

**Migrant self-employment in a European global city –
the importance of gendered power relations and performances of belonging for
Turkish women in London**

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Abstract¹

The wider socio-economic and spatial context has significant implications for self-employment. This paper discusses how the socio-economic processes constituting globalisation materialise in the self-employment experiences of Turkish women in London, conceived of as a global city. Self-employment is here used as a generic term for freelance work and small business. The global city is seen as a site where global socio-economic processes materialise in a specific way in the life-circuits of men and women from a non-western ethnic community. The focus is on the impact of unequal gendered power relations amongst Turkish men and women and their implications for women's self-employment. The question of how far this kind of self-employment improves the bargaining position of women is discussed. Thus, this paper contributes to the discussion about the effect of the new economy and globalisation on women's lives. Furthermore, it sheds some light on Turkish women who are self-employed and have been largely overlooked in other studies. The empirical basis for this paper is an ongoing ethnographic study of the economic activities of Turkish men and women from mainland Turkey who are not of Kurdish origin. A detailed case study is developed to show how far the self-employment of one Turkish woman can be seen as a materialisation of the context. The general findings indicate that female subjectivities in the gendered Turkish-Islamic discourse of the imagined community and the related gendered power relations constitute a big limitation for women's self-employment.

¹ This article is based on a paper presented at the Annual Conference of the Association of American Geographers in New York February 2001.

Introduction

There are varied claims made about the effects of globalisation, the new economy, restructuring of labour markets and their implications for the changing gender relations in society and the emergence of self-employment. Some claim that women have benefited from the changes (e.g. Women's Unit 2000). Others demonstrate that there is only slow progress towards more equality and sometimes even reinforcement of discrimination and disadvantaging of women through changing employment relations (Rubery et al. 1998, Perrons 2001). This paper explores how globalisation, the related changes in employment structures (e.g. the "24/7 economy", increasing part-time work, shift work) materialise in a specific way in the self-employment of women from a migrant community in one particular location. It focuses on the implications of the site of the global city, the gendered structure of the imagined community, gendered power relations, and the performance of belonging by Turkish men and women for self-employment. The location is London, characterised by many authors as having special features that make it different from middle-sized cities (Sassen 2001, Short/Kim 1999).

This paper aims to give insight into the effects of context on Turkish female self-employment. Thus, it can make a small contribution to the picture of a community with a short time of settlement in the UK and to the slowly increasing studies on female self-employment in the context of migration. In doing so, it sheds some light on the significance of the wider socio-economic and spatial context for self-employment in general. In current discussions about shaping the entrepreneurial society in the UK and other countries, self-employment is discussed as a step towards social inclusion (Social Exclusion Unit 2001). Even though this discussion is not taken up explicitly in this paper, the detailed findings on the effect of context on self-employment for Turkish women suggest that the self-employment of women needs to be discussed in a much larger context and that it does not necessarily lead to social inclusion. The case study offers insights into the importance of the household as a unit necessary to study in order to gain information on the micro-organisation of self-employment and the degree of social inclusion in UK society. It remains an open question if social inclusion is achieved if a migrant woman is mainly socialising with

other people of her community and a business serves mainly people of this community.

The paper is divided into four sections. The first discusses briefly the existing literature on gender, ethnicity and self-employment. Then it explores some of the concepts necessary for the interpretation of the findings, such as globalisation, imagined community, global city. The second outlines the characteristics and socio-spatial organisation of Turkish people in London. It does so by exploring the gendered nature of self-employment in general and the limitations the gendered subjectivities of the imagined Turkish community create for women who act beyond this community's cultural imperative. In this context it discusses the importance of the female body, the role of women in reproducing Turkish culture and the challenges the self-employment of women signifies for the gendered power hierarchies in the community. The third section discusses Turkish female self-employment by reference to an ethnographic study in London. A case study of one woman's experience is analysed in detail before general findings are discussed. The conclusion makes some suggestions for further research. It discusses some policy implications before answering the question of whether women's self-employment improves their bargaining position.

Gender, ethnicity and self-employment, embeddedness approach

The existing literature can be divided into two general categories: One discusses gender and self-employment without looking into issues of ethnicity or race (Carter et al. 2001, Carter/Jones-Evans 2000), very often complaining about the lack of an appropriate theoretical frame (Carter/Cannon 1992, Marlow 1997, Mirchandani 1999). The other analyses self-employment and ethnicity/race disregarding issues of gender (Deakins et al. 1997).

Some attention has been given in studies on women and self-employment to how gender, conceptualised as a variable, may affect women's performance in business and which traits and behaviour differentiate women from men (see for example Carter/Jones-Evans 2000, Rosa et al. 1996, Brush 1990, Birley 1989, Goffee/Scase 1985). These studies regard self-employment as the main variable and see gender as

one other variable, which may or may not have an effect on its development. However, the context of self-employment is regarded as gender neutral. It is said that it may provide some barriers for women, which they can overcome if they change their behaviour and become more like men. The structure of the context in society, gendered power relations and the socio-economic disadvantaging of everything that is female that are engrained in the business world, are not made part of the analysis.

Studies on migrant small businesses or ethnicity and self-employment follow a similar pattern to the studies on women and self-employment. They analyse migrant business in isolation or compared to businesses from other migrant groups, or they discuss how far entrepreneurs from different ethnic groups differ in their behaviour from that of members of the white host society, or how far ethnicity and race affect the performance of business (see for example Deakins et al. 1997, Jones et al. 1994, Kloostermann et al. 1998, Ram 1998). Thus, they often construct the migrant business person as “other” and assume that the context of business in society is ethnicity neutral. Self-employment is seen as the main variable and other variables such as ethnic background may influence its performance. Gendered power relations, the disadvantaging of everything that does not correspond to the norms based on the model of a man from the host society that are part of the structures of the business world, are not addressed in this sort of analysis either.

From the few feminist approaches offering a theoretical frame it is worth mentioning that of Marlow which looks at gender subordination and its impact upon women in self-employment (2002, 1997). Holmquist (1997) and Berg (1997) argue that the context of self-employment is androcentric and that self-employment itself is an activity that is socially coded as male. Marlow argues with Mirchandani (1999) that existing literature on female subordination in the workplace should be applied to women in self-employment. She argues that this sex-gender system “elevates the male above the female” (Marlow 2002, p. 87). She suggests that self-employment is an accommodation to subordination by women. This means that is often the last option women see for themselves to escape unfair treatment in the workplace. Female subordination is an integral part of the way in which women experience self-employment. Women are subject to particular disadvantages in the workplace as values, norms, behaviours and rationality reflect male traits and their dominance.

Given the impact of vertical and horizontal occupational segregation in the labour market, women are disadvantaged as waged workers as they are mainly in jobs which are low paid and at the same time involve little control, low skills and require so-called “feminine” characteristics of the person carrying out this work. When women go into self-employment in these sectors and trades, these factors are brought into the self-employment situation. It is not possible that self-employment is removed from existing systems of subordination. Hence, it is gendered in the same way as waged work is. In addition, she argues that subordination is structured by other social factors such as race, age, class and disability.

Mirchandani (1999) demands the integration of issues of race and ethnicity into studies of self-employment by women. Phizacklea (1988) pointed out that existing gender hierarchies have a great influence on the success of so-called ethnic economies. Existing empirical studies looking at the self-employment of migrant women very often lack a theoretical framework for integrating gender and race/ethnicity into the analyses of women’s behaviour. For example, Dhaliwal (1998) found in her study on Asian female business women that the household situation and family background of self-employed women influence their business success. She also looked into class issues and concluded that the class position of the husband has an influence on the woman’s domestic role and time for self-employment. The women she interviewed were all married and “domestic entrepreneurs” (after Carter/Cannon 1992), which means that they organised their self-employment around family life. Thus she concludes that families can help or hinder these women. However, the context of self-employment and gendered power relations, as outlined above, were not integrated into the analysis, and gender and race were not adequately theorised.

There are only few studies which focus specifically on immigrant Turkish entrepreneurs, mainly conducted in Germany and the Netherlands (Goldberg 1999, Goldberg/Sen 1998, Sen 1997, Blaschke/Ersöz 1987), predominantly studying self-employment in the clothing industry, restaurants and supermarkets. These studies focus on businesses, mainly run by men, and only sometimes mention women as an aside (Goldberg/Sen 1998). For this paper these studies offer very few insights, as the gender dimension and the context are neglected. There are only few general studies on

Turkish people in the UK. Küçükcan (1999) only touches on self-employment and small businesses. The few existing studies on entrepreneurs (Bagwell 1997, University of North London 1998) focus on small areas in London, do not include women and mix Turkish-Cypriots with Kurds and Turkish people from the mainland. The Turkish speaking community consists of these three groups. Many Turkish-Cypriots have been in the country since the 1950s, and there is a third generation living in London by now. It is very likely that they have accommodated to the social structures in the host society since their arrival. Therefore, findings on their business behaviour cannot contain many relevant ideas for the study of men and women from mainland Turkey, as the latter have fewer years in the UK. The University of North London study did not differentiate between men and women. It can be concluded from the methodology and the findings, however, that only men were involved in this study. There was no further differentiation within the 50 businesses between Turkish Cypriot and Turkish mainland businesses. Bagwell (1997) found in her study in Hackney that 8 % of businesses are owned and managed by women of the Turkish communities. However, this again includes businesses by Turkish Cypriots. It can be assumed that the number of women-owned businesses is slightly higher. Regional studies in Germany report that the number of self-employed women is actually twice as high as that reported in official statistics (Goldberg/Sen 1998). This was confirmed by Rudolf/Hillmann (1998) for Berlin. In Germany, very many Turkish people are now second and third generation.

Hillmann's study, based on questionnaires (1998), is the only one which offers more detailed insights into Turkish businesswomen in migration, as employees and self-employed, in Berlin. Her findings can only provide hints for the situation in London, as educational background, the length of the stay in the host society, and the sense of belonging to the imagined Turkish communities are different. The study selected 29 self-employed women in specific sectors in which women were found in larger numbers, including the food sector, catering, e.g. restaurants and take-aways, and body and health, e.g. hairdressers and beauty shops, and the clothing industry. The ratio of men to women self-employed in Berlin in the late 1990's is 3:1 (Rudolf/Hillmann 1998). The most important finding from the point of view of the present study is the weak integration of female Turkish entrepreneurs in the ethnic Turkish economy. Hillmann rightly questions whether the behaviour of Turkish self-

employed women in Berlin can be analysed adequately with the concept of “the ethnic economy”. She suggests that the existing concept implicitly only refers to businessmen. Four features are commonly suggested to characterise an “ethnic economy”: horizontal and vertical interdependency of ethnic businesses amongst each other; preference for employing members of the same ethnic group, especially family members; the targeting of members of the ethnic community as clients and customers; and suppliers drawn mainly from their own or other ethnic minorities. These features do not characterize Turkish women’s business behaviour in Berlin, or in London.

The broader theoretical frame this study applies in focusing on context is based on the mixed embeddedness approach. Granovetter (1985) applied existing sociological approaches to self-employment claiming that the social structure in society needs to be taken into consideration when discussing self-employment. Kloostermann et al. (1999) developed this further and looked at political as well as economic factors. However, neither approach looks into the gendered structure of society and gendered power relations and hierarchies.

This study looks at individuals as they participate in society and economy. Their subjectivities and behaviour are regarded as materialisations of wider social processes. The main focus is on gendered power relations and hierarchies in a migrant community and the host society and their impact on the choice and form of self-employment by Turkish women in London. It will explore how far the performance of belonging to a community limits the real choices Turkish women see for themselves. In addition, the gendered power relations in the host society in the specific location of the global city may impact on the development of women’s choices and wishes. This aspect is further developed in the next section.

Context and place - Globalisation and the global city

The notion that place, race and gender are interconnected is crucial for understanding self-employment. This study confirms that place is “a differentially located node in networks of relations, unbounded and unstable” (Berg 1997, p. 264). This means it is not just a physical entity, which can be measured. Places are continuously being reproduced by socio-economic processes that are always gendered, racialised, class- and age-related (McDowell 1997). Feminist geographers have argued for some time

that power relations in society and the community structure places and how they are experienced (Berg 1997, Massey 1994, Rose 1993). Thus, not only is the activity of pursuing self-employment currently constructed as male (Holmquist 1997), including all practices concerning self-employment.

Self-employment is a materialisation of existing socio-economic processes and flows in society, which can be studied in an optimal way in a specific location where it is performed by individuals. In this paper several aspects of context are analysed: globalisation, gendered power relations and subjectivities, and specific socio-economic relations in the global economy. The location where these socio-economic processes are studied is the global city.

All human beings can potentially perform several subjectivities. Behind this insight is the belief that we are multiple beings, that there is not one coherent self, but many potential selves, or rather subjectivities, which can be enacted or performed at different times (Battino/South 1999). We can hold several subjectivities about who we are at the same time, without doing so consciously. In practice it is difficult for most men and women to do so as they have been socialised to perform only one or few subjectivities. In the process of trying this they have to go beyond existing limitations inside of their minds of what is “real”, constructed as right and socially acceptable. This may cause fears of various kinds, especially that of “losing one’s existence” when going beyond those constructions of realities which are seen as being morally acceptable and correct. However, most men and women do not know that they can potentially perform many different subjectivities. Other men and women who perform one or more different subjectivities provide models that remind them that they can do so potentially as well. Identities are relational constructs, used to describe the different social roles an individual can hold in different contexts and to indicate belonging to a nation or social group.

Thus, the global city provides a context where a wide range of possible subjectivities can be performed and is an important influence on the personal development of individuals. Migrants with a short time of settlement in the global city London are exposed to many models by men and women from various cultural and religious backgrounds and migrants with a longer period of settlement in the UK. These

subjectivities that all individuals can potentially perform are gendered, class- and age-related and racialised. They can be performed in various activities, which are themselves gendered and class-related. In this research the performance of self-employment is regarded as a materialisation of existing socio-economic processes and flows including gendered subjectivities, which is localised in the global city. Pursuing self-employment requires the performance of a different subjectivity, in other words, a different self-concept and different social practices.

Globalisation is regarded here as the global flow of migrating people, capital, information and other commodities, which is structured on a daily basis by numerous actors in their practices. These flows are facilitated by the advancement in telecommunications, transportation technology (Sassen 2001, 1991). Both small businesses and headquarters of transnational companies are manifestations of these flows. In the context of this paper, migrants are regarded as constitutive elements of the social processes and flows labelled globalisation. *Global cities* are regarded as necessary territorialisations and concentrations of these flows of migrating people, capital, commodities, information and subjectivities. They represent necessary strategic sites for actors to perform globalisation (Sassen 2000b, 2001, Short/Kim 1999, O'Byrne 1997). Migrants and their small businesses in global cities are therefore seen as a localisation of globalisation (entailing high competition, the necessity to cut prices and subcontract to cheaper suppliers). They function to support and maintain the global economy (Sassen 1998).

I regard the global city as a strategic site for renegotiating discursively constructed gendered subjectivities and power relations. Of note here is that, for migrants from countries with clearly male dominated societies, such as Turkey, moving to a host society with a higher degree of gender equality constitutes a challenge to gendered power relations and hierarchies. Indicators for gender power relations used here are the numbers of women in employment and self-employment. Few women in Turkey are self-employed, while more than 25 % of women in the UK are (Carter 2001).

The specific features of the global city allowing for renegotiating discursively constructed gendered subjectivities in migrant communities and for restructuring power relations between the genders are: it provides 'living models' for women for

performing different subjectivities; social opportunities for performing these; and the necessary physical locations for doing so. I will deal with each of these factors in turn.

Living models: The global city has a very racially and socially heterogeneous society. The presence of different gendered and racialised subjectivities and different power relations between the genders in the host society and in different racial communities (Sassen 2000c) are a constant challenge to their own. These provide models for performing different subjectivities which go beyond the gendered discourse of what constitutes “Turkishness”. For example, women of various social and racial backgrounds in their everyday life in London and in successful positions at work, e.g. in business, as managers, provide models for Turkish women to which they can compare their own life, wishes and intentions. Furthermore, the different forms of relationships, widespread singlehood, and the social acceptance of divorce and re-marriage in the host society all provide examples of different living arrangements.

Social opportunities: In a global city, there are many social organisations, clubs and centres which offer social opportunities to perform different subjectivities beyond the ones suggested by of the discourse of the ethnic community. The socio-economic context in the global city also offers opportunities for small businesses and self-employment to emerge. For example, numerous ethnic and racial groups have specific needs (e.g. catering), which have to be met. In addition, due to high competition amongst large companies and high prices for premises, these companies seek to outsource parts of their production or services in order to reduce production costs, and this provides opportunities for the start-up of new businesses by migrants.

Physical locations: The global city offers many spaces beyond the social control of other Turkish kin and social peers where a Turkish woman can feel comfortable and safe. Examples are shops and restaurants with racially mixed customers, offices and so-called public space. In these locations, only the gendered power relations of the host society are valid. For women this means, for example, that they have an opportunity to relate differently to men and women of other ethnic communities. In addition, current policies on shaping the entrepreneurial society provide support for finding businesses premises, to help turn social and businesses opportunities into a

venture. This support is available to any women who ask for it, independent of the social control of community members and kins.

These elements can be found in a wide variety, large quantity and concentrated form in a relatively small area in the global city. By contrast, the middle-sized city with fewer racial groups with fewer members as well as fewer high-income, high profile, jobs occupied by women constitutes a different strategic site (Sassen 2001). In this location the performance of a different subjectivity outside a community environment is less likely for a migrant woman of an ethnic community. There, the circuits of a woman outside the community will be closely observed by the host society and be seen as unusual to the women of the minority community, members of other communities and the host society. There are fewer opportunities and locations for self-employment and finding different social peers than in the global city, with different norms, values and different discourses of gendered subjectivities.

In summary, globalisation and the global city foster community formation in a particular way as regards the formation of an entity with boundaries to the "other". The presence of different gendered subjectivities and power relations are a threat to an imagined coherent Turkish identity. The next part offers answers to the questions: Who is "the community" of Turkish men and women? What is the position of women within it? Where does it materialise? How far does this social context impact on women who pursue self-employment?

Turkish men and women in London and their imagined community

Turkish men and women in London

Turkish people were chosen for the empirical study for two reasons. One is that they have a relatively short history of settlement in the UK. This renders them ideal for studying the impact of a specific socio-spatial context on gendered power relations. The second is that a clearly male-dominated community provides an ideal context for studying in depth changes in power relations between the genders when women pursue self-employment. All interview partners clearly admitted these gendered power relations. Küçükcan (1999) explains in detail the traditional Turkish family structure with the senior man in control of the rest of the family members.

Interestingly, Turkish people have largely been invisible in the UK. There are three reasons for this. First, the 1991 census only offered the category "white other" for people with Turkish origin. Second, the big inflow of Turkish migrants from mainland Turkey started in the mid-1970s and, therefore, they have only a very short time of settlement in the UK. Exact numbers are not available. Estimates vary from 80,000 to 120,000. For 1997, the Turkish Foreign ministry suggests 97,580 resident Turkish citizens and workers in the UK, excluding the unemployed (in Koray 1999). It is estimated, however, that the actual number is higher. One reason is that those who have British citizenship are not included. Over 90 % of all Turkish people in the UK live in Greater London. Another reason why Turkish people are nearly invisible is the spatial concentration in North London, e.g. in the boroughs of Hackney, Haringey and Islington, which has not brought many of the first generation immigrants in touch with many white British members of society. This is different for their children, however, as they develop social ties with members of the host society and other communities over a longer period (Küçükcan 1999). One reason mentioned by Turkish people for the few contacts beyond Turks is to focus on kin, social networks from villages of origin in Turkey, partly due to language barriers, experiences of racism and the choice to remain amongst themselves to maintain a "coherent" community. Thus, their social sphere often only entails Turkish people and their homes, community centres, Turkish shops, restaurants, cafes and bars.

The Turkish imagined community

"The Turkish Community" is a mental image, a symbol of belonging to a social group based on Turkish origin, and supposedly shared values and norms. "Community" only exists through the discourses and social practices of men and women in specific places (Fortier 1999). This is one of the reasons why authors like Anderson (1983) and Fortrier (1997) call it "imagined community". These discourses and practices are thoroughly gendered, entailing unequal power relations between the genders and specific places and events where particular subjectivities are performed and reiterated.

The imagined community was found in this study to be conceptualised as the "container" of shared gendered norms, values and practices (including speaking Turkish) that constitutes a unity and particularity to which members can refer. It

contains amongst other things norms for men and women about duties of adulthood, parenthood and community behaviour. Performing community includes speaking Turkish, following Turkish traditions, eating Turkish food, visiting the mosque and community centres, paying visits to Turkish restaurants and friends, and marrying a Turkish partner to have children with. Following these norms and practices, then, differentiates members from “others” in the global city. As a reward for those performing community in the “correct” way it offers friends, social peers and business partners, as clients and suppliers, who are essential for an everyday life within a Turkish-oriented life and business to those who perform community through their practices.

Within the imagined Turkish speaking community there are clear hierarchical divisions along lines of gender and age, as in many Islamic communities (Mohammad 1999). The community can, then, only be ideally performed by a woman who lives her motherhood within a marriage to a Turkish man. Reproduction and continuity of “Turkishness” are conceptualised as female and can only be embodied by women. Therefore, Turkish male identity can only be maintained through women in that described way. However, there is no homogenous subject “woman” but rather an ideal subject constructed in Turkish-islamist discourse. Ilyasoglu (1998) highlights the differences between the notion of sexual activity and the body in Western Christian ideas and interpretation of Islam in Turkey. In the latter, sexual activity is constructed as proper as long as it is practised in the legitimate frame of the marriage and improper and shameful if practised outside of it. The body is “more than a physical entity. It embodies both the sense of self and the “ten” and serves as a medium of interactions between the two.” (Ilyasoglu 1998, p. 255). “Ten” is Turkish and connotes the biological skin and the surface of the body as a stage for interaction of sexual drives and sensualities. Thus marriage becomes the crucial initiation ritual for providing a legitimate frame for sexual activity and, symbolically, a necessary institution for reproducing community and the threshold to adulthood. It can be assumed that first generation immigrants re-territorialise the traditional family structure and gendered power relations of Turkey in London. The basic features are that a senior man is the authority and has control over all other members, including younger men. The man is the breadwinner whereas the mother is the “care-taker” (Kücükcan 1999). Women’s sexuality is still constructed as a threat as long as she is

single, and only in a marriage this threat is under control and taken away from the public sphere.

Female bodies are inscribed with the ideal of motherhood and of the guardian, as well as charged with the reproduction and continuity of Turkish culture, as in many Islam-dominated cultures and Christian communities (Fortier 1999, Mohammad 1999). This ideal femininity entails prescriptions of ideal occupations and social spheres where this femininity may be performed. Permitted places (Fenster 1997) of femininity for traditional Turkish women in London in the Turkish-Islamic discourse are their own home or that of friends, homes of other women and other places where they are under social observation by the husband or other community members. In contrast, the male body is inscribed with authority, stability, fixity, fun, and charged with the reproduction of the economy - and so are the places men are permitted to dominate, so-called public space, cafés and mosques, and work places.

Küçükcan (1999) describes in general settlement patterns in London. However, he mainly refers to men and does not specify the situation of women who come as single migrants on their own. First points of contacts are often relatives, friends or neighbours from the same village. If these contacts are performing belonging to the imagined community and the English of the migrant woman is not very good, it is very likely that the single migrant builds networks amongst these contacts. Performing belonging is then influenced to a large extent by the subjectivity available in the Turkish-Islamic discourse, which is very likely to be similar to the beliefs developed in Turkey. It can be concluded from Küçükcan's findings that the longer a woman is in London, the more likely it is that she becomes capable of moving beyond the limits of this subjectivity and these beliefs, providing she establishes contact with British people and members of other communities and adapts herself to the host society. A traditional Turkish partner is likely to limit her moving beyond the socio-spatial boundaries of community.

Women as employees

Stereotypical images of women (e.g. carer, mother) have resulted in employment restrictions in Turkey (Zeytinoglu 1998). These images of women, internalised in childhood (Zeytinoglu 1998), have shaped a disposition, which limits their ability to

act autonomously following their own wishes (Saharso 2000). Gendered divisions of labour are naturalised by referring to the culture. In 2000 the average number of women in the labour force in Turkey in the first and second quarter was 26.2 % (OECD 2001, p. 41) of whom 70 % were unpaid family workers. The latter are officially registered as employed, but do not get any salary or any financial benefits, including pension contributions (Tusiad 2001). The cultural norms and expectations towards women pre-shape the scope of choices and subjectivities a girl can develop. Thus, employment rates of women of the Turkish community can be estimated to be lower than of women in the host society.

The following ideas refer to traditional Turkish men and women. Socially acceptable occupations, beyond caring for children and relatives, in London are jobs mostly in Turkish factories or shops, ideally when working together with the husband as an employees or supporting him in running his own business. Women's paid employment is usually socially acceptable as long as the income generated by the woman is needed for the couple to build up capital, for example for the husband's self-employment. The jobs, which are socially acceptable, are usually low paid low status jobs.

Self-employed women

As shown above, the percentage of women found in self-employment is less than 10%. The percentage of women in self-employment in the British host society was 25.8% in 1999 (Carter et al. 2001). This indicates that there are different gendered power relations in the British host society than in the Turkish community. The few Turkish women who are self-employed, working on their own or in a partnership with a domestic or business partner, are found in the same sectors in which Turkish women are employed. These are those sectors which represent the expansion of unpaid domestic activities into the paid labour market in the service sector, including caring for the elderly and nursing, catering, health and beauty, education, mediation and translation, the retail sector and in slowly increasing numbers the higher service sector (e.g. accountant, lawyer, travel agent). There is one exception known to me of a woman who runs several textile factories in London.

Self-employment of women reduces the mother and carer role which is so crucial for reproducing Turkish culture. The presence of other less hierarchical structures with different roles for women, and men, in London are perceived as a threat for preserving Turkish traditions and subjectivities. Bainbridge (1986) goes further in pointing out that independence can only be achieved for a Turkish man and woman through marriage and rearing children. Thus, the marital status of a self-employed woman gains high significance for social peers and kins. At the right age for marriage any man or woman comes under a lot of social pressure to marry a Turkish partner. In the logic just described, motherhood and childbirth are the necessary next steps after the marriage for a woman. Self-employment, then, conflicts with performing motherhood in the ideal way.

The research process and the methodology

Using a combination of ethnographic techniques, including narrative open-ended interviews and participant observation, I gained insights into the ways in which the interview partners construct their subjectivities and realities. Interviews were conducted with self-employed women and men, and additional insights were gained in the interviews with key informants. These were Turkish and British business advisers in different institutions, e.g. Business Links, Banks, members of community centres in leading positions, employed Turkish women and men and members of institutions concerned with racial equality.

A lot of the knowledge and experiences my interview partners shared with me is based on the fact that I am German and not part of the British host society. Therefore I was trusted to be able to understand some of the experiences of what Anne Fortier (1999), in her excellent article on the Italian community in London, describes as the “new white racism” in the UK based on culture and difference. In addition, my authority was established by the way other members of this imagined community constructed my subjectivity in relation to the knowledge they had about me in terms of my education and academic base. The London School of Economics is perceived to be an authority in economics, and thus part of this authority was transferred to me. And the fact that I have developed real friendships with men and women who are

Turkish and recommend me as reliable underlines my integrity and trustworthiness as well as my genuine interest in Turkish matters.

The research process was characterised by a long starting phase and a high number of rejections for participation in the study. Barriers on the side of the Turkish interview partners were a lack of trust in my authenticity as a researcher. Many feared that the Home Office, the Inland Revenue or the Turkish government might have sent me. Other reasons mentioned to me by those who are part of the study are the lack of self-confidence resulting from many experiences of discrimination and their low social status in the UK society. Some interview partners phrased this status as being constructed to be “descendants from a Third World Country”. In addition, their English was often quite limited, so they feared being “looked down upon”.

Ten in-depth case studies were carried out with Turkish self-employed women. All but one of these women were first generation immigrants (besides one) to London and had university educations from Turkey, the UK or both. They had been in business in the service sector for six years or less and living up to 14 years in the UK. Nine of them were older than 33. Six were married, while two were divorced and single. Finding self-employed women was difficult in the first place, and then it was difficult to convince them to be part of the study. Men, when asked, often said that there were no self-employed Turkish women. It was only through relying on one Turkish man and one woman within my networks within the community that I found these women. Trust had to be developed slowly on their side until they talked about the issues, which really mattered to them. I selected, when possible, women from different trades. My interview partners were a consultant, a lawyer, a former bar owner, two women in export/import, a café owner, an accountant, a property agent, and two journalists. Information about other women who were not willing to participate in the study could be gained from these self-employed women and the key informants.

The position my interview partners maintain in relation to the imagined community varies from hardly any contact with Turkish people at all, and then only to selected individuals, to having nearly all their contacts both in the private and business realms with Turkish people. The choice of this position is limited and very much dependent on their migration history, the length of their stay in the UK, their marital status and

choice of partner (Turkish, non-Turkish), religious orientation and the motives for migration for as well as their initial networks, if any.

Muge C. – a case study

This section discusses a case study in detail. A case study of an individual was chosen for this paper, as, thus it can be shown how the conceptual issues discussed above operate in one person's daily life. Only then do the implications of context and place for the self-employment of women become obvious. The case study is presented twice, first to offer a mainstream presentation of the self-employment of a woman without considering the wider context. The second presentation, or reading, discusses the same case study within the larger theoretical frame laid out above.

Muge C. was chosen for the main case study in this paper as she represents an example of a community-orientated married woman with only few private contacts outside of it. This makes her an ideal case for analysing the impact of the performance of belonging to the imagined community on the shape of her self-employment. She seemingly follows the traditional model of the ideal woman: she has recently married a Turkish man and is expected by the other members of the community and her husband to become a mother soon. So, firstly, she represents the substantial majority of Turkish women who are married to a Turkish man. Secondly, she represents some women who are very active in reproducing and maintaining Turkish culture. Thirdly, she represents community women who are self-employed. Crucially, she is an example of a successful business woman who is coping well, thus showing that self-employed women are not a problem, a stereotype migrant women have often to cope with (Morokvasic 1991).

First reading

Muge (37 years) opened her restaurant and bar less than a year before the interview. She runs it together with a Turkish business partner, but claims to be the real boss. He only works in the kitchen. Her family, one brother and a sister, and her Turkish husband, help her in the kitchen and with other matters related to the business without being paid. She has four female part-time employees, British and Turkish, who help her with serving the customers. Her main motive for becoming self-employed was to earn a living and escape unemployment as a designer. She found finding a job

difficult both because she is from a “Third World Country” and because of the general market situation for designers. Muge has a London University degree in design, worked free-lance and in a Turkish textile factory where she was a manageress. She came as a political refugee, belongs to the Islamic subgroup of the Allevis and has been in London for 18 years at the time of the interview. With this restaurant she is realising a wish she has had for some time. Originally, she wanted one day to open a restaurant in a nice small town on the coast in Turkey. But, as it is unclear when and if she will return, she realised this dream in London first.

She chose the location of the businesses premises near the social sphere of many Turkish people. It is on one of the roads where many Turkish and Kurdish businesses are located. Thus she can rely on her fellow community members for a certain amount of business from the start. I see Muge as a powerful, independent and intelligent personality who knows what she wants and does what is necessary to achieve her aims.

Muge leads a very community-oriented life. Close friends and advisers are Turkish. She has been married to a Turkish man for less than a year and is active in a cultural community centre in running a folk dancing group. Although she claims that most of her customers are British and from other nationalities, after several visits I noticed this only applies to the café that serves breakfast and lunch as well as small evening meals. She has a lot of Turkish customers in the bar in the basement at night, which also rent the room for functions such as weddings. However, the daylight business of the café and bistro is also a focus point for friends and relatives coming along because, she told me, they know someone is there to talk. One table in the rear near the cashier till and the kitchen are used for this purpose.

This description of her situation and choices says relatively little of the significance self-employment has for her and her social peers and why the location in the global city and the place of the global city are so important for her performance of her subjectivity as restaurant owner/manager. A coherent understanding of her “choices” and the way the business is organised cannot yet be offered. The context of globalisation and the global city in which gendered power relations are renegotiated

and the context of self-employment and gendered identities in the imagined community are crucial to understand her performance adequately.

Second reading and discussion of Muge C.' situation

The presence of other life-projects and performances of other subjectivities of men and women in the global city have opened up opportunities for Muge to enlarge her repertoire of wishes and choices concerning her life-project. She came to London at an age when her socialisation was mainly finished in the socio-economic contexts of Turkey. Studying with a variety of young men and women of the host society and other countries in London she got to know other subjectivities and life-styles as models for relationships, performed next to her. She also got to know well all opportunities for employment, self-employment and locations for performing those beyond the socio-spatial boundaries of the imagined Turkish communities. For example, she remained single up to the age of 36, which is far beyond the average age threshold for marriage within the imagined community, which lies beneath 30. In doing that, she has reacted to the social relations performed in the global city of London.

In addition, her wish to become self-employed and open a restaurant was developed in the context of the host society. Muge decided to pursue self-employment after having been unemployed as a designer and having experienced various forms of discrimination when applying for jobs in the host society. She worked in a Turkish textile factory as a manageress before she left employment. This position and the existence of the textile factory are materialisations of globalisation. At that time the textile market needed cheap products and that these could be generated adequately in London. It is quite unlikely that Muge would have been a manageress in a Turkish textile factory in Turkey or a middle sized city in the UK as the labour force structure in such a city and the gendered power relations in Turkey would not have provided these opportunities. What is crucial here is that textile factories needed shift workers and home workers who were willing to work hard for a small amount of money under difficult working conditions. The population of the global city has a large quantity of unskilled workers, refugees and recently arrived immigrants who need work and are willing to work under these conditions (Sassen 1998, 2001).

“Choice”, meaning selecting from various alternatives, is not an adequate term to describe Muge’s decision-making process as regards marriage and the location of her business premises. Her actual choices, those that she regards as viable, are still much more limited. She has internalised the gendered norms, which form part of the subjectivities of the Turkish-islamist discourse for women since she was a child, and she wants to be part of the social group of Turkish people in London. The internal conflict is only indicated by her withheld anger. She can only perform a different subjectivity modelled on that of social peers from the British host society and other communities to a limited extent. Belonging to the imagined community entails performing subjectivities different from those she has seen in London. As her performance of the cultural imperative is rewarded so much by the imagined community, providing clients, family support, social peer appreciation and a frame of reference for her related Turkish subjectivity, she does not see much scope for realising her wishes to a great extent right now. Thus, she reproduces “Turkishness” and contributes to the continuity of certain norms and practices. Breaking out of this discourse completely would mean losing at the same time the basis for part of her Turkish subjectivity – as her interpersonal autonomy is relatively low this would mean, to her, losing part of herself. Saharso (2000) differentiates between interpersonal and intrapsychic autonomy. The latter describes the ability to develop wishes and analyse them in relation to demands put on her from other people.

Muge located the business premises in an area close to the areas where many Turkish-speaking people live, socialise and have their business premises. This decision can only be understood adequately when knowing Muge’s community orientation and her low level of interpersonal autonomy. London provides economic opportunities for many cafés and bars as many people eat outside of their home. Reasons might be that they are single, and/or work long hours and do not want to prepare a meal everyday. And the lack of function rooms with catering for social occasions for the imagined Turkish community and of bars for their members is a business opportunity London provides. The global city is a focal point for many immigrants, and especially for Turkish people as it provides social networks and work opportunities. Premises on Green Lane in North London, for example, therefore provide a potentially successful place for business. A second reason is that Muge and her business partner live in the area and socialise there, so that the already existing contacts and networks are very

likely to provide social support and customers for the business. Thus, Muge has made herself dependent on these networks and comes under the influence of the gendered power relations valid within them.

Muge is well aware of the traditional expectations of her, as a young Turkish community-oriented woman, to perform her “Turkishness” adequately through her role as mother married to a Turkish man. At the same time she is very aware of her own wishes and feelings. This high personal intrapsychic autonomy means in detail that Muge, on the one hand, clearly speaks the narrative of the future mother who intends to leave the business to the men in order to fulfil her culturally prescribed mother role soon. She is well aware that her becoming a mother has a high symbolic significance and function for reproducing community. She says that if she does not perform this expected role she threatens Turkish culture. The way she says this shows her suppressed anger and helplessness together with her clear analysis of the social pressure exercised by her husband, kin and social peers. She sees no other way for herself in this situation than to play a role for the time being – saying one thing, but doing something else. This indicates her low interpersonal autonomy (Saharso 2000). She feels she cannot contradict openly the demands put on her. She seemingly contradicts herself when talking about her plans to expand the business, and clearly tells me that her husband will see by her actions what she really wants to do.

Similar conflicts have been found amongst Asian women outside the business context in a study in the Netherlands, in which they were trapped between pursuing individual wishes and performing what Saharso (2000) calls the cultural imperative – a female subjectivity prescribing gendered behaviour and norms as part of the gendered discourse of the imagined community. For one married Asian woman in the Netherlands the solution to her personal dilemma was suicide. She could not cope with the way the marriage developed and did not see a social space to perform her own wishes. One way out would have been divorce. However, this would have brought shame onto the family (Saharso 2000).

A further example of Muge’s low level of interpersonal autonomy is her having changed from being single to marrying during her first year in business. When she was still single and started her business she came under a lot of pressure from her

Turkish peers, and the wife of her business partner, to become married. One reason given to her was not to “endanger” her business partner’s marriage she explained to me. Even though she did not really want to marry at this point she did in the end and bowed to the cultural imperative.

General findings and discussion

In general, all the recently self-employed women interviewed showed some anger and helplessness in different ways. They are aware of the demands the community makes for the performance of belonging on their lives and find some of these limiting. In addition, some feel unable to act beyond these constraints, as this might mean losing the appreciation and support of some of their Turkish peers. There was a strong sense of loneliness amongst the interview partners, which they told me seems to be applicable to many Turkish women. A common concern for women seems to lie in the lack of business support from outside the imagined community for their self-employment by government institutions. Only two were aware of it and had successfully used it. The system of business support by the former enterprise agencies, business links and the TEC’s (now Learning and Skills Councils) offers different sorts of training and advice. However, the majority of those I interviewed had not heard about it.

A particular concern for women married to a Turkish man seems to lie in the cultural imperative to be a mother. This is conceptualised as being incompatible with self-employment. The one woman who was married, mother of a 9-year-old son and the only breadwinner, complained that her husband who had more time to spend with him as he was unemployed, turned her son more and more against her. In her case, self-employment means, first, more social freedom for her in the office as a property agent and beyond when paying visits to clients. Second, it means losing contact with her son and thus social control over the family within the household. Third, the power relations in the marriage have remained the same since she became the only breadwinner because her husband has control over the money.

The overseeing and control of the significant reproductive function of women who are part of the imagined community has become differentiated and adapted to the

changing context of the global city. As long as a woman sees her place, her social peers, friends, relatives, market and customers within the social frame of the Turkish community, her self-employment does not constitute such a big threat to the unequal power relations between the genders. When the husband remains in control of the income generated by the woman, the wife's self-employment does not constitute such a great danger to the power relations in the household and the imagined community. If, however, a woman has control over her earnings and is the main or only breadwinner, this businesswoman constitutes a clear threat to the power relations in the marriage and thus also to the basis of the imagined community. One of the reasons is that traditional men and women anticipate that the independent businesswoman might lose interest in community affairs. One business woman told me that before she became self-employed she was often involved in discussions with men and her husband on religious and cultural affairs, but that now as a business woman she has no time and interest in these issues any more. The gestures and body posture while explaining this to me showed her dislike of these issues, her increased feelings of superiority to them, as well as greater independence in choosing her interests and topics. It can be concluded that she has already moved a step away from the core role of reproducing Turkish culture as prescribed by the cultural imperative of Turkish-Islamic discourse.

Self-employment opens up many opportunities for women, which may challenge the power relations between the genders. Firstly, it signifies an independent activity beyond the control of the husband different from paid work as an employee. Secondly, it opens up opportunities for new social contacts outside of the imagined community. Thirdly, it provides a new space for women on their own in the office or shop. Both are constructed as highly threatening to Turkish male identity and the imagined community. Fourthly, it opens up an opportunity to gain an income, which can enhance a women's bargaining position in the relationship. These opportunities in economic and social terms materialise in new places and performances of different subjectivities. Self-employment can be regarded as opening up social and spatial opportunities for new place-bound subjectivities performed in offices, shops and spaces beyond the circuits prescribed by the discourses of the gendered imagined Turkish community. Thus, it constitutes a danger to Turkish culture inscribed onto the

female body. As the opportunities cannot be controlled and diminished, the only way to maintain some control is to control and limit the circuits of the female body.

I found men controlling their self-employed wives' circuits within the marriage and three of them literally by being present in the interviews I conducted. This was possible because they were not in employment and therefore had the time to be on the business premises. But it was also clearly controlling their wives activities, as the interviews were not possible in the same way when the husbands were in the background. In two cases the partner came in several times and ended the interview in demanding her contribution in a different room. In one case, the woman twinkled with her eye to me at one point to indicate that she did not mean what she said and moved her head towards the direction where her husband was sitting. He had turned his back to us from the start of the interview and was listening to us. Men control women by, for example, maintaining control over money, controlling their activities by being physically present in the office, especially in interaction with men and women who are not community members and do not share the same norms and values.

Women who do transcend the social and especially marital boundaries of the cultural imperative in the Turkish-Islamist discourse are sanctioned in several ways. They are commercially disadvantaged in not receiving relevant information or money in business matters from Turkish business advisers or Turkish friends, and/or lose them as customers. They are psychologically disadvantaged by having their contributions in community debates and their wishes in partnerships or friendships ignored by men and women. They may also be discouraged from expanding in business.

The place of business is in Muge's case outside of the home and constructed as male. The social relations operating in the context of the imagined community create all locations outside of the home, and the social sphere of the community as male. Thus, there is no place for an adult woman in personal business premises or an office of a big company – she is expected to perform motherhood which would entail for her spending most of the time at home and consequently, giving up her business or full-time job.

Performance of community and belonging are gendered, racialised and location-dependent (Bell 1999, Fortier 1999). This study found that it is time-dependent as well. An example: One day I went out with a former female interview partner on a Friday night to socialize in a dance club in central London. When she recognised two male colleagues, one from her political party and another from a community centre, she started to talk about community life. Community does not take place here, she explained to me. The fellow campaigner from her party hardly greeted her when she walked pass him on the way to the bar. She explained to me that he is embarrassed to be seen by her in this location. When meeting within the social and spatial boundaries of the community, they usually kiss each other's cheeks and have a chat, even when they are not engaged in politics. In the context of the club the other member preferred to ignore her completely. She explained to me that this is leisure time the two men spend on their own, outside the social control of their fellow community members. They behave differently and pursue an activity with non-community members in a place where different gender norms are valid to which they adapt accordingly. My female Turkish friend had no problems being seen in this club. The example of the dance club shows that it is a "No-Go-Area" for Turkish community to be performed. Rather, it is a place for individual members to perform an "independent" subjectivity, acting beyond the norms and interpersonal relations of the imagined community. The dance club is still a gendered place where gendered power relations operate. However, these are different from those of the imagined community. The global city, which offers these multiple nodes of social relations for differentiating and renegotiating gendered subjectivities, is a danger for the dissolution of a constructed coherent unity based on traditions brought over from Turkey.

Social processes leading to self-employment manifest themselves in the changing subjectivities of the self-employed. Pursuing self-employment requires the performance of a different subjectivity. One interview partner said that she had to reinvent herself in order to be a successful businesswoman. Thus she was referring to her taking up other social practices and attitudes towards life and people, a new self-concept and a different self-presentation in order to be successful in business. In the context of this study, self-employment is a social manifestation and localisation of the global processes of changing employment structures and demand for a kind of work more women tend to carry out in the service sector. Norms, values and practices

amongst Turkish people are changing in the process of adapting to the conditions of the global city London, and so does the discourse of gendered subjectivities change – however, much less quickly than other social processes, such as the increase in paid work by women and workforce participation in trades not particularly coded as female.

Conclusions

This paper has discussed in detail the context of self-employment in the global city. It has focused on the implications of social relations in the global city for the self-employment of Turkish speaking women in London. Specific consideration was given to the gendered power relations in the imagined Turkish community and the cultural imperatives which both limit the freedom of women to follow their individual wishes and make choices accordingly. It has been argued that the presence of various lifestyles and gendered power relations in the global city London provides many models for Turkish women that encourage them to move beyond the limitations of the cultural imperative. Singlehood lies outside the cultural imperative of the Turkish-islamist discourse for women. Consequently, women who are single and in the age of marriage and parenthood are pressured to marry and have children. In Turkish-islamist discourse this is incompatible with full-time employment or even self-employment by women. The cultural imperative demands from them to stay at home and look after the children and relatives, if there are any, and possibly support the husband in his work or self-employment. Independent employment is only socially acceptable if this just described role is fulfilled sufficiently. The case study of Muge C. showed in detail how gendered power relations and cultural imperatives work in practice and limit a woman's choices and possibilities to follow individual wishes. Muge C. did marry within the first year of her business although she did not really want to at that point of time. And, although she looks through the cultural imperative of the Turkish-islamist discourse, she sees herself unable to realise her wish of staying single. Performing community demands the performance of a specific female subjectivity. This entails relating to, and following, norms that may suggest courses of actions contrary to their own wishes.

Globalisation materialises in a specific form in the global city in large transnational companies, small businesses, and in the self-employment of Turkish women and migrant communities. The global city has been found to be a threatening socio-spatial environment for the imagined Turkish community because it provides the opportunities and spaces for women to perform subjectivities different from those constructed within the community discourse. Female bodies are inscribed as guardians of Turkish community and culture and conceptualised as performing the continuity of a unique Turkish culture. It is this body that is controlled when it leaves the places prescribed by Turkish-islamist discourse and a woman performs subjectivities perceived as threatening Turkish male identity and Turkish culture. The self-employment of women has been found to be such an activity and is threatening these power relations between the genders in a special way. This, therefore, is threatening Turkish culture to a larger degree than working as an employee would be.

The fact that only few Turkish speaking women do have the confidence to pursue self-employment can be explained partly by the way they are positioned within the social boundaries of the imagined community. However, these gender relations are under constant pressure from the social world outside of the imagined community. Here is a point for intervention for policies. Programmes with a Turkish speaker, ideally a woman, or female translator, can provide training and advice in order to assist women to see and take the opportunities already available in business support. It is crucial that the woman running the programme needs to have a reflexive detailed knowledge of gendered power relations in the community and can adapt the general knowledge on business issues to the specific situation of community-orientated women in London. In addition, information on employment opportunities and support for the self-employed needs to be brought to the businesses and the self-employed women in order to make them aware of their existence and potential usefulness for them. Already existing networks within the community, such as women's groups, form a good basis to start to offer the programmes. Nevertheless, it should not be overlooked that self-employment is very often the last option women see for themselves. I agree with Marlow (2002) that policies focusing on removing barriers for women to self-employment only address symptoms but not the causes of women's bad economic situation.

The question of whether the bargaining position of women can be improved through self-employment has different answers. The answer depends on the marital status of a woman, her various contexts – marriage, community, and society – and whether she challenges patriarchal authority. If the function of self-employment for a single woman is to gain a living because there are no other options, the answer might be “yes” on a superficial level. This applies to all contexts. The complex effects of self-employment on income and pensions cannot be discussed here. If a married woman is the main breadwinner and remains in control of her money, her bargaining position in the marriage is very likely to be improved. However, this is dependent on the extent to which these women challenge the patriarchal authority of the family. If the unemployed husband is in control over money, and spends time with possible children, the woman’s bargaining position is weaker than she stayed at home and brought up the children. If her self-employment is the second income, it might change her position, again depending on who is controlling the money.

This ethnographic study and the findings discussed here only provide some small insights into the complex context of female self-employment in migration. The main limitation of the study is the small number of in-depth interviews with women. Nevertheless, the in-depth study included many instances of participant observation and genuine discussions with many key informants, men and women. All the female interview partners had a high degree of cultural and self-awareness and were in several cases expert informants about the situation of women in their community. A second limitation is the fact that the service sector only provides some illustrations of the way Turkish female self-employment is organised. The number of women in the other sectors, however, is estimated to be much smaller. It can be concluded from this study that their situation appears to be more difficult. The high level of education of the interview partners may be a further limitation, as they only represent a small fraction of the Turkish women. However, these women serve as doors and contacts to the host society in talking about themselves and fellow members in a reflective way. As the complex context of self-employment is the focus in this paper, their situation and analysis offers some significant insights.

Much more qualitative research is needed on the hidden aspects and the wider context of female self-employment, especially within migrant communities. Social context as

an influence on self-employment needs to be regarded in a much wider sense and in much more detail than it has been so far. Only then will a more coherent view and explanation of the occurrences and forms, as well as of trades and sectors, of self-employment with its different functions for men and women be provided. The particular implications of global cities for changing social relations, especially gendered power relations in the household of migrant communities, need a lot more attention.

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