Interventions

Interventions in the political geographies of resistance: The contributions of Cindi Katz, 15 years on

Sarah M. Hughes [a],[*], Amber Murrey [b],[**], Sneha Krishnan [b], Karolien van Teijlingen [c],
Patricia O. Daley [b], Mel Nowicki [d], Maria Fannin [e], Julie MacLeavy [e]

[a] *Geography & Environmental Sciences, Northumbria University, Newcastle, UK*
[b] *School of Geography & the Environment, University of Oxford, UK*
[c] *Cultural Anthropology and International Development Studies, Radboud Universiteit, the Netherlands*
[d] *School of Social Sciences, Oxford Brookes University, UK*
[e] *School of Geographical Sciences, University of Bristol, UK*

1. Introduction

1.1. Sarah M. Hughes and Amber Murrey

Scholars of resistance have long identified and differentiated the distinctive features, contours, and boundaries of resistance in social life. However, some have characterised the resulting plurality of conceptual frameworks in resistance studies as 'somewhat chaotic' (Baaz et al. 2016, p. 137). In this Intervention, we play within the chaos at the conceptual margins of resistance within political geography. We revisit Cindi Katz's (2004) influential articulations of resistance, reworking, resilience, and revanchism 15 years after the publication of *Growing Up Global*. Considering the last decade and a half of socio-political, economic, colonial and environmental violence encountered by human and non-human life, we explore the ways in which Katz's work remains relevant to the issues and debates central to political geography.

As readers of *Political Geography* will know, Katz's work articulates critical analytical categories which have been adopted broadly throughout human geography. Her concepts have inspired scholars to engage with the spatial and global components of resistance (c.f. Dressler, 2019; Bagelman & Wiebe, 2017), including recent collaborative work to 'reveal the connections between [divergent] social-environmental struggles' and the potentials and limits of such imaginaries, practices, and struggles (Apostolopoulou et al., 2022). MacLeavy et al. (2021) draw upon Katz's work to reconceptualise feminist futurity within political geography. Indeed, Katz's thinking emerged from a moment of analytical diversification within human geography; feminist, poststructuralist, and postcolonial theories were stirring energetic debates about power, hegemony, and agency.

Watershed scholarship on the prosaic forms of resistance, the micro-politics of everyday resistance, and the 'weapons of the weak' (Scott, 1985) increasingly framed resistance practice and praxis as diverse, ephemeral, subtle, sporadic, quiet, and banal.

And yet, for Katz and others, if every autonomous act was understood to signal 'resistance', the analytical category of resistance as an *oppositional* practice could potentially be romanticised, emptied of meaning and value. In her extensive ethnographies of Howa, Sudan and New York, she wove together disparate places and spaces. Her method of 'countertopography' identified the global impacts of neoliberal capitalist processes and offered a polymorphous framework for understanding people's actions in both communities. Katz's triadic framework—resilience, reworking, and resistance—elucidated how communities and individuals manoeuvre differently in place against oppressive or exploitative forces, entities, and people.

In *Growing up Global* (2004), Katz examines the challenges faced by villagers within the context of wider economic 'development' policies. She explains that she went into 'the field' looking for resistance but frequently found the term inappropriate. Reflecting on how Howa residents coped with everyday life, she argued that 'it would be too easy to chalk up these responses as "resistance", as has become all too fashionable in contemporary analyses of social change' (237). Instead, Katz argued that '[c]elebrating such acts as resistance is a cheap thrill, usually voyeuristic, a balm to critics in the global north that may be no less exoticizing than earlier renditions of Orientalism' (240).

Katz suggested that people responded to challenges through 'three fluid and overlapping categories … call[ed] the three Rs: *resilience, reworking* and *resistance,* each carried out at a range of scales and by a number of differently situated actors' (240–241). For Katz, resistance

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* Corresponding author.
** Corresponding author.
E-mail addresses: sarah.m.hughes@northumbria.ac.uk (S.M. Hughes), amber.murrey-ndewa@ouce.ox.ac.uk (A. Murrey).

draws upon 'oppositional consciousness' and aims to bring about 'emancipatory change' (251). Reworking alters 'the organization but not the polarization of power relations' (247). Resilience refers to people's endurance, persistence, and the agency to take action (albeit non-transformative) to better withstand their situation.

Political geographers have sometimes responded to the relational framing of resistance by determining resistance in advance, claiming what counts (conceptually) as resistance before it emerges (see Fannin and MacLeavy, and Murrey herein). Whilst a rich vein of scholarship engages with practices and accounts of resistance, papers within *Political Geography* that critically interrogate the *politics of resistance* have been relatively scarce over the last 15 years, with a mere 15 papers including 'resistance' in their title and keywords (cf Naylor, 2017; Bagelman & Wiebe, 2017; Carter-White, 2013; Greenidge & Gahman, 2020; Joronen, 2017). At the same time, political geographers have developed a rich vocabulary for talking about resistance experiences through work on dissent, defiance, dignity, denial, disobedience, non-engagement, withdrawal, and agency. Yet, these discursive contours often make political geography's framings of resistance ontologically incompatible with its conceptualisations of power as a multiplicity, a force that circulates through human and non-human life. Additionally, with such a capacious group of terms, it is easy to be distracted by pedantic debates about the nuance of 'resistance' vocabulary.

This *Intervention* asks: What it might mean to take seriously the unremarkable, the boring, and the non-oppositional as resistance? What if we were to move beyond form as 'the' marker of resistance? Such a conceptual shift would not flatten forms of resistance; rather, as the following contributions demonstrate, expanding resistance beyond oppositional forms would enrich and enliven our geographical accounts. We are not trying to foster a momentary illusion of conceptual closure, resolve the troubles of writing resistance geographies, still the so-called 'chaos' of the sub-discipline, or fix our dissenting taxonomies. Rather, this *Intervention* sits with the conceptual—that is, also the political——antagonisms within and between our terms.

We take inspiration from Katz's work on minor theory (1996, 2017). Minor theory is not a coherent or unified theory, but rather describes an approach to knowledge production that is never comfortable, never at home. A minor theory of resistance, therefore, does not delineate what is 'minor' or 'major', but understands that all well-trodden paths preclude others (see Krishnan herein). Attention to the minor (which may include resistance as unsettling, contradictory, persisting, enduring, reworking) does not diminish these paths-less-taken, or hold them to a different scale – but reworks such epistemologies of resistance from within. As Katz explains, '[t]he draw for me in thinking about—and doing—minor theory was its intent to use major forms in an altered and decomposing way, to undo these forms, practices, and theories from within' (2017, p. 598).

While this approach may seem to contrast with Katz's *a priori* distinctions between resistance, resilience and reworking, we find productivity in the tension. Katz arrives at these distinctions, in part, out of frustration with the 'voyeurism' in academic accounts seeking resistance (2004). A minor theory of resistance also continues this critique by refusing to determine in advance who or what 'counts' as resistance. Here, a multiplicity of resistance is an expansion rather than a reduction of its 'political' potential (Nowicki herein).

Secondly, a minor politics of resistance allows for other voices and narratives to emerge: 'new modes of perception, inventing languages that speak in the interstices of major tongues' (Manning, 2016, p. 2; Daley herein). Reading resistance through minor theory foregrounds those seemingly mundane moments that may be boring, 'everywhere' or unremarkable, but also 'compel [s] political gestures for the current moment when so much feels foreclosed' (Katz, 2017, p. 597).

Feminist geographers have critiqued masculine tropes of resistance, including the activist-subjects who stand in clear opposition to manifestations of power (c.f. Chatterton & Pickerill, 2010). Similarly, resistance in a minor key acknowledges the impossibility of predetermining what resistance might look or feel like. It offers political geographers a 'line of escape' from hegemonic framings of resistance as oppositional, coherent, and discrete. Minor theory 'opens many spaces of betweenness from which to imagine, act, and live things differently' including gentle, implicit, and contradictory resistances (Katz, 2017, p. 597).

A minor theory of resistance can both conceptually and empirically 'break forms, [and] encourage ruptures and new sproutings' (Deleuze, Guattari, & Massumi, 1987; in Katz, 1996, p. 496). It can help political geographers to ask, 'How do 'we' recognize and research resistance'? Central here is the *we* who recognize, encounter and/or name resistance. A minor theory of resistance can also guide us through relational contradictions like the difficulty in labelling actions or subjects as oppositional, without also being part of the interplay between these categories (van Teijlingen herein). It takes seriously those moments, subjects, and spaces that may not cohere to an expected (oppositional) form and which, in their ambiguity, keep the door open for future political claims.

With this in mind, we asked our contributors to reflect on Katz's conceptual boundaries of resistance, resilience, and reworking through their own research. We pushed them to think beyond expected forms, and in doing so, attend to more 'minor' moments of resistance. The resulting set of critical, and sometimes contradictory, contributions alternately advocate for Katz's resistance concepts within feminist political geographies (Nowicki; van Teijlingen) and calls for re-elaborated political concepts, including slow dissent (Murrey), refusal (Krishnan; Fannin and MacLeavy) and linguistic defiance (Daley).

Our *Intervention* refuses neat or tidy conclusions. Rather, we are knowingly grounded in the urgencies of this moment—the convergences of COVID, war and conflict, climate change, settler colonialism, authoritarianism, and racial injustice. Our collective reflection is located in the interstices, the uncertainties, and the disquiets of thinking through the political geographies of resistance *now, in* the communities where we work. The productive friction between Murrey's and van Teijlingen's reconsiderations of the geographies of extraction and resistance, for example, reveals some of the complexities and emotional textures of working in communities struggling to get by in the context of global coloniality. The discord between their theorisations also opens space to consider how a scholar's distinctive ethical and theoretical orientations are made explicit as we *knowingly* theorise resistance differently, without attempt at consensus.

Our contributors work within distinctive thought traditions, including feminist, decolonial, postcolonial and/or Black geographies. While comraderies and similarities exist, the retheorisations of Katz's work reveal how our ontological orientations as scholars or scholar-activists shape our unique ethical positionalities. These, in turn, profoundly shape the possibilities and politics of our theorisations. Our terms *are* different, and the distinctions are important. We sympathetically and generatively consider the significance of our terminological differences.

In writing this *Intervention*, we acknowledge that *resistance* retains a gravitational power that orients all other dissenting actions, including resilience and reworking. The relations between Katz's categorisations are fluid and overlapping. Though Katz is critical of the notion of a 'spectrum' of resistance action, the precise relationships between resilience, reworking and resistance continue to be a source of analytical and political contestation. The following contributions reflectively reconsider how Katz's work helps us understand power and the potential for struggle and resistance today, in our current moment of loss and colonial renewal.

1.2. Slow dissent in Cameroon: an argument for reaffirming romance in decolonial geographies of resistance

1.2.1. Amber Murrey

In the spirit of generative conversation, I revisit Katz's conceptual spectrum of resistance through the communities where I work in Cameroon, including the coastal town of Kribi and the rural community

of Nanga-Eboko. I draw from my longer thinking on the temporalities of resistance, in particular 'slow dissent' (Murrey, 2016), as well as insights on resistance from decolonial thought (Daley & Murrey, 2022). I argue that decolonial geographies of resistance raise questions about the conceptualisation of resistance as contingent upon oppositional consciousness, offering instead an understanding of resistance as re-existence within environments confined by intergenerational coloniality. In rethinking oppositional consciousness, I address the potentials of decolonial resistance geographies that are knowingly, wilfully, and imperfectly romantic. Doing so is a means of raising new provocations on the study of resistance in the social sciences and challenging the now-normalised dismissals of emergent work in resistance studies as simply 'romantic', as I address below.

Katz's conceptual framework helps geographers engage with the multidimensional and multi-layered topographies of human resistance to domination, exploitation, and exclusion. Her work was hugely influential for me as an early career researcher studying the politics of oil pipelines in Cameroon, and helped me to rethink the intentions, ethics, and commitments of my work as a decolonial political geographer. Motivated by a decolonial ethic and committed to understanding the dynamics of colonial power and logics, I sought to be attentive to the aspirations and demands of the communities where I work. To these ends, I drew sustenance from Katz's sensitive self-(re)positioning beyond disaffected anonymity and her reflections on the political limitations of working and writing at a distance from the communities to which she was accountable.

Intermittently throughout the past decade, I have worked and researched in two Cameroonian communities where people express defiance and self-aware vulnerability through community narrative and self-history without immediate, direct, or visible resistance action. Situated alongside the Chad-Cameroon Oil Pipeline, people's collective narratives are defiant, haunted by coloniality, and decolonial in their tenor, shape, and undercurrents. The people I work with live in authoritarian political contexts alongside multiple concurrent extractive projects. There is a sense that there are too many enemies to resist just one (Murrey, 2015). While organised and collective actions against pervasive forms of extractivism and coloniality have been rare in both Kribi and Nanga-Eboko, people share a defiant repertoire of decolonial jokes and common memories. 'Slow dissent' (Murrey, 2016) helps us to understand how the layered spatio-temporalities of defiant narratives anticipate and build the scaffolding for future resistances, nurturing the groundwork for people's present-day decolonial imaginaries.

Slow dissent illustrates the ways in which the experiences of vulnerability prompt people to reconsider their own actions, their community's needs, and their agency (Murrey, 2015). For the farmers I spoke with in Nanga-Eboko, the destructions brought about by the oil pipeline emboldened them to think about responding differently to other, future extractive projects. Focusing on the *longue durée* reframes resistance as enduring and supple, rather than episodic. This extended timeline of dissent foregrounds intergenerational patterning and sharing. Through slow dissent, people often experience the past as embodied: people's memories and knowledges of previous violence, exclusion, and repression are central for fostering expansive, diffuse, and pluriversal resistances in the present (and in anticipation of liveable futures).

Certainly, Katz's analysis of oppositional consciousness does not preclude this kind of *longue durée* thinking. However, the decolonial point of departure for understanding resistance is not oppositional consciousness, but creative presence-making beyond the parameters of coloniality. Padini Nirmal (2016, p. 197) explains that resistance is a 'conjoined component of decoloniality where that which is decolonial is already in resistance'. Resistance draws from possibilities generated by and through vulnerability, withdrawal, active being and 'continuing presence' (Nirmal, 2016, p. 197). The Indigenous defence of life, as well as Indigenous active presence in the face of colonial and extractive violence, are forms of decolonial dissent. The decolonial refrain

'existence is resistance' clarifies this shared refusal of coloniality:

> Decolonial healing requires building to re-exist rather than energy to only resist. Resistance implies that you accept the rules of the game imposed upon you, and you resist. Re-existence means that you delink from the rules imposed upon you, you create your own rules communally and, therefore you re-exist affirming yourself as a human being. (Mignolo, 2016, p. viii)

Decolonial thought gives us space to sit with multiple epistemes, polysemic meanings, and ways of being that escape fixed classifications like oppositional consciousness. Within decolonial thought, community relationality with land and multi-species life, place-based ethics, stories and narrative are paramount.

Moving beyond oppositional consciousness encourages us to turn away from the agency/passivity dichotomy as well as the opposition/vulnerability dyad that have troubled resistance studies. It shifts us away from debates about people's intentions or internal objectives, which have long been central to considerations of oppositional consciousness. The study of consciousness centres on how people see themselves; yet, how scholars attempt to *know* consciousness (concretely, logistically, and methodologically) remains a matter of debate within the social sciences (e.g. the work of Asef Bayat, 2013). There are significant political and epistemic implications of claiming that scholars can determine and name a person's self-understanding or consciousness. For decolonial scholars, the academic evaluation of the intentionality, truthfulness, or falseness of a person or community's consciousness (or, of course, 'false consciousness') perpetuates forms of epistemic and symbolic violence that echo colonial logics and disciplinary tendencies.

I want to conclude by returning to my earlier provocation on resistance and romance. Following interventions in the 1990s and early 2000s, critical scholars rightly deconstructed the inclination for Euro-American scholars to 'romanticise' the study of resistance through one-dimensional heroic narratives that were Othering, essentialising, and exotifying (Katz, 2004; Abu-Lughod, 1990; see also Introduction to this *Intervention*). Yet we now see that what began as a powerful internal critique amongst scholars of resistance has been adopted as a wholesale criticism of resistance studies writ large. Anecdotally, I see this tendency in an assortment of banal encounters that make up the academy. My undergraduate students routinely begin reading an article on resistance by first criticizing the author's political affiliations with the social movement being researched as signalling forms of 'romance'. In conference debates, colleagues hastily renounce emergent and critical work in resistance studies as naïve, subjective, or partial. Through such conventional academic encounters, the term 'romantic' blusterously forecloses richer dialogue. Academics working on resistance are positioned in the impossible predicament of continually evincing that their work is not 'mere romance'. What is more, the critique of *resistance-as-romance* is not evenly distributed: work carried out by junior, queer, and women of colour scholars is at particular risk of being trivialised by these bad faith judgements.

A wholesale dismissal of resistance scholarship as superficial or 'romantic' was never Katz's intention. Rather, internal critiques have been misappropriated within a wider academic discourse that redeploys the criticism—frequently made superficial and emptied of its core logic—against the very community of scholars who initially offered the critique. In corporate universities, decolonial, anti-capitalist, and anti-imperialist work is regularly scorned as naïve and posturing, or political and polemic. Scholars of resistance have become caught in this unworkable position of perpetually needing to defend their work as *unromanticised* views of resistance. Given these dynamics, I encourage political geographers of resistance—while remaining sensitive to questions of power, the historically patterned and shifting *practices* of dissent, and structures of domination (Abu-Lughod, 1990)—to rethink the proclivity to dismiss resistance scholarship as 'romantic'.

More than this, political geographers working on resistance have the

space to creatively *reclaim* what is dismissed as 'romance' in our work. This includes, for example, hope, care, elation, desire, impulsivity, intimacies, attachments within our communities of work, researching sympathetically, radical future-oriented imaginaries, more—each of which has importance and political worth. A close reading of Katz's work, including her affection and care for the young people in Howa and New York, reveals the possibilities of embracing forms of romance in resistance geographies. Indeed, Katz's work on agency and resistance invites us to pursue forms of *wilful romance* in our analyses of people's power and collective change.

1.3. Resistance and agency in mining conflicts in Latin America

1.3.1. Karolien van Teijlingen

With some notable exceptions, the academic narrative that dominates the literature on the mining frontier in Latin America is one of 'Avatar'-like struggles (Bebbington & Humphreys Bebbington, 2011, p. 131). On the one hand, it focuses on the strategies of governments and corporations pushing for the expansion of large-scale mining, often with devastating effects on the environment and rural communities (Dunlap, 2019). On the other hand, it provides a wealth of studies on peasant communities and Indigenous peoples resisting the encroachment of their lands and the transformations of their livelihoods. These studies significantly further our understanding of the conflicts around mining in Latin America. The dominant narrative of powerful corporations pitted against collectively organized communities and grassroots movements, however, has its shortcomings.

The shortcoming I focus on here is that many authors in this field envision power dynamics at the mining frontier as 'being swung between globally connected resistance movements […] and mining companies (and the state on most occasions)' (Conde, 2017, p. 87). In this binary view, community responses other than resistance—e.g. inaction, negotiation or support for mining—remain largely unaddressed or explained in terms of ideological obfuscation and co-optation. Some authors depict community members who do not resist mining as docile subordinates or uncritical devotees whose 'hearts beat at the rhythm of the stock exchange of Toronto' as they have been 'colonized' or even 'mineralized' by mining corporations (Machado Aráoz, 2014, pp. 65–66). As a result, the agency of community members is reduced to a particular rendering of resistance.

Some recent contributions to the debate overcome the above-mentioned shortcoming and explore the more ambiguous and complex subjectivities that evolve around large-scale mineral mining (see Gajardo, 2020; Gustafsson, 2018). These are, however, few compared to those authors who focus their research on resistance alone. Katz's (2004, p.241) attempt to 'diffuse, if not burst the romance with "resistance"' by drawing attention to the broad range of messy and contradictory responses of those disenfranchised by global capitalism, thus continues to be a much-needed perspective.

My work in the south of the Ecuadorian Amazon, where a Chinese-owned large-scale copper mine called *Mirador* is venturing into a complex and layered landscape of tropical forests, Indigenous territories and peasant farmland, attests to this. Here, I met people and collectives, which declare themselves *en resistencia* [resistant] and articulate a 'vision of what else could be' (Katz, 2004, p. 253). They organise protest marches, blocking roads and taking companies to court – practices of resistance that academics have amply documented (c.f. Sacher, 2017). Interestingly, however, a much larger share of the population living around the Mirador mine do *not* participate in acts of resistance or even openly support the project. These actors scarcely figure in academic writing, which is a shame, as a close analysis of the stories of those who do not resist provides a more layered, ambiguous and fluid picture of their practices and motivations than the literature on large-scale mining in Latin America has suggested so far.

Take the example of Oscar, a member of the Shuar – an Indigenous group that has experienced decades, if not ages, of violent settler colonialism, territorial loss, racism and marginalization. He publicly supports the mining project as long as the company grants his community development projects. His negotiations with the company are motivated by his sense of entitlement to the subsoil wealth as an ancestral inhabitant of the region, as well as the strong wish to overthrow the local unequal ethnic hierarchies that derive from settler colonialism, as Oscar explained in an interview: 'We do not want to be marginalised as we were in the past. We want to be free, to be authoritative'. For Oscar, collaborating with the company does not represent acquiescence but a way to affirm Shuar belonging, entitlement and authority. At the same time, he does not embrace all that the mine entails. In 2015 he reported the company to the Ministry of Environment for water contamination, which led to the temporary suspension of the project's activities.

Another example is Julia, a settler woman whose family farm was forcibly displaced by the mine. Despite this experience, she registered for a training to become a voluntary 'community-promoter' of the government's pro-mining campaign. This position requires her to champion the benefits of the mine among peers so they will not resist its presence. Surprisingly, Julia herself is not too convinced by the government discourse: 'They present a thousand wonders, claiming that everyone will benefit […] they present that information to deceive us, to gain support. But we know they lie'. What motivated Julia to become an active promoter of these 'lies'? Being part of the programme, she explained, enabled her to establish personal contacts with government officials – contacts she considers an essential political currency to demand betterment in environmental regulation and compensatory measurements.

These brief stories from the Ecuadorian Amazon show the relevance of Katz's (2004) call to *go beyond resistance alone* and explore the array of responses engendered by capitalist development. Certainly, many actors like Julia and Oscar are sympathetic to the corporate discourses on the ostensible 'betterments' brought by mining, and some of them personally reap the fruits of the arrival of copper-dollars through a company job or local business. This should, however, not lead us to assume that non-resistance is a product of domination or false consciousness. Nor should we see them as powerless or underestimate their agency because their practices do not fit one or another category of resistance. Although they do not resist mining, Oscar and Julia recognize the socio-environmental risks of the mine and their marginal position vis-à-vis corporate and state interests. Based on this awareness, they sometimes embrace mining and at other times seek to 'recalibrate power relations and/or redistribute resources' (Katz, 2004, p. 247). Through such assemblages, their actions shape the way in which mining materializes in their community as much as those of the individuals who oppose mining.

Katz's framework has the potential to overcome the power/resistance binary and appreciate the 'fluid and overlapping' (2004, p. 240) acts of getting by, questioning, negotiating, reworking and contesting in which agents like Oscar and Julia engage. Her conceptual approach opens the analysis of mining conflicts to a range of subjectivities and forms of agency and helps to recognize community actors who do *not* resist mining as conscious agents who exert power. The stories from the Ecuadorian Amazon, however, also reveal ways in which the analytical merit of Katz's framework can be further enhanced. Among other things, they show that it is vital to not only distinguish between different forms of agency but to also look into *how and why* these different responses come about. For Oscar and Julia, for example, it was a mix of local histories of colonialism and conflict, notions of belonging and identity politics, social inequalities, corporate discourses, and personal as well as collective aspirations and experiences that brought them to their actions.

To further explore the motivations and structural factors that shape agency in mining (as well as other environmental) conflicts, I propose that Katz's framework of resilience-reworking-resistance be placed into dialogue with recent writings on micro-political ecology. This approach

integrates 'actor-oriented ethnographic methodology' with an analysis of 'broader politico-historical, economic and social forces' (Horowitz, 2011, p. 26). It emphasises a *situated* agency: an agency that is embedded in social, political, economic and environmental processes and attempts to govern people and nature, yet also exceeds and challenges them. Such an approach is attentive to people's intimate and embodied experiences, engagements and strategies, while acknowledging that these are necessarily open-ended, paradoxical, historically and geographically contingent and changing over time (Asiyanbi et al., 2019; Bagelman & Wiebe, 2017). By tracing these multi-scalar, historical and dynamic webs of power relations and personal motivations, we might be able to better grasp how and why grassroots actors move back and forth between resilience, reworking and resistance in the messiness of everyday life at the mining frontier.

1.4. No nation for young women

1.4.1. Sneha Krishnan

On May 23, 2020, Devangana Kalita and Natasha Narwal, both students in New Delhi, were arrested for participating in protests against India's current Hindu Nationalist regime. Kalita and Narwal belong to a feminist collective called 'Pinjra Tod', literally 'break the cage'. This group came together in 2015 to protest curfews for women at hostels – that is, dormitory-style student residence halls – in Indian cities. In 2019, Pinjra Tod joined the popular resistance against India's new Citizenship Amendment Act, which enshrines into the law overt discrimination against Muslims. Kalita and Narwal's arrest came in the wake of Pinjra Tod's visible presence in the resistance against the right-wing vigilante mobs that pillaged New Delhi in February 2020. We might wonder how a collective of educated, middle-class and mostly upper-caste young women agitating on a niche issue came to be seen as a threat to an authoritarian state. The answer may lie in the politics of refusal that Pinjra Tod's activists have long espoused. To them, resisting gendered rules of discipline in the hostels has meant refusing the Hindu nation.

Katz's work on dissent has been seminal to theorising young people's agency, particularly in the Global South, for she accounts for forms of political subjectivity beyond heroic and spectacular moments of transformation. My own work on hostels in the South Indian city of Chennai has also sought to draw attention to practices such as gallows humour, and ghost-story telling, as sites where young women's political subjectivities are formed and negotiated (Krishnan, 2019). In this contribution, I look at hostels in the context of Kalita and Narwal's recent arrests and propose a fourth to Katz's triad: refusal. I posit refusal as a mode of care (Bartos, 2012) – a way of tending to potentials for futurity, and affective orientations that depart from what is presented to young people as 'liveable' within contemporary biopolitical regimes. I do not imagine 'refusal' as a radical departure from Katz's triad of resilience, reworking, and resistance. Rather, acts of refusal, as I elaborate below, make space for radical forms of attachment which may not see themselves as revolutionary and yet seek to reorient the work of social reproduction.

Hostels house hundreds of thousands of young people both on and off university campuses in Indian cities. Their main draw is that they are inexpensive, charging as little as 250 rupees (US \$4) for the whole academic year at public universities. Hostels are typically single sex, and men's accommodations are lax on the rules. Women's hostels, in contrast, are strictly run. They usually have dress codes, curfews as early as six in the evening, and restrictions on using mobile phones. The Indian state has consistently doubled-down on the need for such measures. In 2017, Maneka Gandhi, then Minister for Women and Child Welfare, responded to Pinjra Tod's demand to lift hostel curfews with the argument that women's hostels needed strict controls on mobility because young women were prone to 'hormonal outbursts.'

The subjects at the heart of the disciplinary regimes of hostels – educated and typically middle-class and upper-caste young women – are the figures that undergird heteronormative and caste-patriarchal visions

of national futurity (Krishnan, 2019). The violent disciplining in hostels indicates the central role that the control of 'respectable' women's sexuality plays in producing national futures. Feminist scholarship in South Asian studies has long held that the postcolonial state in India simply continued its colonial predecessor's civilising mission in seeking to 'rescue, reclaim, and rehabilitate [women] in the fervour of a nationalist identity politics' (Sunder Rajan, 2003). This impulse has intensified as Hindu Nationalism has made electoral gains in India over the past decade. It has been most visible in a public debate on 'love jihad', the Hindu Nationalist conspiracy theory that suggests that Muslim men who marry upper-caste Hindu women are waging a religious war by seduction (Sarkar, 2018). This discourse holds up the Hindu Nation as a site of protection for middle-class and upper-caste women against pathologized—Muslim, Dalit and working-class—masculinities and the dangers of urban life. Simultaneously, it claims these women's bodies for a project of Hindu National futurity.

The case of a young university student called Hadiya who, in 2016, found her religious conversion to Islam invalidated, and her marriage to a Muslim man annulled, illustrates the stakes (Tyagi & Sen, 2020). For two years, Hadiya—a legal adult, who repeatedly testified that she had undertaken both the conversion and the marriage entirely of her own choosing – was remanded to the custody first of the hostel at her university, and then to her parents, with whom she was in legal dispute. While the Indian Supreme Court in 2018 overturned the Kerala High Court on both Hadiya's conversion and her marriage, in 2020 two Indian states passed so-called anti-Love-Jihad laws that are likely to make it easier to strip other adult women of their right to sexual autonomy. Hadiya's case highlights the insidious role that hostels have long played in aiding the Indian courts in providing an extra-judicial form of incarceration for non-criminal women. It is hard not to see continuities with the colonial governance of racialised populations as 'childlike' subjects.

In this context, Pinjra Tod's refusal of the Hindu Nation in the battle against curfews is particularly poignant, and cuts to the heart of Hindutva's caste-patriarchal politics. In a blog post, the collective's young activists write, 'The burden of the nation is a daily reality for every woman, manifesting in diverse forms in the numerous regulations and restrictions that bind and cage her, in the policing of her autonomy and freedom that she has to negotiate and resist, and even internalise, everyday' (Pinjra Tod Collective, 2016). Refusing the nation, as this framing suggests, is possible not merely through spectacular acts such as the highly-visible protests in New Delhi in early 2020, which led to Kalita and Narwal's arrests, but also in everyday practices. In some ways, refusal might be argued to be founded on the 'oppositional consciousness' that Katz (2004) sees as central to resistance. However, refusal, as the young women agitating against hostel curfews articulate it, entails also a lived affective ethic: a wilful (Ahmed, 2014) attachment to an alternative potential, which may or may not be transformative. That is, it emerges less from a self-consciously oppositional practice than from everyday acts of reorientation. Through refusal, young people enact care for their worlds by seeking to enliven affective possibilities that have been relegated to abandonment by contemporary biopolitical regimes (Bartos, 2012).

Refusal, for the young women in Chennai hostels, materialised by allowing their desires to wander in the direction of those with whom there would be no futurity compatible with the demands of Hindu Nationalist respectability. They practiced refusal every day by defiantly remembering – even as hostel authorities rushed to destroy all traces of such incidents – the stories of the girls who had killed themselves when such loving was met with suffocating discipline. Indeed, it is these everyday acts that make the spectacular instances of radical refusal that brought Pinjra Tod to the Indian state's notice. In proposing refusal as a fourth category in Katz's (2004) schema, I thus seek to account for the significance of affective orientations (Ahmed, 2006). This is important for understanding the enactment of dissent, for acting in multi-scalar ways links intimate practices at home with geopolitical discourses

about the nation and its boundaries.

1.5. *Katz's resistance terminology and the politics of home*

1.5.1. *Mel Nowicki*

For several decades, feminist scholars have asked us to 'move past the front stoop' (Domosh, 1998) and acknowledge the home as a key socio-political site. Narratives of home have long been used to embed political ideologies across a range of contexts and scales and undermine and dismantle homes that do not fit dominant narratives (Nowicki, 2014). Even as people fight to retain their right to home, powerful actors utilise narratives of home at the expense of the marginalised. These acts are as nuanced and multi-scalar as the injustices they seek to redress. As Sarah de Leeuw (2016, p. 15) notes, based on her work with Indigenous women on colonial violence in British Columbia, critical interventions in political geography need to more actively account for the intimate, domestic, and supposedly banal. She argues that these geographies 'are deeply political and worthy of much more sustained critical attention by geographers than has previously been the case'. Katz's deconstruction of resistance terminology provides political geographers with the tools to better examine the political potency of the domestic and understand the varied ways in which precarious groups respond to and challenge the destruction of home.

As Katz cautions, we should take care not to romanticise the notion of resistance, as 'we cannot understand oppositional practice or its possible effects if we consider every autonomous act to be an act of resistance' (2004: 242; see also Murrey herein). And yet, as this intervention argues, we should not dismiss actions that may not directly challenge the destruction of home, but nonetheless establish conditions for wider resistances to grow. Katz's distinctions between resilience, reworking, and resistance are invaluable in understanding how discreet actions connect to wider fights for a universal right to home, without conflating or diminishing individual impacts. As Lindsey Naylor (2017) argues, small acts of resistance and autonomy are just as personal and embodied as large-scale and performative ones. To illustrate this, I outline three examples of resilience, reworking and resistance through the lens of the political geographies of home. I do so in order to suggest an expansion of the conceptual spaces of resistance, and how this expansion provides new potential for exploring the politics of the domestic.

In 2017–18, as part of an evaluation of Dublin City Council's new public housebuilding programme, I interviewed 21 formerly homeless families (Nowicki et al., 2019). The project explored their experiences of homelessness and detailed the consequences of losing one's home, in this case after eviction from the private rental sector. Most participants had lived with their children in hotel rooms arranged by the council for months and sometimes years due to a lack of more appropriate temporary accommodation. Participants relayed the devastating impacts of this experience. They were unable to cook for their children, humiliated by the hotel staff and other 'regular' guests, and experienced anxiety from living in a suspended state of precarity. One potentially surprising finding was that even in such an unhomely and traumatic circumstance, participants still tried to make their hotel rooms more home-like. For example, one participant swapped the duvets with their personal sets, while another changed the room layout to resemble a studio flat. These adjustments helped participants endure homelessness. Such practices speak to Katz's concept of resilience, enabling what she terms 'material and spiritual survival, but also the recuperation of dignity' (2004, p. 246). Such 'creative reworkings' of participants' material conditions proved integral to retaining a sense of self and a sense of home, even as they were rendered homeless. And yet, as Katz argues, to define these acts as resistance risks failing to acknowledge that participants were left to construct some semblance of home in lieu of any alternative. Rather, the need to endure homelessness and render the 'unhomely' home-like evidenced the systemic extent of housing revanchism in Dublin.

Examples of reworking also emerged in my research. From 2014 to 2017, I conducted a project to explore, in part, the impact of the bedroom tax (e.g. the underoccupancy charge) on London's social tenants. The policy threatened participants' homes both materially (fears of falling into rent arrears or of eviction) and less tangibly (feeling undeserving of their home or judged because of their tenure status). Residents pragmatically reconstituted their resources (Katz's 'reworking') through a social media support group that collected successful ways to legally appeal the bedroom tax (e.g., a common appeal relates to the dimensions of the supposed extra bedroom). This ad hoc legal service enabled social tenants to 'retool' themselves as 'political subjects and social actors' (Katz, 2004, p. 247). While it was a pragmatic and piecemeal response, the reworking was also plugged into a wider set of resistive acts that sought to legally challenge the bedroom tax on a national scale.

Such reclamations of home, through resilience and reworking, are important for survival in a hostile political landscape for those who do not, or cannot, conform to particular narratives of home. Katz's terminology captures how people retain dignity and establish better conditions for themselves in times of hardship. It also helps us understand how everyday acts lay the groundwork to challenge structures. Without the kindling of these micro-scale, personal acts of resilience and reworking, larger-scale political consciousness about the right to home might not ignite. As Katz notes, 'If reworking reorders and sometimes undermines the structural constraints that affect everyday life both to make it more liveable and to create viable terrains of practice, resistance takes up that terrain with the invocation of an oppositional consciousness' (2004, p. 251).

This is observed, for example, in international activism that emphasises the right to home as a key battleground in the fight for more equitable societies. One global movement advocating universal decent housing through a human rights framework is 'The Shift'. The Shift asks governments and other powerful actors to consciously reconceptualise the home as a human right, not a financial product. Whilst The Shift could be understood as reworking (denoting some slippage within Katz' terminology), it is purposefully branded as a resistance movement. The Shift is a collective, conscious opposition to injustice. It builds, in part, on the lived realities of people like my participants in Dublin and London who eke out resilience and reworking strategies to maintain a sense of home in a hostile political landscape.

Katz's distinctions between resilience, reworking and resistance enable a more nuanced understanding of small moments that can collate into larger resistance. Without romanticising the struggle to maintain a sense of home in precarious circumstances, Katz's framework offers a route to challenge and redress the politics of home. Small-scale examples of resilience and reworking, seeking to piece homes back together, function on their own merits and connect to explicit acts of resistance. Conceptual spaces of resistance are expanded and multiplied, further revealing the political potentials of domestic spaces. In this way, Katz helps us to better explore and advocate the universal right to home.

1.6. *Linguistic defiance: language mobilization and new spaces of resistance*

1.6.1. *Patricia Daley*

Marginalised groups use dialects, slang, local languages, or translanguages as everyday forms of defiance. However, geographers rarely consider the importance of spatio-linguistics in power and resistance. Medby (2019, p. 152) challenges political geographers to explore how 'the social use of specific linguistic patterns contribute to movements' cohesion – or indeed to emotive and/or violent affects [and] how the use of vernacular feed into senses of belonging and non/anti-elite empowerment'. In this piece, I work from Hart (2013a, 2013b) and Katz (2004, 2009) to assert the importance of 'linguistic defiance/disobedience' in understanding resistance within racial capitalism and rising populism in the global North (Komska et al., 2019). I outline how political geographers can incorporate linguistics and the politics of language into studies of resistance practices, revealing the complicated social and spatial dynamics through which marginalised and racialised groups resist

cultural domination by generating new counter-hegemonic languages.

Drawing on Antonio Gramsci's 'theory of language', Hart (2013a, 2013b) asserts the importance of spatial linguistics in class articulation. Elite groups exert power over subordinated communities through the production and universalisation of a standardised language (normative grammar) across space. Gramsci notes that the national language is critical to hegemony but always influenced by other languages. He questions, 'Who can control the linguistic innovations introduced by returning emigrants, travellers, readers of foreign newspapers and languages, translators, etc.?' (Gramsci, cited in Hart, p. 311). In the context of the global North, communities racialised as not white—despite their marginalised positions and because of the oppressive nature of their subordination—are dynamic, influential, and 'spontaneous' language creators.

Political geographers have long recognised the importance of social movements and cultural, intimate, or discursive everyday forms of resistance (Featherstone, 2008; Murrey, 2016; Sharp et al., 1999). Katz (2004), however is critical of the widespread application of 'resistance'. In her framework, resistance is reserved for social movement-style activities that challenge dominant power. In her theorisation, the act of developing a new subaltern language might not constitute resistance.

In contrast, this paper finds common ground with Naylor's (2017, p. 30) reinterpretation of autonomy in resistance. She positions the 'day-to-day activities of indigenous farmers in Mexico' and their 'everyday autonomies' as resistance. Such practices include refusing to participate in state welfare programmes for development and, even when participating, articulating a language of resistance. Consequently, I argue that the development of defiant language, in the face of overwhelming pressure to adopt normative grammar, constitutes resistance. Yet, articulating this subaltern language requires constant vigilance. Linguistic tools of resistance include new vocabularies and the refashioning of specific words and terms as tools of mobilisation and alliance-building. Spontaneous grammars may be derided as incorrect or sub-standard, while also being co-opted and universalised by elites with altered meanings purposefully designed to delegitimise and demobilise.

Recognising the political threat of linguistic disobedience particularly when it connects with broader social movements, state power is directed against languages with war-like force. Spaces of resistance can generate powerful languages that simultaneously mobilise and unsettle worldviews. This is exemplified by the recent co-option of Black terms (such as 'woke') to beat back white supremacy (Malik, 2021) in the UK and the USA. Such languages are deemed a significant ideological threat to white supremacy. I challenge the assumption that the backlash against woke is simply 'dog whistling' or a distraction from the social and economic ravages of COVID-19 or Brexit. Rather, the disruptive elements of the languages of the oppressed reveal how racism is differently spatially and temporally reproduced.

Katz (2004, p. 296) acknowledges the importance of the Marxist concept of consciousness: 'of being a class or other kind of group not simply in itself, but for itself through a recognition of the social relations of position … for everyday acts of resistance'. For Katz, consciousness is crucial for resistance – there is no resistance without consciousness. However, defiant languages might unsettle Katz' assertion that resistance is defined by the active 'consciousness'. Linguistic defiance is both central to consciousness-raising and an act of resistance. Komska et al. (2019, p.13) define the concept of linguistic disobedience as 'refusing the spoils of interactional, communicative hegemony, in pursuit of something better'. They argue that the anti-establishment discourse and idioms used by far-right activists to provoke and incite racial hatred are forms of neo-liberal obedience. Populist slogans resonate deeply with disaffected segments of the population while racialising their hardships. Slogans like 'Make America Great Again' and 'Brexit means Brexit' connote specific spatialities of patriotism, nationalism, and exclusivism.

In colonial contexts, linguistic domination was not meant to garner political alliance with the masses. Rather, it promoted the superiority of the imperial culture and the co-option of Indigenous elites. Indigenous languages were labelled vernaculars and generally prohibited in state educational settings. Gramsci (1985, p. 181) describes how these acts support the normative grammar, in which 'subaltern classes try to speak like the dominant classes and the intellectuals.'

In racialised contexts, aspiring elements of the dominated exhort others to speak the coloniser's language (e.g., 'good English' or Parisian French). This is countered by the masses, whose linguistic inventiveness challenges hegemony and articulates resistance. The Kenyan writer Ngugi wa Thiong'o (1986) understood the use of local languages to be essential to decolonisation. Such vernaculars may be spoken widely or be racially or spatially confined to particular urban or rural settings (e.g. African American English, Jamaican Patois) (McWhorter, 2017). These spaces and the languages they produce are historically contingent and dynamic, with dual usages: 1) they might be co-opted by state elites as a populist or a counter-insurgency tactic (e.g. when state officials speak in the language of the masses) or 2) mobilised by the poor as part of consciousness-raising and movement building.

In the heart of empire, Black cultures have developed new theories and new languages to explain Black people's distinct conditions and ontologies. Linguistic disobedience requires ongoing creativity by 'sufferers' (a Jamaican Rastafarian term), as they simultaneously empower political mobilisation and promote new modes of survival. Such linguistic innovation originated on slave plantations in the Caribbean and Americas. Africans developed new methods of communicating for survival and resistance. Reggae music, originating from the language of poor Black communities of Kingston, Jamaica, became a globally mobilising tool for the dispossessed while also offering hope and entertainment (Campbell, 1978). In Nairobi, young people's use and development of *Sheng* (i.e. Kiswahili-English slang) emerged as a form of linguistic resistance against politicians by the impoverished or uneducated; but Sheng has subsequently been co-opted by Kenyan politicians.

When marginalised languages are co-opted, they become sanitised for white (elite) tongues and sensibilities. Even when new academic concepts emerge from Black struggles, they often lose their original meanings and connotations in the mainstream (e.g., 'intersectionality' and 'decolonizing'). The languages then lose relevance to the originators as they no longer challenge class articulations. When elements of Black cultures are mainstreamed, they often lose their potency within Black communities.

I offer two explanations for why Black emancipatory languages evoke such virulent opposition in advanced white-majority democracies. First, globalisation has challenged white supremacy and exposed it as unnatural and reliant on capitalist practices that dispossess and exploit non-white others. As neoliberal capitalism ravages the world and exacerbates patterns of inequality, even within the global North, the benefits that historically have accrued to whiteness have become increasingly less secure, especially for those white people in the middle and lower classes.

Second, people racialised as Black who live in geographical proximity to whites and/or in white dominant societies refuse to accept their subjugation and instead continuously create new theories, concepts, and languages that speak to their condition. Many white people who were once secure in their acceptance of whiteness and its forms of domination have become vulnerable under neoliberalism. Additionally, people racialised as white now live in closer proximity to racialised others and have become more accepting of diverse cultures due to migration, desegregation, and the breakdown of whiteness in the marketplace. After the 2011 nationwide riots in the UK, white nationalist historian David Starkey argued that in the cities:

> The whites have become black. A particular sort of violent destructive, nihilistic gangster culture has become the fashion and black and white boys and girls operate in this language together … This language which is wholly false, which is this Jamaican patois that has been intruded in England and that is why so many of us have this

sense of literally of a foreign country (BBC2's Newsnight, Aug. 2011).

Starkey's claim exemplifies what Komska et al. (2019, p.17) call 'linguistic obedience'—that is to say, an obedient language signifying a refusal of change.

Right-wing fear of a national youth culture and Black progressives contributes to the hostilities towards 'wokeness' and Black Lives Matter, and motivates attempts to criminalise Black culture and Black protest. Black Lives Matter and the popularity of Black linguistics among those seeking social change threatens ruling class hegemony and 'its political and ideological leadership in the civil, intellectual, moral life, as well as at the material level' (Hall, 1980, p. 332). Following Hall, I argue that the rise of populism and the side-lining of socialist alternatives has given rise to new forms of racism that protect the privileges and dominance of neoliberal elites. Yet, this is a tenuous power; the ruling class feels threatened and frequently claims to be victimised when the most marginalised groups assert their humanity. We have seen this, for example, in responses to the Black Lives Matter movement.

The deliberate weaponisation of tools designed for emancipatory action indicates neoliberal elites' vulnerability as they produce new forms of racism to divide youth and the working class. Geographers must incorporate linguistic disobedience as a methodological tool to articulate resistance and as a creative approach in developing critical practice. This might involve learning the language of the moment, as evidenced in creative outputs like songs, poetry, and everyday idioms. To understand these phenomena as resistance, critical geographers must go beyond glossaries of local terms to explore the spatial linguistic histories of resistance. We must also unpack the nuanced use of defiant local languages and attend to the hegemonic weaponisation against the tools of oppositional consciousness.

1.7. Refusal, affirmation, ambivalence: rethinking feminist resistance in the context of the COVID-19 crisis

1.7.1. Maria Fannin and Julie MacLeavy

Katz's (2001; 2004) conceptualisation of resistance, resilience, and reworking is a touchstone in our thinking about the dynamics of power and the subjects constituted by them (MacLeavy et al., 2021). As the previous contributions attest, the distinctions between these categories involve *live* questions that speak to the many ways in which we reflect and act in the academy. Our intervention investigates the strategies and tactics for surviving and thriving in our institutions. Contributing to a political geography that is increasingly attuned to subtle processes of agency, we argue that everyday actions can remake institutional and material infrastructures for better and, potentially, for worse. We highlight *Political Geography*'s attention to the practices of refusal and affirmation that are a part of feminist resistance in the contemporary moment. The focus is not on resistance as revolution, but on the small-scale struggles continually occurring over subjectivities and meanings. In this sense, our intervention differs from the other contributions, which are framed around specific case studies. Here we address 'geography' more broadly as a field of practice.

Refusal is the "politics of deliberate disengagement" (Naylor, 2017, p. 24) that lays bare resistance as a part of social and economic processes, incremental in its formation, and layered with complexity and contradiction. Emerging from agent-focused analyses of structures such as capitalism or neoliberalism that outline how resistance is embedded within machineries of power, practices of refusal can make visible the dynamics of labour, care, production and reproduction within everyday life, and how these engender social transformations at local scales. Refusal is linked to resistance, but not identical to it, for refusal concerns 'the social as much as the political' (McGranahan, 2016, p. 319). While refusal may contribute to political action or a social movement, it can also be articulated as 'a troubled conscience and rejection of status quo conditions and apologies' (ibid, p. 320).

On this troubled conscience: we write as feminist geographers navigating the shifting spaces and times of coronavirus in the UK academy. As teaching across the UK begins again and reflections on COVID-19 are published, we consider the extent to which this situation may open or foreclose certain types of research, teaching, and activism. We acknowledge that the security of our jobs, our ability to work from home, and our shared caring responsibilities have led us to experience this pandemic differently from others who have lost jobs and livelihoods, or who are otherwise experiencing the pandemic from situations of precarity and vulnerability–not least those suffering through ill health or bereavement.

The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated existing injustices and inequalities and created new pressures on work and life. We are heartened by the many reflections on these new realities by those working in higher education, especially feminist scholars' powerful articulations (for example, Boncori, 2020; Wright et al., 2020). There have been many calls to acknowledge the unevenness of the pandemic's effects. This includes those at disproportionate risk of exposure, those who assume most of the care work and home education, and those without secure and safe access to green space and social distancing at home. Many accounts of the pandemic's effects have made clear the stark divide between those with caring responsibilities for children or other dependents and those without.

At the same time, feminism's own histories of complicity with systems of power are once again plainly visible. Black Lives Matter protests sparked a wider accounting of white privilege in UK civic institutions, including universities. Scholars reckoned with their institutions' materially benefitting from and supporting British imperialism and the ongoing inequities experienced by Black people in the UK. One of Katz's most enduring contributions is her method of "countertopography". It is not just an analytical linking of sites experiencing economic crisis/ transition, but the ability to conceive of 'the simultaneity of different kinds of disruptions' (2001, p. 1232). Countertopography could help conceptualise the simultaneity of different kinds of political disruptions that characterise the contemporary moment—the viral biopolitics of the COVID-19 pandemic, a resurgent feminist analysis of caring labour, and anti-racist and decolonising activism. How do they reveal different dimensions of capitalist crisis, or in Katz's (2004, p. xiv) terms, 'effects of a common set of processes'? Keeping Katz's three R's in mind, we ask how to reclaim and retain feminist teaching, scholarship, and activism in the university when universities themselves are in crisis.

The casualised workforce supporting many of the day-to-day activities of teaching, research, and administration were the first targets of anticipated university budget cuts in the spring of 2020. The largest-ever University and College Union (UCU) strike was also demobilised by the pandemic. For many academics, the pandemic has rendered the dehumanising effects of capitalist productivity in the education sector ever more visible. One feminist response has been to emphasise that those with caring responsibilities simply cannot be expected to work at the same pace and with the same volume of tasks as those without. They should not be penalised for the socially protective measures of school and nursery closures. The newly visible caring labour carried out by working parents and the adjustment to home working could instigate deeper shifts in working cultures. The spatial reorganisation of labour may have enduring effects: moving the workplace to the home can be both liberating and oppressive. Nevertheless, those normally made invisible in the workplace—children—are now foregrounded. This could force a wider reckoning of the value of care labour, whether it is carried out by parents, teachers, or childcare workers, within and beyond higher education.

At the same time, the refusal to work 'as normal' during a pandemic must be seen as a privilege unavailable to academics in tenuous and insecure employment, who are disproportionately women and Black, Asian or non-white staff. Moreover, the refusal of work on caring grounds could result in institutions demanding more of vulnerable academics who are considered disposable. How might we think

collaboratively on issues of care and anti-racism so that refusal to work does not compound other forms of oppression? Is the visibility of workers' caring responsibilities and the slowdown, refusal or sheer impossibility of carrying on as normal an act of resistance, regardless of its potentially negative effects?

Resistant practices have been re-theorised to encompass the emergent actions that condition future claims to resistance (Hughes, 2020). Micro-resistance can potentially remake cultures anew. We are aligned with those theorists of resistance who complicate the narrative of the oppositional subject by focusing on everyday resistance (for example, Naylor, 2017). Our feminist sensibilities attune us to the seductive narratives that reward certain kinds of heroic acts as resistant, while relegating the everyday and mundane work of living differently to a lesser form of action. Of Katz's three Rs, everyday resistance affirms the small and seemingly marginal.

Furthermore, we consider the tensions that emerge from individuals' different political positions in response to the isolating effects and embodied work conditions in the neoliberalising university. Geographical scholarship is increasingly sceptical about theorisations of power as operative through regulatory mechanisms in support of a single dominant group. Rather, it emphasises how power functions through subtle and 'quiet' modes of securing or inducing individual behaviours. Following this, we understand resistance as an array of temporally and contextually specific relations, not an inherently positive or creative force. It is an *imperfect* reaction to the exploitation, inequality, and oppression inherent to neoliberalism and the transformations of neoliberalising academic institutions. Like Hughes, we argue that resistance ought not simply be conceived as 'a position of exteriority in relation to power' (Foucault, 1980, p. 94; see Hughes, 2020), but as something that is forged in and through its other(s). As we inhabit academic spaces and responsibilities, we become part of the system that works to exploit us. We are not separated from the 'ivory tower' but positioned in the thick of the policies being used to reconfigure higher education as a competitive market.

Thinking about power and resistance with respect to our own work as teachers, scholars and activists shows how each of us are "shot through by multiple incoherent forces" (Hughes, 2020, p. 1152) and how we are simultaneously implicated in strategies to secure, sustain and repel changes in and beyond higher education institutions. If resistance is defined as something only happening in opposition to something, and as the province of only external, homogenised or unified constituencies, and as that which takes place somewhere else, "outside" of or against the educational institutions that may provide the foundations of everything we do, we risk missing what makes academic labour intrinsically political: how the University can valorise individual and community struggles and function as a site of solidarity, with each other and with our students. In the day-to-day practices of teaching students through the pandemic, conversations that might have once unfolded in the abstract about social reproduction and precarity were brought to ground and affirmed how solidarity with others is a pedagogical act, despite the very different ways in which the pandemic was and continues to be experienced. We remain ambivalent about the possibilities and potentials that the extraordinary pressures of the pandemic wrought on universities as institutions, and the new configurations of students, teachers, and technologies that may emerge 'post-pandemic'. This pushes us to consider resistance as an irregular, indefinite and unpredictable component of feminist stewardship – a *fragment* of thought or action that leaves space for imagining other worlds.

Declaration of competing interest

Nothing to declare.

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