Power and Hierarchy among Finnish Kaale Roma: Insights on Integration and Inclusion Processes

Marko Stenroos

marko.stenroos@helsinki.fi

PhD candidate in Anthropology
University of Helsinki

ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3343-8909

Marko Stenroos is an anthropologist and a PhD candidate at the University of Helsinki where he also attained his master's degree in social and cultural anthropology.

Critical Romani Studies

Abstract

Despite the vast research on Roma in Europe and beyond, little has been written about Roma agency from a perspective that focuses on manifold dynamics of power. Having worked for two years on the Finnish Roma Inclusion Project in a dual role as ethnographer and project worker has inspired me to rethink concepts of power and to create an alternative narrative of the experience of marginalized and discriminated Finnish Kaale Roma. Encouraged by the current paradigm shift in Romani Studies (which increasingly focuses on Roma agency instead of objectifying the population), this paper explores Kaale power dynamics as part of the social order and empirically demonstrates two parallel and antagonist systems of power exercised by Roma: one that stems from the population's traditional cultural customs and the other from Pentecostal/charismatic Christianity, a growing trend among the Finnish Kaale. The purpose of this article is to underline Roma agency within the frame of national Roma policy practices in Finland.

Introduction: A Finnish Roma Project[1]

Failing Roma inclusion projects are unfortunately abundant throughout Europe. According to a report commissioned by the United Nations Development Programme (Friedman 2015), the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005–2015 did not reach its objectives (see also Jovanović 2015). Similar to the Decade of Roma Inclusion, preliminary findings from the Roma civil monitoring project suggests that the current National Roma Integration Strategy (NRIS) has also failed in many European member states (Hojsík et al. 2018; Rorke 2018). In this paper I elaborate on some factors that I consider significant in regard to the Finnish Kaale Roma in order to explain why these policy attempts at inclusion have not reached their full potential and why inclusion projects are not often trusted by most "ordinary" Kaale. The assertion of this article is twofold: Roma agency in Roma policy papers is often downplayed; and the narratives therein, of discriminated and marginalized Roma, are unidimensional and objectifying. This paper is based on two years of ethnographic fieldwork in a Roma inclusion project in Helsinki, Finland. I argue that inclusion projects typically fail to recognize or value the ways in which Roma communities organize their social order and social structures. By devaluing and failing to recognize these existing systems, inclusion projects end up contributing to processes of marginalization. Finnish national policy on Roma also neglects the existing Roma systems of social organization and order and consequently promotes social change for "normal ways of living."

Finland has a Kaale Roma population of approximately 10,000 persons. In the European context, Finnish Kaale Roma are considered to be relatively well integrated in Finnish society, for example, benefitting from public services equally to the majority Finnish population. Consequently, Roma issues in Finland mostly have been overlooked in the broader context of European Roma politics. The minimal amount of resources that have been directed toward Roma inclusion practices in Finland by the European Union reflects this position. In this article, I will begin by setting the Finnish national policy on Roma into the European context. Then I will scrutinize the concept and practice of power among Kaale as it appeared during my fieldwork, and I will also elaborate on the importance of power relations within the Kaale community in the process of implementing Roma policy. I will conclude this paper by raising questions about social ontology and recognition of Finnish Kaale Roma in Finnish society.

In 2011, the European Commission launched an EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategy (NRIS) and called on its member states to create a national Roma strategy (European Commission 2011). The Finnish Ministry of Social Affairs and Health had already published "Strategies of the Policy on Roma" in 1999 (Suonoja and Lindberg 1999). As the Finnish governmental authorities and ministries had expressed their eagerness to be forerunners in Europe regarding Roma affairs (ROMPO 2009), this relatively early initiative for developing a Roma-specific policy can be considered good practice in comparison to other European inclusion projects. Nevertheless, there are still challenges with the implementation of Finnish policies. In this paper, I focus on the challenges and issues as framed by the Finnish National Roma Policy

for the years 2010–2017. The fieldwork material was collected from the consortium project (described below), which was in line with and justified by the Finnish National Roma Policy.

The consortium project consisted of 16 different project partners, including Finland's Diaconia University of Applied Sciences as the administrator of the project. Partners were from the different districts and cities in Finland; ostensibly it was a nationwide project although many partners were from the capital region. The project partners were from Roma associations, municipalities, and educational institutions and also included an institution of health-related issues. The project workers were both Roma and non-Roma (21 out of 30 project workers were Roma), and the wide network that emerged around this large-scale consortium consisted of both Roma and non-Roma actors. This consortium belonged to two different European Social Fund programs: one focused on the promotion of education, skills, and lifelong learning, and the other one on the prevention of poverty and social exclusion. Financially, this consortium was the largest one that Finland ever has had on Roma affairs specifically, with a budget of approximately three million euros.

The participatory practices of this project were already applied at the planning stage, using the Logical Framework Approach (LFA) as its participatory tool. The LFA is an instrument for logical analysis and structured thinking in project planning (Örtengren 2004). Undoubtedly, this method was selected due to the fact that the LFA is "an instrument to create participation, accountability and ownership" for those the project was designed for (*ibid*. 6). However, the LFA method was not remarkably successful as those who participated in the planning sessions already were involved with Roma politics and therefore represented only a small segment of the Roma community, that is, so-called "ordinary" Roma were absent from the process.

As I observed from the planning phase, the mainstream perception of the Roma community ignores the extent to which the extended family forms a basic unit in the Kaale community. As a result, the non-Roma participants in this project, like the project administrators in the planning phase, often understood the Roma population as one single, coherent community. Consequently, the Finnish Roma project faced the same problem that we find throughout the rest of Europe regarding Roma projects: misunderstandings of the "Roma community." Outsiders to Roma communities might assume that Roma ethnicity implies one shared history and the "same culture," thereby indicating the existence of a tightly knit Roma community.[2] If there is one representative from the community, it is thought to be enough to facilitate the objectives of the projects among Roma (see Clavé-Mercier and Olivera 2018, 157). In their study on Roma migrants in two separate French cities, Clavé-Mercier and Olivera (2018) show that although they witnessed solidarity between some Roma individuals and families, they did not detect a large-scale form of collective solidarity among the various Roma migrants (157). The same applies to Finnish Kaale: collective solidarity can be found situationally and contextually, but it is not a general principle of Roma

---

2 According to Symonds (1998), "The concept of 'community' occupies two parallel realities. One is the 'social lived reality' within which we work and live, that of localities which to some degree have a recognizable value system or culture which consists of 'knowing' the various people, the deviant and the conforming, the sets of rules of behavior which govern everyday life within a specific space and time. But there is another reality too, the 'dream' world of community life. This world is a structural part of our everyday mental framework" (12).

communities. Said otherwise, a person's ethnicity alone does not grant them the legitimacy of being representative *for* and *of* the Roma.

McGarry (2014) adequately summarizes the problem of Roma representation in relation to their social inclusion: "Societal and politico-legal representations have been constructed by the majority and Roma elite with little input from ordinary Roma. Some representations may appear to offer solutions or may seem benign but can be detrimental to the community in the long-term" (758). As mentioned, the LFA method was not successful, despite the participation of some Roma individuals. This is because those Roma *specifically* being targeted by the policies and projects were absent. Consequently, it is not enough to insist on Roma involvement in project planning: we must also be aware of the problems of the narrow representation of some Roma in the process.

As we can see from the scale of this particular Finnish Roma project and from the number of project workers with Roma background involved, this project was rewarding from an ethnographic perspective and also in the context of the anthropology of policy. Ethnographic studies on Roma policy have been mainly conducted in Central and Eastern Europe but this study is one of the first to engage with such topics in a Nordic context.

1. Method

I had a double role in the Finnish Roma project. I was both an ethnographer doing fieldwork and a project worker with a Roma background. My research plan was included in the consortium's project plan, and I presented my research topic several times throughout the duration of the project. From an ethical point of view, I made sure that those working on and involved in the project knew that I was collecting data as we worked together.

During the two years of the project I primarily collected data from my communications with other project workers. I kept notes during my work days, I saved all the memos and minutes of the meetings, and I also wrote a field diary at the end of every workday. I observed the dynamics and challenges workers had while confronting their duties as paid workers. I also did work directly with the target group in my sub-project and thus, my collected materials consist of a combination of what I observed with other workers and with the other people involved. I also conducted a few interviews but quickly realized that the interviewees made assumptions about what I wanted to hear and tended to tell me those things. Participant observation was thus the richest source of my data. For example, in the diary I kept of my work days, I would note what happened during the day and what kinds of issues came up. I mostly focused on the processes, dynamics of relations between different participants, and different occurring phenomena as I was already familiar with Roma culture. Although my fieldwork was based on a nationwide project, my observations are restricted to a certain area of Finland and to the specific people I worked with on the project. This inevitably influenced my analysis and conclusions.

As a result of my double role, I was able to make note of several important issues, which I discuss in the remainder of this article. These issues were relevant for the processes of inclusion and affected the

implementation of policy practices. However, these issues are rarely found in official documents despite their significant impact on the processes at hand.

2. Rethinking Power

Recognition of different modes of power is an ontological issue. The challenges concerning Roma people's access to various kinds of power are that the significance of this for the Roma remains unrecognized by the wider public and by governmental authorities dealing with Roma issues:

> Why are the European Roma so discriminated against? I argue that discrimination against the Roma is largely a function of power differentials between the Roma and the non-Roma. Ever since Roma's arrival in Europe, the non-Roma majority has held a considerable amount of political, economic and social power over the Roma. Being entirely excluded from European power structures, the Roma in Europe constitute what is called the Outsiders (Thornton 2014, 107).

What Thornton is describing here is actually an ultimate goal of Roma policies: for Roma to become part of the power structures so that they can engage in decision-making processes concerning their own issues. It is what "nothing about us without us" stands for: being part of (political) processes in local, national, and European level decision-making. What is often forgotten, at least in the case of Kaale Roma in Finland, is that Roma already have formed their own social organizations, social orders, and power hierarchies. Entering into the mainstream domain of power is a required shift from one social reality to another and includes the expectation of Roma "becoming like them"; these are assumptions typically embedded in the majority of Roma policy agendas. One major problem is that not much attention is paid to how a community is to move from one domain of power to another. Shifting toward European power structures would require fundamental changes in ways of seeing and experiencing the world. Moreover, entering a new domain of power would also prerequisite access to equal opportunities and possibilities in society – conditions that are not often available for Roma. To that end, Roma inclusion often is expected to take place in one direction only, as Rorke (2014) argues.

As with the meaning of power in general, not all Kaale Roma rely on the same definition of power. The degree of power that a Roma person is affected by depends, among other things, on one's commitment to being part of Roma social networks. The concept of power became relevant in our project while we were thinking about whom we were reaching out to in our projects, who were our target groups, and who were the key persons to approach. As we worked with our target groups, we had to pay serious attention to how to justify our goals and objectives.

Integration and inclusion of Roma people requires active participation outside the Roma community,[3] that is, with people from the majority population as well. However, respect among Roma depends on

---

3 My definition of Roma community refers to persons closely linked to each other by family ties or friendship, not the whole Roma population.

one's involvement within Roma social circles, sharing interests such as those having to do with family-related issues, and being aware of what is happening among Roma friends or acquaintances. This means you have to be present and actively share the stories of what is happening with different Roma people. To my understanding, storytelling is a central part of Roma experiences. Social and economic class, education level, family reputation, and whether a person was "living in the Roma culture 24/7" became the core of our discussions regarding target groups. The concept of "24/7 in the culture," offered to us by a young Roma activist in our working group, is revealing as it portrays a person's commitment to following cultural norms and moralities. It is also an indication of the involvement within Roma social networks and circles, social organizations and practices. In the project there was a clear division of those "24/7 Roma" and those Roma having a foot outside of the community, too. Consequently, we can recognize two main forces that are part of integration processes: integration and inclusion policies expect you to participate actively outside of Roma social networks, but your position within a Roma community depends on your involvement with other Roma. Too much involvement with non-Roma can cause an individual to receive a label of being *Kaaje*-like (non-Roma), not a goal that most "ordinary" Roma aim for.

While arranging club meetings for Roma youth – one of the mandates of our project – I noticed that their social networks mainly consisted of other Roma youth. Those Roma I worked with in the project did not mention the words integration or inclusion even once – or anything that referred to that condition in fact. I only heard those words in speeches by Roma activists and Roma project workers. What I often heard and realized was that being called *Kaaje*-like by another Roma person was pejorative and an insult. There is a historical reasoning as to why ordinary Kaale Roma people tend to differentiate between Kaale and *Kaaje*. The history of cultural coexistence is part of Roma Kaale identity development and as such, differentiating between Kaale and *Kaaje* cannot be changed or erased easily by Roma or non-Roma people.

Often non-Roma think of Roma people in Finland as one coherent group, but in fact there are many Roma communities made up of extended family lines and connections. In this article Roma community does not mean the whole Roma Kaale population in Finland but refers instead to those Roma people who have close relations with each other. A community can be thought of as a kind of social construction, whose existence depends on particular perspectives, contexts, and situations. Based on my field observations, the diversity of agency that different Roma people may possess is not often recognized by non-Roma actors or by Roma policy. From the Roma policy perspective, it is important to break down the idea of one Roma community as one single unit because, in reality, there is no one coherent group. Thus, it is misleading to talk about the "Roma project" when the target group does not consist of the whole Roma population.

During the LFA processes discussed above, project workers did not pay enough attention to the definition of the target group, apart from describing the target group simply as "Roma." As this project was in line with the National Policy on Roma and followed the same strategies, it consequently also faced the same pitfall as the National Policy on Roma, that is, it did not recognize the diversity among the Kaale population. Both the project plan and the National Policy on Roma were culturally objectifying the population and, as a result, strengthened the categorical thinking about and stereotyping of Roma.

Roma policy tends to represent, probably unintentionally, an image of the ethnic group that is institutionally constructed, homogenous, and often racialized. It is uncertain whether Roma policies

promote equality and recognition or whether they instead maintain and repeat victimizing narratives and thus, the marginalized position of the people involved (see, e.g., Alghasi et al. 2009). Hence, I do agree with Clavé-Mercier and Olivera's (2018) assertion that inclusion and exclusion policies are two sides of the same coin; both are based on the same conceptual framework of Roma and function in practically the same way of being motivated by stereotypical perceptions of "the Roma." Unfortunately, this also applies to Finland, where the same narrative of victimhood and oppression is maintained and reproduced. Unarguably, Roma are discriminated in Finland as well, but the question is whether it is better to emphasize this marginalized and discriminated position as opposed to focusing on Roma agency instead. I argued that from the perspective of recognition, it would be better to put more value on the agency of Roma people in different social spheres. Or, at the very least, to find ways of balancing between these two approaches.

As a diverse group and, as stated earlier in the text, since Roma power mechanisms do not influence every Roma person in the same way, for some Roma the effects of these power mechanisms are either not especially meaningful or they occur randomly. To some, these mechanisms of power regulate their everyday lives. I use the concept of "a world within a world" to describe the distinctive power systems and the social conditions that Roma experience as part of social reality. Most of all, this concept is meant to emphasize that the Roma power system is located within the larger structural system of Finnish society and is thus, at least in part, influenced by it. This *world within a world* is not the same for each Roma person, but there are components and elements that apply to most Roma, like dealing with prejudices, for example.

To clarify, these mechanisms of power are parts of the construction of the social ontology of the Kaale Roma. Equally important, but beyond the scope of this paper, are outsiders' perceptions and the way Roma interact with non-Roma. Discrimination and antigypsyism significantly matter in this construction of a *world within a world*.

Based on Marx's social theory, Gould (1978) defines social ontology as "the nature of the individuals, institutions and processes that compose society." Gould emphasizes Marx's thinking on individuals' relation to their community (*ibid*. xii). This view of individual-community relations is relevant to the Roma policy context as it is important to navigate the complexity of individual Roma rights versus collective ethnic-cultural rights. Roma policies tend to support categorical thinking of Roma. I argue that categorical thinking is valid only when we are talking about the equal rights of groups that are vulnerable in society, but even so we should not forget the diversity within the group. Ontological conditions change as the society around people, cultures, and relations change. Ikäheimo and Laitinen (2011, 2), following Gould's view, divide social ontology into three parts: starting with persons and then moving to groups, communities, and societies, and lastly institutions or institutional structures (systems of norms). My perception is that Roma policy should consider more of these different levels and layers of what it means to be Roma, specifically following the ideas of ontological thinking.

The social ontological approach is applied here as a methodological and analytical tool. This ontological approach was inspired by negotiations between *saming and othering*; some Roma that I interact with in the project emphasized similarities with Finnish non-Roma, while others emphasized the ethnic and

cultural differences between themselves and majority society. These negotiations were, however, very much political in nature as the underlying understanding of integration and recognition were seen differently by the various participants who took part in this dispute.

There is no simple answer for the paradoxes of individual recognition versus collective cultural rights. I would argue that both approaches are simultaneously needed, but individual recognition seems to often end up in the background in the case of Roma policy. Also, if Roma want to be part of European power structures it would require a shift from one social reality to another, and for this shift there are no tools provided, neither by society nor by Roma policy. Roma power, social organizations, and orders thus amount to something that I call the social ontology of Roma, a *world within a world*.

In the following section, I will discuss the power-related issues that directly influence Roma integration processes. I also consider how the Roma power system is a crucial part of constructing an imagined social ontology of Kaale people.

3. Pentecostal Roma Activism and the Frontiers of Roma Politics

A Roma activist who has been actively involved with Roma politics since 1960s reflects on the changes in Roma politics: "In the 1960s and 1970s Roma activists were involved with the social issues much more than they are nowadays. Now most of the associations and activists are religiously active but the social dimension of activism is missing. I noticed Pentecostalism started to enter the arena in the mid-1980s or so. Before that nobody talked about religion, although Roma have always been believers" (Interview with anonymous Roma activist, April 5, 2017).

Today most of the Roma associations in Finland have a religious mission in their agendas. This is the case at least with the major influential associations like the umbrella organization of the Roma associations *Romanifoorumi*, established in 2007. Although a religious mission is not necessarily explicitly mentioned in the objectives of the associations, it is easily observable through the values that many associations promote. This scenario has created a political arena that is grounded in Pentecostalism; a network of religious unity and solidarity has emerged among Roma activists. The current political frontiers of the Roma movement in Finland therefore can be described as having a strong Pentecostal orientation.

The polarization of the Finnish Kaale in the context of religion appears in a statement made by a young Roma I worked with, who was wondering about mixing up secular Roma songs and religious songs: "Can a religious person sing secular traditional Roma songs? Those songs are taking us back to the old sentiments before becoming a believer. There is a different place for traditional songs?" This distinction also had implications for the consortium project: those who are not believers do not participate in activities that have a strong religious orientation such as praying sessions. Similarly, a believer does not want to go to places where secular activities are practiced.

How determining is the relationship between faith and Roma activism? When I asked a Roma activist with several years experience in the field and who is himself a believer and a participant in the Roma project if all Roma actors are Pentecostal and active in the congregations, the answer I received was: "it is not like a requirement, but it just happens to be so. Those who are Pentecostal tend to educate themselves, so they can also manage better within a *Kaaje* (non-Roma) world." Although there are signs of exclusion of the non-believers in the political sphere, faith has an empowering influence on ordinary Roma as well by supporting social inclusion, education, and participation as those elements have become underlying goals in religious preaching. Those activities, education, and inclusion are depicted as religious values and hence appreciated. As some activists explained, Roma policy strategies and the Kaale Pentecostal movement intersect with mutual values and moralities, and both can be promoted at the same time.

However, despite the intersection with religious views and a common set of values, the biggest challenge of implementing inclusionary practices designed by the project workers (often in-faith) was to get people involved and to participate in the project. As one of the project workers (non-Roma) said: "it is a wrong presumption that people are just eager to participate in those projects provided for them, they are just not that interested." Although there were various activities and measures to improve on and to support Roma inclusion, it was difficult to motivate people. A great deal of marketing had to be done even if the community's key people were involved. While religiously oriented Roma shared the same Evangelical basis of faith, that was not enough to boost interest from ordinary Roma to participate. Clavé-Mercier and Olivera (2018) describe a similar kind of phenomenon as a "non-resistant resistance." It was often also acknowledged in our project that "Roma vote with their feet"; you do not reach them. The "non-resistant resistance" refers to the realm of conflicting ontological differences between political will and the everyday practices of ordinary Roma. In other words, agendas for inclusion and integration were set outside of ordinary Roma, and consequently it was difficult to get them involved as they were not invested in the ideas and practices that had been developed by the others.

The consortium project from the administrator's side was affiliated with the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland. There were two project managers who coordinated the processes and were responsible for the project administration. One of the managers was a Roma with a religion-related profession and other one was a non-Roma. During the period of two years, the non-Roma manager changed twice so there were three different managers altogether. The administrator of the project also involved Roma for the recruitment of the project managers. Those Roma involved with the recruitment were Roma activists from different associations and from the Pentecostal churches. The set of religious networks in this context was obvious, but the agenda-making above this level of decision-making was unclear (see Toivanen 2015). These networks reflect a relatively new version of power mechanisms and structures. It exists parallel to the power mechanism that evolves from more traditional customs and secular culture.

It is helpful to look at the structures and actors behind this large-scale consortium. As the empirical data in this paper is from the Roma project that supports the objectives of the National Roma Policy (ROMPO 2009), it is crucial to scrutinize the different connections on a personal level that lie behind it. These connections actually reveal the collaborative nature between the Pentecostal movement and Roma activism, that is, the nexus between Roma politics and faith.

The Romani way of influencing policies and strategies often takes place through what Friman-Korpela (2014) calls "the expert bodies" (45). In Finland, that expert body is the Advisory Board on Romani Affairs. The Advisory Board is appointed by the government and half of its members must have a Roma background. Roma representatives on the Advisory Board are from the country's different Roma associations, which consequently forms an elite group that is relatively small but that has influence both in the spheres of Roma politics and in the Pentecostal movement. Colloquially, the people with these positions are called "cream" by the ordinary Roma as a way of indicating their higher position or status among the Roma population.

A path from leadership in the association leads to an influential position in governmental structures. According to a follow-up report from the Advisory Board (2014), Roma policy is mainstreamed in different ministries and governmental institutions. This means that different ministries have adopted a National Roma Policy as part of their strategies. The problem is the implementation of these policies and the resources available at the local level (especially in employment and education). While policy is typically agreed upon in governmental spheres, in practice it does not come down to the level of local authorities or local Roma. Thus, such a top-down approach is not effective for practices of Roma policy implementation. To validate Roma policy at the grass-roots level, a more horizontal approach is needed, that is, one that would account for empowerment from below.

The question of agenda-making remains, regardless of Roma representation on the Advisory Board. To this end, in Finland, Roma representativeness is, as it appears to be in many European countries, developed mainly outside of the arena of official and electoral politics (see Vermeersch 2006, 123). Nordberg (2007) assesses that the problem is not that Roma representatives in governmental structures constitute a small group of elites [Romani Advisory Board], but the problem is the absence of a political field outside of the elite (86–87). According to Nordberg (2007), only participation in the public sphere, in a broad sense, would enhance the recognition of Roma (87).

Participating in Roma associations has enabled many Roma to participate in decision-making processes in governmental structures. It appears the same Roma persons are also active in the Pentecostal movement and hence they have influential positions both in official Finnish structures and in the religious Roma community. This religious movement, Pentecostalism, has gained a base among ordinary Roma as well, and it has changed the lives of many Roma in Finland. Faith is strengthening a sense of belonging (Thurfjell 2013; Thurfjell and Marsh 2014; Roman 2016), and thus influencing the overall well-being of Roma Kaale in a social context. While Pentecostalism is common among Roma, there is still an ontological conflict between policy agendas and lived experiences. Although Roma activism from previous decades (1960s and 1970s) has enabled Roma representatives to become a part of decision-making processes in regards to Roma issues, there is still no remarkable social change in the recognition of the Roma (culture) in Finland despite the relatively early start for Roma policy practices in the country. To this end, Roma are part of the decision-making processes on Roma issues, but recognition and participation are limited to the narrow space where Roma policy is created. Therefore, there is a lot of room for improvement on the local level and in everyday life participation and recognition.

4. Avoidance and Moving Permit As Mechanisms of Power

In the previous decades Roma avoidance systems (of conflicting Roma families) and feuding were sensitive topics. The system of avoidance has previously been discussed, for example, in a study about Finnish Kaale blood feuding in the 1970s (Grönfors 1976) and more recently, the *Romani Studies* journal published an article about avoiding systems (Berlin 2015). The Finnish Ministry of the Environment also published a study about Roma housing, indicating problems of avoidance as a violation of individual rights (Törmä and Huotari 2018). A knowledge about this mechanism has increased among local authorities, and as a result they have started to tackle the custom as a problem that has no place in Finnish society. Among many Roma this custom is also considered as a backward remnant of the past. However, the impact of avoiding systems is still remarkable and effect many, if not most, Roma in Finland.

Berlin (2015) describes Finnish Kaale's internal control system by saying that, "The Finnish Roma operate an internal control system that prevents further conflicts between feuding families. This system is based on avoidance of inappropriate behavior, people and places, and as such, define the everyday lives of Finnish Roma" (151). The avoidance system is a way of showing respect to those that have been offended. For the Roma people it is important to know which family one belongs to so that inappropriate encounters can be avoided. For example, if your family member had a violent encounter with my family member, your responsibility is to avoid places and situations where encountering my family members might take place. This is a Roma practice that shows respect and seeks to avoid further conflicts. Blood feuding is not that common anymore, but this custom still appears occasionally and is an extreme form of family conflict. The internal control system is also a reflection of family reputation, and consequently one is never only an individual but also a representative of one's own family. This communally-oriented understanding of family with a concept of family honor are typical of collective cultures (Lidman 2015). The avoiding system also shows that it is indeed misleading to consider the Kaale population in Finland as a coherent community.

These systems of control and power within Finnish Roma communities are deemed illegitimate in the eyes of the majority Finns and also considered to be harmful traditions by Human Rights actors (Human Rights League Finland 2016). The impact of avoidance, moving permit, and feuding, however, should be made relevant when implementing Roma policy practices. But, because these practices are still contentious and deemed illegitimate, such phenomena often are left outside of the official policy documents. There is an unavoidable impact in the implementation processes as a result: if there are people or places that one must avoid, it would be challenging for that person to work for a Roma project and to have to approach some Roma. This was indeed an unsurmountable problem in several cases that I witnessed, specifically when having to recruit certain Roma to certain projects.

Linked to avoidance is the moving permit system. They both have different characteristics in smaller cities and towns where usually a few elders of the families that have inhabited the place the longest, decide who can move to the area. This custom prevents possible future conflicts and is justified in this way according to Roma social ontology. It is such that there is a group of men deciding who can move to the area; this group can consist of several family lines.

In the capital Helsinki this practice is slightly different, although it does follow similar principles. In Helsinki, certain people and families divide the city into neighborhoods that they occupy. For example, the network for Roma youth work in the capital region arranges special celebrations for young Roma once a year. After two years we had to change the location because the permit for the Roma event was denied by certain elderly Roma. These kinds of social arrangements are familiar to anthropologists. L'Estoile (2005), for example, argues that people living outside or at the margins of state power create their own system of control and justice. He draws these conclusions from his study of the native policy in French-ruled Africa and gives the blood feud system of Moroccan Berbers as an example.

The system of avoidance among Kaale Roma is partly an outcome of the prejudices and the problems of representation they have experienced historically. To illustrate the situation, imagine that there is a Roma family living in a small town. Then Roma living outside of this town are passing by and have some sort of undesirable and negative encounter with the local people. A Roma living in that town will be the one who is addressed for the incident. As a member of the minority group, although wrongly, you will face the consequences of misbehavior of other Roma, even without having anything to do with that particular incident. An individual Roma is in this sense responsible *for* and representative *of* the whole Roma community in the eyes of the non-Roma. This is the reason why there is a strong a territorial consciousness among Roma.

To summarize, the moving permit system and avoidance influence all spheres of Roma life: education, employment, social inclusion, and integration. If one is not welcome in the city where his/her college or university would be, he/she cannot move there. If your work would include working with people you have to avoid, you cannot take the job. This Roma social order is typically seen negatively by non-Roma and rarely can be understood as an important system. As an anthropologist and as a Roma, I do not value one system over the other. It is meaningful that different systems and different social arrangements exists, and it is my contention that they both have to be taken into account. It is part of a process of recognition of minority groups.

5. The Parallel Existence of Power Systems

When I meet a new Roma person in the Roma project, they usually ask me three questions: Who are you? Which family do you belong to? Are you involved with congregation activities? With these three questions, it would be possible to do a "social framing" of the situation. The first two questions would help the interlocutor to determine whether there were issues of avoidance between us, and the third question would help them to decide whether possible avoidance issues could be erased by shared religious involvement. Disobeying the moving permit system by people in faith was justified according to the principle that, "God owns the land and everything on it." However, there is a clear contradiction between these two systems as well.

In many cases, a believer removes the practices of avoidance and the expectation to react to previous conflicts. However, this is not entirely straightforward as it is not a matter of individual involvement alone but family business; you are part of your family in good times and in bad. This antagonist existence

of secular cultural tradition and theologically oriented praxis is currently being negotiated among the Finnish Kaale. A recent bachelor thesis on the subject of avoidance in Roma congregations (Schwartz 2016) describes a situation in which the Christian family members of the person who assaulted the member of another family had to be denied access to the congregation and other religious events that were located in the territory of the assaulted family. According to Schwartz (2016), the avoidance custom violates religious doctrines and should not be tolerated in the context of congregational life (3). The relation of secular Roma customs to practices from the Evangelical movement is therefore an antagonistic one.

The parallel power systems of Kaale Roma are micro phenomena that are shaped by larger (mainstream) societal structures. The Pentecostal network of solidarity consists of power that is centralized to the Roma elite. The small group of elites simultaneously operates in and influences Roma politics and different congregations in the whole country. This culture-based practice of power is more territorially shared and comprises more people and families than the religion-oriented system of power. Toward this end, I argue that the religious version of the Roma power system is more centralized compared to the secular power system that entails avoidance and moving permit practices.

Is it therefore correct to say that Roma are powerless? But the entry point to the issue is incorrect; it is wrong to assume that Roma entail one single category that can be labeled as powerless. In addition, Western (Euro-American) power often is understood as a chain of commands, and if some values are attached to the concept of power, those values are most likely implicit (Iteanu 2009, 337). Power is given to people who represent formal institutions, for example, police officers who thus have structural legitimation. In the case of Western ideas of power, power often has a political foundation. In other societies, hierarchies can be more dominant than political powers, and values (that form the hierarchy) are more explicit in the status system.

"In the Roma community, you are part of the community no matter whether you have an education or profession. Your status in the community is based on how you act WITH the Kaale, not based on your education or position in the labor market." This statement was made in one of our project meetings. Based on the ideas of Dumont, Iteanu (2009) argues that the notion of power in the Western context is not directly compatible with power in societies where hierarchies are more dominant (336). Therefore, the comparison should be between power and hierarchy instead of power and power. The comparison between hierarchy and power in this paper is meant to underline an ontological difference; moving permit, avoidance system and one's position in "the Roma community" are based on values, not on a chain of commands. These values include respect, shame, commitment to Roma norms, and a territorial understanding of space. With Pentecostalism we see a mixture of two different ways of understanding social orders. Pentecostal Roma activists mingle with the "Western social order," and that is what creates a tension between Roma activists, Roma policy practices, and the ordinary Roma population. However, this tension is a sign of negotiations and social change and should therefore be regarded as a positive sign. These negotiations might lead to the balance of integration and recognition.

My argument is that in the context of majority-minority relations, there is a clear stratification taking place: if we look at the Kaale Roma from the perspective of Western understandings of power, we can

conclude that Roma seem powerless in societal structures and institutions. If, on the other hand, we look at the inner group Roma power system from a hierarchical perspective, a different conclusion emerges. Following ideas from Iteanu (2013), the first type of hierarchy is created by power (Euro-American), but the second type of hierarchy renders a worldview that includes ontological distinctions of values that might or might not include power (hierarchical societies) (156). This means that social institutions among Kaale work in a different way from majority society, and Kaale social institutions and social orders formulate their own fabric of social ontology. I argue that ignorance of this fabric of social ontology is the cause for the failing of "integration and inclusion (projects)." Roma policy papers are documents guided by outsiders' agenda-making, which typically ignore alternative realities. One system does not apply to all Roma in Europe.

Conclusions: Social Ontology and Recognition

In this paper, I have introduced two sets of power arrangements among Kaale Roma: one stemming from Pentecostalism and the other stemming from secular and traditional Roma customs. I have argued that these two systems differ and are antagonist in nature since the one based on faith is more centered in the hands of fewer people, while the traditional system is more regionally divided and shared. I have also demonstrated the importance of power structures for Roma policy practices, and I have introduced Kaale Roma power as an embodiment of Roma agency. Because Roma often have been regarded as a powerless group, I have taken a different viewpoint in order to show that there are different social orders and power hierarchies among Kaale, and thus seeing Roma as powerless is only one perspective. In light of Roma social arrangements, I also revealed that Roma policy agendas have an ideological foundation set outside Roma communities and this basis is rarely questioned but instead taken for granted by most Roma activists. Toward that end, I argue that policy documents lack a realistic portrayal of Roma agency, thereby objectifying Roma people in the process.

There was a clear lack of interest in inclusion projects among the Roma that I worked with and researched. This lack of interest comes in part from the fundamental social ontological contradictions underlying the different expectations of ordinary Roma and those responsible for designing inclusion projects and Roma policies. The underlying philosophies of integration and inclusion seem to clash with Roma expectations.

Roma policy practices expect Roma to shift from one imagined social reality to another. This requirement fails to explain what this transformation would require from Roma and also from the rest of society. This means that the real recognition of Roma experiences and expectations has not been the basis of agenda-making, and consequently this might have caused the commonly acknowledged failing of different inclusion projects. Rorke (2014) has summarized this contradiction aptly: "Roma integration in Europe has shifted to a right-wing definition of integration where the onus is being placed on the minorities to make the adjustments and accommodations deemed necessary for social cohesion."

Practices of integration are therefore rejected by the population in question as they are typically understood as processes of assimilation instead (see Rorke 2014). This does not mean that Kaale Roma

do not want to be part of mainstream Finnish society but rather that Roma are expecting recognition in Finnish society that entails full social and cultural citizenship as well as equal opportunities for maintaining their own culture.

In order to attain equal opportunities, "we must take additional steps, not only allowing space but also making space. This is about the will to meet Other, which requires the ability to make space or step aside. This step is inevitable move in creating common shared space between cultures" (Alghasi et al. 2009, 9).

References

Alghasi, Sharam, Thomas Hyland Eriksen, and Halleh Ghorashi, eds. 2016. *Paradoxes of Cultural Recognition: Perspectives from Northern Europe*. London: Routledge.

Berlin, Jenni. 2015. "The Moving-Permit Custom of the Finnish Roma." *Romani Studies* 25 (2): 151–166.

Clave-Mercier, Alexandra, and Martin Olivera. 2018. "Inclusion and the 'Arts of Resistance'. How Do Roma Migrants Develop Autonomy in the Context of Inclusion Policies?" *Intersections. East European Journal of Society and Politics* 4 (2): 149–168.

European Commission. 2011. "An EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020." Brussels: European Commission. https://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=6717&langId=en.

Friedman, Eben. 2014. "Decade of Roma Inclusion Progress Report." Bratislava, Slovakia. United Nations Development Programme. http://www.eurasia.undp.org/content/dam/rbec/docs/DORI%20REPORT.pdf.

Friman-Korpela, Sarita. 2014. *Romanipolitiikasta romanien politiikkaan. Poliittisen asialistan ja toimijakonseption muutos 1900-luvun jälkipuoliskon Suomessa* (From Roma policy to the politics of the Roma). Jyväskylä University.

Gould, Carol C. 1978. *Marx's Social Ontology: Individuality and Community in Marx's Theory of Social Reality*. London: MIT Press.

Grönfors, Martti. 1977. *Blood Feuding among Finnish Gypsies*. Helsinki: Helsingin yliopisto.

Hojsík, Marek, Lucie Fremlová, and Violetta Zentai. 2018. "A Synthesis Report on Implementation of National Roma Integration Strategies in Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania and Slovakia." Budapest: Central European University.

Human Rights League Finland. 2016. "Romanit ja syrjintä" (Finnish Roma and discrimination). The Finnish League for Human Rights. https://ihmisoikeusliitto.fi/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/Romanit-ja-syrjint%C3%A4_esite.pdf.

Ikaheimo, Heikki, and Arto Laitinen, eds. 2011. *Recognition and Social Ontology*. Leiden: Brill. https://doi.org/10.1163/ej.9789004202900.i-398.

Iteanu, André. 2013. "The Two Conceptions of Value." *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 3 (1): 155–171.

Jovanović, Zeljko. 2015. "Why Europe's 'Roma Decade' Didn't Lead to Inclusion." Open Society Foundations. September 21, 2015. https://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/voices/why-europe-s-roma-decade-didn-t-lead-inclusion.

L'Estoile, Benoît de. 2005. "Rationalizing Colonial Domination: Anthropology and Native Policy in French Africa." In *Empires, Nations, and Natives: Anthropology and State-Making*, edited by Benoît de L'Estoile, Federico Neiburg, and Lygia Maria Sigaud, 30–57. Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press.

Lidman, Satu. 2015. *Väkivaltakulttuurin perintö: sukupuoli, asenteet ja historia* (The heritage of violent culture). Helsinki: Gaudeamus.

McGarry, Aidan. 2014. "Roma as a Political Identity: Exploring Representations of Roma in Europe." *Ethnicities* 14 (6): 756–774.

Marin Thornton, Gabriela. 2014. "The Outsiders: Power Differentials between Roma and non-Roma in Europe." *Perspectives on European Politics and Society* 15 (1): 106–119.

Örtengren, Kari. 2004. "The Logical Framework Approach: A Summary of the Theory behind the LFA Method." SIDA, Swedish Agency for International Development Cooperation. https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/node/2033/pdf/2033.pdf.

Nordberg, Camilla. 2007. *Boundaries of Citizenship: The Case of the Roma and the Finnish Nation-State*. Research Institute, Swedish School of Social Science, University of Helsinki.

Roman, Raluca Bianca. 2017. "Kaale belongings and Evangelical Becomings: Faith, Commitment and Social Outreach among the Finnish Kaale (Finnish Roma)." PhD diss., University of St. Andrews.

ROMPO. 2009. *Suomen romanipoliittinen ohjelma* (The Finnish National Policy on Roma). Työryhmän esitys. Sosiaali- ja terveysministeriön selvityksiä (Working Group Presentation. Reports by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health). http://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/72788/URN%3aNBN%3afi-fe201504225296.pdf.

Rorke, Bernard. 2013. "Roma Integration Strategies Are Failing. Civil Monitoring Exposes Weak Governance, Unchecked Discrimination and Deep Rooted Antigypsyism." *Open Democracy*. June 7, 2013. https://www.opendemocracy.net/bernard-rorke/national-roma-integration-strategies-failing-romani-children.

Rorke, Bernard. 2014. "Roma integration and 'a Normal Way of Living.'" *Open Democracy*, June 1, 2014. https://www.opendemocracy.net/can-europe-make-it/bernard-rorke/roma-integration-and-normal-way-of-living.

Schwartz, Kyösti. 2016. *Väistämisvelvollisuuskäytäntö kristillisessä kontekstissa* (The avoidance practice in Christian context). Unpublished Bachelor thesis, Keuruu Alphacrucis College.

Suonoja, Kyösti, and Väinö Lindberg. 1999. "Romanipolitiikan strategiat. Sosiaali- ja terveysministeriön selvityksiä" (Strategies of the Policy on Roma). Ministry of Social Affairs and Health/Advisory Board on Romani Affairs. https://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/70957/Selv199909.pdf.

Symonds, Anthea. 1998. "Social Construction and the Concept of 'Community.'" In *The Social Construction of Community Care*, edited by Anthea Symonds and Anne Kelly, 7–17. London: Palgrave. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-349-14107-4_1.

Thurfjell, David. 2013. *Faith and Revivalism in a Nordic Romani Community: Pentecostalism amongst the Kaale Roma of Sweden and Finland*. London: I.B. Tauris.

Thurfjell, David, and Adrian Marsh, eds. 2014. *Romani Pentecostalism: Gypsies and Charismatic Christianity.* Frankfurt: Peter Lang.

Toivanen, Reetta Johanna. 2015. "From Ignorance to Effective Inclusion: The Role of National Minorities within the Finnish Consensus Culture." In *The Challenge of Minority Integration: Politics and Policies in the*

Nordic Nations, edited by Peter A. Kraus and Peter Kivisto, 110–140. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter. https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110441116-008.

Törmä, Sinikka, and Kari Huotari. 2018. "*Romanien asumisen yhdenvertaisuuden seurantaselvitys*" (Follow-up Report on Equality of the Roma in Housing). Ympäristöministeriön raportteja (Report of the Ministry of the Environment). http://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/handle/10024/160489.

Vermeersch, Peter. 2006. *The Romani Movement: Minority Politics and Ethnic Mobilization in Contemporary Central Europe*. Oxford: Berghahn Books.