

Ann Magee - Distinguished New Zealand Geographer

Ann's intellectual roots go back to the ferment of the VUW geography department under the late Keith Buchanan. Vic was a vibrant outpost of internationalism, a hub of political and economic critique, an exemplar of grounded field research and a department where, as Ann notes, 'women were invisible'. It had a marvellous library. Ann's diet of reading included the post-colonialist and the feminist literatures. It was at Vic that her resolve to fight ingrained poverty and to change the world was heightened.

Ann put in 20 years as a geography academic, first at Vic then Waikato. She was foremost a teacher and an activist. In geography she led a curriculum change. First year was about the geography of the Waikato. Second year included a focus on Maori land, with several lectures being delivered in Maori. This shifted mindsets, from a one world view. She stimulated the development of a world-recognised feminist programme at Waikato. Feminist geography was institutionalised in New Zealand, a mark of truly transformative practice. As Wendy Larner, now Professor of Geography at the University of Bristol says, 'There was a generation of us who were inspired and politicised by her teachings of feminism and Marxism in a course called Radical Urban Analysis.

Ann says it was quite by chance that she ended up at Auckland City Council in 1987, the year of the share market crash. Shedding academe, she relished being able to work in and with the worlds of business, community and government. By 1989 Ann had arrived at Waitakere City. In the early 1990s Doreen Massey, one of the giants of international geography, wrote about geographers crafting 'a global sense of place'. Ann asked the global question, 'What could Agenda 21 look like in New Zealand, in Auckland, in Waitakere City?' Her CV contains entries that tell of the next decade: responsible for sustainable city policy framework and implementation programme, pioneering new urbanism, community based design processes, Local Government New Zealand Advisory Group on Agenda 21 and more recently the Sustainable Development Working Party and Auckland Region Chief Executive Working Groups on Sustainable Development.

Ann has represented New Zealand at the International Council of Local Environmental Initiatives in Germany, Japan and Australia and been a keynote speaker at new urbanism conferences in Australia, speaking on the transformation from edge city to eco city.

Ann's contribution above all others is her vision that the compact city is the way forward and her ability to connect the community to the resources of Council.

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