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Editorial

Social Science for Inclusive and Sustainable Futures: A Commentary

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The accelerating pace of global change underscores the indispensable role of social science in shaping inclusive and sustainable societies. While economic or technological innovation often dominates policy discourse, social science provides critical insights into human behaviour, governance, equity, and cultural dynamics; insights that ultimately determine whether innovations succeed [2,8]. Three critical areas demand urgent social science studies:

1. **Urbanisation and Mobility**
   As cities continue to grow rapidly, they face complex social, institutional, environmental, and infrastructural challenges. Research into *urban resilience*; across social, economic, human, institutional, and environmental dimensions is vital for understanding how urban systems absorb and recover from shocks [2,8]. Furthermore, inclusive infrastructure for disaster-risk reduction must integrate social justice concerns so that marginalised communities are not left behind [6].
2. **Digital Transformation and Inclusion**
   The rise of smart cities offers tremendous opportunities but also risks exacerbating inequalities. Studies show that digital divides in terms of access, skills, and the ability to convert digital resources into meaningful life opportunities remain pervasive [5]. Applying Amartya Sen's *capability approach* helps anchor smart-city policies in social equity, highlighting how individuals differ in their ability to convert digital resources into "functionings" [5]. Inclusive governance and infrastructure must ensure that older adults, low-income groups, and people with disabilities can fully benefit [4].
3. **Climate Change, Justice, and Adaptation**
   Climate change is not only a physical threat but also a crisis of justice. Social science research indicates that climate-resilience strategies must explicitly incorporate justice—distributive, procedural, and restorative—or risk reinforcing existing inequities [7]. Community-based, participatory research ensures adaptation pathways are fair, context-sensitive, and socially acceptable [1]. Moreover, combining social resilience, local knowledge, and digital tools is essential for inclusive climate action [3].

Role of the Journal and Our Responsibility

Social Science Insights and Applications occupies a vital niche: translating rigorous scholarship into actionable policy and practice. As editorial board members, we have a shared duty to encourage research that is methodologically sound, globally relevant, and socially just. We should actively promote interdisciplinary work, inclusive research frameworks that centre marginalised voices, and scholarship grounded in justice, equity, and participation.

In doing so, social science becomes not merely an academic discipline but a catalyst for sustainable transformation, guiding societies towards futures where innovation and inclusivity go hand in hand.

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