the Cortorari's lives in order to disclose aspects of their reality and intimacy. The limitation of my role by the lack of control over what happened with the images recorded made me more aware of my responsibility for the content of the recordings. The choices made during the shootings were determined by my trust that the director's ethical standards were very similar to mine, as the former would subsequently influence the decisions made in the editing process and would ultimately shape the film. The director's stated intentions to me of how the film would be structured and her motivation were some of the key variables that influenced the content of the recorded material.

My trust was manifested at moments of uncertainty, when I started recording based on confirmations that something relevant for the film was being discussed and that it was indeed something disclosable. The consequences of these choices reflect in the way the Cortorari are represented by the options available when editing the narrative of their reality.

Informed and voluntary consent to what and how was being disclosed was a practice of ongoing negotiation with the people in front of the camera throughout the whole process of filming on location. The necessity of such a process was emphasized in this case by the language barrier, which required strategies to create a constant awareness that I was recording and to obtain different forms of consent, whether explicit confirmation or an understated acceptance when noticing the camera on rec. The particularities of communication in the Cortorari families I have spent time with entailed adjustments in my practice as a cinematographer. Not understanding the content of the conversations made it difficult for me to anticipate intrusion. In the context of the background tensions between the two families, my aim was to have a preemptive protective attitude towards the people filmed by not revealing things they might not have wanted revealed. The first step in the materialization of disclosure is in the hands of the one capturing the images. Voluntary consent to the filming of private conversations or activities surfaces in the images recorded through the comfort and sense of control expressed by the attitudes of the people portrayed. To achieve such a relationship with the people filmed one must create a space of trust and intimacy where boundaries can be set with no restrictions. Costică's demand of straightforwardness helped me understand what it would take from my part to achieve the openness and acceptance of the people in front of the camera. Throughout the spontaneous conflict, when the thin line between having access and being entitled was blurred, the request to stop filming during the conflict was a form of asserting control of one's image and setting the limits of intrusion. My daring to record tested the bounds of privacy. It created the context for expressing the perception of power within our relationship through the spontaneous and direct withholding of consent.

My experience as a cinematographer for this documentary adds to the diversity of fieldwork situations and the ethical challenges that can arise in documentary practice. Although the dilemmas were defined by the particularities of the context, still I have found that the values that guided my choices have largely overlapped with those of other filmmakers. Ruby (1988) considered that ethical decisions stand at the intersection of the obligations towards the production team, towards the viewers, towards the people filmed, and towards the filmmaker's personal and professional goals. Aufderheide's study shows how ethical conflicts emerge due to the high degree of responsibility filmmakers see themselves to have when dealing with non-fictional stories: "They portray themselves as storytellers who tell important truths in a world where the truths they want to tell are often ignored or hidden" (2012: 382). I refrain from describing the recordings I made as "truths," instead I see them rather as aspects of the reality of the people in the Cortorari community. Framing and cutting parts of reality has (in this case as in previous ones) come with an awareness of the responsibility of this practice manifested through a commitment to a truthful attitude towards the Cortorari, the director, the viewers, and myself.

The two main male characters of the film, Costică and Peli, resting on Easter Day, April 2018. Photo credits: Ileana Szasz.

Anthropologist and filmmaker Cătălina Tesăr helping and chatting with women in the kitchen of Nina's parents' house. Photo credits: Ileana Szasz.

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