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Editorial. Special Issue: working on the ground to contest inequalities. Insights about ethnic minorities, indigenous communities and migrants navigating geographies worldwide

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Date of publication: March 15th, 2020

Edition period: March 2020 – September 2020

To cite this article: Sordé-Martí, T., Macías-Aranda, F., Aiello, E., and Cisneros-Kostic, R.M. (2020). Editorial. Special Issue: working on the ground to contest inequalities. Insights about ethnic minorities, indigenous communities and migrants navigating geographies worldwide. *International Journal of Roma Studies*, 2(1), 1-3. doi: [10.17583/ijrs.2020.5266](https://doi.org/10.17583/ijrs.2020.5266)

To link this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.17583/ijrs.2020.5266>

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Editorial. Special Issue: working on the ground to contest inequalities. Insights about ethnic minorities, indigenous communities and migrants navigating geographies worldwide

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The current number of the International Journal of Roma Studies (IJRS) is a Special Issue presenting a collection of articles that touch upon ethnic minorities, indigenous communities, migrants and refugees navigating the challenges encountered at home and host societies.

The idea of opening this number to cases that do not tackle solely on the Roma communities emerged almost a year ago while discussing with other colleagues with whom some of us collaborated in the framework of the European-funded SALEACOM project (MSCA-RISE-2014, Project Number 645668), about the constraints faced by our communities especially in the field of education and employment, and how most of us wanted to keep the exchange and conversations started in the project as a way of continue sharing experiences and strategies, and strengthen the allies built across the world.

The IJRS offered us a forum where to host this ongoing debate, by dedicating this number to discuss growing works focused on different communities, and knitted by a common thread – what needs to be done to contest uneven situations of inequalities, and show specific examples of what is already being done at the grassroots level by communities themselves. In this regard, in this Special Issue we collect four articles, authored by researchers based in New Zealand, Brazil, Canada and Spain.

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The first article, authored by a group of researchers based at the University of Auckland (New Zealand), studies the experiences of students from working- and upper-class backgrounds. Drawing on qualitative interviews, this investigation reveals how working-class students, most of whom come from Indigenous Māori and Pacific ethnic backgrounds, are forced to navigate obstacles infused with interpersonal and institutional racism. Underscoring the disparities expressed by study participants, the research makes the argument of the need for universities to reframe how resources are allocated to students from diverse backgrounds.

The second article moves to the field of critical pedagogy, and the case of Syrian refugees. In this article, Prof. Shirley R Steinberg based at the University of Calgary (Canada), conducts an ethnography in order to engage in what she calls critical activist pedagogy. Using as a theoretical framework the contributions of Radical Love and Critical Pedagogy authors (Paulo Freire, Joe Kincheloe and Jesús Gomez), Steinberg narrates in an elegant manner the plight of Syrian refugees but at the same time, the organizing networks led by those based on host communities to welcome them, and provide first aid support. Three different scenarios encountered by refugees are discussed in this ethnography; that of Syrian refugees in Budapest, Hungary the work with newcomers from Syria to Canada, and how to engage in a dialogue in learning a critical media literacy; and finally the case of expelled Turkish refugees also in Canada.

The third article approaches the case of Afro-Brazilian and African communities in Brazil. Researchers Marciele Nazaré Coelho, Francisca de Lima Constantino from the University of Sao Carlos (Brazil), engage in dualistic and emancipatory theories to advance the reflection of events occurring in the Brazilian educational context with Afro-Brazilian students. By reflecting on the educational contexts and experiences of primary school teachers, the authors present potential pathways on how to advance towards an antiracist education, favouring dialogue and respect between students from various backgrounds.

Finally, the last article focuses on a case study about inter-ethnic friendship and its potential to advance good coexistence. By looking at the case about friendship between a leader from the Roma community, and a leader from the Pakistani community based in a vulnerable neighbourhood in

the city of Badalona (Barcelona), Spanish researchers made the case of how against what is traditionally portrayed in mainstream media or political forums (such as ongoing confrontations and struggle for resources between ethnic groups), strong friendship bonds among people of different cultures and ethnic backgrounds working together at the very grassroots level can serve as the basis not only for conflict resolution but also to advance towards peaceful coexistence and collaboration.

It is our intention that the IJRS continues being a forum in which to promote lively academic discussions, engaging in a sincere way with those experiences taking place on the ground and providing knowledge that can serve to advance towards more democratic and inclusive societies.

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