Introduction

Hannah Bows and Bianca Fileborn

Background

Spaces – physical and digital, public and private – are gendered. Conceptually, symbolically and physically, women, men and gender-diverse folk access, use and experience spaces differently. For example, the private sphere of the home has traditionally been constructed as safe, but this construction predominantly applies to (White, cis-gender, heterosexual and able-bodied) men, who are most likely to be victims of violence or other crime in public places (ONS, 2020). For women, the home is frequently not a haven, but instead a site where, globally, at least one in three women will experience some form of physical, sexual, emotional or financial abuse by a partner or family member (WHO, 2021), and around two women are killed each week (ONS, 2020; Femicide Census, 2018).

Contemporary evidence shows the routine, commonplace occurrence of physical and sexual violence against women and LGBTQ+ people in public places; four out of five women in the UK have been sexually harassed in a public place (UN Women UK, 2021). Research from the US shows that LGBTQ+ people and people of colour also routinely experience harassment in public spaces (Stop Street Harassment, 2014). LGBTQ+ people also face heightened risk of domestic and family violence at rates similar to, if not higher than, cis-gender heterosexual women (LGBTIQ Domestic and Family Violence Interagency and CSRH, 2014). Yet, the home can also be a sanctuary or space of safety and belonging in a world that is too often heterosexist, homophobic and transphobic, while some public spaces can be sites of queer community, transgression and disruption to the heterosexist norm (Valentine, 1996; Duncan, 1996b; Corteén, 2002). These tensions point to the complex, fluid, relational and temporal nature of spaces as sites of safety or harm – they require us to ask safe or dangerous for whom, and in what contexts?

As we began preparing this collection, the COVID-19 pandemic swept the globe, fundamentally shifting our relationships to and uses
of space – often in ways that heightened and brought to the fore pre-existing inequalities (Kay, 2020; Young, 2021; Bonu et al, Chapter 1). Of relevance to this collection, the pandemic has exacerbated gendered (and other) inequalities, while increased rates of gender-based violence (GBV) in the home have been recorded across the world, leading to what the United Nations for Women have termed the ‘shadow pandemic’ (UN Women, nd). ‘Home’ was portrayed as the safest place to be to avoid the virus, but for those experiencing domestic violence ‘home’ is often the riskiest place to be (see Kay, 2020; Young, 2021; Levell, Chapter 3). Those most at risk of domestic violence faced heightened rates and/or severity of violence, as illustrated by spikes in calls to helplines and, in the UK, a doubling of fatal violence against women (Boxall et al, 2020; Kay, 2020). However, while the pandemic has shone a light on violence experienced in the home, ‘the realities of women’s experiences of urban public spaces have been relegated to the backburner’ (Bharadwaj and Mahanta, 2021: 1). Increased racist harassment of Asian people was also documented during the pandemic, with the bulk of this occurring in public and semi-public spaces (Asian Australian Alliance, 2020). The experiences of Asian women documented in work by the Asian Australian Alliance (2020) demonstrated that this harassment and abuse could be both racist and sexist in nature.

These examples raise the centrality of undertaking a spatial analysis of GBV. Even across these brief snapshots, we can see that GBV occurs across different spaces in different forms. Moreover, this discussion begins to evidence how the social and cultural production of space is implicated in the occurrence of GBV. Gender-based violence can represent a means of (re)producing spaces in particular ways (for example, as the domain of men and whiteness, as heteronormative), while the social and cultural production of space may in turn normalize and facilitate the occurrence of some forms of violence. Our discussion suggests that GBV may be understood differently depending on where it occurs – in the ‘private’ space of the home, for instance – with subsequent implications for what ‘counts’ as ‘real’ or ‘serious’ violence, and what is deemed worthy of intervention (Bows and Fileborn, 2020). Likewise, we begin to see different patterns emerging in terms of the temporal and geographical specificities of violence. In short, we contend that space must be taken seriously as a point of analysis in understanding, conceptualizing and intervening in GBV. Contributions to this collection aim to foreground the role of space and place in GBV from different perspectives. In this Introduction, we aim to provide readers with a snapshot of key debates, developments and concepts relating to gender, space and place, and GBV.
Conceptualizing gender and gender-based violence

This collection foregrounds space and place in the analysis of GBV. It is important to unpack the terms and concepts that are central to our endeavour. We adopt the definition of GBV established in the Istanbul Convention (Council of Europe, 2011: para 44): ‘Gender-based violence refers to any type of harm that is perpetrated against a person or group of people because of their factual or perceived sex, gender, sexual orientation and/or gender identity’. Our approach to GBV draws heavily on Kelly’s (1988) concept of the continuum, which has influenced much of the work on GBV over the last three decades and provides the framework for many of the chapters in this collection (such as DeKeseredy, Chapter 6). Accordingly, we see GBV as ranging in behaviours (from non-physical abuse including the male gaze, unwanted attention, verbal harassment and abuse, to physical assaults and rapes) and contexts, time and place, but always with the same purpose – to maintain the patriarchy (and, we would add, heteronormativity, White supremacy, colonialism, ableism and so forth).

Although gender is the distinguishing feature of GBV, this category cannot be viewed as wholly separate to or distinct from other categories of identity and relations of power. It is co-constructed in and through categories such as race, sexuality and class. This collection draws on an intersectional lens in understanding GBV (Crenshaw, 1994). Further, while gender is central to any understanding of violence, we do not suggest that gender is the only structural or systemic factor at play, or that it is always the most significant factor underpinning violence. Likewise, when we say ‘gender-based violence’, we do not only refer to men’s violence against women, though this is of course a core focus throughout this volume. Thus, when we talk about gender, GBV and gendered space, we come from the perspective that ‘gender’ cannot be disentangled from race, sexuality, class, (dis)ability and other power structures. Indeed, as several chapters in this collection show, violence is situated at the intersections of gender, race and colonialism (see Kilroy, Lean and Quixley, Chapter 11). We also take this term to encompass how the social production and performance of gender is tied up with lived experiences of violence: who harms, who is harmed, and how we individually and collectively come to understand and make sense of both violence and gendered identity. Drawing on post-structuralist contributions (for example, Butler, 1990), ‘gender’ must be understood as multifaceted, relational and fluid.

Space, place and power

Since the early 1990s there has been a shift to recognizing not only the physicality of space, but also the social, cultural and temporal features and
constructs of different spaces which (re)produce gender inequality within different sites. Aitchison (1999) notes that space was previously viewed as absolute and material, but it is now widely recognized as relative and symbolic, providing new ways of seeing and understanding leisure spaces. The contributions of de Certeau (1984) were central to driving this shift: his conceptualizations of space/place differentiated between a geographical, material location (place) and space as constituted through the practices, discourses and symbolic meaning associated with a given place. That is, ‘space is a practised place’ (de Certeau, 1984: 117, original emphasis). This marks a clear shift from seeing space as purely physical, to instead recognizing space as sociocultural and relative in nature.

Consequently, the synergies between gender relations and spatial relations began to be explored (Aitchison, 1999). Early feminist geographers (for example, Valentine, 1990; Pain, 1991; Duncan, 1996a; McDowell, 1996, 1999) provided foundational research into the gendered nature of spaces, from their design to their function, which were built, constructed and maintained within the wider patriarchy. For example, traditional gender roles assigned the home and domestic realm as women’s domain, as a space free from state interference and, paradoxically, as a space in which men retained control as ‘head of the household’, collectively contributing to the existence yet invisibility of domestic violence (Valentine 1992; Duncan, 1996a; Wesely and Gaarder, 2004). In saying this, it is important to consider for which women this was the case. As Black feminist and critical scholars have pointed out, women of colour and socio-economically marginalized women participated in the public sphere and paid employment by necessity (Beck, 2021). The notion that women were relegated primarily to the private or domestic sphere reflects the experiences of White, middle-class women (though, they too resisted and contested this – Kern, 2021), while home for Black women could also be an important site of political organizing and resistance, as well as a space of patriarchal oppression (see Duncan, 1996b, drawing on hooks, 1990 and Crenshaw, 1994). This example again illustrates the importance of employing an intersectional analysis, demonstrating the gendered reproduction of spaces, but also the ways in which the category of gender and gendered space is shaped through power relations of (in this case) race and class (and see Valentine, 1996, 1997 in relation to sexuality). As McDowell (1999: 4) explains, ‘places are contested, fluid and uncertain … with multiple changing boundaries, constituted by social relations of power and exclusion’. As such, we should be wary of analyses that attempt to render space in any singular, coherent or universal way.

Spaces, particularly public spaces, are (White, heterosexual, able-bodied) masculine territories (Duncan, 1996a, 1996b; Valentine, 1996; Fanghanel, 2019; Kern, 2020) which restrict women’s access, regulate their behaviour and expose them to risks that are not experienced in the same way, or
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to the same extent, as men. Feminist scholars have argued that space is constructed in a binary way, whereby patriarchy assigns space as masculine or feminine and ‘in doing so, society retains control of the subordinate group by restricting movements, behaviour and activities’ (Pain, 1991: 422; see also Duncan, 1996b). Space is thus of critical importance in ‘asserting, maintaining and reinscribing binary gender norms’, though this manifests in different ways across different spaces, contexts and times (England, 2021: 1; see also Duncan, 1996a; McDowell, 1996; Valentine, 1997). Several chapters in this volume attend to the social and cultural production of space and its role in gender-based violence. For instance, DeKeseredy (Chapter 6) examines how rural spaces facilitate what he terms woman abuse, while Morgan and Hewitt (Chapter 7) consider how digital space is produced as masculine space, which is in turn implicated in digital harassment. Alexandra Fanghanel’s analysis of Brexit (Chapter 8) shows how constructions and representations of the White victim and Black ‘other’ in the context of sexual violence are drawn on in producing an imagined national identity in need of protection. Turning to the Sahel region of West Africa, Kristine Anderson (Chapter 10) outlines the implications that the militarization and ‘NGO-ization’ of space has for GBV.

Feminist scholars such as Duncan (1996a, 1996b) worked to destabilize and expose the artificial construction of space as a public/private binary. While this construction is popularly perceived as ‘natural’, Duncan (1996b: 127) shows how this divide is instead ‘deeply rooted in political philosophy, law, popular discourse and recurrent spatial structuring practices’. This work is taken up by Haje Keli’s contribution to this volume (Chapter 12), as she illustrates the ways in which the public and private blur into one another in institutional spaces. The organization of space as public/private has also been implicated in the construction of GBV (for example, Duncan, 1996b; Stanko, 1985), working to occlude and normalize violence. Violence against particular bodies in particular spaces come to be positioned as ‘acceptable’ and as ‘non-violence’ (Fanghanel, 2019). This is clearly illustrated through the historic (and contemporary) failure of the state to intervene in men’s violence against women in the ‘private’ or domestic sphere (though the state has been all too willing to intervene in the ‘private’ affairs of others, as illustrated through the surveillance and regulation of homosexuality, or those dependent on the state for support – Duncan, 1996b). The spatial organization of ‘acceptable’ violence is apparent in Kilroy and colleagues’ analysis of state-sanctioned violence against women in prisons (Chapter 11), where the use of sexually violent practices such as strip searches are constructed as normal and necessary ‘procedures’ against women. Given that women in Australian prisons are disproportionately Indigenous, the spatial isolation and perpetration of state-sanctioned violence must also be understood as a tool of colonization.
More recent work drawing on conceptual contributions such as assemblage thinking (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987; Grosz, 1995; Duncan, 1996b; Fanghanel, 2019), critical materialism and posthumanism further complicate our understandings of space. In relation to the city, for example, Alison Young (2021: 20) posits that ‘we must think it as a space characterised by multifarious moments of collision between the multiple bodies, or legal subjects, human and non-human, that inhabit its spaces’. Such approaches ask us to move beyond viewing the material elements of space as simply the ‘inert background’ on which human interaction happens to instead recognize how material spaces (and other non-human elements) can themselves be productive forces (Fileborn, 2016; Fileborn et al, 2020). As Fileborn et al (2020: 72) explain, this line of thinking requires us to consider how ‘cultural, discursive, spatial, material and human elements come together in fluid and temporally specific ways to generate incidents of sexual violence’. Moreover, the idea that the materiality of space plays a role in shaping how and whether GBV occurs is something that has less commonly been considered in research and scholarship on GBV. The role of material space and, in this case, transnational mobility, is brought to the fore by Anja Bredal in Chapter 9. Bredal’s contribution demonstrates how perpetrators’ control over space and movement through space – in addition to a host of other factors – plays a role in enabling their actions.

**Space and fear**

Public spaces have long been linked to fear of crime, particularly for women, LGBTQ+ communities and other marginalized groups (Vera-Gray, 2018; Berry et al, 2021). Early feminist geographers and sociologists, particularly Valentine (1989) and Pain (1991, 1995) documented the spatiality of women’s fear, and experiences, of crime in public places. From an early age, women are told that public spaces are dangerous and the possibility of sexualized threats from men in these spaces means that accessing them carries with it responsibility for managing risk. Women are consequently held accountable for the violence they experience in public spaces as a form of contributory negligence (Burt and Estep, 1981).

It is therefore no surprise that women do not believe they have a right to public spaces; a 2016 Australian study reported that a third of young women surveyed did not believe they should be in public space at night at all and a quarter said that young women should never travel alone on public transport (Plan International and Our Watch, 2016). Arguably, the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in a collective discomfort of public spaces, providing a taste of what women and LGBTQ+ communities have always experienced. As Bharadwaj and Mahanta (2021: 1) argue, ‘it has to be recognized that the heightened sense of fear and distrust we experience
on the street in the present underlines how women have always experienced the city – as a hostile, unsafe and potentially violent space’. However, women’s fear of crime in public spaces – or more specifically, their fear of sexual violence, has to some extent been accepted and taken for granted while simultaneously positioned as irrational. This is because, according to official crime statistics and surveys, men are much more likely to experience violence victimization in public spaces.

Women are required to have the ‘right amount of panic’ when occupying public spaces (Vera-Gray, 2018). They must engage in an ‘appropriate’ amount of safekeeping work to ‘stay safe’, while simultaneously avoid being ‘hysterical’ or as overreacting to a ‘non-existent’ threat. The use of safekeeping strategies, which themselves manifest in spatially specific ways, further contributes towards the production of public spaces as masculine and heteronormative in nature (Pain, 1999; Fileborn, 2021a). As Lea and colleagues’ chapter illustrates (Chapter 13), safekeeping strategies can greatly restrict women’s access to public spaces. However, research since the 1990s has confirmed that women are not irrational in their fear of public spaces, nor ‘hysterically overreacting to a “non-existent” threat’ (Gilchrist et al, 1998: 285). In fact, women continue to face high levels of physical and sexual violence in public spaces – streets, public transport (see d’Arbois de Jubainville, Chapter 5), at university, at work, in gyms and in nightlife venues (see Nicholls, Chapter 2) as well as the home. Women’s fear is therefore well placed and reflects the everyday reality.

However, we must also recognize the differential levels of privilege experienced by women. Different women will experience fear to different extents, and in different temporal, geographical and relational contexts. Women who enjoy greater levels of privilege may be more able to experience a sense of safety, ease and belonging in the world, or to possess the resources needed to avoid sites of unsafety (Kern, 2005, 2020). Indeed, women’s fear can at times perpetuate other structural inequalities such as classism and racism (Kern, 2020; Phadke, 2013). This is seen in Emily Nicholls’ work (Chapter 2), where women’s fear on a night out was associated with the spaces occupied by working-class men.

Moreover, scholars have argued that, although men experience violent assaults at higher rates than women in public spaces, it is men who perpetrate this violence and thus violence against men and women in public spaces, although manifesting in different ways, can be understood through the (spatial) lens of hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 2005). As England (2021: 2) summarizes, ‘Hegemonic masculinity idealises and empowers a cultural ideal of masculinity as brutal, violent and dominant, demanding subordination from women and problematisation of non-hegemonic masculinities – for instance, trans, queer, racialised and economically marginalised men’. Spaces, particularly public spaces, thus offer a location ‘where hegemonic
masculinities are enacted, maintained and legitimised’ (2021: 2), a point that is taken up by Levell in Chapter 3 on the experiences of men who experienced domestic abuse as children and their lives ‘on road’ as adult men. Experiences within public spaces differ accordingly. As Vera-Gray and Kelly (2020: 265) point out, ‘belonging in public space is both different for women and differs between women: for example, the possibility of not being observed/judged is accentuated if you are minoritized or gender non-conforming’. England (2021: 2) argues that ‘the presence of women, trans and queer people in public space is tolerated contingent upon how they behave, and how they are constructed, within the space’.

Space and justice

The work in this volume shows that we need to take space seriously as a (literal and figurative) site of justice in relation to GBV. While our discussion in this collection focuses on space and justice in relation to GBV, it is essential to state that such conversations cannot be disconnected from the return of stolen lands to First Nations peoples and that, ultimately, no justice can be achieved without land justice. As mentioned earlier, spatial practices in relation to GBV are themselves inherently intertwined with processes of colonization and oppression (see Kern, 2020; Kilroy et al, Chapter 11). Leslie Kern (2020: 4) recently observed that ‘the degradation and stigmatization of Indigenous women were part of the urbanization process’, a legacy she argues continues to be reflected in the disproportionately high rates of GBV against Indigenous women and girls. While we are only able to touch on this point briefly, it is one that requires ongoing conversation, and needs to be centred in future discussions on spatial justice. We aim here to outline some of the ways in which space has been approached as a site of justice in relation to GBV to date.

Speaking to the spatial inequalities rendered more visible throughout the COVID–19 pandemic, and the assumption that the home represents a space of safety, Kay (2020: 888) suggested that ‘while we are staying the fuck at home, we should also be imagining how much fucking better home could be, and fighting to make it so’. Achieving justice and rectifying intersectional inequality requires us to fundamentally transform the gendered meanings attached to and reproduced through space. Further, justice requires us to undo the organization of space. As Duncan (1996b: 142), drawing on Deleuze and Guattari, articulated over two decades ago, we require a ‘spatial revolution that would conceive of physical and political or discursive space as less clearly divided between publicly recognized territories of formal power, depoliticized spaces of urban spectacle and protected spaces of uneven privatized power relations’, to be replaced by ‘open-ended, proliferating and inclusive sites or empowerment and resistance’. In her earlier work, contributor Alexandra
Fanghanel (2019: 3) defines spatial justice ‘as a forging of a mode of living outside of the constraints of exclusions and marginalisations that compose public space’. Across each of these approaches, there is a call to reimagine how spaces are conceived, used, experienced and designed.

A cohort of feminist scholars have begun to think through what spatial justice might involve in relation to GBV (see, for example, Phadke, 2013; Antonsdóttir, 2019; Fanghanel, 2019; Kern, 2020; Fileborn, 2021a). Reclamation of space has featured in several accounts, as well as being a focus of feminist activism. Giving the examples of SlutWalk and Take Back the Night, Antonsdóttir (2019: 721) describes such activism as a form ‘of collective spatial resistance where women claim the public space’. However, as Kern (2020: 17) warns us, this discourse of ‘reclaiming’ space reproduces colonial processes and may impede ‘the efforts of Indigenous people to reclaim lands taken and colonized’.

For the victim-survivors interviewed in Antonsdóttir’s (2019: 731) research, survivors’ ‘(re)claiming of space’ after experiencing sexual violence was ‘about changing power relations to be able to exercise … the right to everyday life’. However, the ability to reclaim space from perpetrators often hinged on survivors’ access to resources and support systems. Nonetheless, by refusing to delimit their access to different social and civic spaces in the aftermath of sexual violence, these women asserted what Antonsdóttir (2019: 737) terms a ‘just claim to space’. Shilpa Phadke (2013: 50) has similarly argued the need to shift focus away from women’s safety in public space towards ‘women’s right to access public space’ (see also Phadke et al, 2009). The practice of loitering in public spaces, according to Phadke (2013: 51), offers one avenue for ‘rewriting the city as a more inclusive, diverse and pleasurable city’, on the provision that loitering is an activity available to all marginalized groups. Lea and colleagues (Chapter 13) provide some practical examples of how this reclamation of public spaces can be achieved through their activist work in India and Kenya.

Other forms of activism, such as the use of crowd mapping by anti-street harassment groups, function to disrupt and challenge the dominant construction of public space by making an often-hidden form of violence visible (Fileborn, 2021b). Both Claire Loughnan (Chapter 14) and Walker and Di Niro (Chapter 15) consider the potential for different spaces – namely, sites of public memorialization and creative arts respectively – to function as sites of resistance and transformation in relation to GBV.

Gender and queer-sensitive and social justice-oriented approaches to design, mobility and access to resources also have a role to play in creating spaces that foster a sense of belonging and reflect the needs and uses of diverse groups (Phadke, 2013; Low and Iveson, 2016; Enright, 2019; Kern, 2020; Berry et al, 2021). In this volume, for example, Ruth Weir (Chapter 4) uses community asset mapping (CAM) to demonstrate the role that access to
community resources can play in (under)reporting domestic and intimate partner violence. Space, then, is fundamentally intertwined with questions of justice in relation to GBV. One aim of this volume is to encourage scholars in the field of GBV to heed the role of space in achieving justice to this harm, alongside an acute awareness of the possibility for spatial responses to perpetuate other forms of marginalization and exclusion.

**Structure of the volume**

This volume comprises 15 chapters examining GBV in different spaces, organized into five parts. Part I includes four chapters examining GBV in urban and community spaces. In the first chapter, Bonu and colleagues examine the physical and symbolic potential of a ‘feminist city’. Using Italy as a case study, the authors examine how the traditional framing of GBV in cites was both sexist and racist, depicting the White woman as a passive victim of the ethnic male ‘other’ who was responsible for sexual and physical violence in public spaces. This framing justified a securitization approach, where public spaces and the women within them were ‘protected’ through expulsion of foreign citizens. However, an alternative framing emerged through feminist activism in Italy which focused on the structural nature of GBV. The authors argue for a new approach, which centralizes collective feminist practices of self-determination that have the potential to shape the city into a feminist one.

The second chapter is also concerned with the city, looking specifically at the phenomenon of the ‘Girls’ Night Out’, drawing on Nicholls’s research with 26 young women from Newcastle-upon-Tyne in the UK on their management and production of ‘appropriate’ femininity within the night-time economy (NTE). Nicholls’s contribution considers how the NTE represents a space where sexual violence and harassment are a seemingly ever-present risk to be managed, with this risk actively produced through the social and cultural norms and spatial design of licensed venues. At the same time, participants constructed the risk of sexual violence in bounded and relational ways, with women designating venues associated with working-class male patrons as spaces to avoid at all costs.

In the third chapter, Levell provides insights into how men who have experienced domestic violence and abuse (DVA) negotiated the spaces of home and being ‘on road’, and the ways in which these spaces were related to their production of masculinity. Her chapter touches on an often-overlooked element of gender-based violence by focusing on the spatialized coping strategies of boys and men experiencing DVA. Drawing on the Welsh concept of ‘hiraeth’, Levell destabilizes distinctions between the home and public/private space – ‘home’ became a place to avoid, a site of harm and
isolation for the men she spoke with. Instead, her participants turned ‘on road’ to find a sense of home, belonging and control.

The final chapter in this part comes from Weir, who demonstrates the importance of considering geographic variation in the reporting of domestic violence, and the extent to which the features of a community, such as social capital, collective efficacy and the ready availability of resources, may be predictive (or not) of rates of domestic violence. Utilizing CAM as a method – an approach that has rarely, if ever, been adopted before in research on domestic violence – Weir’s work demonstrates the importance of examining domestic violence at the local community level.

Part II moves on from urban space to consider how gender-based violence manifests across a range of ‘local-level’ and transitionary spaces, from public transport to rural and digital spaces.

The first chapter in this part, from d’Arbois de Jubainville presents findings from the French component of a larger study examining sexual violence on public transport. Unlike previous studies, they adopt a whole of journey approach and present a comparative analysis of journeys on rail and bus transport, as well as the journey taken to and between public transport, including walking to and waiting at railway stations and bus stops. They report high levels of sexual harassment, particularly on trains, with variation in the prevalence and nature of harassment and assault reported on bus versus trains. Overall, the findings chime with previous research on sexual violence on transport but advance our understandings of the continuum of sexual violence experienced across the entire journey a woman takes from A to B. This has implications for transit design and monitoring, which the authors suggest may benefit from more use of potential formal ‘guardians’ (bystanders) which are valued by women and may explain lower rates of sexual violence on buses.

Walter DeKeseredy (Chapter 6) moves on to examine the features of woman abuse in rural spaces, specifically the role that male peer support (in the form of the good ol’ boys network), patriarchal organization, attitudes and beliefs, and pornography consumption play in legitimizing and facilitating violence against women in rural environments. Moreover, the geographical isolation that often attends rural spaces can increase the risks that rural women face, while reducing their access to support services. DeKeseredy’s chapter attends to the importance of considering both the social and cultural production of space as well as the physical features of space.

The final contribution in this part, from Morgan and Hewitt, considers how Twitter as a virtual geographic space reinforces gendered stereotypes and enables online misogyny and gendered cyberhate aimed at women. The authors show that the rules, algorithms and policies that govern these spaces shape women’s experiences and reinforce gender inequalities. They
argue that the anonymity provided by the platform enables individuals to perpetrate online abuse:

Women are still not the ‘full participants’ in digital spaces that they imagined. It is mostly men who shape the system and the rules, determining how women are treated and how full their membership of digital space. If cyberspace is constructed using language and language is inherently patriarchal … power is inherently directed towards men. (p 128, this volume)

They suggest that, to reduce abuse, Twitter should be more inclusive in terms of their staff (employing more women, ethnic minorities and diverse communities) as well as educating moderators and engineers in ethics to minimize privilege and bias.

Part III of this volume moves from the urban and local to the transnational and political. Alexandra Fanghanel (Chapter 8) considers how sociopolitical discourses concerning a series of highly publicized attacks on women in Cologne in 2015 and the separate Brexit referendum and subsequent decision to leave the European Union can be analysed and understood through the spectre of the rape of the nation and the latent menace of the body of the Black ‘other’. Specifically, the author argues that a spatialized and sexualized understanding of the nation-as-territory, through which the White female body is symbolically mobilized as needing protection from the Black other, advance our understandings of rape culture.

Anja Bredal, in Chapter 9, develops the concept of the ‘transnational regimes of violence’ as a lens for understanding domestic and family violence that occurs across borders. Drawing on interviews with women survivors whose experiences contained transnational elements, as well as Norwegian case law, Bredal’s analysis deftly illustrates how perpetrators were able to draw on transnational space as a tool of abuse. Transnational mobility can be utilized by perpetrators in and of itself as a form of control and abuse, for example through forced movement across countries. Bredal’s work brings a new perspective to understanding abuse experienced by migrant women through emphasizing the roles that space and mobility play in enabling violence.

The third chapter in this part, from Kristine Anderson, examines the role NGO-ization and militarization have played in shaping gender-based violence in Niger. Anderson suggests that the NGO-ization and militarization of spaces in Niger produces these spaces in a way that circumscribes the ability of women and girls to participate in civil and political life, while privileging neoliberal and Western notions of rights and civic participation. Simultaneously, the increased militarization of spaces contributes to their production as masculine and patriarchal spaces.
which (re)produce gendered inequalities and increase the prevalence of gender-based violence.

Part IV moves on to consider the role of institutional spaces as sites of violence. While institutional settings are popularly viewed as sites of ‘justice’ and protection from gender-based violence, the two chapters in this part challenge this perspective by showing how institutional settings are instead sites of violence. Kilroy, Lean and Quixley (Chapter 11) – examine violence by institutions, specifically violence against incarcerated women, sanctioned by the state. They argue that women in prison are subject to humiliation, control and shame – tactics that are routinely used by perpetrators of domestic abuse, and in fact prisons replicate women’s past experiences of violence. The authors powerfully argue that this is intentional and is a core feature of the spatial design and geographic isolation of prisons.

Continuing the focus on institutional violence, in Chapter 12 Haje Keli explores the role of government institutions in Iraqi Kurdistan in perpetuating and reinforcing the structural and spatial conditions for domestic violence. Drawing on interviews with survivors and experts, and observation in institutional settings, Keli unpacks the ways in which the very institutions designed to ‘protect’ women instead function as sites of violence. She argues that government institutions can work to protect and reproduce patriarchal family structures, thus blurring and destabilizing the boundaries between public and private spaces.

The fifth and final part in this volume consists of three chapters examining how we might respond to and/or achieve a sense of justice in relation to gender-based violence in ways that are attentive to the roles of space and place. In Chapter 13, Suzanne Goodney Lea, Elsa D’Silva and Jane Anyango provide reflections on the Safecity reporting platform and subsequent interventions to sexual harassment and violence in public spaces, drawing on case studies from New Delhi and Mumbai in India, and Nairobi, Kenya. Their work draws attention both to the extent of sexual violence and harassment that women and girls can face in public spaces, illuminating ‘how the location and the cultural context contributes’ (p 216, this volume) towards these experiences. Importantly, the authors detail the interventions they have developed across these locations and provide reflections on the successes achieved and challenges faced across each location. While gender-based violence is undoubtedly a ‘wicked problem’ that is challenging to address, Lea and colleagues’ experiences show that tangible change is possible at the local level through some simple yet effective interventions.

Claire Loughnan, in Chapter 14, considers the memorial for Eurydice Dixon who was sexually assaulted and murdered in 2018 in a public park in Melbourne, Australia. Loughnan analyses the messages left at the memorial and argues that the memorial became more than just a place to pay respects to Eurydice; it revealed, as she describes it, ‘a localized
politics of resistance to the ongoing violence against women’ (p 232, this volume). Loughnan proposes that, rather than simply seeing spaces as sites of gendered violence, they hold the transformative potential to operate as alternative sites of justice.

Finally, Walker and Di Niro examine in Chapter 15 how creative arts practices and can offer spaces for dialogues about GBV and potential strategies via which to reduce it. Through autoethnographic accounts of burlesque and performance poetry, the authors observe that both of these creative performance spaces exist and function as masculine spaces. They identify three contributing factors: binary gender, commodification and aesthetic conventions.

References


