

Nordic Romani Meeting

8-9 December 2014: Södertörn University

Monday, 8th December 2014

The meeting was opened by Kimmo Granqvist at 11 am with an introduction of meeting goals and expectations and excuses of absentees. This was followed by an overview of invited members for the meeting in form of an introductory round. The members present were: Kimmo Granqvist, Angelina Dimiter-Taikon, Mikael Demetri, Christina Rodell-Olgaç, Susana Rajala, Elissavet Kaltsidou, Kai Åberg and Raluca Bianca Roman. Some program changes were announced due a reception for the graduate school at CBEES, therefore reception moved to 3 pm. Some presenters were swapped: Raluca Bianca Roman was moved initially to Tuesday, 13:30 o'clock, to fit with the final reception, and Kimmo Granqvist to Tuesday.

The participants introduced themselves and described briefly their work:

- Roman, Raluca Bianca: social anthropologist, interest in visual anthropology and religious belonging, worked with Pentecostal Kaale as part of her doctoral research, PhD student at St Andrews University
- Susana Rajala: education of adult Roma in Finland; part of the National Board of Education
- Kai Åberg: Roma musicians, focus on musical performance among the Kaale, since 1994.
- Christina Rodell-Olgaç: Associate professor in education; Romani issues in education
- Angelina Dimiter-Taikon: activist and employee of Södertörn University; interested in Romani language. Romani and Swedish
- Mikael Demetri: professor in Roma fairytales. Romani language interest.
- Kimmo Granqvist: university lecturer at the University of Helsinki, Reseach Leader at Södertörn University

11:30 Raluca Bianca Roman- Emotional worlds: understanding engagement in the field and the usefulness of emotional knowledge

Roman's presentation dealt with the meaning of emotional and social engagement in anthropological fieldwork among the Roma and based her arguments on a 14 month fieldwork among Pentecostal Kaale in Finland. She discussed in particular the role of Pentecostal

movement in shaping the meaning and spread of missionary works conducted by Finnish Kaale believers among Roma communities elsewhere, particularly Eastern Europe. This brought out additional questions regarding the ways in which Pentecostalism shapes the meaning of Kaale identity in Finland. Of significant importance in Roman's presentation was the role of emotions not only as subject or matter of study but as an inter-subjective way of knowing and reaching out, helpful and useful in any anthropological inquiry. The stress was put on treating emotions as a valuable part of the fieldwork process and a legitimate way of accessing knowledge. Fieldwork and the emotional world that it comprises were argued to be intrinsically connected and reflected in particular in the emotional worlds of the believers amongst which Roman conducted her research.

Lunch time: 12 pm

Afternoon session

13:15- Susanna Rajala: the National Report on Education of Finnish Adult Roma

Rajala presented the Finnish Romani Curricula work, which is the most important issue of the National Board of Education: pre-primary, basic education, upper secondary school, vocational education, basic education of adults. This was the first time Roma people participate in this project. There are different types of working groups: at least ten people with Romani backgrounds. The Roma Education Group has three employees (two with Roma background). The Roma Education Group promotes the education of Roma, Romani language and culture. Key areas of their activities include enhancing participation of Roma children, enhancing of social inclusion, and training of adult Roma. The promote basic education, run Romani language nest activities, support teaching Romany language in pre-primary education, basic education and upper secondary education and arrange basic education, teaching of Romany language and culture, empowerment skills for prisoners of Roma background. According to a survey conducted by at schools by the Roma Education Group, almost 80%% of all Roma pupils were okay, just like any other peoples; 1/5 were strongly marginalized; 94% have good connections with schools.

The National Report on Education of Adult Roma will provide a picture of educational level and variety of professions of adult Roma; find out the educational needs of adult Roma and the situation of the adult Roma students in institutional education. Questionnaires were made using the internet and on paper. A national Roma network of about 8-10 people across Finland collected the data; 327 adult Roma responded to the survey (150 men; 177 women). Collection was done through active Roma people in their area (NGOs, school assistants, choosing people from different parts of the country). Different types of questionnaires were sent to heads of vocational education institutions (Roma involved in all kinds of professions); liberal adult education institutions (no degree but you can go and study courses in sewing, handicraft, etc;

plenty of Roma enrolled in them); upper secondary schools for adults (here is the possibility of studying basic education, upper secondary, take degrees to go further; the most important) Results of the data collection: all data is collected in December 2014; report and proposal in 2015; National Report on Education of Adult Roma 2013-2014 and Proposals

Presentation of Christina Rodell-Olgac and Angelina Dimiter-Taikon: Experiences and challenges from a course in higher education for Romani mediators working in schools.

Approximately 50-100.000 Roma are living in Sweden. A lot of Roma groups are living in Sweden: Romani language is stronger in Sweden than Finland. One of the problems in teaching Romani has been that headmasters don't want to give Roma people teaching positions when they don't have a teacher's diploma. In February 2012, Romani National Inclusion Strategy was approved in Sweden. As part of this were pilot projects in education focusing on the inclusion of Roma and provision of education mediators. 18 municipalities applied for mediating projects; 5 got it. The mediator courses have had 16 participants: 8 mediators (3 women and 5 men) in 2012; 8 mediators (3 women and 5 men) in 2013. Participants from: Arlie, Kaale, Kalderash and Lovara, and mixed educational background. All these people are employed. Municipalities employ them at the school 50% and 50% they study. The course gives 30 credits for two years: each semester 7.5 credits. The courses are in Swedish, Romani and English. Roma learn a lot in an informal way: school is formal; how to combine the two ways of learning. Different ways of being a mediator: combining needs. Different ways of working. Finding own ways. It's not easy to be a mediator: everybody expects that they solve all the problems.

Preliminary results: Romani mediators play an import role for pupils, parents and staff and have in a very short time increased school attendance substantially; have disseminated knowledge about history and situation of Roma among teachers and school staff, hence more negotiations about different and flexible solutions concerning the school situation of the children; mediators play a role in the cooperation between parents and school staff; organize extra activities for Romani children inside and outside the school; bridge between Romani children and other children; contribute to a more intercultural approach at school to different issues related to the school situation of Romani children. Accumulation of symbolic capital and higher education may lead to increasing distance between mediators and other Roma in their own community.

The presentation were followed by a discussion on Romani Chib in education: the issues discussed included:

- Publications, presentations of papers at international conferences
- Mediator course (30 credits) for the National Agency for Education (2012-2015)

- Get a real teacher diploma
- Mediator course (22.5 credits) for the National Board for Health and Welfare (2014-2015)
- Courses to strengthen the competencies among mother tongue teachers in Romani (preliminary 30 credits) for the NAE (2015-2017)
- Kimmo Granqvist, research leader in Romani Studies at CBEES
- Rosa Taikon, silversmith, honorary doctor at Södertörn University, November 2014
- The status of Romani language in Sweden: language is already a skill in Sweden.
- How to learn between and from country experiences with mediators. Differences between Sweden and Finland in terms of the level of Romani language skills that the mediators would have.
- How to implement the example of Sweden in Finland?
- When doing the adult education survey, there should be another meeting between University of Helsinki and Södertörn University about exchange of ideas and practices.

Tuesday, 9th December, 2014

10:00 coffee

Excuses of David Thurfjell

10:30: Elissavet Kaltsidou's Presentation on Roma representations in films.

Elissavet Kaltsidou's approach to films was critical engagement. She discussed the exoticized and romanticised images of Roma women in movies, that have little or nothing to do with reality; issues of sexuality and power relations; as well as intersectionality and gender representations. Her analysis was based on Foucault's work on sexuality: are figures representative?

Mikael pointed out that he was the one who translated the films into Swedish. He looked over the manuscripts and found the exoticism in the film. It was noted that there will be a film about Swedish Roma, coming out next year. Angelica Dimiter-Taikon is one of the actress and all of the actors are Roma. That film is about real Roma and have no mysticism or romanticization within them.

11:00- Kai Aberg

Presentation on fieldwork among Finnish Kaale musicians and engagement in the field. Interventions and discussions from Angelica.

11:30- lunch time

13:00 Kimmo Granqvist presentation on the Nordic strategies in Romani Studies at the Nordic Meeting of RAN Members

Granqvist provided an overview of background of Romani Studies in Nordic countries, current resources and areas of emphasis. The presentation included a map of research centers in Europe, offering Romani Studies and overview of what is being done and where. Comments and additions were provided by Susana Rajala and Angelica Dimiter-Taikon. Possibilities for collaboration and further research were discussed between Sweden, Finland, Norway and Denmark. Additional issues discussed included, how to secure further funding for PhDs and for post-PhDs and how to establish a PhD programme in Nordic countries. Academic writing courses for students of Romani background were suggested. There are problems with identifying which students are of Romani background and which are not – there no clear data to show this. Christina Rodell-Olgaç pointed out that: ‘In order to make the programme successful, we need to include Romani students. We would not have come this far if we hadn’t done that. That is also important when thinking of Romani Studies programmes. How to safeguard Romani Students should be essential.’ Angelina Dimiter-Taikon continued that: ‘That also helps to eradicate stereotypes of each other’.

Discussion about ‘Prejudices and stereotypes’ and ‘Nordic Strategies in Romani Studies’

The situation of Roma migrants and beggars from outside of Scandinavia was discussed. How can this stereotyping be considered? It was pointed out that helping Roma in Eastern Europe should be done by a reworking of the administrative systems of their own countries.

Concluding discussion

Further discussion dealt with surveying all work done in Scandinavian countries dealing with Roma. After the April conference there could be a new network in Romani Studies established, focusing on and gathering people working in the Nordic countries. The Nordic conference could be repeated annually, since until now there has been no common meeting point to gather all researchers from the Nordic countries: thus far, there has been no common meeting place and time.

Nordic Romani Meeting

8-9 September 2014: Södertörn University

Final agenda

Monday, September 8th

11:00 Opening / Kimmo Granqvist

11:30 Raluca Bianca Roman: Emotional worlds: understanding engagement in the field and the usefulness of emotional knowledge

12:00 Lunch

13:15 Susanna Rajala: The National Report on Education of Finnish Adult Roma

14:00 Presentation of Christina Rodell-Olgac and Angelina Dimiter-Taikon: Experiences and challenges from a course in higher education for Romani mediators working in schools

14:45 Discussion on Romani Chib in education

15:30 Reception at the Center for Baltic and East European Studies, Södertörn University

Tuesday, September 9th

10:00 Coffee and opening of the day / Kimmo Granqvist

10:30 Elissavet Kaltsidou's Presentation on Roma representations in films.

11:00 Kai Åberg: Presentation on fieldwork among Finnish Kaale musicians and engagement in the field

11:30 Lunch

13:00 Kimmo Granqvist: Nordic strategies in Romani Studies

13:45 Discussion about 'Prejudices and stereotypes' and 'Nordic Strategies in Romani Studies'

14:30 Concluding discussion