

Feminist economics: not just for the little ladies

Linda Kaucher

Research student

Department of Geography and Environment

London School of Economics

For Association for heterodox economics 8th Annual Conference 2006

Draft: please do not quote

Abstract

As long as the pattern of women's perspectives dropping away if they are not specifically mentioned continues, then a 'feminist' label appears to continue to be necessary, in economics as well as elsewhere, despite its apparent 'partisan' limitations. However Feminist Economic viewpoints represent alternatives to neoliberal economics with general validity, and fit, in many ways, with other alternative economic thinking. In fact, because of the fundamental nature of the issues on which Feminist Economics tends to focus, it may be that other heterodox theories tend to incompleteness if they fail to take Feminist Economics into account, and to support a gender divide dualism that is actually characteristic of neoclassicism.

This paper is intended primarily as an exposition of why Feminist Economics is of fundamental relevance to other areas of heterodox economic thought. This will be developed through a discussion of some of the broad issues in feminist economics, including feminist critiques of the of the failure of neoliberal economics to take account of aspects of many women's lives, with some historical background of women's contribution to Economics, through an exploration of the cross-disciplinary relevance of Feminist Economics, and through a consideration of the relationship between Feminist Economics and other schools of heterodox economics.

Introduction

Despite the many years of feminist activism and development of feminist theory, a historical background of women's innovative economic work, a decade of the International Association for Feminist Economics and its journal, still Feminist Economics, and indeed women, remain at the margins of economics. Yet the issues and the challenges and alternatives to neoliberal economics that are raised within Feminist Economics indicate key shared understandings with other forms of heterodox economics. This paper will explore some of the broad issues of Feminist Economics and its critique of neoliberal economics, along with some historical background of women's contributions to Economics, and the cross-disciplinary relevance of Feminist Economics, in order to show the connections between Feminist Economics and other forms of

heterodox economics and, further, why a consideration of Feminist Economics is in fact a fundamental consideration for them.

In first exploring the scope of 'Feminist Economics', this paper could focus on how women are still a small minority in the economics profession, the many ways in which dominant neoliberal economics is gendered, the effects of economic policies on women, the role of unpaid reproductive and care economies in which women tend to take a central role, women's role in 'productive' economies wherein the gender pay gap, low paid for women and gender segregated labour persist, the use of women's labour as the 'flexible' component of economies and the supposed 'elasticity' of women's capabilities in regard to reproductive and care work, women's now very significant role in migrant labour, and the economics of the trafficking of women. It could also consider the fundamental role that gendered power relations play in economies and why women are, overall, significantly poorer in all economies. These are all aspects of the role of gender in economics, and are all generally ignored outside of specifically feminist work.

Juxtaposing Feminist and Neoliberal Economics

When gendered aspects of economics and labour issues have had mainstream consideration, it has usually been only from a market perspective. In the 1930's a focus on the wage differential was from a market-based perspective rather than one concerned with discrimination. The neoclassical explanation for women's increased labour participation in the 1950's was the opportunity cost of staying at home, even while feminists were identifying women's oppression in the housewife role as a cause (Freidan). Becker applied market-oriented concepts to comparative advantage within households, without questioning the consequences of accepting the status quo. In the 1970s, when Boserup raised the issue of women's role in development, it was through mathematical quantitative methods, again without questioning gender socialisation, inequality and asymmetric power. Thus even on so-called 'women's issues', deeply engrained masculine values are maintained when they are not specifically examined and queried (Barker & Kuiper, 2003)

Because all feminist work questions accepted norms, Feminist Economics, in direct contrast, is concerned with deconstruction and critiquing assumptions, particularly androcentric assumptions, to show biases (Beneria in Ferber & Nelson, 2003)

'Just as feminist thinking better explains economics, so economic understanding is a crucial component of understanding women's oppression today' (Albelda, 1997)

Feminist Economics therefore questions the epistemic community of economics ((Barker & Kuiper, 2003) and, importantly, like all feminist work, is essentially transformative.

With an obvious connection to feminist theory (Barker & Kuiper 2003), Feminist Economics applies gender analysis to the Economics field (Barker & Kuiper, 2003). Feminist standpoint theory asserts that from different experiences result in perspectives that are differently informed from the dominant perspective, and thus different but valid. Applied to economics, this means that Feminist Economics is varied, 'with no single definitive feminist voice', and no single set of shared assumptions, but with a 'family resemblance' of concerns & interests (Dawson & Hatt,

2003), taking gender as a central category (Albelda, 1997). This is an essential difference with monolithic neoliberal economics, which, while claiming universality, fails to acknowledge plurality or gendered differences.

As with feminist work generally, standard methodology comes into question in Feminist Economics, in this case in relation to Economics methodology. Therefore Feminist Economics may involve different research questions and methodological approaches, though this is not necessarily the case all the time (Dawson & Hatt, 2000, Ferber & Nelson, 2003)

Feminist economics 'also seeks to increase the variety of explanations that can count as economics' (Barker & Kuiper, 2003:3), pushing to broaden concepts. While neoliberal economics tends 'to focus on efficiency, growth, maximising gains and wealth, Feminist Economics prioritises the enhancement of human development and well-being' (Beneria in Ferber & Nelson, 2003:115), with a focus on provisioning, and on markets as a means to provisioning (Dawson & Hatt, 2000). Feminist Economics takes much more account of welfare and the reproductive economy, though seeks to avoid essentialism, either in the sense that these are women-only areas of concern or that there is a need to always bring in gender.

'What it argues for is a change in the value system of economics, so that economics can become flexible as well as hard, contextual as well as logical, human as well as scientific, and rich as well as precise. Such an economics would be more adequate for analysis of the economic behaviour of both women and men and by both male and female practitioners. (Albelda, 1997:151)

It may be that the ultimate purpose of engendering macroeconomics is to produce gender sensitive policy tools (Cagatay in Gutierrez, 2003), and it can be argued that this would mean a more realistic economics. However, for Feminist Economics to be seen only as being concerned with women's role, position and economic perspectives would be as dualistic as a masculinised economics which fails to take any account of women. Indeed, Feminist Economics seeks to counter the dualisms which underpin neoliberal economics. (Nelson, 1996).

One aspect of neoliberal economics critiqued within Feminist Economics is the self-interestedness of rational individual utility, or rational choice (England in Ferber & Nelson, 2003) 43), and whether this provides a realistic account of motivations. It appears that many forms of activity that contribute directly or indirectly to the economic whole, such as voluntary work, care work, and community maintenance, as well as reproduction and reproductive work, appear to contradict this concept of self-interestedness. The reciprocity and distribution that occur in some societies (Ferber & Nelson, 2003) also undermine this assumption. Thus this indication that the reliance of the neoliberal model on a universal individual pursuit of gain, linked to wealth of nations is undermined by such individual responses to factors other than self interest, appears to justify a rejection not just of the incompleteness of the separative self model, but also 'the false dichotomy of individual versus relationship', a further dualism of neoliberalism (England in Ferber & Nelson, 2003:39)

And while the presumption of neoliberal models is that preferences are exogenous, implying that they do not change in relation to markets, Feminist Economics promotes the more reasonable and diverse assumption that tastes are, in the broad sense, affected by environment including

markets, and also that tastes change over time and through the progress of lives. Differences in the generalised expenditure patterns of men are also a factor which neoliberal economics fails to recognise.

The prevalence of, and acceptance of the 'rational economic man' concept has led Feminist Economists to perceive the assumptions of separative self, and rational economic man as generally masculinised concept (England in Ferber & Nelson, 2003: 27), as it comes from a masculinised neoliberal paradigm. As such, the concept is sometimes referred to as 'homo economicus', or 'Max U' (Barker & Kuiper, 2003: 9).

In contrast, both Kryk and Reid, concentrating on consumer economics, have questioned what 'the good life' of economic well-being actually entails, taking into account ethical dimensions of human behaviour, and including in this the concept of waste. (Van Velzen in Barker & Kuiper, 2003).

Another neoliberal dualism is the dichotomous assumption of the self-interested individualistic microeconomic base as marketised consumer and worker contrasting with the 'soluble' aspect of family life, wherein altruism is assumed, with what happens in families lying generally outside of markets (Nelson, 1996)

While the conventional macroeconomic view is that the private sector produces wealth, that households only consume and the state service sector is mainly a cost factor and a consumer of private goods, Feminist Economics is more inclined to recognise that the private sector, the state service economy, the care economy and the non profit, NGO sector are all part of wealth creation (Young, 2003b).

It is a contradiction of caring work that while it is 'extolled as important and fulfilling work', it is at the same time devalued economically. This has led to a great deal of consideration, within Feminist Economics, not only of how its motivations question the Max U model, but also of how it is to be valued (Barker & Kuiper, 2003:12). This, and how reproductive and care work should be theorized, remain in question, along with what resources it requires, what opportunity costs are involved and how reproductive work should be conceptualized, as not all women have children. It is possible that without a broader acceptance of the value of this work to society, and until such responsibilities are considered to be more societal and less individual responsibilities, that these are insoluble issues.

There is some Feminist Economic concern now that while women have fought for economic rights and have made some gains in the productive economy, that they have, in the meantime themselves become marketised, in labour terms, with a loss, in that process, of their ability to advocate strongly for values outside of the market. There is a further feminist concern that reproduction and care work is also becoming marketised.

An assumption inherent to neoliberal economics and questioned within Feminist Economics is the assumed 'elasticity' of women's unpaid reproductive and care work. This is the assumption that women's capacities in this regard can expand limitlessly to accommodate for instance, to reduced government spending on services, such as the Structural Adjustment Programs that

placed extra burdens on women. The reality of overburdening the social capital of reproductive and care is of course negative effects on the social framework, for instance reductions in girls education opportunities as a result of increased care work and the cost of education in circumstance where the girls education has a low priority (Tsikata et al, 2000)). This false 'elasticity' assumption may also be an issue in the UK, where, in health care, moves to reduce hospital time in favour of 'community care' may increase the care burden on women at home with negative effects on their paid employment. Unpaid reproductive work is of course excluded from Gross Domestic Product (GDP) accounting, and government expenditure figures. Recently, arguments have been advanced for the inclusion of breast milk production into GDP, as it fits criteria (Smith, 2005)

In regard to paid work, Feminist Economics questions the continuation of situations whereby 'women are paid less than men, are concentrated in a narrow range of occupations and industries, and are more likely to hold low status positions, and to work on a part time basis' (Hatt in Dawson & Hatt, 2000:36). These labour market differences are often connected to the division of paid and reproductive work. When women's work options are limited in time and geography by other responsibilities this can result in oversupply and resulting distortions of pay levels (Blank & Reimers in Ferber & Nelson, 2003:165). These are key foci for Feminist Economics but are generally non-issues in neoliberal economics despite their often key roles in national economies. For instance the gender pay gap has been a major factor in the 'tiger economies' of South East Asia, in East Asian growth and in Export Processing Zones around world, and the remittances of female migrant workers are now significant to the economies of some countries, such as the Philippines.

Another assumption inherent in an apparently gender-blind neoliberal economic model is the 'flexibility' of women's productive labour, with its roots in the convenience of the male breadwinner model, suiting the demands of the market, and often related to care demands. Current commitments to WTO trade agreements, the multilateral legalised trade regime based on the neoliberal economic paradigm, may make this a very big issue for women, in the near future if female service workers in the EU become expendable as the cheaper labour of workers from India and China is preferred (EU GATS offer, June 2003, to World Trade Organisation for General Agreement on Trade in Services).

The tendency of the neoliberal economic model to reduce gendered, as well as race effects, of globalisation to the natural consequences of skills, technology and resources fails to take account of other factors (Barker & Kuiper, 2003)

The neoliberal concept of 'overall economic efficiency' not only fails to take account of distribution issues while women overall earn less and have less wealth (Warren, 2006), but is again deficient in relation to unpaid reproductive and care work. In the application of the narrow view of economic efficiency to services, and especially public services, Feminist Economics is inclined to question whether this should be paramount or whether it entails a potential conflict with quality. Thus equity, and social welfare and quality services are all undermined by an adherence to a blanket monetary efficiency, which, in failing to take account of more complexity is only a partial analysis. (England and Folbre in Ferber & Nelson, 2003:65).

Soderbaum's (2002) asserts that standard Cost Benefit Analysis, putting everything into monetary terms, is actually ideological, and recommends that this analysis is abandoned on the grounds that it is in fact undemocratic, a concern of key relevance to feminists generally. Soderbaum suggests an alternative positional analysis, with multidimensional profiles for options as a more useful approach to 'illuminate an issue'.

Of course a gender analysis of government spending, how and where government money is spent and how much is spent for the benefit of women, are of particular interest to Feminist Economists and women's budget initiatives, as a key manifestation of Feminist Economics, have been active particularly in the UK and South Africa (Cagatay in Gutierrez, 2003:36)

Rubery points out the connections between Feminist Economics and gender mainstreaming. Both have the transformative aim to not just make visible, but to reorganise and improve. Similarly to mainstreaming, but unlike policy neutral and gender blind positivist mainstream economics, Feminist Economics seeks to link the academic endeavor to explicit policy agenda. If genuine mainstreaming was genuinely applied to economics it would or should stimulate interest in analyses outside of narrow economic approach, 'embedded in social, political and institutional structures' and an Economics, for instance possibly providing for the provision for co-operation rather than competition in the labour market, challenging where there are skill shortages and gendered practices and attitudes in education, rather than capitalizing on oversupply (Rubery p3)

Thus, in its critiques and its proposals, Feminist Economics shows how market thinking is intertwined with gendered norms of human behaviour, and recognises that there is a coherence of hierarchies of reason over nature, separation over connection, and men over women (Nelson, 1996:133) and challenges this with a concept of people-centred development (Beneria in Ferber & Nelson 2003: 28)

A historical perspective of women's contributions to Economics

It is useful to consider some of the historic contributions that women have made to economics. In 1833, Jane Marcet 'published a collection of 9 stories on economic themes ... intended... for the improvement of the laboring classes'. P7, not revolutionary economic theory but an interesting methodology for engaging people with limited literacy and 'close to the bottom of the economic ladder' with economic questions. From 1832, Harriet Martineau, also wrote 25 stories as 'Illustrations of Political Economy' (Polkinghorn and Thomson, 1998)

Rosa Luxemburg corrected the error in Marx's theory of the accumulation of capital, describing the relationship between capitalism and colonial expansion She wrote that 'Capital cannot accumulate without the aid of non-capitalist organisations nor on the other hand can't tolerate their continued existence side by side with itself. Only the continued progressive disintegration of non-capitalist organisations makes the accumulation of capital possible' (Luxemburg 1951, quoted in Polkinghorn and Thomson, 1998: 47). This is an effect of concern for Feminist Economics now as capitalism utilizes global and public goods, such as the welfare state, for its expansion. Another historic figure, Beatrice Webb, engaged with social investigation and with starting the LSE in 1895 (ibid)

In the US, Irma Adelman 'explained why institutional arrangements and the potential for economic growth were related' 93, and used real world data from 43 countries to show the phenomena of growth exacerbating inequality (ibid: 94), especially in the development context. She recommended redistribution and education before growth rather than redistribution and education later (ibid: 97) and was an advisor to South Korea from 1964 –73 (ibid: 101).

Barbara Bergmann's concern with the economics of racial discrimination, led to 'an investigation of the effects of sexual discrimination in employment' (ibid:106. Describing the post WWII increase of feminine participation into workforce as 'the greatest revolution in our time', she 'set out to analyse it as a market phenomenon' in so doing providing the 'economic rationale to accompany the moral argument for the equality of women in the workplace' (ibid: 107). 'The Economic Emergence of Women' published in 1986 focused on the opportunity cost of staying home, and also dealt with women's experience in the labour market, the discrimination, the worse conditions and the limited choices causing oversupply, exacerbating wage gap, as well as the double burden of where child support should come from and day care issues She also imagined what an industrialised system of housework and childcare would be like (ibid).

Despite this background, Albelda's research into women's participation in economics profession the 1990's showed that few inroads have been made. But her view of the potential of Feminist Economics is more positive, that it seeks to recognise and integrate gender differences into economic models. Her views of the new possibilities that can come from integrating household labour into economic behaviour, and household work including care, the nature of which she explores, into national accounting (1997). This has resonance with the co-operative and unco-operative behaviour in households and household bargaining models that Amartya Sen has explored.

The cross-disciplinary relevance of Feminist Economics

Woolley's analysis of citations of the Feminist Economics journal appear to show the field as primarily a 'collaborative product of an academic community ...of... feminist economists reading and sharing their work and frequently making reference to each other's work', to build a body of understanding. It is when Feminist Economists publish in mainstream journals, and work and communicate in the mainstream, that their work appears to impact on mainstream economics but also 'when people search for "feminist economics"'(2005)

It seems, from Woolley's analysis that people from outside of the economics discipline are more likely than economists to go looking for what Feminist Economics has to say. However, she interprets this as interest from policy makers from areas impacted by Feminist Economics in areas where funding might be more available for Feminist Economic work and perhaps that Feminist Economics can explain things in language that is perhaps more approachable than that used within a discipline. She suggests therefore that it might be at these edges where the fertility and strength of Feminist Economics lies (ibid)

According to Barker and Kuiper 'Feminist Economics is uniquely situated at the intersection of economics, feminism and philosophy' (Barker & Kuiper, 2003:1). While Feiner suggests that

key concepts of markets, including exchange, individualism, rationality and scarcity, may lie in the separation anxieties of the Western masculine subject (in Barker & Kuiper 2003) Kuiper herself has drawn a connection with psychology, examining the ideas of Adam Smith, a key reference figure for neoliberal economics, how he ‘carefully distances himself from women and associations with the feminine’, as well as his own self-image as the prescription for an economist (Barker & Kuiper, 2003:10). Connections could be advanced about the deficiencies in the discipline as it has been conducted

According to Barker and Kuiper:

Science studies, critical theory, history, psychology and sociology may all be used to reveal the ways that economics defends a masculinist Western conception of identity as universal rather than particular’ has open(ed) a space to articulate enquiry in ways that do not erase difference and rationalize unequal social relations (2003:10)

History and Feminist Economics are mutually informative, particularly with the development of women’s history (Blank & Reimers in Ferber & Nelson, 2003:163)

There is a clear crossover between sociology and Feminist Economics, as the latter is more inclined, than standard microeconomic models, to place the concept of community at the center as does sociology; and sociological perspectives, as well as those of psychology and anthropology, may help to more realistically explain the interdependence and contextualised aspect of preferences. Institutional and organisational behaviour studies have relevance from within sociology, for instance in examining firms which choose to hire women and those that avoid doing it (ibid)

Feminist and Feminist Economic engagement in Development and Development Studies, through the concepts of Women in Development (WID) and then Gender and Development (GAD), has made ‘transformative contributions’, for instance in ‘recognizing that the gender biases in mainstream development policies increased women’s unpaid work and worsened already oppressive and exploitative conditions’, and this reechoes with the economic work of Adelman showing that if poor people get poorer, this is predominantly women.

This emphasises the need for disaggregated data, in Economics and in other disciplines to take account of women and recognise their different lives and circumstances and to present a more real and informative picture. There are problems in many fields when all male samples used and results universalized (Ferber & Nelson, 2003:167), especially if the bias is not acknowledged.

Gender in Development Studies is now expanding into explorations of how gender relations serve macroeconomic objectives and affect international trade and finance (Barker & Kuiper, 2003:13). Recent work within the area of Gender and Trade is considering the gendered nature of the international legalised trade agenda, recognising the crossover with both Feminist Economics and gender interest in Development Studies.

A feminist strand within International Political Economy Studies, more recently developed than Feminist Economics but overlapping in many regards, has identified the very male nature of for instance the neoliberal global governance model based on neoliberal economics, epitomised in

'Davos man' (Beneria, 1999) has particularly utilised strategies of discourse analysis to show the role of language in supporting the masculinist nature and concepts of neoliberal economics, in utilising language such as 'penetration', 'domination', and is providing alternative analyses.

The central Feminist Economics concern of how the reproductive economy can be taken into account in the productive economy which relies on it, how to do this without commercialising it, and giving it a monetary value and thus diminishing it as just another capitalist venture, has been considered within the field of Anthropology of Economy, where it has been suggested that this perhaps what is required is a defining of what we want kept outside of capitalist value system, while developing a real valuing of it. (Gudemen, 2001)

But feminist postcolonial studies have shown how feminism can be used for contradictory means, too. Similarly, it has been convenient, within the dominant paradigm to promote the assumption that the global increase of women's paid work has had a necessarily positive effect on women's household bargaining positions, while ignoring the increased double burden, the poor and insecure working conditions generally involved, and the lack of bargaining power in the workplace.

Relationship between Feminist and other Heterodox Economics

The key question in considering the relationship of Feminist Economics and other schools of heterodox economics is how far Albelda's statement that 'By and large the economics profession has done a poor job of understanding the economic contributions of half the world's people' (1997:166) is applicable to those other areas of heterodox economics.

Although 'a coherent alternative to the neoclassical economics' and a 'transformative project' (Woolley, 2005) Feminist Economics is still susceptible to being dismissed within standard economics contexts on rounds that it is not real economics; that publication in a journal such as *Feminist Economics* doesn't count as serious academic publishing; or that Feminist Economics is really just sociology'. It can still also be co-opted into, e.g. the Becker framework, or just be ignored'. But is Feminist Economics still marginalised in the heterodox context? If, as Nelson has suggested, there is a historic fear of the feminine at the base of systemic biases in Economics', maintained by 'cultural sexism', and 'institutional inertia', does it extend into heterodox economics? (Nelson 1996: 139). While this is very clear in neoliberal economics, when alternatives to neoliberal economics fail to examine deeply enough 'the sources of their category of thought', that they 'display some of the same biases. Nelson suggests a test of whether any economic theory takes account of women separately or of gender (Ibid: 134)

Alternative heterodox economic models have been developed or reactivated based on assumptions of co-operation, empathy, concern for collective well-being and interdependence in contrast to the mere economic maximisation of neoclassical economics which appear to contradict real life experience (Beneria in Ferber & Nelson 2003:164-5). It is important that these views are not 'dismiss(ed) as soft, 'idealistic ' and 'female', but instead are positively linked with the 'many manifestations of uneasiness about the results of uncontrolled global markets', including these concerns within Feminist Economics (ibid)

Nelson proposes that the staying power of neoliberal economics is ‘subtly tied to not wanting to be called “soft” because of its association with the feminism’, and that, ‘in fact these biases are so established that they never surface, even if the people involved have shifted in other areas of their lives’ (1996)

If there are shared philosophical perspectives, then the positive attempts of Feminist Economics to include non-tradable goods in national accounting, towards a more realistic and more robust accounting, should logically strengthen these connections. (Barker & Kuiper, 2003), as should the Feminist Economics challenges to the professional dominance of orthodox economics, its claims for more voice, as well as its advocating for research that focuses on difference towards a ‘richer understanding of the masculine/feminine dichotomy’ (Dawson & Hatt, 2000:5); similarly its attempts apply to apply insights of feminist scholarship to economics, including to epistemology and methodology and to promote an economics embedded in personal, cultural, political values as opposed to an abstract and detached version of economics that privileges male perspectives (Dawson & Hatt, 2000:4-5 & Barker & Kuiper, 2003:1).

It perhaps needs to be re-emphasised however that Feminist Economics is not only about ‘women’s economic issues’. ‘Economic issues associated with women influence economic outcomes for both women and men, albeit in different ways depending on social location, as indeed do class issues among women. Caring labour for instance is important to the well-being of both men and women and to society as a whole. And race, class and nationality as well as age are cross cutting issues.’ (Barker & Kuiper, 2003: intro)

While considerations of redistribution and equity and well-being have been called a ‘feminist subversion of economics’ (Dawson & Hatt, 2004) these, along with ideas of moving beyond the neoliberal view of overall efficiency, indeed appear to be common factors with other heterodox economics.

Lavoie has shown ‘tight methodological links’ specifically between post Keynesian and Feminist Economics and refers to other writers who have also drawn these connections. He in fact argues how four contrasting aspects by which heterodox economics (Post K, Institutional and Marxist) contrast with neoclassical economics are shared by Feminist Economics, with reference to the work of Nelson (1995) including her emphasis on ‘provisioning rather than marketisation or narrow individual choice’. Van Staveren has also specifically explored the relationships and demonstrated the connections between Post Keynesian economics and Feminist Economics, showing ‘how traditions can be enriched from a stronger mutual engagement’ (2005). Connection, as opposed to dualism, is a mainstay of gender mainstreaming and of Feminist Economics (see EES article). Soderbaum has pointed this out in regard to economic pluralism and democracy (2002) and the connections between mainstreaming and democracy are obvious.

The major Feminist Economics concern with reproductive and care work is also affects men It has been suggested that new institutionalist economics may provide insights into the whole area of care-giving, markets, and endogenous preferences.

Nelson (1996) asks whether Feminist Economics is in fact just another heterodox critique, as it is not new to suggest, as Feminist Economics does, that economics should be flexible, attentive to

context, humanistic and rich, while still being hard, logical, scientific and precise: or that the notion of Economic Man is seriously deficient as a model of actual human behaviour, or that economics should concern itself more with concrete issues of provisioning, related to the actual social and natural environment and less with abstract analysis of hypothetical choice'. Yet, if all this has been said before, she points out, mainstream economics still dominates.

Perhaps, then in the uphill, and essentially political, current battle to strengthen the currency of heterodox economics, it may be that incorporating the issues that are central to Feminist Economics, and overcoming the 'soft' label, may be the means to strengthening the role, and the broader acceptance, of heterodox alternatives.

Feminist Economics is undoubtedly pluralistic and heterodox in itself, and probably other forms of heterodox economics share with Feminist Economics the same problems of bringing in the new while remaining within the realms of acceptance in the field, and like Feminist Economics, involve 'emerging work', beyond definitive variables, which must remain open to evaluation and change.

If gender doesn't matter, along with the exclusion of women from economics, and if sexism is just a joking matter, then economics can continue without women. However, if the universal subordination of women is not acceptable then any alternative economics must challenge this, otherwise it continues a major failing of neoliberalism. And if it is recognised that sexism is a force then it flows that it is likely that it has indeed affected the nature of the discipline, confirming that there is then a need to examine assumptions.

In fact it is difficult to see how any rounded economics theory or modeling can have validity without acknowledging the clear relationships between gender inequalities, macroeconomics and global trade and finance. (Young 2003:16). Parallel to this, an avoidance of modeling power relationships makes it very hard to apply feminist methodologies to understand the dynamics of gender (Albelda, 1997:5)

Economics is not an abstraction, it does not exist without people. It is a state of affairs. Economists they help create the picture, of which they are a part, from their won particular position. Explicitly recognising own position is an informative move, and helps envision effective strategies for change and new perspectives. (Barker & Kuiper, 2003:intro)

To consider ways forward in merging Feminist Economics more definitively with other forms of heterodox economics Nelson suggests the following approaches: to consider the positive/negative dualism rather than masculine /feminism dualism, that is what produces social good and what doesn't: to think beyond the dualities of the qualities shown in the contrast between economic philosophies and instead to examine the whole, for a wholistic response; to re-evaluate priorities in term of what is core and what is peripheral, and to consider the reverse side of concepts, in order to look freshly at them.(1996:38). An example of the latter would be to reverse the information that women earn only 10 % of the world's income, and to consider that men, then, collectively earn 90%.

A deeper questioning of standard information can involve looking closely at data (Nelson 1996:128), broadening the array of measuring instruments Pujol quoted in Albelda, 1997:168), and looking at gender differences in input and output, because 'assumptions about gender influence virtually all aspects of economic reasoning' (Rubery). Paying attention to the subtleties of language can make a difference in awareness and viewpoint, as can be seen with 'work' or 'paid work', 'leisure' or 'unpaid activities', and 'person or man'.

It has been suggested that the reiteration of statements of market value e.g. choice, competition, acceptance of social inequality, greed, is part of the process of strengthening neoliberal economics. (Ferber & Nelson, 2003:121). If this is true then the work of Gibson-Graham urging us to recognise, acknowledge, subjectivise (become conscious) within the spaces in the existing system that do not fit the capitalist mould, and, as a starting point, to recognise and acknowledge the spaces where we have commonality (Gibson-Graham, 1996) resonates as a way to counter this hegemony.

Urgent work is needed in the form of gender critique of the social construction of trade law, markets, economics, social norms, as well as alternatives and alternative visions at each level

Conclusion

This paper has tried to show that, in contrast to neoliberal economics, that, a key to Feminist Economics is the need to put humans first, and that its broad concerns include a focus on provisioning rather than on consumer 'choice', a questioning of aspects of the exclusivity of rational economic choice and the fundamental role of reproductive work. Other Feminist Economics concerns are the persistence of the gender pay gap, the overall masculinised nature of economics, the inadequacy of a sole, monetary concept of 'efficiency', as well as the meta societal and long term concerns that result from the prevalence of this economic view. The centrality of reproductive work and care work has been emphasised, not just for gender justice reasons but also as a fundamental and societal concern, that affects all.

The cross-disciplinary interest in and application of Feminist Economics has been highlighted and the relationship, including both possible barriers as well as the possibilities of the relationship with other heterodox economics has been discussed. An attempt has been made to justify a need to find commonality, not least for the practical purpose of strengthening the challenge to neoliberalism, as well as for issues of gender equity.

According to Albelda, Feminist Economists have the potential to push the economics profession to new theoretical and analytical insights as they work to make women's economic roles more visible. This will occur 'not by exchanging pronouns, but by reformulating economic models to integrate what economists never measure or theorised but the work has always expected – the production, allocation and organisation of time and care in the household' (1997:169)

For me the real 'activist' value of recognizing the validity of what Feminist Economics is, is in the strengthening the potential to instigate a reevaluation of economic/social priorities and the measure of 'successful' economies, and to reassert redistribution issues, and I personally look forward to the day when feminist economics has merged with a broader pluralist alternative in

which it is fully taken into account, so that Feminist Economics, as a separate field, can actually be put to bed.

References

- Albelda, R. (1997) *Economics and Feminism: Disturbances in the Field* Twayne, NY
- Bakker, I (1996) *Rethinking Restructuring*, UOT, Canada
- Barker, D.K. (2003) 'The construction of Masculine identity in Adam Smith's "Theory of Moral Sentiments"' in *Towards a Feminist Philosophy of Economics* Barker, D.K & Kuiper, E, (eds) Routledge London
- Beneria, L. (1999) 'Globalisation, Gender and Davos Man' in *Feminist Economics* 5 (3): 61-83
- Beneria, L. (2003) 'Economic Rationality and Globalisation' in Ferber, M. and Nelson, J. (Eds.), *Feminist Economics Today*, University of Chicago Press, London.
- Blank, R. & Reimers, C. (2003) 'Economics, Policy Analysis and Feminism' in *Feminist Economics Today*, Ferber, M. & Nelson, J.(eds) UOC Press, Chicago
- Cagatay, N. (2003) 'Engendering Macro-economics' in *Macroeconomics: making gender Matter* Gutierrez, M. (ed), Zed Books, London, NY
- Dawson, G. & Hatt, S. (eds) (2000) *Market, State and Feminism: the economics of feminist policy*, Elgar, UK
- England, P. (2003) 'Separative and Soluble Selves: Dichotomous thinking in Economics' in *Feminist Economics Today*, Ferber, M. & Nelson, J. (eds) UOC Press, Chicago
- England, P. & Folbre, N. (2003) 'Contracting for Care' in *Feminist Economics Today*, Ferber, M. & Nelson, J.(eds) UOC Press, Chicago
- Ferber, M & Nelson, J, (2003) *Feminist Economics Today* (eds) UOC Press, Chicago
- Gibson-Graham, J.K. (1996) *The End of Capitalism (as we knew it)*, Blackwell
- Gudeman, S. (2001) *The Anthropology of Economics*, Blackwell
- Lavoie, M. (2002) 'The Tight Links Between Post-Keynsian and Feminist Economics', *post-autistic economic review* Issue no 11, January , article 2
- Nelson, J. (1996) *Feminism, Objectivity & Economics* Routledge NY

- Polkinghorn, B. & Thomson, D.L, (1998) *Adam Smith's Daughters: eight prominent women economists from the eighteenth century to the present* Elgar, UK
- Rai, S.M. (2004) 'Gendering Global Governance', *International Feminist Journal of Politics* Vol. 6, No. 4 (December), pp. 557 –578
- Rubery, J.
- Smith, J. (2005) 'Mothers' Milk and Measures of Economic Output', *Feminist Economics* 11(1), March p.41
- Soderbaum, P. (2002) 'Democracy and the Need for Pluralism in Economics, *post-autistic economic review* Issue no 11, January , article 4
- Tsikata, D, Kerr, J., Blacklock, C., & Laforce, J. (eds) (2000) *Demanding dignity: confronting economic reforms in Africa*, Ottawa: North-South Institute, 2000
- Van Staveren (2005) *Feminist Economics: Setting out the parameters* WIDE and Institute of Social Studies
- Van Vlezen, S. (2003) 'Hazel Kyrk and the ethics of consumption' in *Towards a Feminist Philosophy of Economics* Barker, D.K & Kuiper, E, (eds), Routledge London
- Warren, T (2006) 'Moving Beyond the Gender Wealth Gap: On Gender, Class, ,Ethnicity, and Wealth Inequalities in the United Kingdom', *Feminist Economics* 12(1-2), Jan /April pp195-219
- Woolley, F. (2005) 'The Citation Impact of 'Feminist Economics'', *Feminist Economics* 1(3), Nov, pp85-106
- Young, B. (2003a) 'Financial Crises and Social Reproduction: Asia, Argentina and Brazil' in *Power, Production and Social Reproduction*, Bakker, I. & Gill, S. (eds) , Palgrave
- Young, B.(2003b) Engendering Economic Policy in a Globalising World, paper presented at *Summer School, Heinrich Boell Foundation 21-26 July, 2003, Berlin*
- Waylen, G. (2004) 'Putting Global Governance into the Gendered Political Economy of Globalisation', *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, Vol. 6, No. 4 (December), pp 557 -578.