




# Gendered geographies of resistance, resilience and reworking in Aotearoa feminist geography scholarship

Gail Adams-Hutcheson<sup>1</sup>  | Lynda Johnston<sup>2</sup>  | Sandi Ringham<sup>3,4</sup>  | as part of  
Gender and Geography in Aotearoa (GAGA) NZGS Specialty Group

<sup>1</sup>Work-Integrated Learning Unit,  
University of Waikato, Hamilton,  
New Zealand

<sup>2</sup>Geography Programme, University of  
Waikato, Tauranga, New Zealand

<sup>3</sup>Geography and Environmental Planning  
Programmes, University of Waikato,  
Hamilton, New Zealand

<sup>4</sup>Ngāti Kuri Trust Board, Ngataki, Kaitaia,  
New Zealand

## Correspondence

Lynda Johnston, Geography Programme,  
University of Waikato, Tauranga,  
New Zealand.  
Email: [lynda.johnston@waikato.ac.nz](mailto:lynda.johnston@waikato.ac.nz)

## Abstract

Aotearoa New Zealand feminist geographies involve alliances of connected and vibrant researchers who pay close attention to the politics of knowledge production, power, intersectionality and decolonisation. Safe spaces to speak and write together have been nurtured over time ‘down under’ due to a collective politics of care and mentoring. This special issue demonstrates the strength of collective thinking on resistance, resilience and reworking contemporary geographical practice in Aotearoa. The four empirically based and theoretically informed articles develop new thinking about resistance to colonialism, patriarchy, racism, metricisation and oppression. These critical articles contribute to feminist geographical knowledges both locally and globally.

## KEYWORDS

Aotearoa, feminist geography, gender, resilience, resistance, reworking

Over 3 days in late November 2022, members of Gender and Geography Aotearoa (GAGA) gathered in Ōtautahi Christchurch for the New Zealand Geographical Society's biennial conference. We had proposed a specialist session ‘Gendered Geographies of Resistance, Resilience and Reworking’ to link to the conference theme ‘Toitū: Geographies of Resilience’,<sup>1</sup> and we were inspired by MacLeavy et al. (2021) who explore resistance, resilience and reworking in relation to changing feminist geographical knowledge. The specialist session had 10 presentations from 28 researchers, many of whom were new and emerging scholars. The presentations were uniformly excellent, the discussions supportive, critical and fun.

While it is usual practice to have specialist sessions in conferences, it is unusual for a relatively small

geographical community in Aotearoa that we continue to produce a significant amount of feminist, queer and Māori geographical knowledge. The success of our GAGA conference sessions was due, in part, to the creation of safe and supportive scholarly spaces to discuss critical geographical research. To amplify these research contributions, and when the conference was over, presenters were invited to submit a manuscript based on their presentation to the *New Zealand Geographer*, hence this themed issue. We add to and build on previous special issues on gender and feminist geography in Aotearoa in the *New Zealand Geographer*, including: Women and Gender Geographies in Aotearoa New Zealand (Watkins & Fisher, 2016); Revisiting Geographies of Sexualities and Gender Down Under (Gorman-Murray & Morrison, 2012); Evelyn Stokes and Geography at the University of Waikato (Bedford & Longhurst, 2005); Feminist Geography in Aotearoa New Zealand (Lees, 1995); and Feminist Perspectives in Geography (Stokes et al., 1987).

Gender and Geography Aotearoa (GAGA) is an affiliated study group of the New Zealand Geographical Society (<https://www.nzgs.co.nz/membership/>)

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In this special issue we reflect on some of the diversity and intersectionality of gender, feminist and Māori geographies in Aotearoa. Important to these collective articles is the shaping of emergent feminist futures beyond linear first, second and third so called 'waves' or 'moments' that have often structured the landscapes of feminist thought and action. MacLeavy et al. (2021) explore resistance, resilience and reworking to help chart the changes to feminist geographical knowledge. They critique the notion of 'waves' and 'movements', opting to embrace the 'three 'Rs' in order to 'grasp the complex relationship between different social movements as well as the theoretical significance of an alternative and more generative way of interpreting the many pasts, presents and futures of feminism' (MacLeavy et al., 2021, p. 1599).

While the three Rs are a useful organising device and link to the 2022 conference theme ('Toitū: Geographies of Resilience'), from an Indigenous perspective the concept of a wave provides a metaphor that helps describe the transformative quality of feminist, queer and Māori geographies. Waves are a movement of many particles, informed by currents and shaped by the climate, land and ocean floor (Rout & Reid, 2020; Stevens et al., 2012). Waves create a continuing circular movement influenced by the past and present and the future (Ingersoll, 2016). Each wave of feminist, queer and Māori geography in the present is connected to the past and shapes futures.

Feminist geography in Aotearoa has produced waves of collective work on social, cultural and political moments, as an alliance of people who learn, teach and research gender in geography (see Adams-Hutcheson & Johnston, 2019; Longhurst & Johnston, 2015; Puāwai Collective, 2019; Women and Gender Geographies Research Network of Aotearoa New Zealand et al., 2019). This special issue also draws on the collective strength of work that charts feminist and sexual geographies 'down under' (Johnston, 2018; Johnston & Longhurst, 2008; Longhurst, 2008), which are both similar to, and different from, feminist geographies from 'elsewhere'. And as Longhurst (2008) notes in her Afterword, much of the work in Aotearoa responds to local issues that reflect the wider global context, but which do not map onto it completely.

Feminist and queer geographers have increasingly sought to question the ways in which gender intersects with sexuality, race, class, disability, age and ethnicity and, importantly in the Aotearoa context, to decolonise knowledge (Simmonds, 2011). Aotearoa scholars are pushing for decolonisation and exploring the many ways in which western institutions can be reworked by including Indigenous knowledges, voices and use of Kaupapa Māori and Mana Wāhine frameworks (Pihama, 2010; Simmonds, 2011; Smith, 2012). The special issue contains four articles in which the main thread of political

resistance is woven deeply, connecting each article and connecting to a feminist politics. Politics—key to feminist geographies in Aotearoa—is engaged in different ways. The special issue grapples with resistance to the naming politics of species taxonomies (Ringham, 2023), resistance to racism in urban agriculture (Palomino-Schalscha et al., 2023), resistance to research metricisation (Cox et al., 2023) and resistance to oppressive political structures that allow food insecurity (Johnston & Adams-Hutcheson, 2023).

In the first article in the issue, Sandi Ringham explores the ways in which her iwi (tribe) Ngāti Kuri, and in particular Ngāti Kuri women, contribute to environmental justice through the naming of taonga (treasured) species. Her work elevates an important ancestress, Moehau, to unpack misinterpretation and misrepresentation of Indigenous naming in conservation science. In doing so, Ringham (2023) reclaims the power to name taonga species and reworks space for Ngāti Kuri women as powerful drivers of change in conservation knowledge. Ringham's (2023) work is a means of taking feminist scholarship beyond current understandings of the past (naming of species in Aotearoa's taxonomy) and 'of imagining and creating futures beyond those represented and opposed in the present' (Nagar, 2014, p. 13).

For decades geographers have explored, not just time (pasts, presents and futures) but also the relationship between gender, place and space from a myriad of perspectives. As such, Blidon and Zaragocin (2019) offer a helpful mapping of feminist geographies in the global context to denote the complexity, nuance and diversity of work done to foster networks of solidarity. Networks of feminist geographers in Aotearoa have been strengthened by global networks, further troubling the linear mode of knowledge from 'below', disrupting knowledge from 'above' through decolonisation (Zaragocin, 2021), while promoting localised subject positions that are often trans-cultural. In the second article in the issue, 'Racism in paradise: Being migrants in urban agriculture initiatives in Wellington, Aotearoa New Zealand', Marcela Palomino-Schalscha, Maria Teresa Braga Bizarria and Isabella Sánchez Bolívar utilise collective autoethnography to explore the racialised nuances of joining Urban Agriculture (UA) projects in Wellington Aotearoa as Latin American migrant women of colour.

The authors challenge dualist understandings of resistance as (organised) opposition to forms of racism encountered in the UA projects. They add to feminist geographers' current thinking of resistance as processual practices, which are at the same time gentle, personal, political and collective. Palomino-Schalscha et al. (2023) highlight how, despite facing structures of racism (and sexism), their resilience results from the relationships between bodies, spaces and conditions that shape

subjectivities. Alongside feminist geographies, they add to the literature and practice of UA, and aim to support the journey of fellow migrants and minorities to make sense of, and confront, exclusion which is transcultural as well as translocal.

Geographers have argued strongly for the importance of the local connection to the global context for some time (Wright, 2009). Globally there has been interrogation of the increasing metricisation of research and geographers have taken an inward look at their institutions. In the third article in the issue, authors Bethany Cox, Kirsten Locke, Emma Sharp, Aisling Rayne, Leilani Walker and Tammy Steeves interrogate measurable performance indicators for research and entrenched ideas of leadership that orient people in particular ways in 'Doing leadership differently as resistance: care-fully reworking Aotearoa's New Zealand's research system'. The article works by elaborating a resistant politics, that is generative, inclusive and care-full, debunking research metrics and leadership styles where people are assumed to have a fixed position relative to static configurations of power. The resistant politics is modest, quiet and emergent, something immanent to everyday relationships (Brown, 2017). Cox et al. (2023) situate their participants and themselves as actors who are entangled with the forces of power in universities that shape the way in which their lives are lived, and work is conducted.

The global pandemic COVID-19 has, however, propelled the need to be attentive to 'variously nuanced time-spaces, place-temporalities, space-times and space-times of experiences, (in)equalities, opportunities and constraints' (Maddrell et al., 2023, p. 386) in our local spaces and places. MacLeavy et al. (2021) utilise Katz's (2001) work to further disrupt, not only waves and moments, north and south, but also local and global distinctions in feminist imaginings. By (re)mapping space, (re)forming positive social relationships and envisioning countertopographies, different ways of being in the world are illuminated. Importantly, political struggles are then enhanced by going beyond 'cul-de-sacs of identification' and sites and spaces of politics that are void of materialities (MacLeavy et al., 2021, p. 1565).

In the final article in the issue, by leveraging a remapping of space, Johnston and Adams-Hutcheson (2023) incorporate materialities, politics and food in their article 'Street food pantries as gendered sites of labour and home: suburban geographies of food (in)securities in Kirikiriroa Hamilton, Aotearoa New Zealand'. The article investigates how street food pantries (pātaka kai) in suburban spaces in Kirikiriroa, Hamilton are often conceptualised as an extension of home. The authors think through food pantries as material and gendered sites that rework and replicate notions of home, caring and emotions. Suburban street food pantry owners resist and

rework ideas of food insecurity and access to food. They do this from both within and outside of oppressive political structures as strategies of endurance (Katz, 2001) to facilitate their everyday living. At the same time, pantry owners also conform to normalised gendered tropes of nurturing, caring for and feeding others, kindness and establishing neighbourly bonds. The material agencies of pantries disrupt food poverty and food waste and connect bodies which suggest new possibilities of alliances between neighbours, communities, cities and health and economic policy makers.

This set of articles encompasses Aotearoa's North Island universities, with empirical work spanning geographical regions such as Te Hiku o te Ika (Far North) in the tribal lands of Ngāti Kuri, Kirikiriroa's (Hamilton) suburban spaces in the central north and Te Whanganui-a-Tara (Wellington), the North Island's southern city and Aotearoa's capital. In this themed section we asked contributors to embrace one or more of the 'three Rs' in order to interpret and extend debates about the many pasts, presents and futures of feminist and gender geography in Aotearoa. MacLeavy et al.'s (2021) work thus weaves in and through the four articles, allowing readers to navigate through familiar but perhaps taken-for-granted 'waves' of political possibilities such as urban gardening and suburban food shelves, as well as unfamiliar terrains like research systems or the intimate process of taxonomy and unearthing powerful ancestral learnings.

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## ORCID

Gail Adams-Hutcheson  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4683-6730>

Lynda Johnston  <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7686-9181>

Sandi Ringham  <https://orcid.org/0009-0002-8114-5625>

## ENDNOTE

<sup>1</sup> <https://nzgsconference2022.weebly.com/>

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