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Widening Reach Without Relocating? Epistemic Rescaling In The Journal Of Identity And Migration Studies, 2007–2026

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Abstract: Academic journals are not neutral containers of research but epistemic infrastructures that shape which problems, places, and scholarly communities become visible within a field. This article develops epistemic rescaling as a framework for analysing how academic journals change over time and applies it to the Journal of Identity and Migration Studies (JIMS). Epistemic rescaling refers to the interconnected reconfiguration of thematic agendas, spatial scope, the institutional geography of authorship, and organisational arrangements. The analysis covers 39 issues and 257 contributions published between 2007 and 2026, combining corpus-assisted coding with longitudinal examination of editorial paratexts and distinguishing between the geography a journal makes visible and the institutional geography from which its scholarship is produced. The results reveal layered rather than linear change. Identity remained a durable thematic anchor, while labour migration declined and forced migration, integration, health, inequality, and digital mediation gained prominence. Explicit Central and Eastern European visibility fell from 37.5% of contributions in 2007–2011 to 12.5% in 2022–2026, while authors' institutional affiliations in Sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East and North Africa, and Latin America rose from 2.6% to 37.7% over the same period. Romanian affiliations peaked at 24.4% in 2012–2016 before returning to 13.2% in 2022–2026, while Romania remained the most frequent single country of affiliation across the archive. Methodological and editorial arrangements also became more differentiated. The findings indicate movement toward a more polycentric configuration while JIMS remains institutionally anchored in Romania, highlighting a tension between wider epistemic reach and the preservation of regional distinctiveness.

Keywords*:* epistemic rescaling; academic publishing; migration studies; knowledge production; institutional geography of authorship; polycentrism; Central and Eastern Europe

1. Introduction

Anniversaries invite journals to remember their origins, list their achievements, and honour the people who sustained them. Such exercises are legitimate, but they can leave a more revealing question unanswered. What does a journal actually do to a field of knowledge over time? Does it merely record changing research interests, or does it also shape which problems, places, and voices become visible? Previous anniversary studies have shown that journal archives can be used not only to reconstruct institutional trajectories but also to trace changes in research agendas, geographical attention, and scholarly participation (King, Money, and Murawska 2011).

The more consequential question, therefore, is not simply how a journal has changed, but how its development relates to transformations in the production of knowledge.

This article approaches the *Journal of Identity and Migration Studies* (JIMS) from this perspective. Drawing on scholarship that understands infrastructure as a relational arrangement enabling and organising particular forms of activity (Star and Ruhleder 1996), and on the concept of epistemic infrastructures as the practical arrangements through which knowledge is generated, stabilised, and circulated (Bueger 2015), I treat the academic journal as an active component of knowledge production rather than a neutral receptacle for research. On this basis, I conceptualise epistemic rescaling in academic journals as the interconnected reconfiguration of four dimensions: thematic agendas, spatial scope, the institutional geography of authorship, and the organisational arrangements through which scholarship is produced and circulated.

JIMS provides a revealing case through which to examine this process. Founded in Romania with an explicit Central and Eastern European orientation, the journal retained identity-related topics as an intellectual anchor while progressively moving away from the early prominence of labour migration. Forced migration, integration, health, inequality, and digitally mediated identities became more visible, while Central and Eastern Europe remained part of the journal's empirical landscape without organising it as strongly as during the first decade. These shifts occurred within a wider migration research field whose growth and internationalisation have themselves been accompanied by changing topical priorities rather than a simple linear expansion of thematic diversity (Pisarevskaya et al. 2020).

The central argument is therefore not that JIMS simply became more international. Its earliest volumes already connected authors and cases from several continents. Rather, over two decades the journal changed the relations between what migration scholarship addressed, which regions it brought into view, where its published contributions were institutionally produced, and how this scholarship was editorially organised, while maintaining a stable organisational base in Romania. I describe this transformation as movement toward a more polycentric configuration. Polycentrism refers here to an arrangement in which multiple regions and institutional locations participate not only as objects of inquiry but also as sites from which scholarly knowledge is produced and circulated, without a single geographical centre consistently organising the journal's intellectual agenda. However, the evidence presented in this article does not support a claim of completed polycentrism. Broader thematic, spatial, and institutional reach developed alongside a marked decline in the explicit visibility of Central and Eastern Europe, revealing a tension between diversification and regional distinctiveness.

The evidence comes from the complete archive available for analysis: 39 issues, comprising 5,443 pages and 257 distinct abstract-bearing academic contributions published from volume 1, number 1 in 2007 through volume 20, number 1 in 2026. I combine corpus-assisted coding of titles, abstracts, keywords, authorship, institutional affiliations, and explicit method signals with a longitudinal reading of founding statements, mastheads, and issue formats. This design makes it possible to examine change across the four dimensions of rescaling while distinguishing between the spatial distribution of what JIMS publishes about and the institutional locations from which its published scholarship originates.

The article makes three contributions. Theoretically, it develops epistemic rescaling as a way of analysing how academic journals change across interconnected thematic, spatial, authorial, and organisational dimensions. Empirically, it documents how a small, English-

language, open-access journal based in Romania mediated broader transformations in migration studies across two decades. Methodologically, it demonstrates how this framework can be operationalised through the combination of a complete single-journal corpus, corpus-assisted indicators, editorial paratexts, and institutional affiliation data. Taken together, these contributions provide a transferable approach for examining longitudinal change in academic journals beyond the JIMS case. In this respect, the framework complements large-scale mappings of migration scholarship (Pisarevskaya et al. 2020) while extending the kind of longitudinal journal analysis used in anniversary studies such as King, Money, and Murawska (2011).

The case also speaks to a broader problem in the internationalisation of social science. Global knowledge production remains structured by unequal relations between institutional locations (Alatas 2003). Recent research on journal publishing in Central and Eastern Europe emphasises that journals operating from semi-peripheral settings are not merely constrained by these hierarchies but also possess limited forms of institutional agency in navigating them (Daniel and Karmazin 2025). JIMS therefore provides an opportunity to examine how a journal rooted in a semi-peripheral regional setting negotiates the relationship between institutional continuity, wider scholarly participation, and changing geographical reach. The question is not simply whether regional anchoring gives way to internationalisation, but how the two may be reconfigured through processes of epistemic rescaling.

The remainder of the article proceeds in five sections. Section 2 conceptualises journals as epistemic infrastructures, distinguishes epistemic rescaling from diversification, internationalisation, and polycentrism, and develops the four dimensions of rescaling. Section 3 presents the case selection, analytical baseline, corpus, coding strategy, and limits of inference. Section 4 examines thematic, spatial, authorship, and organisational rescaling. Section 5 interprets their interaction through the logics of mission continuity, event responsiveness, and networked accumulation and assesses the extent to which they indicate movement toward a polycentric configuration. Section 6 concludes by considering the implications of this transformation for JIMS and for the analysis of academic journals as sites of knowledge production.

2. Journals as epistemic infrastructures: a theoretical framework

Academic journals occupy an ambiguous position in the sociology of knowledge. Researchers usually encounter them as destinations for manuscripts or sources for literature reviews. This functional view makes the journal appear after knowledge has already been produced. Yet journals also participate in its production. They classify manuscripts into sections, define legitimate questions, stabilise vocabularies, assemble reviewers, and connect local findings to wider scholarly conversations. Their influence therefore extends beyond the individual article.

Infrastructure scholarship provides a useful starting point for understanding this role. Infrastructure is not merely a material system that moves objects across space; it is a relational arrangement that enables particular forms of activity and exchange while making others more difficult (Star and Ruhleder 1996; Larkin 2013). Bueger (2015) extends this perspective to epistemic infrastructures: the practical arrangements, sites, and practices through which phenomena become knowable and knowledge is maintained in circulation. Academic journals perform a comparable function. Their archives, editorial roles, review procedures, recurring

sections, publication schedules, and classificatory routines organise the circulation of claims between authors, institutions, reviewers, and audiences.

Treating journals as epistemic infrastructures does not imply that editors determine a field's agenda at will. Journals are themselves shaped by submitted manuscripts, reviewer availability, institutional resources, scholarly networks, funding structures, and public events. Their epistemic role is therefore distributed rather than centrally controlled. Nevertheless, selection and organisation matter because topics, places, methods, and authors do not receive equal visibility. By repeatedly selecting, grouping, and circulating particular forms of scholarship, journals can reinforce established hierarchies of attention, but they may also open space for questions, cases, and scholarly communities that are less visible elsewhere.

This distinction becomes particularly important within an unequal international system of knowledge production. Academic dependency describes a division of labour in which institutions located at the centre tend disproportionately to control theory, validation, and circulation, while peripheral locations are more frequently positioned as suppliers of empirical material (Alatas 2003). Publishing circuits and evaluation systems can reproduce such hierarchies within national academic fields (Beigel 2014), while large-scale studies show that the expansion of scholarly production and collaboration has not eliminated persistent centre–periphery patterns in the social sciences (Mosbah-Natanson and Gingras 2014). At the same time, transnational pathways of scholarly circulation can complicate a simple North–South hierarchy (Collyer 2018). Connell (2007) similarly locates social-scientific knowledge within unequal relations between metropolitan and peripheral sites of theory production, while Demeter (2020) documents persistent geographical inequalities in authorship, citation, and academic gatekeeping. Internationalisation, therefore, does not in itself imply epistemic equality.

These perspectives also make it necessary to distinguish between the geography of what is studied and the institutional locations from which knowledge is produced. Such spatial inequalities are also visible within migration research itself. Schmiz et al. (2022), for example, show that knowledge production at the intersection of migration and urban studies remains geographically uneven, with spatial biases in research production associated with imbalances in the topics that become visible. This reinforces the need to distinguish between the geography represented in migration scholarship and the geography from which that scholarship is institutionally produced.

Central and Eastern Europe occupies an especially ambiguous position within these structures. It is neither external to European academic institutions nor fully equivalent to their established centres. Research on the post-socialist "Global East" points to growing authorial visibility alongside weaker representation in gatekeeping roles (Trubina et al. 2020). Mälksoo (2021) consequently calls for provincialising international studies from Central and Eastern Europe, while Petrovici (2015) warns that the region can reproduce its own semi-peripheral forms of enclosure. The problem is therefore not limited to exclusion by an external centre. It also concerns the ways in which scholars and journals located in the region define their own intellectual position and capacity for knowledge production.

Recent research on journal editing in Central and Eastern Europe offers a less deterministic perspective. Karmazin (2022) emphasises that semi-peripheral journals can create meaningful scholarly opportunities, particularly for emerging researchers. Daniel and Karmazin (2025) develop this argument further by treating such journals as institutions possessing agency,

responsibility, and a limited capacity for innovation. This perspective is particularly useful for JIMS because it avoids two symmetrical simplifications: a celebratory account in which wider international reach is treated automatically as success, and a structuralist account in which semi-peripheral location predetermines marginality.

Migration studies add another layer to this problem. The field has grown rapidly, institutionalised specialised scholarly networks, and internationalised its authorship, but these developments have been uneven. Pisarevskaya et al. (2020), analysing almost 30,000 publications, show that internationalisation proceeded more slowly than the overall expansion of the field and that its thematic development involved shifting patterns of prominence rather than a simple movement toward permanent fragmentation. Migration studies have therefore expanded through both accumulation and redistribution of intellectual attention.

This development has also generated extensive reflexive criticism. Wimmer and Glick Schiller (2002) demonstrated how methodological nationalism could make the nation-state appear to be the natural container of migration research. Dahinden (2016) later called for the "de-migranticisation" of a field that risks reproducing the administrative and political categories it seeks to analyse. Subsequent research has examined how categories, standpoints, colonial relations, non-academic actors, and digital infrastructures shape what migration scholarship can know (Dahinden, Fischer, and Menet 2021; Amelina 2022; Amelung, Scheel, and van Reekum 2024). From this perspective, studying a migration journal means examining not only changing research topics but also the conditions through which migration becomes constituted and circulated as an object of scholarly knowledge.

Anniversary studies increasingly recognise this wider analytical potential. King, Money, and Murawska's (2011) analysis of twenty years of the *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* traced changes in both research and author geographies. Lee, Carling, and Orrenius (2014) combined reflection on the development of migration research with patterns of authorship and citation for the fiftieth anniversary of the *International Migration Review*. Stern, Saunders, and Stame (2015) used the twentieth anniversary of *Evaluation* to reflect on the journal's founding aspirations, subsequent development, and future direction, deliberately moving beyond citation-based indicators alone. Harbers et al. (2021) examined topics, cases, methods, and author diversity across thirty years of *Regional & Federal Studies*, while Kashyap and Nur (2025) used computational analysis to situate fifty years of *Population and Development Review* in relation to neighbouring journals. Such studies turn anniversaries into opportunities for reflexive analysis of how journals participate in the organisation of scholarly fields.

Building on this literature, I distinguish four related but analytically separate ideas: diversification, internationalisation, epistemic rescaling, and polycentrism. Diversification refers to increasing variety within a journal, whether thematic, geographical, methodological, or institutional. Internationalisation is narrower and refers to the widening distribution of authors, institutions, cases, collaborations, or audiences across national boundaries. Neither necessarily changes the relations through which knowledge is organised. Epistemic rescaling refers to such a relational transformation: it occurs when changes in a journal's agenda, spatial scope, authorship, and organisational arrangements alter the scale at which knowledge is selected, assembled, and circulated.

At the journal level, I distinguish four dimensions of this process. The first is *thematic rescaling*, concerning which topics become central, peripheral, persistent, or newly connected.

The second is *spatial rescaling*, concerning which countries and regions enter the journal as cases, comparisons, sources of problems, or sites of conceptual relevance. The third is *authorship rescaling*, concerning the institutional geography of contributors and the changing organisation of individual and collaborative authorship. The fourth is *organisational rescaling*, concerning the methodological repertoire, editorial roles, issue formats, review arrangements, and publishing practices through which research is assembled and circulated. These dimensions are analytically distinct but empirically interconnected. A journal may diversify on one dimension without experiencing rescaling across the others.

Polycentrism describes a possible configuration emerging from such rescaling rather than another name for the rescaling process itself. I use the term to describe a journal in which several geographical and institutional locations participate meaningfully both as objects of inquiry and as sites of knowledge production, without one geographical centre consistently defining the intellectual terms of exchange. Polycentrism therefore requires more than the accumulation of countries or contributors. It implies a redistribution of epistemic participation across locations. The present analysis can identify movement toward such a configuration through changing case geographies, institutional affiliations, collaboration, and editorial organisation, but it cannot establish completed polycentrism. A stronger test would also require evidence on citation relations, the circulation of concepts and theories between regions, transnational collaboration networks, and the distribution of editorial or reviewing authority.

This framework produces three analytical expectations. A logic of mission continuity predicts that the founding emphasis on identity, migration, and Central and Eastern Europe will remain visible despite subsequent diversification. A logic of event responsiveness predicts shifts in thematic and spatial attention alongside major economic, political, and humanitarian disruptions, without assuming that such events directly caused changes in published content. A logic of networked accumulation predicts a widening institutional geography of authorship, increasing collaboration, greater methodological plurality, and more differentiated editorial arrangements. These logics are not mutually exclusive. Their interaction makes it possible to assess whether JIMS experienced simple growth, diversification, internationalisation, or the deeper relational transformation described here as epistemic rescaling, and whether that transformation points toward an increasingly polycentric configuration.

3. Research design and methodology

3.1 Case selection and analytical baseline

JIMS is examined as a revealing rather than representative case of journal development from a semi-peripheral institutional location. Its first issue appeared in 2007, the year Romania joined the European Union, at a moment when European integration was reshaping the legal and political conditions of mobility and Central and Eastern European societies were experiencing overlapping roles as countries of emigration, immigration, return, and transit. Migration was therefore closely embedded in the region's broader social and political transformation.

The journal's founding editorial provides the analytical baseline for assessing subsequent change. Lia Pop, the founding director of JIMS, described the journal as a venue for research on migration and identity that would connect academic, policy, and practitioner perspectives and give particular visibility to materials and theoretical positions emerging from South-Eastern and Central Europe (Pop 2007). The founding mission was consequently regional without being exclusively

regional: it linked migration to questions of identity while positioning Central and Eastern Europe as an important site from which migration processes could be analysed and debated.

Several institutional features also make JIMS suitable for longitudinal analysis. From its establishment, it was conceived as an English-language, online, interdisciplinary journal and remained institutionally anchored at the University of Oradea. It operated through a relatively small university-based publishing infrastructure while sustaining publication across two decades. This combination of institutional continuity and intellectual adaptation makes it possible to examine how a journal located outside the established Anglophone core can alter its thematic, spatial, authorial, and organisational configuration over time.

The case is therefore analytically useful not because JIMS represents migration journals in general, but because it provides an opportunity to examine a less visible layer of scholarly communication. Research on global academic inequality often relies on bibliometric evidence drawn from internationally visible journals and large publication databases (e.g. Demeter 2020). Smaller institutional journals offer a complementary perspective on publishing circuits through which regional concerns, interdisciplinary work, and less represented scholarly locations may enter English-language circulation. The founding mission and organisational setting of JIMS thus provide the historical reference point against which the four dimensions of epistemic rescaling are assessed. The founding editorial is treated as evidence of declared institutional intent, not as evidence that the subsequent publication record necessarily fulfilled that mission.

3.2 Corpus and periodisation

The empirical corpus comprises every complete issue from volume 1, number 1 (2007) to volume 20, number 1 (2026). The archive contains 39 issues and 5,443 PDF pages. I identified 257 distinct contributions with an extractable abstract. Research articles, thematic articles, focus articles, policy papers, and one work-in-progress contribution are included. Editorials, book reviews, conference reports, calls, and contributor biographies are excluded from the article-level analysis, although they are used selectively as evidence concerning the journal's organisational and editorial development.

I divide the archive into four periods: 2007–2011, 2012–2016, 2017–2021, and 2022–2026. The first three contain ten issues each. The final period contains nine issues because the analysis ends with the first issue of 2026. The respective contribution counts are 56, 58, 79, and 64. Periodisation reduces annual volatility while retaining the journal's major phases. It does not assume that change occurred exactly at five-year boundaries.

3.3 Coding and Indicators

Rather than conducting a conventional bibliometric design (Donthu et al. 2021), the empirical analysis operationalises the four dimensions of epistemic rescaling through a combination of article-level indicators and longitudinal evidence from editorial paratexts. Thematic and spatial rescaling are examined primarily through explicit textual visibility in published contributions; authorship rescaling through co-authorship and institutional affiliations; and organisational rescaling through method signals, issue architecture, editorial roles, and publishing arrangements.

First, I coded thematic presence using explicit terms in article titles, abstracts, and author-supplied keywords. The coding scheme was developed to capture recurring substantive domains

in the JIMS corpus and to permit consistent longitudinal comparison across the four periods. It comprises eleven multi-label categories: forced migration and asylum; governance, borders, and law; integration and acculturation; identity, culture, and religion; labour, economy, and development; transnationalism, diaspora, and return; media and digital communication; health, welfare, and education; inequality, race, and gender; environmental displacement; and methodology. A contribution may belong to several categories. The categories therefore measure explicit thematic presence rather than mutually exclusive substantive fields.

Second, I coded geographical scope from country names, demonyms, and explicit macro-regional labels in titles, abstracts, and keywords. The categories distinguish Central and Eastern Europe; Western, Northern, and Southern Europe; Europe without a more specific subregion; the Middle East and North Africa; Sub-Saharan Africa; North America; Latin America and the Caribbean; and Asia-Pacific. Categories are non-exclusive. A comparison of Romania and Spain, for example, contributes to two regional counts. Geographical visibility should not be confused with author affiliation or with formal study location. A country may appear as a migrant origin, destination, policy reference, comparison, or historical context. The measure therefore answers a narrower question: which parts of the world did JIMS contributions make explicit in their most visible textual elements? It captures the journal's spatial scope, not the institutional geography of authorship.

Third, I recorded author names for each contribution and calculated the proportion of co-authored contributions in each period. Author affiliation was coded from the Notes on Contributors section of every issue, supplemented by the opening pages of the contribution where the note was incomplete. The affiliation rule is deliberately restrictive because this variable supports one of the article's central empirical claims. I record the country of the first current institutional affiliation stated in the source. Countries of birth, nationality, research focus, and prior degrees are not treated as current affiliations; where several affiliations are listed, the first is used consistently; and missing values are never imputed from the geographical focus of the contribution. Affiliation data are available for 348 of 376 author-contribution occurrences, corresponding to an overall coverage rate of 92.6%. Coverage by period is 98.7%, 95.1%, 90.2%, and 88.7% respectively. Missing affiliations remain visible as a separate category rather than being redistributed. The first-affiliation rule maximises coding consistency but may understate multiple institutional embeddedness and transregional academic mobility. In addition, the occurrence-based indicator measures the institutional composition of published output rather than the diversity of a population of unique authors. Unique-author trajectories and cross-national co-authorship therefore remain distinct questions for future analysis rather than results inferred from the present coding.

Fourth, I detected explicit method terms in titles, abstracts, and keywords including several categories: survey, qualitative, quantitative, comparative, content analysis, case study, mixed methods, historical analysis, literature review, and theoretical work. Authors do not always identify their methods explicitly in titles, abstracts, or keywords. These indicators are therefore treated as signals of methodological articulation rather than as a complete classification of research design.

Organisational rescaling is assessed through a second set of longitudinal indicators derived from editorial paratexts rather than article abstracts. I recorded changes in issue architecture, including the presence of thematic and focus sections, and compared mastheads, editorial roles, publication formats, and other publicly stated publishing arrangements across the

archive. These indicators are interpreted as evidence of how the journal organised and presented scholarly production over time rather than as direct measures of editorial decision-making capacity.

3.4 Units of Analysis, Validation, and Positionality

Two principal units of analysis run through the article and should not be confused. Thematic visibility, geographical visibility, and co-authorship are measured at the level of the contribution. The first two record whether a topic or region is explicitly present, while co-authorship records whether a contribution has more than one author. Institutional affiliation is coded at the level of the author-contribution occurrence: each author counts once for each contribution, and repeat appearances across different contributions are retained because the indicator measures the institutional composition of published output rather than the size of a population of unique individuals. The 257 contributions yield 376 such occurrences, an average of 1.46 authors per contribution. The corpus-assisted analysis was checked in several ways. I reconciled issue and annual counts, inspected every duplicate title within an issue, reviewed short uppercase headings, and conducted a deterministic stratified check of 32 records. I also analysed the founding editorial and compared mastheads and contents pages across the archive. Table 1 summarises the analytical population and selected longitudinal indicators.

Table 1. Corpus and selected longitudinal indicators by period

Period	Issues	Contributions	Co-authored (%)	Issues with thematic section	Issues with focus section
2007–2011	10	56	23.2	10	1
2012–2016	10	58	29.3	9	2
2017–2021	10	79	26.6	9	9
2022–2026	9	64	37.5	2	8

Source: Author's elaboration based on JIMS's archive.

My relationship to the journal requires explicit positionality. I served on the editorial team as Deputy Editor-in-Chief from the journal's establishment through volume 19, number 1 (2025). This experience provides institutional knowledge, but it also creates a risk of retrospective rationalisation. I mitigate that risk by retaining an auditable coding file, reporting non-linear and potentially uncomfortable findings, and limiting claims to evidence available in the public archive. I do not use private correspondence, reviewer identities, acceptance data, or confidential editorial discussions.

3.5 Inferential Limits

The design is descriptive rather than causal, and dictionary-based indicators capture explicit textual visibility rather than latent meaning (Grimmer and Stewart 2013). The analysis can identify concurrent changes in thematic agenda, spatial scope, authorship patterns, and organisational arrangements, but it cannot demonstrate that changes in one dimension caused changes in another. Nor can the design establish that particular editorial decisions caused the observed trajectories or strictly isolate the effects of refugee movements, economic crises, pandemics, wars, funding agendas, or broader scholarly trends. Topic selection and publication patterns may instead reflect changing combinations of submissions, invited contributions, scholarly networks, public events, editorial priorities, and disciplinary developments. The analysis therefore examines how such transformations became legible in JIMS's evolving publication record rather than attributing them to a single causal mechanism.

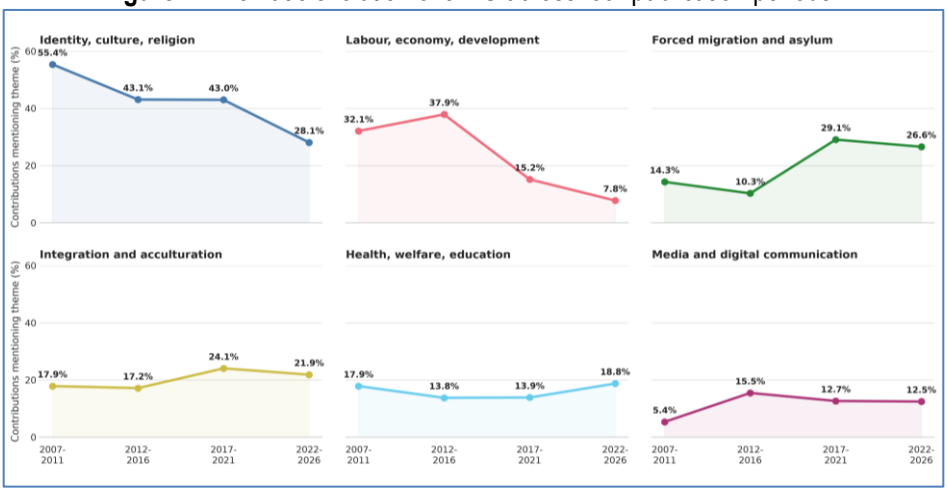
4. Results: four dimensions of epistemic rescaling

The longitudinal analysis of JIMS's archive reveals change across all four dimensions identified in the theoretical framework, although the trajectories were neither uniform nor simultaneous. Thematic priorities were redistributed, the spatial scope of published research widened, the institutional geography of authorship became more diverse, and the journal's organisational arrangements changed in both methodological and editorial terms. The following sections examine these dimensions separately before their interconnections are considered in the Discussion.

4.1. Thematic Rescaling

The founding design of JIMS linked migration explicitly to identity rather than treating mobility primarily as a demographic flow or policy problem. The publication record initially reflected this orientation. Across the archive, however, thematic change took the form of both continuity and redistribution. Identity-related topics remained a persistent intellectual anchor, while labour migration declined substantially after the journal's first decade. Forced migration and asylum became considerably more prominent after 2017, and health, inequality, and digital communication added further layers to the journal's thematic profile. These evolutions are visually illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Thematic evolution of JIMS across four publication periods



Source: Author's elaboration based on JIMS's archive.

Note: Themes are based on explicit terms in titles, abstracts and author keywords. They are multi-label and percentages within a period do not sum to 100.

During 2007–2011, identity, culture, or religion appeared explicitly in 55.4% of contributions. Labour, economy, or development appeared in 32.1%, followed by governance, borders, or law and inequality, race, or gender, each at 23.2%. Forced migration and asylum appeared in 14.3%. This configuration was closely connected to the circumstances in which the journal had been established: labour mobility, European integration, cultural attachment, and national identity were recurrent dimensions of Central and Eastern European migration. Fihel (2007), for example, analysed the institutional determinants of emigration from the region, while Bălțătescu (2007) compared the subjective quality of life of Central and Eastern European migrants. The early thematic agenda nevertheless extended beyond these core concerns. Georgiadou and Kekkeris (2007) examined the role of information technologies in immigrant identity construction, while Cinpoeș (2008) and Petithomme (2008) approached European identity as a contested political attachment. Contributions also addressed remittances, migrant families, education, minority integration, communication technologies, and subjective wellbeing. Migration was frequently organised around relations between identifiable sending and receiving societies, with labour markets providing an important explanatory vocabulary and identity linking economic mobility to belonging and cultural change.

The 2012–2016 period consolidated the economic strand before its subsequent decline. Labour, economy, or development reached 37.9%, its highest level across the four periods. Identity-related themes remained extensive at 43.1%, while transnationalism, diaspora, or return reached 20.7%. Media and digital communication increased from 5.4% to 15.5%. Forced migration and asylum, by contrast, remained comparatively limited at 10.3%. Contributions during this period connected migration to return, employment, human capital, diasporic identity, and communication. Roman and Goschin (2012), for example, examined the return intentions of Romanian emigrants; Li (2012) analysed neighbourhood satisfaction among foreign-born and native-born residents in the United States; and Caytas (2012) addressed the tension between

assimilation and cultural preservation. The thematic range expanded, but labour and identity continued to provide important organising coordinates.

A more pronounced redistribution occurred during 2017–2021. Forced migration and asylum rose to 29.1%, almost three times the proportion recorded in the preceding period. Governance, borders, and law increased to 25.3%, while integration and acculturation reached 24.1%. Identity remained highly visible at 43.0%, but labour, economy, and development fell to 15.2%. The magnitude and persistence of these changes indicate a substantive redistribution of thematic attention rather than a minor period-to-period variation. The contributions published during these years illustrate how forced migration entered the journal through several connected questions. Parent (2018) analysed Turkish perceptions of risk in relation to Syrian refugees, Bosilkov and Drakaki (2018) compared media framing of the migrant crisis in Greece and Macedonia, and Duarte (2018) examined the tension between open borders and welfare states. Other studies considered contact and threat perceptions in Maltese migration policy (Korostelina and Camilleri 2017) and the reintegration of internal return migrants in Ghana (Yendaw, Tanle, and Kendie 2017). Forced migration therefore appeared not only as displacement but also through asylum procedures, border management, political attitudes, social integration, and institutional access. The timing is consistent with the broader rise of conflict, human rights, and forced migration within migration studies identified by Pisarevskaya et al. (2020), although the present design cannot attribute the shift directly to the 2015–2016 refugee arrivals or to any single external event.

The most recent period, 2022–2026, shows a further redistribution. Identity, culture, and religion declined to 28.1%, remaining the largest of the selected categories but standing well below its early level. Forced migration and asylum remained high at 26.6%. Governance and integration each appeared in 21.9% of contributions, health, welfare, and education in 18.8%, and both transnationalism and inequality in 17.2%. Labour, economy, and development fell to 7.8%. The substantive range of recent contributions illustrates this shift. Sibanda and Hlatshwayo (2024) examined the border strategies of Zimbabwean migrant women; Tewolde (2024) analysed residential segregation among Black African migrants in Johannesburg; Andronic (2024) connected acculturation to mental health; García Martínez and Nagem (2025) examined digital control and discrimination; and Sharma (2026) reconstructed the inherited memory of the 1942 Burma exodus. Compared with the earlier prominence of labour mobility, these contributions place greater emphasis on vulnerability, institutional encounters, discrimination, mediated identity, wellbeing, and historical transmission.

Two thematic strands illustrate particularly clearly that change involved accumulation as well as replacement (see Figure 1). Media and digital communication rose from 5.4% in the first period to 15.5% in the second and subsequently stabilised at approximately 12–13%. JIMS had already addressed information technologies and migrant identity in its first volume. Later contributions extended this interest toward media framing, digital discrimination, online interaction, and platform-mediated identity. Health-related themes followed a somewhat different but similarly cumulative pattern. Their visibility fluctuated around 14–18% before reaching 18.8% in the most recent period, with later contributions placing greater emphasis on mental health, wellbeing, healthcare access, professional integration, and the embodied consequences of migration.

Taken together, these results show thematic layering rather than simple succession. Identity remained visible throughout the archive but declined in relative prominence. Labour

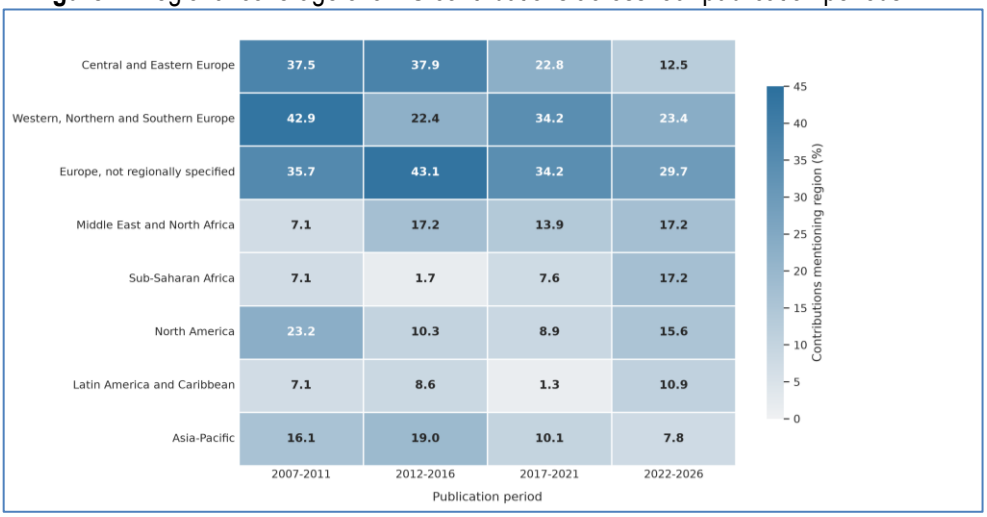
characterised the earlier periods and then receded substantially. Forced migration reorganised the later thematic profile without replacing identity, while health, inequality, and digital mediation connected established concerns with newer forms of vulnerability and institutional encounter. Thematic rescaling therefore consisted less in the replacement of one agenda by another than in a changing configuration of persistent and newly prominent concerns.

4.2. Spatial rescaling

The spatial record complicates any straightforward transition from a regional to a global journal. Although JIMS was founded with a particular Central and Eastern European orientation, its empirical scope was never confined to the region. The first issue already included contributions addressing Poland, Romania, the Czech Republic, Greece, and migration from the former Soviet Union. The second issue extended the range of cases to Canada, Bangladesh, India, Germany, and the United States. International empirical connections were therefore present from the journal's inception. What changed over time was not the existence of geographical diversity but its distribution and the relative weight of the founding region.

Spatial rescaling refers here to the geography made visible by published research, not to the institutional location of authors. Figure 2 therefore records regions explicitly analysed or discussed in titles, abstracts, and keywords. The institutional geography of authorship is examined separately in Section 4.3. Maintaining this distinction is important because an expansion in the number of regions studied does not necessarily imply a comparable change in where published research is institutionally produced.

Figure 2. Regional coverage of JIMS contributions across four publication periods



Source: Author's elaboration based on JIMS's archive.

Note: Regions are identified from titles, abstracts, and author keywords. They are non-exclusive; one contribution may discuss several regions.

Central and Eastern Europe appeared explicitly in 37.5% of contributions during 2007–2011 and 37.9% during 2012–2016. Its visibility then declined to 22.8% in 2017–2021 and 12.5%

in 2022–2026. The first decade therefore displays considerable continuity with the founding regional orientation, whereas the subsequent periods show pronounced decentring. This decline does not indicate the disappearance of the region from the journal. Recent contributions continued to address South-East European youth, European integration, Ukrainian displacement, intra-European mobility, and regional identities. Moreover, a generic European frame remained common. Europe without a more specific subregional designation appeared in 35.7%, 43.1%, 34.2%, and 29.7% of contributions across the four periods. JIMS thus became less specifically Central and Eastern European without ceasing to be strongly engaged with Europe.

Western, Northern, and Southern Europe followed a non-linear trajectory. These regions appeared in 42.9% of contributions in 2007–2011, declined to 22.4% in 2012–2016, increased to 34.2% in 2017–2021, and stood at 23.4% in the most recent period. Part of this pattern reflects the relational character of migration research: contributions frequently connected Eastern European origins with Western European destinations or compared migration and reception contexts across different parts of Europe. The journal's initial Central and Eastern European orientation therefore operated from the beginning within a wider European field of mobility.

The most substantial recent change concerns regions beyond Europe. Sub-Saharan Africa appeared in 7.1% of contributions during 2007–2011 and 1.7% during 2012–2016. Its visibility subsequently increased to 7.6% in 2017–2021 and 17.2% in 2022–2026. Recent contributions addressed Nigeria, Ghana, South Africa, Somalia, Zimbabwe, and forms of intra-African mobility, making African contexts a more recurrent component of the journal's empirical scope.

The Middle East and North Africa also remained visible across the archive, with proportions of 7.1%, 17.2%, 13.9%, and 17.2% across the four periods. Contributions approached the region through migration toward Europe, refugee governance, Turkish and Syrian cases, Gulf migration, diaspora politics, citizenship, identity, and acculturation. These different routes are analytically relevant because the region appeared not only as a point of origin for migration toward Europe but also as a setting in which migration and membership were studied in their own right.

Latin America and the Caribbean display a more discontinuous trajectory. Their visibility rose from 7.1% in the first period to 8.6% in the second, fell to 1.3% in 2017–2021, and increased to 10.9% in the most recent period. Recent contributions included work on Colombia, Venezuela, and Hispano-American migration. North America and Asia-Pacific likewise fluctuated rather than following a linear path. Spatial widening was therefore selective and episodic rather than uniformly cumulative.

The overall pattern resembles, in some respects, the geographical broadening observed by King, Money, and Murawska (2011) in their analysis of the *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, where the relative dominance of British and European cases declined while other sending and receiving regions gained visibility. The starting positions, however, differ. JIMS began as a journal institutionally located in Central and Eastern Europe and explicitly oriented toward that region, rather than as an established Western European journal subsequently seeking wider geographical coverage. The JIMS record consequently shows both geographical expansion and a substantial reduction in the relative visibility of its original regional reference point.

The results do not support the description of JIMS as geographically balanced or uniformly global. European categories continue to account for a substantial part of the archive, while several world regions remain intermittent. What the spatial rescaling analysis demonstrates

more clearly is a shift from a publication profile in which Central and Eastern Europe occupied a comparatively prominent empirical position toward one in which a broader and more varied set of regional contexts became recurrent.

4.3 Authorship Rescaling

Spatial widening in the objects of research was accompanied by changes in the institutional locations from which published contributions originated. Authorship rescaling is therefore analytically distinct from spatial rescaling. The former concerns who contributes to the journal and from which institutional settings; the latter concerns which places and regions are made visible as objects of research. Figure 3 identifies the country of the first current institutional affiliation recorded for each author-contribution occurrence. Romanian institutions accounted for 13.2% of occurrences in 2007–2011, increased to 24.4% in 2012–2016, and subsequently declined to 16.1% in 2017–2021 and 13.2% in 2022–2026. The pattern is therefore not one of steady movement away from the journal's home country. Instead, it shows an intermediate phase of stronger Romanian concentration followed by renewed diversification.

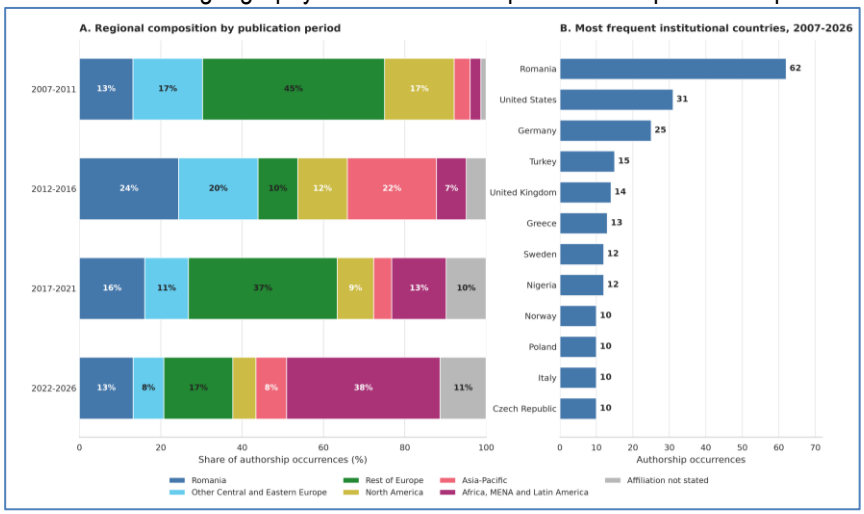
The most pronounced change occurred in affiliations located outside Europe and North America. Affiliations in Sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East and North Africa, and Latin America together increased from 2.6% of author-contribution occurrences in 2007–2011 to 37.7% in 2022–2026. Across the complete archive, Romania remained the most frequent institutional country, with 62 occurrences, followed by the United States with 31 and Germany with 25. The resulting distribution combines continuity in the journal's Romanian institutional connections with a substantially broader geography of contributors.

The Romanian trajectory is itself important because it complicates a simple local-to-international interpretation. JIMS did not begin as an overwhelmingly Romanian-authored journal and subsequently internationalise in a linear fashion. Romanian affiliations became more concentrated during the second period analysed here before declining again. The diversification of institutional locations was therefore uneven and temporally layered.

The distinction between spatial and authorship rescaling becomes visible when the two sets of results are compared. A contribution about Nigeria written by an author based at a European institution expands the journal's spatial scope without changing the regional composition of authorship. Conversely, an author affiliated with an African institution who publishes a contribution focused on Europe alters the institutional geography of authorship without necessarily expanding the map of empirical cases. The two dimensions can reinforce one another, but they should not be treated as interchangeable.

The affiliation data also require caution. Coverage declined from 98.7% in the first period to 88.7% in the most recent period, with missing affiliations reaching 9.8% and 11.3% in the final two periods. Affiliations were not inferred from nationality, educational background, or the country analysed in the contribution, and only the first current institutional affiliation was coded when several were reported. The resulting distribution is therefore conservative and may understate multiple institutional embeddedness and transregional academic mobility.

Figure 3. Institutional geography of JIMS authorship across four publication periods



Source: Author's elaboration based on JIMS's archive.

Note: Each author is counted once per contribution; repeat appearances are retained. Affiliation country was identified for 348 of 376 occurrences (92.6%), and unstated affiliations remain visible.

Co-authorship provides a complementary indicator of change in authorship patterns. Co-authored contributions accounted for 23.2% of publications in 2007–2011, 29.3% in 2012–2016, 26.6% in 2017–2021, and 37.5% in 2022–2026. Collaboration thus increased overall but not monotonically, reaching its highest level in the most recent period. This measure should not be interpreted as evidence of international collaboration by itself. A shared byline may involve authors from the same institution or country, whereas a single-authored contribution may reflect extensive transnational research networks. The present coding does not distinguish same-country from cross-country teams. The narrower finding is that collectively authored work became more frequent, particularly after 2022. Determining whether this increase also represents more transnational or cross-regional collaboration would require analysis of institutional combinations within individual co-authored contributions.

Taken together, author affiliation and co-authorship results indicate that authorship rescaling involved both geographical diversification and a growing recent presence of collective authorship. The strongest evidence concerns the institutional geography of published output: the locations represented in authors' affiliations widened substantially, while Romania remained a recurrent but non-dominant institutional anchor.

4.4 Organisational Rescaling

The founding organisational design of JIMS combined several features that remained relevant across the period analysed. It was established as an English-language, online, interdisciplinary, semi-annual journal based at the University of Oradea. Over time, this institutional anchor remained stable while the methodological profile of published contributions,

the architecture of issues, editorial roles, and publicly stated publishing arrangements became more differentiated.

Method signals provide one article-level indication of this change, although they capture only methods explicitly named in titles, abstracts, or keywords. Qualitative terms appeared in 7.1% of contributions in 2007–2011 and 6.9% in 2012–2016, before increasing to 15.2% in 2017–2021 and 17.2% in 2022–2026. Quantitative signals rose from 3.6% in the first period to 10.3% and 11.4% in the next two periods, before declining to 7.8% in the most recent period. Survey terminology decreased from 19.6% to 13.8%, 10.1%, and 7.8% respectively. Theoretical or conceptual signals followed a U-shaped pattern of 16.1%, 13.8%, 5.1%, and 12.5%. These indicators do not demonstrate a qualitative turn in a strict methodological sense. Authors may use interviews, ethnography, or other qualitative designs without making them explicit in the textual fields coded here, particularly in earlier volumes. What the indicators show more securely is a change in methodological articulation. Later contributions more frequently made qualitative approaches explicit, while survey language became less prominent and quantitative terminology followed a non-linear trajectory. The published methodological repertoire consequently became more visibly differentiated.

Issue architecture changed more clearly. All ten issues published during 2007–2011 contained a thematic-articles section, as did nine of ten issues in both 2012–2016 and 2017–2021. Only two of the nine issues published during 2022–2026 retained this format. By contrast, a "Focus" section appeared in one issue during 2007–2011, two during 2012–2016, nine during 2017–2021, and eight during 2022–2026. The two formats organise contributions differently. Thematic sections group several articles around an announced substantive problem and give an issue a more explicit collective centre. Focus sections provide a more modular format through which one or several contributions can be highlighted without requiring an entire issue to be organised around a single theme. The longitudinal pattern therefore records a clear shift in issue architecture from the near-universal presence of thematic sections toward the recurrent use of focus sections.

Book reviews provide an element of continuity. They appeared in 34 of the 39 issues and became nearly continuous after the journal's earliest years. Although excluded from the article-level thematic analysis, their persistence forms part of the journal's organisational record by maintaining a recurring space for engagement with newly published scholarship.

The mastheads also document progressive differentiation in editorial roles. In 2007, the journal listed a director, two manager editors, four editors, and an international scientific committee of six members from three countries. By 2026, the organisational structure included an Editor-in-Chief, Deputy Editor-in-Chief, Editorial Board, and Assistant Editors. In 2025 and 2026, the board contained ten members across six countries, and the journal had added a designated editorial assistant. Throughout these changes, the University of Oradea and its Political Science and Communication Sciences Department remained the principal institutional anchor.

Publicly stated publishing arrangements also became more explicit. The first masthead described JIMS as an online review, while the 2015 masthead explicitly identified it as open access. The current website states a CC BY reuse policy and provides publication guidelines and a double-anonymous peer-review procedure (Journal of Identity and Migration Studies n.d.). These developments do not by themselves demonstrate changes in editorial quality or decision-

making capacity, but they show greater formalisation and public visibility of the procedures through which contributions are submitted, reviewed, published, and reused.

Open access represents both continuity and formalisation within this organisational trajectory. The journal was conceived from the outset as an online publication, while the terminology and policies associated with open-access publishing became more explicit over time. This arrangement is particularly relevant for a university-based journal operating outside a large commercial publishing platform because it structures how published work can be accessed and circulated, although the present analysis does not measure readership or downstream use.

In sum, the organisational record combines substantial institutional continuity with increasing differentiation in methodological articulation, issue architecture, editorial roles, and publishing procedures. The University of Oradea remained the journal's stable organisational base, while the formats and arrangements through which scholarship was presented and circulated changed considerably across the period examined.

5. Discussion: from rescaling toward a polycentric configuration

The JIMS archive reveals neither a simple institutional history nor a linear progression from regional to international publishing. Its development is better understood through the interaction of the three logics proposed in the theoretical framework: mission continuity, event responsiveness, and networked accumulation. Each captures a different aspect of the journal's trajectory, but none is sufficient on its own. Their overlap helps explain why JIMS's history is marked simultaneously by persistence, redistribution, and institutional diversification rather than by the replacement of one journal identity by another.

Mission continuity is most visible in two forms. The first is thematic. Identity remained present throughout the archive even as its relative prominence declined and other concerns became more visible. The second is institutional. JIMS remained organisationally anchored at the University of Oradea despite substantial changes in the geography of authorship, issue architecture, and editorial arrangements. Continuity therefore did not mean thematic or organisational immobility. Rather, some elements of the founding configuration persisted while their relative position within the journal changed. This distinction is important because it prevents rescaling from being interpreted simply as abandonment of the original mission.

Event responsiveness provides a second layer of interpretation. The later prominence of forced migration, asylum, border governance, integration, and vulnerability is temporally consistent with broader transformations in European and global migration politics, particularly after the refugee movements of the mid-2010s. The JIMS trajectory also parallels changes identified in migration studies more broadly, where conflict, forced migration, and human rights became increasingly prominent (Pisarevskaya et al. 2020). The evidence does not establish that external events caused specific editorial changes, and the archive cannot separate their effects from those of submission patterns, scholarly fashions, funding priorities, or invited contributions. What it does show is that the journal's thematic and spatial profile changed alongside transformations in the wider field rather than remaining fixed by its founding agenda.

The third logic, networked accumulation, is most visible in the gradual widening of the institutional geography of authorship, the recent increase in co-authorship, greater methodological differentiation, and the changing organisation of issues and editorial roles. These developments did not follow a uniform upward trajectory. Romanian affiliations, for example, became more

concentrated during the second period before declining again, while co-authorship also fluctuated before reaching its highest level after 2022. Networked accumulation should therefore not be understood as continuous quantitative growth. It refers instead to the accumulation of additional institutional connections, modes of collaboration, methodological repertoires, and publishing arrangements through which research could enter and circulate within the journal.

Taken together, these three logics clarify what is meant by epistemic rescaling. Diversification would describe the appearance of more topics, methods, regions, or institutional locations. Internationalisation would describe a wider transnational distribution of authors, cases, and affiliations. The JIMS record points to something more relational. Changes occurred across the journal's thematic agenda, spatial scope, institutional geography of authorship, and organisational arrangements, and these dimensions increasingly intersected. African and Middle Eastern cases, for example, became more recurrent at the same time that affiliations from Africa, the Middle East and North Africa, and Latin America became substantially more visible in the published output. This widening coincided with more frequent collective authorship and with changes in the methodological and editorial organisation of contributions. The dimensions did not move in perfect synchrony, but neither did they evolve independently.

This is the sense in which the concept of rescaling adds something to the language of diversification or internationalisation. The relevant transformation is not simply that JIMS published more varied content or attracted contributors from more countries. Rather, the relations among what was studied, where it was studied, where published scholarship was institutionally produced, and how that scholarship was organised changed over time. Epistemic rescaling therefore describes a reconfiguration in the scale at which migration knowledge could be assembled from a relatively stable institutional location.

The question is whether this transformation also justifies describing JIMS as moving toward a more polycentric configuration. The evidence supports such a claim, but only in a qualified sense. Polycentrism, as defined here, requires more than the accumulation of geographical diversity. Multiple locations must participate meaningfully not only as empirical objects but also as sites of knowledge production. JIMS increasingly approximates this condition. African and Middle Eastern cases became more recurrent, while Latin American and Asian cases contributed to a broader, though more episodic, geographical repertoire. In addition, the institutional geography of authorship has simultaneously widened beyond its earlier European and North American concentration. The journal therefore increasingly connects a stable Central and Eastern European organisational base with scholarship produced from a broader range of institutional settings.

This development is important because internationalisation does not necessarily reduce epistemic hierarchy. Centre–periphery relations in academic publishing remain structured by inequalities in theory production, validation, visibility, and gatekeeping (Alatas 2003; Connell 2007; Demeter 2020). From this perspective, the significance of JIMS is not that it displaced established centres or escaped the constraints associated with semi-peripheral publishing. Rather, it created a durable site through which scholarship from different institutional locations could enter English-language circulation without being organised exclusively through a large commercial or Anglophone publishing platform. This is consistent with work emphasising the limited but meaningful agency of journals operating from Central and Eastern European semi-peripheries (Karmazin 2022; Daniel and Karmazin 2025). Epistemic agency need not imply possession of the

resources or symbolic capital of the academic core; it may also consist in constructing alternative routes through which knowledge is selected, connected, and circulated.

The relationship between Central and Eastern Europe and the wider geography of JIMS is therefore central to evaluating the journal's movement toward polycentrism. The founding regional location initially gave the journal a distinctive standpoint from which migration could be examined through the overlapping experiences of emigration, immigration, return, European integration, and post-socialist transformation. Later volumes incorporated a wider range of African, Middle Eastern, Latin American, and Asian cases, including South–South mobility and migration processes analysed within non-European reception contexts. Such widening creates the possibility of comparisons that do not automatically position Western Europe or North America as the sole reference points and may connect the post-socialist Global East with other non-hegemonic locations.

Yet the same development introduces a significant tension. The explicit visibility of Central and Eastern Europe declined substantially across the period analysed. Greater geographical reach can therefore coexist with a weakening of the regional standpoint that initially differentiated the journal. This does not mean that internationalisation and regional anchoring are inherently incompatible. The more demanding possibility is to treat the regional location not as an enclosure but as a position from which comparative questions can travel. A genuinely polycentric configuration would not require JIMS to choose between Central and Eastern Europe and other world regions. It would require the relations between them to become intellectually productive.

This distinction also places limits on how far the present findings can support the language of polycentrism. Wider case geographies and more diverse institutional affiliations are necessary indicators, but they are not sufficient to demonstrate a redistribution of epistemic authority. The analysis does not establish whether scholars based in different regions contribute equally to conceptual development, whether theories generated outside established centres circulate between contributions, or whether collaboration increasingly crosses national and regional boundaries. Nor does it reconstruct citation networks, reviewer geographies, or the distribution of editorial gatekeeping. For these reasons, the evidence supports movement toward a polycentric configuration rather than completed polycentrism.

The 20th anniversary of JIMS nevertheless offers practical implications for how such a trajectory might be strengthened. One possibility is to make comparison between Central and Eastern Europe and other migration regions more explicit as an editorial programme. Rather than pursuing wider geographical representation as an end in itself, JIMS could encourage comparative work linking Central and Eastern European trajectories with African, Middle Eastern, Asian, or Latin American experiences. Potential areas include sending and receiving transformations, migration in peripheral cities, refugee reception outside established destination countries, digital migration infrastructures, demographic decline, or the institutional consequences of mobility. The objective would not be geographical quotas, but the use of location as a source of questions capable of travelling between contexts.

A second implication concerns the infrastructure through which such participation becomes visible and analysable. Structured metadata, persistent identifiers such as DOIs, consistent reporting of author affiliations, ORCID integration, and downloadable article-level metadata would improve the discoverability and analytical usability of the archive. Clear public statements concerning peer review, research ethics, data availability, and the use of generative

artificial intelligence would further increase procedural transparency. Such measures appear administrative, but they also have epistemic consequences because they affect what scholarship can be discovered, verified, connected, and reused.

Future self-assessment could consequently extend beyond conventional citation indicators. Periodic monitoring of case geography, institutional affiliations, unique authors, cross-national co-authorship, career stage, gender, methodological design, editorial-board composition, reviewer diversity, and decision times would make it possible to assess whether a polycentric aspiration produces broader participation in practice. These measures should not become targets in themselves. Their value lies in making the journal's own infrastructure available for repeated scrutiny rather than treating internationalisation as an intrinsically positive or self-evident outcome.

Several limitations qualify the interpretation of results. First, the quantitative corpus is restricted to abstract-bearing contributions; editorials, reports, reviews, and other paratextual material are used selectively but are not included in the article-level coding. Second, dictionary-based thematic indicators capture explicit textual visibility rather than latent meaning and cannot substitute for systematic close reading. Third, regional mentions are not equivalent to formal study sites, migrant origins, destinations, or institutional affiliations. Spatial rescaling and authorship rescaling are therefore deliberately analysed as separate dimensions. Fourth, method signals depend on explicit wording in the textual fields coded and probably underestimate research designs that were not explicitly named, particularly in earlier issues. Fifth, institutional affiliation is measured through the first current affiliation and at the level of author-contribution occurrences. This maximises consistency but may understate multiple institutional embeddedness and retains repeated appearances by the same individuals. The indicator therefore describes the institutional composition of published output rather than the diversity of unique authors. Sixth, co-authorship does not reveal whether collaboration crossed institutions, countries, regions, or disciplines. Future analysis should reconstruct unique-author trajectories, multiple affiliations, cross-national and cross-regional co-authorship, editorial-board geography, and citation relations. Seventh, the final period contains nine rather than ten issues and ends with the first issue of 2026, so comparisons are appropriately expressed as proportions rather than equal exposure counts. Finally, public archive data cannot identify editorial causation. The observed patterns may reflect submissions, invited sections, political events, funding environments, scholarly networks, editorial choices, or interactions among them.

The author's insider position introduces a final interpretive constraint. Institutional familiarity helps contextualise editorial structures and longitudinal changes, but it also creates a risk of retrospectively imposing coherence on developments that were contingent. The archive does not reveal a journal implementing a twenty-year strategy of epistemic rescaling. It records accumulated decisions and adaptations by editors, authors, reviewers, and institutional supporters. Recognising that contingency is essential to the argument: rescaling is an observed historical pattern, not evidence of an intentional master plan.

6. Conclusions

What does a journal actually do to a field of knowledge over time? The JIMS case suggests that the answer lies not simply in publishing more research or extending geographical coverage, but in altering the relations through which knowledge is selected, organised, produced, and circulated. Across two decades, JIMS retained important elements of its founding mission

while changing substantially across the four dimensions examined in this article. Its thematic agenda became more layered, its spatial scope widened, the institutional geography of authorship diversified, and its organisational arrangements became more differentiated, even as its institutional base in Romania remained stable.

The article conceptualises this transformation as epistemic rescaling. The term captures a process that cannot be reduced either to diversification or to internationalisation. What changed was not only the number of topics, regions, or institutional locations represented in the journal, but the configuration linking them. This distinction matters because wider geographical and institutional reach does not automatically imply greater epistemic equality or completed polycentrism. Rescaling may open new routes of participation while simultaneously weakening the regional standpoint from which a journal originally derived part of its intellectual distinctiveness.

JIMS therefore illustrates both the possibilities and the limits of scholarly agency from a semi-peripheral location. It did not cease to be institutionally rooted in Central and Eastern Europe, nor did it become a new centre of migration scholarship. Instead, it developed into a more diversified site of circulation through which a wider range of cases, institutional locations, methodological approaches, and contributors could be connected. The evidence supports movement toward a more polycentric configuration, but not its completion. A stronger claim would require evidence that the widening geography of participation is accompanied by a broader redistribution of conceptual authority, collaboration, citation, and gatekeeping.

The challenge for the journal's next decade is therefore not to choose between regional anchoring and international reach. It is to make their relationship intellectually productive. Central and Eastern Europe can remain a vantage point from which comparative questions are generated rather than a geographical enclosure, while scholarship from Africa, the Middle East, Asia, Latin America, and other parts of Europe can increasingly participate not only as empirical material but also as sources of problem formation and knowledge production.

Seen in this way, an anniversary is more than an exercise in institutional memory. It is an opportunity for epistemic accountability. By examining what a journal has repeatedly selected, connected, amplified, and left less visible, it becomes possible to assess not only how the publication has changed, but what kinds of scholarly relations it has helped make possible. For JIMS, that reflexive task is central to determining what forms of migration knowledge it seeks to assemble in its third decade.

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