



Raising the veil: mountains from a masculine and a feminine angle

Call for paper – before November 15th, 2012



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Context

The present call for papers seeks to offer a feminine/masculine reading of mountains. Many works have already analysed the roles of human activity in mountain spaces, in agricultural production, the travel trade, the economy and the arts. But such investigation has often focused on the masculine side, revealing the practices, customs and narratives of men in the mountains. However the relations between humans and mountains do not all take a masculine form, their feminine side being equally extensive. A gender-related approach highlights these 'blind spots' in the epistemological, theoretical and methodological grounding of such investigation, and in its reading of the mountain space, its practices and its representations (Mac Dowell, 1999, 2008). Our purpose is not to oppose masculine with feminine views of the mountains as the object of representations and practices, but to suggest a reading more resolutely rooted in an understanding of the complementary nature of the sexes and their comparison (Louargant S., 2003, 2004), and in a geography of various forms of sexuality (Blidon M. 2008, Jaurand E., 2011). By giving priority to such approaches we aim to enrich scientific input revealing the feminine-masculine construction of the object we call the mountains.

Themes

This call for papers focuses on the following themes:

Gender, mountains and movement

Mountains have been, and still are, the locus of movement, migration and many forms of mobility, be they seasonal or daily. Such migration and mobility concerns both sexes

and cover multiple realities. In their work or leisure-related travels women take part in displacing, mixing, disseminating and combining trajectories, learning and know-how. They draw attention to border-crossings, transgression and emancipation, modifying the relation to the masculine. By achieving physical and/or symbolic border-crossings women, just as much as men, make the mountains a place to live which undergoes constant renewal, rather than being some marginal area (exchanges across mountain ranges, mobility and sociability networks, etc.). All these forms of movement have socio-spatial and territorial impacts. In particular they highlight the transformation of codes, norms, relations between men and women, between men and between women in mountain areas: the (formal and informal) geography of work, the geography of encounters, trade and indeed love. These territories, these mountain places in which movement is an essential part of mountain life, bear the mark of masculine and feminine influences, apparent in narratives and practices. It is also in these experiences, in the relation to plasticity, to borders, art, the other and to travel (Stazack J.F, 2003) that social and bodily performance find their expression (Butler J., 2004).

Gender, mountains, culture and the imaginary

Gender codes, norms and values are expressed and express themselves in the way mountains, their culture and/or practices are represented. Often coloured by male narratives (left by explorers, mountain guides, etc.), the mountains are also, perhaps in more intimate ways, the subject of female narratives in accounts of exploration and discovery (by such as Alexandra David Néel) and/or stories of daily life. Mountain people contribute to the social fabrication of gender-aware social identities, formally in readable material (amorous inscriptions on the rocks of Alpine peaks), but also more informally in spontaneous, fleeting marks. So, in artistic expression – in writing, film or pictures – male and female faces and figures – following specific individual and collective routes – help to decipher the imaginary, the codes, norms and values expressed in and on the mountains, and their practices, customs and cultures (and various art forms).

Gender, mountains, action, reaction, creation and recreation

Mountains are the site of plural practices, a point of departure for migration, a possible refuge, a place on which to fall back, a battleground, a source of resources, a labour pool and place of work, a place for creation and recreation, for nature reserves, for projects and for living. Women have played their part here without necessarily gaining much recognition. The masculine/feminine approach to (historic, social, economic, cultural and other) practices refreshes our way of looking at the mountains, their customs, practices and functions. As such it contributes to a better understanding of the way mountains are conceptualized in their various dimensions, begging in turn the question of a corresponding re-appraisal of the societal issues at work there.

Gender, mountains, management and resources

The key role of women in the management of mountain land and/or farming systems (pluri-activity, diversification, pastoral activities) has already been highlighted, gaining

recognition thanks to input from trade federations, non-governmental organizations, and/or researchers. Men and women entertain differentiated and/or complementary relations with the environment and (water, plant, seed and other) resources. Whether we focus on management, preservation, conservation or transmission, the gender-aware approach prompts a re-appraisal of issues such as knowledge, activities, practices, vulnerability, fragility, the relation to the mountains and how best to use their resources: biodiversity, farming, energy, food, transmission of learning, raising environmental awareness, well-being, healthcare. Such local mountain knowledge is key to the overall management of mountain sustainability. It merits greater attention, acknowledging mountains as the site of innovation.

Timetable

Half-page proposals, backed by a brief presentation of the author(s), should be sent to Sophie Louargant (Sophie.Louargant@iut2.upmf-grenoble.fr), who is managing the special issue, or to Emmanuelle Tricoire (Emm@nuelleTricoire.eu), who is in charge of editing.

Contributions conforming to *Revue de Géographie Alpine* style rules, not exceeding 30,000 characters (including spaces), should reach us by 15 November 2012, with publication scheduled for July 2013. The rules for publication in the RGA may be consulted at <http://rga.revues.org>.

Selected articles must be submitted in French and English.

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