Introduction

Living in a Global North consumer society: a contextual vignette

I live in an inner city neighbourhood in the United Kingdom (UK). When I visit the well women's clinic, at a surgery where all the doctors are practising Christians, I sit next to a middle-aged Somalian Muslim woman. We live on the same street, share a lawn mower, and struggle to grow plants under large trees. I know that she will probably be circumcised because I am familiar with the statistics – a 95 per cent prevalence rate for women in Somalia (UNICEF 2004). She laughs, and expresses incomprehension, when, as a middle-aged woman, I run along the street, sweating profusely and clad in very little.

Behind my house, a group of boys aged between seven and fifteen regularly play football. They argue vociferously about the rules in fluent 'street' English. Many are Somalis by origin although there are white and African Caribbean boys as well. Their sisters emerge to congregate around the public bench to chat and occasionally to play ball games but always on the margins of the 'pitch'. On Saturday mornings I see the boys returning from their classes in the Koran while one white young man delivers newspapers to my door. His father used to clean our windows until he had a bad accident. He now works for a landscape garden firm but the work is precarious and does not provide an adequate income, so his wife has started to work part time as a social carer for a local disabled adult. His daughter and her female partner look through household items in my cellar which used to belong to my parents to see whether anything would be useful for their flat because they are setting up home together.

Behind me lives an African Caribbean woman with young twin boys. For many years she worked at the end of our street, selling sex, but is now involved with a voluntary organisation which offers support to street sex workers. She chats regularly to her friend and neighbour, another African Caribbean woman, who has recently retired as a probation officer and knows a number of the local young men well. At the end of my street there are two residential care homes for the vulnerable elderly. Black women care workers, who look after the white residents, walk past to catch buses at the start or finish of their shifts. The Malawian woman who cared for my parents in our house until they died recently tells me that a number are, like herself, recent migrants from southern Africa. Around the corner is the local shop and post office run by a couple

originally from the Punjab in India. The woman, who is the holder of the post office licence, and I discuss the weather in North India, because we are both going there soon, she for the first time in fifteen years, me for the third time in a year. She tells me about the difficulties she is facing in obtaining an entry visa for her husband's brother who wishes to attend a family wedding.

From my house I walk for 500 metres, past newly erected, luxury flats, to my local supermarket, Waitrose, which used to be Safeway. The local property paper tells me its presence will increase the price of my house because the change in ownership is an indication that there are significant numbers of affluent consumers within the vicinity. When I shop there, I see an overwhelmingly working-age, white clientele (including friends and acquaintances but never neighbours), choosing between a huge range of imported food products, which are presented and packaged in ways designed for the convenience of 'money rich/time poor' consumers.

This vignette of life and work raises a number of issues, which will be explored in this book. The first of these relates to the plurality and diversity of a multicultural consumer society that is located in the Global North. While there are many ways of telling a story of urban life at the beginning of the twenty-first century, this narrative is told primarily through particular identities, which are ascribed to individuals. This discourse of difference and individuality tends to be dominant within feminist narratives. It describes a white middle-aged professional woman; a Somalian refugee woman; a black African care worker; a Punjabi small businesswoman; an African Caribbean sex worker; a young working-class lesbian and so on. Some of the women are also mothers and citizens; all are family members and consumers. These identities are rooted in communities some of which seem more 'solid' than others. The Somali, Punjabi and African Caribbean communities, albeit in different ways, are identified according to group membership while Waitrose customers are identified via patterns of consumption and lifestyle and lesbian women via their sexuality. The only thing that women seem to share collectively, and not through their status as women, is a neighbourhood. Even then, their use and perceptions of this space, including how safe it is, probably differs substantially (Massey 1994).

It is unlikely that there is much consensus among the local residents on values, for instance in relation to the expression of individual sexual identities. One can presume that the dominant view of the practising Muslim and Christian communities would be that sexual intercourse should be contained within heterosexual marriages and that public expressions of diverse sexual identities are to be actively discouraged. Views on the extent to which women's sexuality is a matter for regulation by family members or through state institutions, or available in the market place for purchase, would vary considerably. Many residents do not like the public transactions relating to the purchase of sex that take place nearby, although there are regular supplies of (male) customers. Yet a wide range of sexual identities and family forms are in evidence in

the neighbourhood. The tensions within particular ascribed communities, when values are not shared between individual members, or between communities and state institutions, when these values differ, are not immediately obvious or seemingly of concern to close neighbours if they are not members of the constituent community. Physical proximity does not produce connectedness.

A second, alternative way of seeing this neighbourhood is through the wider economic and social processes that have contributed to its creation and which continue to shape social and economic relations (Massey 1994: chapters 6 and 7). This narrative would chart the contribution of imperialism and colonialism to the development of the steel industry and the economic prosperity built upon this legacy. It would see the effects on local wages and social relations of the defeat of the once-dominant white male industrial working class, which had secured relatively high 'family wages' through unionisation. It would focus on the shift in mass production to developing countries in the restructuring of the steel industries, which led to a huge loss of male jobs and their replacement by more precarious and poorly paid service jobs and the commensurate increase in women's paid employment. The African Caribbean and South Asian communities would be explained as a product of labour market policies, based on former colonial relationships, which initially brought workers to Britain to work in specific manufacturing and service sectors.

The neighbourhood is also shaped by present forms of globalisation which have contributed to the development of the UK as a consumer-based market economy. The huge range of food products available in Waitrose and other supermarkets is the result of these global processes. Those who grow and process these products are largely invisible to consumers, who do not come into contact with farm workers, many of whom are now seasonal workers from the newer member states of the European Union (EU), in the UK, let alone those working on farms or plantations in Chile, Kenya or the Windward Islands.

The battle for a favourable position within the global market place leads to domestic UK economic and social policies which encourage women to enter and remain within the labour market but also seek to limit the social welfare responsibilities of the state. The care workers who look after the young or the elderly in the local private homes or public institutions are part of the wider service economy, taking over or supplementing activities which until relatively recently have been seen as the unpaid responsibility of female family members. Migrant women, along with local working-class women and some men, are filling the 'care gap'. These care service workers earn very little and do not shop at Waitrose.

Immigration policies based on the colonial legacy have enabled women migrant workers to fill these gaps in health and care services. Now immigration policy does not grant access based on membership of the Commonwealth and relies on the regional labour market of the EU to meet unskilled labour requirements. Because they work with the bodies of their clients or service users and

therefore share a proximity, such workers, including migrants, may be thought to be less invisible than those who produce our food and other consumer goods. However the workers' insecure status as non-citizens or as undocumented migrants, working often in informal employment contexts, ensures a precarious and socially invisible existence. The African care workers will soon not be seen in the neighbourhood either because they have been replaced by EU citizens or because they have been absorbed into less public spaces due to the loss of rights to work legally. The migrant women who work in the most exploited sectors of the commercial sex industry are almost totally invisible.

Introducing the framework

This book introduces a number of specific contexts, albeit not so local as the one described above, which provide similar narratives around constructions of identities and the impact of wider economic and social processes. The villages in the Punjab in India, Mirpur in Pakistan and Sylhet in Bangladesh, border towns in Moldova, the outskirts of Nairobi and farms in Naivasha in Kenya are not chosen at random or as discrete case studies but because they are shaped by, and themselves shape, identities within contemporary Britain. They are all affected by social and economic processes that have created and continue to create inequalities, not only within their neighbourhoods, but also within wider society. These processes, which create relationships of power between people living in the neighbourhoods, also create profound disparities in life chances between citizens of Global North and Global South states. They distribute many of the benefits of globalisation to the Global North.

Figure 1 provides the basic conceptual structure for this book. It seeks to capture the importance of the network of relationships that spans jurisdictions and affects gender relations within jurisdictions. The gender pyramids are adapted from Barrientos et al. (2001) and represent state jurisdictions in the Global North and Global South. Overall, the figure seeks to capture two networks of relationships. The first considers the way in which gender relations within a state are constructed through the institutions of the market, state and family/community (the vertical). The vertical 'up' and 'down' arrows represent the relationships between the three institutions of market, state and community/family, leading to the distribution of activities. Whereas identity was traditionally moulded by relationships in families and communities, it is increasingly conferred by sophisticated and segmented market choices (represented by the 'up' arrows). Consumers now buy an affective service, an interpersonal relationship, which was once associated with caring within families and community. The vertical 'down' arrows represent the expansion of market values into the domain of state and family. The final decades of the twentieth century were characterised by neoliberal policies, which either shrunk the state or introduced market relations into the provision of state services. The extent and impact of these developments varies according to the location of a particular jurisdiction.

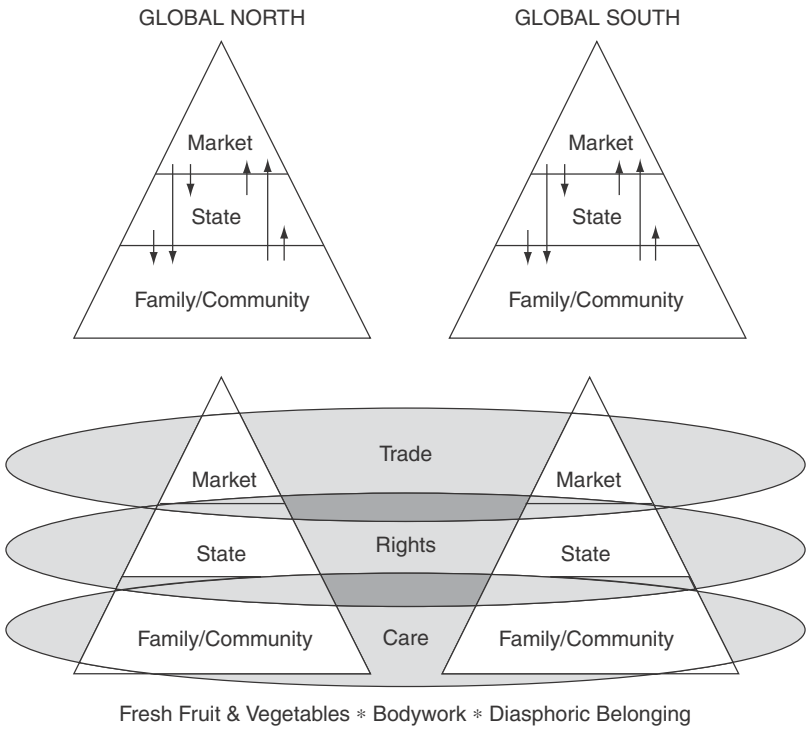

Figure 1: The framework.

The second set of relationships under consideration in this book spans jurisdictions. Global supply chains link the jurisdictions through the horizontal sets of interactions and discourses represented in the ellipses which encompass the lower two pyramids (the horizontal). The processes and their governance (through trade, rights and care 'talk') mould gender relations and construct gender identities. Throughout the book the demand end of the particular chain is focused on the UK. Chapters 3 and 9 discuss the way in which the demand is created for a particular resource. Chapter 3 concentrates on the demand for 'exotic' food products and body work services (involving care and sex). Chapter 9 reviews the way in which South Asian families seek to satisfy their sense of belonging in multicultural Britain. Chapters 4 and 5 consider the African context from which the food products are supplied. Chapter 4 provides an introduction to gender issues in sub-Saharan African countries that experienced British colonialism, while Chapter 5 focuses more specifically on the Kenyan context for the fresh fruit and flowers value chain. Chapters 6 and 7 are concerned with the home contexts for the supply of body workers. Chapter 6 discusses gender issues in Moldova, the Philippines, Poland and Ghana as source countries for women migrants. Chapter 7 concentrates on the particular body work chains involving nurses, care and domestic workers and sex workers from these countries. The next two chapters are concerned with the family chain involving South

Asian transnational families. Chapter 8 introduces the reader to gender relations in South Asia, while the specific issues relating to the family chains that link Pakistan, Bangladesh, India and the UK are addressed in Chapter 9.

Two conceptual 'tools' are used to explain these networks: one drawn from political economy analysis, the global value chain; and the other from feminism, the relational framework of ethics of care analysis. The reasons why global value chain analysis provides a useful framework in which to discuss social and economic processes and their governance are discussed in Chapter 1, while the contribution of the ethics of care analysis, set within a wider discussion of difference, is assessed in Chapter 2. These two chapters between them provide the framework for the rest of the book.

To refer back to the opening vignette, the economically focused framework of global commodity/value chain addresses the narrative told through the social and economic processes but is not sufficiently aware of the impact of gendered identities on these processes (Yeates 2009). Households are seen in current economic models as consumers of goods and public services rather than as producers of valuable inputs to both public and private sectors of any economy. Feminist analyses (Ferguson and Folbre 1981; Badgett and Folbre 1999; Elson 2000) have distinguished activities associated with production from those associated with what they describe as social reproduction, the biological and social activities necessary to sustain ourselves and essential for any functioning society. Production attracts economic value, and is the basis for national budgets, while social reproduction outside the market does not (Hoskyns and Rai 2007). There is therefore very little debate over the levels of care that are sustainable in economies that reward self-interest far more than the altruistic provision of care for others (Badgett and Folbre 1999). When activities are transferred to the market and become services they attract value but usually they are not seen as particularly valuable. The way that production and social reproduction are organised in any society is of central importance to a gendered understanding. Responsibilities for productive and reproductive work are distributed to men and women differently although the particular ways in which this occurs varies between societies.

A major theme of this book will be to explore the gender consequences of the distribution of activities that are associated with social reproduction between the institutions of the market, state, family and community and the contribution of law to this distribution. Assessing the effects of globalisation from the standpoint of how women's lives are organised in households is central to this process (Harding 2008: 225). I will argue that the lack of recognition of the value of social reproduction within any society contributes to global gender inequalities because it tends to distribute the benefits of globalisation to the Global North at the expense of women and their families and communities in the Global South. I use and adapt the concept of global commodity/value chains to explore this claim.

We will see the way in which fruit and vegetables grown in East Africa are prepared and packaged to add value, then exported to Europe to be sold in

supermarkets, creating a commodity/value chain. A care service chain is created when women migrate from Poland or the Philippines, entrusting family care to others, in order to provide care within European economies. The provision of sexual services is now a global industry, entailing both the movement across borders of consumers and service providers but also the creation and circulation of global cultural constructions of sexualities. I use the concept of body work, which avoids a division between sexual and physical nurture, to look at the way in which the social relationships involved in health, care and sex service provision are understood and regulated within global body work chains.

I extend the commodity/value chain concept even further to explore activities associated with transnational families, which involve the movement of individuals but relate also to the movement of norms, particularly those relating to the regulation of women's sexuality. Cultural and ideological identities are constructed within transnational 'imagined communities' (Anderson 1991) which offer citizens of different nation states a sense of belonging to a wider community constructed around shared beliefs (such as the Islamic Umma) or goals (such as the achievement of women's international human rights). Thus the horizontal processes illustrated in Figure 1 affect the way in which men and women work and organise family life within specific (vertical) jurisdictions.

While Chapter 1 critiques analyses rooted in social and economic processes, Chapter 2 addresses the feminist analyses of difference and intersectionality (Grabham et al. 2009). The opening narrative of differing identities presents a challenge for the political solidarity that is essential to support the redistributive strategies which would tackle gender-based inequality (Fraser 1995). Contemporary forms of globalisation affect gender relations in complex ways. It is clearly not the case that all men are winners and that all women are losers. This book is based upon the premise that there is no identifiable universal community of women who experience disadvantage based on their sex alone. However, assumptions about gender roles, and the way in which social reproductive activities, in particular, are organised and valued within any society and then integrated into global market processes, contribute to gender-based injustices, which differentially affect women and men. I contend that care analysis, which assumes that our individual identities are formed through relationships with others, can play a major role in a critique of existing trade and rights discourses and can be used in wider strategies designed to tackle global gender inequalities. The market is absorbing and reconstructing care as affect – something that can be bought and sold as a good or service. The provision of affective services is central to the development of the global economy and forms the core of the UK's consumer society, discussed in Chapter 4. Such consumer markets are developing rapidly across the world and are reconstructing gender identities. Markets offer women and men identities imbued with high degrees of autonomy, which raises challenges for the promulgation of a state-based discourse of women as rights-holding citizens, as a means of expanding 'civil' space for women outside the existing power relationships of the family. The feminist ethic of care provides the

basis for a critical assessment of these changes in the relations between market, state and family.

I intend, therefore, to address the challenges relating to feminist legal analysis in the context of globalisation not primarily through a 'rights question' but through a care question although I take due account of the role of rights in women's struggles for greater justice. I ask: who do we care about and how? not, do all women have human rights? Care thinking will feature in three ways. First, the substantive activities variously defined as social reproduction, caring and affective labour (and associated with a labour process) are the subject matter for discussion in particular jurisdictions and in the global chains; secondly, the values associated with care thinking, such as attentiveness and responsibility, will play a major role in the critiques of existing policies and discourses of trade, development and rights; and thirdly, care is used as a method to support the discussion of the global chains. I will argue that a more relational basis to rights and trade discourses will contribute towards tackling global gender inequalities. Thus I aim to combine and apply commodity/value chain analysis and feminist discussions of ethical caring to the specific contexts under discussion.

The processes of globalisation link people together in new ways within and across societies. They create new divisions and differences. These processes affect gender relations and are in part constructed through legal norms. They are built upon often invisible relationships that need to be understood if the injustices contained within them are to be tackled. This process of understanding requires equal attentiveness to the various contexts in which these relationships are constructed. The actors involved in the chains are located within a range of countries with varying socio-economic and political histories and legal contexts, primarily in the Global South but also, in the case of the body work chains, in 'transitional' states. These histories and contexts affect the interactions between the actors and need our attention. It is important to listen to the ways in which the issues that form the subject matters of the chains, whether they be food exports or transnational marriages, are debated not only internationally but also locally within Kenya and Bangladesh as well as within the UK. Listening carefully tends to reconfigure the perception of the issue under consideration: instead of seeing Moldova through the lens of trafficking, trafficking is seen through an understanding of Moldova.

It is a practical impossibility to cover each 'originating' jurisdiction comprehensively but Chapter 4 provides a wider gender perspective on sub-Saharan African jurisdictions, Chapter 6 discusses Moldova in depth and Chapter 8 does the same for South Asia. Poland, Ghana and the Philippines receive less comprehensive, but still relatively detailed, coverage in Chapter 6. The 'chains' are set within particular jurisdictions and associated with specific transnational activities in order to conduct a more detailed contextual legal analysis. I have chosen these examples because they have attracted wider gender analysis and are also subject to various forms of gender-based policy initiatives. They open up the potential for a

wider analysis of specific issues within and across jurisdictions, such as how difference is understood and dealt with within law.

I contend that constructions of gender are moulded through the plural governance measures within the chains. They contribute to the distribution of power relations between the social actors in the chains. A gender perspective reveals the ways in which the benefits of globalisation are unequally distributed and assesses the potential to redistribute these benefits. I look at the way in which discourses of trade, rights and care contribute to the existing processes of governance and regulation. I will argue that trade discourse is associated with the market and with an individual consumer identity; that rights are associated with the state and a citizen identity; and that care discourse is presently associated with family and community institutions and constructs a relational carer identity but that it is increasingly incorporated into market-oriented consumer discourse, producing a caring consumer.

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Constructing relationships in a global economy

Introduction

The last chapter told a story of cultural identities and economic processes. This chapter considers the impact of the global economy on gender relations, in particular its effects on divisions of labour. The chapter is divided into two sections that introduce two conceptual 'tools', which underpin the framework set out in Figure 1 in the Introduction. The first is the gender pyramid, which provides a gender perspective on the ways in which the distribution of productive and socially reproductive labour embodied in 'gender contracts' impacts on women's position within formal labour markets in contemporary processes of globalisation. It considers the effect of regulatory interventions on the construction of the 'worker', which reinforce gender injustices. It therefore addresses issues relating to the vertical relationships between state, market and family within the framework of this book. It assesses the implications of the increasing involvement of women as workers within global production processes that have relocated much mass production to countries in the Global South. The basis for historic gender contracts, in which women took responsibility for maintaining the household while men provided its income, are undermined, while the gender norms upon which these contracts are based are yet to change significantly, producing gender injustice.

The same developments are creating consumer, service-based markets and societies. The chapter moves on to consider the impact of consumerism on the relationship between production and social reproduction and on the construction of gendered identities. Relationships of care once within the unpaid socially reproductive sphere increasingly involve intimate service relationships involving the body of the worker and that of the consumer, which supplement or substitute familial caring relationships. The chapter assesses the gender implications of this move, which can also contribute to the exploitation of women. The final sections in this part of the chapter address the challenges to, and potential for, political action based upon consumer identities to address these injustices and pose an alternative vision, which would wrest the value of social production from the market and place it within the political domain. Feminism needs to reaffirm the importance and value of social reproduction in all societies to reduce gender injustice.