

Buad Kholes, Arianna Taddei, Catia Giaconi

INCLUDING JERUSALEM

Educational Justice, Inclusion,
and Community Resilience



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INCLUDING JERUSALEM
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and Community Resilience



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Preface

Catia Giaconi

President of the Italian Scientific Society of Special Pedagogy (SIPeS)

As President of the Italian Scientific Society of Special Pedagogy (SIPeS), it is a true privilege to introduce this volume, which stems from an international research project rooted in the complexity of contemporary research within contexts of protracted emergency. SIPeS has long recognised how Special Pedagogy represents a frontier in which researchers are called to respond critically and creatively to the evolving challenges of inclusion (Caldin & d'Alonzo, 2012; d'Alonzo & Giaconi, 2024; SIPeS, 2024). These challenges include supporting self-determined and quality-oriented life paths for people with disabilities, promoting their inclusion across life environments, and strengthening professional competence, while addressing the growing complexity of educational and social contexts (Cottini, 2004; Giaconi, 2015; d'Alonzo, 2018; Caldin & Giaconi, 2021; Aiello & Giaconi, 2024). In the uniqueness of such challenges lies the precious contribution of this book, demonstrating how pedagogical research can continue to generate knowledge, dialogue, and transformative agency even in contexts marked by structural inequalities and profound vulnerability.

Since its foundation, the Italian Scientific Society of Special Pedagogy has framed Special Pedagogy as a discipline committed to advancing equity, participation, and social inclusion. Its mandate to protect every person's right to live a life of quality and fulfillment took shape through the constant – and still ongoing – critical examination of life environments, questioning the conditions that shape our daily experiences and promoting generative processes capable of building a genuine culture of inclusion (WHO, 2001; UN, 2006; Giaconi, 2015). Such an endeavour represents an act of ethical responsibility, rooted in our research tradition and projected onto our future, which are both inherently related to our scientific identity (SIPeS, 2024).

Discussing inclusion and social participation in an emergency context such as East Jerusalem requires us to critically re-examine some of the core concepts of our discipline: barriers, facilitators, the right to education, and vulnerability (UNESCO, 1994, 2011; UNESCO & UNICEF, 2015). Within this perspective, the questions addressed in this volume are not confined to the Palestinian context. Rather, they strive to extend beyond geographical boundaries, resonating with the concerns of the broader international scientific community and calling for meaningful change. Such an understanding lies at the heart of our scientific tradition and recalls the enduring legacy of Andrea Canevaro, one of the founding figures of contemporary Special Pedagogy. Canevaro encouraged us to attend carefully to both visible and invisible boundaries, questioning their meaning and educational implications while reminding us that there can be possibilities of passage (2006). Our Scientific Community is deeply grounded in the complementarity he saw between *boundaries*, which acknowledge and preserve uniqueness and differences, and *pathways*, which make encounter, dialogue, and community possible. The pedagogical challenge, therefore, is not to choose one over the other, but to hold them in creative balance (Aiello & Giaconi, 2024; d'Alonzo & Giaconi, 2024). It is this pedagogical intuition that we hope to cultivate, nurture, and carry forward through continuous reflection and research. These considerations therefore invite us to reflect on how inclusive educational systems can rise, evolve, and continue to uphold human dignity, democracy, and Quality of Life even when educational communities are confronted with instability, turmoil, and uncertainty.

Within contexts where the continuity of education is most severely challenged, Special Pedagogy is called upon to reaffirm its scientific mission, underlining how inclusive education represents a stance, a way of interpreting reality itself (SIPeS, 2024). It seeks to acknowledge and overcome existing barriers, to protect and value diversity, and to foster a sense of belonging as a form of citizenship and reciprocal recognition (Canevaro, 2006). Promoting inclusion in the most adverse circumstances implies navigating the dynamic intersection between the *actual* reality – grounded in concrete evaluations and actionable measures – and the *potential* one, which involves the ability to nurture a sense of desire, imagination, and hope (Giaconi, 2015). The complementarity of these two spheres allows for a solid projection towards different, alternative scenarios, which can guide everyday educational practice.

It is precisely within this intersection that this book is framed, presenting both theoretical reflections and empirical evidence grounded in an articulated process of shared-knowledge production. By channeling the voices of researchers, teach-

ers, pupils, and their parents, the Palestinian experience becomes far more than the subject of a study: it becomes a lens through which the international scientific community is invited to rethink the meaning of inclusion, educational responsibility, and social justice. Such an endeavour advances a particularly sound perspective, because it resists simplistic interpretations and reductionist narratives, embracing instead the complexity, depth, and multidimensional nature of educational reality. By doing so, this book avoids linear explanations or predefined solutions, offering a pedagogical perspective that recognises how inclusion is always shaped by the interplay between social, political, and cultural dimensions. In this sense, the volume invites us to welcome complexity as the starting point for its pedagogical inquiry.

The international cooperation between the University of Macerata (Italy) and the Al-Quds University (Palestine), at the very heart of this project, reflects SIPeS's longstanding commitment to promoting encounter and dialogue with other scientific communities, promoting reciprocity and mutual learning. The openness to intercultural dialogue here represents a process in which, as stated by Canevaro (2017), each part witnesses reality and asks themselves questions, coming together to advance knowledge by initiating a dialogue. To this end, the contamination between expertises and lived experiences, which will be among the objects of reflection in this book, emerges as a core trajectory within Special Pedagogy research, underling how meaningful change can only emerge through shared responsibility and a common vision for a better future (d'Alonzo & Giaconi, 2024).

Ultimately, this volume speaks not only to those involved in the Palestinian context, nor solely to scholars advancing research on Education in Emergencies. The book addresses all those who believe that inclusive education has the responsibility to generate well-being, safeguard human rights, and create opportunities for authentic participation within communities. The Palestinian experience, as will be illustrated in the following pages, reminds us that inclusion is never built under ideal circumstances. However, it can find a way to flourish amidst upheaval and constraints, as it foundationally relies on human relationships and competencies. Its dynamic nature implies the responsibility to construct and sustain it through every day practice, promoting professional agency, self-determination and empowerment, as well as community involvement and educational co-responsibility.

The reflections presented above highlight the urgency of developing a pedagogical understanding of co-design and collaborative networking as essential dimensions of professional practice and educational development, supporting the

active commitment (Canevaro, 2006) required to prepare professionals capable of inhabiting the complexity of the inclusive paradigm. As Canevaro consistently reminds us, inclusion is a journey in constant movement (2006, 2020a, 2020b): "...we can learn to know the pathways only by walking them. This means developing professional competences that enable us to understand boundaries, pathways, and limits" (Canevaro, 2006, p. 11).

This book thus faithfully unfolds around the core focus of Special Pedagogy: the centrality of the person within their life contexts (WHO, 2001; UN, 2006; Giaconi, 2015; Caldin & Giaconi, 2021; d'Alonzo & Giaconi, 2024; SIPeS, 2024). The educational question, as proved by the work of our Scientific Community, is never limited to the individual level, but always concerns the quality of the relationships, environments, opportunities, and communities that shape everyday experience. As a consequence, promoting inclusion means simultaneously supporting personal agency and transforming the contexts in which people live, so that participation, belonging, and the legitimate right to Quality of Life can become concrete possibilities for everyone.

By weaving together scientific rigour and lived experience, this volume authentically invites future generations of researchers and educators to continue rethinking existing realities to collectively build a solid, sustainable, and inclusive future for all.

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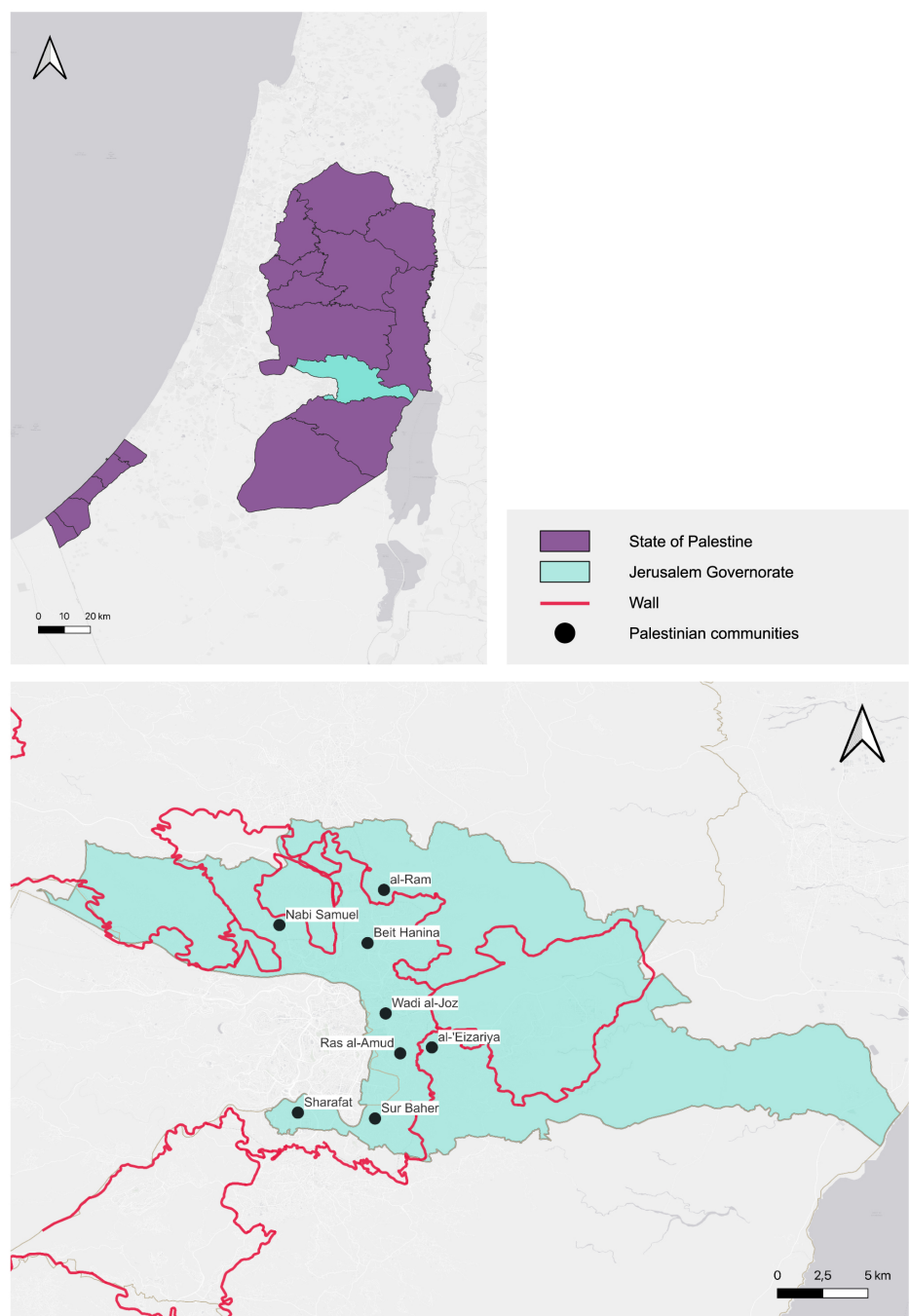


Figure 1. State of Palestine and Jerusalem Governorate

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Including Jerusalem. Educational Justice, Inclusion, and Community Resilience presents a pedagogical research and international cooperation initiative promoted by EducAid NGO, aimed at promoting inclusive educational processes in primary schools in East Jerusalem and surrounding areas within the Including Jerusalem project. The initiative seeks to advance the right to inclusive and quality education in a context of protracted emergency, fostering dialogue between research, educational communities, and context-responsive practices. The volume approaches inclusion as a pedagogical paradigm through which the relationships between rights, participation, social justice, and Quality of Life can be critically explored, recognising schools and educational communities as key settings for fostering individual and collective resilience, belonging, and opportunities for the future. Drawing on the perspectives of researchers, school leaders, teachers, students, and families, the book captures the complexity of the Palestinian experience and highlights practices, professional competences, and community resources that can sustain inclusive processes even in conditions of profound vulnerability. The volume is addressed to those working in education, international cooperation, and pedagogical research, offering a context-sensitive perspective on inclusive education in emergencies and contributing to the international debate on inclusion, educational justice, and community resilience.

