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The Hegemony Cracked: The Power Guide to Getting Care onto the Development Agenda

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Rosalind Eyben

Summary

This paper uses power analysis and the notion of hegemony to enquire into the historical neglect of unpaid care in the international development sector. In the light of that analysis the paper looks at how to exploit the hegemonic contradictions that provide openings for getting care onto development policy agendas. Addressing feminist practitioners and scholar-activists, the paper proposes a strategy of a succession of small wins in naming, framing, claiming and programming care. These can contribute to a change of mindset among citizens, think tanks and policy-makers about the significance of care.

Contents

Preface	5
Acknowledgements	5
Introduction	6
1 A Power Analysis of ‘the Persistent Neglect of Unpaid Care’	7
1.1 How power kept care off the agenda	8
1.1.1 Fitting care into the paradigm: a counter-productive effort?	9
1.1.2 System bias	11
1.1.3 Care: an uncomfortable topic for gender specialists in development agencies?	13
1.1.4 Conclusion	14
1.2 Hegemonic closures and cracks in the current global policy environment for gender equality	14
1.2.1 Hegemonic reinforcement	15
1.2.2 Cracks in the hegemony	16
1.2.3 Conclusion	17
2 Policy Strategizing within the Current Development Environment	17
2.1 A reflexive approach to policy change	17
2.2 A strategy of small wins	18
2.2.1 Naming	19
2.2.2 Framing	20
2.2.3 Claiming	21
2.2.4 Programming	22
Conclusion	24
References	25

Preface

This paper is work in progress that invites comments and contributions from its readers. That readership is people working in the international development sector – in bilateral and multilateral organisations, international NGOs, private foundations and policy research institutes – who recognise the importance of care and are perplexed how to get it onto development agendas. In September 2012 a number of us came together in a workshop co-hosted by Action Aid International and the Institute of Development Studies and discussed issues and strategies. Some of our discussions at that workshop influenced the final draft of the present paper. The paper also benefits from conversations I have had over the last two years with development policy practitioners in various international organisations and places, including in London, Paris, Geneva and New York as well as with students at the Institute of Development Studies.

Acknowledgements

I am most grateful to Andrea Cornwall, Naomi Hossain and Rachel Moussie for their constructively critical feedback on earlier drafts of this paper and to the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency. Sida's funding of the Gender and Sexuality Programme at the Institute of Development Studies supported the writing and publication of this paper.

Introduction

I was recently commissioned to draft a policy document for a multilateral organisation on the theme of empowerment. In a section on 'economic empowerment' I included a key message to make visible and give value to women's unpaid care work, supporting policies and programmes that reduce drudgery and achieve a more equitable gender balance regarding caring responsibilities. I developed the message with an instrumentalist argument (more on that later) about how unpaid care contributes to economic growth through producing a labour force that is fit, productive and capable of learning and creativity, but that it also drains the market of its female work force (Dejardin 2008). But one task team member strongly objected to any discussion of care as 'work' and refused to consider the inter-linkages between unpaid care and economic development. He emailed:

'These are very distinct areas. The gender dimension comes in more from a feminist viewpoint not from a gender one. It is more advocacy than a constructive contribution on how to deal with gender inequality.'

It was he suggested that unpaid care be moved to 'social empowerment'. As a compromise, a text box about cash transfers was thus transferred. However, because other members of the steering group requested clarification about the links between unpaid care and the market economy, the final version of the document eventually included more on the subject – both in the economic and social empowerment sections – than would have been the case if the matter had not been contested. Thus the debate had been fruitful.

Such a debate rarely occurs. Care stays off the agenda. Despite the considerable body of scholarly literature on the subject, care continues to be neglected in development debates and programming design. This paper deploys a power analysis – especially the concept of hegemony – to explore why care stays off the development policy agenda and what those concerned about it can do to get it on there.

My interest in unpaid care derives from personal as well as from professional concerns as a feminist policy researcher and erstwhile practitioner. When I became a grandmother I was living in a different country from my daughter. Unable to meet my caring responsibilities, I observed from a distance the challenges facing her and her partner bringing up two children while working in low-paid jobs with inflexible schedules. Professionally, as part of the Pathways of Women's Empowerment research programme I was exploring how international development agencies understood the concept of empowerment (Eyben and Napier-Moore 2009). We found that instrumentalist meanings of empowerment associated with efficiency and growth were crowding out more socially transformative meanings about rights and collective action. I saw the invisibility of unpaid care in development agencies' discourses, policies and programming as symptomatic of this trend. Thereafter when invited by such agencies to comment on their women's empowerment and gender equality work, I have taken the opportunity to highlight the significance of care. My observations on the outcomes from such efforts are reflected in the paper's analysis of the historical neglect of care in the development sector.

This paper is in two parts. In the first I analyse the reasons for the historical neglect of unpaid care in the international development sector. I use a power lens to discuss how feminist economists have historically addressed unpaid care and why their findings have been largely ignored, including by gender specialists in development agencies. In the light of that historical analysis I consider the possibilities for putting care on the agenda through identifying and taking advantage of cracks in the hegemony. The second part of the paper is about strategy. My premise is that practitioners and activists might be more effective in getting care onto development policy agendas if (1) their strategies for influencing policy and

programming were explicitly informed by an understanding of how the structure of gender norms and the politics of evidence help explain why care has been neglected, and (2) they become reflexively conscious of their relatively privileged positionality and use that positionality to support alliance-building to exploit the opportunities to widen and deepen the cracks in the hegemony that sustains the invisibility of care. The paper proposes a strategy of a succession of small wins in naming, framing, claiming and programming care.¹

1 A Power Analysis of ‘the Persistent Neglect of Unpaid Care’²

Care is a concept carrying multiple meanings and elements. In this paper I define care as *meeting the material and/or developmental, emotional and spiritual needs of one or more other people through direct personal inter-action*.³ In many languages there is no one term that can capture all of this, posing a challenge when communicating to policy makers the importance of care and the different types of activities that it encompasses. Until challenged by feminists, unpaid care has been seen as a ‘natural’ feminine activity and the low wages associated with the provision of paid care indicate its subordinate gendered occupational status. The feminisation of caring responsibilities, and the time women devote to them, result in women’s subordinate position in economic and political life, thus perpetuating asymmetric gender relations. While it is important to distinguish between a gender norm and what people actually do in practice (Whitehead 1990) – and while men may sometimes undertake care responsibilities – care’s labelling as something that women do has made it a central concern of feminist theory and empirical research.

Most research and policy analysis about care have taken place in high-income countries. This has included exposing the normative assumption underpinning the design of welfare-state regimes, which was premised on the nuclear family of an income-earning married man with a dependent wife staying at home to look after the children and do the housework. The aim of scholar-activists was to analyse care as a central and defining part of women’s lives so as to highlight the constraints from which women suffered and the lack of value that the welfare state placed on the time they spent. Scholars accordingly emphasised that care was unpaid *work*, as distinct from a leisure or consumption activity. Since then, the literature has shifted from the study of ‘household labour’ to that of ‘care’. This distinguishes housework, considered to be drudgery, from looking after family members that has an affective or emotional element which, unlike housework, cannot be fully replaced by labour-saving technology (Folbre). Recent debates have accordingly focused on caring for different kinds of people – for children, those with disabilities or the elderly, and on the role of the state, the family, the market and the voluntary sector in the provision of care (Daly and Rake 2003).

With the broadening of the concept of care to paid provision, an analytical light has been thrown on the relations of power between those who pay and those who provide, with an increasing recognition of differences of class, race and citizenship that cut across gendered identities (Lutz 2002). In developing countries paid care is almost entirely within the informal economy, in which middle class families hire poor women as servants who are often underpaid and over-worked (Razavi and Staab 2010). A more recent trend are ‘global care chains’ (Yeates 2004), comprising people from poor countries undertaking paid care work in

¹ Studies of the interaction between the development sector and change and resistance to care policies in any particular country context would obviously be a necessary and highly important complement to the present paper. In that respect, a limitation of my analysis is that it deals only with explanations and strategic responses relating to the neglect of care within the international development sector’s own web of organisational relationships and discursive practices.

² Title from Razavi (2007).

³ Adapted from Standing (2001), as cited in Kofman and Raghuram 2009.

a rich country, leaving a potential 'care deficit' back home. Although the focus of the present paper is on unpaid care, the class and racial interests involved in the provision and receipt of paid care contribute to shaping its invisibility in the development sector, as I discuss later.

Advances in theory and policy advocacy relating to care in rich countries are not always relevant to the situation of families living in poverty in low-income countries where there has never been a welfare state and where the lack of access to labour-saving technology makes the dichotomy between housework and care of persons less obvious. There is also however a growing body of scholarship on care in low and middle income countries⁴ but this is largely neglected in development policy debates and programming design. Why this should be is the subject of this part of the paper.

1.1 How power kept care off the agenda

In 2010 I was invited to speak at a conference of gender equality specialists working in international development agencies. The conference theme was women's economic empowerment. I was dismayed to discover from the programme that all the presentations and case-studies were about women's contribution to economic growth – how to release their potential as entrepreneurs (Eyben 2010). The agenda offered no scope to debate meanings of economic empowerment, unless I used my speaking slot to relate economic empowerment to a vision of economies designed for people, rather than the reverse. Because of how hegemonic power was at work in this highly formalized space, I was concerned that many conference participants would be unable to imagine their world differently and thus find my words meaningless. I decided to use a strategy that in part two of this paper describes as 'naming' to speak out about the issues absent from the conference agenda. However, I was worried whether I would find the courage to speak out and puncture that invisible but tangible membrane enclosing the conference space. How would people react? Would they think me stupid? Would I just be ignored? Would the membrane seal up again as if I had never spoken? These were questions about power and hegemony.

Power has many meanings. Power analysis, often associated with ideas of authority, the state and political institutions, is used to understand election processes or struggles between the executive and the legislature. But we can also look at informal power that operates throughout society and in all relationships as it did in the conference I have just described. Through our relations with others, power is the socialisation process that shapes what we think, say and do. Patterns are created and re-confirmed through habitual and repetitive performance⁵ that confirms and reproduces existing structures of power relations. Every performance is based on prior experience as to whether what we said or did previously was accepted or rejected by others. Power shapes our identity, values and behaviour. Each time we perform according to the historically derived societal norms that influence our audience's judgement as to whether our performance is acceptable, we re-confirm existing structures, values and beliefs. When our performance is rejected we are deviant. Whether we are judged heretic, insane or simply irrelevant depends on the kind of society in which we live and the extent to which the status quo is reproduced through coercion or hegemony.⁶ When feminists in the development sector speak of care as a fundamentally important aspect of social and economic relations they are still largely ignored. What they are saying lies outside that invisible but very tangible membrane that determines what can be legitimately debated

⁴ See Eyben and Fontana (2011) for a more extensive review.

⁵ See Butler (2003: 421) Performance is 'a repetition that is at once a re-enactment and re-experiencing of a set of meanings already established.' This section also draws on Hayward (2000) and Haugaard (2003). For a good introduction to concepts of power in development practice visit www.powercube.net.

⁶ See the distinction Wright (2010) makes between despotic and hegemonic forms of maintaining the status quo. In the former coercion and rules are the central mechanisms of social control whereas in the latter ideology and material interests are the most important mechanisms. Thus in the world of development policy the unquestioned gendered nature of providing care is hegemonic and those challenging the normal state of affairs are treated as irrelevant. However should this normality be challenged, hegemonic power has a stronger coercive element as manifested through socially acceptable gender-based violence.

as a development policy issue. Power makes it embarrassing to make statements about care, 'that fall flat into conference rooms and meetings'.⁷

Power creates our world view. 'It makes existing institutions, social relations and structures seem natural and invisible' (Wright 2010: 286). The neglect of care can be attributed to its not fitting within – and therefore challenging – the world view of the international development sector. Recognizing this problem a body of feminist scholarship has tried to make care fit within that world view or paradigm. I now discuss what this did and consider the outcome.

1.1.1 Fitting care into the paradigm: a counter-productive effort?

Since the 1980s feminist scholarship has sought to broaden notions of work to include unpaid activities (Waring 2004, Goldschmidt-Clermont 1990), including by studying how much time is spent on care and imputing to it a notional monetary value. As a result of this pioneering scholarship and policy advocacy, the international System of National Accounts (SNA) – which is used to calculate Gross Domestic Product (GDP) – defined 'production' as any activity that someone else in theory could be paid to do, thereby capturing subsistence and household production, as well as caring for others. However, despite this important definitional break-through, only a partial change has occurred in what gets counted. The reasons for not including unpaid care in the SNA were that unpaid care services have limited repercussions on the rest of the economy, along with two technical objections, namely (1) that it is difficult to impute monetary values to the provision of care, and (2) that 'the inclusion of unpaid care services would have adverse effects on the usefulness of the accounts for macroeconomic analysis and policy purposes and disturb the historical trends' (Razavi 2007: 5). In response, feminist economics has built a body of theory and empirical evidence that demonstrates the inter-connectedness between the care and the market economies, showing for example that women's unpaid work in South Africa affects their ability to undertake paid work (Valodia and Devey 2005). Fälth and Blackden (2009) report on a Tanzania study which calculated that a one-hour reduction in fuel and water collection would increase by 7% the probability that women would engage in off-farm business activities.

Regarding the second, technical objections, according to Hoskyns and Rai (2007), although these have been largely overcome but there appears little sign of any political readiness to revise the SNA accordingly. If it were to be thus revised to take unpaid care into account, Budlender (2010) shows that unpaid care would be about 15 per cent of GDP in South Africa and South Korea and above 35 per cent of GDP in India and Tanzania. Using humour to reveal the absurdity of ignoring unpaid care, a UNDP gender training module for African policy makers⁸ shows how GDP declines when a man marries his housekeeper and he no longer has to pay her. Pondering on why there is such resistance to integrating unpaid care into the SNA, a UN statistician interviewed for the present paper commented that its inclusion would blow GDP out of the water, obliging development policy makers to look for other measures, such as well-being, that would better reflect social progress.

Time use studies can be used not only to determine the putative market value of unpaid care but also to inform policy priorities within a broad range of sectors such as water and sanitation, early childhood development, support to small and micro-enterprise, agricultural production, etc. While some 15 countries include time use surveys within their labour market surveys, in practice these data are rarely used for informed, gender-sensitive policymaking, which in turn – argues Esquivel (2011) – discourages statistical offices from undertaking time use studies on any regular basis. Recognising the existence of the evidence is a political matter suggested an ILO official interviewed for this paper and reflecting on why statisticians are discouraged from undertaking such surveys. Esquivel wonders whether there was a

⁷ Personal communication from Naomi Hossain.

⁸ 'Gender and Economic Policy Management in Africa' is a UNDP training programme. The trainer's manual was shown to me by Anna Fälth.

missed opportunity at the 1995 Beijing Conference when time use evidence was promoted to secure visibility and recognition of women's work in the reproduction of the labour force (i.e. as an important for economic development) and that the utility of that evidence for creating a more balanced distribution of provision both between women and men and between households and the wider society was sidelined. The energy put into getting time use data into national accounts, might have been used, she suggests to use this to influence sector policies.

Feminist economics has demonstrated that unpaid care work supports the private sector by lowering the cost that employers must sustain in order to maintain employees and their families, and supports the public sector by offering health services, sanitation, water supply and child care. However, inordinate demands are placed on the care providers and both the quality of provision and the effects on the wellbeing of the providers result in depletion of human resources which goes unnoticed and unmeasured, with serious implications for sustainable economic development and the quality of life (Elson 2000). This is an argument to justify investing public monies in supporting care, but have the efforts to make care fit within the existing economic paradigm been counter-productive? Although as I discuss shortly, there may have been no viable alternative, nevertheless, these arguments have not challenged what Bourdieu describes as the *doxa* – 'the self-evident and natural order which goes without saying and therefore goes unquestioned' (Bourdieu 1977, p. 168). By giving care a putative monetary value, we may have risked sustaining international development's dominant ideology wherein value is only attributed to what is potentially tradable, confirming the worthlessness of what cannot be defined as work (Himmelweit 1995). Marilyn Waring recognised this when she wrote in the second edition of *Counting for Nothing* that 'short-term policy needs for visibility were at odds with my passionate desire to bring the system to its knees' (Waring 2004: xxi). The beast grows when you feed it.

Another counter-productive effect in seeking to make care fit is when advocacy uses 'gender' to distinguish between men and women – as has been the case with time use studies and 'gender-disaggregated' statistics – replacing the feminist meaning of gender as the normative and context-specific mutual constitution of male and female. This shift from gender's relational and political meanings to a term that distinguishes empirical differences between the sexes confirms rather than, as Peterson puts it, disrupts 'foundational assumptions, orthodox methodologies and theoretical frameworks' (2005: 517). When we explain unpaid care largely in terms of what women do most of and men not much, and then count how much time each sex spends on it we lose sight of the contingent history, culture and values that shape the pattern of care relations within households, kin networks and wider society. This categorical reductionism also distracts our attention from other dimensions of difference such as class and race inequalities.⁹

On the other hand, as Peterson also recognizes, there are obvious pragmatic advantages to making the case in accordance with how development institutions think about the world, which is more in terms of categories than processes and relations.¹⁰ When we use 'gender' to refer to category distinctions of male and female we allow our discourse to be intelligible within the sector. This has indeed been successful in identifying and tackling certain inequalities, for example, the recent achievement of the Millennium Development Goal in achieving equal primary education for girls and boys.¹¹ The achievement is potentially socially transformative while fitting within an economic paradigm of human capital investment

⁹ In a presentation to the annual conference of the International Association of Feminist Economists in Barcelona (2012), Andrea Cornwall pointed out that the use of the gender binary in international development, as promoted by feminist economists, has also contributed to sustaining heteronormativity. International development policies assume women have children, live in households, spend and save their money wisely. Attachment to the 'good woman' conceals other women (and men, and transgender) and the possibility that their empowerment may lie in defying, resisting, contesting or otherwise avoiding the normative pressure of existing social and gender orders.

¹⁰ See Eyben (2011) for a discussion about the philosophical plumbing of the international development sector.

¹¹ http://www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/library/MDG/english/The_MDG_Report_2012.pdf.

and greater economic productivity. Girls' education is a win-win situation: progress in social justice responds to global capitalism's demands for a larger and better-educated work force. However, when we use gender categories to argue that unpaid care is important for the market economy we are less successful. Unlike girls' education, making unpaid care a matter of policy does not solve but rather creates a problem. To accept fully the argument that the market economy depends on women's unpaid work – and that because they cannot continue to do this adequately at the same time as paid work – thus requiring public intervention implies a major re-structuring of the global political economy and fiscal regimes – which is heresy in the current global economic paradigm.¹²

Meanwhile, the argument about the links between the market and the non-market economy – in terms of women (as a category) being less productive because of the time they devote to care – can also be unhelpful should it lead to an even greater de-valuing of care as an impediment to economic growth. Does a women's time-use approach thus lead us to a dead end?

In sum, efforts to get care onto the development agenda so far have had little success and arguments used to fit policy advocacy within the paradigm may have been counter-productive. But was there an alternative? It is highly probable that an outright challenge to the market paradigm and its relentless progress of commoditisation would have been equally if not more ineffective – at least during the economic boom years prior to the current crisis. That feminist economists tried to fit their argument within the paradigm was because they thought they had even less chance of being heard if they were to challenge it outright. Nevertheless, what they published was largely ignored and they remain marginal within the economics discipline, even, as I discuss later, among heterodox Marxist and green economists. Their work has also been only partly taken on board by gender equality specialists working as policy practitioners within international development agencies. Social norms and institutional power prevented such practitioners using the findings for internal policy advocacy within their organisations, as I now discuss.

1.1.2 System bias

For much of the time most of us are unconscious of how our speech and our actions are reproducing the status quo. Invisible power keeps us in line.¹³ When I recently queried the absence of care from a gender equality policy document of an international development organisation, the gender specialist responsible for the draft admitted she had just 'forgotten about it' and 'of course you are right, we should have included it'. Here is an instance of Lukes' remark that there is nothing in 'the exercise of power [that it] be either *intentional* or that it involve an *active* or positive intervention in the world' (Lukes 2005:479).

On the other hand, there are always people in the international development sector, as in other complex organisational systems, who are critically conscious. Their number increases when things go wrong and it is difficult to cover up mistakes. This is where system bias comes in. By system bias, I mean how institutional rules of the game – and the norms and systems of thought accompanying and sustaining these rules – determine what is possible to discuss.¹⁴ We may recognise there is a problem; but the threat of sanctions keeps us silent. When working for the British aid ministry, I soon learnt that my capacity for influence depended on my being 'sound'. I was warned that my career would be in jeopardy if I was deemed to have 'poor judgement'. On several occasions, these general warnings became more specific. I was cautioned for talking about the negative gendered impact of structural

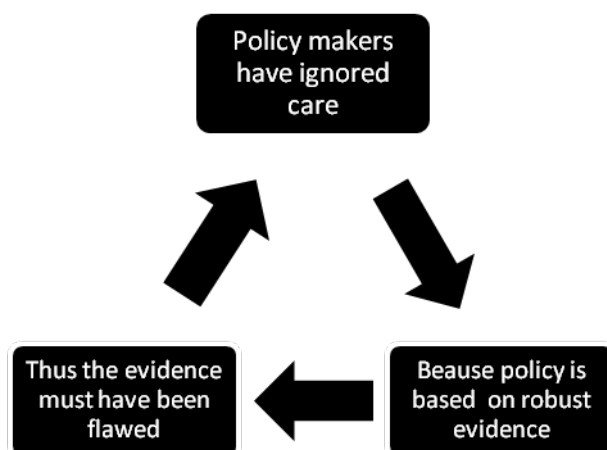
¹² Budlender (2010) calculates that unpaid care work is, for example, equivalent to about 94 per cent and 182 per cent of total government tax revenue in South Korea and India respectively.

¹³ 'Invisible power keeps problems and issues 'not only ... from the decision-making table, but also from the minds and consciousness of the different players involved, even those directly affected by the problem. By influencing how individuals think about their place in the world, this level of power shapes people's beliefs, sense of self and acceptance of the *status quo* – even their own superiority or inferiority' (Gaventa 2006:29).

¹⁴ See elaboration of these points in Clegg and Gray (2012), Haugaard (2003) building on Bachrach and Baratz (1962).

adjustment. I learnt when to stay quiet. But with a change of government in 1997 a left-wing Secretary of State came into office, demanding a meeting of policy advisers to discuss the social costs of structural adjustment. Believing that the policy environment had changed and delighted that at last I might be able to speak out, I went to the meeting (to which I had been formally invited as a member of the senior management group). At the gathering of officials in the Minister's ante-room, my line manager came to me and ordered me to stay away from the meeting. Authority judged that my forcible exclusion was necessary to ensure that the new Minister was correctly educated into a proper neo-liberal understanding of development's economic model.

System bias also works by making appear inadequate or incapable the people seeking to place non-issues onto policy agendas. Recently, a very senior academic posited that if the past thirty years of research findings about unpaid care had been sufficiently robust, then policy would have taken them into account. When the invisibility of an issue is challenged, the burden of proof is thrown back onto the challenger. In this instance, system bias works through the circular logic of the discourse of Evidence Based Policy: the argument runs if there were sound evidence and it is adequately communicated, then it goes without saying that decision-makers would take note and respond. That they have ignored the evidence means it is flawed and/or badly communicated. Thus the discourse of evidence-based policy nullifies the possibility of admitting to strategic ignorance of inconvenient truths – truths that would oblige a reassessment of policy priorities and budgets and might even challenge one's understanding of how the world works.



'Strategic ignorance' explains why – despite an extensive analysis of unpaid care in the main text – the executive summary of the World Development Report on gender equality (World Bank 2011/2012) excludes care from its list of major 'sticky issues'. If unpaid care were given the recognition it merits, then governments and development agencies would have to revise radically their development priorities and budgets. Thus care has been made invisible. Even development organisations that place gender equality at the heart of their work choose not to make it a priority. The default position of mainstream gender and development policy documents is to avoid mentioning care. For example, at last year's High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness in Busan, the joint action plan on gender and development stressed that 'support for gender equality and women's empowerment in the economic and productive sectors should be strengthened', but care was absent from the text.

There is a long history to Busan's framing of gender equality in terms of women as productive agents of development. Broader system bias has prevented staff from raising issues that, if taken on board, would require the system to change. Two additional

explanations to the institutional system bias that forecloses care as a policy issue¹⁵ are the socio-political positionality of gender advocates within the system and the logic of framing women as producers rather than carers.

1.1.3 Care: an uncomfortable topic for gender specialists in development agencies?

Thirty years ago and more, gender practitioners like me struggled to put women – as an empirical category – onto the development policy agenda. We had little interest in including unpaid care in such a struggle and were arguably more complicit in helping reproduce the paradigm than in challenging it. In the 1970s the development sector gendered the economy as production being a masculine and consumption of publicly financed provision a feminine attribute. Men had to make economic growth happen for consuming women to reap the benefits. When first employed by the British aid ministry in the mid-1980s, this is the discourse I encountered. In lieu of a counter-hegemonic response – one that would have challenged the gendered production/consumption binary – I and others like me sought to tackle the subordination of women by showing them to be producers, thus putting them within the same frame as men.

Already in the previous decade feminist anthropologists had been researching the informal sector to argue that the notion of men as family breadwinners had de-valorised and concealed the extent to which women in low-income households were active in the market economy (Moser 1978). For gender specialists in development agencies (most of whom were and still are today non-economic social scientists), revealing the importance of women as producers justified designing women into development projects. In 1978 when working as research officer for an ILO vocational programme in Sudan, I investigated women's earnings in the poorer districts of El Obeid town to demonstrate to my employer that women's income was significantly more than 'pin money' and that thus they had the same right to vocational training as did men. My detailed report stayed silent about unpaid care (which ironically ILO had recognized through the provision of home economics classes – largely cake-making for middle class women – that I strongly objected to).

The growing body of evidence from research into the urban informal sector – and from parallel studies of the role of rural women in agricultural production, following on from Boserup's (1970) path-breaking study – promoted by feminists working in the FAO, the World Bank and other international agencies – challenged the norm that only men produced. This evidence was used to support the policy case that women were not just beneficiaries (consumers) of development but also its agents. Thus started the era (in which we still find ourselves today) of instrumentalist advocacy of investing in women to secure faster development. As I helped write in a British government booklet in 1989: 'If [women] are healthy and knowledgeable, if they have greater access to knowledge, skills and credit, they will be more economically productive' (Eyben 2004: 77). By 1995 and the Beijing Women's Conference this argument had been won – largely due, argues Fraser, to the demands of the globalising capitalist economy in which wage-earning and entrepreneurship were seen as a necessity and a right, for women as well as for men. 'Disorganized capitalism turns a sow's ear into a silk purse by elaborating a new romance of female advancement and gender justice' (Fraser 2009: 110).

Instrumentalist arguments about women as producers kept unpaid care invisible for a long time. There were also possibly personal reasons why gender specialists in development agencies left it off the agenda. As they struggled to break through the glass ceilings of development organisations, advocating the importance of care risked drawing attention to the fact that they themselves were women who might not merit promotion because of potential care responsibilities interfering with their jobs. Material class interests may also continue to

¹⁵ See Fernandez (2012), who identifies foreclosure as one of the system bias mechanisms that prevent effective gender mainstreaming in development policy and practice.

play an interest. When middle-class development practitioners in low-income countries employ their own domestic labour, particularly if they are on a relatively low NGO salary, it makes it difficult to offer their employees a decent wage, and a discussion of the topic creates discomfort for people committed to working for social justice.

Recognising the existence of care also complicates development programming. An NGO front-line worker campaigning to get girls to stay in school brushed off my comments that this might mean their mothers would have to work harder. This complication leads to many development organisations talking of reducing the ‘burden’ of unpaid care, unthinkingly devaluing its importance for human well-being.

1.1.4 Conclusion

Silence about care allows governments to pass on its costs to families and communities, rather than financing care as a public good (Smith 2005). The neglect of care maintains a gendered capitalist political economy – an effect which most politicians are unlikely to have given any thought to. At the same time, those who are the most over-whelmed with care responsibilities, even if they are aware of the effects of power on their lives, are most likely to have the least voice and chance to influence their governments, among other things because the time they spend on care excludes them from political participation. In the international development sector material interests, such as advancing one’s career, might influence policy practitioners not to mention care. They might be concerned to be seen as foolish, as impractical dreamers or poor communicators. They might intuitively know that the subject – albeit never ever discussed – would be looked at askance if raised, received in a damning silence before the conversation moved on. Whatever the explanation, many gender policy practitioners have chosen to ignore care. They have opted to fight other battles – such as the struggle to reduce violence against women – that challenge gendered norms but do not touch the economic model that shapes the work of the international development sector.

However, since the start of the economic crisis, there is greater public debate – although not yet in mainstream development circles – about the viability and equity of the current economic model. It may therefore be no coincidence that unpaid care is beginning to become a more legitimate topic of conversation among feminist practitioners. The next section briefly discusses the possibilities that the current environment offers to get care on development agendas.

1.2 Hegemonic closures and cracks in the current global policy environment for gender equality

Hegemony¹⁶ is a world-view reinforced by power. It differs from ideology in its acceptance as ‘normal reality’ or ‘common sense’ by those who are in practice subordinated to it. ‘Hegemony at its most effective is mute; ideology invites argument’ (Comaroff & Comaroff 1992: 29). The model of economic growth in international development is hegemonic because it brooks no argument within the sector. For example, the World Bank, when encouraging broad-based participation in designing national poverty reduction strategies in low-income countries, made it clear that the economic model was not to be included in the conversation.¹⁷

In what follows I identify both negative processes of hegemonic closure/reinforcement but also the cracks in the hegemony. In addition to analysing how the status quo is reinforced,

¹⁶ *Hegemony* is best known in association with the thinking of the political philosopher Gramsci but its use as a concept has expanded and adapted to cover a wider range of circumstances than Gramsci’s original argument that the bourgeoisie were hegemonic because they managed to present their particular interests as the interests of everyone (Haugaard 2006). It is argued that hegemony is never intact because there are always challenges by those who are excluded from power or are in a subordinate position (Cerny 2006). The institutions that reproduce hegemony at one period of time become less effective under different conditions through the ramifications of unintended consequences and the resulting contradictions.

¹⁷ In Bolivia, our instructions were: ‘*no tocar el modelo*’ – don’t touch the economic model!

we also need to identify its limits and contradictions. Hegemony is never watertight, and efforts to keep it so produce unintended consequences and more cracks (Wright 2010).

1.2.1 Hegemonic reinforcement

Today there are parallel processes of reinforcement of economic hegemony and patriarchal ideology in the international development sector that have a potential negative influence on getting care onto development agendas.

The first is the conservative backlash against gender equality that has strengthened as it common cause is established across religious and other divides and pushing back against the achievements of the last forty-fifty years (Sen 2005). 'The impact is felt in terms of reduced rights in the areas of health and reproductive rights, sexual rights and freedoms, women's participation in the public sphere, family laws, economic rights, as well as a general reduction in women's autonomy; and increased violence against women' (Balchin 2012: ix). In countries where religious conservatism has a growing influence, gender advocates are querying initiatives to promote the importance of unpaid care, fearing this might play into the hands of the conservative ideologies that recognise the importance of care for society but frame this in terms of women's place being in the home. For example in the United States this is used as an argument to preclude the necessity for policy intervention, as care is claimed to be a private family matter.

Until about twenty five years ago what happened inside families was judged to be beyond the scope of development policy. In 1986 the British development ministry's first ever statement on 'women in development' stressed that it never attempted 'to influence the social policies of recipient governments nor to undermine national culture and traditions' (Eyben 2004: 75). Addressing the division of labour associated with care could be interpreted as cultural interference in family life (Esplen 2009). In 2011 at the ILO there was indeed some resistance from more conservative governments to supporting a convention on paid domestic work on the basis of the state not interfering with what goes on in private spaces.¹⁸ Today, the doctrine of non-interference in other cultures has largely disappeared from the mainstream of development policy and practice. Ironically, while radical feminist scholars and activists have been pushing vainly against the prevailing trend of the last twenty years of the extension of market values to development policy thinking, trans-national women's rights activism for social justice has been facilitated by the sector's neo-liberal turn and the language of autonomy and choice (Cornwall et al 2008) that has legitimized development's interest in intra-household matters.

The ongoing invisibility of care contrasts with the success of feminist advocacy in bringing out from obscurity another 'private space' matter, domestic violence, which had been an unmentionable topic in mainstream development thinking as interference in other cultures. Tackling violence against women has now become a highly legitimate mainstream policy topic. Violence is what 'destroys the potential of girls and women in developing countries and prevents them from pulling themselves out of poverty'.¹⁹ Violence prevents women from being able to realize equal opportunities and become more productive development agents. Yet social justice development discourses such as gender equality have not become more prominent in recent years for no other reason than to sustain the centrality of logic of the market as some would argue (Murray and Overton 2011)? The international development sector is ambivalent and full of contradictions that provide opportunities for progressive social change.

At the same time, whereas traditional-aid giving countries (other than the USA during the Bush administration) have largely opposed the conservative backlash and continued to

¹⁸ Personal communication from Jane Hodges.

¹⁹ Statement by Andrew Mitchell on International Women's Day 2012 <http://www.dfid.gov.uk/News/Latest-news/2012/International-Womens-Day-UK-aid-to-tackle-trafficking-and-domestic-violence/>.

support reproductive and sexual rights as well as the struggle to reduce gender-based violence, their progressive position on these issues, argues Gita Sen (2005) has been contradicted by their support for neo-liberal policies that ignore the gendered nature of the economy and that sustain and reproduce inequalities. At the time she wrote this, Sen placed the blame for such policies on what she described as the unipolar world following the end of the Cold War. Yet, in today's multi-polar world the consensus among new and old development cooperation actors about development as growth has only served to reinforce the hegemony of the economic model.

Despite these negative trends, as already indicated, cracks resulting from contradictions are also present, some of which I describe below. I encourage the readers to identify others.

1.2.2 Cracks in the hegemony

Cracks result from hegemony's dilemmas in which solutions to one problem create conditions that produce or intensify other problems (Wright 2010). For example, I cited earlier Fraser's point that disorganised capitalism needed more women in the labour market (page 13). This demand transformed female illiteracy – until then not considered a problem – into an issue to which the system had to respond, further stimulated by a global women's movement demanding attention be paid to the matter. This is our theory of change: Historical circumstances provide opportunities to shift discourse and institutional arrangements towards greater social justice, achieved by actors (ourselves) identifying and taking advantage of cracks in the hegemony.

Currently cracks that are making care more visible include the contradiction of encouraging female employment without sufficient attention to who looks after children, the elderly and the sick. Related to this is the demographic transition, with increasing numbers of elderly people in middle- and high-income countries. In much of Latin America, the increasing attention paid to care as a key social policy issue is attributed to these demographic changes.²⁰ These changes have also increased the demand for paid care workers who are now mobilising internationally to claim labour rights and putting the broader issue of care onto policy agendas, including in the United States – significant because the US is the power house of development policy and in the US domestic policy arena care has been invisible until now. In sub-Saharan Africa, care has also gained a certain visibility through the HIV/Aids pandemic including through the efforts of the Caregivers Action Network (CAN) Africa who have tried to raise awareness of the specific challenges community care workers face across Africa.

The food and fuel crises resulting from the increased volatility of global markets, along with the natural disasters resulting from climate change leave family and community relations severely disrupted and women's unpaid care become more visible to development and humanitarian organisations. Finally, even the global development consensus about the economic model may not be entirely solid. The landscape of international development is changing as the binary between developed and developing countries disappears and an increasing number of middle-income countries are flexing their muscles in global spaces. Although the focus is on reforming the global development architecture rather than on challenging the economic paradigm, Latin American countries are articulating an alternative discourse of well-being, which is being taken up within parts of the United Nations. The Brazilian government, for example, emphasizes its commitment to equity and social progress as central to the global development agenda.²¹ At the same time, rising discontent about the model in many European countries experiencing severe budget cuts may present opportunities to get care onto alternative economic agendas that are being discussed in economic justice networks – although the latter is an uphill struggle in many such networks and their publications that ignore the gendered nature of the economy.

²⁰ Personal communications from Luis Mora and Romulo Paes.

²¹ Personal communication from staff at the Brazilian Mission to the United Nations.

1.2.3 Conclusion

The current economic hegemony has many cracks which represent opportunities for feminist activism. Furthermore, if we understand development policy and programming as a 'messy free-for-all in which processes are often uncontrollable and results uncertain' (Mosse and Lewis 2006: 9), opportunities for individual and collective agency are manifold. As the policy activist chooses and constantly reviews her options, she will need to analyse the specific context of the institutional arrangements, discourses and actors involved, explore and develop her networks and undertake a power analysis to determine her room for manoeuvre (Eyben 2008). It is from this perspective that I now consider the challenges and opportunities for feminist policy activists strategizing to make care more visible in development policy and programming.

2 Policy Strategizing within the Current Development Environment

Policies are instruments of power that classify and organise ideas and social relations to sustain or change the current social order. They frame how the world is or should be, and as such are subject to resistance and contestation (Shore and Wright 2011). The policy process is a power struggle in which people (actors), working within institutional rules of the game, both draw on and challenge current ways in which we interpret our world (discourses) in order to shape social practices (Eyben 2008, Keeley & Scoones 2003, McGee 2004). Policy activists and programme designers can identify many useful actions within the current development environment that can help change happen, provided that they are aware of and carefully manage the risks to avoid sustaining rather than transforming the inequitable relations and structures that keep care invisible. My premise is that practitioners and activists might be more effective in getting care onto development policy agendas (1) if their strategies for influencing policy and programming were to be explicitly informed by an understanding of how the structure of gender norms and the politics of evidence help explain why care has been neglected (the first part of this paper) and (2) as I shall now discuss, if they become reflexively conscious of their relatively privileged positionality and use that positionality to support alliance-building to widen and deepen the cracks in the hegemony that sustains the invisibility of care. Those working inside international development organisations need to join forces with feminist global development networks to engineer a succession of small wins, stimulating in the institutional and discursive environment changes that get care onto development agendas. Thus they can help prepare the moment for more radical alternatives to find a platform, while knowingly but discreetly providing support to those advocating such alternatives.

2.1 A reflexive approach to policy change

When something is never named or discussed, how do you know it is being ignored? Resistance to new policy ideas need only be passive to achieve its effect. The absence of policy is itself a (silent) statement about the right ordering of the world, including those norms that devalue care and sustain political and economic inequities. An issue becomes visible when a sufficient number of people start talking about it not as a fact of life but rather as constructed through social interaction and therefore potentially mutable through such action. But while naming something can stop it from being taken for granted, this is not sufficient to lead to the creation of an alternative framing of how the world should be. It also requires the detailed and imaginative work of creating an alternative social world to which we can aspire and in support of which policy propositions can be made. Here matters have to progress from the dreams of a group of radical dissidents (who, if heard at all, will be subject to derision or

prosecution) to an issue for broader political mobilisation that demands placing the matter on policy agendas. However, even when policy practitioners are successful in having programmes designed to integrate unpaid care, the gendered structures of implementation processes can block the intention (Fernandez 2012). To stop this happening, collective action must ensure that the necessary actions of programming, claiming, naming and framing occur simultaneously and are mutually supportive. Programming, for example, can be designed so as to enhance claims (as I discuss later in relation to an early-childhood development initiative). Framing is often an integral part of the mobilisation process, in the detailed elaboration of policy action or as it is reflected in implementation.

Yet, strategies cannot be fully planned in advance. The complex interaction of networks, relationships and processes in policy work (Cilliers 1998) means we cannot predict all the effects our actions may have on the wider system, or indeed on ourselves as initiators of the action. Small 'butterfly' actions may have a major impact and apparently significant ones may have very little.²² Since complexity and contingency mean that surprise and unintended consequences are likely outcomes of policy advocacy, uncertainty and chance also create opportunities to be seized. Earlier in this paper I considered the risks in making instrumental arguments for care and suggested that such arguments may have made little headway just because they were based on buying into the logic of a paradigm that invisibilizes care. However, this is not to dismiss all such instrumental arguments for these *can be strategic* when taking advantage of available cracks in the hegemony to secure an accumulation of small wins, subversively accommodating our approach to appear as if we are fitting into prevailing discourses and practices. Feminists in the international development sector can harness the power that their location provides.

Those of us working as practitioners, bureaucrats and scholar activists in international development cannot escape the contradiction that we are strategizing for social transformation from a positionality in a global institution – international development – that post-development criticism argues sustains inequitable power relations more than it succeeds in changing them.²³ What an uncomfortable position it is to be working for social transformation within the current paradigm! Not only because of our privileged positionality in global policy spaces but because unavoidably, we abandon gender as a relational construct and revert to substantialist categories, reinforcing the methodological individualism that is the philosophical plumbing of the global political economy (Eyben 2010). Spivak (2003) subsequently rejected her own proposal concerning the politics of strategic essentialism because it risks allowing middle class women – many of the readers of this paper – to ignore their privileged positionality and to make claims for being in solidarity with the oppressed. As Spivak herself suggests, this dilemma can only be managed through the cultivation of hyper-reflexivity (Kapoor 2004). Another risk arising from inadequate reflexivity is that because care is a daily personal matter of concern for most women working in the development sector (as in other sectors), we may frame the issue in terms of our own positionality, making claims for extended maternity leave or flexible working time that bear no relation to the situation of women in poverty and working in the informal sector and on whom the challenge of providing care is so much greater. When exploiting hegemonic cracks, we need to be ever conscious awareness of how power shapes our consciousness and thus our priorities for action.

2.2 A strategy of small wins

Realistically, it is difficult to engage directly from within the international development sector in counter-hegemonic revolutionary activities that we may think the matter merits. Rather, our strategy must be to look for room for manoeuvre within the institutional structures we find ourselves in. On this basis, we can identify our potential for agency in naming, framing,

²² When complexity is understood as a description of how the world really works rather than as a metaphor, social theorists provide a more elaborate and detailed explanations of it than I have attempted here (see for example Cilliers (1998).

²³ See for example Crush (1995), Escobar (1996), Pieterse (2000).

claiming and programming. The examples that follow are of very small wins, each one of which by itself might seem unimportant. A series of wins 'reveals a pattern that may attract allies, deter opponents, and lower resistance to subsequent proposals' (Weick 1984, p.43).

2.2.1 Naming

Getting care named or recognized has been a theme throughout this paper. Even the word itself is problematic.²⁴ A gender specialist interviewed for the present paper had found that 'care' as a concept was poorly understood in her organisation and that it worked better when introduced into an analysis of a specific context. This is also the recommended approach of Fälth and Blackden (2009). They suggest focusing on the country level, including recognising the diversity of gender relations between different countries and groups and the different caring arrangements that arise from these, so as to identify the actual care practices and institutional arrangements which shape care provision. Likewise UNRISD (2010) suggests clarifying the meaning of care by making visible and addressing paid and unpaid care issues when embedded in sectors such as health, education, social protection, agriculture, etc.

An important element of naming is research whose findings show there is something to be concerned about. Although the evidence may be clear, research is unlikely to allow care to be recognized. However, research evidence can encourage political activism for pro-care policies and can inform programming design. Time use surveys and assigning putative monetary values to unpaid care can thus serve as inputs for gender-responsive budgeting (Fälth and Blackden 2009) and may over time have a greater programming effect than has hitherto been the case. At the same time qualitative anthropological approaches – such as Cornwall's (2007) study of Yoruba women traders – might counter-balance the essentialism of quantified time use studies. Participatory approaches to time use studies as currently being piloted by Action Aid International through Reflect Circles (based on Freireian principles) allows people to measure and analyse how they use their own time, encourages a reflexive awareness of the conditions of their lives and provides the possibility of grassroots mobilisation and action in claiming policy responses to the recognition of care.

Hegemonic cracks can be exploited in order to name care. Ideological uncertainty within the development sector about how to explain and respond to the rising fuel and food costs in poorer countries provided an opportunity to expose how the discourse of 'resilience' and 'coping' renders invisible the harder work, longer hours, and greater stress involved in caring responsibilities during difficult economic times (Hossain and Green 2011). 'Discursive judo' draws on the energy of mainstream discourse to popularise potentially counter-hegemonic approaches. An example is to engage with the development sector's enthusiasm for women's economic empowerment rather than ignore it. Thus I agreed to provide comments to an international organisation that was drafting a policy note on women's empowerment, which after several iterations resulted in the inclusion of care into the main text and then – following a further reminder from me – care becoming eventually incorporated into 'the key messages' about economic empowerment. How care is qualified also matters. Phrases such as the 'burden' or 'drudgery' of care unhelpfully confound the positive aspects such as meeting mutually-valued developmental and emotional needs with those aspects of the caring relationship which for poor people in developing countries who have little access to labour-saving technologies require spending time on wearisome tasks – grinding, cooking, fetching water and washing clothes. The phrase 'the burden of unpaid care', so common in the international development discourse, unfortunately signifies that all care is bad and should be reduced so as to realise women's labour into the market economy and contribute to growth. A systematic campaign against its use would contribute to a re-framing of care to distinguish the drudgery from caring relations.

²⁴ However, it is probably preferable to 'social reproduction' which in its use tends to conflate the biological reproduction of the species with the reproduction of the labour force and with the reproduction of society.

Finally and possibly most importantly, the challenge is to take every possible opportunity to name care, planting the idea in all possibly relevant contexts so that those who hear it will start to think this is a legitimate development issue that clearly deserves attention because so many people are talking about it. Naomi Hossain has termed this a 'saturation strategy'.²⁵

2.2.2 Framing

To talk about care we need a frame. The choice of frame is about politics and values. Which frame will muster the greatest amount of support? Which frame might deter potential allies? How do we frame the issue so that we can engage with the mainstream development sector without compromising our ideals?

Can we use different frames for different audiences and contexts? The reflexive policy practitioner must be alert to these questions, testing out possibilities and discussing the advantages and risks of each.

For example this paper, written for a feminist audience, so far has framed care as a women's rights issue that focuses on the persons providing care. But what if we were to frame care as 'the foundation of human existence' (Elson 2000: 9) and a matter of relational well-being – of living well together? One frame does not of course preclude the other – Elson uses both – but we might choose where to place the emphasis. A question that has troubled feminists advocating the importance of unpaid care is why it has been difficult to develop a broad basis of support beyond the women's rights movement. Has this pigeon-holed the issue? Some people I have spoken with suggest this is the case. In a well-being frame, care becomes a collective mutual responsibility in which individuals have the right to receive quality care and the right to provide such care without being exploited. It helps avoid essentialist reductionism and throws into relief other kinds of relations, such as those constructed on the basis of class or race, that also shape the giving and receiving of care.²⁶

There is also the question of whether and how care can be framed as a key development issue without explicitly critiquing the underlying gendered structure of global capitalism and thus risking the possibility of antagonizing mainstream development actors. Once again, a relational well-being frame can help to avoid this pitfall: We can endeavour to have the quality of care taken as an important indicator into the new well-being and happiness measures that are currently being promoted in international circles.²⁷ Care work, argues Himmelweit (1999), has a higher emotional content than many other kinds of work because it concerns looking after other people. A relational approach helps us understand care as something to which humans attach value and therefore sentiment (Folbre and Nelson 2000). Yet, we should avoid romanticizing care. Even aspects of caring that are meeting emotional and developmental needs may be given unwillingly by women and girls living in oppressive circumstances (Elson 2000).

Should one decide to be bolder, a more radical option would be to integrate care into an alternative framing of the processes that shape the production, distribution and consumption of goods and services. Since the 1990s geographers, anthropologists, philosophers, political scientists and heterodox economists have been deconstructing the orthodox idea of an autonomous and increasingly abstract economy.²⁸ Such an abstraction is premised on extreme methodological individualism that views man as an autonomous economic actor maximizing his gains in pursuit of his individual interest and excludes much of the relational activity associated with the sustenance of human well-being. This has led to alternative concepts of 'economy' and 'economic' that aim to bring about changes in real-world policy

²⁵ Personal communication.

²⁶ This section draws on Eyben and Fontana (2011).

²⁷ See the Sarkozy Commission (2009).

²⁸ For example, Carrier (1998) Gibson-Graham (2006) Thrift (2008) Mitchell (2008).

and practice through making visible aspects of social life previously ignored by the policy gaze (Cameron and Gibson-Graham 2003).

One of these alternative conceptual relational approaches is 'provisioning system theory'. This is a lens to analyse social norms and relations in the consumption, production and distribution of goods and services (Fine 2002). It shows how in any social context the same good or service may be provisioned through different kinds of relations. The nature of the relation affects and is affected by the character of the good or service. Using such an approach, Narotzky (2005) has explored child care arrangements and the various possibilities that might be available depending on local historical and cultural context. In the United Kingdom, for example, child care provisioning can be through state services, regulated and unregulated markets, relatives, friends or neighbours. Options will be influenced by income, cultural values such as concerns about letting children be looked after by strangers, the existence of a social network and the availability of willing relatives. Thus child care is not just a service for which one pays or does not pay, but is imbued with values and meanings that shape the character of its provisioning. Such an analysis can provide evidence to support those claiming that the economy be re-organised for more just and equitable outcomes for people (across gender, race, health conditions, etc).

Not all of these alternative perspectives of the economy have as yet succeeded in breaking free of the deeply entrenched gender norms that make care work invisible, but some international bodies are already making the effort. Action Aid International's new seven-year strategy includes supporting actions to build and advocate for gender-responsive economic alternatives. UNDP has supported the work of the Casablanca Dreamers that 'was born out of the concern of deteriorating conditions of women in their countries – especially the least privileged in the South – and their lack of influence on the development agenda'.²⁹

Meanwhile, the global economic crisis has led to a much broader group, including for example the Sarkozy Commission (2009) to ask whether our current world order is just and equitable. Nevertheless it is difficult for organisations dependent on funding by governments and the general public to be bold in public about more radical initiatives which challenge the orthodox, bounded construction of the economy that makes care an externality. Feminists working in such organisations should therefore link up informally with civil society and academic institutions and encourage them to include the centrality of care in the current debates on the proliferation of diverse possible economic forms (Cameron and Gibson-Graham 2003), including those that balance the prevailing methodological individualism values of autonomy and individual entrepreneurship with the relational values of nurturing, sharing and cooperation.

2.2.3 Claiming

Making claims is about demanding the right to be recognised and to have the state and society respond to one's claims. Since the mid-1970s there has been a growth in political movements whose claims for justice were based on forms of identity other than class. These new claims concerned structural inequities of status – for example in relation to gender or race – and were about the right to be recognised on one's own terms. In her seminal work, Nancy Fraser argued that justice could only be achieved if redistribution and recognition stayed coupled together as mutually supporting elements of a progressive political agenda (Fraser et al 2004). Fraser stresses that mal-distribution and mis-recognition are inequities that require political action for institutional as well as personal change. Her later addition of a third 'R' – representation – argues that such change cannot be achieved without parity of participation in debating how each of us understands what is our social world and therefore what needs to be done to make it more just. Everyone has the right to represent their own situation – their self-image and sense-making of the world – rather than be represented

²⁹ www.casablanca-dream.net.

through others' sense-making. Thus the notion of 'parity of representation' challenges the deeply-embedded thinking of most current policy approaches, which is based on an idea of 'objective' knowledge that ignores how power shapes whose representations count. Without representation, care is 'mis-recognised'.

Such ideas about social justice coincided with the rise of human rights as development policy discourse following the end of the Cold War. For feminist development scholars and activists, a rights-based approach offered a means of influencing policy agendas. They seized the opportunity provided by the 1993 UN Conference on Human Rights 1993 to promote CEDAW (the UN Convention concerning the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women, which had come into force in 1979). The argument for care is cast as the right to receive adequate care (Engster 2005) and the right not to be exploited when providing it (Bubeck 1995). Rights relating specifically to care include the right to social security at different stages of the life cycle when individuals may be particularly vulnerable: children, the elderly, the disabled and the chronically sick (Piron 2004). Other human rights such as those to food, housing, and education are also relevant.

Governments that have ratified UN human rights conventions have the duty to implement policy that supports rather than negates human rights. Balakrishnan et al (2010) have proposed a framework for auditing governments' economic policy in relation to human rights claims. They suggest that the methodology – test-run in Mexico and the United States – could be very useful in 'moving economic policy in a better direction by identifying which policies are likely to be inconsistent with human rights obligations' (ibid: 65). These include, of course, policies relating to care. The findings from such an audit can not only reveal the potential social impact of macro-economic policy, but also contribute to exposing the social content of macro-economic policies (Elson 2006).

2.2.4 Programming

One of the reasons offered as to why care stays invisible is that it does not fit in any specific sector. The provision and receiving of unpaid care has an impact on food security, health, education, agriculture, business development, water and sanitation, transport, etc. By belonging everywhere, care fits nowhere in terms of development's sectoral approach. However, the reverse is also the case: Just because it fits nowhere, enterprising policy advocates and programme designers can integrate it everywhere. There are many opportunities to shape programmes so that care is recognized, drudgery is reduced and the allocation of caring responsibilities is more equitably distributed (Elson 2010). Investments in reducing drudgery should be designed and evaluated not solely in terms of releasing women's time for income earning but more broadly within a well-being perspective, bearing in mind that the optimal use of the time saved may be for sleeping or leisure. Clearly, for girls the time saved should also help them stay at school, as occurred in Mali as the result of UNDP's introduction of labour-saving technology (Fälth and Blackden 2009).

Designing programmes to encourage the re-distribution of caring responsibilities includes supporting men's and women's own efforts to change gender norms that prevent men assuming equal roles in care responsibilities, making it easier for men to become more involved in and respected for sharing the family's caring responsibilities as well as for doing paid care work. These objectives should also inform the design of social protection and other public sector interventions, paying attention to ensuring that efficiency arguments used to raise financing do not undermine programmes' potential for social transformation. For example, conditional cash transfers to mothers of school-age children in extreme poverty should be implemented to avoid increasing women's work through the lost labour of girls now in school as well as to avoid reinforcing existing gender divisions of labour in which fathers are not involved in child-rearing responsibilities (Molyneux 2009). Furthermore, emphasising the redistribution of caring responsibilities within the family should not be used to avoid making the case for fiscal redistribution in support of reduction of structural poverty.

Fontana (2011)³⁰ provides a detailed worked example of the potential to use the Elson (2010) framework of recognition, reduction and re-distribution in the design of World Food Programme (WFP) projects that are likely to affect and be affected by dynamics around the provision and distribution of unpaid care within families and communities. In some programmes, for instance Maternal and Child Health Nutrition (MCHN), the link with care is obvious. In other cases the interaction between a WFP project and unpaid care work may be less direct, but it is equally important to expose. In emergency operations, WFP policy recognises that women and girls in camps do the bulk of firewood collection, and therefore have to walk long distances outside the camps with heavy loads and at personal risk. WFP is therefore committed to providing fuel-efficient stoves to the most vulnerable women (thus reducing their time burden) and to involving men and boys in protecting women and children from violence as well as sharing housework (WFP, 2009: 10–11). WFP also acknowledges the role that MCHN programmes can play in challenging gender norms around care responsibilities. WFP policy encourages redistribution of chores by supporting the inclusion of men and boys in nutrition and health education, as well as their reduction by, for example, promoting the use of ready-to-use meals that save time while meeting nutritional needs. Food for Work and Food for Training programmes provide conditional food transfers in exchange for either work to build infrastructure or time spent in training. WFP emphasises the need to ensure that women and men participate equally in these activities and recognises that the provision of childcare on site is a key factor to facilitate women's access (WFP, 2009: p12). Food for Work or similar initiatives would not only make it easier for women to participate on equal terms as men by providing child care on site, but also, and importantly, by using the project to build infrastructure that usefully reduces the drudgery of care (e.g. piped water). This latter aspect tends not to be sufficiently emphasised in discussions on making public works gender-responsive and deserves greater attention. From this example, it can be seen that by paying consistent attention to care, programmes can be designed to reduce drudgery, support public sector provision and challenge gender norms. They can also be designed to support grassroots claims, as the following example shows in relation to caring for small children.

A feature of policy making is to hide values and politics under the cloak of techno-speak wrapped up in a language of efficiency and effectiveness (Shore and Wright 1997). A study (Eyben and Wilson 2009) of an Early Childhood Development (ECD) advocacy and programming initiative to improve parenting skills in the Caribbean found it to be relying heavily on the prevailing policy discourse of returns on investment from enhanced human capital and less crime. As a UNICEF official put it, 'it will save money at the other end' (Eyben and Wilson 2009: 43). In line with the bulk of academic ECD literature, the initiative largely failed to consider the structural issues of absence of political voice and inequitable gender norms relating to childhood deprivation, instead focusing technically on improving the skills of 'parents' (in reality meaning young women). Yet, things were more complicated than appeared at first sight. It is not unusual for development programmes to contain diverse and potentially conflicting discourses. Our study found within the initiative the subdued presence of a more politicized discourse— particularly in parts of the region which have a more radical political tradition: that of changing society so that children can flourish. However, the strategic implications of this discourse in relation to the need for gender analysis and support to citizens' voice had not yet been adequately addressed. The initiative would have been better equipped to promote early childhood development in the region if it were to construct an advocacy and programming strategy that allowed the leadership very consciously to make optimum use of both the efficiency and the rights discourses. Reflexivity enhances capacity for discursive juggling of this kind. Policy advocacy could consciously use efficiency arguments to seek private-sector and state support, while at the same time programme design could encourage political action from within those deprived communities where the initiative was working, taking care to avoid treating young mothers instrumentally but rather

³⁰ This paragraph draws on Eyben and Fontana (2011).

relating to them as citizens with claims and rights to services for themselves and their children.

Conclusion

We must not under-estimate the challenge in getting care into development policies and practice. Today, in richer countries neo-liberal policies and austerity measures have cut back the role of the state in the social service provision that supported unpaid care (Bakker 2007, Hawkesworth 2006). This in turn has undoubtedly reinforced care's neglect in the development sector, which is far less accountable for its policies and programmes than are national governments in their own countries. Because the sector has a global reach – concerned with everywhere and nowhere – it is disconnected from the politics of local context. The consequent absence of citizens' voices about the importance of care has contributed to its even greater neglect, as the discursive dominance of neo-liberal economics remains less subject to contestation. At the same time, the current changes in the international development landscape, with the growing political and economic influence of rising global powers such as China, India and Brazil, do not promise any immediate improvement in the scale of the challenges that feminists encounter. Recent global development events, such as last year's meeting in Busan, revealed a common vision that development should be (in a critic's words) a 'remorseless drive ... towards capitalism on a global scale' (Cammack 2011: 14).

Feminists in the international development sector must engage with global economic justice and sustainable development movements, encouraging them to recognize that without tackling the neglect of care, these movements will never achieve their aspirations of a more equitable and responsible model of economic development. They can support (quietly or otherwise, depending on their positionality) those who are actively challenging the assumptions informing existing economic development models – assumptions that are rendering care invisible. This includes encouraging world-wide debates among diverse audiences about how to change our economic models into ones shaped by altruistic and solidarity principles. At the same time feminists, as reflexive development policy actors and programme designers, can work usefully within the existing paradigm to secure a succession of small wins. A succession of small wins may over time not only help many women and their families lead less oppressive lives, but can also contribute to a change of mindset among citizens, think tanks and policy-makers about the significance of care.

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