

## **Introduction: Bridging gendered diversity in a globalizing world**

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On July 8–10, 2010, we were among fifty men and women from fourteen countries who assembled at the monastery of the Sisters of Zion in the village of Ein Karem, in Jerusalem, for a scholarly meeting of the International Geographical Union Commission of Gender and Geography. The papers offered in this special issue of *Hagar* were first presented and discussed during this three-day meeting and the main conference of the International Geographical Union in Tel Aviv that followed.

In organizing the sessions of this meeting, our main purpose was to provide geographers from different countries and cultures with an arena in which to introduce their emerging research related to the topic of “bridging gendered diversity in a globalizing world.” Our point of departure is that gender is a well known excuse for structuring hierarchical categorizations. Because gender is often fractured at its intersection with other components of identity, it is critically used to challenge the modern notion of universal participation. Thus, the sessions focused on concepts of diversity and multiculturalism, so as to refrain from the reduction of differences to mere demographic categories of analysis. Rather, we aimed to criticize the universal principles typical of modernity and uncover the processes of differential inclusion of national, social and cultural groups. The forty papers presented in these sessions related to such topics as: gendered borders and barriers; national, citizenship, ethnic, religious, class, age, gendered and sexual diversities; locations of diversity and diversified locations in a global world; and space, place, intersectionality and institutions and how they include/exclude gender.

At the end of each day, we held discussion groups. The beautiful and relaxing gardens of the Sisters of Zion Monastery offered a tranquility that facilitated such discussions, where participants could talk about and contemplate the issues raised earlier in the day. During the meetings in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, we also organized a few field trips. Most exciting were the Ein Karem neighborhood tour, which focused

on the local history of women, and the tour of the center of Tel Aviv, that portrayed the spatialized history of the city's LGBT community.

The editors of *Hagar*, who took part in the gathering in Ein Karem, invited us to serve as guest editors of a special issue of the journal that would highlight some of the themes raised and discussed in the meeting. Since the vast majority of papers presented challenging and interesting research, our choice was difficult and we were constrained by available space and deadlines. This volume, then, offers nine of the papers that impart new perspectives on issues relevant to feminist and gender geographies.

Apart from the articles described below, five books pertinent to gender geography are reviewed herein. Janice Monk discusses Dorothy Moss' *Gender, Space and Time: Women and Higher Education*, while Leah Shakdiel writes about *Women, Religion, and Space; Global Perspectives on Gender and Faith*, a volume edited by Karen M. Morin and Jeanne Kay Guelke. Efrat Eizenberg offers her impression of Edna Gorney's *Exploited and Protected: Ecofeminist Theory of Nature, Culture and Society in Israel*. The report by Inbal Wilamovski examines Teresa Gómez Reus and Aránzazu Usandizaga's *Inside Out: Women Negotiating, Subverting, Appropriating Public and Private Space*. And, finally, Chen Misgav reviews Phil Hubbard's book, *Cities and Sexualities*.

In the section of articles, Lynda Johnston and Robyn Longhurst write about "Mixed feelings: Migrant women's experiences of food, eating and home in Hamilton, Aotearoa New Zealand." Looking at the ways in which food, culture and home are paradoxical, they investigate the relationship between food, eating and home among a group of eleven migrant women from various countries, currently living in Hamilton, Aotearoa New Zealand. Interviews and cooking sessions with these women prompted mixed feelings in these migrant women, recognizing their new and old homes. The authors discuss the numerous ways food and cultural traditions are blended, and how these women often feel simultaneously included and excluded by the New Zealand host society. By focusing on the meaningful coproduction of feelings, emotions, food and eating for migrant women, Johnston and Longhurst pay theoretical attention to embodied, emotional and affective geographies, focusing on the connection between geography and migration studies.

In "Researching the urban reflexively: Feminist methodological issues," Elena Vacchelli offers a feminist research methodology and presents a critically reflexive approach for conducting geographical research with feminist activists in Milan. The article addresses embodied methodologies in geographical research and draws on reflexivity as a specifically feminist methodology for explaining relations among the "objects" of research. Focusing on Italian-Milanese feminism, Vacchelli claims that separatist practices and consciousness-raising have been a poignant example of using the body as a vector of knowledge. The materiality of research stems from inter-

corporeal embodied methodologies and is addressed by drawing on both methods and objects of research to mobilize knowledge.

Tovi Fenster, in her paper, “Bodies and places in Jerusalem: Gendered feelings and urban policies,” shows how women’s bodies are differently contextualized in various urban places, depending on the ethno-national or religious-cultural context. She points out how the contextualization of these different women’s bodies results in similar experiences of alienation, fear, discomfort and disbelonging. This bodily contextualization is usually supported by urban policies that perpetuate situations of physical degradation or religious restrictions and, in doing so, bring patriarchal norms back to public life. Women usually react either by avoidance of these locations or by their temporary appropriation. Fenster claims that if these feelings—as local knowledge—would be taken more seriously, our cities could become better places for all.

Two articles in this volume shed light on the feminist-spatial perspectives of work and its relation to women, identity and place, particularly in rural Europe. In the first, Joos Droogleever Fortuijn and Frans Thissen analyze changes in the civic engagement and paid work of women in the northern Netherlands. Inspired by Robert Putnam’s (1995) argument about the decline in civic engagement in the United States, their paper “The changing relationship between civic engagement and paid work of women in a rural area in the Netherlands, 1993–2007” shows the links between the dramatic rise in women’s labor force participation and their decreased engagement in civic life in their rural communities. The negative impact of women’s paid work on their civic activities is in accordance with Putnam’s time availability hypothesis (1995).

In the second such piece, “Women’s ventures in a rural context: Livelihood and identity,” Mònica Carbó, Mireia Baylina and Maria Dolors Garcia-Ramon take us to a rural area in Catalonia (Spain) where social and economic crises have eroded traditional structures of agriculture communities and caused many to out-migrate or look for alternative ways to support themselves. The study focuses on the complex motivation of women of different ages who initiated vital business ventures. In addition to their need for economic resources, symbolic and ideological components that reinforce rural identity and attachment to their place are found to be important incentives. However, their determination, as well as their economic success, is largely shaped by their gender identity.

The home space and the domestic arena are the pivot of two additional papers. Robyn Longhurst’s research, “Stretching mothering: Gender, space and information communication technologies,” reports on the use that New Zealand mothers make of ICTs. Longhurst elaborates on the emotional links of mothers with their children and identifies how the gendered spaces of mothering are now being stretched beyond the home space. Cell phones, Skype, Facebook and email were among the most common

ICTs mothers recognized as impacting the relationship with their children, those living at home and those living elsewhere.

In “‘The little kingdom over which God made you queen’: The gendered reorganization of a ‘modern’ Arab home in turn-of-the-century Beirut,” Sharon Halevi and Fruma Zachs take us to a different time and place. They examine the spatial implementation of an emerging modern Arab discourse of domesticity in the nineteenth-century bourgeoisie homes of Beirut. The authors pay close attention to the emerging contours of the home, the rearrangement and decorations of rooms, the introduction of new consumer items and the resulting psychological impact of these changes on the residents of these modernized homes. At the same time, they discuss the role of wives and mothers, who are in charge of this process of reorganizing the home.

The meaning of home and domesticity is also illuminated in the closing and opening items of the section of articles. This special issue opens with Orna Blumen, Tovi Fenster and Chen Misgav considering “The body within home and domesticity: Gendered diversity,” where they review and discuss some recent developments in research on home and domesticity, focusing on the self and the body from gendered and feminist perspectives so as to provide a conceptual overview for most of the studies included in this volume. The final piece that closes this section is a research observation by Keichi Kumagai, who draws our attention to recent changes in Japanese masculinity and its diversification. In “Floating young men: Globalization and the crisis of masculinity in Japan,” the author shows how economic changes have undermined the breadwinner role as the prime source of masculinity and how this has yielded changes in home as a concept of multiple layers, from the place of individual dwelling to the territory of the entire nation.