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Bauhardt, C., and Harcourt, W. (eds.). (2019). **Feminist Political Ecology and the Economics of Care: In Search of Economic Alternatives.** Routledge.

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Feminist Political Ecology and the Economics of Care: In Search of Economic Alternatives (2019), edited by Christine Bauhardt and Wendy Harcourt is a well-researched anthology, that explores diverse forms of economic activity and their relationship to care work, the environment, and ecology. Written from a wide array of perspectives, the authors from 11 different countries contribute analytical explorations of the complicated connections between the environment/nature and feminism, narratives and practices of care, community economies, food sovereignty, re/production, and the politics of place, in order to understand a variety of concepts found in the field of feminist political economy and ecology. Written for students and researchers of (feminist) political economy and ecology, this book presents a critique of capitalist economic organization. It explores the interconnection between gender/economy/environment as an avenue for addressing social inequality and creating a post-growth/post-capitalist society (1-2). Challenging the controversial and romantic construction that women are inherently closer to nature, the chapters in this book reject "the trend of a feminisation of environmental responsibility" (3), and instead present various examples of how everyday care work fosters a society based on social justice and ecological stability. Searching for new economic and ecological ethics, this book encourages readers to "change current ways of living by adopting lifestyles that respect ecological limits" (13). Although the authors have vastly different approaches to and topics of research, the overarching theme throughout the book comes back to the idea that it is possible to (re)organize the economy in a way that prioritizes care work and care-full relationships to humans and non-human others. The book presents a feminist vision of what a caring economy could look like, and demonstrates how people around the world are already engaging with alternative and feminist forms of economic activity.

Overall, this book presents a wide variety of interesting and relevant research topics for the reader to consider. The chapters build well upon each other, starting with the more theoretical aspects of the topic before moving on to some truly fascinating empirical case studies. This book demonstrates that diverse economic activity is an integral part of our world, and has powerful potential to bring about change. It does an excellent job of achieving the goals set forth in the introduction, and is absolutely recommendable to anyone who wants to expand how they think about the function of care work in our economy and environment.

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Theoretical Chapters

The first chapter of this book gives an overview of the main arguments of the anthology, and develops the goals of the research, as explored briefly above. The second and third chapters, written by the two editors of the anthology, and later also the fourth chapter, begin by building a more theoretical framework to support the rest of the book. In particular, the second chapter gives a wide synopsis of the various theories within the topic at hand: feminist political economy, ecology, ecofeminism, and queer ecologies. Instead of just presenting what's out there, the author, Christine Bauhardt, problematizes various aspects of feminist thought. She pays particular attention to the notion from ecofeminism that women are inherently closer to nature, and ultimately finds it to be an essentializing theory, although she also finds it to be a useful framework for dismantling aspects of patriarchal capitalism. She concludes her chapter by claiming "I defend ecofeminist analysis of capitalism as a powerful critique of this form of economy" (31) while also acknowledging "[t]o see women as the embodiment of nature is harmful to women and is damaging to egalitarian gender relations" (31). The chapter gave a good introduction into feminist theoretical dilemmas within the field, although the arguments centered mainly around the issues of gender and nature, and barely mentioned other elements (i.e. race, class, etc.) of capitalist exploitation.

The third chapter, written by Wendy Harcourt, was one of the weaker chapters of the whole book. Although the topic of the chapter "White settler colonial scientific fabulations on otherwise narratives of care" promises to be an interesting read, the chapter itself felt unfinished. The chapter is a deeply personal reflection on the author's own past relationship to land in Australia, and her attempt to reconceptualize interactions within the white settler colonial experience. However, the chapter jumped around a lot, as if the author couldn't quite formulate for herself what her actual argument was. The application outside this personal exploration was also missing from this chapter, as was the overt connection to feminist political economy/ecology. Overall, the chapter reads disjointed, jumping from personal reflections on the author's own past and privileges (37) to the connection between white settler violence and begonias (43) before seeking to reinterpret history (47-48). The author herself concludes: "My story requires more research and reflection" (50), leaving the chapter feeling unfinished, not ready for publication, and the most ineffective chapter of the book.

The fourth chapter of the book, written by Karijn van der Berg, explores different encounters of environmental feminisms. Although her post-colonial criticism against the notion that indigenous peoples should 'show us the way' back to living in harmony with nature (56) well-articulated, her exploration of ecofeminism was repetitive. Like in chapter two, this chapter criticized the essentialism of ecofeminism without outright rejecting it. Although this chapter went more into depth on the aspect of intersectionality within ecofeminism, it wasn't able to properly articulate how the theories of ecofeminism, new materialist and posthuman perspectives can be applied to "everyday lived realities as experienced by local communities affected by climate change and other environmental issues" (67). This tis a profound weakness of the chapter, which however, was addressed concretely by the later more empirical chapters of the anthology.

Empirical Chapters

Chapters five through fourteen take the reader on an international journey, looking at diverse case studies around the world that uniquely tie back to the theories and concepts discussed in the beginning of the book. Chapter five jumps right in, rather abruptly, by arguing that care work is a missing element in disaster research and disaster response systems. The authors, Maria S. Floro and Georgia Poyatzis, furthermore, build up their argument by claiming the need to make unpaid care work visible and thus reject the status quo of taking it for granted as an indefinitely elastic resource, as particularly important for fostering gender equality through gender-aware response systems (76). In order to contextualize their arguments, they look at data from the case of the Super-typhoon Haiyan, which occurred principally in the Philippines in 2013. They conclude by critiquing the present way of using gross domestic product (GDP) as a measure of disaster fallout, claiming that "[d]amage functions that focus on GDP and economic output fail to adequately measure the decline in welfare precisely because the care economy is left out" (94). Overall, this chapter was convincingly written, particularly because of the author's use of extensive data and tables created a strong base for their argument. Particularly noteworthy was how imperative, and simultaneously excluded, their argument appears to be for disaster relief response systems.

Chapter six, on "Care-full Community Economies" written by Kelly Dombroski, Stephan Healy and Katherine McKinnon, was a slightly more theoretical chapter with many real-world examples to demonstrate their ideas on how to rethink the economy to include care work. Throughout the chapter the authors explore three main questions:

> Who cares?
>
> Women, men, non-humans, and collectives, for example Oznappyfree, an online forum discussing methods for infant hygiene without diapers (103-104).
>
> What do we care for?
>
> The commons and processes of common*ing*, for example community gardens or shared housing projects (107).
>
> How do we care?
>
> In research, we use methods that give control back to the participants involved in the process of knowledge production (110-111).

The conclusion of this chapter suggests some of the limitations of this type of research, tying together a complex chapter, that was successfully able to combine empirical examples with theoretical arguments. However, the overall transition would have been smoother had this chapter been switched with the fifth.

Chapter seven, takes the reader on an exploration of care work as a source of wellth, defined as "well-being expressed as paid and unpaid activities aimed at social and individual flourishing" (125). The author, Mary Mellor, presents a critique of the externalization and marginalization of care work in the current neoliberal capitalist system, and explains her ideas on how women's work could be valued through a "model of internalization that puts care work and the sustainability of the natural environment at the center of provisioning" (117).

Her chapter takes the reader through a reconceptualization of money as the main agent of capitalism, and suggests that we need to move away from assumptions that markets are the ultimate source of money, and instead recognize the fundamental role that the state plays in money creation. "Rather than profit in the market, public money could enable ecologically sustainable sufficiency provisioning. Debt free money could be created and used to fund caring activities on a not-for-profit basis" (125). This, plus a redistribution of wealth, prudent taxation to hinder inflation, and the establishment of a democratic right to money would, according to her argument, allow for a socially, politically, ecologically and economically stable monetary system. While thought-provoking and incredibly interesting, it is questionable just how feasible it would actually be to implement such a utopic system in real life, it feels almost too good to be true. For example, experts on monetary policy might have various objections to the practicality, in particular the taxation section, of her proposal.

The next chapter considers the ethics of embodiment and inter-corporeality at the case study site of Kufunda Village in Zimbabwe. Although the chapter is a rather dense read, the authors, Pamela Richardson-Ngwenya and Andrea Nightingale, do an excellent job of merging ethics with the economy. They create a framework that conceptually and theoretically defines economic spaces as ethical ones, with particular reference to space, place and relations. This chapter serves to destabilize the concept of care "within feminist economic visions of the 'common good'" (155), and instead concentrates on the role of place as key to alternative forms of economic activity, and embodied practices. The case study that they explore provides an example of how a community economy in practice deals with questions of ethics and conflict, with a focus on caring and the challenges of difference. It "shows how learning in itself is a dimension of value; value that cannot be measured through metrics or economic gains" (156). Particularly striking in this chapter was the ways in which it challenges the feminist project of care as central to envisioning new economies and ecologies. As care is a pivotal concept in feminist scholarship, it was refreshing to see a different perspective that pushed back on some of the underlying assumptions about care work in feminist thought.

The following two chapters, nine and ten, place their focus on alternative food networks and food sovereignty. The chapter "Striving towards what we do not know yet: Living Feminist Political Ecology in Toronto's food network" written by Carla Wember, looks at economic actors not just as producers or consumers, but also as practitioners of citizenship, and how transforming food systems challenges neoliberalism. The overarching logic of the article was a bit hard to follow as the chapter jumped around a lot, however the author's key arguments on gendered food inequalities in Toronto were striking: "connections of food (organising) and questions of social justice are primarily seen through the lens of class and race… What we eat is determined by where we are positioned in society through our body" (177). Overall, the empirical case study of this chapter is quite enjoyable to read, but the theoretical section is somewhat disjointed.

Chapter ten on the other hand, written by Joyce-Ann Syhre and Meike Brückner, is a well-structured, if sometimes somewhat repetitive exploration of urban agriculture and 'creating a good life' in Nairobi, Kenya. The authors of this article position urban agriculture as a form of care which happens on the field and on the plate, while urban kitchen gardens are a space of empowerment for women through income independence. In particular, the concept development of food sovereignty as a rights-based approach to meal preparation based on culturally appropriate foods such as African indigenous vegetables is impressive.

Shifting away from food topics, chapters eleven, twelve and thirteen focus more on body politics. Christa Wichterich writes on surrogate motherhood in India and the intersection of the medical industrial complex, biopolitics, and a heteronormative re/production regime. Throughout this chapter, the author explores how re/productive technologies are embedded in neoliberal ideology, and new forms of motherhood are created. She argues that new concepts are needed in order to understand these new forms of labor and exploitation, and the shifting differences between care work and wage work. The author of this chapter did an incredible job of reconceptualizing surrogacy and challenging prevailing stereotypes of femininity, or ideas of women as self-sacrificing vessels for other's use. This chapter definitely stimulates thought about surrogacy and helps to expand understanding about the ways in which poverty can play a defining in women's labor exploitation in informal and formal economic activities.

Chapter twelve, written by Jacqueline Gaybor, explores menstrual activism in Argentina over the last two decades or so. The chapter begins with a strongly argued theoretical framework explaining feminist political economy and the conceptual definition of care as an activity or practice, that includes four separate phrases: caring about, care of, caregiving and care-receiving (233-234). The author then applies this to an interesting case study which frames menstrual management as being about care work and technology. Her various interviews show how participants in menstrual activism go through a "change of lifestyle, oriented to take care of the body and care of the environment" (241). This process then, becomes one of "re-signifying the menstrual body" (242), enabling progressive societal change. Overall, this chapter presents a quality and authentic case study that connects the human body back to nature through care.

Azucena Gollaz Morán writes chapter thirteen on "Bodies, aspirations and the politics of place: Learning from the women brickmakers of La Ladrillera" set in Guadalajara, the second-largest city of Mexico. This chapter explores the intersection of body, home, environment and public (245) through the (dis)encounter within the development sector (such as social policies, laws, or development projects) that can lead to identities which are reconstructed as a violation of individual's histories, feelings, or memories (248). In this sense, violence within the development process is a non-agreement, or opposition (249). The author ties this back to the politics of place and the body (as a place of materiality and metaphor) through interviews with three generations of brickmakers. The chapter argues that care is an essential part of survival, and that social policies are part of a normative patriarchal intervention. Although the chapter is quite short it is an enjoyable read, and it gives a different perspective from the rest of the chapters in this anthology, focusing much more on the role of gender and care work within the specific context of poverty.

The final chapter of the anthology written by Ana Agostino, brings together a "multicultural approach to human rights, experiences and analysis from transnational feminist movements, and the critical views of post-development" (262) to inform urban agendas in Montevideo, Uruguay. This last chapter shifts the discussion towards human rights and how they are both culturally determined and need to be reconceptualized as multicultural as opposed to universal. The author's research stems from her experience as an ombudswoman and work incorporating gender policy into institutions. The chapter relates to the rest of the book in that the author focuses on the role of women in creating sustainable urban management,

(post-)growth and development policies, and the incorporation of an ethics of (intercultural) care into the work being done in the city of Montevideo. She concludes by pointing out that:

> There is a major challenge to incorporate all dimensions of sustainability in the analysis of public policies, municipal projects, and services. This implies considering the externalities of economic activities or infrastructure projects that impact on nature, on the living conditions of women - who are often the most affected - and on future generations (280).

This chapter was an excellent conclusion to the book, as it included a very thorough theoretical section that expanded on many of the ideas found throughout the rest of the anthology, while including concrete empirical examples to illustrate how the theory plays out in real life.

This anthology's unique composition of interdisciplinary theoretical perspectives and international empirical studies is reflective of the diversity of the authors. It is a contemplation on the many different ways in which feminist economies of care happen in our world, and how feminist political economy/ecology can teach us to interact caringly, respectfully and responsibly with each other, non-humans and the environment in our daily lives. Although some chapters are more fully developed and better written, overall, this book is an excellent resource for students and researchers who want to expand their knowledge in the fields of feminist political economy/ecology with particular attention to the concepts of care work, sustainability, gender relations, and alternative economic activity.

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