



Book review: *Handbuch Feministische Geographien. Arbeitsweisen und Konzepte*

Marina Richter

HES-SO Valais/Wallis, Sierre, Switzerland

Correspondence: Marina Richter (marina.richter@hevs.ch)

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In recent years, German-speaking feminist geographers have written and published several introductory books and a large body of articles in German, as well as in international journals. Feminist geographers have not only published widely and influenced important debates such as on labour geographies, environmental questions, methodologies, or pedagogical issues, but they have also increasingly achieved stable positions as professors in German-speaking academia. At the same time, there still remains a need to explain what feminist geographies are about and what it means, as an academic but also personally, to be a feminist. In comparison to other books such as *Gender Geographien* (Wastl-Walter, 2010) or *Geschlechterverhältnisse, Raumstrukturen, Ortsbeziehungen* (Bauriedl et al., 2009), this is precisely where this book contributes to the existing textbooks. It not only introduces current theories and topics of feminist geographies, but it also discusses ways of being a feminist geographer and the implications of conducting feminist geography.

In contrast to other existing books in German on feminist geographies, this book is authored by a collective. The authoring collective formed as a network with financial support from the German Research Foundation (DFG) focusing on “feminist geographies of the new materialism”. Out of these meetings and debates has arisen the idea of writing an introduction or overview of current feminist research in geography. The collective stands as editor and signs every chapter in addition to the main responsible authors. The collective authorship and the particular context and process of writing represent a guiding principle throughout the whole book. It does not represent a mere collection of individual contributions; rather, it is a work co-conceived and co-written by a

collective – and as the authors explain, this is part and parcel of feminist geographies. In line with this reasoning, the book is structured in two parts, each consisting of five chapters. The first concentrates on feminist practices and politics (*Arbeitsweisen*), while the second includes contributions on theories and topics (*Konzepte*) of feminist research. This double structure makes it clear that feminism and feminist geographies are not only about theories and research; feminism is also always a way of doing, a practice and politics that inspires teaching, working, and researching.

The first part starts with a history of feminist geographies in German-speaking academia (Sybille Bauriedl and Eva Kuschinki). It shows how feminist geographers began after a first meeting in 1988 to organize regular meetings and communicate via a newsletter across the three German-speaking countries (Austria, Germany, and Switzerland). The organization in networks or collectives on different levels from students to researchers represents a continuum throughout this short history. At the same time current debates on intersectionality question the inclusiveness of feminist geography as research and in political struggles, pointing to a blindness towards queer people or people of colour. A conversation between three geographers collects different personal statements about the individual paths to feminist geographies, how feminist geographies inspire, and how these paths are often framed by collective experiences in working groups, student meetings, or other venues (Linda Pasch, Anne Vogelpohl, and Leon Witzel). While feminist research is often portrayed as adhering to ethics towards their research participants, a third contribution discusses ethical considerations towards the researchers themselves (Karin Schwiter and Alex Vorbrugg). Slow scholarship provides the framework for an analysis of toxic working environments and possible strategies for a more caring working environment. This is followed by thoughts on the ethics of conducting

field research (Alexander Vorbrugg, Sarah Klosterkamp, and Vanessa E. Thompson). The positionality of researcher and research participants points toward power asymmetries. Finally, feminist geographies are also increasingly taught at universities, which also implies considerations for teaching and learning (Verena Schreiber and Inken Carstensen-Egwuom). The last contribution in this section argues for respectful and collaborative spaces for teaching and learning. Through the contributions of this first part, the authors offer a critical perspective on contexts, concerns, and struggles of feminist geographers.

In the second part, the authors provide insights into selected current theories and research fields for feminist geographies. They start with feminist geographies of labour (Nina Fraeser, Nina Schuster, and Anne Vogelpohl). The text debates the spatial separation of working and living and its gendered implications or the globalization of gendered work and inequality. A second topic outlined also takes up a traditional field of feminist research and critic: the powerful nexus between nature and gender (Sybille Bauriedl and Birgit Hoinle). New materialism is presented as a theory to inspire research and activism on environmental issues and global environmental inequality. The importance of the body and its materiality represents another major feminist contribution to research (Anke Strüver and Nadine Marquardt). The authors outline important theoretical debates on the body as a topic of research and make the link to current debates on new materialism. The contribution to feminist studies of technoscience starts with Donna Haraway's notion of the cyborg (Elisabeth Militz, Iris Dzudzek, and Carolin Schurr). It shows how this notion has not only inspired feminist geographers working with qualitative methods, but it has also been used to further the usage of GIS. The section closes with a chapter on emotions and affect (Jan Hutta, Sarah Klosterkamp, Sunčana Laketa, and Nadine Marquardt). Different spaces such as the home and the everyday, nation and nationalism, and feminist geopolitics, as well as emotional and affective work, are outlined as examples of feminist research on emotions and affect. The selected insights into theories and topics serve as a showcase for current developments in feminist geographical research.

Instead of a concluding chapter, the book closes with a variety of answers from the different authors to a set of questions. Just to name one: "what are for you moments that represent fruitful collective work in academia or at the border between academia and political work?" (my own translation). The varied answers provide inspiration, as they are not consolidated but rather represent the collective as a kaleidoscope of personalities who have altogether shaped the book.

Is the book an introduction, or is it rather an overview, or what is the intention of the collective? As they state, the book is aimed at readers from students and teachers to researchers, as well as to professionals. In general, it is aimed at everyone interested in feminist approaches. It serves both the objective of an overview as well as an introduction, as it presents

theories, approaches, and topics in a condensed way while always providing examples and literature for further reading. It serves perfectly as a course book for teachers and students. The chapters cover many important topics in feminist geographic research in a condensed way. At the same time, they also provide further reading, many examples from research, and exercises to be used for self-study or for teaching.

For an experienced researcher in the specific topics, it will not provide substantially novel aspects, but it represents a collective piece that documents feminist working contexts in groups, collectives, and networks and brings together many of the most important current feminist geographers in German-speaking academia. It is also worth reading for the historical and personal accounts of how feminist geography has developed in German-speaking countries. It represents a testimony of feminist geographies and of the authors in the collective. Reading about how they made their path and how they struggle with not only conducting ethical research but also leading a healthy or slow professional life themselves provides inspiration for considerations of one's own everyday working situations.

As the book was written by members of the DFG network, the topics and theories addressed reflect the research interests of these authors. This means that other topics and theoretical perspectives are missing. At the same time, this also opens the field for further books, leaving loose ends and stories untold for others to continue the work.

Overall, it is an inspiring book that also serves as an example of the feminist phrase "the personal is political". It makes clear that research and the act of researching is political as well as personal and that researchers have scientific as well as political interests that drive them. At the same time, being a feminist researcher is also a personal engagement, and the debates on how to conduct good research, for and with the research participants but also for oneself, constitute an important statement in times of increased quantification, competitiveness, and precarious working conditions in academia.

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