



BORDERS, IDENTITIES AND BELONGING

EDITORIAL

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Territorial borders, collective identities, and experiences of belonging have been profoundly reshaped by the mechanisms of globalization, resulting in the mutual intersection of the issues and challenges that characterize each of these spheres. This issue examines such intersections through interdisciplinary lenses that combine conceptual innovation, empirical mapping, and ethical reflection to illuminate two research avenues developed transversally by the collected papers: *a*) how governance instruments and policy frameworks mediate rights, inclusion and access to physical and symbolic resources across territorial and cultural borders; *b*) how identity construction and claims to belonging are performed, contested, and negotiated through cultural practices and communicative platforms within local and global networks.

From a theoretical standpoint, the first contribution develops a conceptual and methodological framework for assessing how human rights are perceived and implemented across diverse cultural settings. Drawing on approaches from philosophy of science – positivism, interpretivism, and critical realism – Agyare constructs operational indices to quantify the extent to which human rights are justified and applied in three domains (environmental justice, digital rights, and healthcare access), resulting into two main conclusions. On the one hand, strong principled commitments to environmental protection, digital development and healthcare policy frequently collide, to varying degrees, with practices of exclusion and low representation. As a consequence, the author contends that rendering glocalization measurable in more precise terms may offer a promising route for designing context-responsive solutions capable of producing concrete results.

Along similar lines, the paper by Hussain interrogates the politics of climate adaptation in the Sundarbans ecoregion by tracing how multilateral funding streams and institutional priorities reconfigure local capacities to respond to accelerating hazards. Anchored in the framework of the Sustainable Development Goals, the study juxtaposes two case studies – Gosaba (India) and Khulna (Bangladesh) – to show how similar project templates (embankment upgrades, early warning systems, and

livelihood diversification schemes) generate divergent outcomes when filtered through local social relations and ecological contingencies. Against the privileging of technocratic governance, the article advocates a justice-based adaptation agenda that foregrounds community-generated knowledge, gender-aware budgeting, and adaptive project designs that accommodate contextual uncertainty.

Building a bridge between methodological reflection and empirical research, Hiloidari and Bhattacharjee present a bibliometric study on the role of social media in women's empowerment. Tracing the scholarly evolution of the topic between 1994 and 2024, the authors employ citation networks, occurrence analysis and thematic-cluster identification to reconstruct the field's contours. The results shows that digital participation yields measurable effects on women's empowerment and strengthens cross-border digital activism. Yet, at the same time, the digital arena reproduces structural inequalities typical of the offline world, as women are disproportionately affected by algorithmic bias and cyber-harassment. In conclusion, the study highlights promising targets for intervention – digital literacy, reforms of platform policies, and solidarity networks – and calls for research that integrates quantitative mapping with qualitative studies of women lived experiences.

Remaining in the context of gender studies, Jemiluyi examines identity construction and collective resistance in the contemporary Afrobeats scene. Within a rich theoretical framework ranging from performance and discourse analysis to African womanism, the paper analyses a corpus of exemplary songs and artistes from the genre and identifies diverse performative strategies of gendered and cultural resistance, including assertiveness, satire, and excess. Crucially, the paper shows that what may appear as a localized and somehow frivolous sphere functions as an arena in which artistes can rearticulate womanhood and contest patriarchal authority.

Yet within the African ethical tradition, Nyamudo applies Ubuntu ethics to questions of intergenerational justice. By combining conceptual analysis of Ubuntu philosophy with a close reading of South African policy examples, the paper argues that



future persons possess moral worth insofar as they are embedded in communal relations. Therefore, policies that stigmatize or constrain reproduction among the poor are ethically objectionable, as they efface the dignity of future persons and fracture intergenerational solidarity. Grounding intergenerational justice in Ubuntu, Nyamudo argues, shifts the focus from atomistic rights-talk toward duties of care, reciprocity, and the maintenance of communal integrity across time, offering an African-derived normative framework for evaluating reproductive and distributive policies in contexts such as South Africa.

The “Other essays” section hosts two papers. The first one is a historical contribution by Tommaso Dell’Era on the management of clerical sexual abuse in the Catholic Church and a paper by . Using archival reconstruction, the author maps institutional practices of case management at a global level, highlighting procedural evasions, omissions, and containment strategies that obscured responsibility and impeded accountability and reparation. Framing these findings within an original theoretical and conceptual register, the paper shows how juridical, pastoral, and diplomatic logics intertwined to shape institutional responses. Ultimately, the article argues for renewed reflection on institutional responsibility, collective memory, and necessary reforms.

The second paper in the “Other essays” section allows to revisit the topic of borders with a clearer focus on the geographical dimension. In her comparative work, Hammouche explores the evolution of sister cities between French and Chinese municipalities, using Occitanie as a paradigmatic case. Tracing the lineage from Montpellier-Chengdu (1981) through post-1992 decentralization reforms, the paper situates sister city agreements within decentralized cooperation and local diplomacy. Drawing on semi-structured interviews in France and China, the author shows how municipal actors mobilized sister city arrangements for cultural exchange, economic partnership, and civic projects. While growing geopolitical tensions and mechanisms of deglobalization introduce new constraints to cooperation, the article brings to the fore the role of sister cities as a useful diplomatic instrument under shifting global orders.



All in all, the essays collected in this issue show how borders, identities, and belonging function both as points of friction and as nodes of possibility, and happen to converge on two operational imperatives: to adopt methodological and evaluative tools that measure the impact of local participation, cultural specificities and lived experiences in policy construction and implementation; to rethink governance forms that centre local voices, reciprocal responsibilities, and equitable resource distribution. These are pathways through which scholars and policy-makers can design interventions that hold together justice, culture, and sustainability within the hybrid territories of glocal modernity.

