

BOOK REVIEW

Jozefien Van Caeneghem. 2019. *Legal Aspects of Ethnic Data Collection and Positive Action: The Roma Minority in Europe*. Cham: Springer Nature Switzerland. 728 pp.

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Over the past decades, there has been overwhelming number of Romani population facing discrimination and exclusion in different EU countries. This book *Legal Aspects of Ethnic Data Collection and Positive Action: The Roma Minority in Europe* provides insight into the legal aspects of ethnic data collection and positive action that are missing in the national policies of the European countries to fight discrimination and improve the situations of the Roma people as well as other racial minorities (p. 715). The author of this book Jozefien Van Caeneghem draws her inspiration from a longstanding research interest in the Roma and indigenous minority studies. In her early stage of academic career, she has conducted research on racism and racial discrimination for FRANET, the multidisciplinary research network of the European Union (EU) Agency for Fundamental Rights. Currently, she is affiliated at the Faculty of Law and Criminology of the Vrije Universiteit Brussel. Thus, the author's activities contribute to ethnic and minority studies in Europe.

The book is composed of two parts and includes 12 chapters. Chapter 1 offers an introduction to the topics. Chapter 2 provides an overview of the key concepts used in the discussion of the Roma and human rights. Part I of the book explores ethnic data collection and includes an analysis of the key elements, rules and principles (Chapter 3), the benefits, risks, data sources and methods (Chapter 4) and the application to the Roma community (Chapter 5). In Part II, the author focuses to positive action, its role and its link to ethnic data (Chapter 6) as well as the applicable international and European framework (Chapters 7 and 8). It also reviews how positive action can be applied in relation to the Roma (Chapter 9), provides insight into its practical application of four key areas (Chapter 10) and gives special consideration to intercultural mediation in the promotion of the Roma equality and inclusion (Chapter 11). Finally, the book ends with conclusions and recommendations (Chapter 12).

The book clarifies the origin and history of the Roma population and provides numerous accounts on their discrimination and social exclusion. They encounter deep-rooted multidimensional and interlinked social exclusion daily, including the spheres of education, housing, employment and healthcare (p. 13). This information helps policymakers and other stakeholders understand the complexity of the exclusion of the Roma people and formulate effective and efficient anti-discrimination and inclusion policies. In this case, the author considers the heterogeneity and diversity among the Roma communities and focuses on equality, anti-discrimination and social inclusion (p. 4).

The author advocates the ethnic data-disaggregated approach emphasising on a population-wide statistics broken down by racial origin that provides vital information on the size, demographic composition and level of social and economic integration of migrant and minority groups in comparison to other population groups in a given country (p. 260). There is a widespread reluctance to collect the ethnic disaggregated data that establish ethnic categories. Therefore, the statistics are often not ethnically disaggregated, which may cause problems in writing reports and monitoring because of limited comparability, inadequate information and the role of intersectionality to fight against discrimination and improve inclusion (pp. 21 and 319). Notwithstanding, this uncertainty makes it difficult to collect reliable, recent and accurate data for the development, monitoring and evaluation of effective targeted policies towards the special needs of the Roma communities (p. 334). According to the author, the disaggregated data collection is the most appropriate approach to ethically identify people in terms of different ethnic categories for equality and anti-discrimination (p. 257).

Intersectionality as a feminist sociological theory was introduced by Crenshaw to explain and deal with various forms of overlapping and intersecting social, economic and political marginalisation that create unique dimensions of disempowerment offering disadvantaged members of already disadvantaged groups (Crenshaw 1989: 139–167). In the opinion of Van Caeneghem (p. 21), the disaggregated ethnic data on the intersection of ethnic discrimination, poverty and other discrimination grounds, including gender and how it affects the situation of the Roma minority group in Europe, are imperative in the research of both racial discrimination and socio-economic marginalisation aspects.

In addition, the government, organisations and minority groups are often unaware of the potential benefits of the disaggregated ethnic data (p. 260). The author of this book recommends the collection of the disaggregated ethnic data with numerous benefits for the Roma population, other minority groups and the whole society (p. 258). This approach exposes and accurately measures the level of inequalities, discrimination and exclusion in the society (p. 262). It also facilitates the identification of ethnic groups that may require special measures to meet their needs (p. 261). In this case, the absence of ethnic data can implicitly impede the recognition of minority groups such as the Roma population by the state (p. 160). This suggests that the disaggregated data collection is significant to unveil racial bias and discrimination across heterogeneous population, and especially towards the Roma people who face multiple discriminations.

In fact, ethnic data collection is beneficial in ethnic and minority studies that negotiate the perceptions in the design and implementation of anti-discrimination and social cohesion policies of multilevel stakeholders, actors and institutions (p. 160; see also Esien 2019). Thus, the ethnically disaggregated data serves as organisational and regulatory tool to monitor and control the fight against discrimination and social exclusion as well as to improve the social cohesion and belonging of the Roma and other minority groups.

In short, the book analyses the fight against discrimination and social exclusion of the Roma population and other minority groups with inclusive policy-related approaches. The

study has indicated that the disaggregated ethnic data collection approach may facilitate data accuracy in anti-discrimination and inclusion-related policy arena to improve the well-being of the Roma and other minority groups, but the method still faces inadequate implementation. This book confirms the previous findings and contributes to our understandings that despite the fight against inequalities, the Roma people still face marginalisation, political exclusion and prejudices (Rorke 2007: 97) and are regarded as social underclass.

Although the author considers many aspects in this book, she insufficiently addresses the question of people with disabilities (PWDs) and their marginalisation. Disability in connection to inequality is a topic that may have earned a separate chapter because different aspects of disability should not simply be joined in one monolithic category in policy formulation, development and processes to fight against the diverse forms of (political and/or social) inequality (see Esien 2020: 268). One of the reasons is that this special group of vulnerable people belongs to a group within the heterogeneous population of the minority group that often face multiple exclusion in different welfare production sub-regimes, especially in access to social and/or public benefits, which deserves a disaggregated data collection approach (within ethnic minority studies) to develop precise and targeted policy measure.

In sum, the book addresses relevant issues for ethnic data collection and for the positive action to sustain belonging and a cohesive society. This is relevant not only to scholars but also to policymakers and practitioners in the ramification of ethnic minority policymaking, analyses and implementation process.

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Competing Interests

The author has no competing interests to declare.

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