

# RESEARCH TOPICS IN FEMINIST AND GENDER GEOGRAPHY FROM 1975 TO 2021. A BRIEF ASSESSMENT OF ROMANIA'S STATUS

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## ABSTRACT

Feminist and Gender Geography witness a tremendous development since 1975 until 2021, both through the diversification of research topics and international spatial expansion. This paper aims to review and analyse this development worldwide, aiming to provide a new perspective on the matter. A set of 8,376 Web of Science published research is investigated and 32 main topics of study are derived, as well as a spatial extension breakdown. Further analysis highlights three main stages of development of the field based on the emergence of new topics of study: the substantiation stage (1975-1989), the diversification stage (1990-2009) and the 'boom' stage (2009-2021). A distinct section is reserved for reviewing Romania's status, a former communist country, currently lacking substantial feminist geographical research; this section provides a brief assessment of the existing Romanian literature, as well as of the scientific and historical background for the current status. Part of the authors' PhD thesis, this paper hopes to hearten fellow geographers to approach their research through the lens of feminist philosophy and gender paradigm.

Keywords: Feminist Geography, gender studies, historiography, development stages

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## INTRODUCTION

Since its emergence in the 1970s, during the postmodernist paradigm (Soja, 1989), Feminist and Gender Geography have undergone substantial challenges and changes regarding the epistemology, philosophy, and methodology of the field. Given the novelty of these approaches, geographers faced the challenge of adapting and re-adapting their research on gender and feminist issues to the new theoretical findings, epistemological principles, and methodological encounters. This is the background of the emergence of a multitude of critical reviews and theoretical inputs in Geography that contributed to a better definition of the subdomain.

However, the existing literature (reflected in Web of Science) on the evolution of Feminist/Gender Geography is either limited to certain regions and countries or is focused only on specific topics of study. Thus, the emergence of the subdomain and its institutionalisation process over the last decades have been reviewed in the European region for the Czech Republic

(Pitoňák & Klingorova, 2019), Italy (Schmidt di Friedberg & Pecorelli, 2019), the Netherlands (Fortuijn, 2019), Spain (Baylina & Rodo-de-Zarate, 2019), and from a personal standpoint for Greece (Vaiou, 2019). A historiographical perspective is offered for Hungary (Timár, 2019) and, on a larger scale, for the East-Central European region (Timár & Fekete, 2010) and the German-speaking countries (Bauriedlet al., 2019).

Similar approaches exist for the Asian regions (Chiang & Liu, 2011; Yoshida, 2019; Huang & Ramdas, 2019) and the African ones (Wrigley-Asante & Ardayfio-Schandorf, 2019). Regarding the Middle East, studies approach the subject by analysing the subdomain's current status (Fenster & Hamdan-Saliba, 2013). It seems that it is only back in 1994 (when feminist geographical studies were still limited both in number and space) that a global analysis of feminist perspectives in Geography was pursued (Monk, 1994).

Furthermore, there is a substantial number of studies based on bibliometric analysis that enquire into publishing and referencing statistics regarding geographical research on gender or feminist issues (Garcia-Ramon & Caballe, 1998; Johnson, 2008; Rigg, McCarragher & Krmeneč, 2012; Silva & Ornat, 2019; Schurr, Muller & Imhof, 2020). These examples prove the ongoing focus on metrics in the field and less on a global multi-perspective evolution analysis.

Due to continuous social, economic and political changes around the world, Feminist and Gender Geography studies adapted the topics of study, reflecting nowadays a broad and complex range of paradigms that feminist geographers research. However, existing analysis tend to focus on singular topics, analysed individually, rather than following an intersectional approach. Thus, the emergence and evolution of embodiment (Longhurst, 1997; Longhurst & Johnston, 2014) and sexuality (Binnie & Valentine, 1999; Maliepaard, 2015; March, 2020) as feminist topics of study are extensively discussed. Alongside, review papers discuss critically a range of study topics including academia (Monk, 2004), children (Matthews & Limb, 1999), environment (Reed & Mitchell, 2003; Nightingale, 2006), migration (Silvey, 2004; Beck-Gernsheim, 2007), and mobility (Law, 1999; Buscher, Sheller & Tyfield, 2016). This state of events requires a historiographical review of the evolution of the field that includes all research topics in an evolutionary framework.

Substantial attention is also paid to methodological approaches based on the quantitative-qualitative dichotomy (Davies & Dwyer, 2007), on original methods (Sexton et al., 2017; Ghandi, 2021) or on the Geographical Information Systems (GIS) usage in feminist research (Pavlovskaya, 2006; Kwan, 2002).

This brief statement of the current status on feminist and gender approaches in geographical research stands as argument for this paper. Thus, the aim of this analysis is to provide a global perspective over the evolution of Feminist and Gender Geography from 1975 to 2021, considering the development of all topics of study over time and the spatial expansion of geographical feminist and gender research worldwide. The Web of Science database is used as it is the main scientific stream, a widely used research engine for multidisciplinary research, consisting of over 179 million records, with a long high-quality tradition of indexing its scientific content.<sup>1</sup> However, a comparative analysis between WoS and other scientific publishing networks (Scopus, Erich, etc.) would be valuable and should be approached in future studies. A short section is provided for assessing Romania's current status on the matter (given the

<sup>1</sup> According to the Web of Science own description (<https://clarivate.com/webofsciencegroup/solutions/web-of-science/>).

country's prolonged communist political background and conservatory views, the emergence of feminist studies in Geography has been significantly delayed).

## MATERIALS & METHODOLOGY

To identify gender related research studies a query<sup>2</sup> was applied in the Web of Science database, returning 8,617 papers. After a database cleansing process, the 8,376 remaining entries were classified based on their main topic of study deducted from title, keywords and abstract information, resulting a total of 31 research themes (Table 1) associated with articles, book reviews, proceeding papers, book chapters and review articles<sup>3</sup> published between 1975 and 2021.

Table 1: Classification of research topics for WoS studies (1975-2021)

Topic of study	No. of studies	Topics/Concepts included	Study examples
<b>Activism/NGO</b>	211	- protests, social movements; - volunteering; - social programmes for fighting against inequalities and discrimination.	Lin, 2017; Olson, 2017; Morrison et al., 2021.
<b>Embodiment</b>	264	- masculinity and femininity; - identity, body shape and public perception; - motherhood and fatherhood.	Miller, 2014; Evans, 2021; Barone & Barra, 2021.
<b>Empowerment</b>	95	- emancipation of marginalised classes; - inclusion in the decision-making process.	Malapit et al., 2020; Lupien, 2020; Nichols, 2021.
<b>Cycling</b>	43	- emergence after 2005; - urban mobility behaviour.	Balkmar, 2018; Prati et al., 2019; Vietinghoff, 2021.
<b>Colonialism/ Postcolonialism</b>	98	- changes triggered by transition; - social movements; - difficulties in socio-economic development.	Harris, 2008; Pande, 2015; Bigon & Zuvalinyenga, 2021.
<b>Rurality/Indigeneity</b>	432	- perception on gender and behaviour in rural areas; - indigens' social and cultural difficulties;	Canoves et al., 2004; Caro, 2019; Turnock, 2021.

<sup>2</sup> The query code is WC=geography AND TS = (feminist OR gender OR women OR woman), where WC = Web of Science Category and TS = topic of study.

<sup>3</sup> Included in the following Web of Science secondary categories: Women's Studies, Environmental Studies, Regional Urban Planning, Economics, Urban Studies, Geography Physical, Sociology, Transportation, Political Science, Demography, Environment Sciences, Social Sciences Interdisciplinary, History of Social Sciences, Anthropology, Education Educational Research, Area Studies, Ecology, Geosciences Multidisciplinary, Remote Sensing. Categories consisting of less than 50 entries were excluded.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- the impact of modernisation and globalisation;</li> <li>- preservation of local traditions.</li> </ul>	
<b>More-than-Human</b>	59	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- feminist posthumanist philosophy;</li> <li>- the non-animal – animal – human and nature nexus;</li> <li>- nonrepresentational philosophical approaches for body and spirit.</li> </ul>	Carney, 2017; Johnson, 2021; Knott et al., 2021.
<b>Review</b>	646	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- for a single topic of study based on a period/space/methodology;</li> <li>- pattern highlights, critical views;</li> <li>- development of the field.</li> </ul>	Wang, 2019; Villena-Sanchez & Boschmann, 2021; McArdle, 2021.
<b>Development</b>	236	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- local development policies;</li> <li>- population involvement in development programmes;</li> <li>- locals adapting to development consequences;</li> <li>- sustainable development.</li> </ul>	Dawson, 1995; Giwa, 2015; Chappell, Parkins & Sherren, 2020.
<b>Feminist Political Ecology (FPE)</b>	92	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>ecofeminism</i>;</li> <li>- the human – nature nexus;</li> <li>- access to essential natural resources supplies (e.g., drinking water);</li> <li>- intersectionality for ecology, political relations, development, natural resources.</li> </ul>	Sultana, 2009; Shattuck, 2021; Vercillo, 2021; Masse, Giva & Lunstrum, 2021.
<b>Economy/Careers</b>	1132	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- professional fields;</li> <li>- poverty and unpaid labour;</li> <li>- work-life balance;</li> <li>- global production and marketing chains.</li> </ul>	Holloway, 1999; Seager, 2000; Bertolozzi-Caredio et al., 2020; Martinez & Contreras, 2021.
<b>Education/ Academia</b>	409	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- professional advancement, peer communication and general perspectives in Geography;</li> <li>- literacy rates;</li> <li>- tests and experiments based in schools and universities;</li> <li>- the role of educational institutions;</li> <li>- guides for teaching feminism and geography.</li> </ul>	Bondi, 1996; Drucker, 2016; Silver, 2020; Kaufman, 2021.
<b>Emotions</b>	139	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- empathy, morality, laughter, suicide, content, fear, nostalgia;</li> <li>- taboo perceptions;</li> <li>- emotional social behaviours.</li> </ul>	Colls, 2004; Nunn & Gutberlet, 2013; Shee, 2021.
<b>Feminist Geography</b>	491	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- theoretical contributions;</li> <li>- innovating methodology;</li> <li>- authors' personal experience in the field;</li> <li>- substantiation of the domain.</li> </ul>	Herod, 1993; Meth & McClymont, 2009; Akbash, Pasichnyk & Rizhniak, 2018.
<b>Geopolitics</b>	135	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- necropolitics;</li> <li>- international relations;</li> </ul>	Craggs, 2014; Henry, 2021.

		- geopolitical views influenced by social and economic aspects.	
<b>Carceral studies</b>	32	- emerged after 2000; - attitudes and perceptions from behind bars or after arrest release; - discrimination and inequality in prisons and orphanages.	Moran, 2013.
<b>Globalization</b>	45	- planetary urbanisation; - dysfunctionalities resulted from state internationalisation; - advantages for the feminist movement.	Autores, 2007; Lindio-McGovern & Wallimann, 2009.
<b>Borders</b>	80	- border communities; - transborder commuting; - armed conflicts and their social impact on border areas.	Ryburn, 2021; Lafazani, 2021.
<b>Leadership/ Entrepreneurship</b>	82	- gender differences in entrepreneurship; - gender differences in leadership based on the professional field; - fight against discrimination in leadership/ entrepreneurship.	Kobayashi, Gavriş & Ianoş, 2016; Harrison, Leitch & McAdam, 2020.
<b>Home</b>	223	- behaviour at home; - home ownership and homelessness; - residential differences and their social impact; - energy poverty at household level.	Buzar, Ogden & Hall, 2005; Petrova & Simcock, 2021.
<b>Environment/ Sustainability</b>	120	- the impact of changing landscapes; - land sustainable management; - environment-friendly urbanisation; - polluting activities and the fight against usage of chemical agents.	Tulla et al., 2017; Massey et al., 2021.
<b>Migration/ Refugees</b>	1004	- transnational families/marriages/divorces; - emigration, exile, repatriation, expatriation; - remittances; - social and cultural inclusion of migrants/refugees.	Séchet & Vasilcu, 2015; Meeus, 2017; Ciobanu & Bolzman, 2020.
<b>Mobility/ Urban Studies</b>	772	- gentrification, social capital, territorial influence; - accessibility and behaviour in urban/rural areas; - commuting and transportation; - built environment social and cultural management; - architecture influence on social behaviour.	Dyck, 2005; Rado-de-Zarate, 2014; Mokhles & Sunikka-Blank, 2021.
<b>Politics</b>	62	- electoral campaigns and the voting process; - gender differences in politics.	Casellas et al., 2013; Loyola-Hernandez, 2018.
<b>Policy</b>	198	- reforms;	Alston, 2009.

		- citizenship.	
<b>Race/ Black geographies</b>	128	- such studies prevailing in areas with people of colour; - race/skin colour discrimination: <i>whiteness vs. blackness</i> ; - antiracism movements.	Reitman, 2006; Mallory, 2021.
<b>Religion</b>	85	- social and cultural behaviours and prohibitions; - rebellion and overcoming traditional views; - social perceptions regarding religion.	Hopkins, 2006; Ben-Lulu, 2021.
<b>Medical studies/ Health</b>	354	- biopolitics, demographic analysis, natality, mortality; - fertility, reproduction and abortion; - diseases, disabilities, mental and sexual health, addictions and chemical contaminations; - epidemics and pandemics.	Craddock, 2001; Popescu & Vilcea, 2021.
<b>Climate change</b>	186	- emerge after 1995; - natural disasters and their differentiated impact on local communities; - population vulnerability analysis; - adapting strategies and reducing negative effects.	Ruwanpura, 2008; Antwi, 2020; Azong & Kelso, 2021.
<b>Sexuality</b>	284	- LGBTQ+ communities and sexual behaviours; - Haptic knowledge and interactions of bodies; - Sexual traditional views and social perceptions.	Brown, 2014; Voiculescu & Groza, 2021.
<b>Violence</b>	239	- terrorism, human trafficking, criminality; - fear, physical and mental abuse; - safety and public space perceptions.	Pain, 1997; Bromley & Stacey, 2012; Navarrete-Hernandez, Vetro & Concha, 2021.

Source: Own elaboration based on Web of Science data

Classifying the existing papers by their main research topic through this methodological approach involves a degree of subjectivity that is assumed due to the interdisciplinary character of feminist and gender studies that leads to overlapping study topics (e.g., activism and environment, race and sexuality, rurality and economy, migration and home, etc.).

## DEVELOPMENT STAGES

Between 1975 and 2021, the quantitative distribution of geographical gender and feminist research papers highlights three distinct development stages for the subfield (Figure 1): the substantiation stage (1975-1989) defined by a small number of papers, without a substantial

diversification of research topics; the diversification stage (1990-2009), when the number of publications registers both ups and downs, but with a general growing trend alongside with a broadening of topics; the 'boom' stage (2010-2021) consisting of a considerable evolution both of the number of papers and the topics approached.

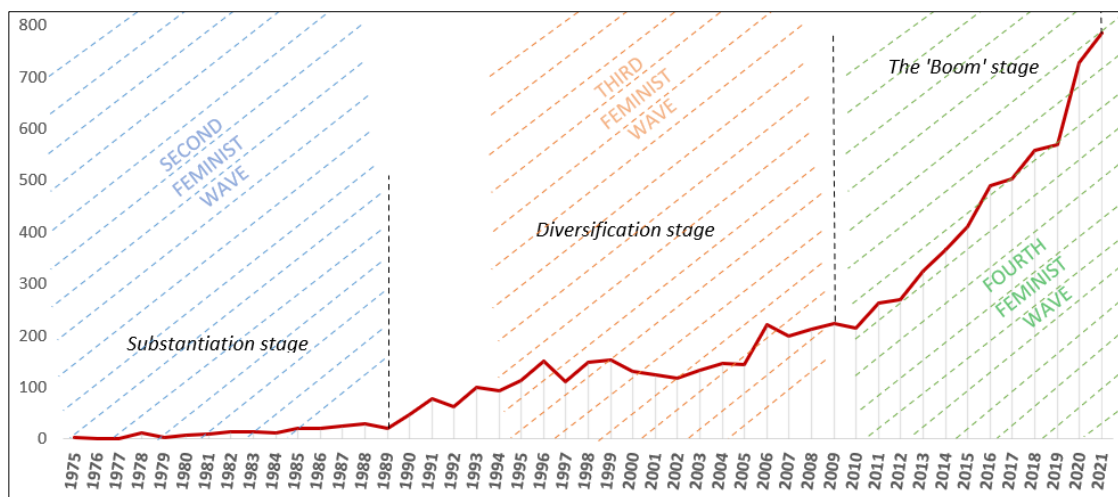


Figure 1: Yearly number of Feminist and Gender Geography published papers between 1975 and 2021

Source: Own elaboration based on Web of Science data

As depicted in Figure 1, the identified development stages are in tune with feminist waves. Consequently, the substantiation stage overlaps with the second feminist wave (from the 1960s-1970s until the 1990s), the third wave (which emerged in the mid-1990s) stands for the diversification stage, while the 'boom' stage emerged in 2010 alongside with the fourth feminist wave. Therefore, each of the identified stages is characterised by a series of specific features in keeping with the historical period and the social and political context, but they are also in tune with the maturity status reached by the subdomain.

#### The Substantiation Stage (1975-1989)

During this time frame a small number of research papers is registered; these are focused on a small range of topics: Economy/Careers, Review, Mobility/Urban studies, Rurality/Indigeneity and Education/Academia. Alongside with these are those centred on theoretical substantiation of the field (Figure 2).

Out of the 189 papers published during the 1975-1989 period, only a few stand out of the general trend, including Politics (Peake, 1989), Medical studies/Health (Andrews, 1982) and Policy (Araji, 1988).

Therefore, this stage is delimited by the focus on theoretical facets defining the field of Feminist and Gender Geography, on the academic environment and on the social and economic status that is undergoing a change of paradigm. Central topics of study revolve around defining epistemology matters and methodological appropriate approaches, as well as around arguing



for the need of feminist and social advocacy in Geography posited in contrast with the “scientification” of the field.

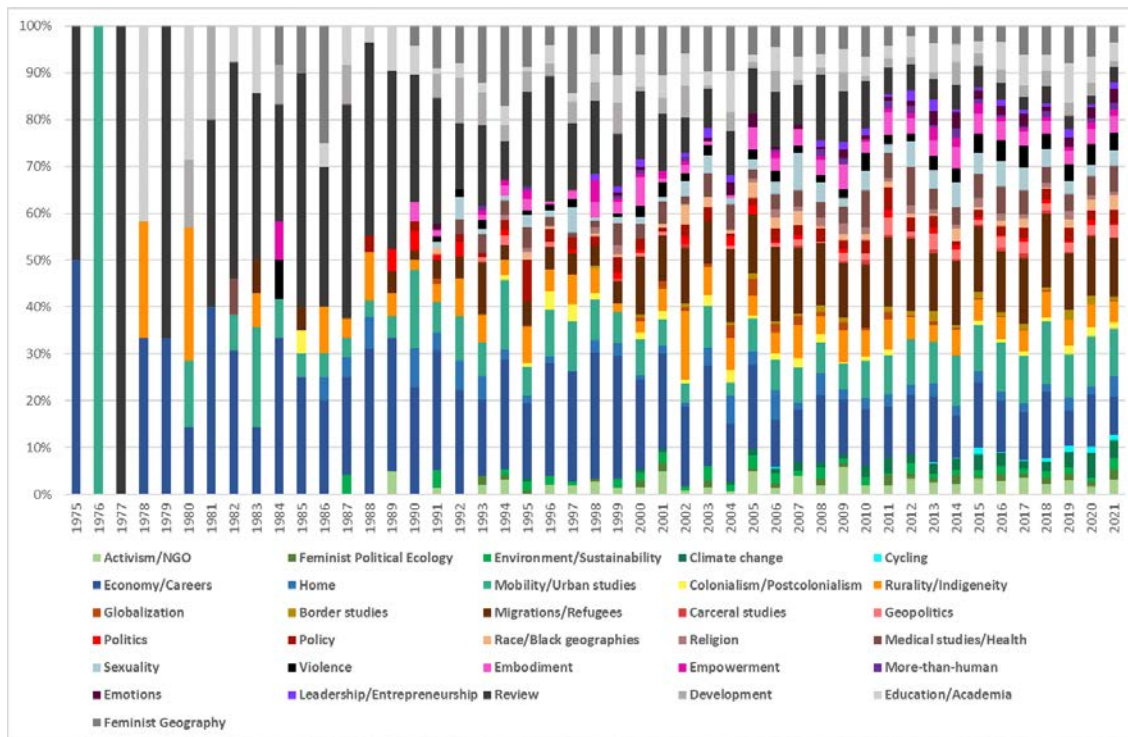


Figure 2: Yearly distribution (%) of research topics in Feminist and Gender Geography (1975-2021)

Source: Own elaboration based on Web of Science data

### The Diversification Stage (1990-2009)

Starting with the 1990s and up to the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Feminist and Gender Geography encounter a diversification of the themes advanced by researchers. This can be explained by the emergence of the Third Feminist Wave in mid-1990s, but also by the new social, economic and political challenges faced by population all over the world. The cultural turn in Geography also stands as argument for this stage, for it facilitated new forms of social construction of knowledge and new developments in Human Geography (Mirahmadi & Ahmadi, 2018). Furthermore, as the domain is still uncertain in its theoretical foundation, there are variations in the number of published studies, recording both ups (1990-1991; 1994-1996; 2005-2006) and downs (1991-1992; 1996-1997; 2006-2007). However, the general trend depicts an increase from less than 100 papers at the beginning of the decade, to circa 200 studies in 2009 (Figure 1).

While the previous topics of study are still popular, some new research themes emerge in this stage (Figure 2). Due to the environmental issues that enter the public concern, feminist geographers shift their focus onto studying the Environment/Sustainability, Activism/NGO and Feminist Political Ecology (FPE), as well as social matters regarding Race, Sexuality, Violence and Embodiment due to the increasing social awareness of the negative impact racism and sexual discrimination have on social behaviours.



There is a growth in studies focused on Religion, Home, Leadership/Entrepreneurship and Empowerment. Furthermore, there is a significant percentual increase for studies of Migration/Refugees (from circa 4% in 1990, to over 13% in 2009) motivated by the new facilities for mobility and travelling on the one hand, and by armed conflicts developing in certain areas, on the other. There is also a limited number of papers approaching subjects as Emotions (Widdowfield, 2000), More-than-human studies (Wolch, 2002), and Border studies (Long, 2006).

#### The 'Boom' Stage (2010-2021)

Beginning with 2010 and up to 2021, the percentage of theoretical contributions is decreasing as a consequence of two developments: first, the topics of study encounter a substantial diversification leading to a different distribution of rates of the research themes over this period; and second, based on the level of maturity of the field, Feminist and Gender Geography reach a state of clear epistemological and methodological defining.

This stage in the development of the field faces the greatest variation of topics feminist geographers research (Figure 2). If their attempts to study less overt topics were rather shy in the previous stage, currently themes like Sexuality, Embodiment, Violence and Emotions are widely argued for. Alongside, compared to the previous period, Politics and Geopolitics gain interest and become consistently present in geographers' feminist studies.

Percentage wise, previously most studied topics remain popular: Economics/Careers (10-12%), Mobility/Urban studies (10-13%), and Migration/Refugees (12-15%). New remarkable approaches include Cycling and Medical/Health studies, reflecting on the interdisciplinarity of the field. Furthermore, theoretical research contributions (Review and Feminist Geography papers, as defined in Table 1) account for a significant decrease: from over 60% in 1980-1990, to only around 20% after 2010. This is in contrast with the Migration/Refugees studies that register over 15% of all research themes in feminist geography after 2010, compared to only 5% in 1985.

Thus, the analysed data depict an overall development throughout all research topics in Feminist and Gender Geography after 2010. The field reached a higher degree of acceptance and practice, covering a vast range of subjects and receiving a central spot in the Human Geography body of research.

## ROMANIA'S STATUS IN FEMINIST GEOGRAPHICAL RESEARCH

Romania is an ex-communist country situated in Eastern Europe that overrode this political status in 1989. Prior to this, restrictions set in place regarding international scientific cooperation and international scientific literature access resulted in a great delay in keeping up with the development rhythm noticed in western countries. Thus, while at an international level the scientification paradigm began to be deprecated, Romanian scholars were still relying their research on quantitative methods and prioritising Physical and Regional Geography over human and social matters (Şimandan, 2002). Consequently, while western and English-speaking countries entered the era of postmodernism in science, Romania was (and still is) approaching research through the lens of modernism. This is exemplified by the place given to *humans* in geographical research that, in Romania, is still more focused on Physical (and Regional) Geography, spatial analysis and statistics, and quantitative methods (Şimandan, 2002; Ianoş,

2009; Voiculescu, 2011). The overreaching essentiality accorded to quantitative research, researching humans as numbers and statistics, and frowning in the face of postmodernist paradigms (relativity, subjectivity, reflexivity, positionality) (Buttimer, 1976; Gregory, 1978) resulted in a monopoly of quantitative research and marginalisation of Human Geography in Romania for a longer period compared to western countries (Şimandan, 2005). However, some progress has been made (Banini & Ilovan, 2021; Ilovan & Muntean, 2021)

Similar to other scientific domains, Geography progress in Romanian literature is delayed by at least a decade. This can be argued by the current extent of feminist and gender studies conducted by Romanian geographers that consists of no more than 10-12 published papers (in Web of Science). One would argue that following the fall of communism in 1989-1990, progress could have been made, as knowledge barriers succumbed; however, the over 40 years of communism left a significant imprint on the population – people remained conservative and reluctant to change, overruling 'eccentric' subjects as discrimination, emotions, or sexuality (Voiculescu & Lelea, 2003; Bîrsănuț et al., 2020).

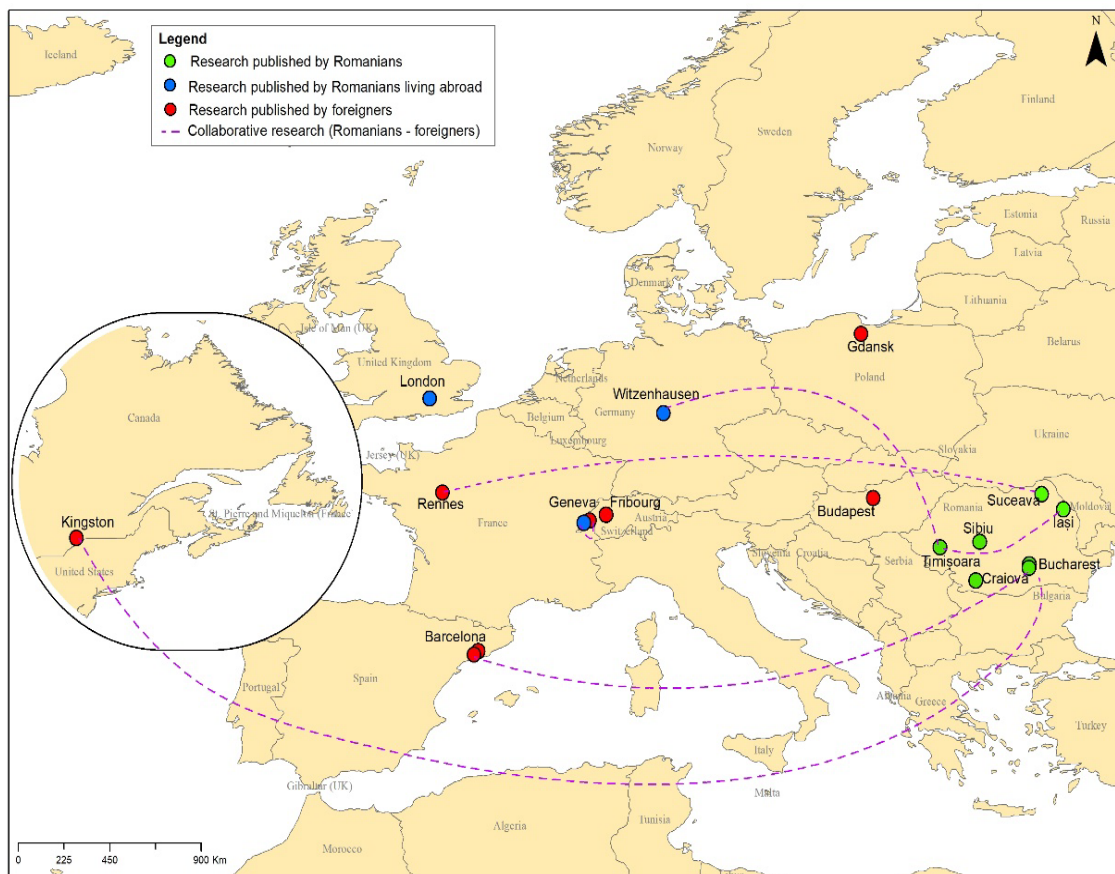


Figure 3: Gendered geographical research focused on Romania

Source: Own elaboration based on Web of Science data

Regarding Romanian feminist literature in Geography, one of the first original studies to be published (Séchet & Vasilcu, 2015) is focused on the issue of physicians (predominantly women) migration in Western Europe. In the following years, the narrow topics of study included female

entrepreneurship during economic transition (Kobayashi, Gavriş & Ianoş, 2016), activism (Lelea & Voiculescu, 2017), and urban sustainability (Tulla et al., 2017). Regarding education, published research addresses the issue of teaching gender in Romanian universities (Voiculescu & Lelea, 2003; Voiculescu, 2011), the political toponymy of educational namescapes (Rusu, 2019) and migration (Ciobanu & Bolzman, 2020; Croitoru & Vlase, 2021).

It is not until 2021 that Romanian geographic research shifts the focus of feminist and gender studies towards sexuality (Vlase & Preoteasa, 2021; Voiculescu & Groza, 2021) and health (Popescu & Vilcea, 2021). Thus, in trying to reach the ongoing status of international research in Feminist Geography, Romanian geographers skipped the general and extremely useful economic, social and political gender bias analysis (the path undertaken by international research before 2000, respectively) and stepped directly into current “popular” topics.

Analysed in reverse, Romania is of interest for international feminist research regarding issues of migration (Mai, 2009; Meeus, 2017), education (Gaspar et al., 2016) or theoretical approaches regarding the development of the field in ex-communist countries from Eastern Europe (Michalski & Wilskulski, 2018).

## DISCUSSION

The significant diversification of research themes in Feminist and Gender Geography over time stands for a high degree of interdisciplinarity of the field. Hence, the range of research areas is vast (Table 2), including social sciences, environmental sciences, economics, urban studies, anthropology, or public administration.

Table 2: Top research areas by number of published papers (1975-2021)

Research Areas	No. of studies
Geography	3,357
Geography; Women’s Studies	1,300
Environmental Sciences & Ecology; Geography	692
Geography; Public Administration	316
Geography; Social Sciences - Other Topics	252
Geography; Government & Law	222
Demography; Geography	205
Geography; Sociology	177
Business & Economics; Geography	166
Business & Economics; Geography; Transportation	145
Business & Economics; Environmental Sciences & Ecology; Geography; Public Administration	139
Geography; Public Administration; Urban Studies	138
Geography; Urban Studies	133
Anthropology; Geography; Sociology	115

Source: Own elaboration based on Web of Science data

The central position of the subdomain resulted not only in the setting up of field-specific journals, but also in an increase of gender studies published in previously established notorious journals (Table 3). Consequently, there is little place for contestation left for the utility, necessity, and expansion of Feminist Geography worldwide.

Table 3: Top of journals by number of published papers (1975-2021)

Journal	No. of studies
Gender Place and Culture	1,264
Geoforum	345
Journal of Rural Studies	297
Progress in Human Geography	254
Social & Cultural Geography	243
Environment and Planning D-Society & Space	232
Professional Geographer	218
Area	212
Antipode	201
Population Space and Place	190
Sociologia Ruralis	160
Environment and Planning A	155
Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers	154
Annals of the Association of American Geographers	150
Journal of Transport Geography	145
International Journal of Urban and Regional Research	137
Political Geography	136
Canadian Geographer-Geographe Canadien	126
Environment and Planning A-Economy and Space	123
Urban Geography	121
Journal of Historical Geography	117
Global Networks-A Journal of Transnational Affairs	115
Emotion Space and Society	100

Source: Own elaboration based on Web of Science data

Although some topics are largely approached from 1975 to 2021, a series of research subjects are still limited in number: Politics (n. 62), Leadership/Entrepreneurship (n. 82), Empowerment (n. 95), More-than-human studies (n. 59), and Cycling (n. 43). Currently (2021), the focus is set on Emotions (12.50%), Review (10.2%), Rurality/Indigeneity (8.29%) and Home (5.36%). On the other hand, the least addressed topics include Feminist Geography (theoretical papers – 0.13% due to the already well-defined field), Economics (0.13%), Geopolitics (0.51%) and Leadership/Entrepreneurship (0.77%).

Hence, there is a migration from the consecrated subjects towards topics centred on individual beings, human perceptions, and the human-nature nexus. Another noticeable change consists of shifting the prevailing emphasis on women towards addressing issues regarding children, men and the elderly, based on the cardinal principle of feminist philosophy that encourages the fight against social disparities as the result of gender bias alongside with discrimination based on sexuality, age and disability.

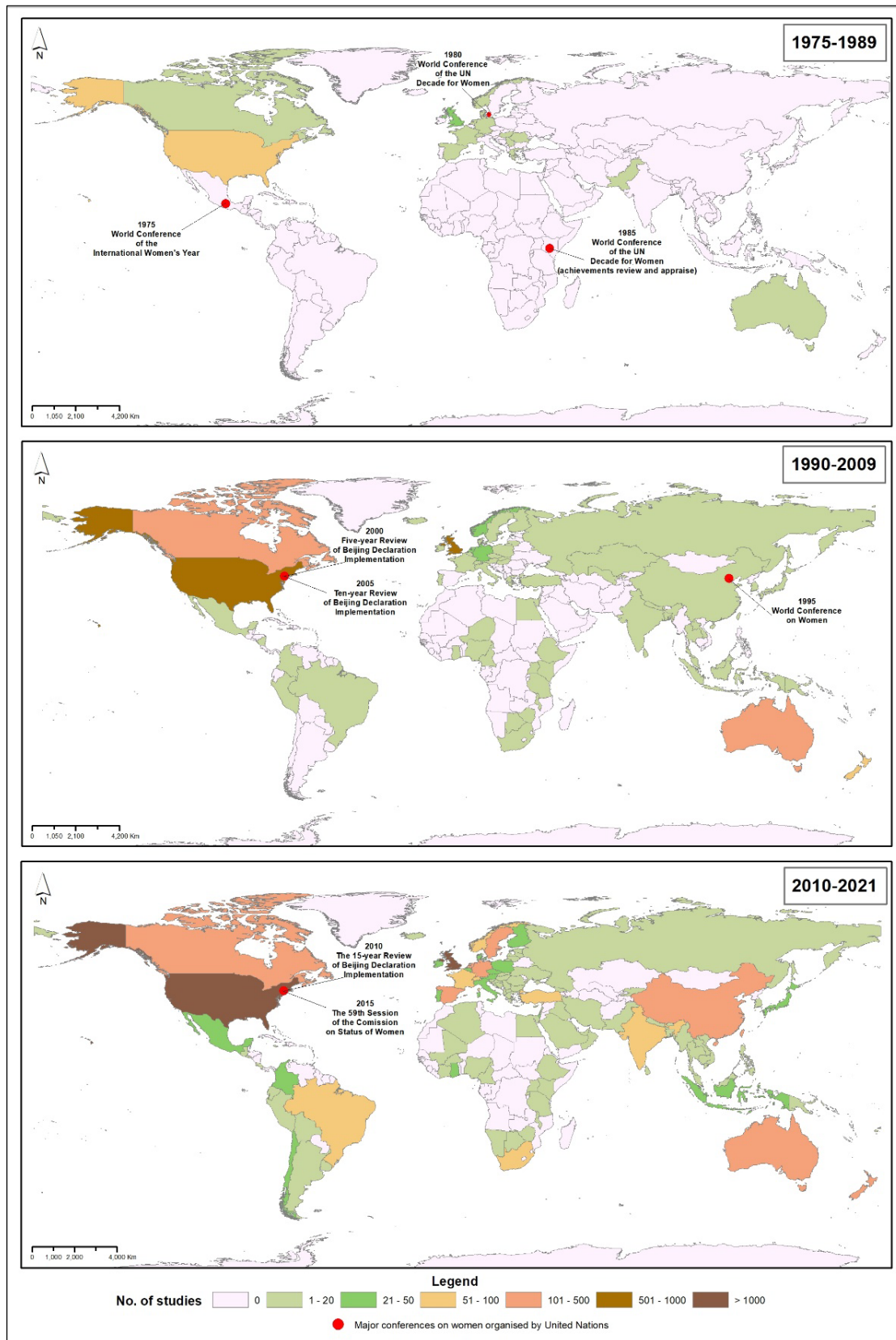


Figure 4: The spatial expansion during the three evolution stages of the field

Source: Own elaboration



From a spatial perspective, the evolution of the subdomain is equally outstanding (Figure 4), with a remarkable increase of the number of countries (derived from the address of the main author included in the WoS database) addressing gender and feminist matters in a geographical framework.

Consequently, while during the substantiation stage (1975-1989) research publications are present in Anglo-Saxon regions, during the diversification stage (1990-2009) there is a spatial expansion towards Asia, South America, as well as (scarcely) Africa and Northern and Southern Europe. Between 2010 and 2021 (the 'boom' stage), the previously mentioned regions continue to register publications (with a numerical development). However, this stage marks at least one published study on feminist geographic issues throughout all countries in Europe. Currently, Anglo-Saxon regions continue to monopolise the international literature (North America, UK, Australia) alongside with India, China, Western Europe, Turkey, South Africa, and Brazil.

A substantial contribution to this spatial expansion and the diversification of research topics in Feminist and Gender Geography is attributed to the United Nations Conferences on Women, focused on action for *equality, development, and peace*. Thus, the three major events held during the substantiation stage (1975 – Mexico City, 1980 – Copenhagen, 1985 – Nairobi) encouraged the following development of gender research in Geography comprised in the diversification stage. Furthermore, the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform Action (1995 – Beijing) and its follow-up review events (2000, 2005, 2010, 2015 – General Assembly in New York) enhanced the public awareness of women issues, leading also to a greater development of gender geographical studies on the matter.

Due to this outstanding expansion of the field, there is one thing scholars should keep in mind: the main purpose of feminist research is to make a clear and tangible contribution to a less discriminatory society. Even though approaching gender in research is 'fashionable' nowadays, certainly so due to an increased awareness of gender specific issues, the scientific community must follow the principles of intersectionality (Hopkins, 2018), positionality and reflexivity (England, 1994; Kunze & Padmanabhan, 2014), long studied and argued for in the past decades. Methodology wise, most studies are situated in a qualitative or mix-methods framework, with a growing body of work arguing for collaborative (Gray et al., 2020) and participatory action research (Yap, 2021). Furthermore, the struggle to address new methods in pursuing the fundamental aim of feminist research should continue to be encouraged and supported (Hiemstra, 2017; Ghandi, 2021), while preserving the phenomenological paradigm in assessing the researcher's own level of subjectivity and bias.

## CONCLUSIONS

Despite numerous obstacles, both social and scientific, Feminist and Gender Geography succeeded to establish a secure and respectable status among other subdomains. Overcoming the Quantitative Revolution, epistemological dilemmas, and methodological dichotomies, the field presently reached the status of being a worldwide recognised and practised research area. However, at a smaller scale, Feminist and Gender Geography is still developing (as it is the case of Romania), the growing rate of the field being dissimilar from a region/country to another.

Another, more focused, perspective informs a differentiated development due to independent reasons linked to singular countries and their socio-political background. One example is offered by Romania, its current attempts to feminist geographic research being limited in scope, in tune



with the country's development regarding society and Human Geography. However, current progress suggests a real interest towards the subject in academia communities leading to internal debates, inclusion of gender in the curricula and diversification of PhD theses by addressing feminist topics.

Despite regional development differences, the Gender and Geography Commission from the International Geographical Union (IGU) has had a substantial contribution to the development of the field through the congresses, conferences and publications it coordinated (Huang et al., 2017). This commission's involvement in geographic communities resulted in unifying feminist geographers all over the world, promoting gender studies outside of the feminist 'bubble', and created the context for the emergence of new (interdisciplinary) topics of study.

This paper is the result of the author's struggle to comprehend the complex historiography of Feminist Geography from multiple sources, during her work of employing a geographical gender PhD thesis (the results presented here being part of the thesis). Obstacles arise especially from the restricted Romanian geographical community familiarised with the subject. Regardless of the university, the expression *Feminist Geography* still raises eyebrows in the Romanian geographical community. The aim of the paper is not to point fingers, but to encourage further feminist research in Romanian Geography. Thus, the author expresses her hope to encourage fellow colleagues and geographers to embrace the subdomain, to contribute to a gender-unbiased society and to argue for the essential role of feminist research in Geography.

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