

## 21 SPACES AND FLOWS

Janice Monk

Searching for a geographic metaphor that would capture four decades of research, writing, and professional engagement in geography, I settled on 'braided streams'. This fluvial form is characterized by divergent and convergent channels, mostly occurring 'where there are almost no lateral confining banks' (Fairbridge, 1968: 90).<sup>1</sup> Two channels account for the greatest volume of my work – feminist studies and geographic education, primarily as it is related to higher education, though the two often intersect. But others are evident and also overlap with these, including research related to racial/ethnic minorities in white dominant societies and on change in rural communities.

Reflecting movements and encounters in my life course, I have been stimulated to write about Australia, the Caribbean, the European Union, the southwestern United States, and the United States–Mexico border region. My writing in English has been published in Australia, Britain, Canada, the Caribbean, New Zealand, and the United States and appeared in Catalan, Chinese, German, Italian, Japanese, and Spanish.<sup>2</sup> I have conducted field surveys and observations, archival research, oral histories, and textual interpretations. Editorial commitments have also been a major part of my work. Professional connections and related friendships have led to short-term appointments and periods as a visiting scholar or consultant in Australia, Canada, India, Israel, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Spain, and Switzerland. I have held appointments in departments of geography and in an

interdisciplinary institute in women's studies and been very active in professional organizations. Across these various sites of endeavor, I see convergences and continuities in my motivations including a consistent concern with social equity, with action as well as research, and with responsiveness to the people and places with which I have been associated. Crossing disciplinary boundaries, working within and to change institutions, and valuing international ties are pervasive in my practice. Others may not see my work as I portray it here and I hope my comments do not appear too self-serving. This account is from the perspective of hindsight and also from one that reflects ideals that I might not have been able to articulate at the time work was undertaken. To a considerable extent, the directions emerged, rather than being planned.

### Places, People, and Ways of Knowing

I have often looked to other disciplines, while retaining a deeply rooted geographical commitment to recognizing the importance and specificities of place.<sup>3</sup> My doctoral dissertation on differences among Aboriginal communities in New South Wales exemplifies this position (Monk, 1974). When I approached this topic in the mid 1960s, the boundaries of Australian geography largely excluded Aborigines. Interest was increasingly focused on testing spatial theories developed elsewhere. Neither was there much international

interest in geography in minority populations or questions of 'race'. My choice arose from personal experience, not from the literature. Shortly after earning my BA I had worked as a volunteer constructing homes for Aboriginal families in a small town in New South Wales. The project was organized by a church group, with young white men and women (mostly recent graduates and professionals) providing labor, and the state government paying for materials as part of its policy to 'assimilate' Aborigines by moving them into town from reserves on the fringes of white communities. The project raised many questions for me, both ethical and geographical. Almost a decade later, formulating a research topic as a graduate student in the United States during the era of the 1960s Civil Rights Movement, I turned to questions of social and economic relations between Aboriginal and white communities in New South Wales.

Seeking insights, I looked beyond geography to the obvious site of Australian anthropology, but it did not offer work that spoke to my geographical sensibilities. Drawing on traditions of British social anthropology, it presented participant-observational studies of single communities, and interpreted them in relation to the persistence of 'traditional' cultural ways or in terms of the psychology of their being closed, institutional communities. I found more useful the ideas of some anthropologists and sociologists in the United States who brought ecological and material perspectives to the study of cultural change and of race relations. While planning my research I encountered Charles Rowley, a political scientist directing a large-scale project on the history and current conditions of Aborigines for the Social Science Research Council of Australia (Rowley, 1970a; 1970b; 1970c); these studies were associated with subsequent major changes in national policies. He was sympathetic to my interests in material relations, and ultimately incorporated my work in his book *Outcasts in White Australia*.

My dissertation illustrates movement outside the channels that were common in geography at the time, while representing one that has persisted in my work – drawing on personal experience to prompt examination of links between public policies and individuals' experiences of them. Another example is my study of the residential patterns and social networks of Asian professional immigrants to Sydney in the 1970s (Monk, 1983), again at a time when the discipline was not especially addressing issues of race and immigration. The choice undoubtedly reflected the confluence of my experiences of growing up in a society where the 'White Australia' policy was still under debate, where a relatively homogeneous Anglo-Celtic majority population was beginning to change with the substantial influx of immigrants of diverse national origins, and my own situation of living as a foreign student and immigrant junior faculty member in the multi-racial/ethnic society of the United States. My subsequent work in the Caribbean was initiated when Charles Alexander and I were assigned to teach a summer field class in Puerto Rico for the University of Illinois. What we saw in the landscape prompted us to ask questions about the impact of changing development policies on rural communities. A physical geographer who had earlier studied cultural historical geography on Margarita Island, Venezuela, he was open to collaboration and to multiple ways of knowing. We integrated survey interview methods, of which I had experience, his expertise in making field observations, his rusty and my beginning Spanish (Monk and Alexander, 1979; 1985). The Puerto Rican research also yielded my first feminist writing, prompted by the strengthening women's movement in society in the 1970s and its impact on academic work across disciplines. We studied the intersections of gender, class, and migration in Puerto Rico and later on Margarita Island (Monk, 1981; Monk and Alexander, 1986).

In the late 1970s, another set of encounters directed my work into new channels, but ones that were compatible with my earlier work on people outside the centers of power. The feminist movement prompted scholars to see more clearly how research and teaching reflected social, cultural, and political values and gender-based inequalities. For feminists in geography, this led to organizing paper sessions, networking and support activities at conferences, developing new courses and teaching materials, and directing new research to women's and gender issues. Bonnie Loyd and Arlene Rengert, learning of funding opportunities under the Women's Educational Equity Act (WEEA) in the United States, approached me about collaborating to write a proposal to support the development and pilot testing of curriculum modules that would introduce feminist content into introductory human geography courses. We submitted a successful request under the auspices of the Association of American Geographers, thus giving professional sanction and recognition to feminist concerns. The result was a booklet of student and instructor materials titled *Women and Spatial Change* (Rengert and Monk, 1982). Bonnie and Arlene also coordinated a special issue of the *Journal of Geography* on 'Women in Geographic Curricula' to which I contributed an analysis of gender biases in the language and roles represented in published simulation games in the discipline (Monk, 1978a). These pieces were intended both to critique existing practices and to advocate a more inclusive human geography. The same goals served as the impetus for a paper with Susan Hanson (Monk and Hanson, 1982) that addressed gender biases in prevailing theories, methods and purposes of geographic research. Since that time, efforts directed towards feminist-inspired curriculum change have been a dominant stream in my work, cutting across disciplines and embracing attention to minority groups and cross-cultural perspectives as well as having a

gender focus (e.g. Monk, 1988; 2000; Monk et al., 2000; Lay et al., 2002).

### Changing Institutions

In two senses, changing institutions has been a critical part of my professional work. From one perspective, my involvement in educational projects has meant linking research and action to attempt innovation in teaching in higher education. From another, changing the place of my employment from a geography department to a regionally oriented institute in women's studies has markedly influenced my opportunities and obligations.

The educational work began almost by chance when researchers in the Office of Instructional Resources (OIR) at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign approached the Geography Department seeking collaborators for an applied research project that would experiment with alternative approaches to improving assessment of student learning. I was close to finishing my dissertation and the department asked me to take a grant-funded junior faculty appointment, teaching an honors class in physical geography and collaborating in the research. Next, OIR sought further collaboration in efforts to evaluate courses and teaching; this work extended my association. Both assignments required learning new literatures, creating new approaches in the classroom, supervising graduate teaching assistants, and co-authoring publications (e.g. Monk, 1971; Monk and Stallings, 1975; Monk and Alexander, 1973; 1975). They also meant engagement with experimental research designs, quantitative and qualitative methods, illustrating their strengths, limitations, and complementarity. The experience enhanced my awareness of the value of accepting multiple ways of knowing.

Around this time, the Association of American Geographers (AAG), which was engaging in an array of projects to improve

college geography, obtained funding from the National Science Foundation to address the preparation of doctoral students for their teaching roles. With my newly acquired expertise and my department's interest in being part of a national project, I took on being the local project director in this multi-university program (Monk, 1978b). It fueled my interest in and commitment to changing practices in higher education through faculty and curriculum development, connected me to a national (and subsequently international) network, and initiated me into participating in large-scale multiperson and multi-institutional projects.

My diverse experiences at this early career stage and my feminist commitments stood me in good stead when I was forced to find a new position at a time when the academic job market in geography was poor. I moved to the University of Arizona to become Associate (subsequently Executive) Director of the Southwest Institute for Research on Women (SIROW). SIROW conducts interinstitutional, interdisciplinary research, educational, and outreach programs focusing on the regional diversity of women or of interest to scholars in the region it serves. My place-sensitive orientations as a geographer, my experiences in multiperson and multifunded projects that crossed disciplinary boundaries, and my engagement with feminist scholarship positioned me well for the new work. But the move also inhibited continuation of personal, field-based research of the type I had carried out in Australia and the Caribbean. I substituted more text-based projects, review essays, and editorial endeavors.

Over two decades at SIROW, I have engaged with colleagues and community organizations concerned with women's health, economic situation, education (especially in science, mathematics, and engineering), and cultural expressions. In some projects my role has mainly been to co-author grant proposals, administer the work, and see that it is disseminated. In others, I have taken a lead.

The most sustained effort brought together my geographic interests in the meaning of place with feminist commitments, resulting in the book *The Desert Is No Lady: Southwestern Landscapes in Women's Writing and Art* (Norwood and Monk, 1997) and a film inspired by the book. Vera Norwood, a scholar in American studies at the University of New Mexico, and I put together a team of researchers in literature, anthropology, and art history to explore how Mexican American, American Indian, and Anglo-American women over a century had connected their senses of identity and place and expressed these in their creative work. Our interpretations contrasted with studies of the writing by white men which had dominated scholarship on the Southwest. They were identified with representations of the land as a virgin to be conquered, as a nurturing mother, as a place for development or conversely a wilderness to protect. We saw the women's work as focused on drawing energy from the land and celebrating its wildness and sensuality. We explored how women's representations were inflected by historical contexts, ethnic and cultural differences, and specific geographies. This project took me into new methodological terrain and prompted further writing related to gender and landscape (e.g. Monk, 1992; Norwood and Monk, 1997) as well as collaboration in film making with British colleagues (Williams, 1995). Though my commitments in that endeavor were largely for fundraising and consulting, the project highlighted how greatly representations can be manipulated through editorial processes, and heightened my awareness of the many-faceted aspects of whose voices are represented in research.

### Valuing the International

The final stream I would like to discuss involves convergence of the various channels. Starting in the 1980s, I began to look for

ways to link what we might now term 'the local' and 'the global' while bringing together feminism, educational efforts, and professional networks. I initiated a series of faculty and professional development programs at SIROW to introduce feminist work into internationally oriented courses across disciplines and international perspectives into women's studies. These programs resulted in a number of consultancies and co-editing of collections to disseminate approaches to linking teaching in women's studies and international studies (Monk et al., 1991; Lay et al., 2002). Since the mid 1990s, this direction has involved collaboration with Mexican colleagues in promoting research, faculty development, and community outreach on the theme of gender and health at the Mexico-US border. Though collaborative work has long been part of my professional life, this cross-border project has been especially informed by feminist thinking that has addressed such questions as who sets the agenda for and benefits from research, and what are the ways in which research and action might be respectfully linked. We have developed approaches to sharing decision-making and resources equitably, and have reflected on the relationships among researchers and those working in community agencies (Monk et al., 2002).

Within geography, I have worked since the 1980s with like-minded colleagues to foster gender scholarship within the International Geographical Union and feminist geography more generally. An important motive has been not only to enhance the visibility of feminist scholarship in geography, but to try to promote perspectives that value visions and voices outside the dominant US and British realms. It led me to co-edit the book series *International Studies of Women and Place* with Janet Momsen, to co-edit two books that include contributors from multiple countries (Katz and Monk, 1993; García-Ramon and Monk, 1996), to write

on comparative perspectives in feminist geography (Monk, 1994), to visit and consult in universities in several countries, and to be an active participant in the IGU Commission on Gender and Geography, editing its newsletter since 1988. Whenever I can, I cite work by scholars outside the hegemonic regions and draw attention to issues involved in working across national boundaries in geographic education (Monk, 1997; Shepherd et al., 2000; García-Ramon and Monk, 1997), and promote teaching that attends to human diversity in the US and beyond (Monk, 2000; Monk et al., 2000). These perspectives also informed the directions I took when I had the privilege of serving as President of the AAG in 2001-2, and invited the women presidents of four geographical associations (Australian, Californian, Canadian and Catalan) to speak at the Presidential Plenary at the Annual Meeting on the theme 'Points of View, Sites for Action', also initiating a reception to welcome the many geographers from outside the US who attend AAG meetings.

Looking back, I see my commitments as in some ways reflecting having been on the margins geographically and professionally – an expatriate Australian feminist, a woman who grew up in the 1950s when women did not expect to pursue academic careers – but also as an immigrant who has now lived for almost 20 years near the border of the United States and Mexico, and who is employed in an interdisciplinary feminist institute. These circumstances have contributed to the positionality of my work. The braided streams, while flowing relatively unconstrained by 'lateral banks,' have nonetheless sustained a commitment to a life in geography and a desire to bring my values to its course.

#### NOTES

- 1 Other tempting choices which some might apply to me include 'misfit stream' and 'erratics',

but I hope not 'deranged drainage', 'rubble drift', or 'planetary wobbles'.

- 2 Colleagues have undertaken the translations.
- 3 This account of my dissertation research is adapted from Janice Monk and Ruth Liepins

(2000). I appreciate the permission of my co-author and the journal publisher to draw on it.

#### References

- Fairbridge, R.W. (1968) 'Braided streams', in R. W. Fairbridge (ed.), *The Encyclopaedia of Geomorphology*. New York: Reinhold, pp. 90-3.
- García-Ramon, M.D. and Monk, J.J. (eds) (1996) *Women of the European Union: The Politics of Work and Daily Life*. London and New York: Routledge.
- García-Ramon, M.D. and Monk, J.J. (1997) 'Infrequent flying: international dialogue in geography in higher education', *Journal of Geography in Higher Education*, 21: 141-5.
- Katz, C. and Monk, J.J. (eds) (1993) *Full Circles: Geographies of Women over the Life Course*. London: Routledge.
- Lay, M.M., Monk, J.J. and Rosenfelt, D.S. (eds) (2002) *Encompassing Gender: Integrating International Studies and Women's Studies*. New York: Feminist Press.
- Monk, J. (1971) 'Preparing tests to measure course objectives', *Journal of Geography*, 70: 157-62.
- Monk, J. (1974) 'Australian aboriginal social and economic life: some community differences and their causes', in L.J. Evenden and F.F. Cunningham (eds), *Cultural Discord in the Modern World*. Vancouver: Tantalus, pp. 157-74.
- Monk, J. (1978a) 'Women in geographical games', *Journal of Geography*, 77: 190-1.
- Monk, J. (1978b) 'Preparation for teaching in a research degree', *Journal of Geography in Higher Education*, 2: 85-92.
- Monk, J. (1981) 'Social change and sexual differences in Puerto Rican rural migration', in O. Horst (ed.), *Papers in Latin American Geography in Honor of Lucia Harrison*. Muncie, IN: CLAG, pp. 29-43.
- Monk, J. (1983) 'Asian professionals as immigrants: the Indians in Sydney', *Journal of Cultural Geography*, 4: 1-16.
- Monk, J. (1988) 'Engendering a new geographic vision', in J. Fien and R. Gerber (eds), *Teaching Geography for a Better World*. Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, pp. 91-103.
- Monk, J. (1992) 'Gender in the landscape: expressions of power and meaning', in K. Anderson and F. Gale (eds), *Inventing Places: Studies in Cultural Geography*. Melbourne: Longmans/Cheshire, pp. 123-38.
- Monk, J. (1994) 'Place matters: comparative international perspectives on feminist geography', *Professional Geographer*, 46: 277-88.
- Monk, J. (1997) 'Marginal notes on representations', in H.J. Nast, J.P. Jones III and S.M. Roberts (eds), *Thresholds in Feminist Geography: Difference, Methodology, and Representation*. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, pp. 241-53.
- Monk, J. (2000) 'Finding a way: a road map for teaching about gender in geography' in *Learning Activities in Geography for Grades 7-11*. Finding a Way: A Project of the National Council for Geographic Education. Indiana, PA: National Council for Geographic Education.

- Monk, J.J. and Alexander, C.S. (1973) 'Developing skills in a physical geography laboratory', *Journal of Geography*, 72: 18–24.
- Monk, J.J. and Alexander, C.S. (1975) 'Interaction between man and environment: an experimental college course', *Journal of Geography*, 74: 212–22.
- Monk, J.J. and Alexander, C.S. (1979) 'Modernization and rural population movements: western Puerto Rico', *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs*, 21: 523–50.
- Monk, J.J. and Alexander, C.S. (1985) 'Land abandonment in western Puerto Rico', *Caribbean Geography*, 2: 1–15.
- Monk, J.J. and Alexander, C.S. (1986) 'Free port fallout: gender, employment, and migration, Margarita Island', *Annals of Tourism Research*, 13: 393–414.
- Monk, J.J. and Hanson, S. (1982) 'On not excluding half of the human in human geography', *Professional Geographer*, 34: 11–23.
- Monk, J. and Liepins, R. (2000) 'Writing on/across the margins', *Australian Geographical Studies*, 38: 344–51.
- Monk, J.J. and Stallings, W.M. (1975) 'Classroom tests and achievement in problem solving in physical geography', *Journal of Research in Science Teaching*, 12: 133–8.
- Monk, J.J., Betteridge, A. and Newhall, A.W. (eds) (1991) 'Reaching for Global Feminism: Approaches to Curriculum Change in the Southwestern United States', collection, *Women's Studies International Forum*, 14: 239–379.
- Monk, J.J., Sanders, R., Smith, P.K., Tuason, J. and Wridt, P. (2000) 'Finding A Way (FAW): a program to enhance gender equity in the K-12 classroom', *Women's Studies Quarterly*, 28: 177–81.
- Monk, J.J., Manning, P. and Denman, C. (2002) 'Working together: feminist perspectives on collaborative research and action', *ACME: An International E-Journal for Critical Geographies*, 2(1): 91–106.
- Norwood, V. and Monk, J. (1997) *The Desert Is No Lady: Southwestern Landscapes in Women's Writing and Art* (1st edn 1987). New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Rengert, A. and Monk, J. (1982) *Women and Spatial Change*. Dubuque, IA: Kendall/Hunt.
- Rowley, C.D. (1970a) *The Destruction of Aboriginal Society: Aboriginal Policy and Practice*. Canberra: Australian National University Press.
- Rowley, C.D. (1970b) *The Remote Aborigines*. Canberra: Australian National University Press.
- Rowley, C.D. (1970c) *Outcasts in White Australia*. Canberra: Australian National University Press.
- Shepherd, I.D., Monk, J.J. and Fortuijn, J.D. (2000) 'Internationalizing geography in higher education', *Journal of Geography in Higher Education*, 24: 163–77.
- Williams, S. (1995) *The Desert Is No Lady*, video recording. London: Arts Council of England.

## Part 3 Practices

This part explores the relationships between theory and methodology/methods. Rather than providing a 'how to do guide', these chapters focus on explaining the links between research designs, the development of particular methods and different philosophical approaches to knowledge (for example, what constitutes data or evidence).

In Chapter 22 Stewart Fotheringham makes the case for quantitative methods, arguing that they are important because they provide strong evidence on the nature of spatial processes – much stronger, he claims, than can be produced by other methods. He shows how quantitative methods have their roots in positivistic philosophies, but points out that 'positivism' and 'quantification' are not synonymous even though many people use them interchangeably. For example, he argues that whereas the goal of a positivist would be to uncover the truth about reality in the form of absolute laws, quantitative geographers recognize that it is rare to find such absolutism. Rather, geographers use quantitative methods to build up sufficient evidence on which to make judgements about reality. Fotheringham particularly stresses the role of quantitative methods as a bridge between human and physical geographers, providing them with a language to talk to each other and the basis for joint research. He concludes his chapter by outlining a defence for quantitative methods against some of the common criticisms levelled at them.

In the following chapter Mike Goodchild (Chapter 23) presents a brief history of the introduction of GIS into geographic research. He then outlines two perspectives. The first, widely held among researchers working with GIS, is that the technology is value-neutral, and that its users reflect a wide range of approaches, from the strongly positivist stance of researchers in physical geography and some areas of human geography, to the more human-centric stance of those working in such areas as public participation GIS and critical social theory. The second perspective, which stems from the strong critique of GIS which emerged in the early 1990s, is that GIS is inherently value-laden. Goodchild goes on to trace this tension between these two positions, and to explore efforts at reconciliation and accommodation. Like Fotheringham (Chapter 22), who recognizes the limits of rationality in positivistic approaches and the need to develop quantitative methods to model irrational human behaviour, Goodchild reflects on uncertainty and scientific norms as examples of methodological issues that still surround the use of GIS.

Rather than understanding knowledge as an object to be achieved, tested and verified by an impartial observer, Paul Rodaway's chapter on people-centred methods (Chapter 24) is concerned with how geographers who understand knowledge to be subjective, partial and emergent have developed methodologies to explore the individual relationships that people have with the worlds that they inhabit. Here, he identifies how humanistic geographers such