

Reinforcing Diversity: From the ‘inside’ and the ‘outside’

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ABSTRACT *This paper focuses on Jan Monk’s contribution to reinforcing diversity and collaboration in the field of human geography. It illustrates how gendered diversity and feminism is promoted in her academic work both inside the Anglo-American academic world and outside, by exposing the feminist voices from around the world and mainstreaming them in her collaborative work. Fostering and reinforcing diversity has become a body of knowledge in her extensive publications in which she assesses the varying extent and nature of feminist geography in the Anglophone world and across countries, attempting to interpret differences in terms of geographical and cultural contexts and disciplinary trends. The paper emphasizes how fostering diversity and collaboration in Jan’s academic work is not only about writing articles, editing books and producing a film, but also engages the formulation of organizational structures such as the Routledge book series and the initiation and establishment of the Commission of Gender and Geography of the International Geographical Union which have contributed to the production of collaborative feminist geographical knowledge across spaces and places.*

KEY WORDS: Feminism; sexism; diversity; collaboration; Anglo-American hegemony

I first met Jan at the 1994 International Geographical Union (IGU) meeting in Prague. It was the first IGU conference I had ever attended. I was nervous, lonely, didn’t know what ‘to do’, how to ‘behave’, and was feeling very isolated as one of a few people working on gender and geography in Israel at the time. My meeting with Jan and other feminist geographers marked a change in my academic life. I felt included, part of a support group that made me feel I belonged to an academic network outside my context in Israel. I could then do more to promote the study of gender in geography ‘inside’ my own context as this ‘outside’ support and service made feminist geography a valid and ‘serious’ academic discipline.

The opening up of possibilities to produce my work on gender and geography both internationally and in Israel is a result of Jan’s service and work on feminism and diversity, both from the ‘inside’, highlighting and fighting against sexist standpoints and views, especially in teaching and higher education, and from the ‘outside’, by making sure that the voices and work of feminists outside the Anglo-American

world are heard. In so doing, she has brought other voices into Anglo-American geography and has spread them to different audiences around the world.

Between 1970 and 2006 Jan published some 94 book chapters and articles and 11 edited collections. It is impossible within the scope of this essay to review or even mention this enormous amount of work. I would therefore like to dedicate it to highlighting those perspectives that I, as an 'outsider' to the Anglo-American world, find so significant and path breaking: those of feminism, diversity and collaboration from the 'inside' and the 'outside'.

The first thing one notices when looking at the list of Jan's publications is that most of her work is collaborative. This is partly because of her 24 years of working as Associate and then Executive Director of the Southwest Institute for Research on Women (SIROW) at the University of Arizona, an institute which has secured funding for collaborative, inter-institutional and interdisciplinary feminist projects. This position obviously affected her academic research, as she puts it (Monk, under review, p. 12):

The position for the most part, has, however, precluded continuation of the field research that characterized my early career; it has meant that many of my articles and books have been co-authored and co-edited. This in itself has been very rewarding, offering opportunities to learn from and support other scholars.

Indeed, in SIROW Jan worked on many interdisciplinary projects collaborating with colleagues in fields such as nursing, history, anthropology, Middle Eastern Studies, mathematics, mining engineering and literature. But working in collaboration was not just an institutional requirement of SIROW, it was part of her feminist aspirations as well. For example, in her most recent publication (Monk, under review) Jan mentions the period beginning in 1995 as the most significant in her collaboration on gender and health at the Mexico-US border. This work not only yielded productive collaboration across the US-Mexico borders but also produced significant academic work which focuses on the values and strains of collaboration (Monk *et al.*, 2002; Manning *et al.*, 2006). In one of her collaborative papers Jan and her colleagues Patricia Manning and Catalina Denman (Monk *et al.*, 2002, p. 92) write of collaboration as 'consistent with long-standing feminist goals of challenging hierarchical relationships and of conducting research that is directed towards changing society'. Without a doubt, the vast majority of collaborative work can be seen as subversive. It challenges dominant norms of promotion and academic excellence which encourage solo research and writing. Moreover, by collaborating with other feminist researchers from non-Anglo-American countries, Jan has made major contributions to international feminist geography.

Reading through her extensive and rich collection of publications it is clear that the main focus of her academic work is feminism: Jan is first and foremost a feminist. Indeed, her first publication on feminist issues was back in 1978, a time when only a few feminist geographers had begun to work on examining the status of women in the discipline (Berman, 1977; Zelinsky, 1973a, 1973b). At that point, Jan herself was facing difficulties with her promotion at the University of Illinois which was partly because she had turned to women and gender studies, although this was never made explicit (Monk, under review). Despite the challenge of rather chauvinist attitudes in the profession, she accepted an invitation to contribute to a special issue of the *Journal of Geography* on teaching courses on

women's geographies. In this piece she made a clear critique on the minor and selective roles assigned to women in geography (Monk, 1978). Her sensitivity to sexist situations and her dedication to promoting equality in the field of geography then led her to write 'On not excluding half of the human in human geography' with Susan Hanson (1982) in which they clearly stated that research in human geography had avoided women, i.e. 'half of the human race'. They substantiated this rather radical argument by presenting sexist biases in geographical research as a result of a systematic and multi-layered structure of thinking in the content, methods and purposes of geographic research. They demonstrated the pervasive nature of the problem by drawing illustrative examples from various areas of the discipline, sketching out the character of sexist biases. In so doing, they illustrated how deep rooted the gender bias in geographical research has been, and perhaps still is, and the extent to which a more sensitive handling of women's issues is essential to develop a non-sexist and feminist human geography.

In the same year, Jan published the first review article on feminist geography, with Wilbur Zelinsky and Susan Hanson (1982), in which they also discussed indicators of the changing status of women geographers. While sensitive to diversity from 'outside', this piece also acknowledged Anglo-American centrality in the production of knowledge in feminist geography. The significance of this paper lies in its wide scope and in 'making space' for the studies of the geography of women which were being produced at that time, namely: environment and landscapes; quality of life and status of women indicators; access to housing, transportation, child-care, health and medical facilities; educational attainment; issues facing elderly women; and women and the world of work, both in the Third World and in industrialized countries. This vast review was a significant statement in itself: that regardless of women's inferior status, low representation in geography departments and limited access to resources, women in fact did produce an impressive body of work. The paper is anticipatory of later perspectives in recognizing the diversity among women and not only their differences from men. Indeed, some of the topics mentioned in the conclusions as necessitating further examination are those that Jan took up in her subsequent academic work such as: geographies of women of different ethnic and racialized groups (Monk, 1983, 1984; Monk & Alexander, 1986; Kay *et al.*, 1988; Monk & Momsen, 1994); women and work (Garcia-Ramon & Monk, 1996); and on women at different points in the life course (Katz & Monk, 1993). Referring to these early feminist writings, Jan has recently noted (Monk, under review, p. 11): 'In some ways, especially in larger professional circles, I had attained "insider" status, in others, I remained an "outsider". Perhaps the titles of some of my feminist projects and publications have more than one meaning.'

Fostering and reinforcing 'diversity' is one of the central tenets of Jan's research. In her paper 'Place Matters: Comparative International Perspectives on Feminist Geography' (Monk, 1994) she assesses the varying extent and nature of feminist geography across countries, attempting to interpret differences in terms of cultural contexts and disciplinary trends. This work can be seen as a review of the 'outside', of non Anglo-American feminist writing, which is complementary to the earlier review paper (Zelinsky *et al.*, 1982) that focuses on the Anglo-American context. This paper reflects in many ways a shift in her career to focus more on international connections and research. She points out the commonalities in research on feminist geography but also indicates that:

Despite the commonalities, however, national differences exist in the extent to which feminist geography has developed and in its approaches and emphases. To date, little systematic attention has been paid to these differences or to specific connections among places, even though *place* is a fundamental category for geographers. (Monk, 1994, p. 277)

This is also one of the first papers in geography to present a critical view on the exclusiveness of Anglophone feminist work and that challenges the somewhat latent belief that Anglophones produce 'theory' and the 'rest' of the world deals with 'the practice', as well as discussing the neglect of much of the research by European feminist geographers in English language publications.

It is not possible to review Jan's contribution to fostering diversity and collaboration without mentioning *The Desert is No Lady*, both the book (edited with Vera Norwood (1987, 1989, 1996), and the film (Williams & Monk, 1995). Analysing the ways in which women's sense of place, identity and cultural expressions in the south-western United States are intertwined, the book provides a rich and innovative interpretation of literature and art by American Indian, Hispanic/Mexican American, and Anglo-American women over the period 1880–1980. It makes these voices explicit and exposes the character of the region and Jan's long-standing commitment to exploring the links between place and diversity. The film, which features nine contemporary women writers and artists, also serves to illustrate the diverse cultures of the region as well as women's lives, struggles and diversity. The book and the film are both expressions of Jan's creative thinking; she reinforces diversity not only through formal academic research and writing but also by producing work which expresses diversity and crosses boundaries in various media. This is another expression of her subversive way of thinking and of conduct which has not always been accepted by mainstream and conservative patriarchal academia but in fact succeeded in making a change.

Fostering diversity and collaboration for Jan has also been about co-initiating (with Janet Momsen) the Routledge book series *International Studies of Women and Place*, which has provided a platform for women around the world to publish feminist work. Some 21 books have been published to date in this series on a large variety of topics representing feminist work and interests around the world. This inclusive and collaborative work with international feminist scholars is clearly manifested in Jan's later writings in papers and edited collections of books. *Encompassing Gender: Integrating International Studies and Women's Studies*, published (with Mary Lay and Deborah Rosenfelt) in 2002, is one such example. This collection of more than 40 essays by 60 scholars from Latin America, Africa and the USA characterizes the nature of her academic work: it is collaborative, international and interdisciplinary, with the book's chapters cutting across the humanities, the sciences and the social sciences.

I end this brief essay by highlighting some of Jan's activities with the Gender and Geography Commission of the International Geographical Union. I see it as yet another of her innovative and challenging ways to 'make place matter' in fostering diversity, inclusiveness and collaboration between different places and cultures. The motivation to engage with international activities in the IGU is connected to her own identity as insider/outsider. As Jan herself puts it:

I think having been an international student myself played a role in why I found the IGU appealing. Just after I finished my doctoral dissertation, I saw an announcement of a pre-Congress Symposium in Vancouver

before the 1972 IGU Congress in Canada on a theme that fitted well with my research. I should add that my topic was not one that was 'mainstream' in the increasingly urban quantitative geography of the US of the time. The Symposium was entitled 'Cultural Discord in the Modern World.' It was an extremely stimulating and congenial event and I felt comfortable with the perspectives of scholars from different scholarly traditions. (12 September 2006, email communication)

From then onwards Jan has been active in nearly all IGU meetings, reinforcing her desire to cross boundaries. At the meeting of the IGU Rural Commission in California in 1982 she and her colleagues offered two sessions on women and development with the aim of introducing feminist perspectives into the IGU agenda. At the Paris Congress in 1984 she and colleagues organized an informal session to discuss prospects of advancing studies of women and gender through the IGU. In Barcelona in 1986 the group presented a half-day program assessing the emerging gender research within various countries. At the Sydney Congress in 1988 they successfully proposed a Study Group on Gender and Geography, which was recognized as a Commission in 1992. Jan has compiled and distributed a substantial newsletter—for over 18 years - for the Commission and serves as a hub for communication for the international mailing list. From its beginnings, then, Jan had been one of the driving forces and the leading figure of the Commission making sure that its activities are as inclusive and comprehensive as possible. She still edits the Commission's twice-yearly newsletter and attends most of the Commission's meeting around the world.

Jan's aspirations and leadership in establishing the IGU Gender Commission and her deep involvement in its current functioning have made it possible to connect several hundred people to the Commission's activities through its newsletter and other activities. It is another aspect of her rich and diversified efforts to reinforce diversity and cross-cultural, racial, ethnic and national boundaries in a variety of means and ways.

To conclude, Jan Monk's contribution to reinforcing diversity and collaboration in the field of human geography is illustrated in the promotion of gendered diversity and feminism in her academic work both inside the Anglo-American academic world and outside. This paper has emphasized how Jan's work on fostering diversity and collaboration has not only manifested itself in writing articles, editing books and producing a film, but also in the formulation of structures such as the Routledge book series and the initiation and establishment of the Commission of Gender and Geography of the International Geographical Union. No doubt, these diverse activities have contributed enormously to the production of collaborative feminist geographical knowledge which crosses cultures, races and ethnicities and have exposed the voices of feminism in various spaces and places.

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ABSTRACT TRANSLATION

Reafirmado Diversidad: Desde adentro y afuera

RESUMEN Éste papel enfoca en la contribución de Jan Monk a la reafirmación de la diversidad y colaboración en la geografía humana. A través de exponer las voces feministas de diferentes partes del mundo y haciéndose a ellas dominante en el trabajo colaborativo de Jan Monk, se ilustra cómo la diversidad de género y el feminismo se promueven en su trabajo académico adentro del mundo académico anglo-americano y también afuera. Promover y reafirmar la diversidad se han vuelto un cuerpo de conocimiento en sus publicaciones extensivos, en lo cual evalúa ella la extensión y la naturaleza de la geografía feminista en el mundo anglófono y a través de diferentes países, intentando a interpretar las diferencias

en términos de contextos geográficos y culturales y tendencias disciplinarias. Éste papel enfatiza cómo la promoción de diversidad y colaboración en el trabajo académico de Jan Monk no solo tienen que ver con escribiendo artículos, editando libros o la producción de una película, sino que entran en la formulación de estructuras organizacionales como el serie de libros de Routledge y la iniciación y el establecimiento de la Comisión de Género y Geografía de la Unión Geográfica Internacional, los cuales han contribuido a la producción del conocimiento feminista geográfica colaborativa que cruza espacios y lugares.

PALABRAS CLAVES: Feminismo; sexismo; diversidad; colaboración; hegemonía anglo-americana