

FEMGEOG 2022: Pushing Boundaries

Session: Political Ecology / Critical Food Geographies

Theme: Food justice and solidarity through feminist, anticolonial knowledge production

Co-creating safe spaces in community gardens:

Multifaceted practices of belonging and care in Wellington, New Zealand

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Urban agriculture (UA) is usually addressed as a relevant initiative to promote food security, that also brings positive environmental and socio-economic impact to citizens. Following a critical agenda on the topic, I explored what motivates volunteers' engagement in community gardens. Focusing on women's experiences, in this paper I unpack findings that show how these initiatives are perceived as safe spaces for participants, in relational dynamics among humans and non-humans.

This study is part of an ongoing qualitative PhD project in Human Geography, focusing on women's lived experiences in community gardens in Wellington, New Zealand. I collected data from participant observation in 3 gardens for 6 months in 2021, and from semi-structured interviews with 9 participants. The findings have been analysed from feminist and more-than-representational approaches, using a conceptual framework from Affective and Emotional Geographies.

My analysis shows that relations developed in community gardens can affect participants' sense of belonging and build safe environments. These processes blur boundaries between public and private spheres, and also endorse practices of care that are inclusive to humans and non-humans, and are affected by intersectional subjectivities.

Keywords: urban agriculture, community gardens, feminist spaces, affective geographies, practices of care, gender awareness

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