

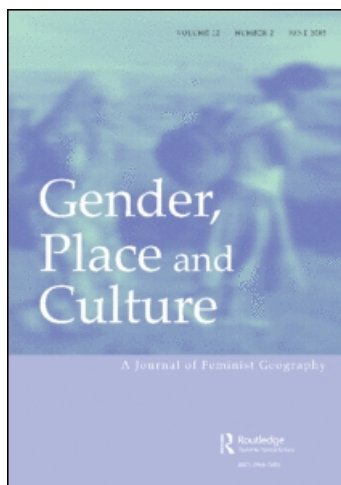
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Introduction: global perspectives on gender-water geographies

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Introduction: global perspectives on gender–water geographies

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This introduction summarizes the work featured in the themed section of *Gender, Place and Culture* titled 'Global geographies of gender and water'. It brings into dialogue scholars investigating a variety of gender–water relationships at different scales, including: poisoned waterscapes; fishing practices; and the implications of neoliberal water policies. The authors featured purposefully engage with the multi-faceted ways in which experiences, discourses and policies of water are gendered, and how gender is created through processes of access, use and control of water resources. In bringing these articles together, we have consciously aimed to support inclusive, feminist collaborative work and to prioritize diversity.

Keywords: gender; water; neoliberalism; nature-society; modernity

At the Association of American Geographers (AAG) meeting in 2007, a group of scholars met in two sessions titled 'Global perspectives on gender–water geographies'. The articles in these sessions investigated a variety of gender and water relationships across a range of research sites from the global north and south, and across national and international boundaries. The articles also crossed disciplinary boundaries and were presented by both scholars and practitioners. This themed section brings together five of the articles from the sessions, all of which contribute to wider debates on water by demonstrating what a gender-focused approach to the study of water resources can bring to light. Debates concerning gender–water relations have been gaining momentum in geography since the publication of the work by White, Bradley and White in 1972, which raises the obvious yet overlooked question 'Who carries water?' Although critiqued as not explicitly feminist (Halvorson 1995), White et al.'s book represents an important and early inquiry into gender–water questions – an inquiry that has expanded into a number of dedicated paper and panel sessions at the AAG annual meetings between 2004 and 2007. The articles here build on this momentum beyond simply forming a body of case studies on gender and water research. The authors purposefully engage with how experiences, discourses and policies of water are gendered, and how gender is created through processes of engagement, access, use and control of water resources.

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This themed section acknowledges that gendered water research has occurred in a variety of separate arenas from cultural studies to political economy. It is intended to facilitate an opportunity for dialogue between feminist scholars about their methods, findings and political agendas. Some argue that the increasingly compartmentalized and reductionist nature of water research has helped cement a neoliberal agenda in water management that silenced debate about the place of the private sector in 'pro-poor' policy making until recently (Laurie 2007). Long-established feminist traditions of collaboration between sub-disciplines and diverse actors using a variety of methods echo these more recent calls for greater crossover dialogue to counter compartmentalization and to focus attention on 'bigger picture' shifts in the understanding and management of water.

In putting together this themed section, we have consciously aimed to continue the commitment to inclusive, feminist collaborative work and to prioritize diversity. We have achieved our goals of cross-disciplinarity and the inclusion of scholars at different stages of their careers – including the composition of the editorial panel. We maintain that more and different voices bring new ideas into a ferment that can take our analyses to greater depth. As an embodied process of knowledge production, this themed section has seen collaborators change institutions, move from temporary to permanent jobs, defend PhDs and take up tenure track positions, often at considerable cost to personal lives and homes made in different places. By making such moves and collaborating in this way, we hope to further strengthen support for feminist scholarship in general, and on water specifically, within the academy.

These articles join the calls over decades to take gender-neutral research and policy to task for neither considering gender as a social construction nor interrogating what an apolitical, gender-neutral approach might mean. They challenge the idea that water is simply natural. What is more, the articles do this in innovative ways. Bull's focus on the role of waterscapes in the creation of alternative rural masculine identities takes research on gender and water into the under-studied realm of men–water relations (Laurie [2005] provides a notable exception). Ahlers and Zwarteveen, and Walker and Robinson argue against the grain of much existing work on gender and water; their articles both posit that too much of a focus on 'women' hides other significant factors (e.g., class and age) and social relations – both at household and community scales – in which water users are embedded. Sultana further complicates taken for granted social categories by showing how the happenstance of location can overturn gender and class privilege in polluted waterscapes. Harris, and Ahlers and Zwarteveen critique feminist studies of gender–water that have neglected to question the individualizing assumptions of neoliberal water policies to the detriment of women and other marginalized groups. Harris also presents a convincing case that geographic research on neoliberal natures has neglected gender to its peril because feminist approaches offer a refined critique of how market methodologies ignore the complexity of nature–society relations and the multiple, co-existing definitions of natural resources (e.g., the psychological and spiritual meanings of water; see also Bull). Sultana highlights a related point by illustrating the simultaneous (re)production of societal, spatial and natural/ecological factors in the formation of gendered subjectivities but links her analysis more closely to an examination of heterogeneous waterscapes and materialities of the body. All five articles indicate that analyses of water's production, consumption and management that do not consider gendered politics miss a critical point.

This themed issue also brings together thoughts on the variety of gendered uses for water. Areas of study that have not tended to speak to each other in the past are addressed here. For example, research on fishing includes both individuals who fish for a living (Walker and Robinson) and anglers who fish for leisure (Bull). These two perspectives

offer innovative contributions. The articles on fishing bring into dialogue the joint concerns of feminist development scholars working in two separate, but both water-dependent, spheres of agricultural and aquacultural production. Bull's article addresses the deep interplay of water and fish in men's understandings of themselves as men, in relation to these natural elements and in relation to other men, in the social space of the pub. Beyond an understanding of water as an uncooperative commodity (Bakker 2003), Bull argues that water's particular materiality, specifically the liminal spaces created by a river's flow and fluid boundaries, generate not only unique understandings of man–nature relations for angling men, but also generate repeatable narratives of fish–man encounters implicit in constructions of rural masculinity. In the case of fishing in Polynesia, Walker and Robinson show that men and women's fishing activities, geographies and methods are more similar than separate. This finding resonates with Ahlers and Zwarteveen's conclusions for their Andean case study. They argue that within households and communities gender relationships are not always in conflict, but often complementary. These authors, Walker and Robinson, and Ahlers and Zwarteveen, conclude that to see only conflict in gender relations hides not only relationships of assistance, but also other important social factors like race, class and age that affect water users' access and control of resources.

Sultana is more ambivalent in her use of a conflict model with respect to household water access. She deploys it when describing struggles by fathers to uphold family honor by limiting young women's water activities that locate them 'out of place' at public taps. She expands this idea by highlighting the inter-generational tensions between daughters-in-law and mothers-in-law over the same issue and shows its versatility when pointing to the potentially empowering opportunities that younger women find when they negotiate permission to fetch safe household water from farther places.

Hidden in the detail of Sultana's analysis of water access negotiations there is a tantalizing insight into a potentially important conceptual overlap with the focus on leisure in Bull's article. This overlap challenges a deeply entrenched binary often missed in research – that of 'pleasure' in the global north and 'conflict' in the global south. A preoccupation with a conflict model is one of the factors that helps to reproduce a struggle model for the South versus the pleasure/leisure agenda of the cultural turn for studies in the North. A postcolonial agenda, however, calls us to take note of the absences in our theoretical frameworks and methodological tools (Pollard et al. Forthcoming). If we are to respond to calls to take culture seriously in development, then pleasure, desire and emotions should be made more visible in our analyses (Chua, Bhavani, and Foran 2000; Laurie and Calla 2004) including in studies of gender and water.

While an examination of masculinities has some resonance with an analysis of socialized, ecologized, spatialized and embodied subjectivities (Sultana), Bull's article may at first glance appear to stand far afield from the other articles, such as Ahlers and Zwarteveen, who discuss the pitfalls of naturalized neoliberal practices of agricultural water management; Harris, who offers a detailed account of the fruitfulness of dialogue between gender–nature researchers and those working on neoliberal natures; or Walker and Robinson's discussion of Marine Protected Areas legislation for fishers' livelihoods. Yet all the articles in this themed section address symptoms or facets of modernity. Although geographically and economically separate, all the authors argue for the significance of the wider political economic context within which people's lives play out and explicitly acknowledge that forces of globalization are felt at local scales. The fishers of the South Pacific, the anglers of southwest England, Andean agriculturalists and rich and poor Bangladeshi households ply their craft and make their livings in a wider world in flux

due to the far-reaching influence of neoliberal economic policies. Bull suggests that men angling in England do so in rejection of modernity, while the men and women fishers interviewed by Walker and Robinson in Moorea seek to make a living in an environmental and economic context that has been rapidly changing in the French post-nuclear-testing period. Walker and Robinson demonstrate how both men and women appear equally affected by economic change and environmental restrictions. For those who *must* fish, gender plays a less important role in how and where that fishing takes place. Nonetheless, the social relations in which English anglers or Polynesian fishers are embedded are no less significant whether one fishes for pleasure, subsistence or indeed both. All the authors in the themed section argue for the significance of social connections – those non-market relations inherent in the functioning of real life, but abstracted into non-existence in neoliberal policy and privileged as ‘northern’ by South–North, conflict–pleasure binaries. Similarly, all the authors heed the importance of water’s materiality as it differentially influences social relations. Detailed, contextual studies are imperative for researchers concerned with the politics and processes of natural resource governance and access. As Harris made plain in her presentation at the 2007 Association of American Geographers meeting, discourses favoring the individuation of property rights conceal relations of unequal power that feminist approaches have historically called into question.

And call them into question we must. Walker and Robinson, Ahlers and Zwartveen, and Harris clearly state the realized and potential negative impacts for women and the poor due to neoliberal policies governing natural resources. The power of a feminist approach, Harris argues, is not to affirm assertions that there are no alternatives to neoliberalization processes, but to continuously call into question the terms of the debate, including, we would suggest, the place of pleasure in our analyses. Both Ahlers and Zwartveen’s, and Harris’s articles argue that the goal of feminist scholarship concerned with gender and natural resource management is *not* to argue uncritically for the inclusion of women in devolution, decentralization and marketization processes, but to interrogate what these policies naturalize and neutralize, including their goals and the inequalities upon which neoliberalism relies.

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ABSTRACT TRANSLATION

Introducción: perspectivas globales en las geografías de género-agua

Esta introducción resume el trabajo presentado en la sección temática de *Gender, Place and Culture* titulada “Geografías globales de género y agua.” Reúne a académicos investigando una variedad de relaciones género-agua a diferentes escalas, incluyendo: paisajes de agua contaminados; prácticas de pesca; y las implicancias de las políticas neoliberales de agua. Los autores presentados se ocupan expresamente de las multifacéticas formas en que las experiencias, discursos y políticas de agua están generizadas, y de cómo el género es creado a través de procesos de acceso, uso y control de los recursos de agua. Reuniendo estos artículos hemos apuntado concientemente a apoyar el trabajo inclusivo, feminista y colaborativo, y a priorizar la diversidad.

Palabras clave: género; agua; neoliberalismo; naturaleza-sociedad; modernidad

绪论：关于性别与水之地理的全球观点

这篇绪论综述了发表在性别，地点和文化学刊里其中一个命名为“性别与水的全球地理”的专题部分的研究。它带给正在研究性别与水在不同层次的关系的学者一个交换意见的空间。受到讨论的议题就包括了含有毒素的水景，捕鱼方式以及新自由主义水政策的影响。这些被特写的作者将讨论水的经验，论述以及政策是如何被性别化的。他们也会探讨性别是如何透过水资源的得获过程，利用与控制而形成的。把这些文章放在一起，我们旨在支持包容性的女性主义协同研究并主张多样性。

关键词：性别，水，新自由主义，自然-社会，现代性