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## **Introduction: Gender Knowledge: Epistemological and Empirical Contributions from the Global South**

By Emmanuelle Bouilly<sup>1</sup>, Virginie Dutoya<sup>2</sup>, Marie Saiget<sup>3</sup>

### **Editorial**

Women's and gender studies are now accepted academic subjects in many Global South countries, whether the field is well established—even institutionalized—or still emerging. However, this phenomenon is under-studied, even though the history, ideas, and key concepts of women's, feminist, and gender studies are becoming well documented in Europe and America (Lagrave; Brown; Bard; Clair and Heinen). This special edition therefore aims to shed light on knowledge production about women and gender *in and by* Southern countries, and not *about* these countries, as is often the case. On the one hand, this edition brings out the *local, regional and global dynamics of gender knowledge production and circulation* and, on the other hand, it focuses on the *content of this knowledge and highlights its specificities (or lack thereof) at the theoretical and epistemological levels*. Bringing together Northern and Southern feminist researchers, both junior and senior, offers an empirical and decentered analysis of gender knowledge production “from the margins” (hooks).

### **Questioning the International Division of Gender Knowledge Production: A Collective North-South Reflection**

Our reflection is based on a paradox: while research on gender has increased exponentially since the 1990s in Global South countries, the latter are rarely considered to be sites of knowledge production or theoretical debates (Connell, “Rethinking Gender from the South”). The first criticisms of women's and gender studies' ethnocentrism were formalized in the 1980s (Amadiume; Mohanty; Oyèwùmí). More recent works have shown that while the postcolonial and decolonial critique has influenced the field of women's and gender studies, it remains structured by North-South relations. Indeed, the so-called Global South countries are most often seen as fields for study and as repositories for concepts developed in Northern academia (Spivak, “Can the Subaltern Speak?”; Wöhrer). However, it is striking to note that most of the early criticism of women's and gender studies' ethnocentrism came from researchers who were institutionally based in the Global North, even though they might come “from” the Global South. This is symptomatic of a division of intellectual labor whereby fieldwork and data are located in the Global South while theory remains the preserve of the Global North (Hountondji; Connell, “Rethinking Gender from the South”; Verschuur). This phenomenon is part of a double logic of marginalization and reification of the Global South within the social sciences that can be traced to the colonial period (Said, *Orientalism*; Keim et al.). In the meantime, gender has become a tool for public action (Ampofo et al.; Cîrstocea et al.; Imam et al.). These dynamics impact the way gender knowledge is produced, and how the concept of gender circulates. Both the unequal division of intellectual labor that structures social sciences in the widest sense and the institutionalization of gender studies will be at the very heart of this special issue.

Here we use the term “Global South” to refer to Latin America, Asia, Africa, and Oceania, in other words, to the regions outside Europe and North America, which are “mostly (though not all) low-income and often politically or culturally marginalised” (Dados and Connell 12). Those areas are often described as sharing an “entire history of colonialism, neo-

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imperialism, and differential economic and social change through which large inequalities in living standards, life expectancy, and access to resources are maintained” (Dados and Connell 13). There are however debates on the geographical boundaries of the Global South, as well as on the heterogeneity of economic, social, and political situations that it contains. Taking those debates into account, we understand this category less geographically than relationally, i.e. in relation to the Global North, and within economic, political, and intellectual power relations, as well as “a distinctive positionality and an ethical subjectivity”, like “Third World” or “Periphery” (Tickner and Smith).

The initial impetus for this collective endeavor came from our own difficulties, as French researchers, working from France on gender issues in Global South countries—respectively, Burundi, Senegal, and India and Pakistan. How could we produce gender knowledge relating to these countries without reproducing different forms of domination, without falling back, as Gayatri C. Spivak would put it, “on a colonialist theory of most efficient information retrieval” (Spivak, “‘Draupadi’ by Mahasveta Devi” 382)? In 2018, we had the opportunity to develop this collective reflection, as we received a grant from the French Gender Institute<sup>4</sup> to develop a network and organize scientific events. In 2019, we organized two events. First, a two-day bilingual (English & French) international conference, entitled “Production and circulation of gender knowledge in the Global South”<sup>5</sup>, was set up in Paris in the spring of 2019. Second, a panel was organized at the international Conference “Globalisations et circulations des idées, des savoirs et des normes” [Globalization and circulation of ideas, knowledge, and norms] in September 2019 in Paris<sup>6</sup>. We then organized a seminar—which is still ongoing—at the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales (EHESS) in Paris. These events enabled us to open a discussion among researchers working on gender in the Global South but based (institutionally and physically) in different countries and continents. This also showed us the difficulties of establishing a lasting dialogue due to material difficulties (getting visas and funding), linguistic barriers, time differences, as well as the COVID-19 pandemic which has tended to accentuate those constraints. For instance, the initial ambition was to open a dialogue between French and English-speaking countries, and while we managed to do this in the conference, it became increasingly difficult to implement in terms of publication. We also found ourselves reproducing some academic legitimacy criteria while selecting papers and inviting scholars from around the world. Indeed, we also had to cope with the expectations of those providing funds and the fact that the organization of such an event was part of the evaluation process we have to go through to obtain tenure or career advancement (Belinga et al. 9), which is also true for Southern colleagues who are also forced to internationalize, i.e., to connect with the Global North. In this respect, the coordination of these events, and later this publication, illustrate how both local and global systems of domination are intermingled. This does not mean that we doubt the overall privileges that we have as researchers from the Global North, but it highlights the importance of examining precisely how these privileges deploy themselves and affect knowledge production processes at all levels. All the contributors to this special edition have participated in one of these events and committed themselves to continue this reflection collectively. Thus, despite the variety of locations, languages (English, French and Spanish), and disciplines (sociology, anthropology, political science, and history), the papers, and their authors, speak to one another. Grounded in empirical data, they all decenter the history of gender and women’s studies from various contexts in Latin America, Africa, and Asia. They thus show how gender

<sup>4</sup> <https://institut-du-genre.fr/>

<sup>5</sup> The programme is available here: <http://ceias.ehess.fr/index.php?4853>.

<sup>6</sup> The programme is available here: [https://www.gsrl-cnrs.fr/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Program2019\\_GlobalisationdesId%C3%A9es\\_Vlong\\_BAT-1-2.pdf](https://www.gsrl-cnrs.fr/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Program2019_GlobalisationdesId%C3%A9es_Vlong_BAT-1-2.pdf) [https://www.gsrl-cnrs.fr/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Program2019\\_GlobalisationdesId%C3%A9es\\_Vlong\\_BAT-1-2.pdf](https://www.gsrl-cnrs.fr/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Program2019_GlobalisationdesId%C3%A9es_Vlong_BAT-1-2.pdf)

knowledge production combines with a set of economic, social, and epistemological power relations, while opening up possibilities of creating autonomous and subversive knowledge.

In the following sections, we first discuss the interaction of social sciences and imperialism and the way women's and gender studies have been a focus for both contestation and reproduction of North-South inequalities. Second, we come back to the dual patterns of institutionalization and globalization of women's and gender studies. Third, we discuss the specificity of gender knowledge as it is produced in the Global South and whether it is "different" or "similar" (Bilgin) and the limits and difficulty of reconstructing the canon from this perspective. Fourth and finally, we present the eight articles that comprise this special edition.

### **Social Sciences and the (De)construction of Power**

Colonialism relied heavily on the collection of information and the production of knowledge (Said, Orientalism). Thus, the formal decolonization of the Global South did not result in the decolonization of knowledge (Keim). As shown by the notion of "academic dependency" (Alatas), the development of the social sciences in Global South countries is characterized by a division of intellectual labor, in which the Global South supplies fieldwork and data, while theory, methodology, and teaching paradigms remain the prerogative of the Global North (Connell, "Rethinking Gender from the South" 520). Despite their subversive stance, gender studies are not immune to this criticism. Various authors have shown the effects of the interweaving of women's and gender studies in North-South relations, both in terms of the domination of theoretical frameworks forged in the Global North (or in the West, in the often-preferred terminology) and the appropriateness of the conceptual frameworks employed (Bhaskaran; Dutoya, "Defining the 'queers' in India: The politics of academic representation"; Oyèwùmí). The invisibility of subaltern women and their experiences (Spivak, "'Draupadi' by Mahasveta Devi") or, on the contrary, their exoticization and reduction to the status of victims (Abu-Lughod; Win) have also been singled out.

These criticisms take several directions. Going further than denouncing the invisibility of "Third World women", authors such as Chandra T. Mohanty have deconstructed the "methodological universalism" that informs many feminist publications from the 1970s and 1980s (Mohanty 346). However, at the same time, she retained "women" and "gender" as useful analytical categories inasmuch as she called for contextualized and nuanced research into the realities of life experience for women from so-called Third World countries.

On the contrary, in her book *The Invention of Women*, Oyèwùmí Oyèwùmí discusses the relevance of the Western concept of gender within the African context. She disqualified gender as being rooted in a Western-specific form of social organization: the heterosexual and nuclear family system, irrelevant, in her view, to understanding African realities. She defends the idea that the precolonial Yoruba family, as well as Yoruba language, are "non-gendered". Instead, she highlights the importance of "seniority" (age) in ranking and differentiating people. This argument has received a lot of attention and criticism—including from African researchers—"as both an inaccurate account of precolonial society, and as replacing an essentialism of bodies with an essentialism of culture that helps to legitimize postcolonial patriarchy" (Connell, "The sociology of gender in Southern perspective" 555; Bakare-Yusuf; Pereira; Panata in this edition). Although some pre-colonial African societies are structured differently from European societies, gender is nonetheless a central category of differentiation and hierarchization. As Pallavi Banerjee and Raewyn Connell sum up:

The factual grounding of the claim that gender was introduced by colonialism is flimsy. The assertion of a unique African way of being is marked by cultural essentialism and conservatism. Pre-colonial African societies—and the same

can be said for pre-Columbian American societies<sup>7</sup>—did have gender hierarchies, did interact with each other, and constantly changed over time. We do not need to romanticize pre-colonial societies to recognize the strongly gendered character of colonization and its violent impact. (Banerjee and Connell, 2018: 64)

Paradoxically, even though Oyèwùmí asserts that “gender” is a product of colonialism, hence strongly reacting against Northern feminism, her contribution has been recognized by and included in Global North gender studies.

Overall, authors from the Global South (but more often from the Global South and having made a career in the Global North) are now recognized as major contributors to gender studies and are part of the “canon”. This growing recognition of the postcolonial and decolonial currents<sup>8</sup> within gender studies led Raewyn Connell to posit that gender studies are an example of a plural and “multi-centred” academic field (Connell, “Sociology for the Whole World”). Yet, such a vision is partial. An analysis of gender studies textbooks and reference publications has shown the pre-eminence of North America and Western Europe and researchers who are institutionally attached to them (Wöhrer). This raises an important question of who can access the global academic field as well as how and why. Furthermore, this growing recognition does not compensate for the general lack of awareness of women’s and gender studies’ dynamics within the Global South. Southern societies are often considered as receptacles for concepts developed by Northern academia (Keck and Sikkink; Naples and Desai; Desai). Without denying the primary emergence of gender as a concept in North America, the paradigm of dissemination and of a passive reception of women’s (and then gender, studies) is not always the most relevant (John, “Feminist Vocabularies in Time and Space”). Despite the extensive and rich reflexive literature produced on this subject (Rege; Bhagwat and Rege; Chaudhuri; John, *Women’s Studies in India: A Reader*), the history of women’s studies in India, its methodological, pedagogical, and epistemic debates are little known beyond the subcontinent. Similarly, the theoretical contribution of work on gender in Africa and South America is still too often neglected (Ampofo et al.; Amadiume; Imam et al.; Sow; Valdés; Lugones; Vigoya; Sadiqi; Oyèwùmí, *The Invention of Women: Making an African Sense of Western Gender Discourses*; Oyèwùmí, “Conceptualising Gender: Eurocentric Foundations of Feminist Concepts and the Challenge of African Epistemologies”). Knowledge is still validated by the Global North: top academic journals are based there, as well as most international conferences, the English language dominates academic publications, and the translations of academic works circulate mainly from the centers to the peripheries, while relations between the peripheries are often mediated by the centers (Heilbron). Thus, while being grounded in a strong critique of power, women’s and gender studies sometimes reproduce the structural inequalities at play in global knowledge production.

Exploring these issues requires a sociological study of the “structure, institutions and workforce of the global knowledge economy, its diversity of situations, and especially the relationships through which it operates and the dynamics of change in these relationships” (Connell et al. 740). To that end, our special edition pays close attention to the mechanisms

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<sup>7</sup> Oyèwùmí’s critique has been espoused by Maria Lugones in Latin America (Lugones, “Heterosexualism and the Colonial / Modern Gender System”; Lugones, “The Coloniality of Gender”).

<sup>8</sup> Postcolonial and decolonial feminism are two different currents. While postcolonial feminism emerged from/against the subalternist movement and within debates on South Asian historiography, decolonial feminism has its roots in Latin America, the two regions having very different colonial histories. This led to differentiated positions vis à vis Marxism, and global feminism, however, both currents question the hegemony of the Global North. For more details about the differences between these two currents, see Mendoza’s work on the coloniality of gender (Mendoza).

and actors in the institutionalization and globalization of gender knowledge, analyzing how these processes are differently experienced in the Global South.

### **The Political Economy of Gender Studies: Policy and Academia at the Crossroads**

Since the United Nations Decade for Women (1975-1985), in development and aid policies, gender has become a “buzzword” (Cornwall and Brock), even a “globalized category of public action and knowledge production” through gender mainstreaming (Cîrstocea et al.). In India for instance, the professionals, often women, in charge of these gender policies within public bodies, international organizations, NGOs, and private companies (Menon; Dutoya, “La Professionnalisation de La Cause Des Femmes En Inde” [The Professionalization of the Women’s Cause in India]) become experts and gender knowledge producers (Bustelo et al.; Prügl; Thompson and Prügl; Direnberger). In this respect, gender knowledge has expanded from the academic field, even though academics themselves can participate in the dissemination of gender outside universities, acting as consultants and moving between different professional worlds. Secondly, the globalization of social sciences, which accelerated in the 1990s (Heilbron, Boncourt, et al.), is characterized by the increasing amount of travel undertaken by Southern researchers, many of whom have been trained or worked in the Global North, as illustrated for example by the careers of Oyèrónké Oyèwùmí, Chandra Talpade Mohanty, Gayatri C. Spivak, Fatou Sow, and Amina Mama.

The effects of this double globalization are widely debated. Some see it as a recuperation, a de-politicization, or a de-radicalization of feminist concepts and struggles, a standardization and a uniformity of thinking, a perpetuation of imperialism and inequality, etc. Various authors have highlighted the dilution of the critical scope of gender due to its use beyond academic and feminist fields (Menon; Cîrstocea). Others prefer to emphasize the access of women’s movements to resources, the democratization of girls and women’s education, the appropriation, and the circumvention of unequal power relations by local female actors, the development of new conceptual tools, etc. Here lies the key issue: can gender be both a universal and institutionalized concept and remain a useful category of (critical) analysis (J. W. Scott; Menon; Cîrstocea). This is also true of other concepts related to gender and studied in this edition, such as “queer” (Dutoya) or “intersectionality” (Govinda; Panata; Sarkar). As Connell attests, “one of the most important [consequences for gender studies] is the framing of much gender research by economic development agendas” (Connell, “The sociology of gender in Southern perspective” 559). But it is worth asking whether dependence on international aid necessarily equates with the imposition of donor-driven agendas on gender research. Indeed, specialists in area studies have long demonstrated the agency and the resistance of subaltern actors and Southern societies, even in structurally unequal power relations (Bayart et al.; J. C. Scott).

Going beyond this debate about globalization effects requires empirical, locally rooted data to question concrete methods of legitimization and circulation processes, and concrete methods of appropriation of gender as a concept in various Global Southern contexts. Borrowing from a sociological approach to the circulation of ideas (Bourdieu), this edition aims to map the channels and the actors (publishers, universities, transnational institutions, activists, and teacher-researchers) who shape the fabric of gender knowledge (Heilbron, Guilhot, et al. 129). What textbooks, or concepts circulate? What are the social characteristics and trajectories of the actors involved? What are their resources and capital? What are their academic and professional backgrounds? Moreover, what are the institutional conditions, both local and global, of knowledge production? What tensions does the interaction between different worlds (governmental public action, international organizations, activists, scientists, non-governmental organizations, etc.) produce with respect to gender knowledge?

By moving away from the postulate of a univocal domination by the North, we want to highlight the (possibly asymmetrical) mechanisms of knowledge co-production. This implies analyzing the role of feminist scientific networks linking Global South countries, the national contexts and historicity of the processes under study, and the material conditions of knowledge production, especially funding, be it local or international, public, or private. Apart from a few well-resourced universities in the Global South, notably in Brazil, India, and South Africa, the scale of resources available for gender studies and research in the Global South remains low compared to the North. Although they are increasing, there are still few universities offering programs in women's or gender studies in Africa (about 30 throughout Africa in the early 2000s) and they face many obstacles, including a lack of qualified staff and institutional support as shown by Amina Mama (see also Adedeji Adebayo in this edition). To counter these problems, academics willing to develop such programs must turn to other sources of funding, such as international organizations or private foundations. In Brazil for example, the Ford Foundation assisted the emergence and institutionalization of gender studies as an academic field, by awarding grants to researchers, universities, and journals from 1978 to 1999 (Grossi, 2004). Addressing this phenomenon therefore involves thinking beyond academic actors and feminist organizations and including governments and local authorities, political parties, non-governmental organizations, international institutions, private foundations, and think tanks, gender-focused or otherwise.

Considering that gender studies "is involved in a global economy of knowledge" that leaves no culture untouched or separate (Connell, "The Sociology of Gender in Southern Perspective" 554), we should question how this process affects the concepts and methods used in gender research and teaching. Thus, our third and final research focus sheds light on the major and singular contribution of the Global South to the production of gender knowledge.

### **Decolonizing Knowledge: Re-building the Canon and Bridging Epistemic Communities**

The epistemological scope of Southern approaches to gender is often minimized, which contributes to maintaining a division of scientific work between theory (in the Global North) and data (in the Global South). Hence, this special edition thoroughly examines the power and originality of this knowledge as well as its ambiguity. As we have already stated, Northern wealth and power do not necessarily produce intellectual domination. On the other hand, knowledge about gender as produced in the Global South is not always radically "different" nor "resistant" to Northern knowledge. Instead, it can highlight a certain "similarity", which cannot be explained through "'teleological Westernization' ('they all seek to become like us anyhow') but as the 'effects of the historical relationship between the "West" [or Global North] and the non-West' [or Global South] in the emergence of ways of thinking and doing that are 'almost the same but not quite'" (Bilgin 6).

Scholars and activists from both the Global North and Global South are facing aggressive anti-gender campaigns (Corrêa et al.), which make dialogue and cooperation more essential and reinforce epistemic communities. This convergence can be seen in the identification of a common set of concepts and analytical categories between the Global North and the Global South, such as gender, intersectionality, queer, and so on, through which sexual, racial and class power relations and division of labor can be understood. And despite the debates and criticisms these authors generate, Connell noticed that "the conceptual world of Marx, Foucault, de Beauvoir and Butler" continues to shape most gender analysis "even when it is talking about sexuality in India, identity in Australia, migration in the Mediterranean or factories in Mexico" (Connell, "The Sociology of Gender in Southern Perspective" 553). This "similarity" is also manifest in the sharing of data collection methods and modes of knowledge-building with critical feminist approaches, such as participatory action research (Tickner 9) or



the belief that “emotion and intellect are mutually constitutive and sustaining oppositional forces in the construction of knowledge” (Code 47 quoted in Tickner 10).

Although “similar”, knowledge about gender as forged in the Global South is not exactly the same as in the Global North. Researchers from the Global South tend to confront this “conceptual world” with their local context, re-shaping it in the process. This is particularly evident in Gayatri C. Spivak’s work, as she can mobilize in the same text Derrida, Freud, Guha, Marx, Mahasweta Devi, and extracts from the Vedas (see for instance (Spivak, “‘Draupadi’ by Mahasweta Devi”; Spivak, “‘Can the Subaltern Speak?’”; Spivak, *En d’autres Mondes, En d’autres Mots : Essais de Politique Culturelle* [In other Worlds, in other Words: Essays in Cultural Politics]). Hence, gender translation strategies (Kaplan et al.), i.e., the operations of screening, reinterpretation, contestation, and adjustment of this concept, need to be considered more systematically. Furthermore, the building of new concepts and methods in and from the Global South, as well as their contribution to the new impetus in global gender research (Bose and Kim), should also be examined. How can we qualify the epistemology resulting from the knowledge production process? Are we witnessing the emergence of “borderlands epistemologies” (Harding 163)? Should we rather talk about “in-betweenness” or “rooted cosmopolitan knowledge”? Furthermore, is a new canon emerging in and from the Global South? Finally, under what conditions is a global dialogue possible between gender conceptions and feminist cooperation across national borders?

This special edition highlights the Southern actors’ agency and unique agenda in adopting—by adapting and reformulating—or rejecting Northern ways of thinking, researching, and teaching, but also in formulating new concepts and methodologies. There is such a diversity of fields that this edition does not postulate a unified use of the gender concept in the Global South, but suggests that there are common practices and questions, particularly regarding the very appropriateness of the concept of gender, the choice of vocabulary studied, and the need—or absence thereof—to produce “indigenous” knowledge and concepts (Oyèwùmí; Vanita).

### **The Articles**

This special edition brings together eight original contributions addressing gender knowledge production issues in different Global South countries: Costa Rica (Fournier Pereira), India (Dutoya, Govinda and Sarkar), Nigeria (Abebayo, Panata), South Africa (Gouws), and Tanzania (Wenzek). Spanning three continents, and with different methodologies, they share important hypotheses and premises. First, they go beyond the paradigms of dissemination, domination, and theoretical dependency. Second, they move away from top-down perspectives and propose empirical approaches sensitive to the on-going sociological processes of knowledge formation in and from Global South countries, looking at actors, places, and actual channels of knowledge circulation, such as scientific journals (Gouws), research projects (Sarkar), or researcher mobility (Wenzek, Govinda). Brought together, the articles shed light on the many actors and institutions (universities, international and non-governmental organizations, associations, activist movements, foundations, etc.) involved in the processes of gender knowledge production and dissemination. For example, Amanda Gouws investigates the role of academic journals and editors (such as *Agenda*) in South Africa, while Virginie Dutoya, Florence Wenzek, and Adedeji Adebayo focus on the institutionalization of women’s and gender studies at universities, respectively in India, Tanzania, and Nigeria. More specifically, Virginie Dutoya (India), and Florence Wenzek (Tanzania) analyze interactions between academics/universities and women’s and feminist movements. Some articles explore the knowledge formation process within specific research projects: a doctoral thesis in the case of Mar Fournier Pereira on transwomen in Costa Rica, and a Ford Foundation-funded research project on LGBT groups in India by Debarun Sarkar.

Finally, Radhika Govinda's article uses the classroom as the site for analyzing gender knowledge production. By examining her own teaching experience, she interrogates the ambition of intersectionality as a critical pedagogy. Third, the papers all pay attention to the historicity of the processes under study, and the local meanings and situated contents of knowledge. The plurality of "indigenous" meanings and epistemic proposals, beyond the well-known debate about the (ir)relevance of gender as a notion and its eurocentrism, are particularly well documented. In the articles by Sara Panata, Debarun Sarkar, and Radhika Govinda, the concept of intersectionality appears as a striking example of this on-going gender-related discussion and knowledge production between the Global South and Global North. Not only is the concept "essentially contested" (Gallie), but, as shown by Radhika Govinda and Sara Panata, to a large extent because of the realities of their local situation in the field, researchers in India and Nigeria had an intersectional understanding of gender even before the concept was coined.

The articles bring new answers to the debate around the disciplinary status of gender studies. In a nutshell, it has been traditional to oppose the disciplinary strategy, whereby women's (and later gender) studies are defined as a separate academic discipline, and the mainstreaming strategy, which advocates bringing a gender component into all disciplines. Our edition shows, unsurprisingly, that the situation on the ground is generally somewhere between these two poles. India and Nigeria offer a mixed picture in this respect. In the case of Nigeria, Adedeji Adebayo highlights the difficulties in developing gender studies as a multidisciplinary field, especially with a view to accumulating knowledge. In India, Virginie Dutoya explains that while in the 1980s the dominant view was that mainstreaming gender would be the best option, in the 1990s women's studies have *de facto* become a discipline, with the development of specific degrees, research centers and reviews. Today there are more than a hundred centers for women's and gender studies and teaching programs ranging from undergraduate electives to PhDs (University Grants Commission). However, in both cases, the issue of obtaining human and financial resources remains central and often unresolved. The development of gender studies as a specific discipline in India does not preclude the possibility of cross-fertilization with other fields of study such as postcolonial and subaltern studies. Beyond the Indian case, the intimate, yet conflicted relationship between gender studies and post- or de-colonial studies has been underlined by different authors in this edition (see Virginie Dutoya, Mar Fournier Pereira, Radhika Govinda and Debarun Sarkar in particular). And it emphasizes the importance of paying attention to the Global South to understand current developments in gender studies worldwide. It also becomes evident that while gender studies are becoming increasingly established in the academic field and teaching, gender studies' interdisciplinarity and openness need to be preserved. The papers also remind us how women's and gender studies have been developed by individual as well as collective activism, and the interweaving of personal as well as academic trajectories, as shown by Radhika Govinda and Mar Fournier Pereira.

In this respect, the articles insist on the agency of those involved in gender knowledge production, while acknowledging and documenting domination logics. In most articles, the material domination of the Global North is striking. Without the Ford Foundation (mentioned in three articles in this edition: Dutoya, Sarkar, and Wenzek) or the United Nations, women's and gender studies would have undergone very limited development in the South. Florence Wenzek's and Debarun Sarkar's articles show clearly how donor dependency has implications for the nature of the knowledge produced, in terms of subjects and areas studied, methodologies, and paradigms or concepts advocated. For example, funders might privilege quantitative research that is more easily translatable in terms of outputs. However, by and large, the authors detail the ability of local actors to retain their intellectual independence. Another important finding in this edition is that North-South domination interplays with other forms of

power dynamics, such as those resolving around class, sexuality, caste, or race. The fact that those who produce knowledge are often part of the local elite complicates unilateral perceptions of academic dependency. In any event, agency occurs through conceptual and theoretical innovations. These are sometimes little documented because researchers from the Global South might not have access to global circuits of knowledge circulation or might not present them as such. For instance, Radhika Govinda, Amanda Gouws, and Sara Panata show that, in their chosen countries, gender was conceived as intersectional long before the concept of intersectionality was created in the United States. This concept is now central to this on-going gender-related discussion and knowledge production between the Global South and Global North. The innovations are also methodological and epistemological. In her article, Mar Fournier Pereira defends the role of affectivity in research, presented as “sentipensar”. Radhika Govinda and Debarun Sarkar place themselves at the center of research, which they conduct with autoethnography and reflexivity. These approaches are not limited to gender or Global South studies, but they are particularly well-developed in both fields. Indeed, in a context where sources are often difficult to locate, archives not always accessible and data scarce, researchers must develop innovative research methods and combine multiple methodologies.

As Mary E. John, professor of women’s studies in Delhi argues, one must not fall into the trap of “false particularism” to avoid “false universalism” (John, “Intersectionality” 75). In this respect, we must walk that fine line in order to produce a heuristic dialogue between researchers working on gender and women’s studies, eager to produce knowledge together, in spite of, and on the basis of our different positions within academic and social spaces. This edition is one more step towards a collective and normative reflection on how to be more reflexive and inclusive in the way we participate in gender knowledge production and circulation. We hope to be able to continue this dialogue.

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