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Routledge Handbook of Gender and Feminist Geographies. A.Datta, P.Hopkins, L.Johnston, E.Olson, J. M.Silva, eds., London and New York, 2020: Routledge. 543 pp. ISBN 978-1-138-05768-5

van Lanen, Sander

Published in:
Tijdschrift voor Economische en Sociale Geografie

DOI:
[10.1111/tesg.12468](https://doi.org/10.1111/tesg.12468)

IMPORTANT NOTE: You are advised to consult the publisher's version (publisher's PDF) if you wish to cite from it. Please check the document version below.

Document Version
Final author's version (accepted by publisher, after peer review)

Publication date:
2022

[Link to publication in University of Groningen/UMCG research database](#)

Citation for published version (APA):
van Lanen, S. (2022). Routledge Handbook of Gender and Feminist Geographies. A.Datta, P.Hopkins, L.Johnston, E.Olson, J. M.Silva, eds., London and New York, 2020: Routledge. 543 pp. ISBN 978-1-138-05768-5. *Tijdschrift voor Economische en Sociale Geografie*, 113(1), 109-110.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/tesg.12468>

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Book review: Routledge Handbook of Gender and Feminist Geographies

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van Lanen, S. (2020) Routledge Handbook of Gender and Feminist Geographies (Book Review). *Tijdschrift voor Economische en Sociale Geografie*.

<https://doi.org/10.1111/tesg.12468>

Routledge Handbook of Gender and Feminist Geographies

EDITED BY A. DATTA, P. HOPKINS, L. JOHNSTON, E. OLSON, J.M. SILVA. London and New York, 2020: Routledge. 543pp. ISBN 978-1-138-05768-5.

By: Sander van Lanen, Department of Cultural Geography, Faculty of Spatial Sciences, University of Groningen

The broad conceptual, methodological and theoretical scope of the *Routledge Handbook of Gender and Feminist* handbook eliminates any excuse to not knowing where to start with feminist geographies. Its 48 thematic chapters contain perspectives relevant for any student, researcher or scholar. This handbook testifies to the widening thematic, epistemological and methodological scope of feminist geographies, ranging from indigenous sexualities to the global economy, from the body to the global, from care to labour and trauma, and from storytelling to feminist GIS. Although the handbook's 543 pages seem overwhelming, clear keywords facilitate the identification of the relatively brief chapters and create your narrative journey. Four thematical parts group the entries into 'establishing', 'placing', 'engaging', and 'doing' feminist geographies. Together, these aim to provide "a window into established gender and feminist geographies while pointing readings towards new directions", so do not forget to discover surprising angles and novel themes in chapters outside of your usual interests.

The chapters in 'establishing feminist geographies' engage the various angles, scales, topics, and positionalities employed by feminist geographers. For example, Adams-Hutcheson and Smith illustrate feminism's engagement with bodies, emotions and space, and use the sweating body to describe how shame emerges from a body out of place. Loomis and Oberhauser trace feminist conceptualisation of the economy as entangled with gendered, raced, and classed values and argue that female emancipation requires more than financial independence. Similar intersectional tensions make, according to Oliver and Faria, Rio de Janeiro simultaneously a 'gay-friendly afro-paradise' for white queers and 'hostile landscape' for queers-of-colour. Together, these chapters reveal how feminist perspectives enriched geographic enquiry.

'Placing feminist geographies' discusses feminist engagements with scales ranging from the body to the global. At the urban scale, Listerborn problematises gender in urban planning, arguing that gender-inclusive urban planning can adversely impact lower-class and racialised urban populations by preparing neighbourhoods for gentrification and selling surveillance as female safety. Drozdowski and Monk explore gendered landscapes through public monuments, revealing how scarce female representation often remains allegorical or mythical while the exceptional appearance of women-representing-women requires continuous effort and money. The chapters in part two present various dilemmas of gender inclusion and its relation to race, class, and sexuality at different scales.

'Engaging feminist geographies' focusses on feminist engagement with geographic topics, including gendered violence and motherhood, but also labour, well-being and neoliberalism. In their contribution, Pain, Rezwane and Sahdan, implicate physical, social, and political geographies in the capabilities and strategies available to gender-based violence survivors as they deal with trauma in Bangladesh, Malaysia and the UK.

Meth investigates gender in development studies, which concentrates in three trends; economic gender disparities, sexual and partner violence, and male-dominated power structures. Nonetheless, gendered dimensions of development are often over-simplified through quantification, heteronormativity, and an exclusive focus on women/girls. Most contributions mark an increasing recognition of structural patriarchy and global feminist entanglements in the subjects of feminist geographies.

'Doing feminist geographies' gathers research and educational methods for feminist and gender geographies, with a specific focus on the complex power relations of researchers, educators and knowledge creators. For example, Pierre, Petigny and Nager discuss the tension between collective knowledge production with individual-focused citation practices. This tension resurfaces in the seven-author entry on participatory action research. While migrant activists participated in liberatory research, power differences re-emerged during publication and authorship. Drooglever Fortuijn discusses teaching feminist geographies within the power structures of university classes and the contradictions between uncomfortable learning experiences and a desire for safe learning spaces. While most chapters desire a more inclusive academy, they also illustrate the omnipresence of power structures in feminist research.

The four parts together provide an extensive overview of the conceptual, theoretical and methodological contributions of feminist geographies to a multitude of societal issues at various scales. The handbook is strongest when chapters introduce a topic or approach and illustrate it with a research project, such as the entries men and masculinities, the nation, and GIS. These chapters offer conceptual and practical understandings of key ideas. A minor criticism is that language in some chapters is hard to grasp. For example, the intertwined use of emotion/affect in chapter 8 or the narrative on decolonising methods were complex. Such complex academic language sometimes obfuscates the otherwise very accessible chapters.

This handbook indicates the deserved and required inclusion of gender and feminism in geography. Its entries, however, also show how much still needs to be done within and outside the academy to address pervasive inequalities based on gender, race, class and other social structures. Therefore, this handbook offers a departure point for those looking to engage feminist geographies. The editors "look with hope towards the scholars who will generate their own inspired points of departure" (p. 01). So, in the spirit of feminism, let's remain attentive to not-yet included voices to engage them in the future.

