Negotiating Agency in Poland's Emerging Civil Society

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Abstract

Based on seven months of fieldwork with The Association of Drama Practitioners Stop Klatka, this thesis is a study of Poland’s emerging post communist civil society of NGOs. As a player in the new civil society and as an organisation working with applied drama, Stop Klatka deals with a range of social actors in their projects. I examine the agency it has and the strategies and policies it develops in interaction with some of these actors, on both micro and macro levels. For this purpose, I focus on a particular but representative example of Stop Klatka’s projects, Patchwork - The use of applied drama method in working with multicultural community.

On a structural level Polish NGOs are faced within an inconclusive legal framework and encounter considerable mistrust in society. While this leaves them with substantial operational autonomy in carrying out their work, it also becomes particularly important for them to gain the trust of the actors they work with. Competition for the limited governmental funding has pushed these organisations to align their policies with those of the authorities. At the same time, this encourages NGOs to turn to foreign donors with their own agendas. One of these is Patchwork’s funder, the Open Society Foundations (OSF), which introduces Stop Klatka to the prevalent ethno politics and Roma related issues. Because of that, and spite of Stop Klatka’s ethnically indifferent attitude, Roma inclusion becomes of central importance.

I show how project leaders negotiate it with OSF, the school where the project was held and the Roma people. They do this based on their own psychological, “colourblind” approach. This strategy is heavily influenced by the local school environment where the project was implemented and in practice opposes OSF’s perspective. As outsiders to the local school environment, Stop Klatka needs to continuously adapt their strategies to gain the trust of a school with a hierarchical bureaucracy, strong focus on academic achievement and ethnic segregation. OSF, on the other hand is a distant actor with an agenda largely unfamiliar to Stop Klatka. Their perspective on “Roma inclusion” which proposes to promote an image of a cultural, “sanitized Roma” and increase Roma participation, is therefore not made an integral part of the project. Lastly, the Roma community is too weak to have a real impact on the project. These manoeuvrings by Stop Klatka result in the Roma people and Roma related issues largely being left out of the project.
Acknowledgements

This master thesis has taken me through a long, hard and beautiful journey of emotions, perspectives, people and places. Poland is to me a familiar place, just on the other side of the pond, - yet it has always been so far away, imaginary almost. Getting to know my other country by living in it, not only observing it from a distance, I came to talk and walk as my Polish self. Getting to write this thesis I got to see life through a kaleidoscope filled with a whole new set of ideas.

Thank you all so much, all of you who have contributed to this experience.

Thanks for convincing me to turn around and “head home”. Thanks for making drama and theatre in all the forms I’ve experienced a part of my life.

Thanks for your hospitality. Thanks for your generosity. Thanks for your help.

Thanks for challenging me. Thanks for supporting me.

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Introduction

This thesis is a study of Poland’s emerging post communist civil society of NGOs, *The Association of Drama Practitioners Stop Klatka* and the project *Patchwork* - *The use of applied drama method in working with multicultural community*.

Stop Klatka is a typical cosmopolitan player in Poland’s new civil society. Founded in 2002 in Warszawa by a group of students who call themselves drama practitioners, the organisation’s trade mark has from the start been applied drama. Applied drama is a theatre practice engaging with various areas of social and cultural policy, with the aim to introduce positive social change. Stop Klatka’s activities entail workshops and interactive theatre plays focusing on a variety of topics ranging from substance abuse to integration.

Aiming to reduce the role of the state, political reforms following the fall of communism made it possible for a multitude of organisations to enter the new civil society, and prompted these NGOs to take an active role in creating and implementing social policy. At the same time, and especially after EU accession, a renewed focus on minority issues in Poland and other Central and Eastern European countries led to a transformation of ethno politics. Coming out of a socialist “deep freeze”, minorities were now to be defended, celebrated and integrated, rather than controlled, persecuted and assimilated (Kopańska 2011). This was also felt by Polish NGOs, which receive substantial funding for projects concerning ethnic minorities and the Roma people. An example of this is Stop Klatka’s *Patchwork* project held at a local primary school in the south eastern part of Poland. Initiated and funded by the Open Societies Foundations as part of the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005–2015, *Patchwork* had an explicit focus on including the Roma people. However, as I proceeded with my fieldwork, I was becoming increasingly puzzled by the fact that Roma related topics were not made a central concern in designing and implementing project. In search for answers, I began to

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1 *Stowarzyszenie Praktyków Dramy Stop Klatka*, hereafter Stop Klatka or SK

2 SK uses *applied drama* and *drama* interchangeably to refer to the same type of practice

3 I will from now on use only *Patchwork* to refer to the project *Patchwork - The use of applied drama method in working with multicultural community*

4 The project’s official name was *Educational theatre and drama as a tool to facilitate Roma inclusion*. It was set up in in eight CEE countries including Poland.
direct my attention towards factors, which might contribute to this, and chose to focus particularly on SK project leaders’ agency5.

By agency I mean someone’s “ability (...) to act of their own volition (...)” (Morris 2012). More specifically, SK’s ability to intervene in a certain social setting is both hindered and enabled by a range of social actors6. These actors constitute “the webs of relations [that] make up [SK’s] social world” forcing the organisation to enter into an ongoing dialogue about its agency (Ortner 2006:152).

When examining this dialogue, and following recent research in organisational anthropology (Wright 1994; Jimenez 1997; Heyman 2004), I believe an actor centred, relationist and holistic approach to be fruitful. This is because it recognizes the complexity in policy making and project practice, as well as “the creativity and skill involved in negotiating development” (Mosse 2004:454). Firstly, this implies that my aim is not to assess, but rather to understand the work of NGOs and Stop Klatka7. Moreover, I work from the premise that an organisation is not an entity with fixed boundaries and a totally objective existence. I rather understand NGOs as actors who continuously need to negotiate meanings and practices within the context of a particular time and with the resources available to them (Wright 1994). This approach also allows for a dual perspective where NGO’s activities can be examined from both micro and macro levels. Finally, I hope this approach and this thesis can help shed light on how Polish NGOs operate in the real world, as well as some problem areas that could be of importance to other civil society actors. Additionally, the thesis can be seen as a contribution to the scarce ethnographic material on the anthropology of CEE and Poland written by outside researchers.

5 The initial agency/structure divide in anthropology is continuously picked apart, discussed and refined. Agency is here understood as relational and context specific. The agency one might “have” is always shaped and played out in a variety of ways in different contexts and in relationships with other actors. (See e.g. Ortner 2006)

6 I use the term “actors” to refer primarily to social entities rather than individuals even if the two categories might overlap. For example, individuals can be part of or act through larger entities. Stop Klatka is thus an actor where the project leaders are doing the acting.

7 In line with recent approaches this opens up for questions about how, and not whether, development works; and about the rationale behind a particular NGO’s work, rather than questioning its rationality (Mosse 2004, Heyman 2004).
To investigate the areas outlined above I have developed the following research questions:

*How does Stop Klatka as an actor in Poland’s civil society develop policies and strategies in interaction with other actors?*

and

*To which extent does Stop Klatka have the possibility to “pave its own way” as an independent organisation?*

**Methodological Considerations**

I conducted my fieldwork between December 2011 and July 2012. The methodological considerations during the fieldwork period centre on my roles, my positioning in the field, activities in which I participated as well as some dilemmas I was faced with.

The choice to do fieldwork in Poland with Stop Klatka was based on my personal interest in drama and theatre, and a wish to spend a longer period of time in my parents’ country of origin. Upon receiving informed consent to carry out fieldwork from the president, the board members and the internal researcher of Stop Klatka I was welcomed to participate in the organisation’s activities. In workshops participants were usually informed of my presence and role by the workshop facilitators.

It proved difficult to follow my informants in their limited spare time. I therefore had access to the organisation mostly through work related activities. These took place on site in different projects and workshops (schools, NGO centres, conference rooms, SK office etc.). Here making an extra effort to help out in SK’s administrative work was crucial to gain access to important documents. Moreover, my interest in and experience with SK’s working method made it possible take a more active part in workshops. Using this previous knowledge and experience in the field gave me a deeper understanding of every anthropologist being his/her own research instrument (Stoller 1989).

Participant observation and informal conversations accompanied by writing out field notes were the primary methods of data collection. The data for this thesis is thus based mainly on observed (inter)action and verbal engagement. This provided me with a general overview of SK and their work and allowed me to see patterns of practices in the field which worked as a basis for writing the thesis. I conducted several semi-structured in-depth interviews. The four interviews I had with the project leaders made it possible to ask supplementary questions
about the organisation, their ideas behind Patchwork and about their work in schools and with Roma people. After Patchwork I also interviewed the principal at the school and the Roma assistant. I thus received valuable information regarding the school context, the work of the Roma assistant and their view on SK’s work in the school. I also interviewed the bureaucrats in charge of the State run Programme for the Roma community at the local (city) and county (Voivoidship) levels in order to obtain background data on ethno politics and the Roma community. Moreover, relevant literature on the anthropology of organisations, Poland and the Central and Eastern European region as well as ethnicity and the Roma people was crucial in writing this thesis. Additionally, I rely heavily on material published by and about SK and its Patchwork project in booklets, reports and online publications. All translations from the Polish language are my own. Through the process of writing the master thesis I was in regular contact with SK staff through email, skype and a short visit in December 2012. Family and friends have also been useful sources of information. As Wadel (1991) suggests I have continuously jumped between and revised my methods, theory and data both during my fieldwork and when writing out the thesis.

During my stay in Poland I was based in Warszawa, living a relatively untroubled, urban life as a guest with my extended family. At the same time, I was never able to establish any routine because I was constantly on the move to new places, on the outlook for opportunities to follow SK activities wherever they were taking place. In this sense my life very much resembled that of those working for the organisation. My fieldwork was multi-sited (Marcus 1995). I travelled extensively, predominantly to Krosno where I stayed at hostels, with friends or accommodation provided by SK.

I participated in the Patchwork project as a facilitator or observer in school workshops and as a volunteer and actress in the interactive Theatre in Education performance. This active participation made me an integral part of SK’s work. However, it also made school staff and students perceive me as part of the organisation.

My position in the field made it natural to cooperate primarily with SK project leaders and workshop facilitators, and only to a lesser extent the beneficiaries (i.e. the students and school staff). A second reason is the central role of the project leaders in the project and the organisation. Factors further contributing to this was the irregular attendance of the children participating in the workshops and some children leaving or joining workshops in the middle of the project. Moreover, it was decided by the SK project leaders that the workshops held by
SK for the teachers were to be conducted without outside interference because of internal disputes between the teachers.

Towards the end of the project I changed my role and began to visit school classes and after school activities. I received informed consent from the principal and the school pedagogue, who informed the staff of my new role in the school. When observing classes and after school activities I was usually assigned a spot at the back of the classroom. Even if the staff by then had become familiar with my presence, I remained an outsider to the school environment.

Because of the closed and hierarchical character of the school system, and the overall negative views of Roma people held by the school staff, I had to make an extra effort to clarify my role as a researcher. I experienced much fear and scepticism on the part of the staff as to how I would present them. They could for instance say “So you’re going to sit here and study us?” or tell children to be at their best behaviour. In this process I tried to balance polite interest with interrogative questioning as best I could. In this final part of the project I also visited a Roma family. I had not done so earlier because I found it difficult to openly maintain close relationships with the Roma, as I was afraid this might jeopardize the trust of the staff on which I was dependent to do my research.

In addition to *Patchwork* I took an active part in an introductory drama workshop, SK’s project *DAW: Dramowa Akademia Wолentariacka* (Voluntary Drama Academy - Białystok), and visited two SK projects: *SUBST – Reorientacja* (performance and workshops on substance abuse - Warszawa), *SPOKO – Spotkanie z konfliktem* (performance and workshops on conflict management - Warszawa); two gatherings celebrating SK’s tenth anniversary with SK’s foreign partners8 and a conference on education and multiculturalism9. Moreover, I visited two institutions working on Roma issues: the Roma exhibition of the Ethnographic Museum in Tarnów and Dom Spotkań Angelus Silesius's seminar on Roma culture10 (Wrocław). Visiting these project enabled me to obtain a deeper insight into SK’s work and other Roma related initiatives.

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8 Conference with John Somers 24.02.2012, Warszawa; Open gathering and dinner in connection with Forum Theatre workshops held by Roberto Mazzini 18.05.2012

9 Edukacja w dobie migracji i wielokulturowości. (Żłudne) obietnice wielokulturowości. (Education in the era of migration and multiculturalism. The (false) promises of multiculturalism). 27th February 2012, Warsaw University, main campus


My double identity of being born to Polish parents and growing up in Norway, I believe, turned mostly to my advantage. Firstly, being fluent in the native language in a country where English is not widely spoken helped immensely, not only in understanding underlying messages and turns of phrase, but also general behaviour and nuances of interaction and practice. In dealing with the Polish language I try to stay as true as possible to the original images and meanings (Kazubowski-Houston 2010). Secondly, while I was familiar with the Polish context having visited the country numerous times, I could also see it from an outsider’s perspective. Thirdly, I was perceived much as a foreigner and outsider, once someone discovered I did not grow up in Poland. Although sometimes treated as the “unknowing child”, I was most frequently met with some sort of desire to impress. This can be seen in connection with Western countries often being thought of as more developed in almost any field ranging from minority rights and social educational work to the overall financial situation. For this reason I often tried conceal my Norwegian origin.

During my fieldwork I took on and was assigned multiple, sometimes overlapping roles. The active participant in the NGO and the foreigner have already been mentioned. The role of the researcher gave me access to the field in the first place and a clearly defined position which allowed me to always be the “tag along”. Yet, at times my inability to answer the expectations of my informants when asked about what exactly it was that I wanted to know created an atmosphere of uncertainty as to my role and alliances. To some extent I suppose this can be explained by participant observation not being widely practiced in Polish academia.

Building trust in relationships with informants is perhaps the most important task at hand for any anthropologist entering a new social field. In Patchwork my key informants find themselves in a very similar role. They enter into an environment which is new to them, where there is a conflict between the principal and the Roma assistant and where they need to establish trust with their beneficiaries. Being studied in this vulnerable position has inevitably impacted on which information they chose to present to me as an outsider.

The challenge which I found most difficult to handle during my fieldwork was to deal with the frustrations when my attitudes and beliefs collided with values and practices concerning Roma issues and the upbringing of children. Feeling forced to keep this to myself in order to retain positive relationships and avoid any extra impact on situations or opinions, I constantly challenged myself to try and understand, rather than judge what I saw and heard.

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11 This is based on statements made by friends, family and the Roma assistant in the school in Krosno.
I anonymize all names of informants or use a position they inhabit (e.g. project leader) to refer to a person. I sometimes change the gender or my relationship to a person to protect that person’s privacy. I do not change the name of the organisation or the town in which *Patchwork* is held, because I refer to public sources where Stop Klatka and *Patchwork* are explicitly written about.

**Structure of the Thesis**

In chapter one I introduce Stop Klatka’s background as a “cosmopolitan, elite, business NGO” working with applied drama and outline their organisational structure. In chapter two I present SK’s *Patchwork* project, and the background and agency of the central actors involved in it: the *Open Society Foundations* (OSF) funding the project, the social context of Polish schools and the Roma community. I also lay out the theoretical perspective for this thesis. In chapter three I zoom out at the structural level and examine some dilemmas faced by the new Polish civil society. I investigate SK’s interpretative autonomy in interaction with state and foreign funders, particularly focusing on the *Patchwork* project design.

In the following chapters I zoom in at the local level and turn to SK’s operational autonomy in the implementation of *Patchwork*. In chapter four I examine SK’s position in the local school environment where *Patchwork* was held, and the ethnicised power dynamics there. In chapter five and six I analyse how SK implements and represents the project in interaction with the school environment and OSF, and propose some possible explanations. In doing so I particularly focus on “Roma inclusion”, the official goal as it is set by the *Open Society Foundations*. Additionally, I examine to which extent SK has the possibility to create these representations independently. In chapter six I also propose some alternative approaches to “Roma inclusion”.
Chapter 1: Stop Klatka

On a Friday evening in February 2012 Stop Klatka has invited its volunteers, affiliates and friends to an open celebration of its tenth anniversary. They have also invited three guest speakers, one experienced SK member, a Warsaw University professor and SK’s honorary member, previous applied drama professor at the University of Exeter. The venue where it all takes place, located far from the SK office, is a hip bar in the centre of Warszawa where SK has booked a separate room. To make sure the guests find their way, a formally dressed board member meets them at the entrance where she politely greets them and guides them in the right direction. Relaxing background music soothes the presumably busy and hard working city people as they enter to take a seat in the neatly assembled rows of chairs facing a stage.

We are waiting for the guest of honour, Stop Klatka’s honorary member, John Sommers, to arrive when a cheerful lady, the president of SK, comes by to liven everyone up with some drama exercises and inform about upcoming workshops. She tells us that they will be right with us and that we should get to know each other in the meantime.

After an introduction by the president and one of the board members the event starts with each of the invited guests giving a talk related to applied drama while being filmed for a promotional video. As the event progresses one gets the impression that this looks like a press conference followed by a question and answer session. However, in the second part of the evening a number of people affiliated with the organisation talk about how drama has affected them personally and professionally, drawing on theory as well as examples from their own lives. They all seem to have solid academic backgrounds, which they in some way or another emphasise. Some have been working with disadvantaged youth, some are teachers, therapists and businessmen or women, but no theatre people, musicians or other artists take the floor. After the event some of us sit down for a chat over a drink, the conversations are casual and relaxed, but at the very end documents and bills start changing hands as in an executive meeting.

When I take the tube home I keep thinking about what a girl who was there together with a theatre director said, that she did not quite understand what Stop Klatka and drama was all

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12 24.02.2012, Warszawa

about. In fact I was not so sure myself. However, after spending a few more months with the organisation I did start to get a better grasp of who they are, something I will try to explain in the following.

As the above description suggests, Stop Klatka is a player in Poland’s new civil society rooted in the post-transformation intelligentsia. One could perhaps say that the people working for Stop Klatka are “civilized strangers” and their organisation a “cosmopolitan, elite, business NGO”. While SK’s office is situated in the Praga district in the Eastern part of Warszawa, inside what is known amongst Varsovians as “the Bermuda Triangle” where one supposedly risks disappearing into the hands of a criminal underclass, the people described above seem to associate more with the city centre and its modern, upper class profile. One SK member also confirms this lack of belonging to Praga by claiming that the location of their office is just a matter of cheap rent.

The Praga district is clearly experiencing an early stage of gentrification and can be seen as an area where “civilized intelligentsia”\(^{14}\) have come to meet the “vulgar dresiarze”\(^{15}\). During the last ten years or so the socially and economically privileged have come to establish themselves on “the other side of the river”\(^{16}\) making their own changes to Praga’s physical scenery and cultural life (Rózga 2009). Alongside grey, run down residential buildings, wobbly pavements and shops selling cheap produce, alternative theatres, culture houses, small galleries, cafes, bars and other “off places” have started to pop up. Together with the rebuilt football stadium which was until recently Europe’s largest open market place and the occasional shopping malls and advertisements for modern housing facilities they stand out as symbols of the rapid changes taking place in Praga, Warszawa and Poland in general.

The cultural life Stop Klatka brings with them comes in the form of applied drama. Applied drama emerges from a tradition of cultural activism and encourages people from a variety of backgrounds to participate in workshops and different forms of performances (Nicholson 2005). Applied drama combines several new educational approaches and techniques

\(^{14}\) “Cywilizowany/a/e” and “inteligencja” are emic terms which often carry positive connotations when describing people one should look up to

\(^{15}\) “Wulgarny/a/e” is an emic term which often carries negative connotations when describing people one should look down on. “Dresiarz / dresiara” is an emic term for mostly young people who are up to no good, often dressed in sportswear.

\(^{16}\) “The other side of the river” is a common reference to the Praga district among people living in Warszawa
emphasising role-play and improvisation. It thus provides an alternative to traditional education and has a specific focus on social intervention as it aims to inspire change in people’s attitudes, beliefs and behaviour. As applied drama is made up of hybrid practices this makes it possible for different practitioners to adjust it to a specific setting. The basic purpose of applied drama, as expressed by SK members, is for the participants to enter fictive situations while playing a role, in order to learn from the experience and later use this knowledge in their own lives\textsuperscript{17}. For example, in one of the tasks assigned in SK’s educational drama workshop I attended in December 2011, was to play out and later discuss a conversation between an employer and an employee. In line with this understanding of applied drama John Sommers\textsuperscript{18}, defines applied drama as “drama which has a job to do”, implying the use of drama and theatre as a tool to induce social change in a specific social context\textsuperscript{19}. SK has here chosen to focus on the “job” rather than the “drama”. In other words, Stop Klatka, in contrast with many theatres in Praga aiming to work with difficulties facing communities, such as teatr Remus\textsuperscript{20}, SK perceives their work as intervention and education, not as theatre and art.

Examining the organisation further we discover that the social and financial side of Stop Klatka hinted at in the introduction of this chapter, fits well with the description of a “cosmpolitan, elite, business NGO”. Firstly, the strong roots and connections in Polish and British academia has had a strong impact on SK’s profile and work. Secondly, SK has developed into what a recent report on the everyday life of NGOs describe as a “business NGO” (Przewłocka et al. 2012). “Business NGOs” typically comprise a small proportion of Polish NGOs and have a metropolitan and elitist character. They often receive more of their grants from non-public donors and have access to more resources than do organisations outside Warszawa (Gumkowska et al 2010). In practice this means that SK is now an organisation operating on a daily basis with a considerable human resources base and an annual budget of approximately 500 000 PLN (2012). Moreover, SK has reached a point where it is expanding and restructuring in terms of staff, partners and beneficiaries,

\textsuperscript{17} SK educational drama workshop 15.12.2011, Warszawa

\textsuperscript{18} Conference with John Somers 24.02.2012, Warszawa

\textsuperscript{19} Stop Klatka’s main mission is working for social change using applied drama and teaching applied drama. \url{http://stop-klatka.org.pl/stowarzyszenie/} (entered 19.10.2012)

\textsuperscript{20} \url{http://www.teatrremus.pl/index_ang.html}
organisational structure, long term strategies, reporting procedures, geographical areas covered and financial income.21

Organisational Structure

The organisational structure of Stop Klatka is composed of two broad categories consisting of the board, i.e. the president and two board members, and a vast group of volunteers. Additionally, the organisation is dependent on its network, i.e. partners, beneficiaries and donors.

The board is the backbone of the organisation and its members were the most important informants in my research with whom I was in regular contact throughout my fieldwork. Hanna, the president of Stop Klatka and the lady we met at the beginning of this chapter sets the tone for the organisation. In many ways she stands out as a strong and charismatic leader, a position she has held from the very start, investing almost all her working life in the growth of the organisation. Her laughter and uncommonly positive approach is a stark contrast to a prevailing pessimistic and critical attitude so often encountered in Polish society.22 Together with the other two board members, she is the most important contributor in setting the standards for Stop Klatka. Being a busy person, her days appear to be planned out to precision. One will find her on her way to or from holding workshops, writing project proposals, articles, organizing meetings, taking phone calls and in other ways constantly working towards realising new tasks and projects. “I can easily drive six hours to be on time for work (...)” and “meeting more than four hundred people a week is quite normal for me”, she once throws into a conversation. Both of the other two board members, Ida and Weronika, keep a similar tempo, juggling many different responsibilities and projects at once, - one of them more than the other. As the president has moved to south eastern Poland, Ida has taken over many of the organisational responsibilities in Warszawa.

Hanna and Ida together make up a leader duo for the organisation. Their roles could be understood as what Geertz (1972) speaks of as “deep players”. They invest considerable resources and run high risks, - “the game” is important to them. In other words, they place a lot of time and effort into running the organisation and much is at stake for them compared to that of the other people working for SK. In addition to being in charge of finances and

21 Interview with board member 10.01.2013

22 Conversations with project participants, school staff and random informants
administration, they are the main project leaders from the planning, to the implementation and follow up phases, and ultimately responsible for the existence of the organisation. Moreover, I would claim that running projects for SK is an important part of their lives and how they define themselves. The same seems to be true for Weronika, the third board member, and perhaps a handful of SK’s volunteers.

The volunteers make up a diverse group of hundreds of people who have been trained in applied drama and/or are involved in administrative work. Most volunteers, as opposed to the board are subcontracted on a short term, project basis. It is not uncommon for them to leave when a project finishes and return when a new project starts. However, some stay for longer periods and can be said to constitute a relatively stable base of experienced staff within SK. They often change positions within the organisation, so that for instance, an intern working with research can also write project proposals and help facilitate workshops if she is considered to have the right qualifications. According to a recent report such a flat and fluent structure is a common feature of Polish NGOs (Przewłocka et al. 2012). This in turn makes the internal organisation more flexible and less transparent, but also places the board in a powerful position.

Whereas the board is in charge of all areas and makes all final decisions concerning the organisation, it needs to delegate work to volunteers. How to recruit and keep the “right” volunteers, and how to monitor and guide volunteers in their work thus become important concerns. It appears that one of the strategies applied by SK to attract volunteers is to present them with the opportunity to gain valuable work experience and the possibility to advance within the organisation. By participating in SK’s internal work (e.g. planning projects) and/or external activities (e.g. assist in workshops), volunteers potentially have the opportunity to rise to the positions of assistant of drama trainers, then drama trainer or project leader, or take on more responsibilities in the administrative work of the organisation. There is a formally recognised way of advancing which contributes to build up an elite of educated and financially better equipped people. Still, fulfilling the official requirements for the extensive competence in terms of higher education and drama training, might only increase, but not guarantee a higher position within the organisation. The more common way of joining Stop Klatka, is through informal contacts, based on the volunteers’ initiative, skills and qualities. While having several ways of attracting volunteers and affiliates helps SK increase their contact network, the headhunting strategy helps them choose people they see fit to work for the organisation. Even if SK has no permanent employees and in principle all staff work on an
unpaid voluntary basis, some do receive varying amounts of remuneration. Because there is no internal system of organising the flow of resources, the board members decide how they are to be distributed.

Stop Klatka has built up a substantial network nationally, and to some extent also internationally. Stop Klatka’s partners, in addition to academic institutions, include a wide range of actors including public institutions, organisations, media and private contacts. Together with the volunteers they are central in keeping the organisation alive. They can, for example, help out with marketing, provide information about new sources of funding and help solving practical issues such as finding venues. The most central beneficiaries are probably Polish schools.

The two most important sources income for Stop Klatka’s are the organisation’s for profit activities (the Drama School) and project funding from donors. The former makes up for approximately one third of its income and the latter comes predominantly from public funders, but with increasing amounts pouring in from other sources in recent years. The impact of funding will be discussed in chapter three.

Conclusion

Stop Klatka’s background as it is described above lays the base for the organisation’s agency and gives SK significant possibilities to develop its own policies and strategies. SK’s extensive social, cultural and economic capital, including academic credibility, a new “cultural product”, a large national network and growing organisational capacity has made it possible to run the organisation efficiently and established it as a strong actor in Polish civil society. This in turn has further increased the organisation’s possibilities to build up their organisation and attract new funding, volunteers, partners and beneficiaries, and thus also their ability to intervene through their projects. However, as will become apparent in the following chapters, Stop Klatka also faces some challenges.

Polish civil society is still “under construction” and currently consists of a multitude of relatively small, diverse and underfunded organisations. NGOs are heavily dependent on governmental funding, and more recently foreign donors. Moreover, it is crucial for them to gain the trust of, and present themselves in a positive manner towards all the various actors they work with. In this process they are caught between top down directives and externally set goals on the one hand and local actors, and concrete practices and attitudes on the other.
Chapter 2: Background and Theory

In this thesis I have particularly directed my attention towards Stop Klatka’s *Patchwork* project. Approached from the macro level *Patchwork* is a result of post transformation ethno politics and the flow of resources to larger NGOs and states from a variety of international funders contributing to a theoretical turn in approaching ethnic minorities. The new discourses brought with them a focus on minorities as a possibility of cultural enrichment and as deserving of specific rights (Vermeersch 2008, Kopańska 2011), and was followed up by legal reforms. It is this new turn towards minorities that made SK hold a project on “Roma inclusion” and Polish schools to implement the state run *Programme for the Roma Community*. However, these are largely “top down” undertakings. The State Representative of National and Ethnic Minority Affairs in the Podkarpacie Voivodeship claims that: “(..) support for the Roma has been simply non-existent in Poland. Had it not been for the EU nothing would have happened here for them”. This is why it is important to look into how policies are implemented, and forces us to examine practices, values and beliefs at the local level. From a micro level perspective *Patchwork* can be understood as a result of ethnicised power dynamics in a primary school in Krosno, which largely continue to reproduce previous communist policies and practices.

In the following I introduce *Patchwork* and the theoretical foundation for this thesis. I then examine the background and agency of the central actors involved in the project. These are *The Open Society Foundations* (OSF), Polish school(s) and the Roma community.

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and


25 Interview 03.06.2012
Patchwork

The project on which this thesis centres, Patchwork - The use of applied drama method in working with multicultural community, was conducted by Stop Klatka in a primary school in the south eastern town of Krosno between August 2011 and June 2012. Its central goal was “Roma inclusion” and it had as its main purpose to try out artistic techniques in the form of theatre and drama, when working with the Roma people in a primary school.

The first intervention was an introductory workshop held by the project leaders at a summer camp for the Roma children in August 2011. During the project period two training for trainers workshop sessions were held for the teachers. However, the bulk of the project consisted of weekly applied drama workshops for children as part of their after school activities. Separate workshops were held for the youngest group (grade 1-3) and for the older children (grade 4-6). Lastly, a Theatre in Education play was developed by a group of volunteers in cooperation with some of the children participating in the workshops and the project leaders.

Patchwork was run by the leader duo, Hanna and Ida. Hanna was in charge of the overall pedagogical implementation and Ida was administratively and financially responsible. However, they had also appointed a “project crew”; Sandra, the internal researcher reporting back to OSF; Ela, the project assistant and grass-root coordinator; Renata, an SK volunteer and myself. Together with Ela and Renata, I contributed in planning and holding workshops as well as filling in evaluation forms.

Towards the end of the project a group of nine volunteers including Ela, Renata and myself participate as actors in Patchwork’s Theatre in Education play26. Additionally, the project leaders hired an independent director from Lublin, Daniel, to guide us through the process. Between March and June 2012 we took part in rehearsals, writing out the script and practical preparations for the play. The meetings took place in an NGO centre in Rzeszów, private housing and the school in Krosno.

Of all the projects held by SK, Patchwork was the first project which lasted for a longer period of time and aimed to actively include an ethnic minority. SK’s previous projects have primarily been of an educational nature. For example, the project “Hominem Quaero –

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26 See appendix I
szukam człowieka”27 was an educational project aiming to “give [high school] students a better understanding of the problems of minority groups and the phenomenon of discrimination” (Cieslikowska 2010:157). Another project, “Emo-link”, held at a school with a significant proportion of Chechen refugee children, had as its main purpose to teach Polish children about Chechen culture and their situation in Poland. However, the project only lasted for a short period of time (Winiarek-Kołucka 2010). We see that, even if SK initially did not have an explicit focus on minority issues it has been drawn into the so called ethno business or Gypsy industry 28 through Patchwork. Just like the “identity economy” described by Comaroff and Comaroff (2009), the new ethno politics and the ethno business have as their objective to increase awareness of a specific ethnicity, give it a form in which to express itself and shape understandings of it in different directions. Just like the “identity economy” produces “ethnic products”, ethno politics produce “ethic projects” such as SK’s Patchwork on “Roma inclusion”. Here various actors work together in a network, before they dissolve into the project. The interaction goes through dialectic processes, where that which takes place at the macro level informs social life at the micro level and the practices at the micro level produce social formations at the macro level. Thus, for instance, practices at a local school can be descriptive of how an NGO or the state operates and vice versa.

To explain the forces at work which shape the different actors’ agency, i.e. their possibilities and constraints in forming Patchwork, I find Ortner’s (2006) perspective on practice theory 29 particularly applicable. Expanding on the definition of agency as the ability to act on one’s own volition and the ability to intervene, I use Ortner’s concept of subjectivity to explain agency. Additionally, and apart from practice theory, I rely on Bourdieu’s (1986) notion of capital to incorporate material factors into the explanatory framework. I suggest that we see the subjectivity and capital of the actors involved in Patchwork as a background which gives a certain form and intensity to their agency.

Ortner (2006) uses the term subjectivity to describe both an inner state and structural frameworks. The former type of subjectivity is described as “the ensamble of modes of perception, affect, thought, desire, and fear that animate acting subjects”, and the latter as “the

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27 “Hominem Quaero – searching for the human being”

28 The ethno business or the Gypsy industry are used mostly as vernacular terms to refer to NGOs and other agencies working on behalf of ethnic minorities and the Roma people (Trehan 2011).

29 Practice theory emphasises a person’s ability to act, and at the same time incorporates a dialectical relationship between structural constraints and the practices of social actors (Ortner 2006:2-3).
cultural and social formations that shape, organize, and provoke those modes (…)” (Ortner 2006:107). The concept is thus important as a major dimension of human existence and its complexity, and at the same time politically significant as the basis of agency. Further subjectivity is reproduced and transformed through dialectic processes, explaining “how people (try to) act on the world even as they are acted upon” (Ortner 2006:110).

The term subjectivity is a “specifically cultural and historical consciousness” (Ortner 2006:111), suggesting that subjectivities change slowly through history. As such subjectivity is akin to Bourdieu’s notion of capital defined as accumulated labour (Bourdieu 1986). However, subjectivity does not, at least not directly, encompass social elements or structures such as financial resources, human networks, institutionalized knowledge etc. I therefore include economic, social and cultural capital, understood primarily as resources, into the analysis. These resources have been recognized as socially significant in a particular social context and time, but are scares and unequally distributed. This in turn both enables and constrains the agency, and also power, of different actors in various ways (Bourdieu 1986, Bugge 2002).

Stop Klatka’s background and agency has been dealt with in chapter on e. When implementing Patchwork SK, with its particular background, has to manoeuvre between and interact with the backgrounds of the actors they work with.

The Open Society Foundations

*The Open Society Foundations* (OSF) becomes important to Stop Klatka as it gives the guidelines for the implementation of Patchwork. OSF has as its central mission to create open societies in place of authoritarian forms of government and aims to stand up against marginalisation, oppression and intolerance. In the context of Central and Eastern Europe “open societies” can be understood to represent an alternative model to previous Eastern Bloc communist societies and the worldview of “Homo Sovieticus” (see page 26). Moreover, its humanitarian agenda has made OSF direct considerable attention towards the Roma people. Founded in 1984, its background is closely tied to the life of its founder, the Hungarian Jew, George Soros, aptly named the “Messianic Billionaire” he has established himself as a financial giant, an entrepreneur with a liberal altruistic approach, an influential public and intellectual figure and a player on the global stage. Soros has published numerous books and

30 [http://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/ (entered 02.07.2014)](http://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/)
articles on socioeconomic and political issues and is invited by world leaders, academic institutions and media to give talks. Surviving the evils of Nazism and Communism Soros escaped to London, earned his degree from the London School of Economics and succeeded spectacularly in the financial world. He started to set up such giant funds as the Quantum Funds and quickly began to transfer his increasing wealth to philanthropic activities such as the *Open Society Foundations*. Since its establishment OSF has expanded to most regions of the world covering a variety of issues, including education and youth; governance and accountability; health; media and information; and rights and justice. However, from the start Central and Eastern Europe has received considerable attention. Soros supported dissident movements during communism and founded numerous local foundations. In 1991 he established the Central European University as a centre of research and policy analysis with the aim to train a new generation of political and economic leaders. CEU received students and employed staff from countries all over the world and all students received Soros scholarships. Moreover, out of the several hundred Central and Eastern European foundations working for Roma related causes in the region OSF is the foundation which has done most for the Roma through their projects (Barany 2002). It has created its own programme directed at the Roma, set up the Decade of Roma inclusion with the World Bank and transferred their Roma educational programmes to a newly established Roma Education Fund. Moreover, OSF representatives and Soros has given speeches in international fora and written extensively on the Roma.

OSF’s approach to ethno politics follows a trend in CEE where rather than introducing large scale socioeconomic programmes, small scale initiatives concerning the Roma which aim to acknowledge them as a cultural group are set up (Guy 2001). With OSF’s intention to deconstruct the negative image of the Roma, they produce a “phantom Roma”, a certain (reductionist) representation of a “sanitized Roma”. The “sanitized Roma” is a political

31 [http://georgesoros.com](http://georgesoros.com) (entered 14.06.2014)

32 Quantum Funds are privately owned hedge funds advised by George Soros through the New York based Soros Fund Management LLC (Ahmed 2011)


34 [http://georgesoros.com](http://georgesoros.com) (entered 14.06.2014)

35 [http://georgesoros.com](http://georgesoros.com) (entered 14.06.2014)

representation mainly encountered in official directives and programmes, portraying an image of the Roma mostly resembling those belonging to the modern, educated elite.

Polish Schools

A Polish school is Stop Klatka’s most important working partner when implementing Patchwork. Consequently, the school system and its cultural capital has a significant impact on the choices SK makes in the implementation phase.

In Poland education is accessible, compulsory and free of charge\(^{37}\) to all. Most children attend public schools in the vicinity of where they live as private schools are hard to come by and expensive. In 1999 the previous eight-year single structure primary school system was reformed to one year of pre-school from the age of 5/6 followed by primary education, lower secondary education (three years) and upper secondary education, (three or four years). Primary education has been divided into two blocks of three years each. In the first three years there is one teacher to one class and students are not given formal examinations and standardized marks. In the remaining three years the curriculum is broadened and students are given separate teachers for each subject. Students begin to sit formal examinations and receive grades. At level six (age 13) children write an examination that determines the particular gimnazjum (high school) they will attend.

Much has been written about the education reforms. Questions around issues such as modernization of teaching methods, a (re)turn towards conservative national and religious values, inequalities between students, administrative organisation and the school’s relationship with parents and the local community have been raised (Elsner 2000, Kawka 2000, Polak 1995).

The impact of ethno politics on the education system also becomes apparent through the many new regulations introduced. Perhaps the two most important laws were the *Education System Act of 7 September 1991*\(^{38}\) and the *Regulation by the Minister of National Education of 14 November 2007*\(^{39}\). Both placed responsibilities on schools to support ethnic and national minorities’ identity, language, history and culture. The latter opened up for extracurricular

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\(^{37}\) Text books, school uniforms, lunches and most school supplies are paid for by the guardians.


activities for Roma children and for employing a Roma assistant\textsuperscript{40} who would act as a link between the school and the Roma guardians. These laws are in large part being implemented through the state run Programme for the Roma Community (2004-2013), which prioritizes education as its most important component. The programme attempts to deal with both the socioeconomic situation of the Roma people, but also takes a rights based, “cultural” approach\textsuperscript{41}. It particularly emphasises factors that can prepare Roma for further education and the labour market (e.g. school attendance, improving marks) and immediate aid (e.g. providing books, insurance, excursions) (Frydrysza\k{e}k 2010, Federacja Centrum Szpitalna 2012). At the local level the municipality and the principal of the school, ideally in cooperation with the Roma assistant, make decisions regarding objectives and practices. The decentralization of the programme makes their relationships crucial to the implementation of the programme. Moreover, lack of thorough and reliable monitoring mechanisms and the short time period the programme has existed contribute greatly to the difference in practices between schools. However, at least three central features characteristic of Polish schools have prevailed despite recent reforms, namely assimilation\textsuperscript{42} and segregation\textsuperscript{43}, a strong focus on educational achievements and a closed, hierarchical system.

The communist policies and practices of assimilation and segregation lean on the assumption that it is the Roma children who need to adapt to the school system (e.g. learn the Polish language, attend classes regularly) rather than the other way around (e.g. the school should provide Roma children with Roma language classes or make room for a flexible schedule for families who travel). Moreover, they are based on a view where ethnicities other than Polish should be monitored and allowed to exist only on the side of society, rendering them nearly invisible to the public. In practice this involved severe control over Roma everyday life, such

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{40} Roma assistants where introduced in all Polish schools in 2004 as part of the country-wide “Programme for the Roma community” run by the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Administration. http://www.msw.gov.pl/portal/en/10/55/Programme_for_the_Roma_community_in_Poland.html (entered 09.06.2014)

\textsuperscript{41} http://www.msw.gov.pl/portal/en/10/55/Programme_for_the_Roma_community_in_Poland.html (entered 09.06.2014)

\textsuperscript{42} Assimilation is a process by which the ethnic group gradually loses its identity markers of distinctiveness and merges into the majority population. This presupposes that there is a real practical possibility of removing the stigma imposed by the dominant population” (Eriksen 2002:30) “Although (…) policies of assimilation are often believed to help their target groups to achieve equal rights and to improve their social standing, they often inflict suffering and loss dignity on the part of the minorities, who thus are taught that their own tradition is of no value” (Eriksen 2002:123).

\textsuperscript{43} “Ideologies of segregation often hold that it is harmful to ‘mix cultures’ or races, and are concerned with boundary maintenance. The context is always one of power asymmetry (…)” (Eriksen 2002:123).
\end{footnotesize}
as high fines for school absence, placing Roma children in “special schools” and militia raids; and resulted in the few public displays of “Roma culture” such as music, dance and crafts being strictly monitored. While recent policies open up for Roma history, culture, language and experiences being introduced in schools, this is not being implemented through the school programmes.

The “educational consciousness” in Polish schools with its strong focus on achievements becomes apparent through the importance placed on good marks and winning prizes, and the central role of extracurricular activities in all schools. For instance, exams are taken very seriously and students wear their best clothes when writing them. Moreover, most schools regularly organise contests, quizzes and tests; and encourage students who perform well to sign up for so called Olimpiady, contests on regional or national levels. Successful students are publicly acknowledged at official ceremonies or have their pictures or names displayed in school corridors for everyone to see. The large variety of extracurricular activities often range from the natural sciences and mathematics to literature, dance, chess etc. and aim to enhance students’ knowledge or help children who lag behind.

The hierarchical administration in Polish schools has its origin in a closed, nontransparent, carefully censured and monitored state bureaucracy based on a communist ideology. Here the central control mechanism was to induce fear leading to outside influence and new ideas being regarded with scepticism. This involved strict requirements for teachers and sanctions if they were not followed, for instance the possibility of losing ones job. There were also centrally orchestrated controls, “wizytacje”, to make sure schools were “doing things right”. Parents or guardians were usually not involved in school related activities unless there was a need to inform them of their child’s performance or behaviour. In this educational bureaucracy each “prezes” had his or her subordinates and was in turn controlled by higher ranking officials.

A central implication of the post transformation reforms in Polish schools is a discrepancy between the state’s modern project of social engineering and the host of informal practices and improvisations that can never be codified (Scott 1998). In practice this can result in a dilemma where the school administration is drawn between the state’s new policies on the one hand and established practices on the other. In chapter four we will see how the interaction

44 “Prezes” refers to an authority figure inhabiting an important position in a bureaucracy, e.g. principal, president in a company.
between the two is played out in the school environment in Krosno where Patchwork was held.

The Roma community

Being the official beneficiaries of Patchwork the Roma community constitutes an actor which Stop Klatka has to incorporate into the project. However, as opposed to OSF and the school where Patchwork was implemented, it is an actor SK does not stand directly accountable to.

The Roma people\textsuperscript{45} constitute the largest ethnic minority in Europe without a coherently recorded history or any aim to put claim to a homeland. Distancing themselves from the majority population and being socially excluded and persecuted throughout history, the Roma have maintained a life on the margins of society. Even if they have inhabited the territory of Europe for centuries they have never managed to fit neatly into the idea of the modern nation state (Guy 2001). Currently most Roma live in Central and Eastern European countries (1.5 – 3.6 million), of which only between 13 000 to 30 000\textsuperscript{46} live in Poland making it the smallest number of Roma in the region (Barany 2002). The people we refer to as the Roma can at best be seen to constitute a fractured group with many different subgroups, interests, dialects/languages, norms etc. The four largest Roma groups in Poland are the Lovari, Kalderari, Polska Roma and Bergitka Roma/Carpathian Roma. They are dispersed in large towns mainly in central and western Poland. However, Bergitka Roma, the Roma living in Krosno, where Patchwork was held, live in villages and small towns in southern Poland and are considered to be the most integrated and modern (Mróz 2001).

It is common to distinguish between the “Roma elite” and the “common Roma”\textsuperscript{47}. The “Roma elite” is mostly educated, thought of as modern and interested in actively building up a Roma identity. This Roma intelligentsia consisting of both Roma and \textit{gadje}\textsuperscript{48} is still relatively young and small. The Roma “nationalisation project” only started in the 20\textsuperscript{th} century with the founding of the International Romani Union and such national identity markers as the Romani

\textsuperscript{45} Rom (plural: Roma) translates as man or human being.


\textsuperscript{47} These ideal type categories must be understood as porous and overlapping in real life.

\textsuperscript{48} \textit{Gadje} is the Romani term for non-Roma people
flag and the International Roma day (Kopańska 2011). Even if political attention and financial support followed the Roma elite has limited influence and only speaks to a specifically interested audience.

As most Roma people are poor they need to satisfy basic needs first and think of identity politics second. With the reorganisation of the market, unemployment hit CEE and Poland, particularly affecting the poorly educated Roma living in the southern regions who descended into deepening poverty (Guy 2001, Mróz 2001). Moreover, with the newly won freedom of expression the Roma people in CEE countries faced even greater antipathy by the majority population. Currently the Roma rank at the very bottom of national opinion polls49 and are subject to both verbal and physical assaults on a daily basis (Guy 2001). The “common Roma” can be described as guardians of the traditional “Romani law’, Romanipen, a set of meanings and practices attributed to being a real Rom. Despite the different understandings of Romanipen by different Roma groups, the term exists as a meaningful concept for all Roma and once being born a Rom one cannot escape its strict rules. Being excluded from the Roma community or being magerized is the worst sanction possible (Mróz 2001).

The position of the Roma in society can be understood to be of an ambivalent sort. In Bauman’s (2007) terms the Roma have remained “strangers” among “the natives”. The Rom, or the Gypsy as he is known to most, is not seen as the unfamiliar faraway “other”, but an ambivalent creature with multiple and sometimes unknown characteristics. This “stranger” is an “eternal wanderer” who is never really integrated, does not belong anywhere and can leave at any time. Yet he chooses to stay and live beside its hosts. He is both inside and outside, near and remote “blurring a boundary line vital to the construction of (...) a particular life-world” (Bauman 2007:61). In order to make sense of this “stranger” many attempts have been made to classify the Roma by creating certain images or representations of them.

Among the non-Roma the Roma are largely thought of as a “pariah group” without the ability to assume normal statuses in the larger society (Barth 1994) and as a “stereotypical Roma” with both exotic and burdensome characteristics attributed to them. However, various actors create their own images. The Open Society Foundations’ image is of a cultural, “sanitized Roma” (see page 18). Among the Roma, however, the above images exist side by side with other images such as the “victimized Roma” and the “assimilated Roma”, together portraying an image of a complex Roma identity.

49 http://www.cbos.pl/SPISKOM.POL/2007/K_144_07.PDF
Summary

In the above I have outlined the backgrounds of the actors involved in *Patchwork* and the type of agency they have in relation to SK’s work. From this follows that while the *Open Society Foundations* sets the parameters for SK’s interpretative autonomy, SK’s operational autonomy is largely defined by the local school environment with the principal as its representative.

Being a wealthy, politically strong and socially influential actor, the *Open Society Foundations* has considerable power to force through its own policies and philanthropic activities. In SK’s *Patchwork* project this gives OSF the possibility to, through the project guidelines, introduce its own take on ethno politics directed at the Roma people. OSF’s powerful agency potentially enables the foundation to transform images of and approaches towards the Roma that do not correspond with its stance, and consequently impact on prevalent subjectivities in society at large. However, as we will see in the next chapter, SK has its very own take on OSF’s initiative where it defines Roma inclusion through a “colourblind” psychological lense.

The education system represents a set way of doing things and a long tradition of a certain type of institutionalized cultural capital; and introducing anything new, such as *Patchwork*, into this system can be seen as a threat. The principal here has substantial power in setting the parameters for how any intervention is to take place in the school. The main “project” of Polish schools could perhaps best be described as ensuring a good quality of education, maintaining the hierarchical structure and leaving aside issues concerning other ethnicities. The Roma community on the other hand, with its weak economic capital, and fractured social and cultural is largely discredited by the majority population. They thus seem to have fewer possibilities to intervene on their own behalf, including opportunities to influence projects that might concern them. Yet, an emerging Roma elite is starting to develop and can constitute possible partners in implementing Roma related initiatives.
Chapter 3: The New Polish Civil Society

Since the days of communist rule, one of the many changes taking place is the establishment of a new Polish civil society. When my plane landed in Warszawa I was not met by militia questioning my motives for visiting an independent organisation. Instead this organisation was now supported by the state to carry out its own work in the manner its members saw fit. However, this same supportive attitude towards the new NGOs does not seem to exist in the Polish population.

In this chapter I explain and point to some implications of the general mistrust towards civil society and the reconceptualization of the NGO-state relationship. I then turn to look at NGOs and Stop Klatka’s interpretative autonomy.

Both public and foreign funding has come to heavily influence NGOs political agendas and challenge the organisations’ interpretative autonomy. Negotiating project goals involves both social processes and elements of problem solving and self interest. Pragmatic considerations become intertwined with ideological factors (Mosse 2004). We will see that in the state’s agenda of implementing civil society and The Open Society Foundations’ agenda of “Roma inclusion” become central concerns to SK’s work. However, at the same time the organisation’s own agency allows the project leaders to take their very own approach when setting project goals.

Civil Society Dilemmas

When thinking about Polish and Central and Eastern European civil society I take a broad perspective understanding it both as a social structure, i.e. as a third sector (Howard 2003), and as a set of beliefs, values and everyday practices (Hann et al. 1996). At the same time, due to the multitude of experiences of civil society in CEE I primarily deal with the country-specific issues of contemporary Polish civil society. Perhaps the most significant issue bothering civil society in Poland and CEE, as suggested by recent research, is the considerable mistrust (Howard 2003, Kotze 2006). Secondly, the reconceptualization of the state-NGO relationship challenges these NGOs interpretative autonomy.

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50 NGO is defined by the Polish authorities as a self governed, non profit organisation based on volunteer work and with the purpose to provide social services. http://www.pozytek.gov.pl/Organizacje.pozarzadowe.376.html (entered 13.03.2013)
The general mistrust towards NGOs is surprising if we compare with Western Europe where civil society is seen as an indispensable part of public life and democratic governance (Taras 2005). Moreover, it appears strange considering that it was Polish civil society which contributed to bring down the totalitarian regime and revitalised the concept as a subject of academic interest (Starr 1991). Nevertheless, I also encountered a general mistrust during my fieldwork.

“How you’re a społeczniiara51!” exclaims my friend after I have explained the non-profit profile of Stop Klatka. As he sees that I’m not quite understanding he explains that “a społeczniiara” is a derogatory term used to describe people working for free for idealistic causes. “The word can also refer to someone who is open to other people and their needs”, he says. Given the negative connotation, I take this to mean that this someone sees himself or herself as in the position of knowing what’s best for others. “But it depends. It can also be somebody who tells on others, an informer, [for instance someone who tells the teacher that a student is cheating in class]”.

Turning to the recent communist past for explanations we encounter the sociological prototype “creature”, Homo sovieticus (Kotze 2006). In this worldview volunteering for civil society actors did not appear as a reasonable option (Howard 2003). During communism societal organisations were closely supervised by a totalitarian state, which forced its citizens to join and made members of these organisations into collaborators (Starr 1991). In this context informal social relations consisting of strong networks of friends and family, which often took the form of working against the state, created important arenas where people could socialize and exchange favours (Kotze 2006). After the transformation people’s attitudes towards organisations did not change and when it became voluntary to participate in the new NGOs most people chose not to do so (Howard 2003). This general mistrust towards civil society present the new NGOs with significant challenges on how to obtain and retain the trust of volunteers, partners, beneficiaries and the general public. At the same time, it has to be added that the mistrust paradigm has been contested. Because trust is never absolute defining trust as a component of any group can lead to inaccurate generalizations. It is therefore necessary to ask about the social basis on which trust is constructed (Torsello 2008). This forces us to examine the actual practices of an NGO.

51 Społeczniiara (f)/spółek (m) are derived from the word społeczeństwo (society)
and its relationships with other actors. In the following chapters we will see just how important trust becomes for SK in the implementation of *Patchwork*.

Following the transformation the state-NGO relationship has been reconceptualised. Civil society has become a state influenced, rather than state controlled, sphere. However, the new civil society in CEE and Poland is, in great contrast to the Western European experience of grass-root movements, a result of top down political process. When the societal organisations of communist times fell apart, many had hoped the strong infrastructure of a resisting, anti-communist movement would translate into a solid base on which to build the new civil society. This did not take place (Starr 1991). Solidarity in its previous form dissolved and religious and political organisations were not defined as part of the current NGO world\(^{52}\). Moreover, most people involved in the resistance were not interested in building up the new NGOs. It was thus the politically influential dissident movements entering politics in the early 1990s who made it a political priority start constructing the new civil society from scratch (Starr 1991, Kłos 1994).

Firstly, it takes time to create a functioning legal framework and attempts to do so are still very much work in progress with legal acts offering only vague guidelines. Because neither organisational profiles nor scripts for civil society actors to perform their new roles have been adequately conceptualized, the emerging third sector has become incredibly diversified in terms of size, sources of income, fields of operation, how they function on a daily basis and how they relate to the authorities (Gąsior 2010, Przewłocka 2012). Such a situation opens up for not only much confusion but a field where new NGOs can operate relatively freely without the permanent regulations directed at an already well established NGO sector as the one in Western Europe (Taras 2005). Moreover, defining NGOs largely as autonomous entities with few constraints in terms of financial transparency, reporting mechanisms and supervision, the legal framework leaves them with substantial autonomy in conceptualizing and implementing their work. This becomes apparent in the most important laws governing

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\(^{52}\) Religious movements and political organisations are not defined as associations in Law on Associations Art 7.1.3 and 7.1.5 [http://isap.sejm.gov.pl/DetailsServlet?id=WDU19890200104/](http://isap.sejm.gov.pl/DetailsServlet?id=WDU19890200104/) (entered 28.02.2013)
[http://www.usig.org/countryinfo/laws/Poland/Poland%20Law%20on%20Associations.pdf](http://www.usig.org/countryinfo/laws/Poland/Poland%20Law%20on%20Associations.pdf) (entered 28.02.2013)
In most Polish research only associations and foundations are counted as NGOs. See e.g. Przewłocka et al. (2012) or Gumowska et al. (2010)
NGOs, *The Law on Associations*\(^{53}\) and *The Act of Law of April 24\(^{th}\) on Public Benefit and Volunteer Work*\(^{54}\).

Secondly, the state’s close relationship to NGOs gives it considerable political power to set the agenda for them. While the overall role of the new NGOs according to state guideline is to complement the activities of public administration\(^{55}\), a more concrete aim can be understood as making NGOs important actors in building up the new civil society\(^{56}\). The authorities’ “project” is made further possible through substantial EU assistance (Gąsior 2010, Osiecki 2011). Therefore, rather than controlling civil society using coercive methods, the state now provides financial incentives for NGOs to implement their policy and has made Polish NGOs heavily reliant on public grants. However, public funding is scarce and public donations are increasingly being distributed to NGOs outside the open application system. This in turn has created fierce competition for grants and pushed NGOs to align their policies with those of the state (Gumowska 2012, Rikmann 2013).

**Interpretative Autonomy**

While the inconclusive legal framework give NGOs considerable autonomy, political agendas can considerably influence NGOs’ interpretative autonomy in forming project goals. The close state-NGO relationship contributes to aligning Stop Klatka’s policy with that of the state. However, foreign donors’ agendas are new to most Polish NGOs, including SK, and a certain reluctance or inability to follow them could be expected. In what follows I firstly

\(^{53}\) http://isap.sejm.gov.pl/DetailsServlet?id=WDU19890200104/
http://www.usig.org/countryinfo/laws/Poland/Poland%20Law%20on%20Associations.pdf (entered 28.02.2013)

\(^{54}\) http://isap.sejm.gov.pl/DetailsServlet?id=WDU19890200104 /
http://www.usig.org/countryinfo/laws/Poland/Poland%20PBA.pdf (entered 28.02.2013)


\(^{56}\) See for example: UCHWAŁA NR XXVI/541/2011 - RADY MIASTA STOŁECZNEGO WARSZAWY z dnia 20 października 2011 r., w sprawie przyjęcia programu współpracy m.st. Warszawy w 2012 roku z organizacjami pozarządowymi i podmiotami, o których mowa w art. 3 ust. 3 ustawy z dnia 24 kwietnia 2003 r. o działalności pożytku publicznego i o volontariacie (RESOLUTION NO XXVI/541/2011 - WARSAW CITY COUNCIL of 20 October 2011 on the adoption of the programme for 2012 on cooperation between the City of Warsaw with non-governmental organizations and entities, referred to in art. three paragraph. 3 of the Act of 24 April 2003 on Public Benefit and Volunteer Work) (http://ngo.um.warszawa.pl/program-wspolpracy/programy-wspolpracy-z-lat-ubieglych entered 28.02.2013)
investigate how SK negotiates its interpretative autonomy with the state’s agenda of building civil society. I then explore SK’s interpretative autonomy vis a vis OSF’s agenda of “Roma inclusion” in setting the goals for Patchwork.

State Influence

The state’s preferred choice of partners are the big metropolitan organisations linked to the political and academic elite (Gąsior 2010), making Stop Klatka a perfect choice. Moreover, SK has kept a record of successfully obtaining public grants for its projects. It thus seems that it has made strategic choices to align the organisation’s policies with those of the state. The DAW\textsuperscript{57} project, an extensive training for trainers programme and SK’s largest project in terms of funding, participants and geographical areas covered, is an example of this. Here the organisation in practice builds up civil society as it trains people to conduct their own drama projects. Using “social capital” as a central term in this project can be seen as part of a political rhetoric where NGOs are to take over some of the government’s tasks and contribute to build a new liberal market economy (Czapiński 2011). The fact that the term is not explicitly mentioned in the organisation’s mission statement or statute seems to confirm this. This is in line with how the term is being used in international development discourses where it has taken on meanings other than those traditionally used in sociological theory\textsuperscript{58}, and ties together psychological, sociological and economic perspectives as well as individual and national aspects (Portes 2000). However, because the concept is so broad it becomes possible to stretch and apply it to fit different settings, goals, policies and practices - and to legitimise these under a common favourable heading. This makes it possible for SK to link it to applied drama and “social change”, and freedom to include a wide range of interpretations and activities without compromising their own background. Consequently, the interpretations of the term differ between projects (Chodasz 2012). In DAW the focus is on educating participants about “social capital”, defined as an “awareness of what is needed for people to work together and an openness towards the common good for the whole community or

\textsuperscript{57} Dramowa Akademia Wolentariacka (Voluntary Drama Academy)

The way SK links social capital to the In Patchwork “social capital” seems to embrace a set of topics relating to “Roma inclusion” and a primary school setting.

Foreign Funding

Polish NGOs have mostly been unable to take advantage of the relatively large sums of foreign funding which have become increasingly available to them (Makowski. However, with SK’s organisational capacities expanding, the organisation has become eligible for its fair share. Some of SK’s donors include eea grants, the Foundation Bre Bank, the Foundation for Cooperation, Funding for NGOs – Democracy and Civil Society, and more recently The Open Society Foundations (Chodasz 2012).

To Stop Klatka OSF comes across as a distant money provider with unreasonable demands. The project leaders and SK’s internal researcher particularly lament the lack of dialogue and the inability of the researcher hired by OSF to understand the realities on the ground. Moreover, by bringing ethno politics into the project OSF exposes SK to a field where they lack experience, network, knowledge and interest. Additionally, the project design is based on a trail and error approach and has relatively open goals. All this contributes to SK’s interpretative autonomy and the organisation’s choice to take their very own approach towards “Roma inclusion”.

The key objective for Patchwork as set by OSF is to “demonstrate the efficiency of educational theatre and drama as a methodology to facilitate Roma inclusion”. This is in line with OSF’s background and implies that “Roma inclusion” should involve some form of cultural change which takes form through the promotion of “the sanitized Roma” in artistic displays (see page 18). In the long term the overall idea seems to be to transform subjectivities which entail assimilation and segregation in the Polish population; and create lasting subjectivities with a favourable understanding of the Roma as a culturally distinct group.

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59 Briefing by SK in the project DAW, Białystok 18.02.2012

60 http://www.funduszeeuropejskie.gov.pl/PoradnikBeneficjenta/PoKL/Strony/1.3.1-Projekty-na-rzecz-społeczności-romskiej.aspx

61 Memo, Educational theatre and drama as a tool to facilitate Roma inclusion Open Society Foundations, Arts & Culture Program, Workshop for the Observers 3rd December 2011, Budapest
Furthermore, in line with the Decade of Roma inclusion, the OSF guidelines also specifically highlight two factors, namely Roma participation and closing the separation gap between the Roma and non-Roma. Participation can be understood both as the Roma taking an active part in the project and making “Roma culture” visible. However, the OSF guidelines merely take the beneficiaries to include “(…) the wider community”, in large part leaving it up to SK to define their target group as they please; whom exactly they want to involve in decision making processes and in the actual implementation, how they want to do it and to which extent.

The last central goal is “to enhance the mutual understanding of Roma and non-Roma and fight discrimination by means of dramatic experiences”. This correspond well with the overall goal of closing the separation gap, and suggest that there should be a focus on stereotypes and negative behavior towards the Roma. However, again there are no further specific guidelines as to how this should be interpreted or take place in practice, allowing for considerable interpretative autonomy.

Interpreting Patchwork

As is common practice for most institutions which want to receive funding, SK needs to formulate their Patchwork goals in a manner, which incorporates the background and “projects” of the organisation, while at the same time leaving out that which they cannot fully commit to or does not appear to benefit them. In doing so SK formulates the goals for the project so that they need not necessarily centre their work directly on Roma related issues. In Patchwork SK designs its own version of the project taking a “colourblind”, psychological approach.

The overall goal for the project as set by SK in their application is to “(…) enhance the quality of coexistence between the Roma and the Polish community in Krosno (south eastern Poland) using drama intervention (…)”. This should be done by “[creating] a space for cooperation between Roma and Polish children (currently after school activities are held in culturally homogenous groups)”.


Memo, Educational theatre and drama as a tool to facilitate Roma inclusion Open Society Foundations, Arts & Culture Program, WORKSHOP FOR THE OBSERVERS 3rd December 2011, Budapest

ibid
What is to take place when Roma and Polish children are brought together is suggested by the remaining goals set by SK, and the statements and material later produced about the project. I argue that in essence *Patchwork* is to be defined through a focus on educational components building on children’s skills and abilities; and through SK’s own perspective on diversity and multiculturalism.

In line with this SK writes that the aim of *Patchwork* is “(…) for children to discover their potentials and develop the ability to succeed” and “[enhance] self development” which is to take place by “increasing interpersonal and social skills”.

The psychological approach remains with SK throughout and is intertwined with their understanding of diversity and multiculturalism. Being able to choose the official name for the project, SK chose to call it *Patchwork - The use of applied drama method in working with multicultural community* where “Patchwork” meant to illustrate diversity (Chodasz 2012).

“Our aim was to show that everyone is different and that this is something good, (…) to make children aware that there are children who are poor and children who are rich, Polish children and Roma children and that everyone (…) has their strong sides”, says a board member.65

This understanding of diversity and multiculturalism stresses differences in terms of human characteristics (“strong sides”) and presents the Roma as one out of many aspects of our diverse and multicultural world. From this it seems that the other main goal, “acquainting the beneficiaries with discrimination as a phenomenon”, could simply be equated with bullying and that discrimination can be mitigated by enhancing children’s skills and abilities. SK’s recent publication confirms such a stance by claiming that “(…) discriminatory behavior appears in multicultural environments often because of a lack of belief in own competencies and a feeling of these not being acknowledged” (Chodasz 2012:123). Their application concludes that “We believe that by teaching children (…) respect for otherness, skills in cooperation and self development from an early age, and by developing their competencies and potentials this will influence the chances of a peaceful coexistence of that community”.

Additionally, SK lays the ground for making *Patchwork* a social, educational project for school children. Defining *Patchwork* as an educational project runs as a red line through the application with such expressions as “increasing knowledge “, “[shaping] opinions” and “developing creative skills”. Following from this the project takes a universalist perspective

65 [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8MEBulzpxk&feature=g-upl](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8MEBulzpxk&feature=g-upl) (entered 10.07.2012)
aiming to teach all children how to deal with difficulties in their lives, through the alternative pedagogy of applied drama.

When defining the target groups SK has the possibility to “create and promote social groups to fit their records” (Heyman 2004:490). They do so by defining the key beneficiaries as school children, defining the Roma as a problem group and by drawing on their own network and involving volunteers to run the project.

SK defines its beneficiaries in various ways including “Roma and Polish children”. However, the focus seems to be to educate the Roma in the school, rather than make them contribute actively with their own ideas. Thus the Roma assistant is to be offered separate educational drama workshops and “the project should improve the functioning of Roma children in the school environment (…)”. This in turn is suppose to “increase the Roma children’s motivation to learn” and help them make more “conscious choices regarding future employment”. In this way SK manages to incorporate OSF’s “sanitized Roma” by focusing on education and employment, but at the same time they lean on their own psychological, “colourblind” approach. At the same time, the Roma are implicitly defined as a “problem group” which needs particular corrective action, in line with prevalent attitudes encountered in Polish society and the school.

SK defines their partners as “partners whom we have worked with in our previous projects” such as Fundacja Inna Przestrzeń and Fundacja Ocalenie which work within the fields of multicultural diversity and anti-discrimination. This way SK draws on their own contacts, while at the same time they do not make it a priority to actively reach out to Roma people or Roma associations.

The last, and to SK perhaps most central category of beneficiaries they want to include are volunteers. This is a very strategic decision, which potentially strongly benefits SK as they can draw on the competence acquired by the volunteers in their future work and delegate some of their work overload.
Summary

Two central challenges facing Polish civil society, namely a general mistrust of NGOs and the altered relationship between civil society and the state. Both heavily impact on NGOs interpretative autonomy. While the new legislature gives NGOs much autonomy, the political and financial structures strengthen these organisations’ ties with the authorities, but also prompt NGOs to look for alternative sources of funding.

The influence of public funding has resulted in SK promoting civil society by introducing “social capital” as a brand for much of its work. Foreign funding, however, is new to most Polish NGOs and so is OSF’s relationship with SK. As a result SK ends up with a project with an unfamiliar topic, “Roma inclusion”, and unfamiliar expectations. At the same time, OSF’s open goals allow SK substantial freedom in negotiating their own goals.

We have seen that while not contradicting the OSF goals, SK’s understanding of the project is in line with SK’s background in psychology and social work. SK takes a “colourblind”, psychological approach emphasises children’s skills and abilities, and introduces “Roma inclusion” through the terms “diversity” and “multiculturalism”. Moreover, through their universalist perspective SK defines Patchwork as an social educational project for children. Lastly, SK’s answer to OSF’s approach involves the perspective of the majority population, where it is the Roma who have to adapt and where no active dialogue with nor involvement of the Roma people is attempted. I would thus argue that in essence Patchwork becomes a project which preaches “inclusion through exclusion”.
Chapter 4: The Local School Environment

In this chapter I start to deal with the social context where the *Patchwork* project was implemented and investigate Stop Klatka’s operational autonomy at the local level. The environment in the school in Krosno where *Patchwork* was held is new to SK and the project leaders are relatively unfamiliar with the barriers and possibilities they will encounter. The issues introduced in the previous chapters enter into play. More specifically, the mistrust towards civil society, the “educational consciousness” in Polish schools and the Roma-Polish relations become intertwined with the local environment, the power dynamics in the school and the relationships between the staff. The latter, and in particular the relationship between the principal and the Roma assistant, is emphasised as the greatest challenge by the project leaders.

In the following I elaborate further on the topics above. Firstly, I introduce the primary school and the staff SK depends on in the project. I also explain Stop Klatka’s position in the school and how SK’s background contrasts with the background of the local environment. I then turn to examine how the ethnic segregation and the power dynamics in the school interact with the policies of the programme for the Roma community.

In the conclusion I consider the implications of the above for SK’s operational autonomy in the implementation phase.

Stop Klatka at School

The primary school in Krosno is one of twelve primary schools in town. The staff counts more than 20 and there are 254 students attending the school, out of which 15 are Roma. It is the only primary school in Krosno which receives funding through the state run programme for the Roma community and employs a Roma assistant. The school fits well into the description of the practices in a closed Polish education system with its hierarchical setup, focus on educational achievement and ethnic segregation. At the same time, it has also come to grapple with the new ethno politics and new civil society actors introduced through the state run programme for the Roma community and SK’s project.

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66 Interview with principal 05.06.2012
The hierarchy in the school and the strong position of the principal is explained by Ida in this way:

> When working in schools we as a rule don’t involve the principal. This is because we see that the staff often don’t dare to say the truth. There was one exception, where the principal himself wanted to take part in our workshops, but he was very conscious of his role, and aware of what was going on between the teachers in that school. [C]oming down from the throne on which the principal is seated and into the group, down to people is a signal that I also want to be with you as a person, and I want to know your opinions and thoughts, and this is very difficult\(^6\).

Mrs. Przeworska, having been the principal in the Krosno school for more than thirty years, seems to occupy a similar role. She appears as the unquestionable leader who expects to be listened to and one could frequently hear her say “This is what I’ve decided” when talking to or about the staff. The principal is not often seen in the school corridors and classrooms and can mostly be approached in her office, just by the main entrance between the reception and the school pedagogue’s office.

\(^6\) Interview 07.07.2012
The position of Mrs. Kozak, the school pedagogue, can perhaps best be understood as the principal’s right hand and implementer of the prevalent “educational consciousness” in Poland. She is the contact person for the school, responsible for the after school day care centres, compensatory tutorials and theatre activities. The school pedagogue is dependent on maintaining a good relationship with her boss. In her conversations with me she gives the principal much of the credit for the school’s good reputation and emphasises the principal’s importance.

The Roma assistant, Konrad, is a Roma man in his mid twenties and a multifaceted character representing the local Roma community. His presence in the school is a direct result of the introduction of the state run programme for the Roma community. He is eager to talk and make a few jokes with people who cross his way. Even if Konrad has been working at the school since 2008, there is still considerable confusion regarding his role.

Stop Klatka’s position in the school could perhaps best be described as “outsiders”. This must be seen in connection with the cautious acceptance the organisation received when initiating Patchwork in the school. The following excerpt from the internal report written by the Open Society Foundations’ researcher states that:

Accessing the school was a long process. First, (...) the Roma assistant was contacted, and the trainers were introduced to the school by him. Later, it was realized that this was not helpful for any of the stakeholders. The assistant tried to position the trainers as “his people” which generated some mistrust among the teachers, including the Principal. The Principal was contacted again, and during this first personal meeting she was convinced about the good intentions of the trainers. (...) Later, she checked thoroughly what STOP-KLATKA was actually doing. Finally, the two trainers were invited to the Roma community summer camp, where they delivered introductory workshops. Final decision about their acceptance in the school was made when the director visited the first groups during the autumn, and realized that it is a pedagogically fruitful new method. With her support trainers received the real opportunity to build relationships with the teachers in the course of the first training. Still, the team of trainers could not ever feel that they are “inside” the school until the end of the project (Oblath 2012:6).

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68 The report here refers to the project leaders.
With a substantial degree of mistrust towards their activities it seems that SK is allowed into
the school mainly due to new state directives regarding NGOs. Mrs. Przeworska attitudes
towards civil society seems to be very positive when I talk to her and she claims that the
school is collaborating with some of the local NGOs. She accepts the new turn in politics
towards NGOs, explaining that “NGOs should play a role, and it’s even in the law that
schools have to cooperate with NGOs”. However, she adds that “It didn’t use to be like that”,
recognizing that working with civil society actors such as SK is new to her. I suggest that this
last statement points to the general mistrust towards civil society and is mixed with a
reluctance, and even fear, towards new ideas and practices concerning education and
integration that SK might try to introduce. These unknown changes could be seen as threats to
the established order and could potentially portray the practices in the school in an
unfavourable manner. The school pedagogue further confirms this when she repeatedly keeps
asking me what I’m going to write, and at some point exclaims that “Well, you might write
something bad about us!”’. At the same time there seems to be a strong belief that the current
practices in the school are the correct ones. In Ida’s words: “The staff here thinks they are
doing everything right!”.
The fears and apparent need to defend oneself is closely linked to the nature of Stop Klatka as
a “cosmopolitan, business NGO”. As such SK is not only an outsider to the school, but also
to Krosno and this region of Poland.
Firstly, as a Warszawa based organisation they do not yet have an established network here.
This prompts the project leaders to use their own network when starting up the project and
contact an acquaintance who is also the representative of the Roma in Krosno. Moreover,
rather than including people from Krosno, the project leaders actively use their own
volunteers from DAW\textsuperscript{69} who do not live in Krosno in the project, and draw on their extended
academic network when applying for the project:

The Polish partner invited to the [preparatory] workshop [by the Open Society
Foundations] was the University of Gdansk (the only non-NGO among the original
circle of invited organizations), represented by Adam Jagiello- Rusiłowski, the dean
responsible for the postgraduate teachers’ training in the field of educational theatre and
drama. He brought along Krzysztof Gojtowski, his former apprentice of Roma origin

\textsuperscript{69} Dramowa Akademia Wolentariacka (Voluntary Drama Academy) (See page 29)
from his former educational theatre and drama NGO “Wybrzezak” operating in Gdansk and Gdynia. After the workshop it turned out that the university could not apply (…) and connected Krzysztof with the Warsaw-based association STOP-KLATKA (Czibloy 2012:3).

Secondly, SK’s pedagogical approach can be understood as contradicting the prevalent “educational consciousness” which has created a competitive learning environment emphasising measurable learning outcomes over social skills, and has perpetuated inequalities between “good” and “bad” students. “We want to stop the rat race that takes place in Polish schools, says Ida. Instead we want children to focus on what they are interested in and passionate about”70.

In my conversations with the school pedagogue the focus on educational achievement was strongly emphasised. Furthermore, the importance of children being obedient and the teachers’ right to criticise their pupils was part of the school’s pedagogical practices. Mrs. Kozak explained that

Yes, in Western countries you might have more pedagogues and psychologists than we do, but here at least children learn something. (…) I know a boy from our school who went to live in Italy. When he came back he was way behind the other children.

The pressure to do well is also felt when I visit the classes. Often students compete to get the right answers when asked by the teacher, take pride in receiving good marks on tests and those doing well in quizzes and competitions are singled out to set an example. Moreover, on the school’s web page the children winning prizes in competitions in various subjects have their names publicly displayed71.

The school pedagogue elaborates on what she sees as the right pedagogical approach by saying that:

[The children] have to realize that certain things are demanded of them and take the consequences of their choices. For instance if a child doesn’t do as he or she is told that child won’t be allowed to go on a school trip. This is not because the family is poor, but because the child needs to learn that there are consequences. What’s happening now is

70 Interview with board member 07.07.2012

that we actually teach children how to not cope with life and they think they can do as they please.

The following incident during after school theatre activities is an example of the critical attitude towards children.

The theatre group for children is practicing to stage the fairy tale *Snow White* and I’m invited to join in to observe. About twenty children are seated in a circle on the floor. The first words coming from the school pedagogue are “Let’s start by someone getting yelled at”, whereupon she demands to see their scripts for the play. After a warm up the first task at hand is to read difficult rhymes from a book being passed around. The children who are unable to pronounce tongue twisters right are immediately corrected. “It’s easy. You’re not supposed to do it like this, but like this”, she says instructing the children how to mime. “Do you want to close the door from the other side?” she rhetorically asks a boy who can’t sit still. Commenting on the reading of one of the children she exclaims: “That rhymes with *hurray*, because this poem is on rhymes if you haven’t noticed”.

Thirdly, the school in Krosno is perceived to be part of an environment in south eastern Poland that stands in contrast to the capital. In colloquial language it is common for people from Warszawa to distinguish between modern, progressive *Polska A* and underdeveloped, traditional, backward *Polska B*, attributing different values and behaviour to the people living in these areas. While the local environment in Krosno could be associated with the latter, SK could be seen by the school staff as having beliefs and practices that do not correspond to their own.

“People are so gloomy. They have nothing to do, so they run to church twice a day. They’re not as open here as in Warszawa”, I am told by a woman in her twenties who grew up in a city close to Krosno, but is now living in Warszawa. Similarly, Ida claims that:

> Here things are different. (…) They have different values. (…) Did you know that PiS\(^2\) had a demonstration in Krosno and there were very many people who actually joined in.

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(…) Here [in Krosno] people will stay at home and take care of their family rather than for instance start new projects.

The above statements seem to hint at what is perceived as a backwardness prevalent in south eastern Poland and Krosno, namely a conservative Catholicism combined with nationalistic elements. While this region of Poland has traditionally been thought of as backwards, much of the explanation for the current situation can be found in the post-1989 transition reforms which left many not only marginalized, but also “confused, frustrated and angry (…), [without] any clear sense of the future” (Ost 2005:6-7). The populations of industrial towns such as Krosno where old industries collapsed or were reorganised, experienced high unemployment followed by intense waves of emigration. This in turn manifested in a great deal of complaining and made it easy to single out whom to blame, particularly targeting secular institutions and ethnicities other than Polish (Buzalka 2005).

The “Catholic consciousness” in Krosno is reflected in the countless religious symbols such as crosses, statues of Jesus, Mary and the pope John Paul II, posters of Christian meetings as well as Radio Maryja73 signs scattered around town. Moreover, all bookstore have a wide selection of religious books. This “Catholic consciousness” is also present in the school, which places great importance on religious practices. Examples are teachers telling children to have clean hearts and be on their best behaviour when preparing for first communion and reminding pupils to lower their voices on Good Friday. “Christian values are very important”, says the school pedagogue, “they teach us important lessons in life”. Seen in connection with the strict pedagogical approach “Christian values” could here be understood as providing moral consolidation for certain ideas and behaviour which are in opposition to the “secular” pedagogical approach of SK.

The “Catholic consciousness” acting as a channel for accumulated disappointment and guardian of moral righteousness also places the Roma people in Krosno in a unfavourable position. Buzalka (2005) claims that “Many people in South East Poland (…) accept [the criticism of] Church officials and Christian politicians of what they see as the results of ongoing capitalist development as well as moral relativism coming from what is perceived as a multicultural society. The main result (…) is a Church-flavored populism based on cultural fundamentalism. (…) [w]ith the potential to develop into (…) new racism (…) [s]tressing cultural boundedness and the superiority of certain human collectives over others” (83).

The Roma assistant statement seems to confirm this: “The priest tells people that [the Roma] are no good and just sit and beg, (…) that’s not true (…) it’s not fair”. Racist statements are also part of the scenery in Krosno. One example is the graffiti on the wall at the train station: *White Krosno. Gypsies to the gas chambers.*

**Segregation**

The programme for the Roma community and the presence of the Roma assistant has placed ethnicity on the school’s official agenda, forcing it to make ethno politics part of everyday practices. Yet, we have to see the implementation of the programme in connection with the background described above. Thus the principal explains that “Well, how should I put this… Roma issues have become more popular in recent years…”, recognizing the new ethno policies of the state, but later she adds that “I do not intend to start any forced integration”\(^{74}\), suggesting that she needs to be careful about challenging the prevalent worldview of her own environment.

As it is largely up to each school how it wants to implement the programme for the Roma community, social dynamics at the local level come to dictate how the interaction between state policies and informal practices and beliefs translate into concrete action. In the school in Krosno underlying identity politics and power dynamics come to the surface, and one could perhaps even say that the programme since its introduction in the school in 2004 has added fuel to the problematic Roma-Polish relationships, further enhancing the segregation of the Roma people.

In Krosno there is both a physical separation and one which centres on the values and behaviour attributed to Roma vs Polish people.

The Roma in Krosno live on the side of the majority population. Most of the 100 Roma people\(^{75}\) currently (2012) living in Krosno live in crowded communal housing in Okulicka street. Just like the housing units are a space apart from the rest of the town, the Integration after-school day care centre or świetlica integracyjna, also known as Roma after-school day care centre or świetlica romska\(^{76}\), represents a different space from the rest of the school.

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\(^{74}\) Interview 05.06.2012

\(^{75}\) This is an estimation by the local Roma partners. The municipality of Krosno City does not have official statistics on ethnic backgrounds.

\(^{76}\) The *Świetlica* is formally described as świetlica integracyjna. In practice only the Roma children go there and it is therefore spoken of and known to most as świetlica romska. On the school web page it has gone under the
Located at the first floor at the very opposite end of the building from the principal’s office and the main entrance it is difficult to find and not easily accessible. Both on the door to the świetlica and inside the room there are colourful posters focusing on Roma people and different issues concerning the Roma. In addition to some of the usual toys, games and equipment one could expect to find in a day care centre for children, the room is filled with several books on the above mentioned topics and two pieces of traditional Roma dress are displayed on the wall.

*Posters on the door to the Roma day care centre*

This separation is also visible in that the Roma children tend to keep to themselves and spend a lot of their time in świetlica romska. In the words of the principal: “It’s better than before, but let us not fool ourselves, it’s not like the Roma and Polish children spend much of their spare time together”. She also points out that “It is a place which the Roma feel is only theirs, name of Świetlica integracyjna (romska), but is currently taken off the list in the overview of the świetice on the school web page, [http://sp6krosno.pl/pl/o_szkole/swietlica/](http://sp6krosno.pl/pl/o_szkole/swietlica/) (entered 15.11.2012)
and where our kids don’t spend much time”77. The Roma assistant thinks of the świetlica romska as a place where the Roma children can feel at ease and do things they’re not allowed to do in the regular day care centres.

We see that the principal does acknowledge an existing separation. However, she also seems to contribute to maintain the segregation as well as previous practices and attitudes towards the Roma, rather than attempt to actively draw attention to the Roma people and issues that concern them. Firstly, she seems to make sure that the Roma do not become visible in the school. The location of świetlica romska is one clear example of how a “Roma element” is allowed to exist only on the side of everyday life while being monitored by the principal as the main authority. Similarly, the practice of having Roma dance as a curious brief, addition to the annual school festival can be thought of as a continuation of previous folkloristic events. Secondly, she does not perceive it as neither necessary, nor as part of her responsibilities to promote Roma people and culture. Consequently, even if the programme for the Roma community encourages the promotion of Roma culture, in this school I have not encountered any interest, invitation or space created for the Roma to publicly portray their culture as part of everyday practices. Moreover, issues concerning the Roma people were never brought up or problematized, neither during the classes I followed, nor when explicitly talking about the Roma children in school with staff.

The principal states that:

In the beginning [when the Roma programme was introduced] there were courses for the teachers, but also for the children, but now I do not see any particular action in this direction. It is hard for me to tell what Roma culture is. But there are activities being organised to make children aware of these differences. For instance, Konrad organised an outing to the museum in Tarnów, where there is an exhibition on the Roma, so a lot of children were there. I organised an integration outing for all the children, both Roma and non-Roma, but the children don’t have a strong feeling of what this culture entails and don’t point out that someone is different and ask if they can say something about themselves…78.

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77 Interview 05.06.2012

78 Interview 05.06.2012
From the school’s perspective it is important to focus on school attendance and the need to provide all children with an education. In many of the statements by both the staff and the principal the level of education and knowledge of the Polish language feature as the most important concerns when dealing with Roma children. This corresponds well with both previous assimilationist thinking, the strong emphasis on educational achievements as well as the focus on Roma school dropouts by Polish researchers (Nowicka 2011). However, the reasons behind the Roma children’s absence or which measures should be used to address this are not openly discussed. In Polish schools the reasons provided by Roma people for school absence are generally thought of as inadequate and incomprehensible by the teachers (Nowicka 2011). The principal in the school in Krosno simply states that “sometimes they don’t feel like going [even if they have to]. (...) There are problems with this also because sometimes they start attending school, then travel somewhere and come back in the middle of the school year”. Without providing any further explanations, she can be understood to imply that the explanation is “that’s just how they are”. This in turn ignores the need to investigate the matter further and look for alternative solutions, and contributes to maintain the status quo.

While the principal does have an important role in maintaining the segregation, there is also a mutual inter group categorisation in the school, which takes the form of a dichotomization process where group membership is confirmed and strengthened by stereotyping and the articulation of conflict (Eriksen 2002).

Stereotyping is common in Polish schools where the Roma are present and largely takes the form of perceiving the minority as an enrichment or a burden (Nowicka 2011, Głowacka-Grajper 2012), and can be seen in connection with both communist state policies and the people’s attitudes towards the Roma. In essence it results in categorising the Roma as everything from exotic ethnic additions to mainstream society to social outcasts. In the school in Krosno both perspectives have prevailed interchangeably, though the latter appears to be more common.

I accompany the math’s teacher to one of her classes79. A Roma boy arrives late.

- Where have you been, Roland?

79 11.05.2012
- With uncle\textsuperscript{80}.
- You are late for class.

The boy sits down by himself.
- Roland write this down, do you have your note book? the teacher asks him.

She then returns to her class where some of the students are competing to give the right solutions to the equations on the board. Roland does not answer unless he’s asked.

After the class the teacher tells me:

That boy has language problems, his Polish is very poor because he is Roma and speaks Romani as his first language. These children have very bad marks. (...) They live in their own area, I bike past there sometimes. They get free electricity and houses from the municipality, that’s why they don’t want to work. (...) The girls have to wear skirts and can’t live on the second floor because then a man could look up their skirts. And the girls quit school and get married when they reach puberty. (...) In gym class they can’t show their legs. (...) They are not Catholics either, they are Jehovah’s witnesses. Some of the marriages are mixed, but they fall apart, they have other rules and traditions... these children are not accepted by anyone [neither the Roma nor the Polish]. (...) There’s a man here who’s responsible for these children, he told me this (...).

The view of the Roma as a burden in this school seems to be intertwined with stigmatization by some of the staff towards Roma. Mrs. Kozak tells me that:

There is great mistrust of Gypsies here, but it comes from somewhere. They don’t want to learn anything at school, there are fights all the time – it’s not true that they support and stand up for each other (...). The rules they set for themselves they don’t follow, they only adjust them as they please. For instance, they say that the girls can’t take part in gym classes, but these are just excuses. They say they have to follow the advice of the elderly, but that’s not how it works, so a lot you will read and hear about them does not fit in with how things are here. Once they organised a get-together in a nearby town, but it all ended with fighting. That’s what it’s like. People don’t like them, but there’s a reason for it.

\textsuperscript{80} Uncle (Romani: \textit{kako}) / Aunt (Romani: \textit{bibi}) are used by Roma people when talking to or about an older. Here the boy refers to the Roma assistant.
These accounts by school staff correspond well with stereotypical images of the Roma as a group which differs significantly from the majority in a negative way. Rather than looking at aspects which could be an asset they depict the Roma as incapable of adjusting to Polish society. In my interpretation these narratives tell us that they do not speak the Polish language properly, are incapable of adjusting to the educational system, have strange customs and the wrong religion, pray on the welfare system, fight and lie. Moreover, neither do they accept nor are they accepted by the Polish population.

The Roma assistant claims that the ethnic stigma and stereotyping of the Roma has tipped over to racism and discrimination. He expresses that he has experienced severe discrimination on several occasion. Once he tells me:

Yesterday someone drove past our house and showed us the finger and said fuck the gypsies. Once they wanted to set fire to our houses. I want to leave this place, go to a village plastered with planks. Poland is not a tolerant country, don’t you agree? Abroad things are like… different. (...) You can’t apply the same yardstick to everybody, see all Polish people as racists, (...) but they see us as someone who fights, steals, who doesn’t do good things. Once I was on my way to the doctor with my wife and children and we hear: “Fuck you gypsy bamboos81, fuck off, you want me to fuck you over you gypsy woman, whore, you rag…?” Soon you won’t be able to go to buy your groceries. It didn’t use to be like this, there were fights and stuff, but not racism like this.

The Power Dynamics

The segregation and stereotyping described above is in this school entangled with the murmuring disagreements between the Roma assistant and the principal. These now seem to have escalated beyond the occasional misunderstandings and regularly erupt in direct confrontations. The conflict between the Roma assistant and the principal can be seen as a clash between their differing backgrounds and “projects”. For the principal the main concern is to run the school and it seems that she sees the primary responsibility of the Roma assistant, like the remaining staff, to be at her assistance in this task. “What should be the point of having a Roma assistant if it wasn’t to serve the school?” she ask.

81 “Bamboo” is a racist term used towards people with dark skin colour.
For the Roma and the Roma assistant the programme for the Roma community potentially provides an opportunity for more attention being directed towards the Roma people in Krosno, and to promote their culture and open up for the marginalized Roma to receive an extra financial boost.

At the same time, the conflict takes a form where the principal as the head of the school and a representative of the Polish majority has a dominant position, and the Roma assistant as an employee and a representative of the Roma minority occupies a subordinate role. The Roma assistant expresses it in this way: “When I tell her that I’m more scared of her than my own father when I was a little boy, she only laughs and says: “Am I that awful?””. Following from this, the conflict dynamic is expressed in the principal’s emphasis on what she has done for them. Moreover, she stresses her position as an authority figure with the power to make decisions and the Roma assistant’s lack of skills and his unfavourable behaviour. The Roma assistant, on the other hand, focuses on what they have done against him or the Roma. He seems to built up an image of the Roma as victims, regardless of the extent to which it is real or fictive. The Roma assistant also perceives himself as a victim. He is scared of the principal, feels misunderstood and not capable of dealing with all his responsibilities.

The two central topic of dispute centre on how they both perceive the role of the Roma assistant in the school and how the subvention from the programme for the Roma community should be distributed.

The principal describes the role of the Roma assistant thus:

The Roma assistant is a good idea but, but, but... our Roma assistant does not necessarily meet our needs. In the beginning we had a fantastic Roma assistant. He was a person with a lot of authority and took good care of the children. Also in Jasło there is a very well known lady and there things are working well. But the current one does not have a significant position in their community. (...) when I first asked them if they could find someone among themselves they chose a specific person. But many members of the Roma community have emigrated to the UK. (...) When it comes to Mr. Konrad someone had to be chosen and no one else was interested – so that’s what it’s like now. Though I can’t say that our Roma assistant now is completely useless. He accompanies the Roma children to and from school, which certainly helps increase their frequency of attendance. The frequency of attendance of Roma children has increased the last years.
In addition, I can tell the Roma assistant to talk to the families if the children don’t come to school and get information about the reasons for this.\(^{82}\)

The school administration sees his additional responsibilities as excuses to escape his chores in the school, causing much frustration. Moreover, he is criticised for not spending his time efficiently when he is at school. The principal stresses this by saying in an ironic voice that I am free to go and have a look at what he is doing in his świetlica romska, implying that he does not do anything useful there.

The Roma assistant on the other hand sees his role differently. He thinks of his job, as serving the Roma community in and outside Krosno. In addition to his job as a Roma assistant in this school, he has other commitments, such as being a social worker for an organisation seeking to help Roma people in the surrounding area enter the labour market, attending meetings of a Roma organisation working to promote Roma culture\(^{83}\), planning to start up his own organisation as well as being a father of two children, taking up much of his time. He claims that the principal does not understand his situation:

She wants me to do activities for the children, but I don’t have that kind of education. I’m a mechanic and I got married early – you know what it’s like among us Roma. She should employ an extra teacher to this, but she won’t do that.\(^{84}\) They don’t see that I’m with the children 24/7 (...) they don’t see that I have a lot to do outside the school. For instance, I have to persuade the parents that they should send their children to school, threaten them, I don’t know what… and they don’t see that I then get problems with my own family. When I come to pick up the children in the morning they ask me “Are you the father?” The most difficult part is that we’re all from the same family – I’m not there as a representative for some organisation. When I’m in Mielec, [a nearby town, as a social worker] it’s different, then I come from the outside.

The other central matter of dispute results in allegations of misuse of the financial resources from the programme for the Roma community. In this school the programme encompasses excursions, equipment for świetlica romska, a summer camp for the children, health insurance

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\(^{82}\) Interview 05.06.2012

\(^{83}\) The Association of Polish Roma (Związek Romów Polskich) [http://www.romowie.com/](http://www.romowie.com/) (entered: 02.08.2014)

\(^{84}\) The possibility of hiring a Roma teacher through the programme exists, however finances and availability of qualified personnel in Poland often restricts this (Nowicka 2011).
and other equipment (e.g. school uniforms)\textsuperscript{85}. According to SK a cause of tension is that the amount received by Roma pupils far exceeds that of other Polish school children.

The ambiguous statement of the principal points to the confusion surrounding how the financial gain from the subvention is distributed: “It is neither me nor the school which receives the money, but the Roma, and they all the time shout that it’s their money, but it’s not their money”. Nevertheless the principal seems to see herself as the rightful administrator of the subvention who does not need to consult or inform the Roma assistant about her decisions. She also appears to claim that the Roma have an immoral attitude and behaviour towards material benefits:

In the beginning I invested a lot in their świetlica. However, things started to disappear, so I had to reduce this. I now apply for a lower sum because the Roma see everything in terms of financial gain,- that we buy books for them, give them things. But this is not how it works. They are not interested in participating (...). I tell the Roma assistant to do things, but he won’t do it. I organise excursions but they don’t feel like participating. Then the money available for this is wasted.

The Roma assistant’s understanding of how the subvention is distributed centres on how the principal is trying to save money on him and spend them on things that will no benefit the Roma:

My contract is renewed every year. I have a new contract from September, but I don’t get paid for August. (...) It is our money, but we see nothing of it. They didn’t want to create a playground where we live. Everything went to the school. We got nothing from that. (...) They[the municipality] even built a fountain in the main square with our money. They could at least have put up a sign saying it was for the Roma people\textsuperscript{86}.

\textsuperscript{85} Interview with principal 05.06.2012

\textsuperscript{86} Interview 06.06.2012
Conclusion

Perhaps the most important implications for Stop Klatka’s operational autonomy in the school is that the organisation is an outsider coming from the capital. Firstly, this means that SK relies on its own network, as it lacks an established network in Krosno. Secondly, SK’s background in significant ways clashes with that of the school. This results in the organisation being viewed as an uninvited guest attempting to introduce unknown and undesirable changes, and whose intentions and actions have to be scrutinized. The mistrust and scepticism is particularly directed at SK as a civil society actor, SK’s pedagogical orientation and the organisation’s implementation of a “Roma project” in the school.

Another important barrier forming SK’s operational autonomy is the position of the principal as the most powerful actor on whose trust SK is completely dependent to go through with the project. While the principal as a guardian of the state’s policies needs to follow new regulations concerning ethno politics and civil society, she at the same time has to be sensitive to the prevalent beliefs, values, attitudes and practices in the school environment. Consequently, it seems that SK and Patchwork are allowed access to the school as part of official policies, but only as long as the project leaders adjust to the ethnicised power dynamics, and live up to what the principal sees as a “pedagogically fruitful method”. It thus appears that it is Stop Klatka’s academic capital that legitimizes their activities and presence in the school, and that issues surrounding Roma culture and “Roma inclusion” ought not to be problematized nor openly discussed.

In sum we could say that the operational framework for Patchwork is formed and legitimized in interaction with the prevalent “educational consciousness” and the ethnic segregation in the school, under the watchful eye of the principal.
Chapter 5: Implementing Patchwork

A good reputation is crucial in keeping any organisation alive, especially in a competitive civil society with limited funding available and a public sceptical towards the activities of NGOs. It is therefore crucial for Stop Klatka as a civil society actor to present its work and Patchwork in a clear and positive manner to its funders, beneficiaries, partners and the general public in order to gain their trust. The project leaders not only have SK activities as their main income, they are also legally and professionally responsible for the organisation’s sustainability, quality of its services and its image. In other words, they cannot afford to fail. Hanna, the president of SK and one of the project leaders of Patchwork claims that “What drives me is going from success to success”. But what does it mean to succeed? Mosse (2004) suggests that projects are not successful because organisations succeed in adequately implementing project goals and broader policy guidelines. Rather projects are the result of social processes and are made successful by brokers with considerable political skills who translate the meaning of the project to the stakeholders. The different representations then work together to create a coherent system of representations (Mosse 2004). In practice this means that SK in the implementation of Patchwork has to manoeuvre between the operational framework set by the local school environment, and OSF’s policy directions, continuously trying to negotiate and legitimise their work. They thus carefully steer the implementation process in accordance with their possibilities at this particular time and place. After having examined the local school environment into which Stop Klatka introduces Patchwork, I in this chapter investigate how SK works around the challenges they encounter and continue to consider the organisation’s operational autonomy. However, I here look into SK’s representations of Patchwork to the different actors involved. I focus specifically on

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87 SK invests considerable efforts in promoting the organisation, distribute its material to a broad range of recipients and has made popularization through publications one of its main aims.

88 Even if they have left much of the work to volunteers, the work carried out by volunteers is mostly not visible to the public. We could perhaps say that the volunteers in Patchwork are predominantly playing on the “backstage” and the project leaders are responsible for the “front stage” when promoting the organisation and its projects (Goffman, Erving 1971).

89 I understand representations, not only as success narratives created through official documentation, but also as emerging through and in combination with actual practices and interpretations of events while they are taking place.
how the official goal as it is set by the Open Society Foundations, “Roma inclusion”\textsuperscript{90}, is interpreted and implemented by SK in the school and point to some possible explanations. I also ask which forms these representations take and to which extent the organisation has the possibility to create them independently.

In the following I introduce some typical Stop Klatka workshops and suggest that SK’s work is rooted in a universalist ideology. I then turn to examine the representations of Patchwork through the concepts diversity and multiculturalism. In the final part we will see how the various representations of Patchwork merge and come to build a broader system of representations in the Theatre in Education play culminating the project.

Stop Klatka Workshops

After having spent a few months with Stop Klatka I became an integral part of the Patchwork project crew and was associated with the organisation in the school. When arriving at the school the children came to greet us by asking: “Do we have Stop Klatka today?”, “When do we have Stop Klatka?” or they would sometimes run down the corridor shouting “Stop Klatka! Stop Klatka!”, eager to take part in yet another workshop.

The weekly workshops were in practice part of the school’s offer in optional after school activities. As a rule the children came to the assigned classroom just after they had finished their regular classes. When waiting for the rest of the group to assemble, they started chatting to each other or fooling around the room looking for things to do. It happened almost every time that someone new joined the group, some of the children already in the group did not show up or that someone arrived late. This of course made it difficult to know when to start.

However, eventually we would all sit down on the floor in a circle and Hanna or Ida would take attendance, before starting up with the workshop session.

All the sessions were built up in a similar manner and consisted of fun games, role plays and reflections around the children’s personal experiences. They started with an energizer, then continued with the main part and rounded off with a closure\textsuperscript{91}.

\textsuperscript{90} “Integration” can be understood as “a term commonly used to describe combinations between assimilation and segregation (...) [implying] the minority’s simultaneous participation in the shared institutions of society and its reproduction of group identity and ethnic boundaries” (Eriksen 2002:124). I think of the terms “inclusion” and “integration” as having the same meaning.

\textsuperscript{91} This workshop plan is based on exercises which took place on different days during the project.
An energizer starting a typical workshop would be “What are you doing Kate?”. Here the children stand in a circle. There is one child standing in the middle pretending to be doing something, e.g. brushing her teeth. Someone from the circle then shouts out “What are you doing Kate?”. The person in the circle says something different from what she is actually doing, e.g. “I’m playing soccer”. The person who asked the question swaps places with the person inside the circle and acts out that he is playing soccer. The game continues until it is time to move on to the main part.

While the energizers have no other purpose than to warm up the group and have some fun together, the exercises in the main part can also involve a great deal of fun, but they always revolve around a specific topic. In one dramatic exercise the children were asked to get into groups and discuss which problems might occur in a friendship. Some suggestions were to talk behind your friend’s back, make fun of someone, take something without asking and fights over getting good marks.

The next task was to choose a situation and the characters involved in it, then choose their names, motives and personalities, make a short scene and rehearse it in groups.

92 This exercise took place 15.02.2012
When everyone was done rehearsing, each group would act out their role play in front the others. A group with four girls was first:

Ala: What are you looking for in my bag?!

Danuta: I wanted to borrow something.

Ala: But you have to ask!

Danuta: But if I ask I don’t get to borrow it anyway.

The other two girls in the group stand on the side looking at the “thief” and talk behind her back:

- What is she doing?

- She’s so rude! It’s not her bag! We have to tell Ala.

After the other groups had performed their role plays and towards the end of the workshop session Ida interviewed some of the small actors in character to make them reflect on the content of the play and the roles. She asked a series of questions when talking to a girl from one of the role plays:

“Do you like that girl?” “What do you feel?” “What would you like to tell her?” “Do you like yourself?” “What do you like in yourself?” “What do you like in her?”

Ida then asked the whole group: “Are they real friends?”

One of the children said: “No. Because they fight.”

Ida: “What would help them become friends again?”

Another child answers: “That they have something in common”.

Returning to the girl Ida asked her: “What’s your hobby? What do you like to do?”

The girl said: “Listen to music, dance, read, hanging out with friends”.
Another option for a typical exercise often used in applied drama is “sculpturing”. In one of the workshops Hanna chose to focus specifically on emotions and communication. She made the children get into pairs and stand back to back. She then shouted out emotions which each of the children depicted as best they could in frozen pictures. For instance she would shout anger and everyone made nasty faces and gestures. Then she could shout happy and everyone tried to make their sculptures look happy. After this initial trail of “self sculpturing”, one of the two children in the pairs received a note with an emotion written on it. The child would then sculpture the other person into that emotion. When all the sculpturers were done they ended up with four different human sculptures and Hanna handed each of them four pieces of blank paper.

The artists were then instructed to walk around and look at all the different human sculptures. When they had decided for themselves which sculpture depicts which emotion they would write it down on the four pieces of paper and place the right piece in front of the right sculpture. In the end the four sculptures ended up with four different notes in front of them. Even if there was some overlap many of the children had interpreted a sculpture to be portraying different emotions. For instance, one of the human sculptures had notes which said “sad”, “annoyed”, “frightened” and “angry” in front of him.

In the reflection after the exercise Hanna explained that we make assumptions about other people’s feelings without realising that we might be wrong, and that this is why learning how to communicate with others in a good way is so important. She then taught the children a method of communicating, which involves talking about our own emotions, needs and expressing what we want instead of judging others.

The workshop sessions ended with a closure. A closure is a way to quickly wrap up the day and say good bye. One example is where we stand in a circle and one person after the other puts one hand into the middle of the circle while saying a positive word about the day. When everyone is done we lift our hands up in the air with a big roar.

A Universalist Ideology

It seems that Stop Klaka introduces a universalist ideology through *Patchwork*. By this I mean that the issues brought up in the workshops concern all human beings regardless of background, upbringing, social status, educational achievements, ethnicity etc. They centre on

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93 This workshop was held 18.01.2014
such topics as friendship and cooperation, hobbies and interests as well as emotions and communication. I would argue that it is also this Sandra, SK’s internal researcher evaluating the project, refers to when she states that “we create them space to be just people” (Marthon 2012:15). The content and ideas behind the workshops imply that the means to deal with “Roma inclusion” lies in strengthening personal and social skills and abilities and giving children the possibility to interact and build relationships based on common experiences, mutual interest and knowledge of each other’s lives. This in turn can contribute to reduce the separation between Roma and non-Roma children and increase the Roma children’s opportunity to participate on equal terms with the Polish children. The universalist perspective allows SK to incorporate both the school’s expectations and their own psychological, “colourblind” approach. However, it also leaves out the approach taken by the Open Society Foundations.

Firstly, the chosen representation of Patchwork presented to the school seems to be of a social, educational project for children teaching them how to deal with difficulties in their lives. It is a representation which appears to live up to the principal’s expectations, as she agrees that it is a “fruitful educational project” (see page 37) and claims that such “social projects are very useful, but very rare”\(^94\).

Secondly, project leaders have enough flexibility to incorporate their pedagogical approach on their own terms. Stop Klatka workshops introduce a new way of learning and socialising, which is not common in a regular school setting and which stands in contrast to what has been described as the prevalent “educational consciousness” in Polish schools (see page 21). One of the workshop participants once told me “I like Stop Klatka cause here we can have fun and do silly things”\(^95\). Whereas the structure of workshops and the space given to children to freely express themselves is different from that encountered in the classrooms, the messages SK wants to get across, also contradict the strong focus of the traditional focus on achievement. This can be illustrated by how Hanna handled the unintended development in one of the workshops. The children were told to sit on chairs in rows facing each other. Only the first person in each row was allowed to have their eyes open. Hanna then tossed a 1 zloty coin. When the coin landed and showed the symbol of the eagle the first child in the row squeezed the hand of the child next to her as quickly as possible, and the other children

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\(^{94}\) Interview 05.06.2012

\(^{95}\) Workshop 06.03.2012
followed up with squeezing the hands of the next person in their row until the last child in the row felt his hand being squeezed. The quickest group won the round and the last person in the row moved up to take the place of the first person in his or her row while the rest of the children in that row moved down one seat. The group of children seated opposite who had lost the round stayed put. These rounds were supposed to continue until one of the groups ended up with the same person in the “front seat”. However, one of the children repeatedly kept failing at something, for instance, squeezing the next person’s hand when she was not supposed to do so or being too slow to react when a child squeezed her hand. She therefore ran off and started crying on several occasions. At one point Hanna decided to stop the exercise even if the children had not finished yet. She explained that “In life we lose many times. We don’t win all the time. (...) We have to learn that this is ok. That we can learn from this and try again”.

The children were instructed to stand in a circle and yell “I lost!” in turns. The other children then shouted “Bravo!” and clapped. Some children were reluctant at first, but in the end everyone dared to take part. We see that the exercise in this workshop was initially meant to be about group building and cooperation, but Hanna turned it into an exercise about accepting the possibility that one can fail and learning how to cope with it.

Thirdly, the universalist perspective SK takes seems to represent an understanding of “Roma inclusion” in essence contradicting the perspective of the Open Society Foundations, which maintains that Roma people are a cultural group whose cultural characteristics have to be acknowledged and celebrated. It can perhaps be explained through Wikan’s (1995) critique of discourses surrounding “integration”. She writes: “When children with different cultural backgrounds get along as well as they often do, it’s just because they behave like people: They are in movement, not in set positions, they relate to “the others” as people, not merely as “members of a culture” (Wikan 1995:23)\textsuperscript{96}. Further, she claims that “culture” is being used as a constructed, exotic, patronizing term, which takes for granted that there are certain proper ways of being e.g. Roma. Defining people only or mainly in through of set cultural characteristics reduces real people to cultural products, and does injustice to each person’s individuality and people’s changing and complex experiences and environment. It does not take into account that only “(...) people can think around culture and make their own truths, from their own standpoints” (Wikan 1995:22) and that “(...) it’s about who defines what to

\textsuperscript{96} My translation
whom, and who is in the position to give power to these words” (Wikan 1995:34). Applying this analysis to Patchwork it could be argued that while OSF’s guidelines and recent ethno politics intend to promote a good cause, in practice ascribe certain peculiar characteristics to the Roma children which in turn reduces these children’s experiences, lives and personalities to a question about ethnicity.

**Diversity and Multiculturalism**

While the name “Patchwork” is indicative of “diversity”, the title of the project in OSF’s report and Stop Klatka’s recent publication, bring up the term “multiculturalism”. We will see that thinking of “Roma inclusion” through these terms presents the Roma as part of a package of unclearly defined understandings of human diversity and cultural differences.

In the following I show how the representation of Patchwork as a project about “diversity” and “multiculturalism” is constructed by using examples from two workshop sessions and the statements from SK’s promotional video. I also suggest some possible explanations for this.

At the end of February, Ela, the project assistant, suggested to use theatre puppets in the workshops. In one of these workshops the children were handed sheets of paper with drawings of different characters. Afterwards they were to colour them, cut them out and glue them to a stick. All the puppets symbolized diversity in some way. They had different appearance (e.g. Asian looking), different interests (e.g. football), different disabilities (e.g. a broken leg), different ages (e.g. a grandma character). After having chosen a character the children put a lot effort into colouring and creating the puppets and seemed to be having fun.

In the next workshop the children were divided into smaller groups and were to make up a short story with the title “Worries and Joys in Sosiolandia”. The story was meant to be about some of the problems and dreams of the main character(s). When the children had been

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97 My translations

98 Also the first subtitle is in SK’s publication on the project is “Beauty lies in diversity” (Chodasz 2012:123)

99 “Patchwork - The use of applied drama method in working with multicultural community” (Oblath 2012:1)

100 “Patchwork – drama in a multicultural environment” (Chodasz 2012:123)

101 The workshop was held 22.02.2012

102 The workshop was held 29.02.2012
divided into groups the facilitator asked them who the characters were, what they were like and helped the children create a plot. Then one group after the other came up to present their story to the rest of the workshop participants. This proved to be difficult for the children, but every group managed to create at least a snapshot of a story. One scene was about a girl being teased because her leg was broken. Another group presented a story which involved tricking grandma into giving away her strawberries. In one of the next groups, Jas from China was playing volleyball with a Polish volleyball player, Marek. Kasia from England was the referee. After the game Jas and Marek started fighting over who had won the match. Mateusz, a friend of theirs, came by to see what was going on. He then became angry with them and everyone started fighting.

This activity shows that while the exercise deals with differences and stereotypes the ethnic component is clearly undercommunicated, and has no direct reference to Roma people or “Roma inclusion”. Moreover, the consequences of these differences are not communicated. In this vain Hanna in SK’s promotional video\(^{103}\) claims that “diversity can be the key to understand other people”, but does not explain what she means by this or what the implications following from diversity might be. The previously mentioned universalist approach and “educational narrative” of teaching children to overcome challenges in their lives, however, are overcommunicated.

Unlike diversity the term multiculturalism refers to different cultures or perhaps rather groups of people with different cultures. However, in Patchwork we find a multiculturalism with no culture”, i.e. what is meant by culture, the implications of belonging to a certain culture or the relationships between different cultures is not addressed. The last group in the Sosiolandia exercise can be understood to bring up multiculturalism as all the characters come from different countries. While the differences between these characters are not further problematised by Ida who is facilitating the activity, one of the boys in this group, Rafał, tries to grapple with this issue in his own way. He tells me that his character is Chinese.

- How do you know? I ask him.

He seems to become somewhat confused and says:

- For me this is something out of the ordinary, it’s all different.

\(^{103}\) Krosno24.pl - PatchWork - reportaż (12.07.2012)
Me: But how do you know if he is from China? Maybe he’s from Thailand or Japan?

Rafał: This is a person of countries\textsuperscript{104}.

\begin{center}
\textit{Theatre puppets used in the Sosiolandia workshops}
\end{center}

His intentions with this statement is unclear. One could perhaps by this understand the idea of “a person of countries” as related to multiculturalism, the character could perhaps be a “citizen of the world” with multiple national identities or someone who does not have a national or ethnic identity at all. He could also be a person with his own national identity who alongside other people with their own national identities. Yet, these are only possible interpretations and we do not quite know how to define a “person of countries”. Moreover, even though, the “cultures” in multiculturalism” are thought of in terms of national identities it is not clear what it implies to belong to a certain nationality. Similarly, the relationships and interaction between them are not addressed explicitly.

A statement by one of the pupils attending \textit{Patchwork} workshops in the promotional video tries to define this relationship by referring to the moral implications of “multiculturalism”. She says that “One can’t laugh at other people just because they come from a different

\textsuperscript{104} “To jest krajowy człowiek.” Another possible translation could perhaps be: “This is a person from our country”.

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country or they have a different skin colour”\textsuperscript{105}. This highlights that inequality between different nationalities or ethnicities can exist, but again speaks of this in general terms and does not bring this up as a central point. The only time project leaders publicly direct attention to the Roma is in Ida’s statement in the video\textsuperscript{106}. Here the focus is on positive traits in people, rather than reflecting on questions surrounding ethnic diversity, and the Roma are here grouped together with other categories. (See page 32).

We see that the representation of Patchwork and “Roma inclusion” portrayed through “multiculturalism” and “diversity” is in line with Stop Klatka’s “colourblind” approach and has enabled the project leaders to largely leave out the Roma from the narrative of the project. Yet, at the same time it does bring in a “cultural component” making it possible to legitimise Patchwork to OSF. Representations involving “diversity” and “multiculturalism” appear to have become popular in Poland in recent years precisely because they do not address what (cultural) differences entail, the implications of them or the problems that might arise through the coexistence of different groups or the power imbalances between them (Głowacka-Grajper 2012). For this reason they are also very convenient for SK.

With the school context described in the previous chapter in mind, it is perhaps no coincidence that the project leaders chose not to speak more openly about the Roma or “Roma inclusion”. Hanna’s understanding of how the principal perceives initiatives directed at the Roma people confirms this. She tells me that: “I think that the principal by now has had enough of all this talk about the Roma”. Consequently, by not addressing OSF’s overall aim of “Roma inclusion” directly, project leaders do not have to deal with the prevalent segregation in the school and risk creating situations which might harm the school’s trust towards organisation. However, this cannot be completely avoided. When concerns regarding the Roma are addressed openly within Patchwork it becomes difficult for SK to legitimise the project to the school, and they seem to make every effort to avoid leaving the school with the impression that Patchwork could be a project which involves the Roma. This can be illustrated by the following incident.

The local newspaper was invited to write a story about Patchwork and the article which came out on the internet was titled “Theatre, Drama. Learning about Tolerance and Acceptance”

\textsuperscript{105} Krosno24.pl - PatchWork - reportaż (12.07.2012)
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T45Am2xErdw (entered 12.07.2012)

\textsuperscript{106} Ibid.
The introduction said that “These are no ordinary theatre activities, and the school has not been chosen by chance. Using applied drama as a method, psychologists aim to increase the level of integration of students from different cultures, and help them improve the relationships between them”. In the second last paragraph the article claims that “a boy for the first time [in his life] lent a crayon to a Roma child, something which he had never done before. We can see that both Polish and Roma children are already more open towards mutual contact”\textsuperscript{107}.

When the article came out the project leaders panicked at the extent to which it openly brought up that this was a project about the Roma. “They might as well have given the article the title “Roma project”, Ida exclaimed. “Konrad must have had something to do with this”. So far the project leaders have been able to influence the representations of the project, but when this slips out of their control their fears seems to come to the surface.

This is further stressed in how the project leaders dealt with comments like “Gypsy give back the crayon!” and “Poland for Poles only” popping up on the newspaper’s web page. Everyone in the project crew was told to write some positive feedback, and the newspaper was contacted and told to delete all the negative comments.

When the separation between the Roma and the Polish as well as inequality and intolerance, previously glossed over with the concepts multiculturalism and diversity, were openly addressed, it seems that the project leaders chose to adjust to the school’s expectations. We can try to understand Stop Klatka’s actions as an act of organisational expedience. Organisational expedience means that an organisation in order to reach objectives knowingly, but not necessarily intentionally, breaks or bends certain rules or norms (Parks et al. 2010). For SK the act of expedience in Patchwork involves interpreting, disguising or presenting “Roma inclusion” as something else than the original interpretation of it. “Roma inclusion” then becomes the expedient, i.e. the means to reach a different end, namely “looking good” in the eyes of the relevant actors. The notion proposes that some actions might be necessary for an organisation to get things done, survive and succeed. In other words, whether perceived as cynical and short sighted or as creative solutions and organisational innovation, the adaptations and manoeuvrings involved in expedience can sometimes be or appear to be the

\textsuperscript{107} Krosno24.pl “TEATR, DRAMA. Nauka tolerancji i akceptacji”
only viable solution given the working conditions. Consequently, in *Patchwork* portraying “Roma inclusion” through the representations described could be seen as a necessity, rather than a choice.

The mistrust towards Stop Klatka, which appears to have continued throughout the project\textsuperscript{108}, seems to further confirms this. Moreover, the internal research report by OSF states that “This approach was diagnosed by the project planers as a must in the given social context: a more explicit approach about Roma, or a more explicit processing of racism might have unintended consequences” (Oblath 2012:13). The “unintended consequences” which spring to mind are the potentially negative implications a more direct approach could have for SK. Ida explains that “We do not yet have enough trust in the school [to bring up difficult questions]. They know that we are doing something good, but not everyone knows what it is yet. In this school we did not feel that we had the legitimacy to work on such issues\textsuperscript{109}. For this to happen we would have to work there, say another two-three years”\textsuperscript{110}. SK’s engagement in organisational expedience also becomes apparent by how the project was introduced to the school. To begin with the project leaders did not yet seem to be aware of the strong segregation and ethnicised power dynamics in the school. When I first met some of the members of Stop Klatka at the beginning of my fieldwork, the *Patchwork* project was informally spoken of as “the Roma project”. As described in the previous this is also how the project was presented to the Roma assistant chapter (see page 37). Initially the project leaders contacted Konrad, but soon realised that the principal and the school pedagogue are the people on whose trust they had to rely to gain access to the school environment and maintain a favourable opinion of the project. The power dynamics between the principal interfered further as the principal was the one who decided how *Patchwork* should be introduced in the school. I am told by the project leaders that while the children attending the workshops were recruited through open introductory workshops, the Roma children were told that they have to attend. The principal simply said: “I instructed the Roma assistant to tell the parents [that the Roma children have to attend], and that was it”\textsuperscript{111}. The project leaders together with the

\textsuperscript{108}The school showed little initiative to take an active part in SK’s project, teachers were reluctant to partake in workshops and did not try to incorporate applied drama into their activities.

\textsuperscript{109}Ida here refers to issues concerning the Roma.

\textsuperscript{110}Interview 07.07.2012

\textsuperscript{111}Interview 05.06.2012
principal also decided that the project not be spoken of as a Roma initiative in the school, and that only the principal, the school pedagogue and the Roma assistant were to know that this was a “Roma project”.

A Patchwork Performance

During the last two months of Patchwork workshops, school children had helped direct a Theatre in Education performance by bringing up difficulties which they think might realistically appear in the life of someone their age. The “project crew” and the volunteers amended these suggestions into their play. In June it was time for the volunteers to stage it at the annual school festival. The play could be understood to be a typical Patchwork production, as it incorporates all the representations of Patchwork and “Roma inclusion” discussed earlier. At the same time, the performance reflects SK’s place as outsiders to the local community.

The annual school festival is a festive event with various games, performances and other entertainment where the parents are invited to the school. This year’s (2012) slogan is: We support the national football team. Poland scores!, and the theme of the day and most activities is the European Football Championship which is just around the corner. The school is all in red and white colours. Handmade decorations and Polish flags hang from walls and ceilings. Teachers and staff are dressed as football supporters in the national colours. The two mascots for EURO 2012, Polish Sławek and Ukrainian Slavko, are displayed on a board next to the school entrance. Some children sit down to have flags painted on their cheeks. It seems that the national pride runs high.

When all this is taking place, the volunteers are rehearsing for our Theatre in Education play in one of the classrooms. The play has been given a time slot and allocated to the theatre hall, making it yet another contribution to today’s programme, which also includes some non-EURO related activities (e.g. Capoeira, ballet, traditional Roma dance). The performance starts without being introduced by the principal, but under the watchful camera lense of the foreign researcher hired by OSF who is there to report on the performance and do some interviews. Some parents and children have taken the time to come and see the show. Once they are comfortably seated, one of the project leaders introduces the hero on stage, Milena, who is very upset. Being asked “What happened?” Milena responds: “Don’t wanna talk about it. Go and see for yourselves”.

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Milena is a girl attending fourth grade in a primary school. She loves dancing. So does her Ukrainian friend, Natasha. They have both taken part in a competition and are hoping to make it to the finals. We find them stretching out before dance practice chatting about the upcoming rehearsal. This is when the dance teacher comes in and tells them that they have made it to the finals. The girls jump up and down in excitement. The following day Milena is off to yet another day at school. There is quite a lot of pressure to get good marks and the teacher is condescending towards those not doing very well. Milena’s classmate, Eliza, brags openly about her good grades and Milena’s mom pushes her to study harder and thinks she should be more like Eliza. Milena’s family struggles to make ends meet and her father works abroad to help out financially. During a break between classes Milena meets Patrycja in the school corridor and gets invited to her birthday party. Patrycja is rich and popular and has trendy clothes as opposed to Natasha who is standing right next to Milena. Natasha is not invited and Milena doesn’t stand up for her when Patrycja is talks back to Natasha. What is more Milena and Natasha are having a dance performance on the very same day Patrycja is having her birthday. After school Milena goes home to tell her mom she didn’t get the mark she expected on her English test and that she wants money for a new dance outfit. Her mom sends Milena to her room to study and lets her know she is grounded. Milena calls Natasha who tells her that she shouldn’t call her, that they are not friends anymore and hangs up on her. She then phones her dad, but only gets the answering machine. Milena has no one to talk to and ends up crying.

From the above we see that Patchwork’s role in the school appears as relatively insignificant and implies that SK is viewed as outsiders to the local environment. The organisation’s performance is not linked to the school festival’s general theme and does not form any central part of its programme. Yet, perhaps in an attempt to look at issues that can be important to people in Krosno, SK takes on board the broader social context and direct attention to family matters and the impact labour migration might have on children. However, the most important message SK wants to get across seems to be “do something you are passionate about and be good to your friends”. This corresponds well with SK’s universalist perspective and incorporates both SK’s psychological approach focusing on skills and abilities and the representation given to the school of Patchwork as a social, educational project for children teaching them to deal with difficulties in their lives. The representation of the project focusing

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112 A translated version of the script can be found in Appendix 1
on diversity and multiculturalism is presented through Natasha’s character. Because she Ukrainian she can be understood to represent difference. At the same time she perhaps represents a category of people who is underprivileged and looked down on. As such Natasha provides a link to Roma people, but it is a link which is never explicitly explained or touched upon. Moreover, the main character is Milena, not Natasha. This way we are asked to reflect on and identify with the situation of a Polish girl, who has the possibility to include a stranger, Natasha. The audience is not encouraged to place itself in the position of this stranger. Neither are they prompted to learn about her ethnic identity. This has in the internal OSF report been described as an understanding of “Roma inclusion” which aims at creating “an atmosphere which is inclusive towards any ethnic minorities” (Oblath 2012:13). The representations of “Roma inclusion” introduced through the project and the play do not correspond well with those of the OSF. Yet, when performing the play SK is officially reminded that OSF is the other central stakeholder they are accountable to. In the next chapter we will see how SK attempts to manoeuvre towards OSF’s version of “Roma inclusion”.

Conclusion

SK has considerable operational autonomy to create their representations and explanations of the project, when navigating in the social landscape of the school. By adjusting their psychological, “colourblind approach in various ways, project leaders strategically apply interpretations in a manner they find appropriate in any particular situation. Throughout the implementation process the project leaders have tread carefully in creating their representations of “Roma inclusion” and Patchwork, and as the project evolved the representations of the project changed direction and took on different forms. While it was introduced as a “Roma project”, this representation was quickly hidden to the school environment. The central representations emerging from the implementation process are of a “social educational project about the problems in children’s lives” and a “project about multiculturalism and diversity”. The explanation for these representations can understood to lie largely in Stop Klatka’s universalist ideology, which proposes that one should create a space for all children to interact, without explicitly focusing on ethnicity. It seems to be a rather independent perspective, which is in line with SK’s psychological, “colourblind” approach. However, the need to engage in organisational expedience seems to be heavily influenced by the need for SK to gain trust in the school. It even appears that the project leaders see
adjustment to the school’s policy and practices as the only viable solution, as project leaders throughout join forces with the principal in setting the standards for Patchwork.

The Open Society Foundations, on the other hand, seems to be perceived by SK as a distant actor they only have to be officially and partially accountable to in the implementation phase. OSF’s agency and influence on SK’s work could thus perhaps best be defined as weak. Of all the actors involved in the project the Roma community has the weakest agency, something which results in SK leaving the Roma people’s representations out of the Patchwork project altogether.
Chapter 6: Manoeuvring Towards Inclusion

The inherent paradox of the notion of inclusion, which on the one hand proposes that cultural differences are to be protected and celebrated, and on the other suggests that one culture is to merge with the other, places implementing agencies in a dilemma. As Nowicka (2011) points out there are no obvious answers to how the topic should be defined and dealt with, which practices are to be tolerated, encouraged, discredited, eliminated, incorporated, transformed etc. It is also not clear who should be in charge of including whom, and on which terms. In the previous chapter we saw how “Roma inclusion” is implemented and represented in the Patchwork project. In this chapter I continue to examine SK’s approach to “Roma inclusion”, and discuss how it manifests in practice. I explain how SK begins to open up for Roma participation and manoeuvre towards the Open Society Foundations’ understanding of “Roma inclusion”. Yet, this redirection of focus is of an ambiguous sort, something which becomes apparent when Stop Klatka introduces the project Romski Pstryk to the school. In the final section I suggest alternative ways to “Roma inclusion” which incorporate representations of a more complex reality as well as Roma perspectives and lives. I also discuss if and how SK could have taken these representations on board in Patchwork.

Inclusion Through Exclusion

We have seen that rather than making Patchwork a project, which explicitly brings up topics concerning the Roma people and makes Roma participation a priority, SK applies an ideology focusing on universal human experiences. It could therefore be argued that the Patchwork project preaches inclusion through exclusion, where exclusion becomes the means to reach the aim of “Roma inclusion”. Yet, it might seem that this approach in practice tips over to “Roma exclusion”. When implementing Patchwork, project leaders chose an indirect approach described by SK as “soft intervention”, i.e. an educational approach, which aims to strengthen the resources and interpersonal ties among participants, centering on self development and the development of groups and communities. “Hard intervention”, on the other hand, is described as dealing directly with the psychological and social problems of a particular group (Markowska-Byczek 2007:8). “Soft intervention” does not oblige project leaders to address stereotypes about the Roma and risk having to deal with the conflict in the school. However, as the project goes
into its last phase in March the “soft intervention” is challenged by Ela and Renata, the two volunteers in the project crew. They have just attended a workshop in Wroclaw about the Roma held by the organisation Dom Spotkań Angelus Silesius, and suggest that the project leaders introduce exercises about stereotypes. Despite the girls’ persistence that the exercises they have learnt are interactive and fun, the project leaders decide not to bring them into the workshops. When I ask Ida why they made this decision I am told “If we did that they would eat us”, implying that the project leaders would have to defend themselves against criticisms from the school and the parents. At the same time, a different explanation for not bringing up stereotypes and directly dealing with Roma issues is put forward by Hanna:

Projects directed at the Roma have the opposite effects of those intended. We didn’t want to deepen the stereotypes about them [i.e. the Roma] being different, weaker and in need of extra support. There are so many projects for the Roma now in Poland, integration into the local community, money for the unemployed. These projects only enhance the stereotypes about the Roma as lazy people, drunks, and overall on the side [of society]. It’s important for us that the project is directed at all the children, the whole school, so that this stereotype is not brought up.

She then adds:

This [i.e. running Roma projects] is absolutely pointless – here in Poland there are many poor children too.

Such a stance supports Timmer’s (2010) argument that because NGOs are financially dependent and strive to gain recognition for their work from a variety of entities, they need to maintain largely negative and re-stigmatising narratives of the Roma. These representations of “needy subjects” created by NGOs obscure the complex reality in which they operate and result in NGOs restigmatising an already stigmatised group (Timmer 2010). It seems that SK wants to form a counterpoint to NGOs who run projects reinforcing this image of the Roma. Furthermore, SK appears to distance itself from the ethno business altogether, claiming that factors other than ethnicity should guide projects.

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114 *They* here refers to the parents of the school children
However, SK cannot distance itself from ethno politics and OSF guidelines entirely. One of the project leaders tries to deal with “Roma inclusion” and Roma stereotypes on the side, when no one from the school is present. This takes place after a workshop\textsuperscript{115} when a group from the project crew sits down to have a chat about how it went. When we start talking about the Roma children, the project leader suggests that the main difference between the Roma and the Polish children is that the Roma are more concerned with material values and that they mentioned having money, food, clothes, a place to live when asked about their dreams. She claims that non-Roma have other values, which centre on issues such as friendship and hobbies. Then she adds that:

This is not because the Roma do not have their basic needs met, but because their values are different. There is a lot of negative energy generated by the Roma children. This is destructive and has to be directed into something positive. They don’t listen to each other and don’t talk about topics others suggest, only if an adult suggests something. (...) They need to be seen and appreciated by an adult.

Perhaps the above categorisation process could be seen as an attempt to grapple with OSF’s perspective on “Roma inclusion”. The project leader seems to recognize the separation in the school, which is also visible in the workshops where the Roma children tend to arrive together and keep to themselves. Additionally, she suggests that the Roma children are different and in need of particular attention. This could give way to a focus on “Roma inclusion”, which also involves Roma participation. However, if we take a closer look at the interpretation of “Roma inclusion” seems to be more strongly influenced by the ethnicised conflict in the school, as the particular attention the Roma children need is explained through a focus on their Polish language skills, the need to be good at something and having formal training. In line with a common perception among teachers in this, as well as other Polish schools, the \textit{Patchwork} leaders thought that Polish children can feel threatened when Roma children speak their language and express solidarity with other Roma in everyday conflicts (Nowicka 2011:97). In a conversation with Mrs. Kozak, the school pedagogue, Ida discusses the Roma children’s language problems and agrees with her that it is very important for the Roma children to learn the Polish language. During one of the Patchwork workshops Hanna tells the Roma children

\textsuperscript{115} The workshop was held 29.02.2012
to speak Polish. “If you say something I don’t understand I might get scared you’re saying something bad about me. Here we speak Polish. There will be other opportunities to talk in Romani”.

The importance of having certain skills is brought up by SK’s statements in the OSF report:

Polish children were able to realize (…) that Roma children were very good at dancing - not in traditional dances, but in break dance and in other genres that everybody wants to be good at. Polish children could see for the first time how good they were (Oblath 2012:8).

Similarly, not involving the Roma assistant in the workshop activities and having separate workshops for the teachers and the Roma assistant was explained in this way by Ida:

At first the Roma assistant appears to be a nice guy, easy to talk to (…) and taking good care of the children. But the more we get to know him, the more I get the impression that he is not really aware of his role is in the school. And he doesn’t have any pedagogical training. That’s why he doesn’t do anything in the świetlica. He just sits by the computer and doesn’t do anything for the children\textsuperscript{116}.

Furthermore, Ida explained that they chose to leave him out of their DAW\textsuperscript{117} project for his lacking abilities.

\ldots{} he has so many problems. He wouldn’t learn anything there. He would just go there to have fun, really get into playing a role and then not be able to get out of it or mess up the whole group dynamic\textsuperscript{118}.

The strategy of leaving the Roma assistant out of their activities is also mirrored in how the project leaders instructed the volunteers to maintain a professional and not too close relationship with him and to decline his invitations. The following incident illustrates how this reluctance to build personal ties with the Roma assistant translates into action.

\textsuperscript{116} Interview 07.07.2012

\textsuperscript{117} Dramowa Akademia Wolentariacka (Vouluntary Drama Academy) (See page 19)

\textsuperscript{118} Interview 07.07.2012
At one workshop\textsuperscript{119} which was to be held by Hanna, Ela, Renata and myself, only two Roma girls turned up. While waiting for more people to join we chatted to the girls about their lives and what it’s like to be a Roma. However, realizing that probably no one else was going to show up, decided to cancel the workshop and went to the Roma świetlica. When writing a note on where to find us in case someone arrived late, Hanna stressed that we shouldn’t write we were in the Roma świetlica. “Write that we’re in the day care centre opposite the computer room”, she told one of the volunteers.

Once we sat down in the Roma świetlica together with the Roma children and the Roma assistant, Konrad, started to talk about himself and issues which concern him, and the volunteers became engaged in conversations with him. However, at some point he handed a sheet of paper to Hanna, who just put it to the side and continued reading something else. When he asked her if she liked what he’d written she replied without looking at him.

After having spent some time in the świetlica I left the room to take a phone call. When I returned there was a strange silence. Later Renata told me that “Konrad invited us to his place, but no one said anything. It was kinda weird. I was waiting for Hanna to say something, but she didn’t say anything, so the question was just left hanging up in the air”.

Finally, it could be argued that SK implements Roma exclusion by making school children and the volunteers, not the Roma, their central beneficiaries in \textit{Patchwork}. The explanation for this can be seen to lie in role overload\textsuperscript{120} (Parks et al. 2010:713). It is likely that the project leaders have been constrained by time shortage, other priorities, the distant location of the organisation and limited resources available. This has probably resulted in them not having had the opportunity to spend time to investigate the local environment and gain substantial knowledge of Roma related issues, establish contacts in the \textit{ethno business} and other actions, which could have contributed to enhance Roma participation. At the same time, including volunteers from \textit{DAW} as an important part of \textit{Patchwork} can be seen as a pragmatic and strategic move made by Stop Klatka. The decision to prioritise their own network and organisation over Roma participation clearly benefits the organisation. Not only are project leaders able to delegate work, they also invest in potential staff for their future projects.

\textsuperscript{119} This workshop was held 11.04.2012

\textsuperscript{120} Role overload: “The extent to which time and resources prove inadequate to meet expectations of commitments and obligations to fulfil a role”.
A Roma Project

From the above we see that *Patchwork* leaves out the Roma from their activities and narratives. But can *Patchwork* be considered a “Roma project”? Towards the end of *Patchwork* the project crew began to have conversations with the Roma children about their ethnicity, language, how they got along with Polish children, about their families, plans for the future and their lives in general. At the same time, Ela’s and Renata’s visits to the Roma świetlica became more frequent. So did their contact with the Roma children and the Roma assistant. In the end both Ela and Renata agreed that out of all the children they had come to know the Roma children the best.121 However, the most visible developments towards “Roma inclusion”, can be seen after Ida and the project assistant, Ela, had attended a conference with the foundation *Inna Przestrzeń*122 in April. When they came back to hold the next workshop for the children, they invited Konrad and told him to bring whoever he would like. Throughout the project he had expressed that he wanted to participate in the workshops, but was previously not allowed by the project leaders to do so. The invitation seemed to be a direct result of Ida and Ela attending the conference. Ela tells me that

last time when you weren’t here Konrad came with his family and the Roma kids were here. It was really nice. (...) At the conference there were many Roma from different places. There was a slogan they kept repeating, “Nothing for the Roma without the Roma.”123

Similarly, inviting a Roma painter whom they met there, Małgorzata Mirga, to hold a workshop at the school seemed to be a consequence of Ida and Ela attending the conference. For the first time Stop Klatka had invited someone embedded in the Gypsy industry into the *Patchwork* and into the school. In previous workshops Roma culture had never been

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121 Conversations 18.04.2012

122 *Inna Przestrzeń* is a foundation whose main purpose is to promote openness, democracy, human rights and multiculturalism through artistic and social means. http://przestrzen.art.pl/content/project/232/english.htm (entered 05.05.2014)

123 The workshop was held 11.04.2012
discussed openly and neither the Roma assistant nor Roma partners had been asked to be an integral part of the project. By inviting Małgorzata Mirga and Romski pstryk, SK at the same time invited “Roma inclusion” to be implemented on the terms implied by OSF. Mirga was one of the co-founders of the project Romski pstryk\(^{124}\) which was funded by the Stefan Batory Foundation, the local branch of the Open Society Institute. Like Patchwork Romski pstryk can be seen as an initiative aiming to promote Roma culture and to introduce an image of the “sanitized Roma”. However, in comparing the implementation of Romski pstryk to Patchwork there are several important differences. Firstly, unlike Patchwork, Romski pstryk was a joint Roma – Polish initiative where a Roma woman from the modern, educated elite works together with Polish artists. Secondly, the project was held in villages and towns with a large Roma population. Thirdly, Roma children were actively involved in running the project and in creating their own “life projects” (see page 78). Additionally, the project centred directly on everyday life situations of Roma children participating in the project. These situations were portrayed by the children in drawing workshops and through pictures they took with a camera obscura. Some of the pictures were used as illustrations in a book with Gypsy fairy tales\(^{125}\). In Romski pstryk not only were the Roma children invited to show “their world” publicly, in the final phase of the project some Roma children held mini workshops for the Polish pupils in their school\(^{126}\). The idea was now that Mirga should come to hold a one off drawing workshop in the school in Krosno.

The workshop was to be held as part of Patchwork’s final phase and the project leaders opened up for all the school children to participate, regardless of them initially being part of the group chosen to take part in the previous workshop series. Following Stop Klatka’s psychological, “colourblind” approach and the representation of Patchwork to the school as an social, educational project, the workshop was advertised on a poster under the heading

\(^{124}\) “AKADEMIA PSTYK” [http://www.akademiapstryk.pl/art/218](http://www.akademiapstryk.pl/art/218) (entered 05.05.2014)

\(^{125}\) Mirga, Jan et al. (2010) “Baba Jaga”, Kraków

\(^{126}\) “AKADEMIA PSTYK” [http://www.akademiapstryk.pl/art/218](http://www.akademiapstryk.pl/art/218) (entered 05.05.2014) and Kotlarska, Marta “Bez Nienawiści - Marta Kotlarska o projekcie Romski Pstryk” [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lqi3LLmClxk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lqi3LLmClxk) (entered 05.05.2014)
“Painting together”. It was also grouped together under the main title “May with passion”\textsuperscript{127} and along with the other two workshops “Breakdance!” and “Pantomime”. There was no mention of the artist being of Roma origin and no sign of the workshop being organised within the framework of a “Roma project”.

The Roma assistant, on the other hand, perceived the invitation differently. He was talking about the visit weeks in advance, proud of receiving a famous Roma person in the school he insisted upon inviting her home after she had finished. When the cheerful, young Roma lady arrived at the school accompanied by her husband, she represented a person the Roma children and the Roma assistant could identify themselves with and for a short time strengthened the visibility of Roma in the school. Like most Roma people, she has dark skin and black hair, and to most Polish people she is likely to look like a Gypsy at first glance. However, in the eyes of the Roma she could easily be classified as belonging to the Roma elite; she is married to a gadje, she has higher education and she is wearing trousers. Talking to the Roma in Krosno I got the impression that this for some could be perceived as behaviour breaking with, or on the edge of what is acceptable amongst Roma\textsuperscript{128}.

Mirga and her Polish husband were greeted by the Roma assistant, his family and some of the Roma children and invited to sit down with them in the school canteen for a meal. The principal quickly became aware of their presence. According to one of the project leaders who talked to the principal, the principal was furious and said she would not have strangers hanging around in her school. “The principal was so upset I had to sit with her and calm her down. (...) I had to make the Roma assistant introduce the guests to the principal, [as neither of them would do so themselves]”, she says.

Out of sight of the principal’s watchful eye, the project leaders in Mirga’s workshop had an opportunity to allow for Roma participation through a direct focus on “Roma culture”, but instead they attempted to transform it into a typical “Stop Klatka workshop”. Once everyone that signed up for the workshop had gathered in the room, the SK project leader withdrew to

\textsuperscript{127} The Polish word \textit{pasja} which translates as \textit{passion}, can also be used to mean something one is passionate about doing / a hobby.

\textsuperscript{128} For instance, while some of the Roma girls in the school said they would not object to marrying a Polish person, the Roma assistant told that the oldest girls will soon be taken out of school to get married. The Roma women I spoke to said that it’s ok for them to wear shorter and more modern skirts, but that they could not put on trousers in public.
the side and gave the floor to the Roma artist. There were about twenty children, both Roma and Polish, seated behind desks in two rows facing each other. Everyone was equipped with drawing material. Mirga and her husband introduced themselves and started explaining some drawing techniques to the children. Then the Roma artist told them that she would read a fairy tale from a book made by Roma children. Afterwards the children were instructed to make a drawing from this fairy tale. She continued to explain more about the project when the Patchwork project leader interrupted her and asked her where she learnt to paint, thus trying to direct the children’s attention towards education. Later on when the children had started drawing, Mirga began to talk more about her Roma background and asked the children if they had learnt about the Roma groups in Poland. She received no response, but went on explaining. While the children continued on their drawing related to the fairy tale, she read another fairy tale and instructed them to paint something with the theme: “The Roma – our neighbours” when they had finished their first piece. The project leader reacted immediately by taking the painter and her husband to the side to talk to them, whereupon the children were told that the theme for the painting had changed to “friendship”. The children slowly finished their drawings and started putting them up in the school corridor. As the workshop was coming to a close, I joined the project leader and the Polish-Roma couple in small-talk on their work with drama, art and Roma children and possibilities for future cooperation.

From the above we see that SK’s invitation of Roma participation in effect results in disguising aspects that might portray Patchwork as a “Roma project”. This is in line with SK’s previous practices, which left out representations of the Roma and did not actively include Roma people in activities or decision making processes. SK’s choices also seem to correspond to the situation of the Roma in the school described in chapter four, where the Roma have to adjust to the majority population’s way of life. This results in the Roma not having a possibility to raise issues important to them and leaves out the complexity of Roma life and Roma identity from the representations created by SK. It is this that the internal OSF report seems to point to when stating that “(...) a well-designed inclusive program is to be evaluated from the perspective of the specific minority” (Oblath 2012:13).

**Alternative Ways**

Recognizing the contradiction inherent in the idea of “Roma inclusion”, the OSF report claims that it on the one hand entails a structural aspect which places the responsibility with the surrounding society to include the Roma minority, and on the other explicitly emphasises
the Roma minority. This seems to be directed at Stop Klatka who has focused on the first element of “Roma inclusion”. Yet, could project leaders have attempted to incorporate Roma perspectives into their representations in Patchwork? And which form could such representations take? In the following I point to some possibilities.

To understand “Roma inclusion” from the perspective of the Roma, SK could try to incorporate what Barras (2004) calls life projects. In dealing with questions surrounding development initiatives for indigenous peoples, he takes this term to mean their possibility to conceptualise their place in the world and the direction they want to take in life. I suggest that life projects in the context of this thesis can be understood as representations of the Roma and “Roma inclusion” which are put forward, negotiated and incorporated by the Roma people. Although, these representations are constructed essentialist notions they are not imaginary. Created and upheld by both the majority population and the Roma themselves, the representations are real in the sense that they are rooted in real experiences, are constructed in real life situations and have real consequences for the social life of real human beings. In significant ways, they thus reflect the Roma peoples’ lives, their relationships with the majority population as well as larger policies surrounding Roma related issues. Consequently, one can for instance understand the stereotypes of the Roma held by the Polish majority described in chapter four, as contributing to maintain the segregation in the school and vice versa. Similarly, the ambivalent and weak position of the Roma assistant in the school and the images he creates of the Roma mutually impact on one another.

In Patchwork SK has in essence given life to the life projects of children at a primary school in Krosno, rather than life projects of Roma people. However, taking a broader perspective SK’s possibility to deal with Roma people’s life projects within Patchwork is considerable. Even if power dynamics in the school, hostile attitudes towards Roma people and the lack of support from a weak Roma elite in Poland can make it difficult to actively involve the Roma in decision making processes and the implementation of Roma initiatives, projects such as Romski pstryk show that it is possible. I would argue that the Roma people are often not in a strong enough position to independently form their life projects and need other actors, such as SK to invite them. Barras (2004) claims that indigenous people are subordinated to the nation state and the international system. In a similar manner the Roma people can be said to be dominated by the Gypsy industry run primarily by national and international non-Gypsy actors (Terhan 2001). Taken to its most extreme, we can take this to mean that the state run programme for the Roma community in the school and SK’s Patchwork project are close to
hegemonic institutions governing the lives of a suppressed minority. While I would not go this far, I would argue that it is the majority which has the power to set the parameters for “Roma inclusion”.

However, civil society actors need to be wary of the fact that Roma people might want to maintain a boundary towards the majority population. Thinking of the Roma as an ethnic group where its members use self ascription and identification, and organise interaction between people to maintain its boundaries (Barth 1994:10), Romanipen, Romani law, comes to play a central role. Despite, or perhaps because of the assimilationist policies, and regardless of the actual definition of the term by different Roma groups, Romanipen exists as a meaningful term used by the Roma to maintain the boundary towards the majority population. The Roma assistant explains that: “Just as you can never become a Roma, I can never become a gadje. (...) If a Roma gets magerized,129 well it’s better not to think about that... Well, you can’t sit together at the same table with a magerized person”130.

Moreover, even if the Roma in Krosno belong to the Bergitka Roma who have been sedentary for centuries and are perceived as the most liberal Roma group in Poland, they have maintained a way of life different from that of the majority. Besides the visible identity markers such as skin colour, language and the older girls being dressed in skirts, Romanipen constitutes an important framework for beliefs and practices. An important aspect of this is not leaking out knowledge about what Romanipen entails. This has been thought of by the Roma as crucial for their survival as an ethnic group (Mróz 2001). When asked why the Roma children sometimes do not answer when asked about Roma culture, the Roma assistant says “The children don’t always know what they can and can’t tell”.

From this follows that the need to define themselves as separate from the Polish population might take precedence. With an inferior position in larger society the Roma generally have the power to exclude themselves, but not to include themselves. This can lead to Roma people wanting to protect their identity or group by holding on to the values and practices entrusted to Romanipen and refraining from being involved in any types of Roma initiatives.

129 To be magerized (Romani) means to be excluded from the Roma community.

130 Even a Polish teacher in the only Roma school in Poland and a friend of many Roma families, speaking their language fluently and having an insider’s understanding of Romani life, was not considered a Rom (Milewski, Jacek 2008).
particularly if these entail practices which can be interpreted as contradicting Roma laws. If this is the case there is not much NGOs like SK can do. However, with some insight into Roma related issues and what can be understood to constitute “the Roma way of life”, SK could begin a dialogue with Roma people on whether they would like to take part in the project and on which terms.

While the Roma elite is more likely to be interested in participating actively in “Roma projects”, the “common Roma” have fewer resources and are usually much more reluctant to change “traditional ways”. It therefore becomes necessary to gain a broader understanding of the Roma community an NGO is working in and with. With greater cultural understanding, SK could start to think about ideas and perhaps even portray some of the dilemmas and life projects of Roma people in the local community to the public, be it stigmatization by Polish children, gender relations and early marriage, Roma people’s relationship to education or any topic related to Romanipen. When looking at the life projects of the Roma, and in particular representations of the Roma and “Roma inclusion” in Krosno, the Roma assistant provides for a good starting point.

In his ambivalent position as an outsider to the school, but also as a representative of both the Roma programme and the “Roma elite” on the one hand and a representative of the local Roma community and the “common Roma” on the other, the Roma assistant is pulled between many and often contradictory “projects”. In his role as a Roma assistant, he tries to retain a façade of an esteemed position as someone representing the larger Roma community. However, as an “ordinary Gypsy man” he is also guided by personal (financial) gain. Moreover, while he wants to stay true to traditional Romani customs, he also wishes to be part of the Polish majority. Additionally, as an underdog in the school context he has a largely unsuccessful agenda of resistance against the principal and the Polish majority. From this we see that the Roma assistant can be seen as a hybrid representing many Roma images. Thus it is possible for the representations of the “sanitized Roma” and “the victim Roma”, as well as the image of the “assimilated Roma” and the “stereotype Roma” to live side by side.

As discussed in chapter four the image of the Roma as victims was particularly perpetuated by Konrad. This is closely linked to a broader victim representation of the Roma as eternally

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131 See e.g. Kazubowksi-Houston’s (2010) account of her performance on marriage kidnappings in “Staging Strife – Lessons from Performing Ethnography with Polish Roma Women”.
persecuted and impoverished. It can be viewed as a reaction to the Roma people’s current situation and to centuries of oppression and marginalization (Vermeersch 2008). At the same time, the victim image can be perceived as providing an excuse to reap the benefits coming from it, which in turn contributes to create an image of the Roma as passive receivers of the aid available to them. In line with this the Roma assistant tells me that “we are Roma people, so we are entitled to receive things”.
However, the victim image can also be a booster for greater Roma political, social and cultural activism. This can be seen in connection with Konrad’s attempts to embrace the image of the “sanitized Roma” that has been introduced to him through the Gypsy industry and his role as the Roma assistant. This can be illustrated with my somewhat official visit to the świetlica romska. When I came by the Roma assistant, who usually meets and greets everyone cheerfully in the corridors, now introduces himself in a formal manner. The Roma children dancing around the small room became quiet and one of them wrote “be quiet because we are having a guest” on the board. As we sat down the Roma assistant eagerly started telling me about famous Roma people, their language and culture, and handed me a pile of reading material I might be interested in. With the same enthusiasm he continued to talk about the work he is doing, his responsibilities and the projects he participates in. “This is Adam Bartosz”, he said pointing at a picture of the Polish academic “guru” on Gypsies who built up the ethnographic museum in Tarnów.132. “He is a cool guy. I wanted him to come to the school, but was told ‘Who’s going to take care of that!’”. If they’ve heard a Polish person talk about Roma culture, now that would have been something different, they would have looked at everything differently”.
Konrad does not seem to have managed to develop an effective approach on how to present Roma “culture” and people to the public. We could say that the ordinary Gypsy man without any previous interest in standing up for Roma rights, in his role as Roma assistant has been drawn into the Gypsy industry and almost by chance becoming a representative of Roma interests in the school and in Krosno. This can be seen to reflect in how he on the one hand does take pride in and guards his Roma identity, and on the other appear to distance himself from the Roma people. From time to time he came with outbursts where he showed resent towards the practices and values associated with being a Roma. He also said that he would

prefer to be Polish. These attitudes could be seen as a result of assimilation which has become internalised, something which leads to a representation of the “assimilated Roma”. Konrad would randomly state that “If I could choose I would not want to be married off”. Sometimes his statements would even suggest that he would rather prefer to associate with Polish people or go back to the assimilationist politics of the past. When discussing how the Roma political mobilization and Roma initiatives are organised he bluntly said that “There’s so much trouble there. I would rather work with Polish people”, or “Before it was better everybody did the same things. Nobody said you are Roma and you are Polish, we just went on trips together and had competitions and stuff…”.

Just like the image of the “assimilated Roma”, the “stereotypical Roma”, can be seen as reflections of attitudes maintained by the majority population, which have come to be internalized by the Roma themselves. The Roma people’s vulnerable position vis a vis the majority population helps maintain an image of the Roma as a pariah group which is always on the side of the majority society either as a troublesome burden or as an exotic, cultural enrichment. This image is also confirmed by the representations of Gypsies in Polish songs, tales and drawings, where they are portrayed either as artists, travelers and beautiful, mysterious Gypsy women or as thieves, cheats, beggars etc.

We can see all these representations as attempts to make sense of the ambivalent Gypsy “stranger” (see page 23). As such they give no unambiguous pointer to how “Roma inclusion” should be dealt with. In fact they bring forth contradictory attitudes towards the Roma and thus reproduce the image of the ambivalent stranger who is neither inside nor outside the majority population. This ambivalence in turn paralyses action (Bauman 2007). We cannot capture him as he slips out of set categories. Yet, taking on board the complexity of Roma people’s reality and worldview when creating a project about “Roma inclusion”, could pave the way for a broader and more diversified understanding of Roma related issues from their perspective, and help the Roma take charge in decision making processes and activities that concern them.
Conclusion

In this chapter I have shown that in their attempt to manoeuvre towards inclusion, Stop Klatka, to a large extent, ends up excluding the Roma. I have also discussed the possibilities for alternative ways of approaching “Roma inclusion”.

According to SK’s universalist ideology exclusion seems to be the right means to reach inclusion. Consequently, project leaders chose an indirect approach and officially distance themselves from dealing with Roma issues and Roma people in the project, as they believe a more direct approach would reinforce negative stereotypes and that factors other than ethnicity should direct projects. However, in their attempts to address stereotypes, segregation and Roma participation the project leaders’ choices lead to practices where, “Roma inclusion” is to happen on SK’s terms, and to be “granted” only if the Roma are able to adjust to SK’s and the school’s expectations. Moreover, the Roma are interpreted as a “problem group” and volunteers in practice take the place of the Roma as central beneficiaries in the project.

The project Romski Pstryk is an example of how Roma people and “Roma inclusion” can be represented differently in NGO projects. In line with the Open Society Foundations’ approach, this project is an alternative to Patchwork where, the Roma are made visible and Roma culture is openly discussed within the framework of a project by, for and about the Roma. However, once again the interests of the school and the principal appear to have influenced the representation of the project to the school. This led to the project leader present having to improvise both when mitigating an escalating conflict between the principal and the Roma assistant, and when setting the agenda for the workshop.

The final section shows that it is possible to introduce alternative ways of representing the Roma from their perspective by thinking around the notion of life projects and introducing hybrid representations of Roma people and culture. However, it is up to NGOs’ own initiative whether or not, to which extent and in which way they want to search for, incorporate and represent such life projects. If they choose to do so it might be necessary for them to invite Roma people into their projects and to gain knowledge about Roma related issues. This way the NGO becomes the facilitator, which only to a limited degree creates representations of the Roma, but rather makes it possible for the Roma to be the central actors in creating their own representations and ultimately their own life projects and subjectivities.
Concluding Remarks

How does Stop Klatka as an actor in Poland’s civil society develop policies and strategies in interaction with other actors?

and

To which extent does Stop Klatka have the possibility to “pave its own way” as an independent organisation?

Stop Klatka can neither be thought of as a completely free agent, nor merely as a puppet in a game directed by external stakeholders. Rather SK is always embedded in webs of relations with different actors, so whatever ‘agency’ the organisation seems to ‘have’ is in reality something that is always interactively negotiated (Ortner 2006: 152), so that practices, strategies and policies become a result of a multi-layered complex of relationships (Mosse 2004). However, the different actors involved in SK’s work and the Patchwork project play different roles and influence SK’s agency in different ways. Similarly, the policies and strategies SK develops in interaction with these actors differ.

The structural framework for Poland’s emerging civil society lays the ground for SK’s work. While the inconclusive legal system gives NGOs considerable autonomy to conceptualize and implement their work, the Polish authorities and funding agencies set the most important parameters for their interpretative autonomy. The strong state influence has prompted SK to adopt a strategy where they under the heading of “social capital” promote the state’s agenda of building up the new civil society. At the same time, SK has begun to receive considerable funding from foreign donors, including the Open Society Foundations funding Patchwork.

The Open Society Foundations introduces Stop Klatka to the prevalent ethno politics and sets the overall agenda for the project and the main goal of “Roma inclusion”. As a powerful global actor, OSF has significant possibilities to impact on policies and practices in the countries it operates. However, OSF and their version of ethno politics are new to SK, and it is only through the Patchwork project that Stop Klatka has come to engage with Roma related issues. Consequently, OSF has limited influence on SK’s operational autonomy and implementation practices. OSF’s approach proposes to introduce “Roma inclusion” by promoting a “sanitized”, cultural Roma and focusing on Roma participation, stereotypes and
discrimination. Nevertheless, the project leaders in Patchwork implement their own “colourblind”, psychological approach. Emphasising skills and abilities over ethnicity, this approach stand in contrast to OSF’s perspective on “Roma inclusion”. In essence this leads to “Roma inclusion” as it is understood by OSF, to be dealt with as a by product and not an integral part of the project. It is only towards the end of the project that SK try to grapple with Roma related issues such as Roma participation and stereotypes.

The local school environment seems to affect SK’s implementation of Patchwork and how they go about addressing “Roma inclusion” the most. This is in line with recent research, which shows that it is not the policies on new minority rights that are most decisive in how the Roma are approached, but rather the power dynamics at a particular place and time (Nowicka 2012). The social field into which SK enters, the strong position of the principal, the ethnicised conflict and the “educational consciousness” in the school, have to a significant degree dictated SK’s practices. Moreover, with SK’s position as outsiders in need of the principal’s trust it is perhaps only natural that the organisation has had to adapt to the local context.

SK has applied several strategies when interacting with the school. In order for Patchwork to be recognised as a “pedagogically fruitful method” by the principal they have drawn on their academic capital and represented Patchwork as a social educational project about difficulties in children’s lives. Moreover, they have represented the project as dealing with multiculturalism and diversity. Both representations can be seen as strategically chosen by SK. They are broad enough to incorporate interpretations of “Roma inclusion” in a manner, which suits the organisation and allow project leaders to successfully implement their own psychological, “colourblind” approach, which in effect preaches “inclusion through exclusion”. They also make it possible for SK to gloss over issues concerning ethnicity which might play into the ethnicised conflict between the Roma assistant and the principal. This form of expedience is by SK seen as a practical necessity. However, in practice it results in a form of exclusion, where SK together with the school set the terms for the project, SK distances itself from ethno politics altogether, defines Roma as problem group and make volunteers their central beneficiaries.

Out of all the actors involved in Patchwork the Roma community is the actor, which has had the least impact on SK’s implementation of the project. Being accountable to both OSF and
the school, SK is drawn between their contradictory expectations towards “Roma inclusion”. In this process the Roma people and Roma related issues are left to be dealt with on the side. An important reason for this is that the Roma community does not constitute an actor on whose trust SK must rely to carry out the project. Moreover, SK’s own approach and background does not aim to directly incorporate the Roma. Lastly, the Roma community is weak and often impoverished, making it difficult for them to take an active part in projects that concern them. While these are important explanatory factors for not involving the Roma community, it could be possible for SK to invite Roma people into the project, so that they become its central actors. As exemplified by the project Romski pstryk and my discussion on alternative ways to “Roma inclusion”, this could be done by working with Roma people’s life projects. Doing so would make it possible to take on board the complexity of Roma identity and life as it is perceived by the Roma themselves.

In sum we can say that Stop Klatka has a significant degree of agency to “pave its own way” as an independent organisation in Polish civil society. Strategically negotiating their agency Stop Klatka has interpreted the Open Society Foundations’ agenda of “Roma inclusion” through their own psychological, “colourblind” approach and adapted it to a local school setting. This has resulted in the organisation successfully incorporating its own “projects” and background into the Patchwork project.
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Legal Acts and Regulations


Appendix

Script of the Interactive Play titled …………………………
created as part of the project “Patchwork” by volunteers of the Association of Drama Practitioners STOP KLATKA in cooperation with the Foundation “Good Life”

In the beginning there is a presentation about the Patchwork project prepared by [the project leaders]

I Props introduced to build the story

The leader hands them out to the participants/audience, the participants build the story

Props needed:
- Props in the bag
- Large, dark table cloth where we place the objects after introducing them

And now we welcome you to watch our version of the story…

II The Play

INITIAL SLIDES

A mix of music, signalling that the play is about to begin and to draw the audience’s attention

Music is silenced, Milena enters the stage

Beethoven – Silencio

1. Crisis scene

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133 The play never received a title

134 Fundacja „Dobre Życie” is a foundation set up by the president of Stop Klatka

135 When a child is handed a prop he/she is to guess what has happened in connection to that prop. The props include: a phone with an sms from Milena’s father who works in England, a note from the dance teacher, a note from class including conversation between Milena and Natasha, Milena’s invitation to Patrycja’s birthday
Milena sits on stage crying with phone in hand writing an sms to her dance teacher that she’s quitting dance practice

Project leader approaches her an asks: Milena, what happened?

Milena: It’s a shame to talk about it! See for yourselves!

SLIDES PRECEDING THE SCENE AT DANCE PRACTICE

They say a bit more about the main characters and their relationships than does the scene itself

Photos, zoomed in on images/people + photos showing their relationships – faces and how they are playing (fooling around)

2. Dance practice

Milena + Natasha stretching out, talking

M: Don’t you think the choreography the dance teacher taught us is really nice?

N: It’s great! If we get to the finals with this one we will win for sure!… But this dance move is really hard, isn’t it? (tries to show Milena)

M: It’s not so difficult (shows Natasha) here when you need to do a split you just need to practice a bit and you’ll make it. (enthusiastically)

N: You know, my dad just got back from Ukraine. He brought me a drawing kit and drawing blocks…

M: Can you draw something nice for me then? You’re so good at drawing (Dance teacher enters)

DT: Girls, I can see that you’re doing really well. I have news for you. I just talked the director of the House of Culture, and … he told me that we got pass the eliminations and got through to the finals on Saturday! (girls are happy and jump up and down in excitement. The dance teacher is happy for them)

DT: Come down, girls. We have a great deal of work ahead of us in the following days. We will rehearse the show in your school before the performance. It would be good if someone could draw a poster. Do you know anyone who knows how to draw well?

(M+N are quiet. Natasza is a about to say that she can do it)

N: well…

But Milena interrupts her. Doesn’t look at her, is tying her shoe lace.

M: I think the older girls in school were doing something recently.

DT: Could you ask them if they can help us out?

M: ok
M: (walks up to the dance teacher) … Miss, I would like to go an hour earlier, because I have to study…

DT: (agrees reluctantly) If you really have to. But later you need to catch up.
I’ll put on the music and we get back to rehearsing.

Waka Waka -> Blackout

SLIDES

Pictures showing something more about their relationships. From the kitchen
Pictures Antek and Milena at home (kitchen) picking a fight.
Sit in one room. He plays games on his computer, she is doing her homework.
A proper family photo – at the table with mom

3. Siblings

Milena and Antek in the morning in the hallway before going to school
Antek enters singing Ko ko, ko ko Euro Spoko
Milena sees that her brother has stolen her headphones. Antek is wearing a football shirt or carries a football, headphones.
M: What is that?! These are my headphones!
A: Can’t you see? I took them, cause mine are broken and mom said I could.
M: But you know I didn’t say you could.
A: what do I care, it’s more important what mom says.
M: Giv’em back, they’re mine! Why does mom always allow you to do things?! 
A: (looks up, confused). Cause mom loves me more, you still haven’t noticed?
M: Oh yeah?! So let her love you then (destroys the headphones)
M exists slamming the door

4. English Class

The teacher writes down the homework

Homework: ex. 2 page 4…

Whereupon she starts to hand out the corrected English tests

Teacher: And now we’re finished for today, but first you get your tests back as I promised.
Eliza, 5, as usual.
Eliza: I was studying with my mom, my mom is very good at English.

T: Patrycja 4. And you Milena, unfortunately only 3 plus. You have to try harder. Natasha 2 (marked tone, frowning)

Patrycja: How is it possible to get 2 on such an easy test?

T: (ironically) Apparently it is.

M: But, miss, I was studying. I even skipped dance rehearsals.

N: (speaking to herself) I got a 2

T: (talking to Milena) apparently it wasn’t enough. You should put some more effort into this.

T: I encourage everyone to join the extracurricular English lessons. We will be meeting every Tuesday at 15:00 hrs.

E: Are we going to be preparing for the Olympics¹³⁶?

T: Yes, we will also be preparing for the Olympics.

E: Ok. Are you going? I am.

M: Didn’t you hear? It’s only for those who are good

E: But if you study you can join as well. You know what, I and my mom can help you with school work. She really knows English really well. She’s very smart. And I am doing quite well, I’ve got a five. So, you want to come by? We can study together.

M: No, I won’t come… I’ll manage by myself

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SLIDES

Preceding scene, show differences in the relationship between Milena-Patrycja

Milena – Natasha

Gotye (school bells in the background) – pictures of Milena and Natasha

Tiesto – Traffic

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5. Break between classes

Patrycja, Milena, Natasha

Milena and Natasha walk together talking about their bad English marks

M: (cheering N up) Whatever, let’s not get down about this, let’s focus on the performance. It’s great that we got through to the finals.

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¹³⁶ Olimpiada is a larger contest, usually on a regional or national, organised within a specific field, e.g. English, which pupils can sign up for. The winners are awarded a price and the remaining participants are listed according to which place they have obtained in the contest.
Milena and Natasha meet Patrycja in the hallway


Milena goes over and Natasha follows her

M: Hi!

N: Hi Patrycja.

P: (to Natasha) But I’m not talking to you...

Natasha goes over to the side, but not too far away, so that she can hear everything

P: (to Milena) I’d like to invite you to MY birthday on Saturday. Here’s the invite. P gives M the invitation. All the girls will be there, my mom ordered a special cake with my picture on it and it’ll all take place at Mc Donald’s. It’s going to be great!

N: But we’re having our performance that day (she says quietly to Milena)

Patrycja turns around to face Natasha, looks up and down at her with contempt

P: Natasha, you should better go and see if you haven’t forgotten yourself over there!

Natasha goes to the side

M: Well we have a performance, and I have the main part…

P: Milena, but it’s my birthday! You can for once not go to the performance. You have to come! My mom bought me new clothes, we’re going to take pictures and put them on ‘Nasza klasa’. So, you’re coming then?

Natasha jumps in again:

N: But remember that we have a performance then

P: (to Natasha with contempt and anger) And you’d better just get out of here and go learn some English, so you won’t get a two again!

M: Well… I don’t know, I’ll have to see… I’ll let you know

P: See you Saturday then! Byeee

SLIDES

Preceding scene 6

Milena goes back from school. Antek. Mom in the kitchen preparing food. Mom on the phone (gesticulating, talking to dad)

6. Returning home, scene with mom

Milena returning home. Mom is preparing pirogues for dinner

137 Nasza klasa means our class and is an internet portal similar to facebook
M: Hi mom
Mom: Hi! How was school?
M: Ok, and do you know that we have a performance in the House of Culture
Mom: What performance? And when you going to study? What did you get on your English test?
M: Ehhhm The English teacher wasn’t at school today. But do you know that the girls all have new dresses? Can you buy me one too?
Brother: But I saw the English teacher today…
Mom: What do you mean?
Brother: At school. She was there during breaks.
Mom: Milena? So was she there or not?
M: Well she was there…
Mom: You’re lying again? What did you get on the English test?
Brother: Probably a stick\(^{138}\)!
M: (to brother angrily) It was not a stick!
Mom: I asked you what you got on your test.
M: 3+
Mom: And Eliza, what did she get?
M: 5
Mom: You see, Eliza knows how to study. Milena, what’s going on? You bring home lower and lower marks and you’re lying too. What am I going to tell dad? (frustrated)
M: But mom…. I’ll make it better, but this dress…
Mom: There will be no dress, you’re not studying, you’re trying to lie to me, nothing good comes from all this dancing. You’ll eat your dinner, and then march off to your room to study. Later on I’ll check on you.
M: I don’t want to. I’m not going to eat!
Mom: (to Milena’s brother) It’s good that at least you don’t cause me any problems.

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\(^{138}\) *Pala* translates as *a stick* and refers to the number 1, i.e. the worst mark one can receive
7. Crisis Scene

M: Hi Nasha, you know what my mom doesn’t want to give me money to buy a dress, cause of the 3 I got on the English test. And what am I gonna tell the dance teach…

N: And what are you calling me for about this?

M: What do you mean Natasha! But we’re friends.

N: That’s what I thought, but you apparently chose Patrycja. Hangs up

Milena calls Natasha – she hears the ringtone, but no one picks up.

M: Natasha! Pick up, I’ll explain everything, I….

Dials another number, she’s calling dad.

Ringtone. Answering machine says: „This is Zieliński, Andrzej, leave a message”.

Milena puts down the phone and cries.

THE END

III Searching for Answers Together

Project leader walks out on stage

- short conversation with the audience
- hot chair
- the audience learns that in a while they will have the opportunity to help Milena
- actor ‘de-role’ and are introduced with their real names, countdown from 1-8
- audience is divided into 8 groups, one actor goes over to each group
- information to the children that attended the Patchwork workshops earlier, that they will be assisting the actors
- instruction to the audience about working in groups
- working with the audience on creating improvised scenes that will help Milena
- presenting the scenes to the audience
- summing up, closure

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The actors sit on a chair on the stage one by one in character, and the audience ask them questions.