

**CONNECTING PEOPLE, PLACES, AND IDEAS:
REFLECTIONS ON THE HISTORY OF THE INTERNATIONAL
GEOGRAPHICAL UNION COMMISSION ON GENDER AND GEOGRAPHY**

**Janice Monk
Department of Geography and Regional Development
University of Arizona
Tucson AZ USA 85721**

Challenging practices and creating institutions

Innovations in knowledge and the creation and support for scholarly communities do not exist without the inspiration, research, and leadership of a dedicated group of scholars. In this reflection on the development and efforts of the Commission on Gender and Geography within the International Geographical Union (IGU), I offer a personal account of the Commission's origins and its subsequent work in fostering and disseminating scholarship that has challenged traditions and practices in the discipline of geography which had long represented primarily the experiences, visions, and leadership of male geographers. I begin by reviewing the emergence of gender-related work within the IGU, then report on its development and subsequent work from the 1980s to 2007.¹

Women have been present at IGU Congresses since the first was held in 1871, but for decades, most attended as relatives of the men delegates, not as academic participants. Social events designated for "ladies" were being offered as late as 1956 and perhaps beyond. In some cases, professional women geographers were given the responsibility of organizing these events. A handful of women were singled out for their professional attainments, notably the Belgian geographer, Marguerite Lefevre, who became First Vice President from 1949-1952 (Robic *et al.*, 1996).

The first scholarly events related to gender that I have been able to identify within the IGU took place in 1981 and 1982, the former being seven papers on women offered at a meeting of the IGU Commission on Rural Development held at California State University, Fresno. The goals were to demonstrate new feminist awareness to the "mainstream." Five of the papers were given by US scholars (one by daughter and father team, Judy and Daniel Dworkin), one by Janet Momsen, then in England, who has played a sustained role in the Commission, and one by a Mexican man. The 1982 program was much more substantial. Organized by the Italian geographer, Maria Luisa Gentileschi in Cagliari, Sardinia, under the auspices of the Commission on Population Geography, it involved significant European and non-European participation (from Asia, South America, the US and Australia) with papers on women/gender and migration. Funds were not sufficient to support publication of a single volume, but papers were divided into three groups, those focused on Sardinia, those that dealt with other areas of Italy and Europe, and those that were non-European. They were published in Italian in *Archivio*

Sardo (17/19, 1983) and *Studi Emigrazione*, and in English in the Indian journal, *Population Geography* as well as in other outlets (M.L. Gentileschi to J. Monk, email December 28, 2005). The common lack of reference to this program raises several questions. This substantial pioneering event has received little notice in often-cited histories of the development of feminist/gender geography, however, perhaps because the papers were not published in well-known Anglo-American journals where other themes, such as women and work attracted much of the feminist early attention.

By the 1984 International Geographical Congress in Paris, interest in the developing an international network of feminist/gender geographers emerged. An informal meeting and its outcomes are worth reporting as an episode in international organizing and thinking about priorities. I do not recall just who proposed calling the meeting of geographers working on women and gender. The Congress program had only two related papers, one by Janet Momsen (UK) who has played a sustained role in the Commission, on the role of rural women in developing countries, and one by S. Jayachandran (India) on maternal and child health care in rural Tamil Nadu (Robic *et al.*, 1996). But it fell to me to contact the French organizers to ask for time and space for an exploratory meeting. I made the request and was informed of the day, but not of the time or room. The Congress organizers reported they had not assigned the room or hour because they didn't recognize my university letterhead as representing an "official group." The session was not listed in the program timetable, but to make sure it was visible, I had taken to Paris sixty notices in English and French announcing the session, some tape so the signs could be posted in the hallways, and a marking pen to fill in the details of time and room which I arranged once at the Congress. We arrived at the room to find it locked. It was hardly an auspicious start. But we got it opened, some fifty people from an array of countries attended, and French translations were facilitated by Anne Buttimer, later to become IGU President. The decision from the meeting was that it was not yet time to propose a separate Commission on gender, rather that we should work through existing groups but create a mailing list for communication. That list formed an important basis for later work. Though the experience was in some ways reflective of difficulties encountered in smooth running of the 1984 Congress, it is a reminder of the challenges of trying to gain voice, and of the importance of thinking about when is the right time to adopt a strategy of independence or of working within the existing structures.

The 1986 Regional IGU Congress held in Barcelona highlights the importance of people in places. Maria Dolors García Ramon, who had attended the Paris session, was involved with the overall meeting organization. She had a history of international activity and had published a review article in *Documents d'Anàlisi Geogràfica* (1985) on the British Women and Geography Study Group book, *Gender and Geography*. She had standing in the local and national geographic community. Her position made it possible to set aside a half-day for a gender session, partly of papers, partly a round table for reports on the state of feminist/gender geography in different countries. With the local support of Gemma Canoves, then a doctoral student in Geography at the Autonomous University of Barcelona, and drawing on the list from the Paris meeting, plus other contacts, we assembled an array of speakers for a well-attended and received session, followed by a

lunch that allowed people to become better acquainted, an important part of the event. Then in December, 1987, Maria Dolors García Ramon with Gemma Canoves and Montserrat Solsona, who were working on their PhDs and teaching in the Department, organized one of the many international seminars that have been held at the Autonomous University of Barcelona. Presentations on rural women were given by French sociologist, Martine Berlan, Janet Momsen (employed in the UK, but with a history of work in Canada and the Caribbean), Maria Dolors García Ramon (who had studied in the US as well as Spain), and Janice Monk (who began her career in Australia and subsequently conducted research in Caribbean and was employed in the US). That meeting reveals strategies that have been important in furthering gender studies within a particular university that has international orientations. First, was the focus on rural women that built on the tradition of rural studies in Catalan geography; second was the leadership of Maria Dolors García Ramon, by then a professor catedrática, the highest rank in the system; third this was a context where there were a) other women professors in the department (see García Ramon *et al.*, 1988), b) other members of staff who had international scholarly connections, c) opportunities for government funding, and d) the strategy of engaging young graduate student researchers in program building. The seminar also provided time for informal discussions among established women geographers about proposing formation of a gender study group within the IGU. This background also suggests the importance of having experience and connections in organizations and networks for developing institutional support for feminist work. It contrasts with the situation Elisabeth Buehler and Karen Baechli (2007) have described for the promotion of work on gender by German geographers, where, with few women professors, organizing has depended heavily on students who have lacked resources or academic security.

Within a month of the seminar, conversations among feminist geographers from several countries who were attending annual conference of the Institute of British Geographers prompted follow-up actions. A letter, signed by approximately 30 people, was written to the Secretary General of the IGU requesting formal recognition for a gender group. Informal connections were important in furthering the discussions and lobbying for support, especially through Janet Momsen's prior ties with IGU leadership through her participation in previous conferences. The outcome was the approval by the IGU Executive Committee at the 1988 IGC in Sydney, Australia of the Study Group on Gender and Geography. The condition for approval was that a male geographer be added to the names proposed for the Study Group officers. Janet Momsen was appointed Chair, Janice Monk Vice-Chair, and Maria Dolors García Ramon as Secretary. As it happened, the Australian feminists had organized a round table session "Agenda for Gender" which was attended by Isamu Ota, a Japanese man who strongly supported gender concerns though himself studying ethnic issues. To meet the Executive's requirement of having a male member of the Commission, he agreed to be proposed, though he later commented on the irony of his position: "It is deplorable that a person [who is not specialized in gender research] is the Japanese representative to attend the IGU sectional meeting for gender studies" (Ota, 1992, cited in Murata, 2005). (Figure 1.) Also at the Sydney Congress, Australian organizers, wanting to have a woman speaker for one of the plenary lectures, invited Janice Monk to give a presentation, reflecting their acquaintance

going back to her undergraduate years in Australia and later ties at IGU meetings. The lecture reviewed the current state and significance for geography of gender research and deliberately included examples that went beyond Anglo-American urban contexts.



Figure 1. Judit Timár (Hungary) and Isamu Ota (Japan), IGU Congress, 1992

Building Networks

As already mentioned, interest in networking was expressed at the Paris meeting. Since then, a substantial international network of geographers engaging in gender research and teaching has developed, facilitated by recognition that an infrastructure was needed and that technology could be important in supporting international communication, though also limiting its reach. When the IGU Study Group (subsequently the Commission) was initiated, it was evident that to maintain communication, organize meetings, and to pursue publication, access to resources such as mailing privileges and potential funding would be needed. Not only motivation, but also certain conditions, had to be considered in identifying those who would take on responsibilities of chairing and serving, even as representation from across continents was included, a policy of the IGU. Janet Momsen, then at the University of Newcastle upon Tyne, was the obvious choice for Chair and served two terms (1988-96). Ruth Fincher of Australia succeeded her (1996-2000),



Figure 2. Janet Momsen (UK and US). Chair, 1988-96



Figure 3. Ruth Fincher (Australia). Chair, 1996-2000

Joos Droogleever Fortuijn of the Netherlands served from 2000-2004, and Tovi Fenster (Israel) (Figure 3) was elected chair for the period 2004-2008. These geographers all had job security at the time of taking on chair responsibilities. Interestingly, and from the point of biography, Janet Momsen, Ruth Fincher, and Tovi Fenster had worked and studied in more than one country, a part of biography that we need to recall, one that is not uncommon among many who have been active in the Commission's programs. Joos Droogleever Fortuijn's story of engagement (which I appreciate her sharing with me) illustrates that there is no one path to international work, however (J. Droogleever Fortuijn email to J. Monk, January 12, 2006). She sees two seemingly contrary faces of Dutch geography as significant for her trajectory. Working in a minority language, scholars have long read in other tongues, predominantly English from England and the US, but also in French and German. Yet much of their work (and support) relates to national policy concerns, especially in urban and planning fields, with theoretical stimulus coming from outside, especially from Anglophone geography. Though there is also a stream of Dutch geography that focuses on international development geography, for Joos Droogleever Fortuijn family concerns and a part-time appointment led her to concentrate her own research within the Netherlands. Her international activity was initiated by the opportunities that offered support for her rising interest in feminist geography. There seemed to be two prospects for the few early Dutch geographers interested in feminist work to build community, or as she has put it, "to get a feeling that we were not crazy." They could link with feminists in other disciplines or connect with like-minded geographers beyond the Netherlands. That connection began with a meeting



Figure 4. Joos Droogleever Fortuijn (Netherlands) 2004-08, Tovi Fenster (Israel) 2004-08

in Amsterdam with British geographers in 1986, organized through the initiatives of Lia Karsten and Saar Boerlage, the latter an especially entrepreneurial and radical feminist with a keen eye for identifying funding sources. Note that this was a bi-national program, though it was an important preliminary to the multi-national European ERASMUS network in gender and geography to which I will refer later. A comparable effort to the Dutch seminar brought together British and German-speaking feminist geographers in London in 1989 (IGU Gender Commission Newsletter 1989) and in Hamburg in 1993 (Mechtild Rössler, email to J. Monk, January 11, 2006). Such programs as these can initiate and sustain collaborations that are international, though not necessarily “world-wide.” Joos Droogleever Fortuijn’s account of her entry into international networks also reminds us that a desire to overcome isolation can prompt network building, and has undoubtedly been an important motivation for geographers interested in gender in contexts beyond the “dominant” ones. Such connections play an important role in disseminating conceptual and methodological approaches, and are supportive, as Judit Timar has noted (2007) in her comment that getting access to books and articles depends on her outside contacts. Yet they can also contribute to the formation of hegemonic perspectives.

Supporting the Commission Chairs have been an international leadership group, originally known as “Full Members” of the Commission and subsequently as members of the Executive Committee. Named for four-year terms (and some have served two terms), they are selected to give representation across continents, and many have taken responsibility during their terms (or on other occasions) for organizing and hosting thematic symposia that give additional regional visibility to the work of the Commission. They have also been involved in visiting appointments outside their home countries, collaborative writing and editing, and in hosting feminist scholars for shorter and longer periods, whether as graduate students or as faculty on leave.

At this point I’d like to move from history and individuals to examine the overall network by looking at the membership of the mailing list for the IGU Gender Commission Newsletter (Figure 5). At the beginning of 2006, 326 people, a substantial number, were on the list. While countries where English is the primary language are most represented, the western European presence is strong, yet uneven, as Figure 6 reveals. It is not necessarily reflective of populations, or presumably of the number of geographers in those countries. The strengths in Spain and Italy are notable. Returning to the world map (Figure 5), note the low representation in eastern Europe, though research and teaching there are growing, in east Asia, except for Japan, Africa except for S. Africa, and Latin America except for Argentina. In the Latin American context, as Susana Velda da Silva and Dian Lan (2007) propose, politico-economic conditions and the directions of geography have been factors accounting for the limited amount of gender studies and the greater extent of work in Argentina than elsewhere. But I also suggest that the ties to

IGU Gender Commission Newsletter Mailing List

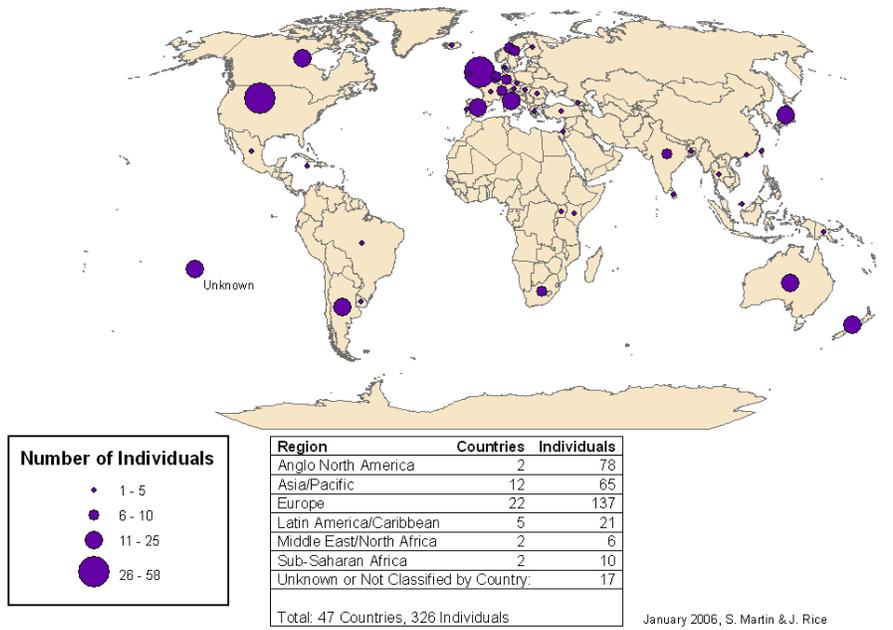


Figure 5. IGU Gender Commission Mailing List, 2006

European Region

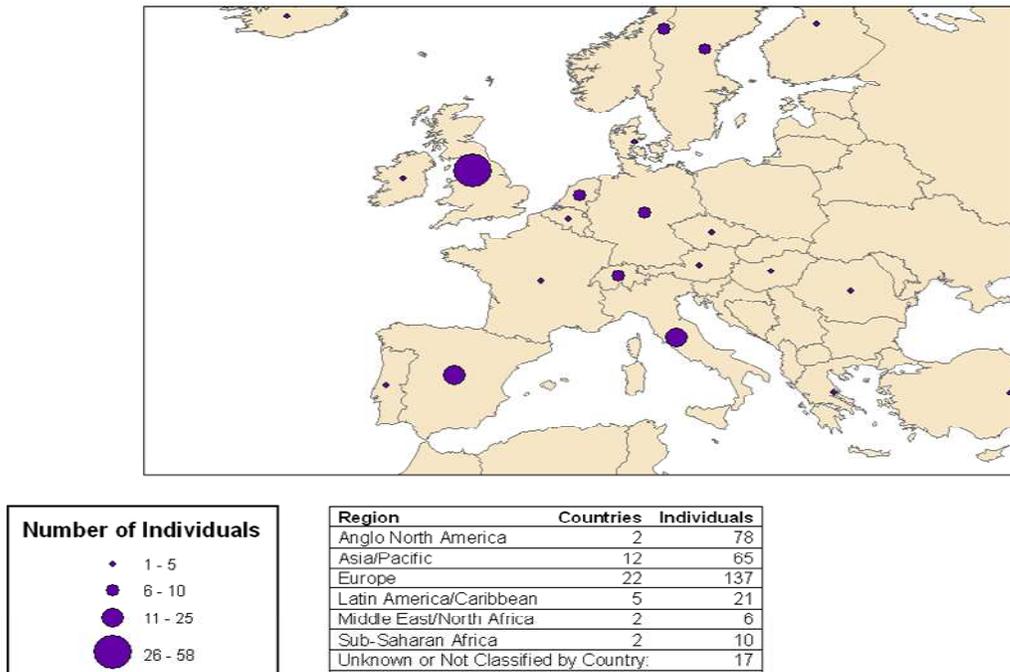


Figure 6. IGU Gender Commission Mailing List, 2006 European Region

Barcelona have played a role in making the international connections. Visiting lectureships by Maria Dolors García Ramon in Buenos Aires and Mendoza in 1995 and her presentation as a plenary speaker at the Encuentro de Geógrafos de América Latina in Buenos Aires in 1997 (Figure 7) helped to build connections with network members. The invitations reflected not only her gender work, but her interests and connections in rural geography and geographic thought were influential, reminding us that multiple networks can be involved in spreading gender scholarship. Her ties also brought Latin American geographers to study in Barcelona, including Perla Suzman, Susana da Silva, and Claudia Pedone (Maria Dolors García Ramon, email to Janice Monk, January 31, 2006). But I assume that conditions such as the status of gender researchers within their institutions, economic resources, and language and have meant that Argentinian geographers have rarely participated in the Commission's events, even though Monica Colombara and Diana Lan have served as representative on the Commission.

Another interesting feature of the world map is the Japanese participation. This is relatively recent, mainly growing from contacts were made at the IGC in Seoul in 2000, though the story is also a more complex one, as I have hinted earlier, related to the low presence of women geographers in Japanese universities. In the African case, I think issues of resources and meeting locations are both relevant for participation. Two



Figure 7. Encuentro de Geógrafos de America Latina, Buenos Aires, 1997. Left to right: Janice Monk (USA), Beatriz Dillon (Argentina), Leticia Garcia (Argentina), Maria Dolors García Ramon (Spain)

meetings have been held in South Africa, one with the Population Commission in Pretoria in 1995 and another in Durban in 2002 at the IGU Regional Congress. By

contrast, the training workshop in Ghana in 1995, mostly attended by young scholars from African countries, did not lead to growth of African participation. Mariama Awumbila (2007) has pointed out that there are cross-national gender networks of significance in sub-Saharan Africa, but not necessarily of geographers and that priorities of context and resources are relevant. Thus meetings relating to geography and gender in a region may foster but not be sufficient to bring people into ongoing ties to the larger international feminist geography network. Lack of resources for international travel are clearly also a major barrier for many African scholars. In the Ghanaian case, funds towards the workshop were provided by a grant from the Commonwealth Geographical Bureau (Figure 8)

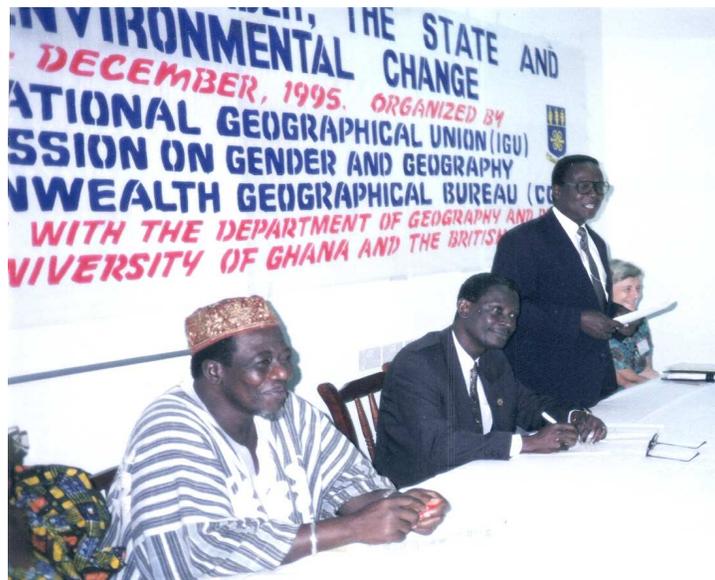


Figure 8. Ghanaian workshop, 1995. Geographer George Benneh (standing) who was also Vice-Chancellor, University of Ghana, (far left) Head of Department of Geography, (left) Ghanaian Minister of Environment (far right) Janet Momsen.

Congresses and Symposia

Since its founding, the Commission (and earlier the Study Group) has maintained an active program of organizing sessions at International Geographical Congresses and Regional Congresses, as well as holding thematic symposia hosted by Commission members in different parts of the world, and co-sponsoring events with other organizations (Figures 9, 10, 11, 12, 13).



Figure 9. Commission members visiting All China Women's Federation, Beijing, 1990



Figure 10. Lan Hung Nora Chiang (Taiwan, ROC) Beijing Regional Meeting, 1990.



Figure 11. Commission group at Ewha Women's University, Seoul Congress, 2000



Figure 12. Agnes Musyoki (then in Kenya, later South Africa) and Susan Hanson (USA) at reception at 1992 IGU Congress, Washington DC.



Figure 13. Rosa Majoral (Spain), Folasade Iyun (Nigeria, later USA and IGU Vice President) and Janice Monk (USA) at reception at 1992 IGU Congress, Washington DC.

Each four year period of work has been anchored in a broad theme approved by the IGU Executive and Delegate Assembly which vote on continuation and approve appointment of the Commission Chair. These themes have been broadly framed so as to allow space for different regional interests and issues. Beginning with the Study Group, the theme for 1988-1992 addressed issues of the ongoing changes in different contexts in women's productive and reproductive work and how they are complementary. In the second period (1992-1996) the orientation turned to the intersections of gender with political and environmental change. For 1996-2000, mirroring concerns in international fora, the Commission took up issues of gender and human rights, a theme that was extended for 2000-2004 with the focus on gendered spaces of inclusion and exclusion. The theme for 2004-2008, reflecting the both the intersections recognized in the earlier years and current awareness of globalization and transnationalism was "Crossing Borders."

For the period 2008-2012, the proposed central theme (to be approved by the IGU Delegate Assembly in August, 2008 at the IGU Congress in Tunis) is "Gendered Perspectives: Connecting Across Difference." This theme allows the Commission members to focus on gendered differences and the theoretical and practical meanings and implications of the connections that can be made to bridge such differences. We intend to explore this theme on various scales and contents: from international and global perspectives, to a regional and local scale and on the individual scale. It promotes attention to discussion of multiple identities and experiences of difference, connecting gender with culture, ethnicity and nationality, class and economic status

and other recurring forms of difference such as age and ability/disability and the ways such multiple identities reflect situations of 'connection across difference'.

While pursuit of these themes is especially evident in the symposia that the Commission has organized as pre-Congress and between Congress events (described below) it has also worked to harmonize with the themes set by Congress organizers. (Box 1). Efforts have been made to secure funds for scholars from lower income countries to participate in the Congresses, tapping both IGU and other sources, and to hold events at Regional Congresses that are more accessible to scholars within the region (Figures 14, 15, 16).

BOX 1: Study Group and Commission Participation in IGU Congresses

- 1988 Sydney. International Congress. Study Group approved
- 1990 Beijing. Regional Congress: 5 papers, 3 reports; visits to Women's Studies Program, All China Women's Federation.
- 1991 Brazilian Regional Congress, Sao Paulo. Joint sessions with IGU Commission on Development.
- 1992 Washington DC International Congress. Commission approved. (see discussion below)
- 1994 Prague Regional Congress. Joint symposium with World Political Map and Public Administration Commissions on "The Politics of International Migration and Citizenship."
- 1994 Havana Regional Congress. Joint sessions with Commission on Health and Development and Study Group on Development Issues in Marginal Regions
- 1996 The Hague. International Congress. Session on "Navigating Women's Lives: Routeways, Residences, and Resources" (see below). A joint session was held with the Commissions on Population, Monitoring Cities of Tomorrow and World Political Map. It resulted in collaborative publication in the journal *Urban Studies* (Droogleever Fortuijn, Musterd, and Ostendorf, 1998). Additionally a joint workshop was organized with the Commission on Geographical Education on integrating gender themes into teaching.
- 1998 Lisbon. Regional Congress. Pre-session on "Gender, Migration, and Human Rights.
- 2000 Seoul. International Congress. Full-day paper program; discussions with Asian Center for Women's Studies, Ewha Women's University and Korean Women's Hotline.
- 2002 Durban. Regional Congress. 20 papers in sessions on "Inclusion and Exclusion in Relation to Resources"; field trip on gender issues in Durban. Joint session with Commission on Monitoring Cities of Tomorrow with publication in *Geojournal* (Droogleever Fortuijn, Horn, and Ostendorf, 2004)
- 2004 Glasgow. Commission sessions, joint sessions with RGS/IBG Women and Geography Study Group; gender papers in sessions of other Commissions and/or RGS/IBG Study Groups (Tourism; History of Geography, Health)
- 2006 Brisbane Regional Congress. Three well-attended sessions included 12 presentations plus a keynote session honoring the contributions of Janice Monk. In addition, a half-day field trip related visited sites related to women's and indigenous geographies while a business meeting was devoted to planning for the period 2008-2012.



Figure 14. Silvia Levy (Autonomous University of Mexico), Jane Benton (UK), Rosa Ester Rossini (University of São Paulo). Brazilian Regional Congress, 1991.



Figure 15. Bertha Becker (Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, later IGU Vice President), Janet Momsen (UK), Maria do Carmo Galvão (Chair, Department of Geography, Federal University of Rio de Janeiro) Brazilian Regional Congress, 1991.



Figure 16. Prague Regional Congress, 1994. Janet Momsen with (center right) Mariama Awumbila (Ghana) and Dolasade Iyun (Nigeria) (far right) and colleague.

A fuller report of these events is reported in the Commission's newsletter in the November issues of the year in which the Congress was held. Without commenting on

each of these meetings, an issue of interest relates to the ways in which Congress organizers were sensitive to representation and inclusion of gender themes in the programs. I will discuss the 1992 Washington Congress in some detail since it highlights ways in which gender perspectives were able to be influential. The Organizing Committee for the Washington Congress in 1992 included feminists in key roles. Alice Rechlin was responsible for protocol and public events, and paid attention to issues of diversity, for example, including a musical program that involved an African American choral group presenting geographically-oriented music. I was offered the option of Chairing the Publications or the Scientific Program Committee; I recognized that the latter offered scope for shaping both the overall orientation and special sessions. As Chair, I was able to propose the names of sixteen acceptable mid-career, progressive scholars to constitute the Program Committee, and with them to identify themes for papers and for plenary and sponsored session and to propose speakers. The overall Congress committee wanted to move away from organizing the program around traditional sub-divisions of geography, such as geomorphology, cartography, or population geography to more problem-oriented ones. Among other things, this made an opening to insert gender themes more visibly. Though that goal was not the only one of the Program Committee, it certainly was among them. The politics of the Scientific Program Committee, though not without encountering periodic stresses, especially about plenary speaker choices, also made it possible to incorporate diversity into selection of these speakers to a degree greater than previously and I would venture to say since. The call for papers, since it used non-traditional categories, offered examples of potential topics within them. Table 2 lists the main categories offered in the Call for Papers and with examples of potential gender themes among the numerous other suggestions within them (Box 2).

**BOX 2 1992 IGU CONGRESS, WASHINGTON DC: PRELIMINARY
PROGRAM CALL FOR PAPERS**

`Sectional organization and sample proposed gender topics

I. Observing and representing the earth

IA1. Cultural interpretations of space and place. e.g. Gender and landscape

IA2. Spatial cognition, e.g., gender differences

II. Environmental change

IIA. Approaches to the study of human-environment relationship, e.g. ecofeminism

III. Dynamics of the world economy

IIIA3. The definition and measurement of economic concepts, e.g. revising concepts of “work” or the “household.”

IIIB1.a. Women and the reorganization of the agricultural enterprise

IIIB1.d. Changing production and labor practices and their consequences

IIIB3.d. Impact of the debt crisis at local and national scales, e.g., on the household

IV. Human wants, needs, and rights (7 sub themes included gender examples)

IVA2. Conceptual and methodological approaches to the study of women’s needs and rights (e.g., strategic vs practical needs)

IVB4. Personal and collective security, e.g., domestic and personal safety

V. Political Order and Change (2 sub themes included gender examples)

VI Geography: Defining Territory and Crossing Boundaries (3 sub themes included gender examples)

VIA1. Geography in the world of the mind, e.g., the development of feminist geography

VII. New Worlds Discovered (Commemorating the Columbus Quincentennial) (3 sub themes included gender examples)

VIIIB2. Women travelers’ and settlers views of the Americas

VIIIC2. Transformations in the making – e.g. contemporary women and migration in the Americas

The resulting Congress had feminist participation in four of eight symposia sponsored by the Scientific Program Committee, including American-Indian, Mexican-American, and Polish American women speakers and the internationally distinguished Caribbean feminist, Peggy Antrobus. There were at least forty papers in other sessions on women and gender. Efforts by the members of the Gender Study Group and their allies led to the election of feminist health geographer Folasade Iyun (Nigeria) as a Vice President of IGU. The IGU voted to “upgrade” the Study Group to Commission status. Additionally, networking and celebration took place at a party for about sixty feminist geographers and supporters, and travel grants provided by Society of Woman Geographers for women geographers from Nigeria, Kenya, Poland, and Croatia.

In 1996 initially the Organizing Committee of the Congress in The Hague presented a different challenge. Initially they announced the theme as “Man, Land, and Sea.” Members of the Gender Commission, reflecting feminist political perspectives that had addressed English language usage, were able to communicate that a change was desirable in the title from “Man” to “Land, Sea, and Human Effort.” Within this theme the Gender Commission organized sessions on such topics as women’s travel writing, migration, and involvement in marine-based industries as fishing and coastal resource management. The Dutch organizers also secured travel grants from the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs to enable six presenters for these sessions, contributing notably to their success. By 2000, the Korean organizers in their Call for Papers adapted the thematic terms of the Washington Congress and chose “Living with Diversity.” Under such a rubric, the Seoul Congress similarly offered numerous opportunities for gender-oriented and gender-aware presentations that paid attention to diversity within multiple contexts.

In addition to the International Congresses and Regional Congresses, the Commission has also been active in holding pre-Congress meetings and discussions which permit more focus and intensive discussions than are possible at the large Congresses. Also vital are free-standing symposia, often hosted by the Commission Chair or a member of the Executive Committee that take up specialized topics within the Commission’s theme. (See box 3) These highly successful events attract specialists on the topic and are also key events for introducing scholars from the region and related disciplines to the work of the Commission (Figures 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22). Many have resulted in books and special issues of journals and contributed widening participation. Through these events, networks have not only been expanded by collaborations developed that have also fostered research and teaching across national boundaries.



Figure 17. Durham Pre-Congress Symposium, 2004. Tovi Fenster (Israel),Saraswati Raju (India), Lan Hung Nora Chiang (Taiwan, Republic of China)



Figure 18. Tel Aviv Symposium, 2000. Irene Hardill (UK) Tovi Fenster (Israel), Elisabeth Bühler (Switzerland), Pascale Herzig (Switzerland)



Figure 19. Heidelberg, 1994 Yoga Rasanayagam (Sri Lanka), Peter Meusberger (Germany)

Participants in these meetings have reported their value in promoting re-thinking of culture-bound (or culturally inflected) concepts of geographical thinking in their own settings. After the 1992 Pre-Conference, for examples, the following impressions were among those reported:

...looking back, the realization of the symposium's importance to my personal and academic politics becomes stronger and stronger. Meeting new colleagues from all parts of the world made me too acutely aware of the stereotypical ways in which I was still thinking. It allowed me the opportunity to listen, first hand, to what non-Western geographers thought of North American and Anglo-European geography: that is was preoccupied with theory, but more importantly, theory built upon concepts that often had little applicability to their everyday lives (Linda Peake, Canada)

Discussion which showed us that some ideas worked out in advanced capitalist countries cannot be applied in other regions spurred us to rethink some terms and concepts (production-reproduction, masculine city-feminine suburb. (Judit Timár, Hungary)



Figure 20. A group at break time, Zurich Symposium, 2006.



Figure 21. Fabia Diaz-Cortés and Mireia Baylina Ferre (Autonomous University of Barcelona). Field trip, Women's Work and History in the Gotthard Tunnel region, Switzerland, 2006.



Figure 22. Symposium in Taiwan, Republic of China, 2007.

Disseminating the Commission's Work

An important aspect of the Commission's work is to reach wider audiences than can attend conferences. Since its founding as a Study Group in 1988, the Commission has published a *Newsletter* twice each year, initially distributed via post and now electronically. A full archive of issues is maintained on the Commission's website, maintained thanks to former Commission Chair, Joos Droogleever Fortuijn at the University of Amsterdam (<http://www2.fmg.uva.nl/igugender>). The newsletter includes reports of past meetings, announcements of forthcoming events, news on activities of members, and an extensive bibliography of books, book chapters, and journal articles on gender research in geography. The latter is constrained somewhat, however, by the greater ease of access to the databases to which libraries in wealthier countries subscribe, and this increasingly means work published in English by large commercial publishing houses. Journals published by individual geography departments or scholarly societies in other languages are not in as wide circulation as at some periods in the past. Identification of book chapters and of materials published in other languages is also largely dependent on information contributed by authors. Factors such as time pressures on scholars and publication opportunities within Africa and other regions where funds for gender work

often come from development agencies and nongovernmental agencies also result in circulation of research reports being limited to agency reports and local libraries.

In its early years, the Commission initiated a Working Paper Series to disseminate papers that would later be submitted for publication. Some thirty-five were issued, however, editing and preparation for their publication was time-consuming and done without a budget. Circulation was limited, among other obstacles being the international transfer of funds. Now that publishing on the Commission's web site is possible, the series has been revived; Working Paper No. 36 by Turkish geographer, Nazmiye Özgüç was issued at the end of 2007. The Commission has also taken advantage of the opportunity to publish through the IGU Home of Geography (Cortesi *et al.*, 2004) (Figure 23), by-passing the expensive commercial world, but it faces the challenges of visibility of work that is not in the big databases. Papers from Commission-sponsored symposia have also been (or will be) published in international journals including two issues of *GeoJournal* (Droogleever Fortuijn *et al.*, 2004 and Klodawsky and Preston (eds), 2006) *Hagar: Studies in Culture, Polity, and Identities* (Fenster, 2002) *Urban Studies* (Droogleever Fortuijn *et al.*, (1998) *Geographica Helvetica* (forthcoming) and *Journal of Geographical Science* (Taiwan) (forthcoming) and papers from the symposium on tourism held at the University of California, Davis were included in the book edited by Swain and Momsen (2002).

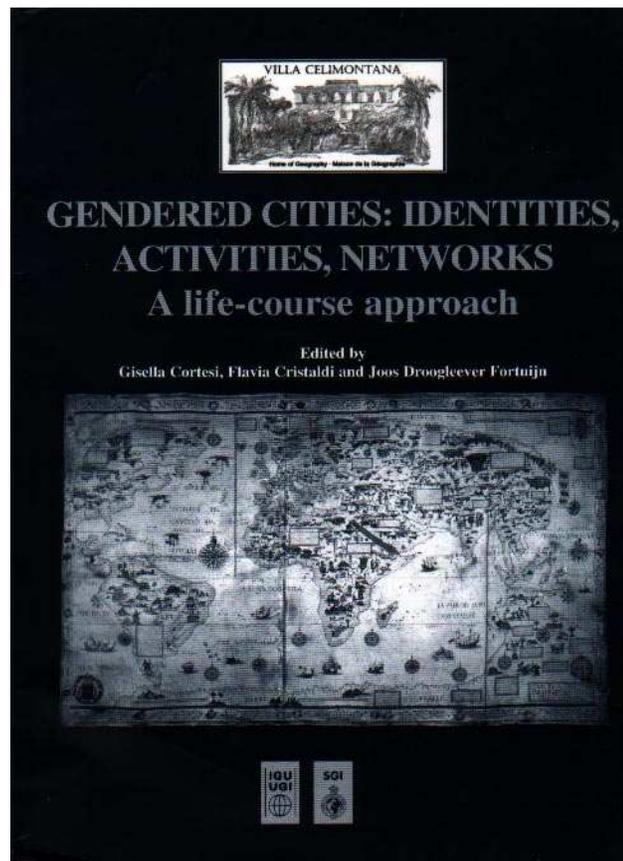


Figure 23. Publication from symposium at the Home of Geography

It is also important to recognize that the Commission has collaborated with groups of geographers and others outside the discipline to disseminate geographical perspectives and to engage in multi-national teaching. Of particular interest in relation to the latter is the series funded by the European Union's ERASMUS program which supported courses in gender geography that brought together staff and students from five countries and languages: Denmark, Greece, Spain (Catalonia), the Netherlands, and the UK. The history and challenges of this collaboration have been well documented (Droogleever Fortuijn, 2002). Here I will simply highlight a few points that recognize the political contexts in which scholars operate. First are its origins in the policies of the European Union to develop EU wide educational programs, student and staff mobility, and create a European elite with a European identity. Second, I want to mention the numerous challenges that implementing the gender geography courses raised. There were the obvious challenges of language. English was the realistic *lingua franca* for discussions and readings, a condition that had power and political dimensions within the classroom. But there were also such challenges as different pedagogical traditions, and orientations to disciplinary research practices and frameworks. Goodwill, building sustained personal relations among the staff, innovative, non-hierarchical strategies were key to addressing these challenges, to deal with what Joos Droogleever Fortuijn has termed "the diversity paradox" (p.272): solving the problems of difference while profiting from diversity.

The second example relates to publishing books that involve Commission members (and others) with commercial publishers. The Routledge series *International Studies of Women and Place*, which now includes over 25 volumes, was developed under the co-editorship of the first Commission Chair, Janet Momsen, with Janice Monk. Its goal was to include work that would engage scholars who were active in the Commission (though not limited to them). One of the first books in the series resulted from the Commission's (then Study Group's) initial conference, organized by Janet Momsen in Newcastle-upon-Tyne in 1989. It brought together more than eighty people representing twenty-eight countries, mostly women geographers, to focus on international development. The principal support came from the Commonwealth Geographic Bureau with assistance from the Commonwealth Foundation, the British Council, the Institute of British Geographers, the Canadian High Commission, the Province of Alberta, Canada, and the Department of Geography at the University of Newcastle-upon-Tyne. I mention this example not only because it was an exciting and productive event that forged new linkages some of which have been sustained, but because it too reveals a paradox. The principal funding sources reflected colonial history. Asian and African participants came from countries that had been part of the British Empire and had earned advanced degrees



Figure 24. Field trip group. Newcastle-upon-Tyne Gender and Development Meeting 1989.

in British universities. Yet the resulting book (Momsen and Kinnaird 1993) brought into international scholarly circulation perspectives and scholars whose work otherwise is generally invisible in that arena. Interestingly, as one of the first titles in the Routledge series the 1993 paperback edition of this book has sold almost 4,000 copies about half in North America and continues to be sought out.. Released at the same time in the series, *Viva, Women and Popular Protest in Latin America* (Radcliffe and Westwood, 1993) has sold about 3,500 paperback copies, 80 per cent of them in North America (Terry Clague, email to Janice Monk, January 16, 2006), indicating some regional differences in geographic interests. But whereas these early books were available in both paperback and cloth editions, the economics of publishing have resulted in books in this series now only being available in cloth editions, priced beyond the resources most individual scholars and many libraries, and it is likely that even the paper-back editions are beyond the means of scholars and students in low income countries.. The series has certainly brought into English language publishing chapters (and edited/co-edited) research that might otherwise not have been recognized outside the home countries of authors. Yet the prospects of such circulation are increasingly hindered by market considerations.

Concluding Reflections

I hope this interpretation of the Commission's development offers some stimulus for moving forward. Research and teaching on gender in geography are still far from world-wide, though a conference organized in 2006 at the Autonomous University of Barcelona (which the Commission co-sponsored) has yielded a special issue of the journal *Belgeo* (2007/3) examining world views and practices within gender studies in geography and presented "state-of-the art" reviews from Argentina./Brazil, France, Ghana, Hungary, Switzerland (encompassing German-language research), Singapore (on Southeast Asia), Spain, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Commentaries at the conference were offered by scholars from several other countries. The work of the Commission has been important in supporting and fostering awareness and networks that underlie such an event and publication. Likewise, the willingness of Commission members to host symposia in various parts of the world has made it possible for scholars from local institutions as well as different world regions to present their work and exchange perspectives, often involving people who would not be able to attend large Congresses in regions far from home and that are beyond their financial means. Challenges vary within and across regions and institutions, and development strategies will need to take that into account. In some cases, the main concern may be to challenge the "mainstream" within institutions of higher education. In others, the problems of publishing expectations and policies may be a critical concern. But individual people, their values priorities, and career trajectories, and the networks they build are significant in fostering change. I will end with four images that remind us we need to attend to the history that is behind us; we need to cultivate cordial and enjoyable relationships among ourselves, whether working with fragments or sharing resources under adverse conditions. Even when skies are cloudy, we can keep focused on the horizons before us.



References:

- Awumbila, Mariama. 2007. "Challenging contexts: Gender studies and geography in Anglophone African countries." *Belgeo* 2007/3: 261-274.
- Buehler, Elisabeth. 2006. Email to Janice Monk, January 31.
- Buehler, Elisabeth and Karen Baechli, 2007. From *Migration der Frau aus Berggebieten* to *Gender and Sustainable Development: Dynamics in the field of gender and geography in Switzerland and in the German-speaking contexts.*" *Belgeo* 2007/3: 275-299.
- Clague, Terry. 2006. Email to Janice Monk, January 16.
- Cortesi, Gisella, Flavia Cristaldi, and Joos Droogleever Fortuijn (eds.) 2004. *Gendered Cities: Identities, Activities, Networks: A Life-Course Approach*. Rome: International Geographical Union Home of Geography,
- Droogleever Fortuijn, Joos. 2006. Email to Janice Monk, January 12.
- . 2002. "Internationalising learning and teaching: a European experience." *Journal of Geography in Higher Education* 26(3): 263-73.
- Droogleever Fortuijn, Joos, Sako Musterd, and Wim Ostendorf. 1998. "Introduction: International migration and ethnic segregation: Impacts on urban areas." *Urban Studies* 35 (3): 368-371.
- Droogleever Fortuijn, Andre Horn, and Wim Ostendorf. 2004. "Gendered spaces in urban and rural contexts: An introduction." *Geojournal* 61 (3). 215-217.
- Fenster, Tovi. 2004. (Guest ed.) *Hagar: Studies in Culture, Politics and Identities (Special Issue "Beyond Tolerance: Globalization and Gendered Exclusions."* 5(1): 1-167.
- Garcia Ramon, Maria Dolors. 1985. El análisis del género y la geografía: reflexiones en torno a un labor reciente." *Documents d'Anàlisi Geogràfica* 6: 133-43.
- . 2006. Email to Janice Monk, January 31.
- Garcia Ramon, Maria Dolors, Margarita Castañer, and Nuria Centelles. 1988. "Women and geography in Spanish universities." *The Professional Geographer* 40: 307-156.
- Gentileschi, Maria Luisa. 2005. Email to Janice Monk, December 28.

Klodawsky, Fran and Valerie Preston (eds). 2006. "Placing Gender, Making Policy" *Geojournal* 65(4) 243-414.

Momsen, Janet H. and Vivian Kinnaird. (eds). 1993. *Different Places, Different Voices: Gender and Development in Africa, Asia, and Latin America*. London: Routledge.

Ota, Isamu. 1992. Esunishiti jendar 10: jyosei ga inai Nihon no chiri gakkai (Ethnicity and gender10: Woman does not exist in Japanese geography. Cited in Yohei Murata, "Gender equality and progress of gender studies in Japanese geography: a critical overview," *Progress in Human Geography* 29: 260-75.

Radcliffe, Sarah A. and Sally Westwood. 1993. *Viva: Women and Popular Protest in Latin America*. London: Routledge.

Robic, Marie-Claire, Anne-Marie Briend, and Mechtild Rössler. 1996. "From the ladies' program to the feminist session/ Du programme des dames aux sessions feministes." *Géographes Face au Monde. L'Union Géographique Internationale et les Congrès Internationaux de Géographie*. Paris: L'Harmattan.

Rössler, Mechtild. 2006. Email to Janice Monk, January 11.

Swain, Margaret B. and Janet H. Momsen (eds) 2002. *Gender, Tourism, Fun?* New York: Cognizant Communications.

Timár, Judit. (2007) "Gender studies in the gender-blind post-socialist geographies of East-Central Europe." *Belgeo* 2007/3: 349-369.

Veleda da Silva, Susana and Diana Lan. 2007. "Geography and gender studies: The situation in Brazil and Argentina." *Belgeo* 2007/3: 371-382.

ⁱ Most of the material in this paper is drawn from the Commission's *Newsletter*, which I have edited twice each year since 1988. I appreciate the suggestions of Joos Droogleever Fortuijn, Tovi Fenster, and Janet Momsen who read drafts of this paper,