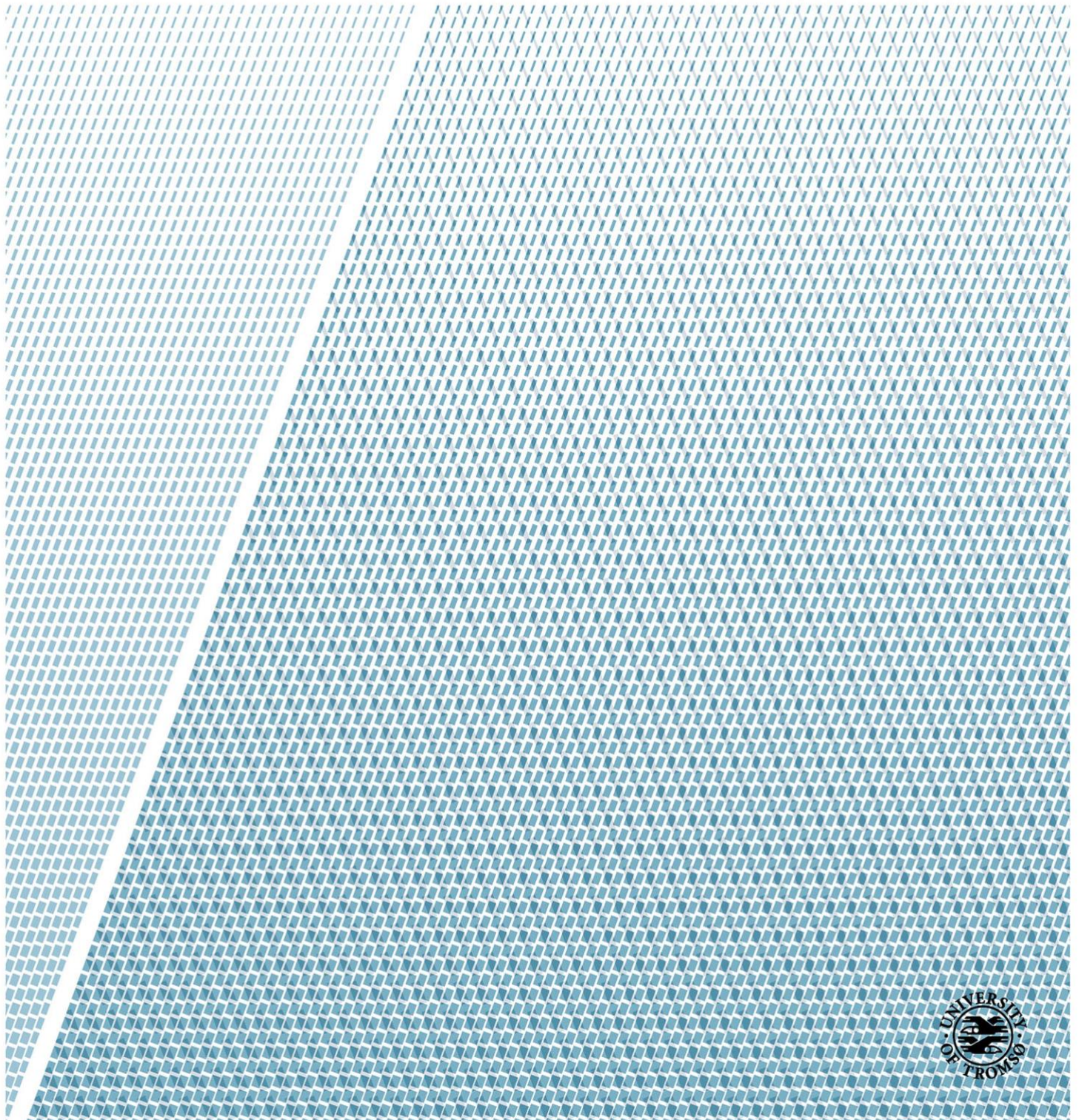


Behind the mask

A Traditional Circus in Times of Change

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Master thesis in Visual Anthropology. November 2018



Behind the mask:

A Traditional Circus in Times of Change

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SVF-3903 From fieldwork to Ethnographic film and text
Autumn 2018

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Abstract

This thesis is describing the life of the circus community, considered to be a specific type of group recognized by a traveling way of life, behavioural signs, different values, or cultural practices etc.

This research is based mainly on participant observation with and without a camera following a small, traditional family from a Czech circus, consisting of 16 members founded in 2010.

In this paper, I am discussing their position in today's society, their perception of themselves being different compared to *the Others*, as well as their relationship towards the circus animals, which is a resonant subject for a discussion nowadays.

In this study, I am also trying to investigate the possible connection between the circus community and the Romani ethnic group, finding interesting similarities in the form of lifestyle, values and language, but unable to show a definite link.

Moreover, I am focusing on the circus and its functioning under the wave of globalization, as the new wave of entertainment in the 21st century is affecting their existence.

Based on what I found from my fieldwork, the circus, along with its traditions, seems to be in a time of change, facing a more and more uncertain future mainly related to these two factors.

Keywords: Circus, tradition, identity, stigma, education, relationship, animal welfare, future, entertainment, globalization

Acknowledgments

I am deeply thankful to circus Berosini and its members, who all allowed me to look into their lives and share moments together. I very much appreciate the openness and honesty they gave me. A special thanks belongs to Karolína, with whom I became good friends with, and our relationship continue to this day.

From the University of Tromsø, I want to thank all the professors which has been there for me during the years, specially my supervisor Bjørn Arntsen, who has been very patient, supportive and there to give me advice. My thanks also belong to Torgeir and Irati, for sharing their opinions and ideas with me.

I am also grateful to Hanuš Jordan, for his feedback, discussions and his interest.

Last but not least, I want to thank to my family, for believing in me and supporting me through the years of my study.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The roots of circus art are first to be found in Knossos, Crete in 2400 BC., where young men were portrayed skipping a bull, juggling with balls, and demonstrating other circus acrobatics in Hellenistic Greece. In another part of the world, today's Mexico, the Aztecs are portrayed as demonstrating acrobatics and the art of antipod, while people could look at the wild and dangerous animals behind the cages.

It was the art of unusual physical exercises that only some of the talented ones could command, often risking their own lives.

This is the basis of the art which then arrived in the last third of the 18th century under the circular arena, later the circus tent, creating the modern circus, now defined as traditional, accompanied by acrobats of various disciplines, animal tamers, clowns, tightrope walkers, along with the music. (Jordan, 2014:9-11)

Nowadays, most people see the circus as a place to spend Sunday afternoons with their kids, a place they might see a variety of exotic animals, or be impressed by acrobats flying around over their heads, while eating candy floss. The perfect place to capture especially a child's imagination. Spotlights, masks, smiles, loud music, colours, animals, applause or intriguing people walking on a tightrope.

For my topic and fieldwork, I decided to choose a specific traditional circus which is located in Czech Republic, run by a family with a long tradition in this field. My motivation is not only connected to my own curiosity, but also due to the increased media attention traditional circuses have gotten in later years based on changing norms and values relating to, among other things, animal welfare and the increasing availability of digital and global entertainment. Due to such factors, the traditions of the circus is now under threat of being lost in an ever more modern society, making traditional circuses an interesting subject to study.

According to Jordan, those who are interested in the history of the Czech circus have a difficult role as there are no monographs dealing with the history and treatise on the worlds "round art". The reason why historians, as well as sociologists, theater theorists, and cultural

anthropologists are not dedicated to the particular field as much as other cultural phenomena, are many. In the first place it is the ignorance of the people from outside and the closeness of the circus environment to the world. There is only few, who enter the environment and get to know the daily life of this business from *behind the scenes*. For decades, there has been a division of circus people, so called “*secular, “the Others” or “worldly”*”. (Jordan, 2014:13)

Having the opportunity to study the life of this unique community, would further bring me to the questions which will be of focus within my thesis and is also linked to my film.

What is the life behind the scenes? What does the circus people have in common? What is the differences between us and them? What is the future of the circus?

1.1 BEROUSEK FAMILY

Thanks to establishing contact with a publisher of several books dealing with the topic of traditional circus in Czech Republic, and also a curator of circus collections working in the National museum in Prague; Hanuš Jordan, PhDr., i have gotten very useful knowledge and found out alot about the history and the origin of the Berousek family.

According to Jordan, Berousek ,as well as many other traditional circus families, got into the industry in the form of puppetry work. Archival records however, reveal the unusual difficulty associated with their artistic origins. The village of Vlásenice in Jistebnice Region (south Bohemia) rejected Ignác Berousek an application for permission for puppetry and gymnastics on July 6, 1836.

The rejection was connected to the fact that the previous permission was issued by the village in 1827 to the local puppeteer Jan Flachs, for the operation of puppets and gymnastics in the village and settlements under its jurisdiction. However, Gubernium cancelled the permit due to a formal issue. Ignác Berousek was given an official concession the 1th July 1853. He continued his entertaining professions until 1869, together with his son Jan Berousek.

The puppetry and gymnastics branch of the family is linked to a long tradition of rope-walkers, founded by Silas Berousek (born 1844). His group was in 1911 appreciated by Franz Joseph I. His descendants – Berosini – traveled around the world before settling in the USA.

The founder of the traveling Czech circus Berousek, namely Ignác (Hynek) Berousek (1875-1937), is now seen as the origin of what is now the largest national circus in Czech, Original Berousek, as well as circuses Sultán, Berosini and Bernes.

Circus Berousek originated simultaneously with the Czechoslovak Republic. Hynek's eldest son, Ludvík Berousek (1902-1954), established Circus Bernes (1930), and during the years 1939-1950 led the circus as a medium sized private enterprise. His son of the same name (Ludvík II.) took the advantage of the fact that the state circuses tolerated smaller family businesses, and as a "transitory" form of ownership could in 1956-1958 operate his own business. Early legislation against the nomadic inhabitants of Czechoslovakia affected not only those of for example Romani ethnicity, but also circus and secular people, roundabouts and other traveling attractions.

The most famous of the second generation of this family, is undoubtedly Ferdinand Berousek (1912-1977). In 1939 he took over the family business. Gradually, he built a tradition based on high quality animal dressage, especially bears. Thanks to his organizational capabilities, he managed to complete the season in 1948. For the way he performed, noble and elegant, he was nicknamed "professor". The National Enterprise of Czechoslovak Circuses and Varieties repetitively used his name to promote the best of what he was offering. Ferdinand Berousek was also featured in a popular film, in which his bears ride on motorcycles. (Jordan, 2014:78)

Ferdinand Berousek had five children; Jiří, Karel, Anna Polachová, Eva Lagronová, and the youngest one Ferdinand Berousek II, who is currently the owner of Circus Berosini. (Jordan, H., personal conversation, 2018-09-15) For many years, he has been involved in the dressage of bears together with his brother Karel with whom he has traveled the world with. After his brother's death, Ferdinand established Circus Berosini together with his wife Olina Berousková and two of his daughters; Simona and Karolína.



Picture: Ferdinand Berousek (1912-1977), father of Jiří, Karel, Anna, Eva and Ferdinand Berousek II, owner of the circus Berosini.

FERDINAND BEROUSEK

As I mentioned above, Ferdinand comes from a well-known family with a long circus tradition. He was literally born in the circus, as his mother gave birth inside of a caravan on the circus grounds. He worked as a bear dresser and traveled around the world together with his brother Jiří and Circus Originál. As an animal trainer, he perceived himself as a supporter of human dressage, which is basically associated with a feeding form of reward to the animal.

He is now the owner of Circus Berosini together with his wife and support his two daughter's in continuing within the circus tradition.

Ferdinand: *“I was never considering doing anything else than traveling with the circus. I love it and want to be part of it. What else I could do nowadays, become a driver? I am too old to be hired to do manual work.”*

OLINA BEROUSKOVÁ

Olina Berousková was born to a mother belonging to the circus community, and a father who was primarily a musician and, based on my findings, belonged to the Romani ethnic group. After being thrown out of his home by his father, he decided to join the circus as a trumpeter.

“My dad was given an offer to work in the German Philharmonic Orchestra, but he refused so he could stay with his family. I think he regretted it his whole life, because the conditions for living in Germany were better than here. We would live so-called “from hand to mouth”, meaning in a deep poverty.”

Olina is the only one holding a higher education which is from an economic school completed by a graduation certificate. After that, she decided to go join the circus and work as a cashier. While there she met, and got married to, Ferdinand Berousek and they established a family.

KAROLÍNA BEROUSKOVÁ

Karolína is the main performer of Circus Berosini, and the youngest daughter of Olina and Ferdinand Berousek. She has never experienced a life other than the one in the circus, and was born into this community the same way her father was.

Karolína has a great love for, and relationship with, the circus animals, as well as great passion for what she does. During my fieldwork, I created a strong bond with her which naturally gave me access to several pieces of internal and important information about the circus community. Her sister Simona works for the circus primarily as a juggler. She liked to spend time alone without seeking or establishing contact with the others. She would rather spend a lot of time in her caravan, or walk her dogs, who she also used in her performance.

1.2 NATIONALIZATION OF CZECH CIRCUSES

One of the more crucial moments in Czech circus history appeared within the post-war period along with the radical changes of this time. A politically divided Europe did not allow free movement across borders, and therefore, circuses and communities associated with them were divided and developed in different ways. The year 1948 marks the end of the traditional nature of free artistic traveller-trades, such as circuses.

In Eastern Europe, circuses became the symbol of all-purpose entertainment under the influence of the socialist status in the U.S.S.R. They were thus nationalized and merged. Due to this situation, a radical reduction in their total number was observed.

The fundamental social change after February 1948 affected circuses in the most sensitive place. The tradition of private family ownership, passing down the knowledge to the next generation in the absence of artistic schools, helped circuses overcome the recurring adversity of social crises and wars, were now under pressure from increasing taxes and competition from other circuses. The ideas based on leadership of a national enterprise stepped in and took over the whole activity of circuses. For instance, the names of the circuses were no longer to be reminiscent of the west, and had to be changed to sound more Czech.

As circus tours were scheduled, the programme of the circuses was decided and artistry, dressage, clown shows and magical performances etc, began to be evaluated bureaucratically. The relevant commission, based on analysis of the performances, assessed the technique of work, presentation and demonstration, aesthetic movements etc. Another criterion was linked to a sense of teamwork and the ideological content of the performance. According to this, an artist could gain or lose a class and salary. Circus families became employees of the national enterprise with both fixed salary and working hours. (Jordan, 2014:97-102)

One of my participants describes this time as one of the most crucial and life changing times within the circus communities. According to Olina Beorusková; *“During communism, the circus was comparable to a factory. We had accountants, four cashiers, several drivers, cleaners, ushers, artists etc. It was a jolly life with bunch of people, but after the era of communism it has changed. All the circuses became family run again and they shut themselves off. People got jealous and envious and suddenly there were no friends.”*

Hanus Jordan argues for this to be a classical memorial related optimism. People were also jealous and envious of themselves. Who will get how much of money was decided by the trial commission, and the differences between circuses were significant. The leaders of the state circuses as well decided who would go to the west or who would go for instance to Russia. (personal conversation, 2018-09-18)

I think the circuses in general functioned better during the era of communism as it was very difficult for anyone to travel abroad. Therefore, seeing exotic animals like elephants, monkeys or zebras was considered as rather unique. More than that, the circuses had greater certainty of getting salary or permanent work. Another factor might be the smaller variety and less options in terms of entertainment.

1.3 FIELDWORK CONTEXT

The circus community and its members present a distinctive, separate community with specific rules and relationships. This aspect is predominately based on the necessity of traveling in association with the potential business environment. Due to this fact, the way of life and the priorities of this group within their families significantly differ from the standard of the majority.

My fieldwork took place in many villages and small cities mostly in southeastern Bohemia, following the route of Circus Berosini. The aim of the research was to study, and learn from, the process of a small, traditional Czech circus, provided by several members and workers.

Since it is important not to harm the circus itself or its characters, no sensitive information gathered from personal relationships or video material, recording for instance animal harm, is not included within the film. However, some of the information will be used within the text, dealing with the interpersonal relationships and animal welfare in detail.

The aim of the research is targeted on the understanding of social aspects of the way of life within the selected community, as well as the identification of the impact of changing conditions for the business, not only in relation to the style and form of performances provided, but also on the mood and opinions of the members of the selected community.

2. METHODOLOGICAL AND THEORETICAL APPROACH

Fieldwork is, rather than merely studying subjects, a learning process from other people with the goal, as Malinowski put it; “*to grasp the native’s point of view*”. (Spradley, 1980:3)

In this chapter, I am going to describe the methods used during the research and how they have created the knowledge and insights I gained thanks to my participants, and their will to be a part of this project. I will also discuss my position and how I entered the field, as I view this to be crucial for defining the communication and future relationship with my respondents.

I conducted my fieldwork within the period from the beginning of June (2017-06-03), until my last visit which took place in September (2017-09-17). I followed the circus through many small villages (see Appendix, figure 1.) My first visit took place in Jindřichův Hradec, but my fieldwork officially started in Uherské hradiště, followed by travels to Koryčany, Kuřimi, Bystřice nad Pernštejnem, Žďár nad Sázavou, Kamenice nad Lipou, and Soběslav.

During this time, I have been collecting data mainly by filming, taking notes, filming interviews with the members of this circus community, or during collective activities or performances, trainings, and other occasions.

As I said above, the selected methods for gathering the material have been predominantly interviews with or without the camera, recording the daily life in the circus community, and participant observation. *During participant observation, we are trying to immerse ourselves into the life of the locals and not to be noticed, so that they can carry on with their own lives as usual.* (Eriksen, 1995:34)

I would spend a great part of my time by just walking around, observing and simply trying not to be noticed, or interrupt the others in their activities. I have been talking to the members of the circus, communicating with the children, or just interviewing without the camera, especially in the first days of my research. According to Malinowski, in this type of work, it is good that an ethnographer puts his/her camera away to join in on what is going. (O’Reilly, 2012:17) I perceive talking to my participants without the use of camera as crucial, also for the development of our relationship.

I wanted them to feel calm and have the ability to believe me, and also not be afraid that I would harm them in any possible way by my use of the camera and by my presence overall. For me, relationships based on trust were fundamental for further development, and gave my participants the ability to be open and straightforward even though I used the camera later on.

After a couple of days, my presence ceased to be alien to them, and due to this their behaviour changed and they would act rather naturally towards me, even in the presence of the camera.

According to Erikson and his discussion on learning about the fieldwork, he asks a number of renowned anthropologists how to go about doing it. The closest answer to my own perception would be the answer of Malinowski, who himself told the novice ‘not to be a bloody fool’. We should keep in mind that we are entering an unknown territory and interfering with other people lives. Therefore, we should approach it with humility towards the participants and behave politely in any situation. (1995, 34-35)

To join the daily life in the circus, I would usually wake up early in the morning and join their routines, as a requirement of fieldwork consists in trying to take part in local life as much as possible. (Eriksen, 1995:34) I would not leave the circus during the day, and went to my room/apartment later in the evening, usually after the last performance. I would then look at my recorded material, charge the camera and the batteries for the next day, and sometimes, I wrote notes related to my reflections, situations, but also my own feelings which came to me after spending the whole day in the circus.

Reading my field notes now, they somewhat allow me to go back in time, as well as remind me of a lot of things I have already forgotten. As all of my film material is focused primarily on the circus community, the field notes on the other hand, gave me more to learn from my own insights, thoughts and personal impressions.

I would describe the use of the camera as not only a tool capturing the social interactions or dialogues, but also an item giving me a certain position. For instance, when I would ask my participants what is the main differences between us and them, the answer was: “*How about-you are here with a camera and we work here.*” Meaning, no matter how much I wanted to be seen within the group, the camera always caused a certain distance, or difference, between us. Sometimes, I felt I could somehow hide my own self behind the camera as well. Although it is me who decides where the viewfinder will be pointed, the camera gave me the ability to silently watch what was going on through it without any interference.

It is not only the camera giving me a certain position, according to Eriksen, but also the gender, age, race and class that inadvertently influences the experience of fieldwork as well as our personality. (1995:34) I think all that has been mentioned by Erikson had an unconditional influence on the research and material gathered. However, over time I felt all these aspects had settled and did not stand in my way anymore. For example, I felt sort of foolish at the beginning of my research due to the different social class, as in a case where I got a question concerning prices in Norway, they replied that they would not be able to even pay for the plane tickets.

My research has been planned and conducted within the natural environment of the group. My approach combines the creation of a continual video-record of the interviews and common every-day events of the community in order to discover the basic anthropological aspects and hierarchy of the group, as well as the behavioural patterns that are adopted by the group members according to their role in the community. *When ethnographers study other cultures, they must deal with three fundamental aspects of human experience; what people do, what people know, and the things people make and use.* (Spradley, 1980:5)

The interviews have been conducted individually, as well as in groups, as an open discussion of a set topic. However, the interviews were always conducted within the area of the circus and could always be interrupted by other member of the group, as they were commonly recorded outside the facilities in the open area. Interviewing is probably the most widely used method of investigating the social world. However, the actual interview formats adopted by social researchers vary widely. *“Interviewing carried out by ethnographers whose principal research strategy is participant observation is often virtually unstructured, that is, very close to a “naturally occurring conversation.”* (Davies, 2002:94)

Very often, I would only follow up on a conversation without making any preparations. However, I would keep secret my thoughts and possible themes which were the target of the research and use them if or when I felt it could be the right moment for it.

2.1 ENTERING THE FIELD

My very first contact with Circus Berosini began in Autumn 2016 through a social media website thanks to a friend from Czech Republic, Lukas Košner, whose former classmate knew Karolína Berousková (22) and thus put me in touch with her. From the beginning of our conversation, and after my clarification of my purpose of contacting her, Karolína was very accommodating and open to take part in it. She discussed it together with her parents and agreed on participating.

After my arrival back to Czech Republic, we made an appointment and I decided to visit them in Jindřichův Hradec in the late spring of 2017. At that time, I was not yet allowed to use the camera, and therefore I do not have any film material from my first visit.

I remember entering the circus ground for the first time accompanied by feelings of insecurity from the new unfamiliar environment. I got out of our brand-new family car and stepped directly into manure, immediately realizing I was about to enter a, to me, completely unknown territory.

The circus surroundings had an intense odour of straw and manure, and was rather noisy due to other children and members of the circus screaming or loudly laughing at each other. At first glance, I felt like I had travelled several years back in time. I felt the curious eyes of the people there, but nobody would come up to us, or say hello to me with interest. I would certainly have been a subject for discussion as a new intruder entering their territory. This is something I realized much later on, when I understood how intense it is when someone new arrives into their area.

After arriving, Karolína introduced me around the circus environment, and I was offered to come for their performance the same day. I remember returning back after couple of hours wanting to pay for my ticket, but Karolína's mother Olina Berousková refused and told me to go and sit in the first row. However, the performance was unfortunately cancelled due to low attendance. This situation has repeated itself several times during my research and is one of the crucial aspects to me. As a stranger, who did not even communicate with the other members of the circus, I still felt sorry seeing the children walking away, crying. Those who

came were refunded their money, and the children could have a look at the animals as consolation.

2.2 ACCESS AND POSITIONING

My second visit took place in Uherské Hradiště (2017-06-03), which is more than four hours by car away from Prague where my parents live, and where I would stay unless I was traveling with the circus. At this time, I had all the equipment needed to start my fieldwork. As usually, I rented a room/apartment or a cabin very close to the circus on their stops.

The only member of the circus I knew at that time was Karolína, and therefore I asked her to provide me around and introduce me to the circus environment while in the presence of the camera. However, when I looked at the material from the first day, she seems to feel very uncomfortable accompanied by my uncertain voice. According to Eriksen, anthropologists sometimes involuntarily step into the role of a clown, as their language might be dissimilar, and their questions towards the participants might be rather surprising or unexpected. On the other hand, breaking some rules can be also considered as a learning process for us. (1995:12) I am aware that some of my questions given at the beginning of the research, were sometimes considered by Karolína as insignificant, or even being laughed at. This was mainly due to the fact that my knowledge of the circus, as such, was rather limited compare to hers, and therefore some of my questions may have sounded little primitive or shallow. Last but not least, even though we share the same Slavic language, I retreated from my standard Czech language to a rather informal language used by the circus people, except for the vulgar words, often used by them for accurate expression.

I spent the first three to four days filming the animals, their dwellings from outside, as well as the performances. At the beginning, I felt distanced from all the members, and most of them avoided contact with the camera as well. Therefore, I decided to leave the camera in my bag at first, and gradually build up conversations with some of them.

Slowly but steady, their curiosity did not let them stay at a distance for long, and some of them even came themselves to ask on the reason of my presence. When I explained the

purpose of my stay, most of them had a positive reaction to it. I felt the reason was simply because they were pleased someone was having an interest in their lives without being judgmental, as something they are used to.

Over time, I think some of them enjoyed the attention I gave them- especially during the performances, when they would look for me as well as my camera, and I tried to be there every time just so not to disappoint them. I suddenly realized that the key was to give them space to express themselves in their natural environment. I also think that one of the reasons they felt somewhat comfortable in front of the camera during the performances, was the fact that they are accustomed to an audience and used to the attention, as well as performing in front of the others.

The first person who talked to me without seeming to have any specific problem with my use of the camera was Ladislav Brož, who is a retired acrobat. He would invite me for coffee out of his caravan, and willingly answer any of my questions related to the daily life in the circus, as well as stories and information concerning his background.

The next day, we took his car and drove around the village, since he needed to advertise the arrival of the circus, and I wanted to use this situation to collect film material. This car had a loudspeaker placed on the roof as well as a plastic statue to make sure we were seen and heard.

I noticed Ladislav's interests in me, as he would ask me for my phone number and offered me to meet for a coffee when he would be in Prague. I gave him my number and said; "*We will see*", as I could not find the right answer. My relationship with Ladislav had to be blurred by me not paying too much attention to him, since I had no interest in this elderly, married circus man. Our relationship was thus based on his interest in me, as well as my interest in the circus community. However, thanks to me giving him my phone number, I was always getting information about what is happening in the circus, even during my absence.

After just couple of days, I gradually became acquainted with all the members of the circus. I tried to not to leave anyone out and not to take sides, as I would notice different small groups of people gathering together within the community.

2.3 GETTING USED TO THE CIRCUS ENVIRONMENT

During my stay, my position evolved rapidly. From being an unknown intruder, I got into a position of a researcher, and furthermore a friend and someone who shows full respect towards the community with a genuine interest in *what* they do and *who* they are, which seemed to be appreciated by my respondents.

Slowly, but clearly, I found myself getting a lot closer to Karolína, which would make my position within the field much easier, and gave me a lot of valuable information. However sometimes, I felt a difficulty of finding the right balance between the position of a researcher and that of a friend. Since we were together for many days, some situations that occurred influenced our relationship. One of them appeared when I got severe back pain and was stuck lying in a wooden cottage in a camping ground without being able to move. Karolina decided to come get me and drive me to the hospital.

Even though I was filming through my back pain on our way there, I was suddenly getting more and more personal information, but due to ethical reasons, unusable for my film. Much of the information she would share with me was not known even by her own parents, and therefore I began to feel a weight and somewhat responsibility towards her. I began to notice we were actually communicating as friends, and that my position as a researcher was only obvious when I used the camera. However, Karolína would not pay attention to my filming, and only sometimes mentioned; *“I would like to talk to you now, not to the camera”*.

Over time, I felt more and more comfortable within their environment and started to sympathize with the community. According to Malinowski, this is one reason why an ethnographer needs time. Moreover, time also allows the researcher to settle themselves in and to begin to feel part of things, and to understand them from the point of view of those being researched. (O'Reilly, 2012:16) If I left the circus for more than couple days, I would get messages asking when I would come back again, along with how they are doing or where they are at the moment. Returning back to the circus was always a fortunate event.

Even though I fundamentally disagreed with for example the circus' use of animals, I found myself empathizing, being able to feel a similar stress from a lack of an audience, and therefore the uncertain future of the circus itself. Spradley describes the participant observer

as both insider and outsider simultaneously. As an insider we might share some emotions during the research which remain the same feelings that ordinary participants feel. We are part of the *scene*, yet outside of the *scene* at the same time. (1980:57) When I got used to their environment, I began to grow more confident. I began to trust them completely, but because of it, I also started to stop objectively seeing what is around me, but rather become part of it.

At the end of my research, I felt sadness and also emptiness. I suddenly missed the roar associated with the circus, and felt sorry for not returning back and continuing my research. Even more, I came to miss the noisy, chaotic and free-minded environment of the circus itself.

2.4 THE FILM: CIRCUS BEROSINI

I agree with McDougall, who describes the emic being more present in the film than in the text. (1998:156) There are so many perceptions, especially in the circus, which seem to be difficult to explain by mere words, and which then gives the viewer a sense of the atmosphere in the circus and the area within. As well, it is not possible to describe every silent moment or expression on the faces, which can often tell us more than the words itself. *Film does not have to use words; it manifests itself to us directly.* (Tarkovsky, 1996:62)

Within the final 30 minutes long film, the main focus was not intended to be on the performances, but primarily lied in the onstage/offstage transition of the participants, i.e. in the difference of their behaviour on the stage and behind the scene. Even though the performances were primarily not a focus, the contrast between the spectacle on the stage and the *lives behind the scenes* can only be captured by including some of the stage experiences as well. Some delicate situations were not used in the film, however, some of them will be made use of within my thesis as a part of the study under the consent of my participants.

This film is divided into three main subject matters, considered to be of the utmost importance. The first one refers to Circus Berosini struggling with the lack of a paying audience nowadays. Furthermore, I investigate the perception of circus people considering themselves to be different from the rest of our population. The third topic appearing in my film is the subject of animal welfare and my participants point of view towards this matter.

The main subject of my film is not only one person, but rather the circus as a whole and inseparable unit. The rest of the recorded material used in my film, is presenting the daily routines within the circus community and social situations describing the life within.

After I finished the editing part, I showed it to my participants, being a little bit nervous about their response. However, they all liked it, and there was not any situation or part within the film they would consider as inappropriate, which was of a great importance to me. They themselves perceive the film to be authentic and based on how the circus truly function. According to Arntsen and Holtedahl, it is necessary to include the role of the audience as well as the third person of reader, viewer or listener, as the recipient may play an important role in the construction of representations and knowledge. (2005:68)

2.5 THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

The inspiration for my theoretical perspectives is related to the study of Richard Jenkins, as he is occupied by the question of identity and argues that social identity is our understanding of who we are and of who other people are. (2008:5)

According to Jenkins, the basic concept of identity is defined by the ways individuals as well as communities are distinguished based on their relation to other individuals and communities, whereas identification itself is related to the established signification between individuals, communities etc. This makes the notions of both similarities and differences between individuals, as well as groups, the dynamic principles of identification. (2008:18)

This means that one cannot define individual- or group identity without relating or comparing it to other groups or individuals. If we use the circus as an example, we see that individual identity on a micro level within the circus differs with several factors. This can be for example based on social hierarchy, where the identity of a certain performer differs from that of another performer based on for example seniority or perceived importance to the show itself, as some performers are deemed more popular or important within the show.

For instance, the individual identity of a performer like Karolina within the circus differs from that of Roman Brož (performer), even though they are both acrobatic performers important to the show. As Karolina is placed higher within the social hierarchy, her identity as a performer differs from the rest based on her increased level of responsibilities to the show. On the other

side, all the performers within the circus also share a certain identity among themselves when compared to another sub-group within the circus, for example to the workers, who do not perform, but operates behind the curtains so to speak. In the same way though, the identities of the workers can also be seen on a personal, as well as group-based level, all depending on the comparison within or between groups at the same circus. On the macro level however, we see the group identity of the circus on a whole, vastly different from the rest of the established society, complete with different sets of values and norms, often resulting in widening the gaps between these two groups and their identities.

Within the circus community, it seems the traditional use of animals is viewed as a part of their identity, and thus they are very determined to keep this particular practice alive and relevant.

While most circus communities still to their best to keep this kind of tradition alive, the established society on the other hand, places bigger value on moving forward based on a continually increasing access to information on a global scale, and with that an increasingly shared global value system, at least when it comes to animal welfare it seems.

Therefore, thanks to the rising number of people who identify the use of animals for entertainment as inhumane, the circus is under increasing pressure, and thus negatively affected.

Globalization changes our subjective view of the world and ourselves. An increasing number of other types of entertainment have already caused a reduced number of audiences which would be interested in circus as such.

Even though it is not intention to confirm or refute whether the circus community belongs to the Romani ethnic group, some similarities do occur, and can be of use according the study of Frederik Barth, who define an ethnic group as biologically self-perpetuating, sharing cultural values and forms, and having a membership which identifies itself and is identified by others, as being distinguishable from other groups of the same order. (1998:10-11)

However, some similarities based on his study might be of use thanks to my own findings. For instance, the members of the circus based on their testimonies, gives preferences to finding a partner within the circus community. Establishing family with a partner who does not belong to their community is considered to be taboo. Circus communities are thus mutually intertwined and create families that are interconnected within the circus a such. Another of my discoveries is, that the circus community is creating and sharing similar kinds

of cultural values and norms associated with Romani tradition. Later within my thesis, I will focus on the connection between the Romani ethnic group and the circus community.

Another interesting topic I can relate to this community is the Stigma associated with lesser known or understood groups like the traditional circus community. Stigma arises, according to Goffman, initially from first impressions and with that, attributes anticipated by society. This gives, in the present case, groups like the traditional circus community a social identity based on attributes being put on them by mainstream society. If these given attributes are perceived bad, dangerous, weak etc., according to the norms of the mainstream society, such attributes are defined as stigma. Goffman goes further by dividing the social identity of a person or group into two forms, a virtual social identity, based on the stigma and characterization from the outside, and actual social identity, based on actual attributes possessed by the group. Stigma can thus be seen as a discrepancy between these two forms of social identity as long as such undesirable attributes are truly outside the norms of society, as not all anticipated negative attributes are serious enough to be considered stigma.

The poor treatment of captive animals is a well-known example of a stigma associated with the circus community. This does of course not mean that mistreating animals is a made-up accusation, as many professional circuses have been exposed for treating their animals poorly. However, stigmatizing attributes unfounded in one possessor such as this can stem from a usualness in another, giving in this case all circuses the stigma of animal cruelty. My participants in Circus Berosini then, views this topic as stigmatizing to them, claiming to treat their animals well. The discussion, in this case, on whether this truly is a stigma, or a justified attribute, is also influenced by the different set of norms concerning the treatment of animals. What mainstream society views as animal cruelty, may not be considered the same by the circus community. (Goffman,1990:12-13)

2.6 THE SOCIAL ORGANIZATION

In this chapter, I am going to introduce the organization of the circus, given by specific roles, or positions recognized by the other members, which further affects their relationships to each other, and also personal positions within the hierarchy.

Each member of the community is assigned a position and a clear role to be represented throughout the circus season. For the clarification and a deeper look into this semi-nomadic community within the structure, I will gradually represent its sixteen members and assigned roles within.

I will begin with the highest-ranking member of the circus from the point of view of the social roles inside this community, and that is the principal and the head of the circus Ferdinand Berousek. His role includes everything from planning a route throughout the season, recruiting new workers, looking after the financial side, to the role of a clown and an entertainer in his own circus. He would also be the one making the crucial decisions within this group, determining the next stop or deciding for how long the circus would stay in one location, which is mainly influenced by audience attendance.

The second most important role in this community belongs to his wife Olina Berousková, who is primarily concerned with the financial side of the circus, and has responsibility as the cashier, along with also being a performer.

The other members of the family are the two daughters; Simona and Karolína Berouskovy. In the possible absence of their parents, it is they who become the main representatives. However, their roles within the community is built differently due to other social factors. One of the reasons could be Simona's speech disorder which has the effect of impaired communication with other members of the circus. Another reason could be her not so close and enthusiastic relationship towards the circus itself, in comparison with her younger sister.

The second family consisting of seven members who travels with the circus Berosini, is the family Brožových. Kateřina and Roman, parents of four, with one of their daughters from Kateřina's previous relationship. They are acrobats traveling and living in a caravan throughout their lives. Along with them, there is Kateřina's father; Ladislav Králík, whose

responsibility lies within taking care of the animals, advertising, and anything else what is asked to be done by the principal.

The rest of the community consists of workers, the lowest position within the community. Workers or so called “labourers” by the circus people, are usually random people without formal education, family background, and often facing major existential problems. Their role lies in taking care of the animals, and all physically demanding work. They are hired by the principal of the circus, but most of them do not stay long as the position has a high rate of turnover.

I would now like to present a layout of the circus ground, showing the placement of individual members of the circus and with that shed more light on the social organization within, as each of the caravan is placed based on rules and social standing. (See drawing below)

I will start with the most important area, where all the members of the circus gather (1). The circus big top is usually placed in the middle of the chosen area, as the most important meeting point for spending leisure activities, trainings, deliberations and of course for the circus performances itself. There are not any specific rules and even workers often spend their free time drinking coffee, smoking and talking to each other in this area.

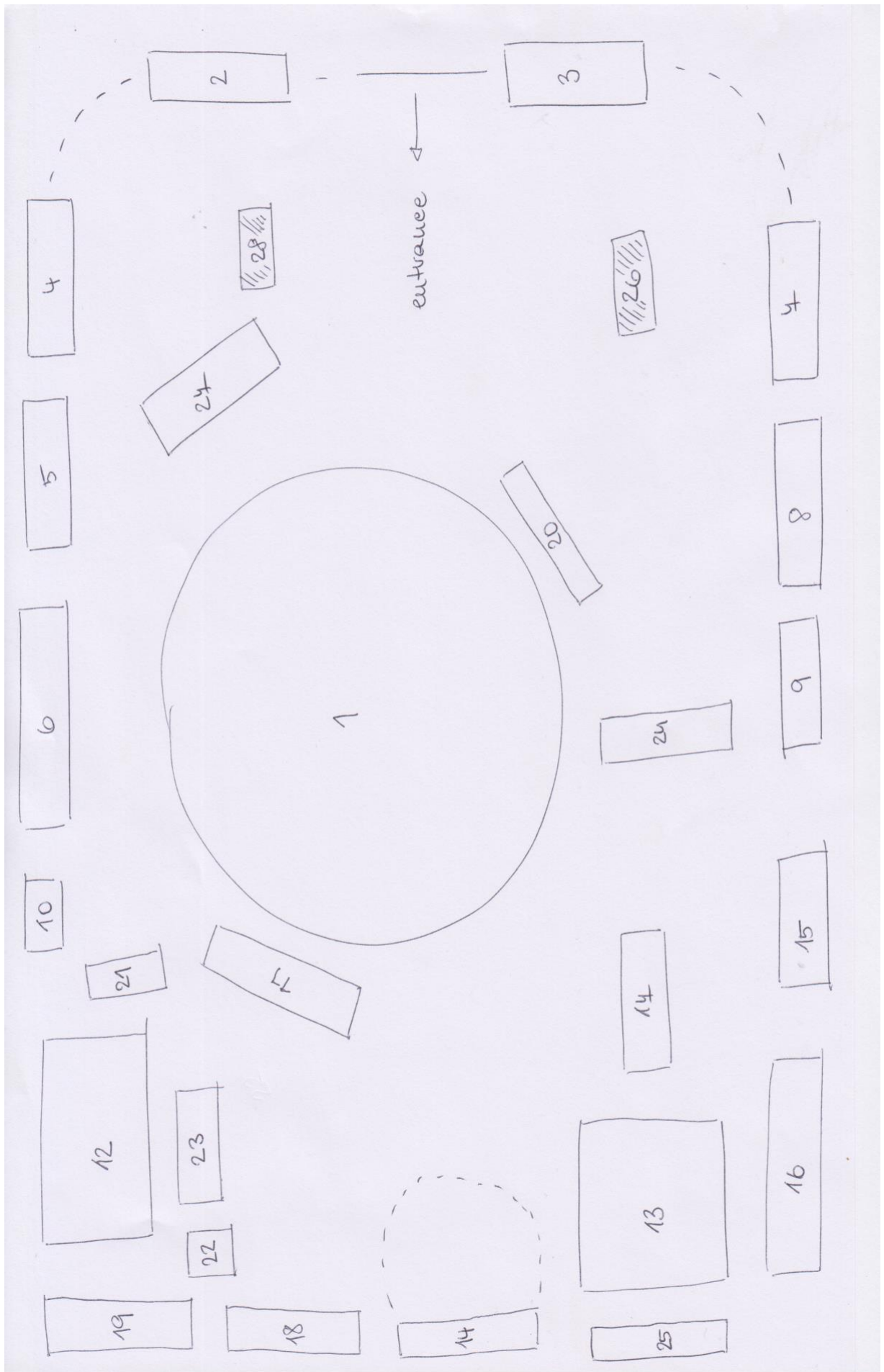
Karolína’s caravan (4), would usually be placed close to the entrance. Inside, you can find a couch on which she sleeps, but it also includes a kitchen and a bathroom for the rest of her family. They, on the other hand, spend their nights in a different caravan (5), which is placed right next to hers.

Moving forward, we get to the next caravan (6), where the bigger animals, such as horses and camels, are being housed. This caravan also works to divide Karolina and her family from the area where workers are situated.

On the very opposite side of the area, we will find three more caravans used by the family Brožových. Kateřina and Roman (performers) occupies one caravan (7) together with their youngest children. Right beside them, there is a caravan with a bathroom and a kitchen which is fully equipped (8). The third caravan belongs to the daughters Edita and Kateřina (9), but also their grandfather Vladislav and their youngest brother.

Caravans (10) and (11) is intended for workers- Martina, Radek, Ladsislav, Čestmír and Zdenek. They have no access to either bathroom or kitchen, and must therefore shower using the hose, as well as being without the possibility to cook. They are always located a certain distance away from the circus performers, nearby the tents with the animals. The rule within the community is, that workers are not allowed to come inside of the performers and owner's caravans.

As we can see on the picture below, the deployment of the different parts of the circus, tents and caravans are mirroring the social roles in this community.



1. Circus tent
2. Entrance (ticket sales)
3. Public toilets
4. Karolína's caravan (kitchen, bathroom)
5. Occupied by Olina, Ferdinand, Simona
6. Caravan - camels, horses
7. Occupied by Kateřina, Milan, Románek, Roman
8. Caravan (kitchen, bathroom)
9. Occupied by Ladislav, Edita, Kačka
10. Occupied by workers
11. Occupied by workers
12. Circus tent - horse's
13. Circus tent - camels, lamas
14. Circus tent - pigs, donkeys
15. Transport vehicle
16. Transport vehicle
17. Cage - monkeys
18. Cage - racoons
19. Transport vehicle
20. Transport vehicle
21. Transport vehicle
22. Cage - birds
23. Cage - ducks
24. Transport vehicle
25. Wagon for props
26. A personal car
27. Wagon for props
28. A personal car

2.7 NORMES AND VALUES WITHIN THE COMMUNITY

According to Michael Frese, there is a negative relationship between “As Is” (cultural practices) and “Should Be” (cultural values). “As Is” are cultural practices, and “Should Be” refer to values. Cultural practices are shared perceptions of how people routinely behave within a culture, and values are shared ideals of culture. (2015:1327)

For instance, the circus community perceives the use of animals as natural, as they do not consider to hurt them in any way by using them as an attraction. On the contrary, they have a strong relationship towards them, taking care of them and loving them. However, the cultural norm of treating animals seems to differ from mainstream society, as does the cultural value of captive animals. Especially nowadays, many quarrels and misunderstandings take place between the animal protectors, ministry of agriculture and the circus communities within Czech Republic. From the point of view of the animal protectors, it is inadmissible to further continue with keeping animals under these living conditions. Ferdinand Berousek: *“We have duties to our ancients and traditions. They cannot just come and erase all the tradition from this world.”*

If we should try to speak of values within the circus community, I would consider the values associated with family to have the greatest importance. Born into the circus, everything you learn, know, share etc is coming mainly from your parents, grandparents or siblings, thus the circus community exclusively. Children are taught values linked to the tradition and also to be fiercely proud of who they are. The importance therefore lies within the continuation of what their ancestors did before, and the focus on how they can achieve it themselves. Another important value in this community, is the freedom connected to a nomadic or traveling way of life.

Speaking of norms, and what is socially acceptable or not, I make use of an example from my fieldwork of whether it is considered to be tolerated if anyone from the circus gets romantically involved with someone not belonging to the same community. From what I have learned, this is considered as substantially negative by the members of the circus community, and carries with it a loss of value and social standing. People coming from *outside*, trying to

belong to the circus community are rarely considered to be one of them, and almost never fully integrate within the group, based on the testimonies of my participants.

2.8 RELATIONSHIPS WITHIN THE CIRCUS BEROSINI

Circus ranks are very often interconnected with family, from the point of view of marriage or familiar lineage. According to my respondents, all Czech, as well as many foreign heads of circus families are related in different degrees. Such a division between the main families and their members can be clearly observed in the circus family groups. Family is also considered as a very important aspect.

According to the theory of Marc Granovette (1973), family relations are characterized by strong ties that arise between individuals on the basis of regular contact, common experiences, emotional engagement and by sharing the same responsibilities. As I said above, in Czech Republic, there are several famous circus families operating together, as well as it is in the case of circus Berosini.

Ferdinand: *“We are working together, and I take it as an advantage to have this possibility to be with my family every day.”*

On the other hand, Karolína would often claim she does not want to be surrounded by her parents, and would rather travel with a different circus to avoid their presence. From gaining more information on this matter, young girls often leave the circus and marry into another circus family. However, there is a difference between gender, where the boys mostly stay in the circus they were born into and bring their partner to established their own family.

Roman: *The boys born within the circus community are expected to take care of their parents and stay close to them. After the parent’s death, they take the responsibility for the circus themselves.*

There are several reasons for relationships within the circus community to appear dissimilar from the rest of the society. One of the reasons might be due to the fact, that the circus people simply cannot leave the area for longer than couple of hours, which limits them in getting to

know *the others*. Thanks to my founding's, there is as well a lack of interests in making a connection with the so called "townies" or the ones not belonging to the circus community.

It seems to lie in their habits and traditions, which prefer marriages within the circus communities. Karolína Berousková (22), describe the situation with men as very unfortunate. *"The worst thing is, that you have to find a partner in the circus, as if you bring somebody from the outside, it usually does not work for him. That is also the reason, why circus people travel abroad, because there are more comedians to choose as your partner."*

Soon after we got to know each other a little closer, Karolína confided in me a secret affair/relationship with one of the other members of the circus. The whole situation put me in a rather awkward position, as from that point on, I would have to pretend not knowing in front of his children as well as Karolína's parents, due to the sensitive nature of this information.

The relationships within the circus are closely related to the social organization as such. That means the social hierarchy is naturally affecting the way they communicate with each other, and also the way they gather together. When it comes to personal relationships, circus Berosini is divided into a few small groups and furthermore couples. The simplest division lies in two families and then workers. The families and workers are further divided into other smaller groups.

The workers would spend most of their time together, as well as the circus families, but there was one exception represented by Vladislav, who is a worker and who seemed to have a strong relation to Karolína and Roman, as they would spend a lot of free time together. His position seemed to differ from the other workers, mainly due to his long-term cooperation and traveling with the circus Berosini. Although he would rarely share his background or the reason he joined the circus itself, he would admit that he cares about Karolína and this to be one of the main reason for him still being there.

Furthermore, I have been interested in whether the relationships are strong and long-lasting based on the constant and everyday contact.

Me: Do you think that when two people meet at the circus, that they stay together? Are the relationships stronger?

Karolína: I don't know. It depends. Some met when they were fifteen, and they are still together. Others get married, talk about the biggest love ever and then they split up anyway.

In the circus it is the same as with you, normal people. People break up, cheat, reunite, love and hate each other. It's all the same.

3. WHAT DOES THE CIRCUS PEOPLE HAVE IN COMMON?

Circus people seem to share some similarities. According to my findings, this does not only relate to the same kind of lifestyle when it comes to traveling, clothing, lack of education, time perception, or considering themselves as different among the others. Their otherness also lies within behaviour signs, which I would describe as passionate, quick-tempered or hot-headed.

I am basing my knowledge on several stories told by my participants and also my own perceptions, as often they would discuss loudly, or quarrel, but also a physical fight with the *others*. These situations mostly arrive when they leave the circus environment and get into unknown territory with unknown people, whose reactions might not always be as positive as they would expect or wish it to be. Some people laugh at them, others compare them to dirty comedians, or animal abusers.

As Karolína described herself, conflict arises with animal protectors coming inside of the circus area. She is not afraid to fight for her opinion, and based on interviewing some of my participants, she would not be the only one. I do not consider them to have any kind of inclinations towards aggressive behaviour, as they seem to only protect their values and significant aspects of their lives.

Another element to be shared by the circus community is as I said above, the similar style of clothing. I agree with Daniel Miler, that clothing might be recognized as a sign and a symbol that represent us. Clothes might as well represent class, cultures of origin, confidence or diffidence or gender (2010:12).

3.1 THE TRAVELING WAY OF WAY OF LIFE

One of the most beautiful aspects of living in the circus, is by my participants recognized as the traveling way of life. Ladislav: *“I love to travel and experience new villages and towns. It’s far better than staying at one spot and do the same thing all over again.”*

Karolína: *“I feel at home wherever I am traveling with the circus.”*

Furthermore, they describe the nomadic way of life as being associated with freedom and feelings of independency.

For the circus members, their home is the circus and therefore the location of home is changing with the relocation of the performance area. According to Carmeli, the travelling way of life of the circus community is associated with specific characters that influences the every-day activities and, moreover, creates the social environment with special demands on the upbringing and especially the children (and adults) education possibilities, but also social and work interactions that achieve a much stronger character than the actual major society relation outside the family circle. (1988:258)

Circus season is mostly adapted to the weather as Berosini usually leave their wintering grounds around March, not to return until Autumn, when they travel back to their wintering grounds. Throughout the season, their main goal is to save money for the upcoming winter.

According to Ferdinand Berousek, the circus season is most successful in the spring, around March, April and May, when the weather is dry and warm. In the summer, the circus is economically mostly in “red numbers” due to low attendance as people usually leave for vacation or do more varied outdoor activity. While smaller circuses are more flexible and can change the route faster, larger circuses are limited to planning.

In addition to the mentioned topics under this chapter, the travelling way of life presents various issues that have to be overcome continuously. Primarily, the character of accommodation utilized by the circus performers and staff has to be adapted to a standard of simplicity and easy-to-pack, and the location character highly influences the comfort and equipment of the facilities. The common type of accommodation is comprised of the caravan, temporary dwellings built on the circus site, or other types of vehicle-based facilities equipped

to the level of what is necessary.

Although such accommodation varies in the nature, the great difficulties always lie in the aspects of the reliability of services, such as power or water sources. The proper adaptation of these conditions may be considered crucial for the future of the business.

The advantage of the travelling way of life and the continual relocation is the possibility to create a complex picture of the inquiry and to communicate the optimal requirements of the target audiences. The skills of the members of the community, especially concerning the performers, might therefore be applied distinctively. Based on the reaction of audiences, the performance and approach to the entertainment can be modified in relation to the experiences across the locations and national habits.

The travelling way of life brings to the circus community many difficulties on the other hand in terms of cooperation, that helps to build the cooperative and interdependent nature, as all the members as a unit provide an effort to succeed in the task. This aspect of the circus business can be considered one of the strongest, that helps the community to keep together, as well as the actual feeling of freedom that is natural to the members of the social group.

This kind of life requires outstanding features of an individual's nature that is believed to be found in any circus community member. These features comprise especially the longing for freedom not limited with the norms and standards of the life of the major society. Moreover, the members of the circus community commonly target very different priorities within their life and future.

3.2 EDUCATION IN CIRCUSES

The lack of a formal education within the circus community is one of the common aspects determining the way of life in the circus. From the sixteen members of Circus Berosini (including workers), there is only one of them owning a secondary education (high school), however the majority only holds a basic-primary education provided by the state.

When I asked my participants why there seem to be a lack of circus people with academic degrees, one of the answers was: *“To be an acrobat, you do not need a doctoral degree.”* – and that is very true.

From the education debate I had with my participants, there is not only one reason for not pursuing a higher level of education. By talking to two of my participants; Karolína Berousková and Edita Brožová, I have discovered another issue which some of them share, and that is the inner, social aspect of this matter which seems to be related to the ethnicity as well as perceiving circus people differently by our society.

Edita Brožová would see herself as treated differently from *the others* at school. She also admits to be the first one to be called to the principal office if there was any kind of a problem.

Me: *“How do people react when you tell them?”*

Edita: *“That I am with the circus? Some stare with their mouth open, some take it normally. At school, they always saw me as different. I was more like a boy, I never just sat like a proper pupil. That was never me. When something would happen, they called me to the principal’s office. Even when I had nothing to do with it. They always pointed at the circus girl. It was her. Even when it wasn’t.”*

Here, we can only assume whether this kind of disgust comes from those who are concerned about circus communities or rather the fact, that Kačka most likely belonging to the Romani ethnic group, which brings many quarrels and misunderstandings within Czech society.

According to Bhopal, Reports on Gypsy Travellers and education have recognised the extent to which Gypsy Travellers face racism and bullying in the education system, both as a means of exclusion, and as a means of the Gypsy Traveller diaspora being identified as “alien” and “other”. (2004:49)

Karolína Beorusková would also describe her education as unsuccessful, as she has not finished it and did not believe she ever could have.

“They might think I am privileged because I would not always be at school, then the teacher asks you something, but you do not know the answer and everybody laughs at you.”

I wanted to continue with school, but then I realised, I would not make it, so I decided to not to.” Karolína’s wish was to be a veterinarian owing to her positive relationship towards animals. When I asked her about her dreams within the future, if not to become a veterinarian,

she answered: *“I would once like to perform in Monte Carlo. It is perhaps the dream of every comedian.”*

Another topic we can address towards this matter, could be the education regulations itself and the outdated system we are dealing with in the Czech Republic.

I believe children born within the circus community, simply have far more interesting perceptions within the circus, than at school.

The school system is also lacking when it comes to some specific, individual cases that do not follow school requirements. This could be addressed to the circus communities, as well as for instance people who choose to live in harmony with nature, or raise their children in their home environment. According to Bhopal, the absence of Gypsy Traveller staff in education services contributes to the sense of marginalisation as well as a lack of understanding of cultural preferences of the group. (2004:60)

Moreover, it might be their parents as the greatest authority towards their children, who possess mainly the basic education, without the desire to continue.

Bhopal describes a minority of the parents who have been interviewed and attended both primary and secondary schools. They describe their educational experiences as negative and this to be, in some extent affecting the expectations of their children’s experience of the education system. In many families, the parents (especially the fathers) had dropped out of school. (2004:52)

Oline Berousková: *“I think people got crazy. Modern age. Everyone will study and prosper in the world, no one wants to do a manual work anymore. Young adults are brought up to be successful and there is no respect to the others working manually.”*

The truth is, that higher education nowadays is no longer an exception. Less people are interested in manual work, in my opinion, due to the low salary in these professions within the Czech Republic.

One situation in which the differences in the level of formal education took place, occurred when Kateřina Brožová; mother of four, asked me to help her son with homework as she would not understand it. I naturally agreed and went to help him. Her son was sitting in the caravan with a grumpy face, and did not appear to have a great interest regarding his homework.

When I asked what he is going to do when he grows up, without thinking, he replied: *“I will be an acrobat like my dad.”*

Roman Brož II, son of Kateřina and Roman Brož, is now 8 years old, and is already earning money by selling balloons and performing with his family, as children from circus families usually start working at an early age. It is expected that they will participate in the livelihood of the whole and help their families with the earnings. That is also the case of young adults traveling with this circus, which then puts parents into a position of a superior, along with the role of a parent raising their children.

A specific aspect of circus life is the bringing up of children that are to eventually participate in the business from their early life. The most important difference within the travelling life lies in schooling, being much more focused on the performance, rather than on the general knowledge required by the standard education of public elementary schools. (Circuses and sideshows 2013).

The reasons why the members of the circus are not interested in higher education are variant. One of them can be addressed to their parents, who are insufficiently supportive and do not have education themselves. Another reason is constant moving from one place to another, which causes low levels of integration with other students, or getting used to general requirements of school such as early wake ups, homework, school trips etc. I think making money in childhood also leads to the fact that these children are not interested in continuing to study as they get used to being more independent from an earlier age. Furthermore, it also has to do with the lack of integration between the others, getting away from their family, tradition and moving to an unknown path leaving the circus behind.

3.3 TIME AND SPACE

TIME

“Even after the hardest winter comes the spring. It is a good custom and justice for the secular people, devised with a special regard to the comedians and circuses.” (Cibula, 1970:38)

The concept of time is crucial for the circus community acquiring their own culture. Compared to students, who divide a year into semesters, exam periods and summer holiday,

circus community divide year into the season, that is, the time they spend traveling around the country, before they settle down into their wintering grounds and leave the semi-nomadic way of life for a period of time. In the case of circus Berosini, the family Berousek spend the winter in a village near the capital city of Prague, called Bylany. The rest of the employees have to deal with the question of where to stay during the winter.

Ferdinand Berousek: *“Winter is destined to repair everything we have broken down and prepare the vehicles, caravans and other for the next season. With the first spring day we are on our way again.”*

It is also the time for a rest and taking on new forces for the next season. Time is also related to the gradual change of position within the circus. As the artists grow older, losing his/her abilities, body flexibility and overall reflection, it is often the course of life that changes the discipline in which one stands out with a respect to age. As well as Ferdinand Berousek, who became a clown after his whole life working in animal’s dressage, or Ladislav Králík, who is no longer an acrobat, but takes care of the hay, advertising etc.

We can also relate time towards their perception of every day as something I often heard from my participants. Vlád’a: *“We live in the present; we do not care what will be the next day.”* I find this as one of the most beautiful point of living in the circus community. In today’s fast-moving world, with all the perceptions we receive every day, people in the circus seem to live far more in the present moment compared to most of us. According to Maffesoli, long-term planning, scheduling and career-wise plans leave the room for the intensity of the moment. (2002:247)

SPACE

The circus expresses spatial separation not only by having their own community. Spatial separation is indicated at the first sight by a fence that surrounds their entire territory and is very typical for all the circuses.

For the circus community, their arena is a self-sufficient space where they work and live, and at the same time it is a place for their important life rituals such as birthday celebrations,

weddings etc. They rarely leave their territory, and if so, they are usually aware if anyone does, and for what kind of purpose or for how long.

In my perception, there is a certain degree of insecurity owing to the possibility of a member leaving without any notice. During my presence there, two of the workers left the circus during the night, to avoid contact with the others, and they never came back. The details of their decision are not familiar to me however. Based on this, I noticed frequent quarrels among other members of the circus.

4. CIRCUS PEOPLE AND THE “OTHERS”

One of my discoveries and a subject I have been dealing with, both in my film and now in my thesis, is the tendency of my participants to divide themselves from the rest of the population.

The reasons for the circus community to feel separated from the others are varied, but most of them seem to lie within sets of very different attitudes, beliefs, backgrounds, history, lifestyle, and perhaps even from the possibility they might be linked within a different ethnic origin.

Ferdinand: *“I got a feeling that comedians in Czech Republic as in the only state still lives sort of at the edge of the society. In the Middle Ages, there were walls around the town with a gate for the “normal” people, and then there was a little one meant for prostitutes, executioners and comedians. I feel like this wall still does exist between us.*

Circus is a distinct little micro-unit, in which only a few hundred people have been associated. Various circuses will come to the town or villages for several times in a year and then they disappear. The division according to Jordan was already established back in history. In addition to the respectable large circus businesses, they also saw the small ones with people starving, who lived as they could, including smaller theft in the gardens and courtyards belonging to the locals. The natives then took on an unfriendly statute and here is where the division of the two separate worlds starts; *“them”, as the different ones who does not belong to our world.*” (Jordan, 2014:13-16)

It is not only that the Romani ethnic group is constantly encountering the rejection by our society and looking for its place, we can refer the same to the circus communities, as they are often dealing with the misunderstanding and consequent rejection especially from the side of the animal protectors nowadays.

Any kind of function or position given within the circus, the basic dichotomy which is implicitly differentiated among the circus communities, is the division into the words “secular” and “townie”. The definition of the division is given by Antonín Hančl; “*Secular is naming of nomadic society and its employees, who were born in the circus.*” (1995:137) *The opposite term is “chrapoun”, thus “townie” who does not belong to the circus family.* (1995:88)

Olina Berousková: “*I grew among both. Kinker’s aren’t fond of townies, they only need them to come to the circus. And townies aren’t very fond of kinkers. Based on my experience. At school, some would admire me for going abroad, which we did at that time. Others would go ‘Ew, a dirty circus girl. ’Its controversial and weird. The circus has their own community, which is enough for them. But today we also have loads of friends among normal people.*”

As emerged from the interview, the circus people appear to have a little world for themselves without the need to rank or integrate among the others, as it is enough for the circus. On the other hand, the circus itself would not survive without the audience and as Olina Berousková noted, they have many friends among the “*normal people*”.

The circus itself never stays in one place for more than a few days. This may result in reduced assimilation with *the others* as for to get to know each other, we need time.

I think the main reason of their separation from the society lies in the misunderstanding and disrespecting of their goals, visions and a great passion for what they do for their livelihood which relates to their tradition. Furthermore, the differences between the circus community and *the others* is probably primarily rooted in a distant history about which I will talk in the next chapter.

Me: - *How do you think your parents would react if you would find a partner outside of the circus?*

Kačka: - *I would put my family to shame If I would decide to stay with someone who is not belonging to the circus community. Everyone would say I am dating a townie. How do you think people would see me? Look she is a dating a townie!*

Not only are marriages strictly between circus people considered to be a tradition, but Kateřina feels to be condemned to make this decision.

Another reason could be their own free will to preserve the mark of being exceptional: Roman Brož: *“I would work within the circus even for free.”*; Karolína Berousková: *“I would not live with anybody else than a circus guy”*; *“I couldn’t live without the animals around me.”*

It is a position that repeats within most circus people, but the reality of circus life is slightly different. The reason for not being integrated into the society lies mainly within the fact that circus people are traveling, which divides them from other groups as colleagues at work, classmates and neighbours.

Last but not least, they do not want to be bound by society as they do not use any cultural funding from public sources (local culture grants, city festivals they could participate in). They are not associative and have no bargaining position for authorities, legislatures, and executive power, but instead, are pushed into the role of outsiders. (Jordan, H., personal conversation, 2018-18-09)

Me: - *If you had to describe the differences between kinkers and townies. What is the main thing?*

Vlád’a: - *I am really interested in their answer.*

Kačka: - *I am just waiting on her to speak.*

Karolína: - *How about – you are here with the camera and we work here.*

Me: - *Katka, you can imagine being with a townie, or you would rather prefer a circus guy?*

Katka: - *A circus guy.*

Me: - *And why?*

Karolína: - *Can you imagine her going to work?*

Me: - *Or you could take him here?*

Karolína: - *It is possible. But it takes a long time to get used to it. And to learn everything. And still everyone will see him as a townie. Not one of their own.*

Kačka: - *He still has the townie blood, as we say.*

Vlád'a: - *The red one.*

Karolína: - *Red and blue don't match well.*

I have been often faced with the division myself. Even though we maintained friendly relations towards each other, I would often get the impression that I was perceived as below-average thanks to my genes, and thus not being of one of them. However, from their point of view, this applies to everyone who are not born into the circus community, and therefore not considered as “*real comedians*” or “*one of them.*”

The term blue blood is within history associated with aristocrats and nobility, which also leads to the potential division of the higher class and the less valued people in their perception. According to Goffman, *an individual might be insulated by his own alienation, protected by identity beliefs of his own, he feels that he is a full-fledged normal human being, and that we are the ones who are not quite humans.* (1990:17)

The circus people are a highly stigmatized community, often considered different or distant to *us*. From my own perception, most of society is only afraid of the unknown and their territory due to the lack of communication and the simple condemnation, and lack of respect from both sides.

4.1 THE ROMANI ETHNIC GROUP

For better understanding of the current situation, it is useful to return to distant history, to the Romani ethnic group and their arrival in Europe.

The Romani ethnic group is, what we know by now, coming from the Indian subcontinent. Other than the difficulty of determining the exact place from where this ethnic group comes from, would be the unknown reason they decided to leave approximately between 3. - 9. (10th) century AD.

On their journey, they have got into the area of Armenia, but also to the area of Greece, from which the dialect abundantly originates.

Information about them leaving the country is still unclear and there are many speculations on the subject. (Horváthová, 2002:5)

However, Romani came to the European continent from a very distant, and above all, different cultural area, such as the Orient. Their habitats, ways of expression, clothing, and overall appearance had to differ in many aspects from the European ones.

(Horváthová, 2002:15) There were nomadic groups consisting of craftsmen, burglars, musicians and jugglers, who had to travel (on regular basis) because they would not have their livelihoods in one place. (Kalinová, & Laubeová, 2006:7)

Many people from the public, but also professionals, believe and connect the so-called secular people with the Romani ethnic group. During the research, I myself discovering some similarities lying within behaviour signs, similar position within the society, lack of education, traveling way of life, cultural habits or the language etc.

However, it is not in my intention to support or refute these claims, but neither is it possible to fully circumvent or avoid this topic, as based on some of mine respondent's testimonies, there is a connection within the Romani and the "secular" people within the past.

The term "Gypsy" had a different meaning within history than in present time. World powers had the need to categorize them and they perceived the distinction between the "genuine Gypsy", and then the ones who only lived the same way of life in practice. However, the comedians were always considered to be somewhere between these two concepts. They were mostly of a lighter skin colour than the Romani, but lived very similar, nomadic style of life. There is also a belief that there are groups of people who has only adopted the habit of the Gypsies, whether in the language, the way of dressing, or in the social position of the wanderers.

The Romani had a similar position as the wandering "comedians" since their arrival to the Czech Republic. They lived a similar way as they would travel for work from a place to another, and the undeniable fact is, that in the language of the circus people, there is a high percentage of words taken from the Romani ethnic group. (Himl, 2007:222)

Karolína Berousková: *"The first traveling comedians as I know, were of Romani origin and we still have some of their words taken from the language."*

According to Elena Marushiakova, who is a member of the international association of persons in "Gypsy and Traveller Studies"; there is a high possibility that there are individual

families working in the circus, but that they are not connected to their specificity and origin. (personal conversation, 10-10-2018)

According to Freeman, (2010) the main aspect of Romani culture lies in the *“lacks of stability that comes with an incomplete integration into society, as well as any kind of territorial or political strength”*. The nature of people within this culture and their habits are originally arising from the way of life, which has been predominantly influenced by the travelling (nomad) character, as Gypsies were used to learn and perform artistic numbers for a varying audience to earn money.

It needs to be said, that some of my respondents recognized themselves as Romani, but some of them on the other hand felt accused by me giving them this question. In my opinion, this is caused mainly by the Romani ethnic group and its situation within the Czech Republic nowadays, as they are recognized as unwanted, and the ones who needs to be taken care of by the state, never fully integrating. Most of them live in houses assigned by the state forming a ghetto, living on the edge of society.

In Romani culture, as well as in the circus community, the man is in charge of the woman, and the children are brought up as young adults, leading to a purely practical life and gaining livelihood from an early age. Furthermore, for the Romani, it is the family, the clan, the patriarchal, large-scale family, or the community they live in, that is the only certain point in their uncertain world, and therefore of the greatest value. Compared to my findings, the circus family is basing their perception of family on the exact same principle.

Another similarity can be found within the division of *us* and *the others*, as being a non-Roma is considered unclean based on not knowing the Romani rituals and the rules of purity. This arrangement is by some sociologist and anthropologists referred to a *“traditional society”*, and thus even as *“anachronism”*, influencing their lives, including relationships between themselves. However, it must be added, that the social system goes hand by hand with extraordinary flexibility, allowing the Roma to survive social exclusion, persecution and poverty for centuries. (Kalinová & Laubeová, 2006:6-7) Circus communities then, divides society between the kinkers and the townies within different lifestyle, values, traditions etc.

5. WHAT IS THE FUTURE OF THE CIRCUS?

5.1 ANIMAL WELFARE

Ladislav: *“Many times I came somewhere and they went: I can’t stand kinkers. You torture animals! I always say: ‘Fine’, we torture animals, be glad we don’t torture you and I leave. No need to talk to such people. Communists would show them, if they stood by the circus with banners. Or went to demonstrate.”*

In this chapter, I will discuss the animal welfare and circus animals over the interviews made with my participants. I would like to present some of the dialogues and my character’s points of views on this matter, and as well my insights from the field, as animals present one of the main elements within the circus.

According to People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA), animals are not actors or circus clowns to perform foolish tricks under the threat of, or in the worst case, actual physical punishment. They should not be separated from their families and travel across the country in boxcars or semi-truck trailers all for the sake of a human “entertainment”. They would also mention the animals to even pay with their own lives under those living conditions.

Based on James Hamid Sr. interview with PETA, public demand for cruelty-free circuses continues to grow. He sees future of the circuses moving to non-animal’s productions and performing animal acts as a past within the next 20 years. Furthermore, their websites contain disturbing pictures and video material of animals from the circus environment. (Peta n.d.)

Because of the current situation, and a rising number of people who does not agree with the use of circus animals as an attraction, animal welfare is considered as one of the crucial topics for the circuses nowadays and become central for the future of circuses worldwide.

It is one of the main causes of which circuses are closing in other parts of the world, and brings more arguments and misunderstandings between the comedians and *the others*.

Olina Berousková: *“If you look at some Facebook comments, it makes me sick. Someone writes a comment, or something happens at the circus. My nephews seal died. It was hot and he got a stroke. Vets did all the tests and proved that it wasn't his fault. When I saw what people wrote...If they could, they would stone us to death. But they also sent us direct e-mails hoping we die. I was badly hurt by that. Why should we all croak? So if someone abandons a puppy, should I say that all normal people should croak? People are different, so I cannot. But they see us as a whole.*

Circuses as such are quite often verbally attacked based on tragedies in other circuses. They are usually not being recognized individually, but simply as a whole. Therefore, if anything happens in one circus, it will affect the other ones for a period of time as well.

There have been several cases in Czech Republic related to this problem blurred by the media, but in my opinion, it is mainly tabloids, looking for a sensation more than for the truth itself, and therefore there is no possibility to build an objective opinion based on the information.

Three of my participants asked on this subject; Kateřina, Lád'a and Karolína, would claim it is not them harming the animals. Rather, they perceive themselves as treating them well. According to Karolína; *“Not all the circuses treat the animals right, but they should not throw us all in one bag. We would do anything for them.”*

However, when I asked whether they think there are circuses where animals are not treated well, they would all agree.

Furthermore, they discuss the case when animal protectors burned the hay within the circus in response to an accident caused by the ignorance of circus visitors.

Someone fed a camel soft pastry that caused colic and the subsequent death of one of the animals during a performance, and the animal protectors misunderstood this as stemming directly from poor treatment.

Karolína: *They just think we abuse them. That they would have a better life somewhere else. I do not get it.*

Kačka: *Look at the state of the animals in Zoo. They leave those alone, but we are apparently always the abusers. I would get it if we really did abuse them, but we don't do anything towards them.*

Karolína: *They cannot go near me. I need to hide in the tent and others must hold me.*

Me: *Did you ever get into a conflict with the animal protectors?*

Karolína: *Yes I did.*

From this conversation, but also from my own observations, it seems, that circus people are simply not agreeing to, or aware that, their captive animals living in bad conditions the trucks and cages, or that they might cause them harm by using them as attractions. On the contrary, they feel to give them good living conditions, at least in comparison to the zoo. I think people in general tend to defend themselves by relating to others who are doing something “*even worse*” than themselves. Certainly yes, there are others behaving far worse towards animals than the circus community, as for instance factory farming, large scale animal breeding, testing on animals etc.

However, we should not forget that circus families are deeply entrenched in such an environment, meaning it appears to be natural for them to be surrounded by the animals from when they are born, as well as to use them for their livelihood.

According to Olina Berousková: *“This issue lies in the hands of the state, which determines the conditions you have to follow. We are constantly inspected by the veterinary administration under the threat of a fine. There are plenty of states where the circuses have closed and the animals were put down, which I do not understand if they say, they want the animals to be treated better. The idea of PETA is, that it is better to kill the animal than to let them live in the circus environment. My dad liked animals better than humans, and I feel like I have it the same way now.”*

In 2004, animal welfare organizations managed to ban the use of some of the new born species of wild animals such as primates, pinnipeds, cetaceans (except dolphins), rhinoceroses, hippos or giraffes in the circus. Wildlife species are understood to be those whose populations are self-sustaining in nature. The goal of the organization is to ban the use of all wild animal species in circuses, i.e. to extend it to animals such as elephant, tiger or lion. (cirkusy bez zvířat, n.d.)

It is not only the specific organizations of animal protectors, but even many ordinary people seem to suddenly care more for the connection between animals and humans than before. At least I can say the percentage of everyday people claiming to care about animal welfare, seem to steadily increase in my surroundings, and mainstream society.

Based on my own findings, members of the Berosini circus have a deep relationship to the animals, without signs of malnutrition or illness. However, I have also experienced a situation

in which horse had been hit several times. This situation occurred only once and any similar instance was not repeated during my presence.

During a phone interview, Hanuš Jordan stated: *“You have seen it yourself, the animals are living in good conditions and they are taken care of. The fact that you saw Ferdinand hit the animal still does not prove anything. Maybe he only had a bad day. The animals are part of their living and they subordinate their lives towards them.”*

Personally, I am not making any conclusions, but I tend to agree with Jordan, as it was my own perception that the animals were taken care of as well as he describes. (personal conversation, 2018-09-13)

My insights and opinion on keeping circus animals evolved and changed during my research. At the beginning, I was very critical to what I had seen, and the situation in which Ferdinand appear to hit the animal happened only the second day after my arrival, but I also think that it is partly caused by me being in the presence of the animals, seeing how they lived. I have simply become accustomed to them and stopped paying so much attention to the environment where they lived, but rather adapted to it.

I am not standing for the use of animals for entertainment or business, however, the conditions in which these animals lived were decent. Sometimes, they have to subordinate the space rented out by the city or the village in which the circus is located.

I would also like to draw attention to the different requirements of animals such as ducks or monkeys (domesticated and non-domesticated animals), as I do not consider ducks, donkeys or pigs to be particularly suffering from the presence of large numbers of people and loud music compared to monkeys, for which the environment seemed to appear very stressful, and around which I would have to be alert as they were shown to be very aggressive. Iossa, Soulsbury and Harris (2009:133) present the former approaches to the training of wild animals within the circus environment that has been believed to enhance the abilities and also health of captive wild animals. However, the performance commonly provides a stress for the non-domesticated ones.

The authors have also stated that the impact on the welfare of wild animals included within the travelling circus performances is much higher due to the use of called “beast wagons” subjected to provide the optimal vehicle for their transportation. On the tour, when the circus

arrives in the location of performance, the animals are held under alternative environmental conditions – within cages connected to the beast wagons on the site of the circus.

I do not consider the animals to be somewhat suffering during the transport. I have learned that they never stay in the wagons for longer than couple of hours, and it is important the circus do not travel long distances because of them. Moreover, the very first thing they do after the arrival is let the animals out to feed them and give them water. Ferdinand Berousek would further say that the animals are used to traveling and well aware of what is happening. Therefore, according to him, they do not feel any certain level of stress or nervousness.

As I mentioned in previous paragraphs, the growing public interest in animal welfare and the conditions under which they live in the travelling circus facilities, might lead to the gradual reduction of the animal training performances, as many activists for the animals' rights fight for the global ban of the circus treatment of animals.

The main three reasons for the prohibition based on the animal welfare are the conditions of travelling (unsuitable spaces of vehicles, lack of movement necessary for their good health), the hard and demanding training and the volatile accessibility of veterinary care (especially for such exotic animals). Nevertheless, some countries accepted the prohibition on the keeping and using in performance of all animals (wild and domestic).

The third kind of bans are targeted on the form of use – some countries prohibited wholly the presence and keeping of animals in a travelling circus environment, while others put restriction just on the performances associated with the training (which is considered the most demanding in terms of animals' health and welfare). Some of them put restrictions also on variety shows and similar types of entertainments including the performances of animals, or even their transport. (Stop Circus Suffering n.d.)

An informational text spread within social media appeared only couple days ago, with the title: *“The end of circuses in Bohemia? The ministry of Agriculture proposes a total ban on animals. We will drop the lions at your municipality, says Berousek.”*

The owner of the National Circus Berousek, Jiří Berousek earlier said he sees the proposed measure as a restriction on the business. *“All the owners of the circuses are emigrating in that case. “According to Berousek, the dressage of animals has been consistent with the people for centuries, and parents with children mainly go to the circus to see the animals they do not know from anywhere else.*

If it happens, we will come with all the lions and tigers to the Václavské square (the biggest square in a middle of Prague), or the Ministry of Agriculture, and we will let them all go. He added that the owners of the circuses are confused about the resort under which they operate. We have been under the Ministry of Culture all our life, now we do not know where we belong.

The issue of animal breeding within the circuses has been recently highlighted by the activists. The ministry received a petition against breeding of the wild animals in circuses signed by 14000 people. Besides, about two weeks ago, a hundred people demonstrated at the entrance of the Berousek circus in Prague, as they do not like the way the animals are being treated in similar facilities. (Kyndrová, 2018)

I have also received many messages and queries whether I would help myself and sign a petition to help the circuses. This was obviously not an easy situation, as I suddenly found myself between two sides and opinions.

We can clearly see, that the situation which is happening in our country right now, might affect the circuses in a way of prohibition regarding the breeding of animals in circuses.

The recent information posted on Karolína's Facebook page, is an answer to the animal welfare organization: *“Dear animal protectors, I cannot believe what kind of hypocrites you are. It is only a few days since a horse accidentally died in a race, but nobody cares, as you say that this just happens. Breeding animals within a circus is on the other hand unethical and terrible. In fact, animals in the circuses are doing better than anywhere else. We live with them since they were born, care of them and when it is needed, we even sleep with them in their cages. The campaign of circuses without animals is miserable, and if you want the circus without animals, then I want racing without horses and no slaughters.”* (personal communication, 2018-09-20)

No official decision has yet to be made on the matter. However, it is clear that the situation is rather serious, and can fundamentally affect the use of animals in circuses within the near future. This can come from an increasing level of moral values by our society, or also simply because of the circus being seen through the eyes of a wide audience, society, people.

5.2 GLOBALIZATION AND MEDIA REALITY

Me: *What do you think is the reason of the low attendance of audience in the circus Berosini?*

Vladislav: *“People have no interest in the circus nowadays, they have different things to do.*

I think it is the internet.”

This would be one of the most common answers shared by all my participants. They all agree that the era of the internet is taking their uniqueness, and also audience, away.

Information and transportation technology are making the world smaller, and the spectacles that circuses sold are less and less spectacular. Close to the end of the twentieth century, the internet, television and the motion picture industry had completely overtaken the circus as a purveyor of the fantastic; television shows connected people at their homes to places all around the world, and special effects gave actors the ability to fly and perform superhuman feats. (Loring, 2007)

One of the reasons I have been interested in this whole matter, is the changing attitudes towards circuses worldwide. It is the unstoppable development of our society and the desire to be constantly moving on in all possible ways.

Globalization is not only a process which expands our economy, speeding up the movement of ideas and goods, the cultural and political process, but also affects the entertainment industry and thus the circus itself.

As for the individual, the same applies for the whole, that is, if we want to evolve with time, we must obey the so-called established system that we have created. The problem is, that there are people who do not pursue such things, and who fight for the contrary as well as the circus communities. They do not have anything in common with this new direction and rather prefer to turn back into their traditions.

To move a step further in the business environment, we must usually either obey the majority, or – in the case of circuses – completely change the concept itself. This might be one of the reasons the concept of circuses is slowly being changed, and evolves the direction where animals are no longer featured. Instead, modern technology is being used and artists focus on the technical side of motion and acrobatics, trying to surprise their audience and go *with time* as for instance the Czech ensemble “Cirk La Putyka”, who is professionally dedicated to the genre of the new circus.

One of the most important elements of the new circus is the elimination of dressage.

The best-known circus carrying the concept “cirque nouveau” is “Circus du Soleil”. These troupes combine orchestral soundtrack together with elaborate costumes, traditional circus arts, lighting and a theme or storyline. According to Loring, this might be the start of new circus legacies that carry the industry through the 21st century. (2007)

Though there exist huge variations in both scale and style within the “new circus”; what unites them all is their rejection of animal performances as well as a common genesis in the alternative arts of the 1970’s, particularly street theatre, mime and dance- all of which of course are, at the same time, deeply traditional in their origins. (Stoddart, 2000:29)

Unfortunately, or fortunately, the traditional circus community is not connected or involved within the era of the new circuses. The new concept is developed by actors or acrobats, often with an education background from artistic university. This fact may also lie within the lack of communication or integration within the circus people and the rest of the society in the Czech Republic.

As said above, the revolution that came with the internet and possibilities of new technologies has highly impacted the area of entertainment.

The implementation of information- and communication technologies into the common life of a person has opened a brand new field of life, shortening the distances and the period for finding and experiencing variable kinds of entertainment, despite the dependence on time or space.

As Olina Berousková said; *“There is nobody any more interested in coming to see the animals as horses or ducks. Why would they be interested, if they can sit at home and play a video games on a computer. I have no longer the nerves to sit here and wait if anyone will come to the circus or not.”*

As the area of virtual world quickly evolves into new stages, it can be assumed that the impact of the developing possibilities will further push out the traditional forms of entertainment. Above all, the greatest potential can nowadays be seen in the technology of virtual reality, that enables us to create a whole new image and activities experienced in real-time with the actual feeling of reality.

The internet, TV, or virtual reality, despite the fact that it is a relatively new form of entertainment, has found a very common place in the every-day life of human beings. The

advantages of the virtual space and the offer of entertaining possibilities significantly reduce the share of real-time entertainment providers. Nevertheless, the real-time performances of the acrobats or clowns seem to still be somewhat tempting to audiences (especially the families with little children) as they provide an exceptional type of entertainment that is commonly associated with the tradition and insight into the lives of extraordinary people.

The topic of circus entertainment future in the 21st century, therefore, needs to be adapted to the globally spreading information and communication evolution. This factor is the main cause for people spending much more time inside than in the entertaining facilities outside their homes. The impact of the virtual world on the possible future of circus and its business can be seen in three specific points of view described in detail in following paragraphs.

First, is the price of the performances (or visit of the circus ZOO). Although the standard of living in the dominant part of households in developed countries is increasing gradually, along with their mean level of income as well, the demands of the maintenance on specific standard of living comprise expenditures that are predominantly related to keeping of track with the virtual reality (the count of electronic devices on the households increases gradually). Therefore, there is much less free expenditures for the random group entertainment which the circus is included in.

Another aspect of the virtual world affecting the success and public interest in circus performances lies in the wide range of accessible videos (not only from the circus environment), that alternate the necessity of visiting the circus to see something that is exceptional (animals, acrobats, etc.). Although the experience is exceptional, the ratio of price/performance and the ability to watch such type of entertaining content from home, is for many people the crucial factor in decision making.

The third way the virtual world influences the sales and business of circus entertainment, is based on the possibilities of virtual reality which can take the audience to a real, or virtually created circus environment, only by buying the equipment to provide the virtual reality service that can be utilized for further purposes.

Nevertheless, the opportunities offered by the virtual world can also be used for the circus` purposes, and do not distinctively mean the decadence of the circus entertainment area. For example, as said above, the Cirque du Soleil has re-imagined the performances for the

purposes of virtual reality entertainment and cooperates on further development (Linendoll, 2015).

Moreover, the inclusion of further elements that include virtual tools (not only as a marketing channel, but also into performances) can help to develop new types of entertaining performance that might attract the audiences (e.g. the interconnection of the acrobatic numbers with the projection). Therefore, it can be hypothesized that the entry of the possibilities of the virtual world to the area of entertainment, does not mean just the weakening of the other forms, but also opportunities for the future. This aspect can be considered less significant for the circus future in a negative way, but more in the positive way.

5.3 IS CIRCUS A DECLINING PHENOMENON?

Vladislav: *“If I could travel back to the past, when there was no use of the internet, I would. People seemed to be more satisfied and when the circus arrived to the city, they came to us. If circus comes now, they are heading to the other side.”*

Hanuš Jordan: To be specific, out of 35 circuses within Czech Republic, who at least for a couple times in a year drive to their audiences, only one officially shut down in 2017, and that is the circus Kellner. Allan Kellner is now, instead of traveling with the circus, traveling and selling fast food.

Furthermore, circus Carini did not travel last season because of health conditions. I cannot say that the circuses end one after another in the Czech Republic. To be more honest; the programs are weak, outmoded, combined with bad business strategies and marketing. They do not go with the time. (personal conversation, 2018-09-18)

From the answers given by Hanuš Jordan, circuses in general are still far from giving up on their tradition.

However, when I asked Olina Berousková how she imagines their future, her answer was: *“I would personally close it right away and rather go to work. I think the big circuses like my two brother- in laws, the original Berousek, they will survive, they’re big, can invest more etc.*

Us small ones, we perhaps have to become really small and do it by ourselves, but I do not think we will survive. “

As I said before, during my time with the circus, the performance would be cancelled due to low attendance on several occasions. This certainly brought a deep nervousness and sadness to all the members of the circus community, but maybe also thoughts on whether or not to end completely.

According to the owner of the circus, the problem lies within the population and their low income.

Ferdinand: *“I think people are having too many debts without the possibility to spend money on culture. Everything is expensive. People just need better salary to have money left for the spare time and the entertainment.”*

Roman Brož instead put the blame on the parents who let children spend too much time on their computers, instead of leading them towards the culture.

Roman: *It will get harder and harder. That’s what I think. It already is harder. And it will be even more so.*

Me: *What can be done to make it easier?*

Roman: *Parents could draw their kids towards culture instead of the internet.*

Another issue the circus encounters is the economic aspects of this type of live entertainment. According to Jordan, the economic situation is a greater misery than we can imagine. The circuses live in constant debt, borrowing from “people”, or worse, from various other sources. They do business without permissions and adjusted tax returns. In addition, many people from circuses receive social benefits as unemployed and/or people in social need. Even though the economic situation was not in my particular focus, I agree with Jordan and his claim on the financial side as not so pleasant, due to the lack of audiences in comparison to the high costs circuses has due to traveling expenses, payment, feed etc. (personal conversation, 2018-12-09)

Thanks to the information gained, it seems, the future of the circuses is rather uncertain. Some of them would prefer to close down immediately, others will not give up without a fight. In my opinion, the concept of the traditional circus in Czech Republic will continue for several more years, although there is a high possibility they will have to travel and perform without

the use of the animals. That will likely result in their rapid decline as most of them claim the circus without animals not to be the traditional circus as they know it. However, the main reason for the decline, is according to my findings, the animal protectors fighting against the use of the animals within circus, as well as the wave of globalization which is changing the way of the entertainment nowadays.

I will close this chapter with the testimony of Roman Brož, who believes the circus will never disappear.

Roman: *„It will never happen Ema, for the circus to not exist. Maybe there is only going to be three of them, the biggest ones, but the circus is eternal, trust me.*

6. CONCLUSION

Through mainly participant observation with and without the camera, I conducted a study of a small, traditional circus community traveling around Czech Republic.

According to my findings, there are many similarities shared by circus people, that separates them from the rest of the society.

In my opinion, the basis for their way of life is given to them already in their childhood. Being born into the circus community means learning, accepting and often unconsciously receiving the same cultural values and norms given by their parents, grandparents or other authorities in the community. Instead of being led to gain a formal education, they are taught different acrobatic skills, and start to earn money at an early age. Instead of taking a formal education and for instance learning about animals and their natural habitat etc., they are surrounded by them at an early age, becoming accustomed to their presence, developing a strong relationship with them and further using them for the purpose of their livelihood.

Other similarities lie within the traveling way of life, which they perceive as a certain form of freedom, but also relationships, which arise primarily among the members of the circus communities. The circus community separate themselves from the rest of the society and do not seem to have the need to integrate with the Others; at the same time, they could not exist without the audience coming to the circus.

My respondents seem to perceive the outside community as distant, often inferior, living a monotone way of life. From their experience, the ones born outside of the circus community

would never get used to the life in the circus, and would most likely never be accepted as one of them either. Moreover, some of them would feel ashamed for establishing family with a man/woman from the outside society. In their community, it is perceived as taboo.

I have not come to any definite answer whether there truly is a connection between the Romani ethnic group and the circus community as such. However, there is a significant possibility there might be a connection between these two groups, at least in the past. This is based on a somewhat similar way of living and to a degree shared language in the form of words.

The world is constantly on the move, evolving and changing our perceptions. Animal protectors, but also many people from the public are no longer tolerating the use of circus animals. There are so many new kinds of entertainment, especially for children, who are meant to be the main base of circus audiences. These two factors play an important role in today's circuses, and there is a possibility this issue will further affect this community and force them to shut down.

Described as passionate, straightforward, or hot-headed, the reaction of circus people towards animal activists is unanimous and clear, as they simply do not perceive themselves as treating the animals bad, and according to some of them, they are used to fight for their opinions. Furthermore, they do not understand why animals should not perform in circuses, while horses are dying in races and other animals suffers in Zoos etc. In comparison, they spend a lot of time with the animals, and grew up with most of them. They feel, in many cases, to be judged based on circuses as a whole, and therefore thrown into one bag within the ones that do mistreat animals, further negatively influencing the number of paying visitors.

The older generation seem often to be dreaming of returning to the past, when circuses was the only place to see a huge variation of exotic animals, and the audiences were bigger. However, the times have changed, and the traditional circuses seem to not know how to react and adapt to it.

I started my project as an outsider. However, when I left the circus community, I was not only accepted as a researcher, but also as a friend to most of them. In particular, my friendship with Karolína Berousková has allowed me to stay in contact and follow their movements through social media as well as over the phone. This has brought me continued insight into their lives long after I finished my fieldwork.

Through this relationship with Karolina, I learned that this year's season has been cut short and the circus has been forced to pack it in until next year, or even later. This is, according to Karolina through our correspondence, due to sharply declining attendance stemming from a story in the media accusing a bigger circus within the same family of abusing their tigers. Because of this, Circus Berosini has been the victim of a general boycott on top of already low numbers of attendance. This, along with other factors, has promoted Karolina to go work for a different circus in the Czech Republic, while the family Brožových have been forced to go work in circuses travelling within Germany. Ferdinand Berousek is now working in a circus owned by his cousin, while Olina Berusková works as a cashier in a grocery store.

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Figure 2: Roman Brož during the performance.



Figure 3: Vladislav Králík.



Figure 4: Karolína and Roman in their spare time.



Figure 5: Me and Karolína before I left the field.



Figure 5: Hanuš Jordan Phdr. (in the middle), visiting Ferdinand Berousek (on the right) in circus Sultán (2006)



Figure 7: Poster from circus Berosini. (2017)