

The Popularization of the Ethnological Documentary Film at the Beginning of the 21st Century

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ABSTRACT

This paper seeks to explain the reasons for the rising popularity of the ethnological documentary genre in all its forms, emphasizing its correlation with contemporary social events or trends. The paper presents the origins and the development of the ethnological documentary film in the anthropological domain. Special attention is given to the most influential documentaries of the last decade, dealing with politics: (Fahrenheit 9/11, Bush's Brain), gun control (Bowling for Columbine), health (Sicko), the economy (Capitalism: A Love Story), ecology (An Inconvenient Truth) and food (Super Size Me). The paper further analyzes the popularization of the documentary film in Croatia, the most watched Croatian documentaries in theatres, and the most controversial Croatian documentaries. It determines the structure and methods in the making of a documentary film, presents the basic types of scripts for a documentary film, and points out the differences between scripts for a documentary and a feature film. Finally, the paper questions the possibility of capturing the whole truth and whether some documentaries, such as the Croatian classics: A Little Village Performance and Green Love, are documentaries at all.

Key words: documentary film, anthropological topics, script, ethnographic film, methods, production, Croatian documentaries

Introduction

This paper deals with the phenomenon of the popularization of ethnological documentaries in the past decade in the world and in Croatia, by using examples of the documentaries that had the most success with audiences. During that period, the documentary turned from an acclaimed and important genre, with relatively limited audience appeal, into an attractive and popular film form, which, apart from getting primetime TV slots, successfully made it to the movie theatres.

One might ask whether the existing popularity of the documentary genre is caused by how current the topics are or by their style of presentation. It will become evident that the success of the documentary genre is usually in direct correlation to relevant contemporary social events or trends. Directors around the world deal with current and important anthropological topics, from political manipulation, health care systems, environmental topics, dangers posed by food, to arms control while, at

the same time, creating a work of art. Therefore, a socio-logically and politically conscious audience is satisfied and has access to a completely different global reality, while the scientific community, through the analysis of the content of documentaries, can get a very clear and useful overview of topical social realities and relevant socio-cultural realities, with significant anthropological and research potential. Movie producers and distributors certainly have a different view of these films, being less interested in their scientific (anthropological) potential and much more of the economic aspects.

There is a fundamental reason for the popularity of the documentary genre among producers. Primarily, the price of production. If compared to most feature films, documentaries have a much smaller budget, which makes them attractive to production companies. The most financially viable among them can cover costs and make a profit even with restricted distribution. At the same

time, national cultural institutions (primarily in European countries) continue to support the creation of documentary films financially.

The hotly topical films of Michael Moore: *Bowling for Columbine* (2002), *Fahrenheit 9/11* (2004), *Sicko* (2007) and *Capitalism: A Love Story* (2009), and Al Gore's *An Inconvenient Truth* (2006) and Morgan Spurlock's *Super Size Me* (2004) were all hits at the box office, as well as in video distribution and on television afterwards. In one sense, it could be said that Michael Moore's *Fahrenheit 9/11* was a turning point in the popularization of documentaries because of its recognition as an art form by winning the *Palme d'Or* at the Cannes Film Festival in 2004. It is therefore very important to conciliate scientific facts with the artistic aspects, because in this way the scientific truth can be disseminated more easily, i.e. it reaches a wider audience¹.

In the past decade, documentaries have gained in popularity in Croatia as well, and some of them have become box office hits: *Novo, novo vrijeme* (*New New Times*), *Sretno dijete* (*Happy Child*), *Što sa sobom preko dana* (*Facing the Day*), etc. In addition, the ZagrebDox International Documentary Film Festival has been successfully launched.

This paper also deals with the long history of ethnological documentaries, dating from the beginning of cinema, and analyzes the basic types of ethnological films, as well as the differences between scripts for a documentary and a feature film, using precisely the examples of the above-mentioned films.

We analyze the scientific-exploratory aspect of creating documentary films in the anthropological domain. Within this context it is important to typologically delineate genres and subgenre definitions, i.e. »narration formats«.

Although the anthropological documentary is often characterized by a less distinctive authorial freedom, created in accordance with the principles of ethnographic methods, we shall see that this description has become broadened to include more subjective material. However, the ethnological documentary retains its aims to capture reality without distortion. Therefore, this excludes *Ducudrama*, that uses dramatized re-enactments to depict and interpret actual historical events; *Docufiction*, which represents a synergy of two narrative approaches, namely, a documentary narrative and a feature film narrative, and *Mockumentary*, which ironizes or parodies the documentary form and its content either in a dramatic or comedic way.

Each of these subgenres allows for a degree of license regarding the real event depicted. As we shall see, some documentaries that claim to be strictly ethnological have elements of these three subgenres. Despite the growing popularity of ethnological films among the general public, due mainly to Michael Moore, they still lag behind those dominated by fiction as seen in the table in the year 2010–2012 (Figure 1).

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The History of Ethnological Documentaries from the beginning of cinema

John Grierson, who first coined the word »documentary«, and who was the principal force behind the movement in 1930s Britain, defined the genre as »the creative treatment of actuality.«². Documentaries dominated the cinema in its early years, when the Lumière brothers, August and Louis, employed cameramen to travel the world, but after 1908 they became subsidiary to fiction films. Documentaries began to be taken seriously immediately after the Russian Revolution (1917), when propaganda pictures were sent across the vast country on »agit-prop« trains to educate the masses about communism. Dziga Vertov edited a series of these films between 1922–1925, calling them *Kino-Pravda* (*Cinema Truth*), adding slow and reverse motion, animation, texts and still photographs.

In contrast to the didactic Russian films were American Robert Flaherty's ethnological documentaries, which expressed his view of the importance of primitive societies and the balance between man and nature. Flaherty's *Nanook of the North* (1922), a milestone in the evolution of the documentary, could claim to be the first of its kind to gain a wide cinema audience. Flaherty lived with the Inuit for six months in Canada's Hudson Bay, establishing an unprecedented rapport between the film's subjects and the man behind the camera. However, Flaherty »cheated« by instructing an Inuit family to re-enact their lives for the camera, including a scene in which a walrus is hunted with harpoons, something they hadn't done for years. To be able to shoot inside an igloo, Flaherty had a new one built at twice the average size, with half of it cut away to allow in sunlight. Dubious as this sounds, such techniques allowed Flaherty to convey the drama and the struggle underlying the daily existence of these people, depicting a way of life threatened by encroaching civilization. It was a new approach to reality on film, ennobling its subjects rather than exploiting them.

In fact, there has always been »cheating« in documentaries. The first film shown to the public on 13 February 1895, *Workers Leaving the Lumière Factory*, by the Lumière brothers, was obviously staged because none of the workers looks at the camera or walks towards it.

The future directors of *King Kong* (1933), Merian C. Cooper and Ernest B. Schoedsack, directed two exotic adventure-travel films: *Grass* (1925), following a Persian tribe during their annual migration, and *Chang* (1927) about a Thai family's to survive life with a herd of elephants.

In Western Europe and the US, documentaries highlighted social and environmental problems.

Kino-Pravda was translated in the 1960s into *cinéma vérité* in France. Leaders of the movement, such as Chris Marker and Jean Rouch, believed that the camera's in-

tervention stimulated people to greater spontaneity. Rouch, the French anthropologist, who set up the International Ethnographic Film Committee in 1952, began using film as part of his research into the tribes of West Africa. *Chronicle of a Summer* (1961), made with the sociologist Edgar Morin, edited down 25 hours of interviews with a cross-section of Parisians, many of them replying to the question, »Are you happy?« This ethnological approach to the French and Africans alike made for revealing documentaries.

In the US, Direct Cinema was developed in the early 1960s by a group of filmmakers, notably Richard Leacock, D. A. Pennebaker and the Maysles brothers, Albert and David. They believed in filming events as they happen without interpretive editing or narration, therefore »recording the truth«. Yet even Fred Wiseman, a leading proponent of Direct Cinema, who eavesdropped on many institutions such as *High School* (1968) and *Welfare* (1975), recognized that there is no pure documentary but all filmmaking is a process of imposing order on the filmed materials.

In the late '60s, there was a gradual move away from *cinéma vérité* and the recording of reality towards historical reporting and investigative exposés. This included films such as Marcel Ophuls's 4-and-a-half hour *The Sorrow and the Pity* (1969), which builds up a complex picture of France under the Occupation; Claude Lanzmann's *Shoah* (1985), which gave an insight into the Holocaust, and Errol Morris's *Fog of War* (2003), which put in the confessional Robert McNamara, the man who was US Defence Secretary during the Vietnam conflict.

Certain statistical comparisons between documentary and fiction features.

It is useful to observe interactive maps (Figure 2), which at any moment allow us to see movie sets around the world used at this very moment for filming documentaries.

We should observe the frequency of certain feature film genres in comparison with the documentary film from 1908 till 2008 as illustrated in Figure 3.



Fig 2. *Documentary.net World Map: Explore and select free films from around the globe.* Source: *The Documentary Network*, accessed on 30th June 2013, Available from: URL: <http://documentary.net/documentaries-world-map-explore-and-select-films-from-around-the-globe/>.

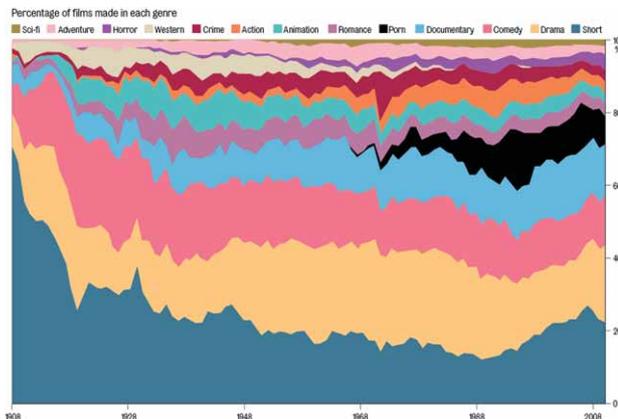


Fig. 3. *Percentage of films made in each genre.* Source: *Labs. timeonline.co.uk*, accessed on 30th June 2013, Available from: URL: <http://www.lawyersgunsmoneyblog.com/2012/09/film-genre-over-time>.

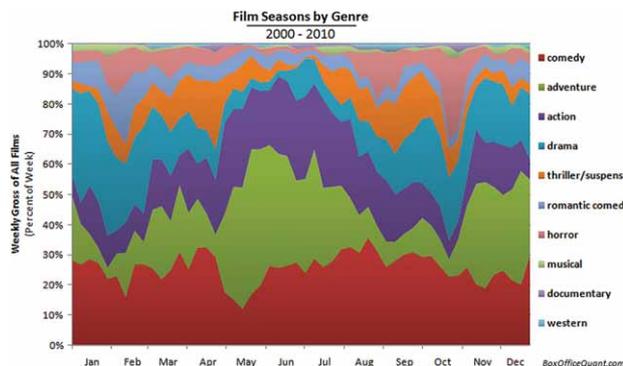


Fig. 4. *Film Seasons by Genre 2000-2010.* Source: *boxofficequant*, accessed on 30th June 2013, Available from: URL: <http://boxofficequant.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/04/Film-Seasons-By-Genre.png>.

This graph suggests that the documentary, starting from the 1920s, had a constant high number of productions with only a small decrease in 1968.

Also, it is useful to analyze the table that illustrates the period in which certain film genres are being filmed, in relation to the months of the year (Figure 4).

This chart clearly shows that the majority of genre feature films are being filmed in the period from April to August, as opposed to the documentary film that marks the biggest frequency in September and October. The timing of filmmaking is most likely caused by the production-distribution decision based on the assessment of the time necessary for filming and post-production, while at the same time aiming for the movie's completion to coincide with festive days or holidays.

Most Influential and Popular Documentaries in the Last Decade

Politics

Fahrenheit 9/11 directed by Michael Moore is a documentary which particularly influenced the populariza-

tion of the genre with audiences, as well as with the print and electronic media, thus unexpectedly contributing to the new boom of documentary production in the last decade.

Dealing with several socially potent and current stories, *Fahrenheit 9/11* has significant anthropological potential. By covering several seemingly independent topics, it actually gives an overview of the political moment and the pulse of society, entering in this way directly into the realm of socio-cultural anthropology and political anthropology.

Amidst numerous debates and controversies, from problems with distributors to the most restrictive R Rating (Americans younger than 17 years were able to watch it only if accompanied by an adult), the film gained great popularity in the world, including our country. It had its Croatian premiere at the Arena in Pula, where an unprecedented 7,000 viewers gathered to see it.

The basic idea of the film is a ruthless analysis of the actions of U.S. President George W. Bush. While the first part of the film recapitulates omissions and deceptions of the U.S. president, the director uses the second part to show some impressive personal stories, from a pensioner questioned by the FBI over a negative statement about Bush, through a peacekeeping group in which the sheriff's deputy got infiltrated and the systematic creation of psychosis among American population, to a mother whose son was killed in Iraq, and who disapproves of Bush in his letter.

Moore used this film to show that Bush had rigged the presidential election in Florida, that the entire Bush's business empire had been financed by the Bin Laden family, and that the Bin Laden family left the United States despite the flight ban. But the most intriguing scenes show Bush's utter inability to act in the moment of the biggest crisis, reacting with confusion at the time when one would expect resolution. The film causes a somewhat perverse-voyeuristic pleasure of watching the most powerful man in the world being humiliated and ridiculed because of his failures. Moore placed himself in the position of the little man who outplayed the powerful, with whom audiences could identify.

A synergy of anthropological paradigm and the author's approach occurs, which leads us to the question whether anthropologically relevant topics can be staged through the personal optics of a director or should they be treated objectively and from a distance, so that the final outcome is completely objective and free of the so called »observer effect«.

Although it is clearly an American film made for an American audience, it speaks equally powerfully, in a skilful way, to an international audience, assuming that what happens in the USA is relevant abroad. It is not always easy for a nation or its artists to initiate the process of catharsis and acknowledge the bad things that their nation did. It took a long time until American movies denounced the war in Vietnam, but because of the rapid change in the media, the internet and social networking,

it is no longer possible to manipulate the news so easily, and both American documentaries and fiction features are ready to criticise or justify the US government's policies³.

Time is also a very important factor in the reception and perception of anthropologically relevant documentaries. For example, one of the very good documentaries with a similar potential as *Fahrenheit 9/11* is *Salvador Allende* (2004), directed by Patricio Guzmán, which reveals how Nixon changed the history of Chile. The two films are very similar in terms of their visual lethality. But *Fahrenheit 9/11* came at the right moment, at the time when, unlike *Salvador Allende*, it had the ability to make a real impact because the events it depicted were current. As a director, Moore correctly concluded that it was no time for subtlety, and portrayed the situation clearly and directly. Moore's film also expressed a hope that it would prove that a documentary was not only a reflection of reality, but that it might also be the conscience of a nation or humanity as a whole and able to change things before it was too late.

Many Americans disapproved of the film even before they had seen it declaring at the same time they did not want to see it. Because of the media blockade of certain key information on American television, Moore was forced to present his film in a different way. In a normal situation, almost everything Moore stated in the first part of the film is something that should be shown on national television, but the United States was not in a normal situation, but in a state of patriotic psychosis.

But, what did Moore manage to change? Although it was expected that Moore's film would cause George W. Bush's popularity to plummet by revealing embarrassing information about his actions, the president managed to develop a patriotic mobilization to such a scale that enabled him to win a second term. Moore's film barely scathed him.

Bush's Brain: Karl Rove

An intriguing documentary about Bush's key advisor, *Bush's Brain* (2004), directed by James Moore and Wayne Slater, based on their book about Karl Rove, and the role he played in the elections of George W. Bush, was rather overshadowed by the much more explosive *Fahrenheit 9/11*. Although the documentary had neither strength nor lucidity of Moore's film, it can be seen as its complement, because it points to some of the details that were not previously well known.

With the help of a large number of witnesses, primarily those within the ranks of the Republican Party who once got in Rove's way, the documentary reconstructs his career based on lies, frauds and hoaxes, from planting listening devices in his own office to inventing compromising things about the private lives of competitors of the people he had been working for.

The film is important for understanding the way in which the U.S. policy functioned during the Bush administration.

Gun Control: Bowling for Columbine

Before winning the Palme d'Or for *Fahrenheit 9/11*, Michael Moore won an Oscar for a very lucid documentary *Bowling for Columbine* (2002), translated as *Crazy for Arms* in our country. A large number of people who die from wounds inflicted by firearms in the United States prompted Moore to explore the roots of the American enthusiasm for weapons.

Translation of movie titles more often causes outrage than admiration, but this title was very witty, especially in its full version: Are Americans crazy for arms or are they just crazy? No matter how insulting the title may seem, it reflects Moore's message that Americans are incomprehensibly subject to an atmosphere of fear and paranoia spread by their media, unlike the equally armed, but calm and self-conscious Canadians. Moore, in the manner of the best anthropological study, held up a mirror to Americans that shows the cruel truth of their pliability and misconceptions, in a way that no one had previously done.

Moore's skill is evident in the fact that he does it all in an accessible way in order to get to the average American viewer. He even included a humorous animated cartoon that sums up the history of American violence. Moore often manipulates, emotionally and factually, but not to the extent that it would jeopardize the credibility of his key thesis.

Health: Sicko

Subsequently, Moore attacked the health care system, through his film *Sicko* (2007) which once again sugars the pill of propaganda and statistics to make it easier for general audiences to swallow. It depicts the problems of 50 million Americans who do not have health care insurance, or the money to pay for medical services, but also the problems of those who have them, but the health insurance companies deceive them when they need it. Moore finds the culprits for the system in Nixon (by means of the famous tapes) and Bush Junior, but also in Reagan in his acting days. Many Europeans will question the utopian depiction of their hospitals and physicians, but no one can deny the fact that basic health services in all the countries of Western Europe are free of charge, which is not the case in the United States.

The highlight of Moore's ironic provocation undoubtedly was taking insufficiently treated American patients to Cuba, to contrast the two systems to the disadvantage of the USA.

Economy: Capitalism: A Love Story

Capitalism: A Love Story (2009) investigated the roots of the latest recession, and found them in the excessive influence that lobbyists from powerful financial companies exerted on American presidents, particularly on Republicans Ronald Reagan and George W. Bush, proving that their key associates came from the ranks of the powerful financial corporations and that their actions were more in favor of their own companies than the U.S. society.

Apart from the key events in the country, the documentary also included some touching stories about the hardships of ordinary people, such as the owner of a private correctional center who shared profits with a corrupt judge who arbitrarily detained hundreds of young people. For everyone who experienced the Yugoslav variant of socialism, the most dubious part of the movie was when Moore naively points out the example of workers' self-management in an American company as a successful example of an alternative to wild capitalism, advocating it as a way out of the crisis.

Europeans, accustomed to a high level of social security, were not surprised by an already forgotten recording of one of the last speeches of U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt, in which he stressed the need to create a new Charter of Rights, which would include the right to health care, education and social security.

Effectively and very wittily combining stock footage and propaganda films with new footage, and featuring himself, Moore's personal, socio-political documentaries could be said to have had a great influence on the genre.

One example is the satirist Sabina Guzzanti's *Draquila: Italy Trembles* (2010) which described Berlusconi's manipulations surrounding the town of LaAquila devastated by an earthquake. Guzzanti had previously made *Viva Zapatero* (2005) an equally effective documentary about how Silvio Berlusconi drove his critics and fair-minded producers off Italian television and replaced them with his own men and women.

Ecology: An Inconvenient Truth

The documentary by former U.S. Vice President Al Gore and director Davis Guggenheim, *An Inconvenient Truth* (2006), presented the alarming data and predictions about climate changes intertwined with clips from Gore's life. Through photographs, charts, maps, animation and computer simulations, the film revealed recent scientific research on the extent of the problem of global warming. The problem is dealt with from a scientific, economic, political and moral point of view, and special attention is devoted to disproving the energy lobby's theory that global warming was invented.

Al Gore is very convincing as a lecturer and it is precisely the footage from his lectures, which make up the bulk of the documentary, that are the most interesting parts. At times it may seem that Gore oversimplifies some of the problems, but it is simply because the lecture was adapted for a wide American audience, and as such tested more than a thousand times. This documentary is extremely important for strengthening environmental awareness around the world.

But it is important to note an inconvenient truth discovered afterwards. After Al Gore won an Oscar for best documentary, his opponents decided to calculate the consumption of electricity and other energy sources for his massive estate in the Belle Meade area of Nashville, to see to what extent he himself lived by his principles. The results were embarrassing for Gore: in 2006 he spent

221,000 kWh of electricity, which is 20 times more than the national average of 10,656 kWh, and in August alone 22,619 kWh of electricity, which is more than double the annual consumption of U.S. households. Gore defended himself claiming that in order to reduce the environmental impact he used solar cells and energy-saving lights, bought electricity on a green tariff (deliberate choosing a higher tariff, out of which renewable energy sources are subsidized) and bought units of greenhouse gas emissions (a measure of financial compensation for excessive emissions per capita). However, although this revelation reduced Gore's personal credibility, it did not diminish the strength of his argument in the film.

Food: Super Size Me

In order to show why Americans often face the problem of obesity, Morgan Spurlock conducted an experiment for his documentary *Super Size Me* in which for 30 days, as a guinea pig, he fed himself only food from McDonald's. Courage (and masochism) of the director who, for the purpose of making this film, exposed himself to an experiment involving health hazards, enabled us to completely identify ourselves with him, and the credibility of the film was underpinned by the testimony of his wife, who complained mostly about the decline in his sexual abilities!

In a world of galloping consumerism, the fact that obesity in America is becoming a greater danger to health than smoking indicates that the subject of this documentary is much more serious than it seems at first sight. Of course, junk food is everywhere, but McDonalds was chosen logically as its largest distributor in the world and a global symbol.

Morgan Spurlock entered into this project with premeditated objectives, thus ignoring one of the prerequisites of scientific research. However, bias was counterbalanced by his physicians' results. The devastating consequences which food from fast food restaurants has on health, especially if it becomes a staple food, served as a very clear warning and a plea for future research on the negative aspects of obesity and »fast food«.

Popularization of the Documentary Film in Croatia

Most watched Croatian documentaries in theatres

In the past decade, documentaries have affirmed themselves in Croatia as well, and some of them had very decent box-office results. *Novo, novo vrijeme* (New, New Times, 2001) by Rajko Grlić and Igor Mirković, which documented events in Croatia at the time of great political changes was the first Croatian documentary shown in the regular cinema distribution, attracting 30,000 viewers. This obviously satisfied the hunger for contemporary events treated with more depth and amplitude than television can offer.

In his documentary film *Sretno dijete* (Happy Child, 2003), Igor Mirković described the New Wave age in socialist Yugoslavia and recalled the most important protagonists of the time. The documentary attracted some 10,000 moviegoers.

Ivona Juka's film *Facing the day* (2006) won the main Documentary Award at the Festival of Central and Eastern European Film goEast in Wiesbaden. The film was an exhaustive and, above all, encouraging analysis of three convicts whose lives experience a liberating change when given an opportunity to participate in a theatre project.

Lately, the biggest interest was sparked by Dana Budisavljević's documentary film *Nije ti život pjesma Havaja* (Family Meals, 2012). For the sake of the film, the director persuaded members of her family to speak openly on camera about the problems caused by the lack of understanding of her »wrong«, homosexual orientation.

As a result of the boom in the documentary film production in our country, an International Documentary Film Festival ZagrebDox⁴, held every year at the end of February, was launched in 2005.

The most controversial Croatian documentaries

Amarcord 1991–2001 (2001) was based on the footage recorded by Božidar Knežević for Yutel in 1991, at the time of the outbreak of the so-called »Log Revolution«, which Pavle Vranijcan, the director of the documentary, found on some accidentally purchased second-hand video-cassettes. As the tapes contained the original, unedited materials as well as the edited news stories, the film compares the unedited footage and the final news, proving that Knežević withheld the true information about the beginning of the Serbian rebellion in Croatia to the public.

When *Days of Croatia* film was to be inaugurated, Nenad Puhovski, the director of ZagrebDox, claimed that *Amarcord 1991–2001* (2001) was a »wanted bulletin« for a man (Božidar Knežević) who could not defend himself because he was unfortunately no longer alive. He even threatened to withdraw *Factum's* films, of which Puhovski was the founder, from the programme.

Amarcord 1991–2001 kicked up a lot of dust due to its portrayal of the military action which was contrary to the official Croatian interpretations of the action. Although the film was interesting and important for revealing the real truth about Knežević's attempt to conceal the facts (the murder of a Croatian policeman, warmongering speeches, the organization of an armed insurrection, etc.) recorded on video tapes, it can hardly be considered an original work as it is mostly made up of shots by Knežević's cameraman supplemented with an excessive and overly sentimental narration.

The Structure and Methods of the Documentary Film

Determining the structure of processes and methods in making a documentary film (reactive process)

There are two approaches when observing a documentary film as a carrier of relevant anthropologically information:

a) A documentary film as *cinéma vérité*, i.e. as a socio-political-economic »biographer« of the moment in which we live. (reactive process)

b) A documentary film as a driver and »provocateur« of events and changes that it potentially causes through its screening (proactive process)

If we say that a documentary, in the context of *cinéma vérité*, is only a socio-political-economic »biographer« of the moment in which we live, we are putting it into an anthropological context of »recorder« of events, without pretending to impose revolutionary changes with the discourse of its content. Such a reactive documentary process is completely legitimate. Finally, contemporary visual anthropology is based on evolutionary, ethnographic film, as its original starting point.

On the other hand, the films of Michael Moore seem completely different. With their sometimes minimalist and naturalistic narrative style, nonconformity and »calling things by their right names«, apart from registering a social moment, they also contain a driving force for a change.

Of course, both of these approaches (proactive and reactive) are legitimate, even though one of them has an evolutionary and the other revolutionary thread in itself.

At the core of a documentary there is a theme and a message that the author wants to send to the viewer, and often a documentary is aiming to encourage some changes. Moore, for example, does it without much finesse, aggressively and biased, with no journalistic objectivity, never disguising his didactic purpose. In *Fahrenheit 9/11*, he wanted to convince viewers (primarily American voters) that Bush was an incompetent president and that they should not vote for him. In his movie *Sicko*, he advocates the introduction of universal health insurance, while in the documentary *Capitalism: A Love Story* he calls for the restriction of the power of the financial oligarchy.

Generally, the humorous component is of secondary importance in a documentary, a rule most blatantly broken by Moore. By using various clips from stock footage (feature films as well as animated films), editing music and sound effects and witty, often ironic and sarcastic remarks, Moore sets out to entertain his viewers at the same time as educating them. Igor Mirković also breaks this rule as his documentaries are very entertaining for the audience. His movie *Novo, novo doba* (New, New Times) contains scenes which depict politicians in situations in which we are not used to seeing them (including the cult scene in which Finance Minister Škegro is steal-

ing a bottle from the table, used by Mirković as a metaphor for all the crime in Croatia during the 1990s), while *Sretno dijete* (Happy Child) entertains the audience with music, i.e. fragments of music videos and live performances.

Basic types of scripts for a documentary film

The script is often the most underrated aspect in the creation of a documentary, but it is probably the most important part of the process of creating a documentary film, says Trisha Das⁵. Some directors believe that a documentary must be free and fluent and that the written concept of the film should be done after the shooting. This principle is applicable in the case of events that cannot be controlled, such as political rallies, demonstrations or natural disasters. But, in all other cases it is necessary to make a solid script, regardless of whether there will be changes in the shooting process or not.

Precisely this division mentioned by Trisha Das is best seen in two Croatian documentaries by Igor Mirković. In *New, New Times*, Mirković (with co-director Rajko Grlić) accompanied opposition politicians during an election campaign, and later, out of the abundance of footage, edited the material he deemed the most interesting, without a predetermined script. Referring to the process of shooting the documentary Mirković said⁶: »We started negotiating with the protagonists months before the election, and suggested to them we would follow them with cameras during the election campaign and record everything they were doing in order to get a real, authentic story. We told them: »We would edit the film and show it to you before revealing it to the others, but you would not be able to intervene«. We promised them that we would not make fools out of them and that the job would be done extremely professionally«. The principle for his other documentary, *Happy Child*, was completely opposite namely Mirković's thorough preparation of this nostalgic documentary about music and the way of life in the eighties.

Trisha Das specifies that there are two stages of documentary scriptwriting: a script before the shooting and a script after the shooting. The pre-shoot script is like a map for a journey, during which you can encounter barriers or pleasant surprises. The post-shoot script is the final version of the script made between the processes of shooting and editing, and is usually a modified version of the script created before the shooting. This script is responsible for creating a true story line.

Michael Moore's documentaries are generally carefully planned. He departs from a script and outlined theses that he seeks to prove through a series of stock footage and data discovered in the process of investigative journalism. Relatively less script planning is undoubtedly present in his stories portraying destinies of individuals, which obtain their final form only after the shooting process.

Differences between scripts for a documentary and a feature film

The script for a documentary film has similarities, but also major differences in relation to a feature film script. Trisha Das points out that the fundamental characteristic of the documentary script must be truthfulness; it must be based on real events, people and issues. It should not include any elements of fiction. The director of a documentary must gain the trust of viewers. Michael Moore does it by presenting himself as the ordinary, little man, opposed to powerful lobbies, mainly political and financial.

A documentary is generally more flexible than a feature film, which means that it is highly unlikely that its script would be realized completely the way it was initially imagined. Thus, Mirković planned to interview Johnny Štulić in the central part of Happy Child his documentary, but the singer turned him down, forcing Mirković to shape this part of the film in a different way. He did it by making his failed attempt - which many would have given up in the editing process - an integral part of the film.

Any formulaic approach to the documentary film script is unnecessary, because each topic is specific and requires a specific approach, and there are no safe recipes on how to make a documentary.

The key word in a documentary is research. The scriptwriter of a documentary film must be characterized by curiosity, the quality of his research must be more important than quantity, and the research strategy is also of key importance. It should include research of archival material (Trisha Das mentions only printed material, but video and electronic materials in all their forms are equally important), field research and interviews.

The complexity of making a film is best illustrated by a leaflet of French TV station Canal+ (Figure 5), intended to simplify the process of preproduction, production and postproduction.

Are Classic Croatian Documentaries Documentaries At All?

As we have seen, right from the beginning of cinema and the very first ethnological films, there has always been 'cheating', the most famous example being Nanook of the North. One of the most prominent Croatian documentary shorts is the anthological film, Mala seoska priredba (A Little Village Performance) by our great documentarian Krsto Papić. The film has been analyzed many times, as well as awarded and appreciated for its authenticity.

Dario Marković wrote in Hrvatski leksikon (Croatian Film Lexicon)⁷ that the film had been »shot in a village in Međimurje on the occasion of a local event held on Sunday 24th September 1971, which included performances of amateur singers, local folklore dance group and joke tellers, and, at the same time, a pageant for the most beautiful girl in the village«.

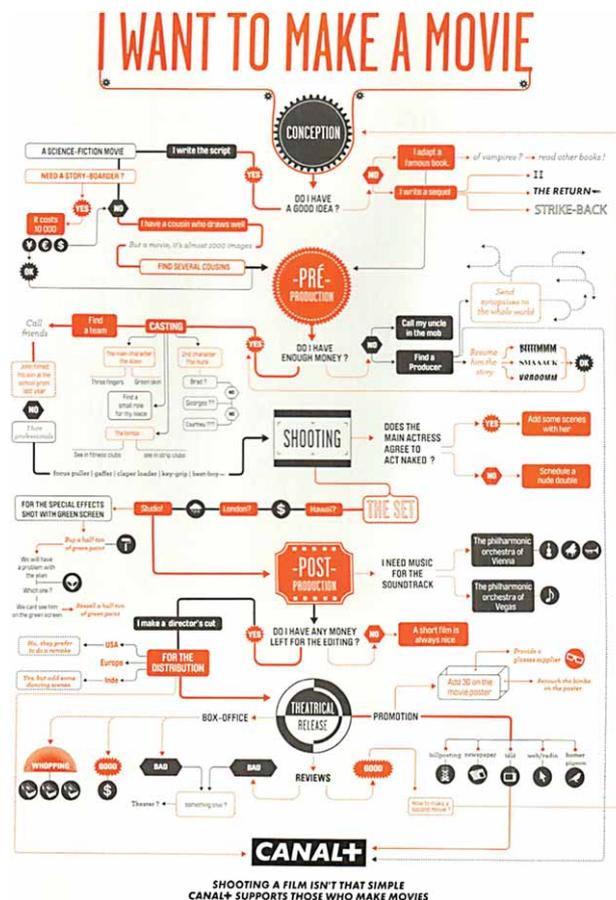


Fig 5. Canal+ leaflet explaining how to make a movie. Source: Canal+, accessed on 30th June 2013, Available from: URL: <http://www.nnhs.net/library/component/jce/?view=popup&tmpl=component&img=images/I-want-to-make-a-movie.png&title=>

In 2005, in an interview given to Vijenac newspaper and journalist Zlatko Vidačković, Krsto Papić revealed that the documentary did not show an authentic event, as believed for decades, but that it was a performance organized by no other than the director in accordance with the script for his documentary!

In regard to this topic, Krsto Papić said⁸: »I was filming a movie called Nek se čuje i naš glas (Let Our Voices Be heard Too) dealing with independent radio stations in northern Croatia, and while filming the movie, I saw they were organizing beauty pageants in many villages, and this was widespread. I attended such a pageant, and saw that they were actually mimicking television. Television was on the rise at the moment and everyone was already buying colour-television sets. Every one of those little villages was mimicking big events, and generally speaking, there was no big difference. Afterwards, I wrote the script for the film, and we organized a beauty pageant in the village of Orahovica near Čakovec. Dragutin Palašek was the president of a youth organization, and he helped me to organize such an event. We filmed it in one day, and afterwards I did some additional shooting at the same location«.

Thus, the most famous Croatian documentary was not actually a full-blooded documentary film, but to some extent a feature film with non-professional actors. It was not even fully filmed on the day stated at the beginning of the film, but contained some material that was filmed and edited later.

The documentary aspect of the film is somewhat corroborated by Papić’s claim that the film’s participants were not familiar with the director’s intentions and they just did what they normally do (»After the premiere there were some complaints about the movie, because no one who took part in it did not expect the film would have a dose of humor or satire«).

An observational-evaluation sheet (Table 1) used in film schools in the USA can be helpful when realistically evaluating a documentary film and analyzing the rhetorical question about whether it is of essential importance if an event portrayed in a documentary actually took place or not.

However, the evaluation questionnaire does not mention technical details of the film i.e. realities of the filming process. The emphasis is on the intrigue of the subject, i.e. the proactive approach, which promotes the factor of a potential social change.

From the aspect of reality, the making of A Little Village Performance most certainly caused the integrity of the objective approach to be lost, but on the other hand, the documentary recorded all the rituals and everything that was intended to be recorded by such a film, in this context, a village beauty pageant.

This is best illustrated by the words of Papić to describe the preparation and work on the film. »The editing was not so long a process because we could not shoot a lot, it was important to have a concept. We had one thousand two hundred meters of film negatives and in fact, during the shooting of the movie, we were already editing. Nowadays, people more or less use a digital camera and they shoot everything, and afterwards spend months struggling to edit the material. We had to have a clear concept of editing even during shooting«. Of course, Papić is exaggerating in his description of the present-day directors of documentaries, but there is no doubt that earlier limitations had a stimulating effect on better preparation of the documentary’s concept and script.

Rudolf Sremec’ Zelena ljubav (Green Love), made in 1968, is a moving testimony of a custom of child marriage present in the region of Posavina. In the film, the camera captures various future spouses who say they love each other in a shaky voice, though they are children who obviously do not know what a marriage and marital obligations are, and in fact the motive behind it is joining of their parents’ estates. The centre of Sremec’s attention is a young couple, their wedding and celebration. The prominent Croatian director, Zoran Tadić⁹, was particularly impressed by the scene, as well as the entire movie: »Everything up to a point, in its naivety, humorous, but at the same time monstrous, creepy... The film has a very strong effect. We are under the impression that what ensues after its end is horror, not a movie, but life itself«.

But many years later, in 1996, Tadic saw a documentary lasting eleven and a half minutes, produced by Nikola Hribar Elementary School in Velika Gorica, entitled Tragom Zelene ljubavi (Tracing the Green Love). Elementary school pupils from Velika Gorica went to Veleševac village, where twenty-eight years before Zelena ljubava (Green Love) had been filmed. A woman from the village explained in detail that Anica from the film was actually Milica, who lived in Zagreb, and was married, but not to the groom from the film, because they were just acting. The groom from the film was called Stjepan, never got married and never moved away from Veleševac. Milica also appears in the documentary explaining how the film was shot in the summer, and she did not get married until the end of the year. Stjepan, says that Sremec told his school teacher, »This young man is just we need«. At the very end of the film, Rudolf Sremec says: »This film looks authentic, it is almost close to the original, truthful... It is not authentic, but it is veracious...«.

A small group of elementary school students exposed the myth surrounding one of the best films of the great Croatian documentarian. While there were doubts about A Little Village Performance regarding not only its authenticity, but its documentary value as well, there is no doubt that Green Love, despite the authenticity of the theme and the location, is to a large extent a fiction feature with non-professional actors.

It is worth mentioning that in 2003 Zoran Tadić said that up until recent times, when the documentary film

TABLE 1
DOCUMENTARY FILM ANALYSIS GUIDE QUESTIONS

| Documentary film analysis guide questions | |
|--|----------|
| Name: | Section: |
| Professor: | Date: |
| Documentary Film Title: | |
| 1. What is the primary subject of this documentary? What is its foremost purpose? | |
| 2. What realities or issues are depicted in the documentary? Does it advocate for social change? | |
| 3. Does it argue for a position? Does it critique a position? What kind of impact does it seek to achieve? | |
| 4. What part/s of the documentary struck you most? How were you affected by the video? | |
| 5. How would you evaluate the effectiveness of this documentary film? Why? | |

was almost completely made for television, there were hardly any documentaries located in urban areas in our country. Rural themes, problems and locations were predominant, and movies were a testament to backwardness, underdevelopment, lack of society's care, etc., and one needed to fight against it and get involved. Tadić said that there had been many cases of fake involvement: »It almost felt like if you did not know what to do with yourself, and you earned your living as a filmmaker, you would put the camera on your back, follow the dirt road to some neglected village, get some older toothless locals in front of the camera, make them yammer a little to the camera and – you had a movie«.

In trying to answer the question why serious directors (including himself) were drawn to rural areas, barren landscapes and locations, inhabitants of mountainous areas and their destinies and why highlanders all the way up until the 1980s had been dominant protagonists of our documentaries, Tadić states: »People living in mountainous areas wear their hearts on their sleeves, they are not ashamed of it and do not hide it, they are showing it, and the camera wants that truth, that truth is evident and supple, quick to reach. And by the time you start to perceive some truthful and relevant feelings through the bustle of a city – that moment is gone as well as the entire movie«.

Nevertheless, Tadić does not conclude that there is something more serious, from a psycho-sociological and film-wise standpoint, in the evident disproportion between urban and rural documentaries. However, from his honesty and self-criticism, from the writing in which he briefly and humorously summed up half a century of Croatian documentaries, one can identify some important trends and find out something fundamentally true about the way in which Croatian documentaries were once planned and filmed.

However, it was precisely Zoran Tadić, through his work as a documentarian, educator (he taught at the Academy of Dramatic Art) and writer, who left a number of exemplary film examples, lectures and articles on what a documentary should look like. In his work he par-

ticularly cherished the fundamental postulate of documentary filmmaking – truthfulness. Precisely because of that he was affected by the aforementioned deceits in the work of a documentarian he greatly respected.

Conclusion

In the last decade documentary films experienced extreme popularity primarily due to provocation and because they covered topics that genuinely deal with the problems of today, such as political manipulation, obsession with guns, the problems with health insurance, the causes of the financial crisis, environmental concerns and the risk of unhealthy eating, in an entertaining manner. All the covered documentaries are similar precisely because of their timeliness and relevance of these topics for each viewer. Although many of our examples deal with problems primarily from the American perspective, where the situation is different in many respects, almost all topics that were covered can be considered as global. But there are also significant differences among documentarians.

Although it was precisely Michael Moore who initiated the popularization of documentaries, his work should not serve as a model for other directors, because, in order to make an impression, he often manipulates data for effect. Some films are closer to classic TV-documentary, such as *An Inconvenient Truth* or *Bush's Brain* which are more serious and objective than Moore's somewhat tendentious films.

Croatian documentaries should perhaps address issues that trouble Croatian citizens in a more courageous manner, without of course neglecting those who cover personal stories of individuals or families.

Croatian documentaries continue to be popular in theatres, and through Days of Croatian Film and ZagrebDox International Documentary Film Festival a number of new directors, especially women, are making a name for themselves, confirming the fact that the documentary film in Croatia has a secure future.

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POPULARIZACIJA ETNOLOŠKOG DOKUMENTARNOG FILMA NA POČETKU 21. STOLJEĆA

SAŽETAK

Ovaj rad nastoji objasniti razloge rastuće popularnosti etnološkog dokumentarnog filma, s naglaskom na antropološku domenu, odnosno na korelaciju sa akutnim društvenim zbivanjima ili trendovima. Koristeći se znanstveno-istraživačkim pristupom dokumentarnom filmu, ovaj rad predstavlja korijene i razvoj etnološkog dokumentarnog filma. Posebna pozornost posvećena je najutjecajnijim dokumentarcima u proteklom desetljeću, koji se bave politikom (»Fahrenheit 9/11«, »Bushov mozak«), naoružavanjem (»Ludi za oružjem«), zdravstvom (»Bolesno«), ekonomijom (»Kapitalizam, ljubavna priča«), ekologijom (»Neugodna istina«) i hranom (»Super veliki ja«). Rad analizira i popularizaciju dokumentarnog filma u Hrvatskoj, najgledanije hrvatske dokumentarce u kinima i najkontroverznije hrvatske dokumentarce. U radi se također nastoji definirati što čini neki scenarij dokumentarnog filma dobrim, analiziraju se osnovne vrste scenarija dokumentarnog filma i razlike između scenarija dokumentarnog i igranog filma. Konačno, rad ispituje jesu li klasici hrvatske dokumentaristike (»Mala seoska priredba« i »Zelena ljubav«) uopće dokumentarci.