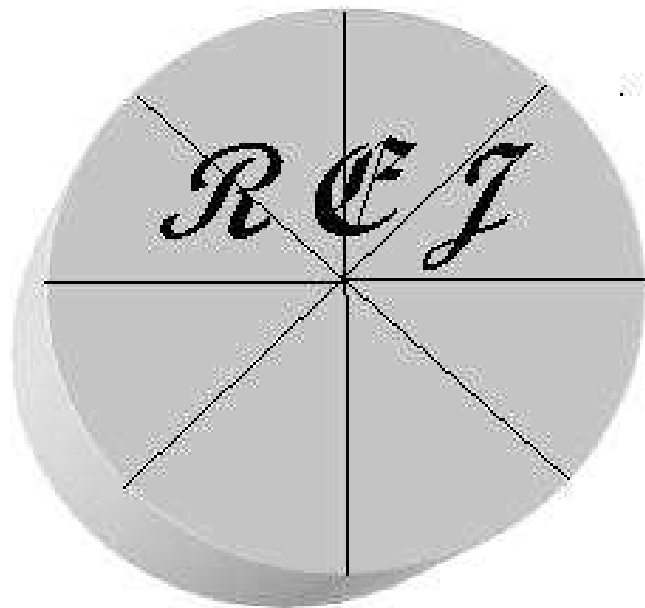


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Editorial and Summary of Contributions

During the autumn of 2007 and the spring of 2008 several Romani social networks were created by Roma in Sweden. Before the creation of these networks, online communication between Romani activists, researchers and individuals often took the shape of e-mails sent to larger or smaller numbers of recipients. However, when *Romsktnet* was created in late 2007 and after it other Romani social networks also saw light, online communication between Romani activists, researchers and individuals became much easier and efficient and people were brought together. People could share knowledge and experiences, discuss Romani related matters and share photographs and video clips from all occasions of life. However, as time went by, the existence and development of Romani social networks brought technical and ethical challenges to those working with them. In his contribution to this issue of Romani E Journal, Gregor Dufunia Kwiek tells the reader how *Romsktnet* was created, how it developed and how the Romani community reacted to it.

Romsktnet: Its Rise, its Fall, & its Resurrection – A study on how two factions used the same values to argue for different ends.

by

Gregor Dufunia Kwiek

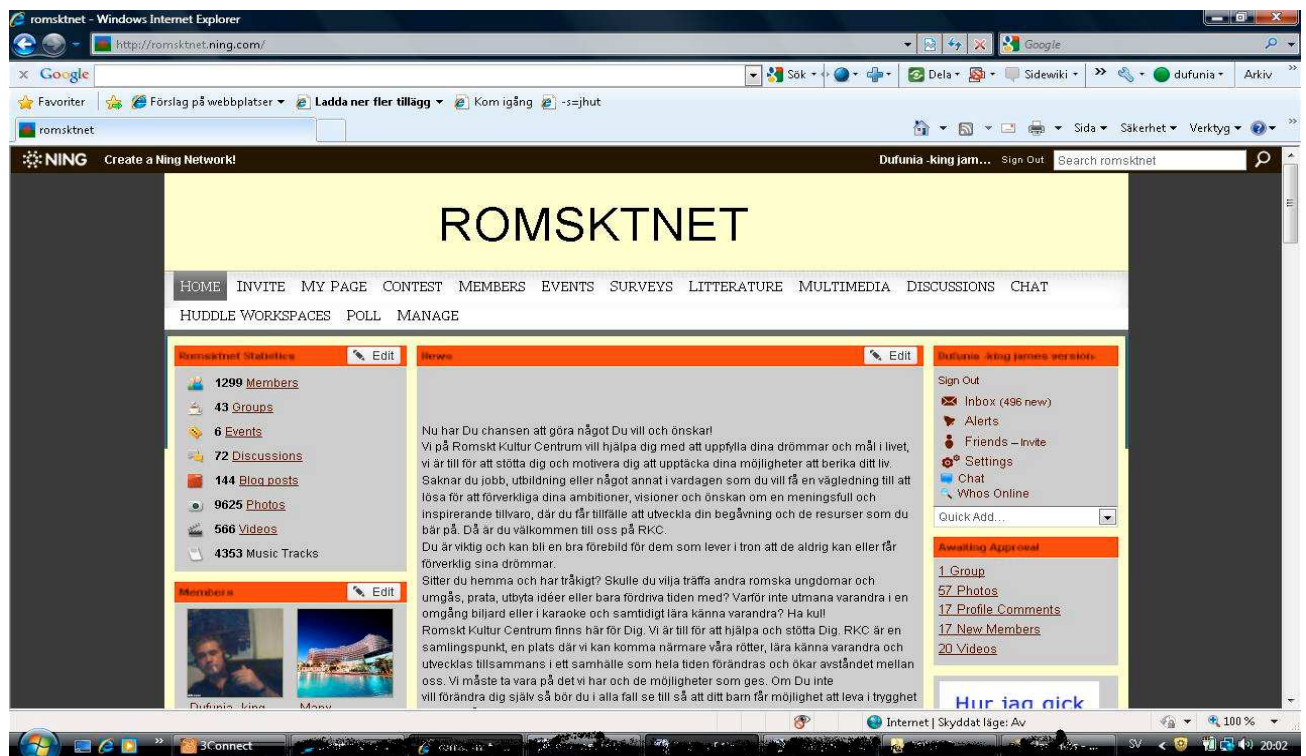


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Introduction

The website known as *Romsktnet* was started sometime in October, 2007. Although it was the not the first Romani social network to be developed, it was the first one developed for Roma¹ in Sweden and the first to facilitate and encourage participant interactivity. Prior to *Romsktnet's* creation Romani social networks were identified as such because they in some shape or form provided information or held discussions that were related to the Romani people. Rarely were these social networks made up of Romani members and in cases where they were, the limitations that technology had at the time of their development did not have the same level of interactivity that *Romsktnet* had during its development. Within the first few months after its creation, *Romsktnet* had nearly 500 members, a contribution of 2000 photos, 5 groups, 120 videos 15 blogs, 800 songs and 15 discussions. By March 2008, the site had over 2,500 members, an archive of 556 video, 9,825 photos, 4317 songs, 42 groups, 72 discussions, 143 blogs, and hundreds of announcements. The site was growing rapidly like no other Romani social network prior to its creation.²

That which distinguished *Romsktnet* from other similar websites was the ingenuity of *Romsktnet's* administration to load up photos of well recognized Roma in the community, causing members to react and write comments and histories about the people they recognized in the photos. By using such methods, in combination with the advanced technology, the administration was successful in drawing Romani people to the website.

The administration had features that could banish members from the website should they have broken any of the website rules. The website rules did not permit members to use profanity or upload any materials that were offensive or had a sexual nature to them. However, members felt that the administration did not take on enough responsibility and as a result of their criticism, the administration incorporated Romani values as a part of the rules and regulations that governed *Romsktnet*. Romani values consist of norms and practices that distinguish what is honorable from what is dishonorable. The codex of Romani values (see Appendix for a more detailed description) is vast; it differs from group to group and even

¹ The word Romani word is used as an adjective, while Roma is used as a noun to denote the people.

² According to information provided by IP addresses , it was most common that only one person per household had membership. It seems reasonable, though, to assume that many of the households concerned consisted of more than one person. Provided that access to the website and its information was shared in these households, the site could have reached out to several thousand.

changes over time within a group. There are some 60 dialects of the Romani language, consisting of people that practice different Romani traditions depending on the Romani group they belong to (Hyltenstam 1999: 261). Sweden is home to a variety of Romani groups that are not homogenous in the way they practice Romani traditions and customs. The Romani community that is focused upon in this study is made up of several groups that do share similar traditions and practices and are a part of an international community that shares similar values. This Romani community is a part of an international Romani community because it maintains contact with Romani communities in different parts of the world, while communities like those of the *Resande* Roma have had a stronger history of being isolated from other Roma. Thus when Romani values, customs, traditions and the *kris* are mentioned in this study, these terms are not applied to all Romani groups but the particular Romani community that this study addresses.

To implement all aspects of Romani values into the website would have been an impossible feat for the administration to reach. Rather, what the administration did was not to permit slanders that members could make that could dishonor someone. This was done through surveillance and the threat of banishment from the website. Dishonor can be brought upon a Romani person if someone makes false accusations that are believable about that person. The question of such accusations actually having an effect and bringing dishonor to someone's name is a decision that normally rests in the hands of either the Romani *kris* (Romani trial/tribunal) or a group of respected elders (see Appendix for more information on the *kris*).³ The administration did not attempt to take over this responsibility, and therefore incorporated Romani values into the website not by deciding whether contributions made by members were in line with Romani values or not, but by not permitting members to make accusations against one another that the administration believed could bring dishonor to a person via the accusation.

Approximately, one year after *Romsktnet's* creation, a wedding took place in Stockholm that had some 700 guests. The administration was flooded with photos and videos for approval. One photo from the wedding was taken of the tables at the end of the wedding. This photo gave the impression that there was very little food at the wedding. Comments followed

³ Not all members of *Romsktnet* belong to Romani groups that practice the *kris*. However, even Romani groups that do not, do recognize the authority of the *kris*. The community that is the focus of this study - and to which the author of the study belongs - recognizes the *kris* at local, national and international level.

the photo stating that guests left the wedding hungry. Before long, heated debates broke out and some made verbal attacks against the organizer of the wedding.

The organizer had spent a vast amount of money on the wedding and felt that the site gave the opportunity for people to damage his good name. As a result, the organizer brought a *kris* (Romani trial/tribunal) against *Romsktnet*. The *kris* was bent on shutting *Romsktnet* down, but its creator, who is the author of this study, proposed a different solution which will be addressed later.

During the *kris* and after it, some members that openly supported *Romsktnet* began changing their opinion and claimed instead that it was antagonistic to Romani values. Members who continued to support *Romsktnet* argued that *Romsktnet* supports Romani values. In fact, there were *krismen* (Romani judges) who also believed that *Romsktnet* promotes Romani values. This ordeal had many Roma throughout Sweden divide into two parties, those who supported *Romsktnet* and those who opposed it.

Purpose

This study shall examine the motivations and arguments of the parties mentioned above, those who were in favor of *Romsktnet* and those who opposed it. As will be shown, not all supporters of *Romsktnet* supported it for the same reason, yet they shaped and formed into a group that sought to maintain *Romsktnet*, because its existence satisfied various wants and needs of its membership. The opposition on the other hand was made up of the *krismen* at the *kris* that sought to shutdown *Romsktnet* and some members from *Romsktnet* that perceived it to be a threat to Romani customs and traditions. The *kris* is an authority that can decide who, when, where, why and how Romani customs have been broken. The mere idea of them seeking to shutdown *Romsktnet* for being detrimental to Romani values is enough of reason for some to recognize it as an offence. Both parties motivated their actions to attain two diverse results according to the same social order, namely Romani values. How did the two parties both claim that their two different desired outcomes would be beneficial to Romani values?

A study that seeks to research, present and analyze how two opposing parties use the same fundamental arguments for their cause can be approached in numerous ways. As an example, political parties can both agree on a problem but not on the methods to solve it. In other cases, religious groups can agree that a scriptural text authentically represents their belief, but its interpretation can place these groups in disagreement with one another.

In the same manner, both those who opposed and supported *Romsktnet* recognized and respected Romani values but interpreted and understood *Romsktnet* to produce different results. Both factions agreed on what is damaging to Romani values as most people in European society would agree that the sexual abuse of children in the Catholic Church is wrong, however not all Europeans would agree that it is the church which is the instrument that gives opportunity for the sexual abuse of children. Without question, many people would certainly point out the good work of the Catholic Church, while others may reflect more upon the historic atrocities that the Catholic Church is responsible. *Romsktnet*, in the same fashion has divided the Romani community into two factions, with one seeing it as a resource to Romani values while the other has seen it as being detrimental.

The example provided above of the Catholic Church can be one of many for the sake of comparing how *Romsktnet* divided a Romani community in two. Generally, people who have little to gain from the Catholic Church will more than likely be less loyal to it than those who do. Thus this study shall present the various interests that shaped and formed into one faction that was loyal to *Romsktnet* or and one that desired its extinction.

Analytical Assistance

Philosopher, Michel Foucault's (1977) study on how discipline and punishment were used on prisoners plays a vital role in analyzing how the Romani community in this study was disciplined into conforming to Romani values and *kris* decisions. Foucault points out that a true politician binds his slaves through the chains of his ideas and not iron ones; hence the power to control slaves through an idea is a power (1977: 101-103). However, as Foucault points out, where there is power, there is resistance (Ibid).

Romani values are a system of ideas that controls and brings order to the way in which the Romani community of this study engages in everyday practices. This study does not examine how members of the community resist this system but rather how resistance is carried out in this system and by using it. To this purpose, Michel Foucault's (1990a) *The History of Sexuality*, is used less for its analysis on sexuality and more so for its discussions on power and resistance. The different opinions and interests that divided the community into supporters or adversaries of *Romsktnet* was a display of power and authority and resistance to it.

It is vital to point out that discipline is not carried out merely by punishment alone; rewards, compensation and benefit are all means with which an authority can discipline

others. Sociologist Pierre Bourdieu explains that *symbolic capital* provides resources to a person on the basis of honor, prestige or recognition (1977: 184). A group reinforces the practice of customs by making them available for observation to other members to learn and repeat them (Bourdieu 1977: 176). The honor that is placed in practicing Romani values can bring honor unto a Romani person, giving him/her the possibility to gain status in the community that provides prestige and recognition. Bourdieu's symbolic capital will assist in analyzing the significance that Romani values had for *Romsktnet* members and its supporters, as well as the *kris* and those that supported the suggestion to shut it down.

Views and opinions on what Romani values are change over time as views on sexuality changes over time. Political scientist, Iver B. Neumann (2003) is of particular assistance to this with his discussion on how ideas, concepts and their meaning change over time. Neumann points out that Foucault acknowledges that had he known about the work carried out on critical theory by the *Frankfurt School*, he would have saved himself of the many detours and mistakes he had made in his own work (2003: 25). The *Frankfurt School's* approach of critical theory analyzed the changes that comes to society as a whole, rather than looking at it and understanding or explaining it as something that is static (Ibid). Neumann's discussion on how discourse and how words and things change meaning over time provide this study with a valuable tool for analyzing how opinions differ from informant to informant dependent on the generation they belong to.

Two institutions exercised authority and discipline over members of the Romani community that this study focuses on. The first of these is the *kris*, which was and is an authority that is to uphold the values of Romani society while the other is *Romsktnet's* administration, which had authority limited to the scope of the website. Both of these institutions took a governmental approach to administering to the needs of the community they served. Sociologist Mitchel Dean's (1999) *Governmentality* assists this study in portraying how *Romsktnet's* administration governed and catered to the needs of its membership. Dean's study presents how modern government establishes its authority by administering to the interests of the people it reigns over through gathering data that can assist it, setting up mechanisms that deal with the needs of its people, and taking measure to secure the well being of its population and its own sovereignty.

Sociologist Michel de Certeau (1984) differentiates between *strategy* and *tactics* by presenting a strategy as places/spaces that are governed and designed by institutions and structures of power, while tactics are the activities with which individuals maneuver and

manipulate a space for themselves within a strategy. De Certeau uses city streets and maps to present strategy as the order that organizes the movement of pedestrians, transportation and other objects on the city streets; whereas tactics are the movements of a pedestrian or form of transportation that need not fully comply with the order of movement organized by an institution or structure of power, in order to take a short cut, for example (1984: 91-97).

De Certeau's concept of strategy and tactics are used for analyzing what tactics were used by *Romsktnet* members, its supporters and its opposition, in confrontation with authority. *Romsktnet* is a place in which certain ideas were implemented by the administration which members did not always comply with; the interests that individuals had on *Romsktnet* altered and changed the way in which *Romsktnet* was organized and governed. However, de Certeau's strategy and tactics is not limited to analyzing how *Romsktnet's* members affected *Romsktnet*, but is primarily used to analyze the tactics that were taken by individuals in the two opposing factions to attain a desired outcome.

One may question why strategy and tactics need to be used when one already has the option of using power and resistance for analysis, but what de Certeau points out about tactics, when he uses a tightrope walker to make his point, is that the tightrope walker takes advantage of the occasion, choosing his/her steps in the moment (1984: 86-87). In other words, what is taught and learned about tight rope walking is valuable but just as important is the tightrope walker's ability to make quick decisions that helps him/her maneuver the steps bringing him/her to safety. Thus the usage for de Certeau's strategy and tactics is to analyze how individuals took advantage of an opportunity in resistance to authority, to attain a self interest and how the field where that maneuver took place was controlled by the rules and regulations of that field.

It is without a question that resistance to authority can be used to analyze the actions of an individual in his/her resistance to an authority; however, this would limit the analysis to resistance alone. De Certeau's concept of strategy and tactics helps in analyzing the actions of an individual in cases where the action may be carried out for a variety reasons. As an example, a person may engage himself/herself in an activity to gain symbolic capital, but then again, some may conduct the act for reasons other to this. Thus de Certeau's concept of strategy and tactics is used primarily to analyze the maneuvering of individuals in a social system. Whether the maneuver is carried out by one person or more is not the focal point here, but rather that strategy and tactics are a good analytical tool to use when it comes to maneuvers in a specific environment that has a set of regulations to control those maneuvers.

The environment of course in itself cannot be neglected as it has rules and representatives with authority to enforce those rules upon individuals operating in that environment (people like policemen, judges, doctors etc. and signs, symbols, directions, etc.). As such, the interplay between the two institutions, *Romsktnet* and the *kris*, and members from this Romani community, are analyzed using strategy and tactics to examine how individuals maneuver in the space of these two institutions, their rules and representatives who enforce those rules.

Data Selection & Method

The empirical data to be gathered for this study came from video interviews, *Romsktnet* website discussions, and an interview with one *krisman* (judge) documented via tape recorder. Some of the discussions from the website are used to exemplify the form of communication that was used by members that had the administration incorporate certain aspects of Romani values into the site. The interests members had in the site, which drew them to it, made them loyal to it, and gave them reason to defend it when there was a rumor that the *kris* wanted to shut it down.

No notes were taken at the actual *kris*, the communication that took place at the *kris* was not recorded in any form, and the only documentation available on the *kris* and what had occurred there rests in the memories of people who were present at the event. The problem with gathering documentation on the *kris* via memory is that the recollection of experiences from the past is dependent on the way we understand the world today (Ricoeur 2004: 40 & 58). As an example, during the *kris* I felt fear, anger, bitterness, sadness, and had someone interviewed me about the *kris* that wanted to shutdown *Romsktnet* then, it is highly likely that those feelings would have affected the way in which I would have responded. At this time, some two years later, I no longer feel those same emotions, and if I was interviewed about the *kris* today, it is certain that my responses would not reflect the same feelings. However, because the objective is not to present what was said and done at the *kris* but to present how two oppositions use Romani values as a means to secure to different outcomes, the memories and the discussions that followed the *kris* exemplify the kind of rhetoric that was used by the opposing factions. It is discussions like these that were documented via video camera and have been used in this study.

Group interviews were carried out in order to capture the interactive discussions. Group interviews can have their ups and downs. Often in group interviews people tend to speak over

each other. This is why a video camera used as recording device instead of a tape recorder, so that distinctions between speakers would be easier to follow visually (Davies 2008: 128).

The camera is limited when compared to what a human can capture in the same position (Davies 2008: 133). After all, I, as the ethnographer not only hear and see what the camera does, but I also smell, touch and feel what it cannot. The camera gave freedom of movement to interject in the discussions and record to notepad what the camera was not able to pick up as a means to compensate for what the camera could not document.

The interviews were carried out with one group three months after the *kris* and another one was carried with a different group of people six months after the *kris*. The time that elapsed between the interviews and why interviews were not carried closer to the time of the *kris* against *Romsktnet*, was due to planning, organizing, arranging questions, setting up dates for the interviews, and finding suitable locations for the interviews.

The first group video interview consisted of five male participants all ranging between the ages of thirty to forty years of age. This group video interview was not intentionally segregated but did become it as the group video demanded that the interview consist of people who supported and opposed *Romsktnet* and were willing to participate in the interview at the time. The second group video interview took place some six months after the *kris* and consisted of five female participants and two male participants. All of the participants in this interview ranged between the ages of thirty to forty years except for one woman who was closer to the age of sixty. Both of these group video interviews were documented so they could be used later for a study such as this one. Although these interviews took place long before this study and its purpose was undertaken, the purpose for the interviews and the questions they sought to answer were relatively the same. The initial objective of the interviews was to gather the opinions people had for either choosing to support or oppose *Romsktnet*. Questions that were posed to informants in the interviews sought responses that would portray an opinion as to what they thought was either good or bad with *Romsktnet* and why they had such an opinion. What was illuminated in the interviews was that not all individuals supported either one or the other faction for the same reason, but yet chose to join one faction over another because that faction's end goal was inclusive of those various reasons. Hence the video group interviews provide the empirical background material that is relevant to the purpose of this study.

The various roles that I have as a Romani activist consist of being researcher, translator, instructor, material developer, poet and project and event organizer often leads me to

documenting various events that are used for different purposes. The two video group interviews presented above are such an example where informants have been notified that the documentation can be used for a variety of purposes, to which they agreed prior to being interviewed.

The third and final element is an interview with one of the *krismen* that supported *Romsktnet*, which was documented via Dictaphone. This interview was carried out nearly two years after the *kris* and reflects the impact *Romsktnet*'s history has had on the Romani community in Sweden to date. Other *krismen* (judges) were asked to participate in this study as informants but only one was willing and able to provide the study with an interview. This final interview with the *krisman* took place some two years later after the *kris* and was specifically carried out to fill a gap that this study required, which was to show that not all *krismen* opposed *Romsktnet*.

Ethics

All the interviews were carried out in Romani, while discussions on *Romsktnet* were carried out in English, Romani, and Swedish. Interviews were translated directly into English from the recordings, and then later, the documentation was gone through several times and was compared to notepad observations, so that the essence of what was said in the interviews could be properly translated. Once this was done, the translated interviews that appeared to be questionable were sent to informants for screening in order not to misrepresent their contributions.

Commonly, ethnologists change the names of informants to conceal their identity in situations where there can be repercussions as result of their identities being known. Most of my informants did not believe that anonymity would actually conceal their identity. However, even when informants decline anonymity the researcher should apply it regardless as there may be unforeseen implications that the informant shall face if his/her identity is revealed (Davies 2008: 61). One cannot guarantee that an informant will not be recognized if he/she is given anonymity. What is for certain with giving anonymity to informants is that no one, except the researcher, can say with certainty that they know the identity of an informant that is represented in the study.⁴ Nevertheless, because I am aware that informants can face

⁴ Names of participants in this study are fictitious and fictitious names are used for them under references. The purpose with this is to provide background information on the informants and the interview (ages, gender, how interviews were recorded, when and for how long).

repercussions pursuant to my study, I also check with informants prior to using their interviews in circumstances that more than likely can provoke repercussions.

The researcher should be able to consider if the informants contribution can be altered so that he will not be recognized, or use another means to present the same circumstance and remove the informant's contribution from the text, or can use it and risk alienating others like the informant from researchers, should that person be in a position to make this known to others belonging in his/her group. The researcher needs to consider the circumstance and the condition of a situation and not simply treat all fields in the same way.

Researchers are distrusted in various communities, and in many cases for not regarding the repercussions an informant can face such as being recognized for having aids, hatred towards someone, sexual fantasies, and many others. Kaijser and Öhlander discuss how researchers have faced skepticism in the field, because there have been instances where researchers have earned a reputation for distrust (1999: 34). Numerous researchers and journalists have pointed out that Romani people are reluctant to answering questions from researchers and journalists because of past negative experiences (Rodrigues & Matelski 2004). Researchers have a social responsibility to avoid causing harm to society (Resnik 1998: 63). On the other hand, consequences that do bring harm to informants and society at large due to the work of a researcher should not be held accountable if such an outcome is unanticipated by the researcher. However, in cases where the researcher is aware of the consequences, the researcher then needs to consider if analysis, in the name of science, outweighs the harm that can be caused to an individual and the alienation of possible future informants from the same group.

To demonstrate an example, one informant had implied that he would prefer that I not use an interview that he participated in for this study. He was critical to the *kris* for wanting to shutdown *Romsktnet*, and did so publicly. His critique was particularly directed at one *krisman*, who has passed on as this study was under construction. Because the death is so close to this study's scheduled public availability, he felt that others would accuse him of being disrespectful should he permit his interview to go public. Had I not given him the option to withdraw his testimony, it would be I, the researcher that would have been deemed as being disrespectful.

Members on *Romsktnet* have the choice of using their true identity on *Romsktnet* or can use a fabricated one. In cases where members have chosen to use fictitious identities, these members should be treated no differently from in person interview situations, as the fictitious

identities are real people expressing comments stemming from who they are (Davies 2008: 158). Another key issue here is that some who use fictitious identities share their true identity with others on *Romsktnet*. Because their discussions are available on *Romsktnet*, under that fabricated name, this makes it the more so difficult to give anonymity to *Romsktnet* members.

The solution to this dilemma rests in the fact that the administration records all discussions prior to their removal and files them into the administration's group. Certain discussions that get out of hand are to be deleted so that members do not complain about improper language in such discussions being available to young members. It is these files that are accessible through the administration's group that are largely used for this study. The discussions on *Romsktnet* were often in Romani, and although these texts have been translated into English, they can still be recognized by some back to the original source. For this reason, this study has used files that have been removed from the main part of the website that is accessible to all members, but were saved in the administration's group and are not accessible to all members, only administrators. Other discussions and comments have also been used that are accessible not only to the administrators but all members on *Romsktnet*. These discussions have been used in this study because members' comments in them cannot as easily be tracked back to the original source.

Self Reflexivity

Self reflexivity includes the studying of ourselves in relation to others in our studies (Davies 2008: 13). Too much inclusion of one's self can say more about the author than the subject of study (Davies 2008: 17). However, a researcher should take into account his/her own involvement and the affects he/she on the field that is being studied (Davies 2008: 22).

Commonly, when I write studies that are on the Romani subject, I point out that when a researcher who is researching Romani society has a Romani background, this background does not make the researcher an authority. The circumstances differ in this study. I was born and raised to understand the rules and regulations in relation to Romani values. I am a Romani activist who has worked with numerous issues such as the Romani language, gender equality, housing concerns, employment and education for more than 20 years. I have developed and created the website known as *Romsktnet*. I have studied linguistics, ethnology, religions, and anthropology at the university level. It is the combination of these experiences that has assisted me in knowing how to approach informants and create a database of informants. It is not my Romani background that makes me an authority on this particular Romani subject but

the experiences that I have which few other Roma may share. It is vital also to point out that while I am a Romani researcher, I am also many other things at the same time (Davies 2008: 330).

The role that I have as a researcher in the field of this study gives me an advantage as far as access and knowledge about this field is concerned because I belong to the field that is being researched. At the same time however, because it is I who created *Romsktnet* and became its defender, as its creator, in the *kris* that was brought against it, this role affects my research of that field. My role as an activist, a researcher, *Romsktnet*'s creator, and a member of the Romani community that this study is on, cannot be dissociated from the study. I distance myself from the study not by removing the various roles I have played in this history but by "minding my own steps". As Ricoeur points out, self reflexivity is about paying attention to the affects the researcher has on the field he/she studies (2004: 38-39). Thus I must be attentive to the impacts I have had in interview situations and discussions because of the various roles I have had in those situations. The way in which I distance myself is by treating my own testimony in discussions and interviews as I would treat the testimony of other informants by analyzing it within the context of a discussion with others.

It is with certainty that those who opposed *Romsktnet* in the interviews took a more active role in presenting their views than those who supported because of my presence. Had I been replaced by another researcher who had no affiliation to *Romsktnet*, supporters of *Romsktnet* would have needed to "say" more about *Romsktnet* than they had with me as the researcher and its creator. It is this factor that I had to carefully consider when gathering the documentation provided in this study and its presentation.

Related Research

There are numerous Swedish ethnological studies that discuss codes of honor and dishonor among immigrant groups in Sweden, such as those of Minganti (2007), Farahani (2007), and Hosseini (1993), just to name a few. However, these studies focus on these codes of honor and dishonor in relation to the Swedish majority society to a large extent, and this study concentrates on an internal conflict that arises within the same ethnic group. A more useful and even inspirational Swedish ethnological study to this one is Åke Daun's (1969) *Upp till kamp i Båtskärsnas*.

Daun's study was about the history that brought a community together to protest the relinquishment of the town's sawmill, which was the town's major source of employment. His

study portrays how sawmill town's people invested interests in the area so much that they were reluctant to move from the area. Daun beautifully presents how the town was politically divided into communists and social democrats historically and how the threat of losing this sawmill brought these different political parties and town's people together in the struggle to maintain the life of the sawmill in their town.

This study presents how the Romani community was divided into two parties because of different interests. Daun's study is inspirational to the objective of this study because in it, he presents why people refused to move and made such uproar about this sawmill shutting down. It is these interests in Daun's study that brought people together that will be paralleled and compared in the final chapter of this dissertation to the interests of the Romani community in relation to *Romsktnet*.

It is also important to point out that there are several studies on Romani law; however, they are limited in their usage for this study for many reasons. Claude Cahn explains in an article on the European Roma Rights Centre's website that a *kris* decision cannot be overturned and that women traditionally were not judges in the *kris* but that this has changed more recently in America.⁵ The problem with this claim is that Romani women played roles as *kriswomen*⁶ more so in the past than today and the *kris* system, among most Romani groups, has the possibility for appeal, which places *krismen* in the position to carry out a *kris* with care so that their decision will not be overturned bringing dishonor upon them. So why does Mr. Cahn make such a claim if it is not true? It is because earlier texts have generalized practices within Romani society based on the practices of a few Romani groups that were believed to be representative for all of Romani society.

Certain texts have been canonized via being referenced and cited repeatedly (Neumann 2003: 49). Among earlier studies on Romani law were those of Weyrauch (2001), Sutherland (1986), and Gropper (1975). When these studies discuss the *Vlax* Romani *kris* system and Romani laws, their point of reference are the North American *Kelderasha* and *Mechvaja* groups. In North America, there live several other Romani groups that do not practice the *kris* in the same way, and for the most part, many of the Romani groups in Europe and other parts of the world do not practice the *kris* in the same way. I quote Thomas Acton, a professor in

⁵ <http://www.errc.org/cikk.php?cikk=644>

⁶ A distinction is made between *krismen* and *kriswomen* as these distinctions are made within the Romani language.

Romani Studies, from an email exchange on this issue (2010-3-18) to contextualize the problem with these references even further:

The N. American literature tends to represent N. American Rom as conservative in practice, and therefore, a good basis for generalizing about all Roma. My argument, right back in 1978, was that American Roma may have exaggerated the strictness of some prohibitions on women to deal with a crisis in gender relations that was fundamentally economic.

The fore mentioned studies are used as a point of reference in relation to some of the Romani traditions that are known to be practiced by the Romani community that this study focuses on. It is as important to explain in what way the fore mentioned studies on Romani customs and law are not used and why, so that unnecessary criticism may be avoided as to why so little information has been applied from some of this literature.

Study's Outline

The chapter entitled *The Rise*, presents how criticism from *Romsktnet's* members led the administration to incorporate Romani values, which in turn led to the formation of a surveillance team that reported abuse back to the administration. *The Rise* examines how the administration governed *Romsktnet* with a liberal approach in order to meet its aim of disseminating information on Romani history, events, culture, and language and acquire feedback from the membership on that information. *The Rise* provides an account on the success and organization of *Romsktnet*.

The Fall presents, via interviews discussing this issue, how the *kris* portrayed *Romsktnet* to be a threat to Romani values, as grounds to shut it down. This chapter demonstrates how supporters of *Romsktnet* became condoners of it, through interviews with informants that present *Romsktnet's* character as a threat to Romani values.

The Resurrection examines the discussions on *Romsktnet* that present the interests of members who remained loyal to it. This chapter concludes with an interview that was conducted with one *krisman*, to show how some *krismen* that supported *Romsktnet* identified it as something that can promote and preserve Romani values, as opposed to others who condoned it.

The final chapter entitled *Discussion*, summarizes some of the points that were presented in the fore going chapters to analyze how one party understood *Romsktnet* to be a threat to Romani values, while another seen it as an instrument to promote and preserve Romani values. The analysis examines how interests play a role in how various individuals had various perceptions of *Romsktnet*. The *kris* and Romani values are discussed for the authority that they have. However, the *kris* and Romani values were understood differently by one age group when compared to another. In essence, the final chapter analyzes how perception and meaning for the same thing differs from person to person dependent on interest, condition, experience and time.

The Rise

In 1971, the first World Romani World Congress was held in London, England, where Roma came to from various nations and adopted a Romani flag and anthem as a symbolic gesture for the reunification of the Romani people (Sigona & Trehan 2009: 98). The International Romani Union (hereafter: IRU) was created at the 2nd World Romani Congress in 1978, which acted as the international representative Romani body that adopted qualities that are associated to nationhood. Among those qualities, the wellbeing of the Romani people, dissemination of information to its own population about Romani history and society and the standardization of the Romani language were of great relevance.

At the 4th World Romani Congress, in 1990, the International Romani Union accepted and adopted a system for writing in a standardized Romani (Matras 1999). The accepted standard however has not been put to practice by the majority of the Romani population (see Hancock 1995, Matras 1999 & Lee 2005). Disseminating a standard and Romani history to its people proved to be a difficult task. Romani linguist Ian Hancock is cited to demonstrate the difficulties that are faced with disseminating information to the Romani people “Although the Indian origin of the Romani people is beyond dispute, not only on the basis of linguistic but also of cultural and serological evidence, this remains largely the concern of the academic”.⁷ From personal experience of working at a Romani cultural center and visiting other Romani cultural centers around Europe, I know that Roma rarely attend seminars, and exhibitions, but when it came to music and dance, the centers did not have enough space for all the Romani visitors. The Roma that have shown up to seminars on Romani history and exhibitions were either already activists or considered becoming activists. However, when one combined the two and the speaker holding the seminar was connected to the community, and the audience was able to relate to what was being said culturally, the events would prove to be prosperous.

The ning.com platform gave the opportunity to *Romsktnet* to do just that, to combine the two, entertainment and dissemination of knowledge. The biggest difficulty the International Romani Union faced was that it had no means by which to distribute information to the Romani population. *Romsktnet*'s intention was to be the place where Roma could gather to acquire knowledge on history, language, education, housing, health, events, and could even discuss these issues. Discussion in turn gave the administration input with which to make the

⁷ http://www.radoc.net/radoc.php?doc=art_d_identity&lang=en&articles=true

website function better. Because members could share, upload and download Romani music, videos and photos on the site, it drew many Romani members to it.

The site maintained its authority by being able to provide these services, and banishment was used should a member not comply with the rules of the site. The rules for using *Romsktnet* were simple, no profanity (this meant no foul language) language was permitted and no content was to be uploaded by members that were deemed inappropriate, such as material of a sexual nature.

The administration had a group where banishment would be discussed. The administration also discussed in the group functions, rules and regulations. Analytics from the website showed how often each member visited what part of the site so the administration would know what features interested members the most and would be most concentrated on for upgrading. The administration agreed that it had a duty to screen contributions and not permit any form of profanity on the site, but at the same time it also used a disclaimer that *Romsktnet* was not to be held accountable for anything that a member(s) may suffer from as a result of being on the website, which in other words simply meant that people would join the site at their own risk.

A few months after *Romsktnet's* launching, others began using the ning.com platform to develop their own websites and began copycatting *Romsktnet* and making duplicates of it. *Romsktnet.ning.com* as an example had features similar to that of *Romsktnet*, but the profanities were not controlled. In fact, *ginosnet.ning.com* stated openly that profanity was permitted and that there were no rules. *Romsktnet's* administration believed that had it not been for the members' discussions accusing the administration of not taking on enough responsibility in controlling the website, the administration probably would not have adopted new rules and regulations more in tune with Romani customs. And in turn *Romsktnet's* membership would not have had the comfort and security had the administration not added these new rules and then it would have been likely that members simply would have left it.⁸

The IRU had in its members that practiced and held in high regard Romani values, but its aims and goals did not include the administration of Romani values because an institution already existed in Romani society that had this responsibility, namely the *kris*. *Romsktnet*, like the IRU shared the same goals except that it could easier spread these goals because of technology.

⁸ This point is in reference to a discussion the administration had in the Administration's group.

What this section shall concentrate on is the discussions that caused the administration to integrate some Romani customs into the rules and regulations of the website which has also led to the expansion of the website's organization. The administration applied originally, only some of the customs into the rules of the website by not permitting members to accuse one another of being unclean. The concept of *magaripe* (unclean) considers all body parts below the waist as being unclean while all parts above it as clean. Thus one should not for example engage in oral sex because this would mix the two and lead to contamination to the upper half of the body from a part that is in a lower half of a body. Different Romani groups interpret acts of being clean and unclean in different ways, this is why the administration did not address what is clean or unclean and left such a matter to be decided by the *kris* (the institution that normally addresses such a concern). The administration did not permit members to accuse one another of unclean acts, and in that manner included this aspect of Romani values. An accusation of carrying out unclean acts against anyone can bring dishonor upon the accused if the accusation is believable, and can be addressed by the *kris* for slander against a person's good name. Thus the administration concerned itself with restricting accusations not judging their merit to be true or not.

Following the discussions that changed the position of the administration of taking no responsibility for what was happening on the website to nearly full responsibility, are the discussions on how members requested to become administrators, what may have motivated them to take on such responsibility voluntarily, and why the administrators did not add more administrators to the three already existing.

The Administration is Challenged

Approximately 30 days after *Romsktnet* was started, a discussion was started entitled "O Romanipe hasajvel"⁹ (The Romani culture is at a loss). The discussion was started by a member called Gabe, who felt that the administration needed to remove another member of *Romsktnet* that Gabe accused of incest. No *kris* ever took place in relation to the accusation, and the administration stated that because the member did not break any of *Romsktnet's* regulations, he would not be banned from the site. The discussion in itself did not lead the administration to incorporate Romani values into the website but what it had done was start a

⁹ <http://romsktnet.ning.com/group/administration>

trend that had other members denouncing the administration for its lack of preventing activities on the website that were detrimental to Romani values.

Gabe: Dear brothers and sisters, if we are not to carry the values of our elders, will our children then carry them? We have *mageripe* (see appendix for definition) among us! The administration, our respected brothers and sisters do not seem to care.

Admin Gregor: Dear brother, why do you not speak clearly, who and what you are talking about...it does not matter for we know. There was no *kris*, there was no judgment, and so shall we play the part of the *kris*? This is a website, and this site has rules that were not broken, so we do not see any reason to ban anyone. Besides, if you do not like someone, do not speak with him.

Bano: Fuck you admin! Fuck your dead, and fuck all you stand for.

Admin Gregor: Now you have broken the rules, you should apologize to the membership at once for your language. You forget we have elders here, women, and children. He has not broken any of our rules but you have.

Bano: You are as unclean as he is. *Kris* or no *kris* he is unclean.

Janina: I think you are missing the point Bano, Gregor is not going to play judge, let the *kris* deal with this man if he has done wrong.

Admin Gregor: What is worse is that the accusation is being made without certainty, which in turn the accused can bring a *kris* against others for damaging his reputation.

Gabe: I am going to close this discussion. Things are getting out of hand.

Admin Gregor: Before you do, let me ban Bano, we cannot have the likes of him among us.

According to Dean, critique is a method that liberalism uses to set the limitations of government (1999: 51). Gabe's and Bano's criticism of the administration was not so much to empower the administration as judges to determine what is unclean and unclean, but to limit the administration from giving the same rights to members they deemed to be unclean as they had as members. The problem with Gabe's and Bano's critique is that if they had their way, another member's rights would have been infringed upon. By pointing out that it is Bano who has broken website rules and not the accused of *mageripe*, and that issues around *mageripe* should be in the realm of the *kris*, I am stating in the discussion as Admin Gregor that the site does not take on the responsibility of investigating accusations of *mageripe*.

Dean explains that the state must be recognized for its own rights independent of its individual citizens (Dean 1999: 104). The administration used rules that only they could change and by doing this they exercised the rights that are independent of the membership. The rules on *Romsktnet* could only be altered by its administration. Texts that others can only receive and can leave no mark on are instruments of power (de Certeau 1984: 169). The rules were used as a method to present the administration as doing the right thing in not banishing the accused. This is why Gabe chose to shutdown the discussion as Bano's profanity was shown to be counterproductive to Romani values and that the rules did serve Romani values. The tactic used by Gabe to shame administrators backfired on him because it was made evident that the administration could not take the existing role of the *kris* and that the authority of *Romsktnet* was limited to this electronic territory. This response presented the administration as upholding of Romani values and respectful to the *kris*. Gabe certainly did not intend on replacing the *kris* with the administration, but Janina and an administrator made it appear so.

De Certeau explains that institutionalism informs the public in order to give form to social practices it wishes to project (1984: 166). The administration made a distinction between the *kris* and *Romsktnet*, using rules that could not be altered by members without consent from the administration. And with this the administration reasserted its authority, and made it evident to members what was acceptable to *Romsktnet* and what was not.

Freedom of Speech

Romsktnet's membership not only feared banishment for using profanity on the site, but also feared banishment for criticizing the administration. Examples have been made in the past of members who abused the website. Members who were banned were given opportunity to contact the administration by telephone so that their membership could be reinstated.

Whenever a member was banned, no new member was to be approved until the administration was contacted by the person that was banned. This was done so that the banned member would not come in again as a new member under a different profile name¹⁰. In nearly all cases, banned members contacted the administration after banishment. Most members were unaware of how much control the administration had over the members. Many did not understand what an IP address was, some assumed that with it they could be tracked down,

¹⁰ Members could choose to use an alias as their user name (profile name) or their identity, making it difficult for administrators to know if a banned member was joining under a new alias or not.

and reported to the authorities. For this reason, most members restrained from criticizing the administration. So what was it that had given members the courage to criticize the administration? The discussion below, “Skiripe-Ramope-Drabbaripe Romanes”¹¹ (Writing in Romani), shows how members refrained from criticizing my recommendations for writing in Romani, two days before the discussion “O Romanipe hasajvel” was started. Then the next day, the same members began to show critique towards my recommendations when one of the other administrators began questioning the recommendations. And finally, just minutes after the member Bano began verbally attacking the administration, these same members became far more critical.

Two days prior to the start of the discussion “ORomanipe hasajvel”.

Admin Gregor: I have noticed that some of you are writing in Romani using either a Swedish or Polish grammar. And that at times there are misunderstandings as a result of this. This is why I will provide a few examples of how you can write Romani in spellings where there is more uncertainty than others. Words like xav xabe (I eat food) should use an X not an H, dzh or zh in words like zhav (I go), u as in both (many), o as in vov (him), dj as in djesh (day), sh in shero (head) and ch in chang (knee).

Illuminati: Ok, but how shall I know when to use X, is it not easier to use H for this sound?

Admin Gregor: This is a problem, the word xas means we eat and the word has means cough. So when you say words that you are uncertain of like hacharav (I understand) and xandro (sword), place your hand on your neck and you will notice a bigger vibration in your throat for X and far less for H.

Tanek: I had no idea that there was an H in front of acharav?

Admin Gregor: Yes, place your hand over your mouth when you say ambrol (pear) then place your hand over your mouth when you say hacharav, and you will see that a breath touches your hand more so when you say hacharav as opposed to ambrol.

Illuminati: Cool!

One day prior to the start of the discussion “O Romanipe hasajvel”.

Admin: It seems to make more sense to me that we write gazje instead of gazhe. Where does this H come from, I don't hear it when I say it?

Roban: Hi Admin, the H is not a sound here, but changes the sounds to letters like t, s, c, z, p, and b when it follows them. You do not hear the H in chair, or the H in Ship, so it is the same with ZH.

Illuminati: I like Admin's example, it makes more sense to me.

Admin Gregor: Well, Admin has made a suggestion, and you can use it if you want, but Admin needs to know the grammar rules. If you are going to use SH in shov (six) then you should use ZH in zhav (I go). You cannot choose to follow one rule but not another. If we do that, the entire idea then will be pointless.

Tanek: It's easier to write as we choose.

Roban: It is, but how shall we then develop teaching materials, books, lexicons, without have some rules for the language.

Moments after Bano uses profanity in the discussion “O Romanipe hasajvel”.

Illuminati: and one more thing, the rule of law is not written in gypsy language.

And we are doing fine with the foreign languages that we know and use in our everyday lives. What makes you think that you or anyone else will ever get all gypsies to write in one same language, with all the different dialects we have?

you people will never ever, ever write or publish a gypsy dictionary, so start writing one if you think it's possible. This is baloney, what do you know about the language, you can hardly speak it, you are a gazho (non-Romani male).

¹¹ <http://romsktnet.ning.com/forum/topics/1562732:Topic:798>

Admin Gregor: Why do you need to make all these offenses, speak your mind you don't need to offend anyone.

Illuminati: I don't like this idea of publishing lexicons, setting up rules, telling us how to write.

Admin Gregor: Well make your point as to why. What you think we will not consider it? We start these discussions to get feedback, not just to write for writing's sake.

Tanek: In that case, it is not for you to consider but for the community to consider.

Admin Gregor: I apologize, I did not mean that we make decisions on behalf of the community, just that we together, as a community discuss these things, and people will do as they will choose to do.

One can argue that it is mere speculation to say that the two discussions affected one another; however, no other discussions had as many members viewing them as had these two throughout the history of *Romsktnet*. In other words, because the discussions permitted members to criticize the administration other members began understanding that they may freely express themselves without being banished by the administration as long as they abstained from using profanity. One can see from the discussion on language how Tanek and Luminati progressed to being more and more openly critical.

Foucault explains that exercise of power is not merely to show what power the authority has but the powerlessness of the individual condemned of a crime (1977: 29). Members were rendered powerless when banished; they could not make known their voices heard once they were banished. However this was not the intention with *Romsktnet*. *Romsktnet* sought to govern its membership based on the interests of its membership. It was necessary to make it known that criticism is welcome because it is valuable to the administration's work in catering to the needs of the members. One can see how Tanek is already expressing an opinion rather than posing a question once the two administrators begin to show publicly that they do not always agree.

Tanek is an example of how other members began to speak their minds more openly but with self control. Bano was banished for his use of profanity but Gabe was not for his critique.

The administration of *Romsktnet* sought to present itself as a liberal government that minimized its intervention not to put too much control on its member (Dean 1999: 164). However, even liberal government intervenes so it can minimize risks that can bring disorder and misconduct onto the populace (Dean 1999: 167). Thus banishment was used as a means for members to discipline the way in which they participated on *Romsktnet*.

The Incorporation of Romani Values

In days that followed the language discussion, a young woman uploaded a photo of herself on her personal page, and soon after two other members began taunting her. The administration

was contacted by her and the administration asked these two members to leave her alone. Both members stated that they would and apologized, but it did not take long for other members to begin taunting her. One female member was following taunts like this one, copied them, pasted them on the administration's page and left the following message.

Donna: Mr. Admin, this is horrible, you are just like Tom. Why do you do nothing? Tom is not one of us, and you are. We see you, touch you, know you, how can you let those go on.

Gregor: But Donna, what shall I do?

Donna: We know each other for a long, long time, how can you allow members to comment on the picture of a girl hugging her dog that she sleeps with her dog. This would mean nothing on a non-Romani website, but here, amongst us, we cannot permit this sort of thing. It will bring death to WHO and WHAT we are. ¹²

Because the terms and conditions placed by my.space.com that takes no responsibility for the actions of its membership resembled the same position taken by the administration, Donna's reference to Tom, sarcastically compared the administration to Tom Andersson, co-creator of my.space.com.¹³ Donna's point on how other members accused a girl in a photo with her dog of sleeping with her dog has a double meaning. The accusation can infer that she is having sexual relations with her dog, or that she is actually sleeping in the same bed with her dog.

Dogs are considered unclean animals according to Romani tradition. Dogs are to sleep separately from humans and they are not to use the same plates that humans do, regardless of how well the plates are cleaned (Weyrauch 2001: 203). Dogs place their faces in places that humans can choose not to. Members making these accusations can be but joking however other members may assume them to know that the young woman actually does this and hence she can be regarded as contaminated and unclean.

Donna's critique of the administration resembled that of so many others. The administration determined that it should not take on responsibilities of the *kris* but also realized that it could not permit members to accuse other members of not upholding Romani values without a fair hearing. As Donna points out, the accusations would have little meaning on non-Romani sites, but here, the implications from these accusations could have a

¹² <http://romsktnet.ning.com/group/administration>

¹³ <http://www.myspace.com/index.cfm?fuseaction=misc.terms>

devastating effect on an individual. Because *Romsktnet* seeks to combat prejudice it also needed to police members so that they would not make accusations against others prior to having their case heard by a *kris*.

This prompted the administration to set new rules and regulations that had no tolerance for slanders that could bring dishonor upon any Romani person, alongside the older regulations. In order for people to still carry on such jests without offending other members, the administration recommended to a few members that they start a “enter at your own risk group”, where members who joined the group, would be aware that consequences can be faced. Dona and members like herself were asked to join a surveillance team that would report any misconduct to the administration, but had no power to ban members or remove any content from the site. Often members of the surveillance team lacked technical knowledge needed to ban members and remove content from the website. As de Certeau points out competence is transmuted into social authority, and as most members lacked the needed technical knowledge to administrate, members in the surveillance team could not be granted the authority (1984: 8).

The surveillance team was made up members that created profile with names such as Enforcer, Terminator, Admin Bad, Cyber Cop and Baby Admin. They loaded up pictures of fictitious characters in police and soldier uniforms, and super heroes. But not all that carried out surveillance on *Romsktnet* created profiles under which they did the surveillance. Rather, most of them carried out this task out in silence. As Foucault notes, a good form of surveillance is the one that makes all things visible onto it but remains invisible to all others (1977: 214). In other words, the visible part of the team served the purpose of making their presence known, causing members to discipline themselves whenever the surveillance team was present. The invisible surveillance team could have been online at anytime. The invisible team reported misconduct to the administration and with that information the administration contacted members accused of the misconduct. The idea with having the invisible surveillance team was to put members in the position of disciplining and governing themselves according to the rules of *Romsktnet* as the gaze of big brother could be on them at anytime.

Dean explains that governmental reform comes with cultural changes (1999: 162). The added security to *Romsktnet* came from demands made by members. However, not all demands were incorporated into *Romsktnet*. Dean elaborates that practices of a government can transform dependent on what that government deems to be a good way in which to administer, and this in turn can then transform the very population it governs (Dean 1999: 33).

In fact, one can say it has, the demand was satisfied so that members can feel safe against accusations that could bring dishonor upon them, but at the same time, the surveillance now provided the administration with knowledge to better police the website that the administration did not have before. A government can use data collected from its population in order to change the ways in which it administers services, thus the administration benefitted from the surveillance of the website just as much as the membership did (Dean 1999: 36).

Preferring *Romsktnet* to other Romani Social Networks

The effect from the surveillance and the added rules¹⁴ that did not permit members to accuse and slander one another of being unclean or dishonorable to Romani culture to the website, brought peace and stability to the site for several months, and the site began to grow in its membership. During this time, numerous sites began duplicating *Romsktnet*, one of which even called itself *Romsknet*, yet still, member growth was steady and *Romsktnet's* membership remained loyal to it. Comments from the discussion “What makes *Romsktnet* so special”¹⁵ provides a glimpse into why the members remained loyal to *Romsktnet*.

Nadja: I feel safe on *Romsktnet*. I can read, write, look at pictures, and upload pictures, without worrying about snide remarks.

Russel: Both my daughters are on *Romsktnet*, and I am confident that the admins will not allow anything to get through that is inappropriate. Nowhere else on the Internet have I such certainty.

Ruby: If you want to say something stupid, you can go to ginos.ning.com but if you want to know what is happening, maybe find a job, get advice, have fun, without being attacked, or reading trash, then *Romsktnet* is where you want to be.

Richie: *Romsktnet* is more than that...it's our homeland. And thank God for the internet police, they do a great job.

¹⁴ Only one new rule was added that did not permit slanders that could bring dishonor to any Romani person, but this rule was divided into several rules, such as: Any member making slanders with intent, that can bring dishonor upon another Romani person shall be banished. Any member making slanders without intent, that can bring dishonor upon another Romani person shall be warned (dependent of severity) and banished if the act is repeated.

¹⁵ <http://romsktnet.ning.com/group/administration>

According to Dean, modern government aims to enhance the life of its population through norms, whose instrument is law (1999: 102). It uses police to prevent and detect crime breaking that law (Dean 1999: 96). The crimes that were to be detected and prevented on *Romsktnet*, for the most part, were not crimes that brought personal injury upon anyone but rather crimes that brought dishonor. De Certeau points out that it is people's belief that gives life to institutions (1984: 178). Because the members believed that certain things could make them unclean and because it was understood that the administration sees to it that the site and members will not be contaminated by what is considered unclean, for these reasons members preferred *Romsktnet* to other social networks. Most members did not seem to consider that the administration was carrying out its surveillance and applying its discipline for reasons other than to uphold Romani values since all member comments associated the surveillance to the upholding of Romani values. The administration, after all, also discouraged members from loading up photos and videos unrelated to Romani issues, it removed discussions they deemed insignificant, and they banned members for not supplying requested information and for comments promoting sexism, discrimination and racism. The surveillance came into practice because of interests members presented, while the surveillance served an interest valuable to the administration.

The Administration's Popularity

The discussions, videos, music, interactivity and the security, popularized *Romsktnet's* administration. An exchange between two male administrators in the administration's group under the topic heading "We are bigger than the Beatles"¹⁶, reflects the status they had gained via *Romsktnet*.

Admin Gregor: Brother, I was at the Romani school in Gothenburg, and as I walked into the hallway, about 20 girls stood there. As soon as I walked in, they all turned to me and began yelling *ROMSKTNET*.

Admin J: That's nothing, I was in Spain, and I was recognized by a group of Gitanos. Think...and I have heard we are even more popular in Brazil and Russia.

¹⁶ <http://romsktnet.ning.com/group/administration>

Prestige and honor can be accumulated by partially or completely monopolizing on society's symbolic resources in religion, philosophy, art and science (Bourdieu 1977: 187). The administration was made up of people in their 30's, which were well educated, and were very charismatic and practiced the same Romani customs that members did.¹⁷ It is often believed that Romani people who are successful in non-Romani society are distanced from Romani tradition. The website gave opportunity to reveal that this is not the case.

The personality of administrators in combination with *Romsktnet* and their administration of it had turned the title of being an admin into symbolic capital.

Administrators don't Control the Site, the Site Controls the Administrators

The popularity and status one gained by being an Administrator on *Romsktnet*, prompted numerous others to request positions as administrators. However, for administrators it was vital that applicants had patience, and would consult one another before taking any action. Administrators faced scrutiny from members for not approving a picture or video. In such circumstances, the administration even faced threats and personal insults. Before a new administrator could be approved, he/she would need to work in surveillance, so he/she could first get a feel for what kind of problems could come up. Secondly, a candidate for administration was tested by an administrator posing as a member to provoke the candidate. The discussions between a candidate, an administrator posing as a member and the forwarding of these discussions to *Admin Gregor's account*¹⁸ and the discussion that followed between Admin Gregor and the candidate expresses why *Romsktnet's* administration was unsuccessful in having an administration of more than three people.

Admin in disguise (Fwd.): Hi there, can you help me to load up a picture on my page?

Candidate (Frwd.): What is the problem?

Admin in disguise: It's a picture of your mother and I am afraid the site will crash.

Candidate (Frwd): You know you are wasting time, so I will give you a warning, and let you go this time.

¹⁷ Members of the administration have appeared on Swedish television, in newspapers and on radio. Members frequently discussed what members of the administration said in these media appearances and referred to them as being charismatic, successful and that they maintain their Romani identity, and were seen as role models.

¹⁸ <http://romsktnet.ning.com/profiles/message/listInbox>

Admin in disguise (Fwd): Sorry. But why are they making you an admin, you are a moron.

Candidate: Admin Gregor, we should ban these kinds of people, look at what he saying, they need to fear and respect us. We should ban him, make his words public, and show how we deal with this.

Admin Gregor: But if people see this, it could have the opposite effect, and more will do the same. Besides, we have a lot of kids that do this kind of stuff. We need to take this sort of thing sometimes. We need to record this data, find out more about the member. What is the point if we ban him; he comes back under another profile name, and does it again.

Candidate: You know what? I do not agree with you, I think you let people get away with too much. I think you should be replaced.

Admin Gregor: Look, I at times have to remove friends. Do you know how difficult that is? Suppose this guy was your cousin, would you ban him then?

Candidate: You know what? This is way too much hassle. I don't want to be an admin.

A democratic government extends its own behavior onto its population so that it may mimic the same democratic values (Dean 1999: 108). The administration was not to attack members verbally or use profanity in discussions with members regardless of what they may say. This is why administrators tested internet police when they applied for administrative position by playing the role of members, and provoking them.

Dean explains that the modern state assists its population in practicing their freedoms as long as they practice them in the way the state sees fit (1999: 160). The strategy of the institutions forced administrators to distance themselves from other members as representatives of the institution. The administrators of *Romsktnet*, did not represent themselves as administrators but the institution, and by that were its instruments and should not reflect their personal opinions, in cases where they may be forced to discipline a close relative or friend no differently from any other member. De Certeau points out actions such as walking and talking are controlled by the rules of the field in which they are practiced in (1984: 30). The conversation between the applicant and the administrator exemplifies that a criterion is needed to be filled by an administrator that needs to be disciplined in the role of a representative for *Romsktnet* rather than an individual who is on *Romsktnet*. The applicant for administrator that is cited above did not fulfill the criterion of talking/writing in a particular

way with/to members that the field or rather role of an administrator demanded. No applicant was added to the administration because no applicant was found to be able to discipline him or herself into the role of administrator.

The Fall

In September 2008, a Romani wedding had taken place. Rumor had it that over five hundred guests attended the wedding. *Romsktnet*'s administration suspected that *Romsktnet* was to be flooded with photos and videos from the wedding soon after its end. What was even more difficult with screening contributions sent from the wedding was that two of the three administrators were to attend the first EU Roma Summit conference just two days after the wedding. The very first day after the wedding, members already began complaining that their contributions were not available for display. According to *Romstnet*'s statistical database, over two hundred and fifty photos were sent in on that day. The administration held a meeting in the administrative group on *Romsktnet*, and decided to screen no more than fifty contributions per day.

The administration consisted of two men and a woman. The administration was divided into a hierarchy with the creator having complete control over the website, the second in command had the same amount of control over the website as had the creator except that he could not shutdown *Romsktnet*, and the third administrator had limited control to approving or not videos and photos. The hierarchal positions that were divided among the administration were based on technological knowhow they each had. Because two administrators were to be absent from *Romsktnet* during the coming days, the female administrator that was to man the website during those was limited to screening fifty photos a day and was not to screen any other contributions for approval until the return of the other two.

Three days after the wedding only one administrator manned *Romsktnet*, and she had begun to receive complaint after complaint from members who could not understand why their photos were not being approved. The administrator stopped reading complaints and accepting instant messages, and chose to concentrate on screening contributions from the wedding. As a result of this, some photos got through without careful screening. One of these photos displayed one of the wedding tables as barely having any food on it. It was apparent that the picture was taken after guests left and already ate what was placed on the table earlier.

Soon after this photo was approved, comments followed, made up of slanderous remarks about the wedding, accusing the organizer of being cheap, and made profanities against the organizer.

One day after the other two administrators had returned from the EU conference, one of the administrators logged onto the website and found that he had received nearly 250 complaints. As soon as the administrator logged on, *Romsktnet* police that were logged on at the same

time began inviting him to chat, explaining what had happened in the past days while he was gone. *Romsktnet* police also explained that they tried to contact the only administrator that was online during those days but that she had disabled her instant messenger. By the time the returned administrators received word of this, the discussion was shut down and the photo was removed. The administration began questioning *Romsktnet* police and some members if they could recall the profile name of the member who started the discussion and made the negative critique so they could be banished from the website. But no one remembered accurately enough.

In the coming days the administration met and decided to place into the website a costly program that would track IP addresses of members, and had a freezing feature that would freeze members so that all their contributions would remain on the site for screening while they would not be able to leave or affect the site in any way. The freeze function worked very much so like a jail cell, while the administration could investigate accusations made against the frozen member. These functions would have given the administration the power to better control material contributed by its membership, by tracking the IP address of a contributor even after he/she removes the contribution.

Sometime after the incident the community began to speak about it and soon *krismen* began discussing all the possible evils that can arise out of *Romsktnet*. A few months later it was made known that the main organizer of the wedding called for a *kris* to shut down *Romsktnet*. *Romsktnet's* administration met quickly to discuss the issue at hand.

As already mentioned earlier, one of the administrators on *Romsktnet* was a woman. There were some members on *Romsktnet* who questioned the power and authority she had on *Romsktnet* to approve and disapprove contributions to it because they did not believe that a woman should be given such authority.

When contributions came in from the wedding, she was the only administrator which was online when slanderous remarks were made about the wedding. Because there were fears that some may use this at the *kris*, the administration decided that the creator would take full responsibility for *Romsktnet*. The fear that the administration had was that the *kris* could have found her to be the guilty party based on the testimony of eyewitnesses who had contacted her about the slanders which she did not address as she was overwhelmed with other duties in the website. Such a decision could have placed the administration in a position to remove her from her post and allow those who questioned her authority on the grounds of her sexuality to use this as evidence for their own purposes. The administration faced a paradox; it needed to

exclude her participation from the *kris* in order not to permit her exclusion from the administration. The administration believed that if she participated in the *kris*, that not only would they risk facing a decision that would shut down *Romsktnet*, but that she would certainly be found guilty as well. If a *kris* was to be made against the administration, one of them would certainly be found guilty, in addition to the risk of having the website vanish from the Internet. Since the creator was not guilty by his actions (in relation to the slanders made against the wedding organizer) except that he opened the website, then the *kris* had to address the site itself and not him.

It is therefore the purpose of this section to examine video recorded discussions with those who supported the *kris*'s legal arguments; to present how those that at one time supported *Romsktnet* later opposed it, and arguments of those that blamed the incident on the notion that a woman should not hold such a position of authority.

The *Kris* Decision

A space was used for the *kris* that was commonly not used for *krisa* (plural) but rather was used by Roma in Stockholm for parties and other events. The space that commonly was a venue for parties and similar events transformed it into a place that represented the institution known as the *kris*. The room was occupied by no less than 200 Roma, with the *krismen* sitting at the end of the table, with people giving testimony sitting on chairs across from *krismen* and the defense stood throughout the process in close proximity to the *krismen*.

The *krismen*, defense, and those that gave testimony all stood in a position that was visible to the entire public. Heads of families sat in close proximity to the *krismen*, while male relatives of *krismen* stood behind them like soldiers ready for battle.

It was made known well in advance that a *kris* was in the planning to shutdown *Romsktnet*. This had given the administration time to prepare a defense. A *krisman* who supported *Romsktnet* provided advice to the administration, but could not attend the *kris* itself.¹⁹ The administration was aware that few supporters were going to be at the *kris*. The administration planned its defense around appealing to a new *kris* to overturn the decision that was to be made at this one.

Although the *krismen* were representatives of Romani law (like *Romsktnet*'s administration), *krismen* needed to be as tactful as the defense, as their audience could give

¹⁹ The reason for why the *krisman* could not attend is undisclosed as it can reveal the identity of the *krisman*.

testimony at an appeal. The *kris* could not pass a judgment that could return an appeal. The *kris* made the point that all the various Romani groups that live in Stockholm and have been living in peace up to that point and that *Romsktnet* was a threat to this. By making this point, the *kris* now had established that this was the reason that they want to shut it down, and sought no form of punishment. The *krismen* gave opportunity to the public at the *kris* to provide them with alternatives to shutting down the website. By giving this opportunity to participants at the *kris*, the *krismen* removed possible arguments that the administration could have used to appeal the decision/agreement. The only way the administration could appeal a decision made by this *kris*, is if the *kris* would have not allowed evidence to be presented by the administration that would have been pertinent to the case. However, because *krismen* allowed alternative suggestions to be made at the *kris*, it has provided room for evidence to be entered in this manner.

The opportunity to provide an alternative solution to shutting down *Romsktnet* was given to its creator. The creator had asked the *kris* to give him three months to remove all non-activists, because the website is used by activists for their work and that activists would not engage themselves in such behavior to bring slanders against someone because they risk losing a membership valuable to them in their work. The *kris* accepted the suggestion but added that if any damaging slander be brought about again via *Romsktnet* a fine of 100,000 SEK would have to be paid for the slander, and limited the period for removing non-activists to two months. Because the creator chose the decision himself, he could no longer seek to appeal the decision. An alternative suggestion was made by the administration prior to the agreement that was made between the creator and the *kris* of removing all non-activists. This initial suggestion was that the *kris* work with the administration to prevent members from using the site to break with Romani customs and norms. However the *kris* refused to listen to this suggestion. The reason that the *kris* provided for not giving this suggestion any consideration was that it did not want to be involved in *Romsktnet* but rather act as its judge and jury.

Three months after the *kris*, a video group interview was carried out with five male participants, discussing what happened at the *kris* and their reflections on it. Two of the men in the discussion supported the viewpoint of the *kris*, another two supported *Romsktnet*, and one had a neutral view on the matter.

Gregor: I wonder if you can answer this question for me, there are so many duplicate sites of *Romsktnet*, without any control what so ever. In fact, some of them even use the fact that we control the site to promote their own! By saying things like “Hey, we are not like *Romsktnet*....say and do what you want here.

Robert: That’s exactly it. The *kris* said that the other sites do not control and take what they do seriously, and no one knows exactly who these people are that run these sites. We know who you are, and you are well aware of Romani customs and traditions. You have status in the community, and because you do control the site, the more the information that is placed on it, is believable.

Jon: But the administration cannot control everything. At the *kris*, it was made known that statistically, out of all the messages, photos, videos, comments, over a period stretching longer than one year, the site only had three incidents. One can say that we did better than some nation states.

Robert: Look, the *kris* said “You cannot change what has been done by what is done” and when Gregor continued with this matter the *kris* said “You will not explain to us what you can do, but help us in deciding what to do”.

Jon: True, this is why the *kris* gave Gregor the opportunity to suggest an alternative solution to shutting down the site.

Gregor: Well, I suggested that I be given two months to remove all non-activists, because the site had several hundred activists and that the site made it is easier for all of us to work together.

Mako: Shrewd Gregor, but the *kris* wanted its own guarantee and this is why they said in addition to your suggestion, they will agree if you accept that should similar dishonor be caused again, that a fine of 100, 000 shall be paid to the person against who the offense has been made.

Lando: But who will pay? So many people on *Romsktnet* hide beyond fake profiles.

Robert: Don’t you get it? Gregor will pay. He is the creator, and he will be accountable. When Gregor said that they put in a new system that would show them who people are, the *kris* interrupted him, they did not wait for him to finish and said “We are not going to chase people down, and have a hundred *krisa* a week. How many Roma live in this city and at peace, shall we allow a site to destroy this”. This means that Gregor is to be held in account if anyone on *Romsktnet* disturbs this peace.

Foucault provides examples of how a soldier's behaviors and manners, that control the very steps and movement's he/she makes, are disciplined through repetitive practice until they become habitual for the soldiers (1977: 165). In this manner, behaviors have been taught to *Romsktnet*'s administrators to uphold Romani values. What Robert is saying is that because the other sites did not uphold these values, had the wedding been made a mockery of there, this would have had little meaning as most would not believe it. Whereas with *Romsktnet*, it was believable because its administration is known for maintaining Romani values and has incorporated them into the site, thereby giving more authenticity to the negative critique that was made about the wedding.

The defense had taken the position to demonstrate with statistics of how well it did in controlling improper behavior on *Romsktnet* but the *kris* reacted negatively to this. It is, as Foucault puts it; law has little use if acts against it go unpunished (1977: 96). However, the *kris*'s reaction is not limited to this single concern; it has a threefold meaning, the first of these being to put Romani law to use. The second, was to present its skill and authority by not permitting the administration to present how well the administration managed to control abuse on the website, and how the administration could do even better if the *kris* was to assist them. Above, Robert pointed out that the *kris* said "You will not explain to us what you can do, but help us in deciding what to do" the *kris* is saying that it does not acknowledge any authority in the creator of the site to do anything, it is they who shall do, and he shall but give council in his defense that will help them come to a decision.

Dean explains that authority is established via the expertise and knowledge it has in its particular field; the *krismen* in this case, are recognized as *krismen* by the community because of the expertise and knowledge they have in Romani law (1999: 17). Because *krismen* are needed by many members in the Romani community to settle disputes, their expertise in Romani law is what is then demanded, and it is the demand which gives them this authority. It is the *krismen* that know the law, not the defendant, he has not earned the skills and expertise that the *kris* has to fulfill the purpose of this trial which is to maintain a peace that *Romsktnet* is a threat to.

The third point that was made in this remark was to give opportunity to the defense to present a solution other to shutting the website down. Foucault explains that crimes in the past that caused no injury or harm to anyone underwent punishment regardless, as the act disregarded the rights of the superior man (1977: 47). It is with little doubt that modern law permits crimes to go unpunished whether the action has harmed anyone or not, except that

this is done less often in the interest of a single person but rather a collective. Law seeks the restoration of order, and by carrying out punishment it tries to minimize the risk that can corrupt that order (Dean 1999: 185). Thus when the *kris* stated that “You cannot change what has been done by what is done”, it is stating restoration of order must be based on the crime not its prevention. When the defense was given opportunity to suggest an alternative to shutting down the website, it was also given an opportunity to render an admission of guilt and give up any good grounds for appeal. The creator unwittingly gave the *kris* an admission of guilt when he proposed removing non-activists from the website. Had the creator made no alternative suggestion to shutting down the website and the *kris* gave him opportunity to do so, they more than likely would have decided to shut it down, and no appeal could be made as the *kris* gave opportunity to the creator to present his case. Thus the *kris* placed the Romsktnet in a position of either entering an admission of guilt and not being shut down or a plea of innocence but being found guilty and shut down. The creator had to choose between the better of two evils. As Foucault points out, confessions were used as a means to discourage the public at executions from making any protest (1977: 58). The *kris* did not have to accept the creator’s suggestion of removing non-activists from *Romsktnet*, but with its acceptance an admission of guilt was also entered.

Once the *kris* and the defense came to an agreement on an alternative to shutting down *Romsktnet*, the *kris* reinforced its authority by threatening misbehavior on *Romsktnet* with a fine of 100,000 kronor, a means to deter improper conduct to Romani values. The *kris* stated that it will not chase people down who would make slanderous remarks on *Romsktnet* to bring a *kris* against them. The *kris* felt that it is not their responsibility to address every slanderous remark on *Romsktnet*, but rather is a duty that the administration must deal with and be held accountable for what members do. With this the *kris* placed pressure on the administration to take action that would ensure better control.

Because there was no evidence presented at the *kris* that any actual disputes have broken out in the community as a result of *Romsktnet*, the argument to deter disputes can be understood as a maneuver to present local *krismen*’s authority over *Romsktnet*, via the institution known as the *kris*, which serves to maintain order and peace in the community.

From Support to Opposition

In an interview with the same participants, one informant points out the evils that can arise out of *Romsktnet* by referring to a look-alike video, where he was compared to a TV-character

that he found to be unflattering. In the interview he is asked why he did not complain when the video came out months prior to the *kris* and only aired his complaint in relation to the *kris*. He explains and is confronted by another informant in the group who explains how one man at the *kris* also brought up a similar issue about his daughter-in-law. That was placed in a bogus photo of her in a bathing suit. However the *kris* did not regard this as being a believable slander that was liable although they did see *Romsktnet* as a platform that could encourage this kind of behavior; meaning that *Romsktnet* gave the opportunity for members to falsify photos of people in situations that do not coincide with Romani customs. Photos of people in bathing suits are not to be exposed publicly because this is deemed as offensive to Romani culture and shows a lack of consideration to Romani values on the part of the person making such a photo a public exhibition. There are certainly Romani people that do not recognize such acts as being improper but at the same time they do not belong to Romani communities that uphold these customs, and the ones who do, were the majority that made up *Romsktnet*'s membership. Using these examples, this section shall reflect the opinions members had for changing their position of support for *Romsktnet* to opposing it and wanting it to be shut down after the *kris*.

Gregor: You now complain about a look-alike video that compared you to a celebrity that you do not find flattering. This video came out nearly one year before a *kris* was brought against *Romsktnet*. Why did you not complain about it then?

Robert: Look, if you do not want your hands to get dirty you don't touch shit. You cannot catch a fish on land. Should have I brought about a debate? And say that this person does not look like me. What would this bring back? People commenting that I do look like the fellow I was compared to, members were already saying how well everyone resembled the stars they were compared to. Why bring this upon myself? But when the *kris* was raised, and many others began bringing up these kinds of things that you let through, well then, I wanted to add my thoughts as well to help a case against this mockery.

Mako: Yes, like the young woman they placed that revealing bathing suit...(interrupted)

Jon: Oh come on man. The *kris* did not even allow that to be entered as evidence, everyone at the *kris* said that the photo was obviously touched, so no true dishonor was brought upon her although whoever did it is a jerk.

Lando: Yes, in the case of the wedding pictures and all those negative comments, people might not know the man who paid for it. He spent a fortune, and here there were photos

making the wedding look like he was cheap and the comments were a direct attack on him. The bikini, well let's just say that it would take a fool to believe that and so no true damage is done.

Gregor: Yes but they allowed people to bring it up even though.

Robert: Yes, this is exactly what I mean. My complaint and those of others was to present the character of the site.

Gregor: Come now, I am an admin. You always wrote how great *Romsktnet* is for Romani culture. Maybe pressure from the *kris* changed your mind (My eyes squint with frustrations as this is said)?

Robert: Look, I enjoyed the music, discussions in our language, the videos, but I did not love the garbage that was damaging our values. And since you could not control this, those values are more important to me than what *Romsktnet* had to offer me (Robert reclines in a comfortable position once he completes this sentence).

Foucault (1990a) explains that subordination, silence, or capitulation does not signify a lack of power but is a different means from which to manifest power. Robert's silence on *Romsktnet* was a form of protest. The expressions he uses above for his unwillingness to confront the look-alike video when it came out is used commonly by Roma when something is so beneath them that they do not even bother with it. Robert explains that he had nothing to gain by complaining then. The photo of the young woman in a bikini was a forgery and Lando makes it known that because the forgery was obvious, no one would believe that she actually posed in the photo and hence no true damage was done. For damages to incur, people would have to believe that the picture was real, and then the girl in the picture could have brought a *kris* against *Romsktnet* as this is something that could bring dishonor upon her, that is if people believed that she actually posed for the photo.

Often at a *kris*, there will be people who will try to interject their own grievances. The *kris* can for example distinguish the grievance from the case that is before them at present, by acknowledging it as worthy of a hearing and suggest that this matter be dealt with in a separate *kris* or the *kris* can find that the grievance has not brought no damage to anyone. Thus Robert's grievance was no different to the grievance of the girl in the forged bikini photo, thereby, giving Robert no grounds on which to complain as it would provide no resolve. Robert states that his negative testimony on *Romsktnet* was not for any personal gain but to ensure the prosperity of Romani values. However, Robert's testimony was a tactful way

of taking advantage of the opportunity to gain symbolic capital in the community by showing that he is an honorable Romani person. Robert's testimony and his silent protest presented him to the community to be a person who places more investment in Romani values than his personal interests. The administration used technology to know what part of the site a member visited most and how often, as a means to govern with (Dean 1999: 172). As an administrator, I had knowledge on how Robert used *Romsktnet* as a member. That knowledge provided me with documentation which showed Robert to be a supporter of *Romsktnet* in the past, which I used to confront him with in the interview and question why he had changed his mind after the *kris*. However Robert had responded and explained that his interests in *Romsktnet* were for the most part of an entertaining interest, and the reward of having prestige in Romani society by upholding its values overweighed that interest.

De Certeau states that "Every society manifests somewhere the formal rules which its practices obey" (1984: 22). Foucault explains that when children do well a teacher may assign to them privilege points (1977: 180). The same applies to Roma who try to accumulate social status in Romani society by being patted on the back by respected elders (Foucault 1977: 180). Discipline regards individuals as instruments and objects of its exercise, in this case Robert becomes an instrument that is disciplined by what can be gained for being "protector" of Romani values (Foucault 1977: 170). Teachers often provide students with "privilege points" when they obey the procedures imposed by the teacher. Krismen, like teachers, hold a position of authority that can inflict status onto another person for following practices in accordance with the way in which they believe those practices should be carried out.

Women Can't

Approximately six months after the *kris*, a group video interview was carried out with five female and two male participants. There were some who blamed what had happened with *Romsktnet* on the female administrator. The blame had less to do with the fact that she had approved the wedding picture that led to the *kris* against *Romsktnet*, than it had to do with her being a woman.

Karina: You know what was the biggest problem to hit *Romsktnet*? Your female administrator!

Meri: Yes, she was to choose what is good and what is not good. When was a woman a *kris*man? Women do not belong in the *kris*!

Jena & Nani: (Remain silent but nod in agreement with Meri)

Kenia: You are so wrong! My God, Kerza, Nadja, these were *kriswomen*. They are gone now.

Gregor: Why do you think this is the case?

Kenia: We have become like non-Roma. The women had more status before than today. Then the women made the money. They told fortunes. Money is power, and we have less of it today.

Gregor: Why was it that the women brought home the bread and butter?

Meri: Because the non-Roma feared less the women in the past, and I guess, men took the place of women because they could be less noticed as Roma, because of the clothes and stuff.

Jon: Ok, we went off topic here. I mean our female admin did nothing wrong. Are you blaming everything on her because she is a women or what she did?

Karina: Women should not be as visible as she was, making decisions like a man.

Gregor: But did we not establish already that Roma women were involved in the *kris* before?

Meri: That was then, this is now! Traditions have changed with the times.

Kenia: Maybe it's time that tradition changed again.

It is relevant to point out here that Meri, Karina, Jena and Nani are all under the age of 40, while Kenia on the other hand is closer to the age of sixty. Kenia, unlike the other women, has experienced the participation of Romani women in the *kris* via firsthand experience. The others have heard about participation but assumed it to be a rarity as the discussion continued.

Foucault explains that punishment does not reactivate justice it reactivates power and authority (1977: 49). Punishment and discipline can be enforced via various instruments such as a guillotine, prison, banishment, shackles, and so on. The instrument that had given power and authority to *Romsktnet's* administration with which to discipline and punish its members was the functions that the ning.com platform provided them with. Romani law is the instrument with which the *kris* empowers itself. This instrument of power exists only because Romani society sees it as a means to maintain law and order in Romani society. Kenia elaborates that Romani women had higher status in the past because they had a source of income. Meri believes that discrimination has placed Romani women in a position of having less of a chance than Romani men do to provide for themselves economically. Whether this is

true or not is irrelevant, what is relevant here is that Meri believes this; just as much as she believes that Romani women should have no authority in the *kris*. Thus the difference of opinion between Meri and Kenia reflects that the authority of Romani women has shifted from more authority in the *kris* to less authority as time progressed.

The entire discussion on *Romsktnet*'s female administrator completely excludes what she had done that would demonstrate her wrongdoings. Instead, the entire discussion is about Romani women and why they should not be in a position of authority. The right to decide, in the case of approving photos and videos on *Romsktnet* is paralleled to women making decisions at the *kris*.

Kenia believes that the lack of economic power among Romani women has lowered their status in the community. Understandably, Romani women told fortunes, men were dependent on them for a source of revenue. And most certainly, it is without a doubt, that it did bring status and authority to Romani women as many Roma to this day glorify their grandmothers when speaking about them for bringing wealth to the household.

Neumann points out that if a discourse has been in use for long enough it can turn certain social practices into a routine (2003: 113). The younger Romani women in the interview were unaccustomed to seeing Romani women having a position of authority in the *kris*, making this a "routine" that they were accustomed to. Because the younger women were not accustomed to seeing Romani women holding positions of authority in institutions like the *kris*, they believed that women should not hold such positions and felt it was wrong for a female administrator on *Romsktnet* to have authority in issues related to Romani values. Foucault elaborates that the portrayal of a subject as being disobedient is instrumental for safeguarding the existence of a social order, using prohibitions and censorship to exercise power (1990a: 10). This is not to say that any Romani custom in itself requires that Romani women abstain from taking on roles with authority in the community, but that the circumstances have led Romani women to have less and less status, leaving future generations with no examples to present the contrary and creating a discourse that Romani women should not be in authoritative positions in institutions like the *kris*. Most interesting in this discussion was that no one explained why a Romani woman cannot be a *kriswoman*.

There are certainly Romani women from the same age group as Meri and the others that do not share the same opinion. Never the less, the opinion exists and was a part of the discourse that defined *Romsktnet* as being an instrument that can spread evils against Romani values. It was because of this that all responsibility was taken on by the creator so that this would not be

made a part of the testimony that would lean towards shutting down *Romsktnet* at the *kris*. The administration, inclusive of the female administrator, did want any administrator to be made the scapegoat for the slander that was made on *Romsktnet*, and by placing all responsibility on the creator, the administration did not give the *kris* the opportunity to address the actions of administrators as culprits for the slanders that were made on *Romsktnet* about the wedding.

It is without question that the *kris* would not have permitted the administrator's gender/sex to be a part of the testimony that was to be entered into evidence, but that does not mean that it would not have been heard at the *kris*, which the administration believed to be detrimental to the purpose *Romsktnet* serves. As already mentioned the female administrator was overburdened and could not control everything that was happening on *Romsktnet* at the time which could have been used as evidence to find her as being guilty. A decision of this nature would have given fuel to those that questioned her role as an administrator because of her gender. By placing all responsibility on the creator and not permitting this testimony to enter into the *kris*, the creator sent a message that he stood behind all the administrators, and would not acknowledge any protest against the female administrator's role on *Romsktnet*.

The Resurrection

Just hours after the *kris*, *Romsktnet*'s administration held an emergency meeting to discuss how to implement the agreement made with the *kris*. Although the *kris* was bent on shutting the site down, they could not if it was presented to be more than just something that was created for entertainment purposes. At the *kris* it was explained that the site's first few hundred members were colleagues who worked with Romani related issues, and that these members were inclusive of people who were journalists as well as officials representing various institutions. It was also explained that the website was provided free of charge to members and that the site in itself does not profit financially through advertisements, although revenue is obtained through its usage when it is used to carry out studies that are funded. Examples were provided such as data being gathered from the site that could benefit the Romani community in areas such as housing and employment.

Based on the agreement and decision that was made at the *kris*, the administration had decided to begin freezing the accounts of all members that openly argued that *Romsktnet* should be shut down. This was done after the decision was announced on *Romsktnet*, and the administration asked that each member provide details about their identity and background information on how they are affiliated to Romani activism. The idea with banning members that openly opposed *Romsktnet* was so that other members could understand the threat of banishment to be serious, when they would see that the membership was declining.²⁰

Romsktnet's membership at the time consisted of twenty five hundred members, and an average of one hundred and fifty applied for membership each week. Because a rumor spread that the *kris* decided to shut down *Romsktnet* the administration was flooded with messages from the membership. It was apparent that the majority of the membership did not read the announcement. The administration decided to create a video announcement and place it on the main page. However, before the video was made available the membership created a discussion's group entitled *NA PANDAVEN O ROMSKTNET (DO NOT SHUT DOWN ROMSKTNET)*.²¹

Members who joined this group began speaking to family members, and influential people in the Romani community, and this led to *Romsktnet*'s becoming a registered organization and having a *krissman* as its chairman.

²⁰ Members can see membership size of the website on the main page.

²¹ <http://romsktnet.ning.com/group/napandavenoromsknet>

This section is devoted to presenting the dialogue that was taking place in this discussion's group on *Romsktnet*, and how opinions represented in this discussion reached influential Roma and *krismen* to support *Romsktnet*. This section is inclusive of an interview with one of the *krismen* that had a different outlook on the decision that was made at the *kris* and yet believed that freedom of speech should not permit the smearing of one's reputation. By presenting this argument this section shall elaborate how *krismen* who supported *Romsktnet* agreed with the *kris* that it can spawn evils but that the solution was hardly to shut it down, as the *kris* has in mind at the time.

Loyalty to *Romsktnet* but not the Administration

The group entitled *NA PANDAVEN O ROMSKTNET* consisted of a single discussion that had hundreds of members participating in. The discussion voiced protests to shutting down *Romsktnet* by presenting the interests they had in maintaining its existence. These interests were the interests that reached *krismen* and influential Roma in the community and led to the reorganization of *Romsktnet*.

Jac: I found my son who I did not have contact with since he was a child through *Romsktnet*.

Magda: I have not seen my children for twenty years. When I became ill, I had to leave the country for medical attention. I needed it for years. My husband remarried and life just became such that I later remarried also. But to find my babies on *Romsktnet*, to talk with them, and finally know one another, this is a dream come true.

Joel: I have moved to Sweden about 15 years ago from Russia. All my brethren stayed behind in Russia. We now meet here. We share videos from weddings, photos, we talk, it's like we are together again.

Vic: I live alone with my immediate family in South America. During the war our family broke off from the rest of the family in Russia. I now am a part of the bigger family again. What the war took away *Romsktnet* has given back. Don't let them shut it down.

Tania: My children vaguely spoke any Romani, but they are chatting in the language with others. I read the stories to them that were in Romani. I played the games with them that were suggested to me by others.

Borno: The *kris* is not very smart. The children watch TV, read books, go to schools, they do not go to the *krisa* as young people did in the past. Where will they learn about Romani

values, their history, and culture if not here? The schools will not teach them, they do not read of it in comics, or see it on TV. Here they have music, videos, information, all in one place, and they want to kill this. This is our future.

Blue Bull: I had no idea about these Romani programs. I would not have enrolled in this school had it not been for *Romsktnet*. There is discrimination and I would not have bothered to join an education's program only to be ridiculed. These programs do their part and *Romsktnet* does its own.

Fardi: I noticed that one can start various groups on *Romsktnet*, and joined the Christian group. I have a relative who has a drug problem, and together, through the group, we have found help. *Romsktnet* must live.

Gregor: Dear friends, I have just put up a video explaining what happened at the *kris*, and how *Romsktnet* will work from now on.

Bani: You cannot shutdown *Romsktnet*, it's not yours to shut down.

Gregor: I am not shutting it down...please watch the video.

Fardi: You will not shut it down! We will talk to other *krismen*.

Gregor: I cannot tell you what to do!

Romsktnet's administration was well aware that discrimination limited options for the Romani community in Sweden when it came to housing, education and employment. Governments have been known to use research and data to benefit its population by announcing simple recommendations such as wearing a hat for protection from the sun (Dean 1999: 199). The administration carried out research to produce data using *Romsktnet* that would in turn be of interest to the membership. Members interests in housing, employment, education and religion, led the administration to cooperate with organizations and institutions that could assist members in these matters. The administration was aware via research of the problems that Romani people have with maintaining the Romani language as it is in competition with majority languages and sought ways to address the issue.

Different members understood *Romsktnet* to serve different purposes. Some joined for entertainment purposes, others because of their work with Romani activism and some understood it to provide a platform for Roma to have contact with one another from different parts around the world. However, when members found relatives through the website, that they did not have contact with otherwise, or were in search of one another but had no success

prior to finding one another on *Romsktnet*, these members then had this reason in the quest to maintain the existence of *Romsktnet*.

Dean explains that a population can have a history and customs independent of government (1999: 107). Within Romani society, its language, culture, laws and way of life are represented in the collective of Romani people. The Roma have no territory to define their identity with and it is in the contact that exists between Roma that Romani identity is established, that is, through the practices and discussions in their interactions. Some *Romsktnet* members turned its space into a place for family reunions. The administration did not plan or calculate this outcome, nor could it control it to serve an objective of *Romsktnet*. The practice was independent of the administration except for the usage of its territory.

When members begin to say that it is not for the administration to shutdown the site and say that they will speak with *krismen* about this, they are removing the authority from the administration to govern *Romsktnet*, take it over and intend on placing it into the hands of another authority.

De Certeau explains that strategic discourses are formal rules, while the everyday practices and rhetoric are tactics that seek to manipulate the rules for self interest (1984: 30). In essence, the membership being under the assumption that the *kris* decided to shutdown *Romsktnet* and the administration is to follow this decision, revolts against the administration seeks to replace it with another governing body. *Romsktnet* members that wished to maintain the life of *Romsktnet* were securing their own interests. The entire idea with *Romsktnet* was such that members would express their views and opinions on *Romsktnet*. The liberal approach taken by the administration to govern *Romsktnet* with is the same mechanism that members use to secure its survival. For it is as Dean points out that liberty is also a condition of security because people can use it to secure their own interests (Dean 1999: 116, 117 & 137).

The Reorganization of *Romsktnet*

After the video on the agreement between the *kris* and *Romsktnet* was aired, numerous Roma felt it was wrong that only activists could remain on the site. The administration explained that all people that are active in promoting the well being of the Romani population (those who promote the language and culture, those who challenge misconceptions and stereotypes, those who take in active role in social issues such as housing, employment and education for Roma) are Romani activists. The idea behind this was to maintain members who have more at

stake in losing *Romsktnet* than just entertainment. Numerous members had spoken with *krismen* who were not at the *kris*, and discussions began to take place between the administration and some of these *krismen*. The agreement that was made at the *kris* was not appealed or overturned. Instead, some of the *krismen* took the position of becoming involved in *Romsktnet* by stipulating to the administration what can be permitted and what cannot be permitted, taking the role of authority from the administration and turning the administration into a body of police to enforce their authority. However in reality, it was the *krismen* and their participation in *Romsktnet* that gave power back to the administration and the membership.

Some two years after *kris*, an interview was carried out with one of these *krismen*. This *krisman*, like others, was involved in a *kris* that ruled against a song and its creator for ridiculing a *krisman*. The interview, to an extent asks him what distinguishes *Romsktnet*'s case from this case, opening the discussion to present some of the reasons for why some *krismen* joined members in the support of *Romsktnet*.

Krisman: *Romsktnet* is not yours to shutdown. It belongs to the Romani world.

Gregor: But I may have to anyway, if anyone should do something wrong, I cannot afford to pay the fine in their place.

Krisman: My son, the *kris* is who you are and who the people on *Romsktnet* are. *Romsktnet* needs to be used by the *kris*, it needs to be our tool. In the future, the *kris* needs to be carried out online, with people who understand the world around them, not just the Romani one.

Gregor: But I tried to explain to the *kris* how we can control *Romsktnet*, with new technology. We now are able to trace people's IP address, and we require that they become members. People that become members give their name, address and pay a due. I think that very few would pay a due only to forfeit it in order to do something childish. But the *kris* did not hear us out.

Krisman: I do not think the *kris* wants you to replace it. After all, it is not for you to judge what is wrong and what is right. The rules need to be created by the *kris*. This is what I mean by the future. There should be a council of *krismen* that make up the rules for *Romsktnet*, while the administration implements and polices this.

Gregor: But may I ask this of you, you were one of the judges that placed a fine on a man for making a song that ridiculed and dishonored a *krisman*, how can you defend *Romsktnet* when it has done the same thing to another *krisman*?

Krisman: *Romsktnet* is different because it can be an instrument of the *kris*, not under its control, but controlled by the community. Sadly, the *kris* has changed. Years ago, the audience at the *kris* could intervene; today the *kris* is controlled by a few *krisman*. They shush down people in the audience when they wish to speak, and use the argument that it is they who are the judges. They have done this to you when they did not let you finish in explaining your plan. I agree with them that what happened was wrong, as I agree that the man was wrong for making this song. But I think of the *kris* backed *Romsktnet*, I think members ready to play pranks would not do this fearing the power of *krismen*.

The *krisman* believes that the *kris* will utilize the Internet, by people with knowledge in fields in conjunction with knowledge in Romani law. Foucault explains that the judges of normality are everywhere in modern society; the teacher judge, social-worker judge, doctor judge, etc. (Foucault 1977: 304). The authority to judge as teachers, doctors, social-workers and website administrators should be dependent on their expertise, however, expertise does not always promise authority to anyone. The *krisman* makes this point when he establishes that the administration cannot replace the *kris* and that it is not for the administration to play judge. With the administration being but an instrument of *krismen* to administer their will onto *Romsktnet*, the power that would then control *Romsktnet* would be the institution of the *kris*. Because Romani values represent the Romani people, the collective then sees a violator of these values as a traitor to the people; as criminal acts are taught to societies to be treachery against them (Foucault 1977: 22).

Crimes are often committed because they give an advantage; by bringing forth punishment upon an act ending in greater disadvantage, it is more likely that a person will not enact it (Foucault 1977: 94). Because the *kris* can banish a person in the real world, removing from her/him all the advantages that come with being in Romani society, its punishment gives greater disadvantage to those using *Romsktnet* for acts against Romani values, than the punishment the administration can inflict on *Romsktnet* alone.

When the *krisman* is confronted with the question of making a distinction between *Romsktnet* and the song that ridiculed a *krisman* that he ruled against, the *krisman* begins to talk about the flaws that exist in the modern *kris* in Stockholm. This *krisman* believes that the

kris is to be under the authority of the population it is supposed to serve the interests of. He believes the modern *kris* is limited to too few and has too much control. In a way, *krismen* that have supported *Romsktnet* and have given it power outside the Internet, are protesting the present way in which the *kris* is practiced. By supporting what the *kris* wanted to shut down, and seeing it to be in the interest of Romani values they mock the *kris* that wanted to shut it down. This reasserts Dean's point that authorities themselves become subjects to others above them (Dean 1999: 28). In this case, that authority at top of the hierarchy is the frustration that one group of *krismen* has with another for the way it practices the *kris* today. The trial against *Romsktnet* has given opportunity for this one group of *krismen* to criticize the other that was its judge and jury. It is the opportunity to formulate a critique that can influence members of a community to decide in whom and what they place authority. Thus the *kris* system, like *Romsktnet*, allows liberal critique to decide its destiny.

Discussion

Governments commonly use a set of rules and regulations with which its citizens can discipline, control and govern the self according to the rules and regulations of that government. *Romsktnet's* administration applied a liberal approach to governing the website. Dean explains that governing through liberalism provides the individual/citizen authority with which he/she can criticize the government and by that is an active participant of government rather than a passive recipient of governmental decisions (1999: 50). The administration used liberalism as a means to involve the membership in concerns such as language standardization, employment, education, housing, Romani history, Romani culture and Romani activism. Because the administration sought to motivate members into making their opinions known and because the website was to serve the interests of Romani society, the membership was successful in having the administration incorporate Romani values. Romani values consist of distinguishing between what is clean and unclean, what is honorable and dishonorable, and what can be said and not be said and to whom. That which is unclean, dishonorable and what cannot be said was controlled, prevented and obstructed by *Romsktnet's* administration and its internet police through the threat of banishment. What the administration did not incorporate was to play the role of the *kris*.

Foucault makes it clear that it is the traditions and norms in which a person is raised that gives him/her the mastering to discipline the self and others (Foucault 1977: 143). The administration was raised according to Romani values, they needed no guidebook or counseling to know what contributions made to *Romsktnet* were adversaries to Romani values. The *kris* on the other hand has the knowledge, power and authority with which it can determine if a "crime" was committed against Romani values. Because the administration was deemed to have high status as ambassadors for Romani values, it had a greater responsibility on it as did others that replicated the site and so it was deemed fit to have judgment passed upon it (Foucault 1977: 254). The position taken by the administration in defense was to present to the *kris* that it had found a way to deter members from unacceptable acts against Romani values. The objective of the *kris* was to determine guilt and find a resolution which in itself is a means of deterrence. Each society has a set of rules for how its members should operate activities within it (de Certeau 1984: 30). The field in which the administration incorporated Romani values onto *Romsktnet* was one of deterring acts against Romani values, rather than determining if an act has been committed against Romani values and how to address this matter. The administration had but one means to enforce its rules, which was

banishment from the site, and it was the ning.com platform and their own knowledge of website development that made this possible. The *kris* on the other hand had many options for this and had skills in determining the severity of an act, how much damage it has or can cause, its circumstances, and what solution to apply. The administration could only not permit *Romsktnet* to be used by members for acts against Romani values; it could do nothing once those acts caused damage. Thus the strategy of the *kris* became an authority over *Romsktnet* because it had knowledge to deal with a matter that the administration did not. For it is as de Certeau points out, knowledge is exchanged for authority as is a paycheck used in exchange for work (1984: 8).

Neumann explains that hegemony must continually be defended so that it won't disintegrate (Neumann 2003: 61). Experts commonly are the ones who define and decide how the society should interpret various concepts (Neumann 2003: 63). Of course experts have power over ideas but the reason for this is because they have power to mobilize a discourse (Neumann 2003: 64). If a discourse has been around long enough it can turn certain social practices into a routine making it even stronger (Neumann 2003: 119). Discourse strengthens through normalization or standardization (Neumann 2003: 147). Because members on *Romsktnet* criticized the administration for not doing enough to include Romani values into its rules and regulations, they had strengthened the rules for Romani conduct, by causing them to be applied in a terrain where they did not exist before (in this case it was the website known as *Romsktnet*).

It was the *kris* and its audience, *Romsktnet's* administration and members, *Romsktnet* supporters and its opposition that gave and gives Romani values its power, because they apply its rules in the real world as well as in the virtual. The *kris* with its knowledge, power and authority decides whether a party has broken with norms of Romani values or not. Because members of this community practice their everyday lives according to these norms and recognize the *kris* as the institution as the protector of these norms, the norms are strengthened and are applied in other realms such as a website. An institutions' legitimacy can speak with authority over other institutions if members of that society apply the rules and regulations of one institution into others (Neumann 2003: 113). As members from this Romani community practice these norms in environments less associated with Romani identity, such as educational institutions, public offices and some sectors of employment, being careful not to engage in acts that can lead to their banishment, they strengthen the authority that banishment has. After all, banishment is used as form of punishment upon a

person that has engaged in an act of dishonor; however banishment in itself officially dishonors that person, making banishment the highest form of dishonor that can be brought upon a Romani person. If members of this Romani community did not recognize the codes of honor and dishonor in relation to Romani values, then the threat of banishment would have little effect and *Romsktnet* would not have had an opposition to it.

Interests & Perceptions

Daun (1969) elaborates in his study about the interests that drew members of the sawmill town to protest the shutting down of the sawmill that kept the town's economy alive. Daun explains that fishing provided some locals with an extra income when they sold their catch for less than its cost in the shops and lowered living costs for other locals (1969: 85). Daun continues explaining how the company provided the community with lower costs for heating and electricity, and also gives a variety of examples of how members of the community helped one another build shacks and other buildings (1969: 87). Other amenities such as club and leisure activities are used to present invested interests members of the sawmill town had that made them loyal to it (Ibid). The local clubs, events and activities that bound the community together are the very same mechanism that Daun uses to show how the community slowly dis-integrated. One example he uses is how television withdrew women from club activities and gave them less opportunity to meet (1969: 69). Daun provides numerous examples of how some people left the community for employment elsewhere, left due to a marriage that drew them elsewhere, and for other reasons such as housing (1969: 99). Daun also provides examples of people who have lived in the sawmill town not long enough to integrate into it as those who have invested interests in it over time.

Much like the sawmill town in Daun's study, *Romsktnet* provided amenities that some members understood to serve their own interests, which in turn made them loyal to *Romsktnet* and willing to fight for its survival. While other members, on the other hand saw *Romsktnet* to serve nothing more than purposes of entertainment, and this interest could have been substituted by something other to *Romsktnet*. The amenities made available on *Romsktnet* were available to all, but not all shared the same interests that those amenities supplied.

Neumann uses his own experiences as an employee in hide auctioning to demonstrate how this experience affected the way in which he would look upon the opposite sex (2003: 31). He explains that the experience from working with hides now added to his interest in observing the way a woman dressed, in addition to interests that were based on shape and movement

(Ibid). Neumann uses this personal experience to point out that perception (seeing, hearing and feeling) change in relation to what a person experiences or modus (2003: 30). Modus can be explained as the interest or focus a person has during a given moment. As an example, a commercial can cause a person to crave a certain food or be in the mood to shop for a certain product, focusing the perception of the individual on that food or product at that moment. In other cases, that same food or product could be secondary to another food, product or activity, and so the sensory perceptions focus differently at different times, and are driven by what are interests at that given moment.

Romsktnet members that had experienced discrimination, problems in finding employment and housing, or missed a love one and longed for contact took sight of the amenities available on *Romsktnet* addressing these concerns. Members joined *Romsktnet* for various reasons. The reason that they joined to begin with could have just as much governed the way in which they perceived what purpose *Romsktnet* served, as much as their experiences had. What drew Romani people to *Romsktnet* was that it sought to serve the interests of Romani society. This means that *Romsktnet* not only sought to provide information on Romani related issues, or to discuss the Romani language, its history and culture, but to include interests that may not be Romani related that are of interest to Roma. It is thus the interest one has at a given moment that concentrates the senses, playing a role in the way that something is experienced (Neumann 2003: 30-31). Not all people share the same interests, and even the same person will not prioritize an interest in the same way as she/he has in the past. Commonly, interests are focused dependent on how valuable the reward is to the individual that seeks its acquisition. However, rewards and their value differ from culture to culture. By upholding Romani values, members of the community that this study has concentrated on discipline themselves as they can gain status as being well respected Roma. It is without question that the kris would have little power if the reward of having status as respected Roma did not exist. Hence, although various Roma supported or opposed *Romsktnet* for personal gain, they were all governed and disciplined in their individual quests by what could bring either dishonor or honor in accordance to Romani values.

Changes

Time and space changes the meaning of words and concepts. As an example, Neumann explains that the word Europe had a different meaning in a different era because it encompassed lands different to what it encompasses today (2003: 43). Romani women in this

study that were under the age of 40 understood the *kris* as male dominated institution, while the woman older than they, did not see the *kris* as a gender segregated institution because her experiences told her otherwise.

Romani values, knowing the distinction between what is clean and unclean, what is honorable and dishonorable, how to move and even how to sit, all was handed down from one generation to the next without conscious effort. Even in circumstances where youths are taken to Romani events to learn about Romani customs and ways, the teaching and learning process is not scheduled or planned but rather is something that is done out of habit. Often children are not told that they are going to a *kris* and are not explained to how they should behave at it, rather they watch and learn. As Bourdieu points out, members within a group learn the system of dispositions, such as those of linguistic competence and cultural competence, by observing how other members of that group practice those dispositions, then repeat and make them a habit (1977: 79-83).

Because these practices change in some ways due to circumstances, and no formal training is given for them to be learned and practiced, what is learned comes from what is seen. The habit of seeing only men at the *kris*, causes the observer to believe that it is a male dominated institution if its history is unknown. In the same manner, there is still little experience in the Romani community with upholding Romani values in electronic arenas. Therefore the neglect had commenced as it could not even be considered that a website could become a new institution to Romani society that can promote and protect Romani values.

According to the data that has been gathered for this study, along with the group video interviews, what distinguished members loyal to *Romsktnet* from members who were not was that they did not share the same interests in it. Members loyal to *Romsktnet* saw it something that promoted Romani values while its opposition did not. The opposition to *Romsktnet* had a somewhat egotistic attitude towards those loyal to *Romsktnet* as they did not take their interests into consideration when it came to discussing the fate of *Romsktnet*. The protests that came from *Romsktnet* members against the *kris* and its supporters were that the *kris* and its supporters neglected the interests of *Romsktnet*'s members. *Kris*men that supported *Romsktnet* and were a part of its reorganization found that the *kris*men who sought to shutdown *Romsktnet* because it could be counterproductive to Romani values neglected the good it could bring. Thus what distinguished the two opposing factions was not that one was wrong and refused to accept what technology had to offer, or that the other was willing to compromise Romani values for the sake of modernization, but that the way (one group seeing

it as detrimental to Romani values and another seeing *Romsktnet* as its champion) in which they perceived *Romsktnet* at the time, placed them into two opposing factions.

References

Video Group Interview A

Name: Robert Bradley
Occupation: Salesman
Age: (Approximately) 37
Sex: Male
Interview date: 09/01/05 12:30-16:30
Interview Length: 240 minutes
Interview recorded via video camera by researcher

Name: Jon Martin
Occupation: IT
Age: (Approximately) 34
Sex: Male
Interview date: 09/01/05 12:30-16:30
Interview Length: 240 minutes
Interview recorded via video camera by researcher

Name: Gregor Kwiek
Occupation: Researcher
Age: (Approximately) 39
Sex: Male
Interview date: 09/01/05 12:30-16:30
Interview Length: 240 minutes
Interview recorded via video camera by researcher
(Researcher's dialogue is included in the analysis therefore is added as a source)

Name: Mako Leseke
Occupation: Salesman
Age: (Approximately) 37
Sex: Male
Interview date: 09/01/05 12:30-16:30
Interview Length: 240 minutes
Interview recorded via video camera by researcher

Name: Lando Terek
Occupation: Chauffer
Age: (Approximately) 31
Sex: Male
Interview date: 09/01/05 12:30-16:30
Interview Length: 240 minutes
Interview recorded via video camera by researcher

Video Group Interview B

Name: Karina Askila
Occupation: Cleaning
Age: (Approximately) 32
Sex: Female
Interview date: 09/04/25 18:30-20:30
Interview Length: 120 minutes
Interview recorded via video camera by researcher

Name: Meri Dunda
Occupation: Self employed

Age: (Approximately) 34
Sex: Female
Interview date: 09/04/25 18:30-20:30
Interview Length: 120 minutes
Interview recorded via video camera by researcher

Name: Gregor Kwiek
Occupation: Researcher
Age: (Approximately) 39
Sex: Male
Interview date: 09/04/25 18:30-20:30
Interview Length: 120 minutes
Interview recorded via video camera by researcher
(Researcher's dialogue is included in the analysis therefore is added as a source)

Name: Jena Laktos
Occupation: Unemployed
Age: (Approximately) 32
Sex: Female
Interview date: 09/04/25 18:30-20:30
Interview Length: 120 minutes
Interview recorded via video camera by researcher

Name: Jon Martin
Occupation: IT
Age: (Approximately) 34
Sex: Male
Interview date: 09/04/25 18:30-20:30
Interview Length: 120 minutes
Interview recorded via video camera by researcher

Name: Nani Ranja
Occupation: Unemployed
Age: (Approximately) 34
Sex: Female
Interview date: 09/04/25 18:30-20:30
Interview Length: 120 minutes
Interview recorded via video camera by researcher

Name: Kenia Slotko
Occupation: Cleaning
Age: (Approximately) 58
Sex: Female
Interview date: 09/04/25 18:30-20:30
Interview Length: 120 minutes
Interview recorded via video camera by researcher

Krisman Interview

Name: Laslo Bek
Occupation: Retired
Age: (Approximately) 75
Sex: Female
Interview date: 10/02/03 20:00-21:00
Interview Length: 60 minutes
Interview recorded via Dictaphone by researcher

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Thomas Acton (Email exchange. Received: 2010-03-18. 09:40) Subject Heading: *Romani Law*

Ian Hancock (Last visit: 2010-05-21) *The Struggle For The Control of Identity* [<http://www.radoc.net>] Accessible:< http://www.radoc.net/radoc.php?doc=art_d_identity&lang=en&articles=true > [Read: 2010-02-15]

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