

## REGULAR SESSION INFORMATION

**Title of Session:** Conceptualizing Inequality: Does Difference Make A Difference?

**Name of Session Convener(s):** *Manuela Boatca*, Freie Universität Berlin;

*Elisa Reis*, Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro

**Chairs:** *Manuela Boatca*, Freie Universität Berlin; *Elisa Reis*, Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro

**Comments:** This session is organized on behalf of ISA WG02, Historical and Comparative Sociology

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I) *Use of Remittances of Migrant Mine Workers from Lesotho: Welfare and Public Policy Implications of Persistent Declines in Migrant Numbers*

Sam Mensah, UFS South Africa

II) *Gypsy/Traveller Children and the Socio-Spatial Construction of Schooled Self*

David Cudworth, De Montfort University, Leicester

III) *Education on Immigration: The Preventive Evaluation Promoting Integration in School Spaces*

Karla Haydê Fonseca, Universidade do Minho, Braga

Ribamar Fonseca Júnior, Universidade do Minho, Braga

IV) *Fashion, Inequality, and Democracy*

Alicja Raciniewska, Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań

**Session description:**

The idea of equality as paramount value is one of the major characteristics of modernity. In the West, together with the emergence and consolidation of the nation-state as an ideological amalgamation of authority and solidarity, equality came to constitute the core notion underlying the institutionalization of the modern status of citizenship. Rejecting the idea of natural differences that had previously been used to justify rigid social hierarchies, the individualistic culture of modernity redefined the opposite of equal as “unequal”, and no longer as “different”. It is only in recent decades that the idea of the right to difference as part and parcel of ongoing global processes is slowly recognized as a legitimate claim and as a necessary condition for enforcing equality. However, the revamped discourses of difference - as diversity, multiculturalism, or cosmopolitanism - frequently obscure the relations of power underlying the structures of inequality they are meant to describe. How does sociology deal with these competing notions of equality, inequality and difference? The session aims to discuss in both theoretical and empirical terms the tensions between inequality and difference as central notions guiding the analysis of the structural transformations of power relations in the modern world.

**Abstracts:**

*I) Use of Remittances of Migrant Mine Workers from Lesotho: Welfare and Public Policy Implications of Persistent Declines in Migrant Numbers*

Sam Mensah, UFS South Africa

Using mainly primary data, this article demonstrates that remittances of migrant mine workers put migrant households among the highest earners in rural Lesotho and increase their welfare levels through higher spending on basic consumption needs and on education in the short term, and, in the long term, on enlargement of agricultural operations and on constriction of residential accommodation. The article also demonstrates that, with migrant numbers and remittances on the wane as a result of retrenchments and non-renewal of contracts, former migrant households are threatened with income vulnerability and poverty in Lesotho's high unemployment environment. It is argued that the optimistic expectations of migrant miners to work in the mines “till retirement”, which discourage interest in alternative economic activities, could worsen the economic prospects of their households. To redress the welfare loss, the article recommends that the “till retirement” mentality of migrants should be changed and that retraining of ex- and even current-migrant mine workers in trade skills and entrepreneurship as a way of increasing their absorption into economic life in Lesotho should be an important agenda of public policy.

Key words: migration, remittance use, welfare, retraining, public policy

JEL Classification: E24, F24, I31, J61, R23

## *II) Gypsy/Traveller Children and the Socio-Spatial Construction of Schooled Self*

David Cudworth, De Montfort University, Leicester

Concerns over the underachievement of Gypsy/Traveller children in the UK educational system has been acknowledged by policy makers for forty years. Despite this commitment and rhetoric around equality of opportunity and multiculturalism children from Gypsy/Traveller communities continue to experience discrimination and remain the worst achieving minority group in the UK education system.

The paper argues that the discrimination experienced by children from nomadic communities has been historically constituted through the key political and social territorialized policies of modernity – territorialized policies of nation states. The emphasis of this political project has been associated with the need for assimilation into a sedentarised existence and thus a rejection of nomadism as a legitimate way of being. The development of state education became synonymous with the development of a cohesive identity, a specific set of values, and social improvement. As a result, many children from these communities remain marginalised within the socio-structural configuration of schools. Drawing on the work of Lefebvre and Soja, in particular, this paper examines the situation of children from Gypsy/Traveller communities using spatial theory, and locates the marginalization and exclusion of these children within the context of the socio-spatial landscape of school life. The paper draws on interview material from parents and young people from these communities and those who work with these children in schools, as well as ethnographic observation in schools.

This paper will suggest that in the case of Gypsy/Travellers state mechanisms to promote equality via educational achievement are unable to accommodate the difference of nomadism and reinforce structural inequalities.

## *III) Education on Immigration: The Preventive Evaluation Promoting Integration in School Spaces*

Karla Haydê Fonseca, Universidade do Minho, Braga

Ribamar Fonseca Júnior, Universidade do Minho, Braga

The key role of education is the development and integral formation of man and citizenship. And it is in schools, during socialization processes, that it is given the opportunity to develop identity and autonomy, interacting, increasing the emotional bonds, recognizing, learning and growing with mutual differences. In this context, the immigrant person deals with the prejudice, trying to integrate himself, battling against the strange and the strangeness. And it is in the school spaces, where was not supposed to occur any type of discrimination against the immigrant person, you realize that the word citizenship has no meaning in practice. The problems faced by immigrant children are never taken into consideration, which include cultural and linguistic differences, as well as living in a difficult socioeconomic status. In this paper, we will make a reflection about the relevance on preventive evaluation developed by educators, so as to propitiate school spaces to

become a link with the host country, working for the citizenship development and immigrant respect, transforming the school space into a pleasant place, where immigrant person would not need to lose his identity to feel himself as part of the society where he lives.

Key Words: Citizenship, Education, Evaluation, Immigration

#### IV) *Fashion, Inequality, and Democracy*

Alicja Raciniewska, Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań

Fashion is now a huge global business and one of the most important institutions of the individualistic modern societies. Fashion system can be seen also as the spirit of the capitalism turned into refined belief system which is having power over the image, people's concepts of reality, deepest consciousness, needs and dreams. For this reason, in my speech, I would like to take a look at how notions like "difference", "equality" and "inequality" are perceived and defined in the contemporary fashion.

The development of fashion in the twentieth and twenty-first century is often described as the process of "democratization of fashion" and giving each individual the opportunity to be fashion-able. But can we talk about the full democratization of fashion? And what does it actually mean? How the word "democracy" is used in the context of fashion? What are the implications of the application of democratic values and civil rights concept to the fashion discourse?

In the era of "democratization of fashion", in recent decades we witness the debates about ethical fashion, sweatshops, equal pay, issues of power, social justice and social injustices executed through fashion. Some of these issues, such as sweatshops, have been discussed since the birth of the industrial revolution, yet they are left unresolved or simply moved beyond immediate sight. Why? What these debates tell us about the inequalities and structural transformations of power relations in the modern world? How fashion shapes our sociality, the perception of inequality and the current political issues? In my speech I will try to answer those questions.