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15

Caregivers, the Local-Global, and the Geographies of Responsibility

Kim England

In their invitation to contribute to this volume, Pamela Moss and Karen Falconer Al-Hindi suggested to me that there is a localness to the research for this piece with Bernadette Stiell (England & Stiell, 1997), as there is to other of my research projects. Generally I think this is a fair characterization of much of my research. They asked me to reflect on the ways that much of my research is "local" and how localness contributes to the ways in which feminisms are taken up in geography. They acknowledged that this is an ambitious task (and I agree), but they persuaded me that this was an opportunity to think about my research in a particular way. In this essay I consider the local in a variety of ways through reflections on my research with Bernadette Stiell. And as my contribution appears in the section of this book that focuses on praxis, I have snapped up the chance to also offer some comments on feminist research practices more generally.

I arrived in Toronto in 1990. I loved the lively streets, lined with small, two-story nineteenth-century stores, the interiors of which were often crammed full, with little room to maneuver. It was in these stores that I first became aware of what I later found out were so-called foreign domestic workers and live-in caregivers who arrived in Canada through the federal government's employment/immigration policies. I noticed women pushed babies in strollers around the tiny, cramped stores, whereas in other instances children were left in their strollers at the front of the shop. On one occasion a particularly grumpy shop owner of a small health food store barked, "The baby will be OK if you leave it by the front door." I turned and saw a brown woman struggling to navigate a stroller

holding a white baby around piles of boxes on the floor. I was bewildered and annoyed: Why did he embarrass the woman that way? So what if she wanted to bring the stroller into the guts of the store; it wasn't busy. The Canadian-born friend I was with explained that the woman was most likely in Canada through what was then called the Foreign Domestic Movement program (in the early 1990s the program was reviewed and in early 1992 was revised to become the Live-in Caregiver Program). As Bernadette and I describe in the paper reprinted here, this is a federal government program designed to bring "qualified live-in caregivers" to Canada because apparently there are insufficient Canadian citizens or permanent residents available for this sort of work. Both programs *require* that domestic workers/caregivers "live in" at their employer's home for their first two years in Canada.[1] After two years, the person is eligible to apply to become a landed immigrant (also known as a permanent resident), and like other landed immigrants can eventually apply for citizenship. For some women, most often those from the "global South," Canada's Foreign Domestic Worker and Live-in Caregiver Programs are their only opportunity to apply for landed immigrant status as independent migrants.

The experience in the store prompted foreign domestic workers in Canada to become what I describe as one of my back-burner research projects. I have several of these on the go at any one time. I amuse (and irritate) family and friends with my habit of reading the newspaper and tearing pages out as I go along. Some of these clippings are intended to do double duty as teaching material and potential fodder for research. A box (or two) in my office is filled with folders of seemingly random pieces of paper to which I intermittently add more things. Usually these additions are more newspaper cuttings (surely I am not the only one who hailed the advent of searchable newspapers online as one of the most glorious advances in technology); my relatively well-ordered notes from public meetings and lectures; and less-ordered scribbled notes on Post-its, the backs of receipts, and used envelopes, of half a story heard on the radio, of (I have to admit) snippets of conversations I overheard on the streetcar, or of a phrase resulting from a rare visit from the muse (did it have to be in a coffee shop?). I know this is not a very systematic way of going about research and collecting data, and from time to time I force myself to throw out a file of yellowing papers and unsticky Post-it notes. But sometimes a series of events and trajectories come together in a particular moment and coalesce in ways that make a back-burner project transform into a roiling boil. One of these moments was when Bernadette Stiell arrived in Toronto in the autumn of 1992.

Bernadette had received a highly competitive Canada Memorial Foundation Scholarship[2] to cover one year of M.A. study at the University of

Toronto. The child of Afro-Caribbean immigrants to 1960s Britain, Bernadette was keen to work on a critical analysis of Canadian immigration policy around folks from the Caribbean. This is an incredibly important—but immense—topic, and I wasn't sure it could be done in one year. In the months leading up to Bernadette's arrival, the media had occasionally covered stories about the outcome of the federal government's review of the Foreign Domestic Movement program and the reaction to it. I dutifully clipped, scribbled, and added these media items to a folder, and attended a couple of public meetings about the changes. After a while, it finally dawned on me that while the primary source countries for foreign domestic workers had shifted away from Caribbean countries to the Philippines,[3] here was a topic that fell under the rubric of a critical analysis of Canada's immigration policies, and in our next meeting, Bernadette and I had the first of many animated and (at least for me) very exhilarating discussions of the implications of the Live-in Caregivers program, flipping through the yellow pages to look at the print advertisements for nannies, discussing the British NNEB (National Nursery Examination Board) program (as we are both English, we both knew about this qualification, and both knew women who had gone to college to be trained as nannies), and even singing a few lines from "A Spoonful of Sugar" from the film *Mary Poppins* (as indeed, did one of our respondents, a German woman whom we call Silke). Bernadette wrote a fabulous master's thesis (Stiell, 1993) based on this project and together we wrote three pieces (England & Stiell, 1997; Stiell & England, 1997, 1999), one of which is reprinted here. Bernadette returned to England, as required by her fellowship, and decided not to pursue a doctoral degree. However, as this section of this book is also about the multiplicities of feminist praxis, Bernadette's decision provides an example of someone who has chosen not to lead a traditional academic career. Bernadette enjoys doing research, but rather than becoming an academic lecturer, she has for most of the past decade or so worked on applied social policy issues as a researcher based at Leeds University, a U.K. government department, and now Sheffield Hallam University.

One sense in which our work is local is that it is based on research conducted "at home" in the place where both Bernadette and I lived at that point in time. The relationship between home and the field has come under increasing scrutiny in recent years (see, for example, Gilbert, 1994; Hyndman, 2001; Katz, 1994). Feminists have questioned the idea that the field is something spatially distant and physically (and even temporally) discrete to be entered for a period of time and then left to return home. Troubling these space and time boundaries means that the field, as Jennifer Hyndman (2001, p. 265) puts it, "is both here and there, a continuum of time and place." Texts on fieldwork also often address the dilemmas of being an outsider immersed in life elsewhere. Many of the issues faced

by research somewhere else have applicability for research at home, especially that dealing with the social terrain of fieldwork (England, 1994; in the context of the domestic workers project, see also, Stiell & England, 1997). So being sensitive to power relations, being reflexive, and accepting that knowledges are embodied, situated, and partial would have been important whether the field was in Toronto, Timbuktu, or Tbilisi. Logistically, of course, because our fieldwork was based in Toronto, it was easier to accept invitations to participate in a meeting with domestic worker organizations, and to follow up unexpected leads (as opposed to doing research in a place where you don't usually live and finding out that the person you desperately hope to interview wants to reschedule to a date after the one that appears on your return plane ticket, as I recently experienced). However, as several others have pointed out, simply because we lived in Toronto and had a goodly amount of local knowledge did not make us insiders (see Gilbert, 1994; Katz, 1994; Mullings, 1999; Nagar, 2002). In fact, while there were some points of overlap, the meanings attached to Toronto differed between each of the women involved in the domestic workers project (i.e., me, Bernadette, and the caregivers). However, rather than thinking in terms of an either/or dichotomy, feminists argue that the mobile and multiple subject positions of the researcher and, indeed, the researched, are "constituted in spaces of betweenness, a place neither inside nor outside" (Katz, 1994, p. 72).

A second way our project is local is in terms of the scale of the project we explored, something highly localized: the everyday experience of immigrant[4] caregivers living in other people's homes in Toronto. However, our *analysis* extended well beyond these homes, and indeed Toronto, to include a tangled web of networks, social relations, and material practices at an array of scales. As Moss (2002) argues, the scale of analysis need not be the same as the scale of the project; although a great deal of "feminist research often focuses on local, micro-scale studies, there is no intrinsic connection between feminist research and scale" (Moss, 2002, p. 10). Just because the spatial extent of our fieldwork was within Toronto did not restrict our analysis exclusively to the local—far from it. The majority of Canada's foreign live-in caregivers are from the global South (a point to which I will return). The largest numbers of them live and work in Toronto—a secondary global city tightly woven into national and global flows of people, capital, commodities, and information. The increasing demand for live-in caregivers relates to socioeconomic changes within Canada—the continuing shortage of affordable, quality child care, the increase in dual-career couples, and the feminization of paid employment, particularly of high-status occupations. These, in turn, are linked to global city networks, economic globalization, and the expansion of advanced services. And while our research primarily involved the households

employing foreign domestic workers, we described how the dynamics behind these front doors informed and were informed by an array of processes and practices at other scales. For instance, attitudes and demands of employers affect (and are affected by) the day-to-day operation of Toronto-wide live-in caregiver placement agencies in terms of who gets sent to which households. Employers of domestic workers influence policy directions at Immigration Canada. And, of course, Immigration Canada influences the entry of domestic workers into the country.

A third understanding of local relates to a different aspect of scale: the debates about defining the local, especially in relation to the global. Here I am greatly influenced by the arguments that Doreen Massey (1994, 2005) has been making for some time now. The local is often counterposed to the global, as a product of, as subordinate to the global, and even as a victim suffering the effects of globalization. Instead of this sort of local-global dualism, Massey (2005) urges us to conceptualize "a world in which the local and the global are mutually constituted" (p. 184). To recall her oft-quoted claim "the social relations which constitute a locality increasingly stretch beyond its borders: less and less of these relations are contained within the place itself" (Massey, 1994, p. 162). Massey (1994) offers an understanding of the local that is *not* tightly bounded, nor singular, self-sufficient, and introverted, but instead involves a "global sense of place" with "the simultaneous coexistence of social interrelations at all geographical scales, from the intimacy of the household to the wide space of trans global connections" (p. 168). However, actually existing locals are differently and asymmetrically positioned within "mobile power-geometries of the relations of connection" (Massey, 2005, p. 174); so as a node in the power-geometries of globalization, Toronto is very different from Timmins in northern Ontario. Moreover, by extending arguments about the relationality of identity and subjectivity, Massey suggests that by approaching the local and global as co-constitutive, not all locals are victims of globalization (can we seriously think of London as one such victim? she asks), but rather are agents in globalization. From there, she argues for geographies of responsibilities to address how "the distant is implicated in our 'here'" (Massey, 2005, p. 192). As I already noted, Toronto is an important destination for live-in caregivers. This flow into Toronto is part of the transnational migration of thousands of women from the global South to take up jobs in the West as domestic workers, nannies, maids, and housekeepers. Massey (2005) argues that thinking about space (and indeed, politics) relationally also means tracing the often (conveniently?) ignored networks that radiate beyond the boundaries of a global city (she uses the example of London) and which are necessary to sustain that city. For instance, two of the caregivers (Joan and Felicity) we interviewed are links in what Rhacel Parreñas (2001) calls global care chains—women

who leave their children at home in Jamaica or the Philippines in the care of family members and local domestic workers, in order to migrate to care for other (more affluent) people's children. Feminist scholars have shown how the work of these women services the global economy (see for example Momsen, 1999; and the contributions [mainly by anthropologists and sociologists] in Ehrenreich & Hochschild, 2002). While the transnational flows of what Ehrenreich and Hochschild (2002) call the "global woman" bear the traces of the legacy of colonialism and imperialism, the *ongoing* geographies of uneven development and multifarious global inequalities (the production of which certain locals are helping to produce right now) generate a global supply of women who move (willingly? freely?) thousands of miles to work as live-in caregivers.

Reflecting on these multiple, relational, local geographies of domestic workers has reminded me that context and spatiality are important in the praxis of feminist geography. Doing research in a particular locale, and importantly, being sensitive to that specific place as a layered social site, opens up all sorts of empirical, theoretical, and political possibilities. For decades, critical geographers have argued that space is not a static container, and have made a case for the difference that space makes. Doreen Massey (2005) laments the tendency (and mistake) of theorists to conceptualize time, but not space as dynamic, open-ended, and provisional. Geraldine Pratt (2004, p. 3) makes a similar argument in relation to spatializing feminist theory, and putting that theory to work in the "concrete struggles of domestic workers" in Vancouver. Rethinking social processes through space (or more precisely time-space) brings into sharper focus the very untidy materialities that produce particular places. It also reveals how those processes and the particularities of their associated practices are made concrete and meaningful in different ways in different places at particular points in time. A feminist geographical imagination that engages with the material and with the lives of actually existing people can uncover the contradictions, continuities, and nuances in what might otherwise be seen as monolithic and inevitable, in turn offering potential avenues and strategies for social change.

NOTES

1. Challenging the "live-in" requirement has and continues to be an important focus for domestic worker advocacy groups such as INTERCEDE in Toronto, as do issues around labor legislation, taxes, minimum wage rates, overtime pay, and the like (see Geraldine Pratt, 2004, for an excellent discussion of these and many other issues around live-in caregivers in a Vancouver context).

2. The Canada Memorial Foundation was set up in memory of Canadians who served with Britain during the First and Second World Wars. Usually only two scholarships are awarded a year to U.K. citizens with excellent academic standing. The scholarship is for one year of master's level study at a Canadian university, and the recipient is expected to "return to contribute fully to UK society" (Association of Commonwealth Universities; see http://www.acu.ac.uk/).

3. The proportion of entrants from the Philippines had risen from 15 percent in 1983 to 58 percent in 1990; while the proportions from Jamaica and the United Kingdom gradually fell.

4. In the piece reprinted here, we did not draw on our interview with the Canadian-born live-in caregiver, but we do elsewhere (Stiell & England, 1997, 1999).

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16

Space for Feminism in Greek Academe?

Dina Vaiou

Since the early 1990s, a common practice has developed among feminist scholars to contest disembodied and unlocated forms of knowledge and totalizing universalisms, as well as postmodern relativism and instead produce visions from somewhere. Following Donna Haraway's (1997) argument about situated knowledges: "[t]he only way to find a larger vision is to be somewhere in particular" (p. 64), while "[t]he alternative to relativism is partial, locatable, critical knowledges sustaining the possibility of webs of connections called solidarity in politics and shared conversations in epistemology" (p. 60). It is in this light that I see my commentary: from a specific location, embodied and self-reflexive, trying to disentangle solidarities and trace shared conversations through time and space. Location here is on the one hand a metaphor for spaces of knowledge. On the other hand it extends also to material space and place, to a geographical location, Greece and Greek academe in this case, with its culture, traditions, and politics, as well as with the multiple determinations resulting from its positioning in relation to other places. My commentary is organized in three parts: the first is a reflection on my own trajectory toward and in feminist geography; the second discusses ways of being a feminist academic in Greece; the third is an attempt to trace the contours of a possible space for feminism.

FEMINISM AND THE LEFT IN URBAN STUDIES

My own interest in the development of feminist approaches in scientific inquiry arose out of two rather distinct areas of involvement. The first has