

Roma Families and Education in a Changing Era: The internal contradictions of the rationale of three Roma mothers concerning their children's education.

Tonia Papadopoulou, P.H.D. student in University of Peloponnese

Abstract

In contemporary times the rapid changes occurring in political, social, economic and ideological terms, impose flexibility and demand the adoption of individual mobility strategies not as an alternative choice of action but as the one and only way of survival in the global society. People who face difficulties in keeping up with these transformations and responding to their demands are coming from social groups based in principles of mechanical solidarity where the social cohesion and the unity of the group overcomes the individual needs of its members.

Roma people, as members of such communities, are expected to experience major contraventions, as they will be forced to choose between the particularities of their nomadic lifestyle and the assimilation with the dominant cultural model. The strategies that Roma will have to apply in the purpose of their assimilation may be in conflict with basic norms of their community.

The following essay is based on the interviews of three Roma mothers regarding the education of their children. The purpose of this study is to show the contradiction of their rationale and of the strategies that they adopt. Although these mothers are aware of the consequences of these global shifts in economy and society, as well as the importance of education and specialization and their close ties to the labor market, they seem to be unwilling or unready to act according to the demands of our era as far as their children's education is concerned and their expectations of it. These interviews reveal their internal contradictions, their anxiety and the obligation to comply with the norms of their community.