

## Building a 'Bridge' of Justice: Simmel's View To Overcome Otherness Towards a Democratic World

Caetano, Pedro Jorge (1); Mendes, Maria Manuela (2,3)

1: New Lisbon University, Portugal; 2: University Institute of Lisbon, Portugal; 3: Faul-University of Lisbon, Portugal  
pedrocaetano[at]fcsh.unl.pt, mamendesster[at]gmail.com

With the purpose of contextualizing in sociological terms the pervasive discrimination that Gypsies/Roma people are continuously suffering in Portugal, we explore here some contributions of Simmel's epistemological analysis, mainly from his texts *Bridge and Door*, *Excursus on the Stranger* and *The Lye*, the latter concerning secret societies. In this sense, it is examined how the spatial and social segregation of the Gypsies fosters the conservation of two perfectly rooted and separated moral orders. On the one hand, the Gypsy moral order, bearing on moral precepts that are based on Gypsy origins and traditions; some of them configuring a device marked by intra-ethnic secrecy as clear identity defence strategies against the assimilationist threat. On the other hand, the wider social order that penalizes gypsy people as an unreliable people. Furthermore, Gypsies also do not trust non-Gypsies. Notwithstanding, and following Simmel's essay on lying, where he called on "enlightenment" to "the removal of the untruths operating in social life" as "entirely democratic in character", we argue that the existence of more social and educational opportunities for Gypsies is indispensable for the creation of a more just and solidary society. In order to investigate the conditions of possibility of a fairer and more inclusive society, we discuss the findings of an empirical investigation using a scenario-based questionnaire in 3 Portuguese secondary schools, with non-Roma students, about the best way to accommodate Roma school children in their own school. These findings point to two broad perspectives: the assimilation and individualization of the Gypsies.

## Real Bridges and Mental Borders in a Transylvanian Ethnically Mixed Community

Toma, Stefania

Romanian Institute for Research on National Minorities, Romania  
tomastefania76[at]yahoo.com

"The human being is likewise the bordering creature who has no border". Simmel 1997:69 We are overwhelmed through different channels that we are "different" from the "Other", and that the "Other" believes in something that does not conform to our cultural or social norms. It seems that the broader society struggles with different forms of alterity. Being categorized as "different" is more than a frame through which we understand the world, but it is one of the factors which define, cause, etc. different social processes on local level. This article deals with formal and informal strategies of dealing with the Roma/Gypsies in a rural Transylvanian locality. Although, nowadays there are no clear spatial borders between the old Hungarian majority and the Roma communities, the mental map of the local's still bear this separation (Migdal 2004). The physical (river) and symbolic (ethnic) borders are continuously crossed, more or less successfully. While the bridge materializes the illusion that the two sides of the river now form one single locality uniting old inhabitants with the newcomers, more subtle and symbolic bridges ensure a more valuable connection of separated communities. This symbolic bridge is the ritual kinship between Hungarians and Roma through Godparenthood (G. and P. van Berghe 1966, Mintz and Wolf 1950, Goody 1970). Godparenthood relations in one hand extend the social network of the Roma families; on the other hand contribute to the maintenance and reinforcement of social cohesion in the community by granting new content to the work relationships between different ethnic groups.