

IOs and (Gendered) Social Policy Innovations: The OECD's Social Investment Perspective vs CEPAL's Care Economy

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It is important to critically assess 'new' social policy ideas travelling across the globe (Peck and Theodore, 2015), especially their underlying gender assumptions. Social investment is clearly one such set of ideas that has assumed increasing prominence over the last two decades. Like most such rapidly diffusing ideas, however, it admits of quite different interpretations. For some, it represents an important break with neoliberalism while also advancing the cause of gender equality (Morel et al, 2012; Hemerijck, 2015). Although others accept that it constitutes a significant social policy innovation, but are more skeptical about its actual and potential contribution to the achievement of gender equality (Jenson, 2009; Saraceno, 2015). This paper compares the gendered assumptions underlying the OECD's (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development) interpretation of social investment, with a focus on measures to facilitate work-family reconciliation, and CEPAL's (the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean¹) alternative conception centred on the concept of the care economy.

Over the past decade or so, the OECD and CEPAL - two important IOs, widely known for their policy-oriented research - have attempted to grapple with the issue of work-family tensions. As women continue to spend more time on unpaid domestic work than men in all countries (OECD 2016: 129), work-family tensions are – or are becoming – an issue faced by both organisations' member states, and thus one that they have attempted to address. Among the OECD's member countries, based predominantly (but no longer exclusively) in the Global North,² the adult worker family has clearly become the norm. In 2015, women's labour force participation in the OECD reached an average of 58.6%, although this figure obscures important differences among its members, most notably between the Nordic countries and those of Southern Europe.³ The OECD sees the solution to the resulting work-family tensions from a social investment perspective, a set of ideas it has done much to promote from the outset (Jenson, 2010; Mahon, 2010). Although women's labour force participation in the Latin America remains below the

¹ CEPAL is the Spanish acronym for the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC).

² With 35 member countries, the OECD's original core was Western Europe, Canada, and the US, with Japan joining in 1964 and Australia and New Zealand in the early 1970s. Since 1994 it has added new members, including two from Latin America (Mexico and Chile). In 2013, it began negotiations with Colombia and in 2015 Costa Rica was invited to apply.

³ The labour force participation rates for women 15-64 in the Nordic countries were 74.4 (Finland), 75.3 (Denmark), 76.2 (Norway) and 85.5 (Iceland) in comparison with 54.9 (Italy), 59.9 (Greece), and 35.0 (Turkey) (OECD, 2016: 220).

OECD average, it has been rising steadily since the 1990s (OECD, 2016: 170).⁴ CEPAL, the UN regional commission for an important region of the Global South which is known for its postwar contribution to critical thinking about development, offers instead a perspective based on feminist understandings of social reproduction.

The first section of the paper focuses on the social investment perspective, drawing out the ways it represents a social innovation relative to the postwar Keynesian-welfare state and to neo-liberalism. Particular attention will be paid to the gendered implications of social investment both as discourse and as practice. The second section will focus on the development of the OECD's social investment discourse and the gendered implications thereof. The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) – or more specifically its Directorate for Employment, Labour and Social Affairs (DELSA) – made an important contribution to the creation and dissemination of the social investment perspective. Its version has undergone some important modifications over the course of the last two decades, moving from a narrow 'gender awareness' to tackle the issues of shared parental leave and women's unpaid labour. The discursive frame, however, retains the instrumentalist cast of the social investment perspective. This is in contrast to CEPAL's discourse, discussed in the third section, which shifts away from the reconciliation of work and family so that women can work and bear children, to focus attention on the care economy.

Social Investment as (Gendered) Policy Innovation

While the social investment perspective posits a break with the Keynesian-welfare state⁵ and neo-liberalism, it also shares certain features with each of them. Whereas the Keynesian-welfare state located the barriers to employment on the demand side (hence the necessity to 'prime the pump'⁶ and the automatic stabiliser role of programs like unemployment insurance), both neo-liberalism and social investment focus on the supply side, albeit with some important differences. Thus both seek to 'activate' the unemployed and those on social assistance. However neo-liberalism's instruments of choice focus on limiting eligibility and cutting benefits in order to push people into (frequently low-paid and precarious) jobs. Proponents of social investment would instead place more emphasis on 'carrots' such as in-work benefits to 'make work pay'. More importantly, in contrast to neo-liberalism's negative view of the welfare state, from a social investment perspective, social policy can play a positive role - as long as it focuses on

⁴ It is above the OECD average in Colombia (63.7%) and Brazil (62.4%) and just below in Chile (55.8%) and Costa Rica (53.9%) (OECD, 2016: 220).

⁵ In Latin America, the relevant form of post-war state is the 'developmental state' actively involved in promoting industrialisation by import substitution. As a corollary, it came to include social insurance programs for urban formal-sector workers. In some countries (e.g. Argentina and Uruguay), by the 1970s the latter had come to include a substantial share of the population whereas in others like Brazil and Mexico, these left out a substantial part of the population (Figuiera, 2004). Neo-liberal structural adjustment programs contributed to the dramatic shrinking of the formal sector and the spread of informal employment.

⁶ As we know, not an idea invented by Donald Trump.

investment in people's capacities. Thus for instance the state has a role to play in supporting early childhood education and care (ECEC) as well as post-secondary education and training and retraining. In other words, although the social investment perspective shares certain features with its neoliberal cousin, it is differentiated from neoliberal versions to the extent that 1) its strategies for incorporating the poor in the labour market place greater emphasis on the use of carrots (in work benefits) than sticks; 2) with the Keynesian-welfare state it shares elements of social liberalism, in this case an emphasis on a positive role for social policy in promoting the development of human capabilities of all citizens, not simply the poor; and 3) while it retains the post-war concern with equity, the latter is to be secured over the life course, rather than in the here and now.

The three also differ in their gender assumptions. For the most part, the Keynesian-welfare state focused on mitigating the risks faced by male breadwinners, insuring them against the loss of family income due to his unemployment, sickness, disability, or old age. Such programs were often supplemented, to various degrees, by programs supporting the female caregiver, such as family or child allowances for all citizen-mothers⁷ and (means-tested) social assistance for lone mothers.⁸ In pure neo-liberal discourse, women, including especially lone mothers, however are to be treated like unencumbered male workers. To the extent that this gives rise to the need for non-familial care, this is to be met through the market, although there may be room for targeted support for some form of daycare. Neo-liberalism however can also be combined with social conservative efforts to resuscitate the male breadwinner family form, a move consistent with the privatisation to the family of aspects of care once (partially) assumed by the state.

Social investment focuses on the needs of the adult worker family. The normalisation of this family form is welcomed as it facilitates the redesign of 'overly generous' social insurance systems intended to support the male breadwinner family. The two-earner family is also more able to cope with the effects of the 'flexible' labour markets arising out of the decline of (post-war) standard/formal sector employment. In addition, the proponents of social investment are concerned to increase women's labour force participation in order to broaden the tax base and thus to counteract the fiscal effects of population ageing. They are also concerned to promote the intergenerational reproduction of human capital. Thus states have a role to play in supporting ECEC to establish the foundations for life-long learning and help parents (mothers) to combine work and family, including childbearing. Social investment's emphasis on supporting the adult earner family thus also entails a shift in emphasis (from Keynesian times) from transfers to 'capacitating social services' (Hemerijck, 2015: 247).

⁷ See Sainsbury (1996) for a discussion of the difference between those targeting the breadwinner and those going to women.

⁸ Again while in some countries, only widows or married women whose husbands had deserted them were eligible whereas others were more inclusive.

Social investment has appealed to social democratic thinkers from Esping-Andersen (1999) to Morel et al (2012) because, as the latter note, it seems to offer a way 'to regenerate the welfare state, promote social inclusion, create more and better jobs, and help address the challenges posed by the economic crisis, globalisation, population ageing, and climate change' (2012: 353). At the same time, they are aware of criticisms. Thus Nolan (2013) has criticised social investment proponents for conflating policy analysis and policy advocacy, while Kazepov and Ranci (2017) argue that social investment only works under specific contextual conditions.⁹ Southern European countries like Italy – and arguably much of Latin America – lack the socio-economic and institutional structures required for its success. Crouch and Keune (2012) in turn suggest that the fiscal austerity policies adopted in the wake of the 2008 crisis have derailed the social investment project. Cantillon's (2010) criticism – that social investment policies tend to do little to alleviate poverty and can in fact result in deepening social exclusion – in particular has prompted social democratic proponents to insist that social investment needs to be combined with social protection. Thus Hemerijck would argue that in addition to policies designed to ease the 'flow' of life course transitions and raise the quality of the 'stock' of human capital, it is important to maintain 'strong minimum-income universal safety nets as social protection and economic stabilization buffers' (2015: 242). Morel et al stress the continued centrality of equality – equality of access to capacitating services, equality of outcome as well as opportunity, and gender equality. The latter is of particular interest here.

That is there have been important feminist critiques of social investment. Jenson (2009), one of the first to identify it as a distinct break with neo-liberalism (2003), has argued that social investment proponents, like Esping-Andersen (1999) tend to 'write out' attention to gender equality: 'support for women's capacity to balance work and family is assessed purely in terms of ...potential for achieving a better demographic balance' (2009: 467). In the process, they ignore the very 'structural factors that cause women, their work and their achievements to be devalued and undervalued with respect to men's', leading inter alia to the persistence of gendered wage gaps and the related undervaluation of 'feminine' jobs (2009:466).

Saraceno, who along with Esping-Andersen was involved in the OECD conference that in a sense launched the latter's engagement with social investment,¹⁰ has taken the critique further. While acknowledging that social investment does add gender and its policies aim to redraw the boundaries of responsibility among families, states and markets, it takes for granted gender inequalities in the household and labour market. In particular, its promotion of women's participation in the labour market ignores the situation of women who stuck in low-paid, precarious jobs. Lost from view in social

⁹ Palier, in conjunction with Julian Garrizmann, Silja Häusermann, and Christine Zollinger, has launched a major project 'The World Politics of Social Investment, to explain variations in social investment agendas and patterns of reform across the globe.

¹⁰ The November 1996 Conference was on *Beyond 2000: The New Social Policy Agenda*. Saraceno contributed 'Family Change, Family Policies and the Restructuration of Welfare State while Esping-Andersen's contribution was 'Welfare States at the End of the Century'.

investment's stress on activation is the feminist idea 'that one must make (paid) work pay not out of necessity, but because it is meaningful, well-remunerated and acknowledged activity that leaves time also for other relationships and activities that one values' (Saraceno, 2015: 265). Elaborating on the latter point, Saraceno critiques social investment's instrumentalist view of families and 'family time' for undermining the already weakly institutionalised right to care not to mention time for other aspects of life, including 'friendship, leisure, social and political participation' (Ibid: 262). In other words, while more positively 'gender aware' than either the post-war state or neo-liberalism, in Fraser's (1989) terms, simply aims to create the conditions for universalising the adult earner family. It is a long way from her feminist utopia based on the universalise caregiver model, in which work occupies a modest but not determining place in women's and men's lives.

Social democratic social investment proponents like Hemerijck and Morel et al admit that social investment falls short of promoting gender equality in theory and in practice. Thus Morel et al acknowledge that no country 'has thus far managed to – or south to – effectively address certain persistent gender inequalities, such as the division of unpaid care and house hold labour, the gender wage gap, labour market segregation and the "glass ceiling" effect for women' (2012: 364). For Hemericjk, 'Paid parental leave, affordable childcare, extended pension credits for child-rearing and long-term care, provisions for work absence when children are ill, enable women to develop much greater autonomy in work, care and family life. It is nonetheless true that these provisions have yet to improve the gender balance in caring and parenting' (2015: 252). In what follows, we will explore the way the OECD has dealt with gender as it has developed its social investment perspective, contrasting this with CEPAL's approach, centred on the feminist concept of the 'care economy'.

Social Investment According to the OECD

The OECD, or more specifically its Directorate for Employment and Social Affairs (DELSA), began to explore an alternative to the Keynesian Welfare state already in the 1980s (Mahon, 2014). It was not until the 1990s however that it began to chart a new social investment course. The broad parameters of the DELSA's social investment discourse were sketched in the document prepared for the 1994 meeting of the Ministers for Social Policy. *New Orientations for Social Policy* outlined an agenda for modernising social policy that sought to break with the post-war era's emphasis on protection and instead to promote the development of citizens' potential to participate in the emergent and increasingly globalised 'knowledge-based economy. Or, as the document put it, 'governments can no longer be thought of as providers of largesse, but instead, as partners that enable and empower people to take initiatives on their own behalf and to exert greater control over the circumstances of their lives' (OECD, 1994:11). *New Orientations* was very much in line with the principles of social liberalism enunciated by John Stuart Mill, inserted into a of neo-liberal macro-economic framework. The implications, however, were fleshed out through subsequent initiatives and in this process the gender dimensions would come to the fore.

New Orientations clearly accepted the neoliberal imperative of non-inflationary growth and the need to 'reconcile costs with limits on budgets.' At the same time, it began to suggest that this should not take place at the expense of social policy – as long as the latter were properly designed: 'systems of protection against certain risks are important to the functioning of the economy, not least because they give individuals the security necessary for them to take economic initiatives which themselves present risks. More broadly they provide the political and social stability required for structural adjustments to the economy' (1994: 12). The report called for a shift from income maintenance to facilitating labour market participation, even while it recognised the need for ongoing support for the most vulnerable. The report also reflected a moderate gender awareness: the emergence of the 'dual worker' family was welcomed as it 'increased options for self-realisation open to women.'¹¹ It also required a new role for the social policy in facilitating access to childcare and other services previously provided in the home. At this point, however, the dual earner family was not allocated a central role nor was childcare singled out as a critical area for social investment to combat child poverty and/or to lay the foundations for lifelong learning.

New Orientations in 1994 opened the way for DELSA to develop its agenda along the lines. In this DELSA staff sought input from external experts through conferences such as the one on 'family, market and community' that brought social policy ministers together with invited experts, such as Esping-Andersen, who supported the general social investment thrust and acceptance of existing labour market inequalities - as long as the state was prepared to help people to acquire the skills needed to leave low wage employment over the life course. Esping-Andersen's contribution highlighted the need 'for a radical rethinking of family policy...that helps reduce dependence on a single income earner, and...that makes it possible to combine high fertility rates with female careers' (1996:65). Concomitant with this was the argument for a shift in expenditure on the elderly (e.g. pension reform) toward investment in young (adult earner) families. Saraceno's contribution similarly focused on the importance of the dual worker family for maintaining economic security, but in contrast to Esping-Andersen, she was also critical of the assumption that women's primary responsibility for providing care is part of the natural order of things. Neither raised the issue of getting men to share in domestic care work, however.

The conference contributed to the Secretariat's work the next ministerial meeting, *A Caring World*. Like *New Orientations*, *A Caring World* accepted the strictures imposed by neoliberal macroeconomic policy while arguing for a reorientation from social protection to social investment. It returned to the issue of lone parents and the poverty to which their children are exposed and saw activation as the solution. While this was in line with the residualist assumptions of neoliberal social policy, *A Caring World* reflected the learning that had taken place between the two meetings. It was thus broadly concerned to support the adult worker family to support flexible labour markets and to facilitate

¹¹ It went on to note, however, that 'full equality of opportunity in the labour market remains elusive in all countries' and that the emergence of the dual earner family 'may also reflect income insecurity and the inability of many households to sustain an adequate level of living without two pay checks' (OECD, 1994:10).

the reform of 'overly-generous' male breadwinner pensions (1999:14-15). At the same time, *A Caring World* acknowledged that states would need to help such families reconcile work and family life via public investment in childcare and appropriate leave policies.

These documents reflected DELSA's efforts to work out a social investment perspective. To influence member state policy, however, the OECD backs such broad policy advice with detailed comparative policy review, which would entail the development of appropriate indicators to facilitate the benchmarking of country performance. While the DELSA's employment division focused on developing appropriate labour market indicators – the "reassessed jobs strategy (Mahon, 2011), 2001 DELSA's social policy division launched a thematic review, *Babies and Bosses*, centred on the needs of the adult worker family and barriers to its generalisation. As (adult earner) 'family friendly' policy was seen as a relatively new area for DELSA, for which appropriate indicators had yet to be identified, *Babies and Bosses* eschewed a large sample, quantitative comparison in favour of small set comparisons – four in-depth reviews involving thirteen countries,¹² which allowed for greater attention to diverse institutional arrangements and debates and made it possible for learning to occur.

Babies and Bosses scrutinized tax and benefit policies to work to identify barriers to the normalisation of the adult earner family. It was critical of long term childcare leaves as these erode women's human capital and weaken their workforce attachment. While the final report continued to promote the elimination of such barriers and the introduction of 'moderate benefit sanctions if benefit recipients do not take active steps to find work or improve their employability' (OECD 2007:20), it did note that poverty can also stem from low wage work. Therefore appropriately structured benefit supports ('making work pay') were seen as an important complement to measures to help parents reconcile work and family life (OECD, 2007:66). It thus sought to mitigate if not to challenge the growing inequality in labour markets.

Perhaps the most important development over the course of these studies involved its recognition that reconciliation measures need be designed to do more to promote gender equality. *Babies and Bosses* began with the assumption that it was women whose lives were being changed in this new 'family friendly' world, not men's. Thus while critical of the 'long hours' male work culture in many of the countries examined, it initially favoured the expansion of part-time work for women. By the final report, however, it recognised that women's part-time work contributed to their economic inequality. It thus argued for equal rights for part-time workers, such as pro rata pay and benefits (OECD 2007:180). More importantly, it had altered its position on parental leave. In the first two volumes it failed to consider the importance of incentives to genuine 'parental' (i.e.shared) leave. This began to change in the third volume due to the

¹² Conducted between 2001 and 2005, the reviews involved Australia, Denmark and the Netherlands (2002); Australia, Ireland and Japan (2003), New Zealand, Portugal and Switzerland (2004) and Canada, Finland, Sweden and the United Kingdom (2005). The final synthetic report, which included other OECD countries, appeared in 2007.

influence of Janet Gornick a feminist political scientist contracted to help construct a new set of indicators. The lesson was reinforced by the research team's exposure to debates on this issue in Portugal and Sweden. By the final volume it was thus clear that fully shared leave is important to 'gender equitable employment outcomes.' Thus DELSA's initial attempt to flesh out the new strategy focused on the needs of the adult worker family, and did so with increasing emphasis on gender equality.

The staff member who headed *Babies and Bosses* (Willem Adema) also coordinates the OECD's gender data portal that assembles data from all directorates¹³ and it was he who shepherded the OECD's next major gender initiative, *Closing the Gender Gap: Act Now* (OECD, 2012), through the process.¹⁴ The final report built on the foundations laid by *Babies*. Thus it stressed the importance of affordable childcare and shared parental leave. It cautioned against part-time work as a long term solution for parents (mainly women) and reiterated the criticism of the tendency of men in some countries to work long hours (Ibid: 27 Box 1.1).¹⁵ Perhaps one of the most important additions was recognition of the unpaid domestic work done by women.¹⁶ Thus it observed that while affordable childcare is important, 'how people manage life at home also plays a big part in the equation. Many systems still implicitly regard childrearing as a mother's responsibility; everywhere women are doing more unpaid work than men, regardless of whether they have full-time jobs or not' (ibid: 15). As we shall see, unpaid work and the larger 'care economy' in which it is embedded is one of CEPAL's central concerns.

Another innovation was the inclusion of countries of the South. In the past the OECD's world had been neatly divided into its advanced capitalist country members and those it sought to help 'develop' through the Development Assistance Committee (DAC). By 2010, this world had become visibly more complex even within the OECD, with the accession of Korea, Mexico and Chile and closer engagement with the other 'emerging' states. Nevertheless, the OECD retained a North-South binary, continuing to see the gender in the South through the lens of the Development Centre's 'social institutions and gender index' (SIGI). Thus if high childcare costs, a masculine workplace culture and unpaid work inhibit gender equality in the North, in developing countries it is discriminatory social institutions such as early marriage and boy-child bias that are seen to limit women's progress. This ignores the importance of common problems – including high childcare costs, masculine workplace cultures and the unequal sharing of

¹³ [Http://www.oecd.org/gender/data](http://www.oecd.org/gender/data)

¹⁴ The new gender initiative, which focused on education, employment and entrepreneurship, was launched in 2010 when Hilary Clinton as US Secretary of State had appointed a (feminist) ambassador, Karen Kornbluh, to the OECD.

¹⁵ As is often the case with such reports, certain interesting findings were buried in the text. Thus the report noted 'the comparably high diversification of female occupations in the Czech Republic related to their past as communist regimes, while the subsequent move to a market economy has brought the shift back to a more traditional model of segregation' (OECD 2016: 155). In addition to acknowledging that the USSR had been relatively effective at tackling segregation, the report noted that unions could help to close the gender pay gap (ibid: 172).

¹⁶ This entered the Division's perspective through the piece, *Cooking, Caring and Volunteering: Unpaid Work Around the World* (Veerie, 2011), commissioned with the encouragement of the then-US Ambassador.

unpaid work, not to mention the spread of precarious employment. It also misses important connections between North and South such as those forged by the appearance of global care chains.

The resulting 2013 Council Recommendation of Council on Gender Equality instructed the committee serviced by the DELSA Secretariat - Employment, Labour and Social Affairs – to monitor the implementation of the Recommendation and 'report to Council no later than four years following its adoption and regularly thereafter' (OECD, 2013: 6). This does mark a stronger commitment to gender mainstreaming than in the past.¹⁷ Gender also appears as part of the most recent elaboration of the organisation's growth discourse. Its inclusive growth project, which marks a distancing from neoliberal ideas, builds on DELSA's work on income inequality,¹⁸ the OECD's 'well-being' index, and the *New Approaches to Economic Challenges* initiative launched in 2012. The Gender Initiative is included in this package (OECD, 2015b: 42). Following the approval of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the DAC's GenderNet launched a 'policy dialogue on women's empowerment' with the aim of promoting SDG target 5.4 – recognising and valuing 'unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies, and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally appropriate'. These projects exist alongside the Economics Department's 'going for growth' initiative, which still bears a neoliberal imprint, although gendered thinking appears to have had some impact on the Economics Department.¹⁹

Comment [R1]: Revise once the 2017 report to Council has been released.

Thus the OECD/DELSA's version of social investment has come to incorporate a greater concern to promote gender equality. The 'reconciliation of work and family life' problematic remains the central focus. Although some attention is now given to the unpaid work done by women, the latter is mainly understood as a barrier to their full and equitable participation in the labour market. Time to provide and receive care and to do the other things that make life worth living remains a marginal concern.

CEPAL's Care Economy

Much of the debate on social investment, especially those who see in it the potential for reviving the social democratic project, is European-centred. Nevertheless, as Jenson (2010) argues, Latin America constituted an important site for the discovery of social investment, most notably through the development of idea of conditional cash transfers (CCTs) in Brazil and Mexico. CEPAL did not play a major role here. It has been less enthusiastic about these than the World Bank, which has become a major proponent of CCTs on the global scale. For CEPAL, CCTs are at best a component of a broader

¹⁷ It also appears that the OECD is doing more to promote women within the organisation. Currently one of the Deputy Secretary Generals is a woman, women head three of the directorates, including Economics and Gabriela Ramos is chief of staff and G20 sherpa.

¹⁸ *Growing Unequal* (2008), *Divided We Stand: Why Inequality Keeps Rising* (2011a) and *In It Together: Why Less Inequality Benefits All* (2015c).

¹⁹ Thus the *OECD Economic Survey of Austria* (2015a) includes two chapters on gender equality in work, family and life arrangements.

social policy matrix centred on the idea of 'basic universalism' (Huber and Stephens, 2012). Moreover, its Division for Gender Affairs (DGA) has been particularly critical of the way CCTs reinforce women's maternal role, as have feminist scholars like Molyneux (2006).

To situate CEPAL's contribution it is important to recall that the dominant post-war state form was not the Keynesian-welfare state but rather the developmental state, which played a key role in supporting industrialisation by import-substitution (ISI). CEPAL - and Raúl Prebisch, the Argentinean economist who played a critical role in its founding years - is noted for its contribution to providing the intellectual underpinnings for the ISI model of development in Latin America. In response to the dismantling of ISI in the wake of neoliberal structural adjustment, CEPAL developed its neo-structuralist alternative, which, as Leiva argues, combines ' 1) an alternative vision to neoliberal dogmatism; 2) a comprehensive development strategy; 3) an integrated policy framework; and 4) a grant narrative about the path toward modernity that the twenty-first century offers Latin American and Caribbean societies' (Leiva, 2008:xix). It shares certain elements with social investment but its Gender Affairs Directorate has developed an alternative to the reconciliation problematic.

CEPAL's neo-structuralism accepts neo-liberalism's emphasis on exports but argues that they should be balanced by growing domestic demand. It also rejects comparative advantage based on low wages and raw materials exports in favour of 'systemic competitiveness' through state-promoted innovation and the diffusion of productivity increases across the economy. It is critical of dualistic labour markets, which have contributed to the region's high levels of poverty and inequality. In relation to the flexible labour markets so central to neo-liberal discourse, CEPAL's neo-structuralism stressed 'functional' flexibility, through investment in the education and training of the population as a whole, over numerical (hire and fire) flexibility celebrated in neoliberal discourse. More broadly, it is supportive of 'basic universalism' – 'policies that guarantee a minimum income and provide basic free or subsidized health care and child care and labor market training, along with quality primary and secondary education' (Huber and Stephens, 2012: 53). In this respect, its neo-structuralism is consistent with the social investment perspective. Where it diverges is in its treatment of gender.

The issue of work-family reconciliation is on the agenda in Latin America where neoliberal structural adjustment programs and the resulting economic crises helped destroy many (men's) jobs in the formal economy. Thus by 1990, the informal economy accounted for 50% of non-rural men's employment in Argentina, and around one third in Brazil, Chile, Uruguay and Mexico (Abramo and Valenzuela, 2005: 313). The resulting decline in men's wages, in turn, brought more women into the labour market, though mostly in the informal economy. Thus labour force participation of urban women in Argentina rose from 38% in 1990 to 48% in 2002, in Chile from 35% to 42%, Mexico from 33% to 45% and Uruguay from 44 to 50% (Abramo and Valenzuela, 2005: 375). As the OECD (2016) noted, this trend continued into the new millennium. Over the same period, the migration of men (more often to the US)

and women (more typically to countries in the region) also became an increasingly important way to make ends meet.

It is not surprising, therefore, that work-family tension is an issue that the CEPAL-supported Regional Conferences of Women in Latin America and the Caribbean²⁰ have addressed. From the start they did so in a way that highlighted inequalities in the division of domestic labour. 'Shared family responsibilities' was one of eight priority areas in the Regional Action Plan for the Women of Latin America and the Caribbean 1995-2001, but it drew on feminist conceptions of social reproduction. Thus it aimed to 'raise society's awareness of the value of the *time socially necessary for the care* of the home and family and the need for equitable distribution of these tasks among all members of the household (CEPAL, 2006:53-54 Emphasis added). While various documents identified the need for shared parental leave and childcare, it was recognised that on their own such initiatives would be insufficient, especially given existing social security systems. Where maternity leave provisions do exist, they only apply to part of the work force, excluding many women who work in the informal economy. Thus in Latin America, 'importing the idea of reconciliation wholesale and applying it to the region's countries (in both policy and analysis) tends to obscure the heterogeneity of employment situations. Evaluations of reconciliation policies acknowledge the coverage deficit resulting from the way they are targeted in formal employment, thus excluding women in the informal sector' (Lamaute-Bresson 2013:86-7).

The document prepared for the 2004 Mexican Conference introduced the concept that would instead serve as the lens through which DGA sees the world - the 'care economy' (CEPAL, 2004a: 34). Under the leadership of Sonia Montaño, head of DGA for many years, the concept has been developed in the various documents, beginning with the 10th (Quito) session in 2007. Thus *Women's Contribution to Equality in Latin America and the Caribbean*, produced for that session, noted that 'the care economy refers to the distribution of care services and includes both the providers and recipients. The latter may be either dependent – the elderly, the sick and children – or active in the labour market. On the provision side there are four agents: the State, the market, civil society (the 'third sector') and the family' (2007: 60). In Latin America, the document went on to note, the majority of care work falls on the family, and in particular on female members thereof and this, in turn, not only constrains their labour market participation, but also impinges upon their lives as citizens (ibid: 2).

The care economy makes visible the way women's unpaid care labour contributes to improving their family's well-being by making up the gap between the wage and the family's daily consumption. Women's unpaid labour also constitutes 'a[n invisible] reproduction tax, permitting savings on health costs, childcare and care for older persons in the family' (ibid:1). In other words, women bear the impact

²⁰ The Conference is a subsidiary body of CEPAL, providing a triennial forum for national women's machineries in the region. Following the 4th UN Conference, DGA's predecessor, the Women and Development Unit, was added to the Secretariat to support the work of the Conference and its executive, provide technical advice to national bodies (on request), and contribute to the integration of a gender perspective across the organisation.

of the decline in quality and access to health care and the lack of childcare, not to mention the absence of provision for elder care beyond pensions, which in turn have been largely confined to those in the formal sector. This way women serve the state is especially visible in the spate of conditional cash transfers (CCTs) that have spread across the region. As the DGA has pointed out in numerous publications, poor women are required to perform liaison work (schools, health centres etc) in a way that reinforces their maternal roles. Thus 'the capacity of the CCTs for transforming the lives of poor women through the transfer of money income (one step forward) is more than neutralized by the consolidation of their care of their caregiver role, which has multiple negative implications' (CEPAL, 2013a: 61).²¹

The DGA has attempted to make visible women's unpaid work by promoting the implementation of time use surveys. With its support, 18 countries in the region have utilised the time use survey it developed - *Classification of Time Use Authorised for Latin America (CAUTAL)*. Although, as in the OECD, these time use surveys served to document the fact that all women do more unpaid labour than men, they also made visible class differences, as women with higher incomes can purchase care whereas 'for poor and middle income sectors...it is virtually impossible for them to reconcile work and family life so they remain excluded from the opportunity to work' (CEPAL, 2010: 56). In fact, many higher income families hire low income women to attend to a substantial portion of their domestic care needs. Paid domestic labour accounts for a not-insignificant share of women's employment in the region – in 2013, 11.5% (CEPAL, 2015a: 43). This sector, which is marked by low pay, long hours, and low levels of social and legislative protection, builds not only on class but also racial-ethnic differences among women, as indigenous and Afro-descendent and non-indigenous are over-represented in this sector (CEPAL, 2014:175).

Migrant women – from Peru to Chile, Bolivia to Argentina, Nicaragua to Costa Rica – also account for a large share of domestic workers in the region as well as in the North. The importance of women's migration was already identified in the Regional Action Program, which stressed 'the need for governments to recognize, in migration...policies, the importance of enhancing the development potential of families, preserving their integrity and contributing to their reunification' (CEPAL, 2006: 55). This was picked up again in the 1997 Consensus which saw the need to incorporate 'gender analyses into studies of migratory movement, since the figures reveal an increasingly significant involvement of women in the phenomenon; to incorporate analysis of such aspects as the special features of migration deriving from women's involvement, the impact it has on children, the disadvantage women face in comparison with men in the receiving cities, and the fact that in many communities male migration leaves women to cope with the problems of family subsistence and management of the household's resource...' (ibid: 69). Limited economic opportunities in their home economies combine with the sexual division of labour to confine many women to work in this sector (CEPAL, 2007: 87). As *What Kind of State* noted:

²¹ This annual report of the Gender Equality Observatory has a good discussion of the gender implications of CCTs but similar criticisms appear in other work produced or commissioned by the DGA.

These migrants are a key link in “global care chains”, but are also the most critical expression of the discriminatory nature of the global market which, on the one hand, promotes the establishment of extended transnational families and yet, on the other,...restricts the movement of persons and leaves many women who emigrate with no possibility of family reunification. The paradox of this new type of chain is that...it is virtually impossible to reconcile family and work, which means a decline in the standard of care for the children of migrant workers’ (2010: 57)

Under these circumstances, ‘reconciliation of work and family’ indeed represents a major challenge for migrant women.

Thus through documents prepared for the biennial Conferences, the commissioning of studies by feminist scholars in the region, and work with technical experts on projects like the time use survey, DGA has developed the concept of the ‘care economy’ in ways that shed light on obstacles to work-family reconciliation in a manner that highlights gender inequalities and their articulation with class and race-ethnicity. In addition, under the leadership of Montaña and her successor, Nieves Rico, DGA has influenced CEPAL’s broader organisational discourse.

CEPAL neo-structuralist discourse had begun to incorporate a social dimension through the efforts of the Social Development Division (SDD), spurred by the political ‘pink tide’ sweeping the region (Mahon, 2015). SDD proved an important ally for DGA, although it took a while before the former came to share the care economy perspective. The special issue of its flagship publication, *Social Panorama of Latin America* (2004b), included a chapter on the family which acknowledged that despite the rise of women’s labour force participation, an unequal sexual division of labour persisted in the household. Accordingly it called for policies to promote work-family reconciliation. Initially its view of what the latter should entail reflected the sort of policies DGA would soon come to criticise: ‘In most countries [of the region]...the idea of “reconciling” family and work still refers to arrangements or mechanisms that rely on women to respond simultaneously to the demands of employment and those of family in such a way as to achieve the best quality of life possible given the working conditions that obtain. In other words, reference is made to a “need” that appears to be peculiar to women and not to concern men or society at large’ (CEPAL, 2007: 96).

DGA succeeded in winning SDD over to its perspective, aided by the Rico’s move from the DGA to SDD.²² Thus half the *Social Panorama 2009* edition was devoted to the issue of care, with chapters on gender and unpaid work; population change, care and gender; and public policies and the care crisis. Utilising the concept of the care economy, *Social Panorama* was able to go beyond ‘work-family reconciliation’ to stress the importance of time not just for paid work but also for ‘self care, leisure, political participation’ (CEPAL, 2009: 175). It also recognised the importance of redistributing tasks within the family and called upon states to ensure the provision of quality care for children and the elderly. CEPAL

²² Rico represents an important link between DGA and the Social Development Division. She worked with Montaña for many years before moving to the Social Division, where she most recently held the post of interim director before she returned to head DGA.

also called for enshrining the right to care: care should be viewed 'as a right of the community, to be provided through services that maximize the autonomy and well-being of families and individuals, with the State taking direct responsibility' (CEPAL, 2009: 201). Half the 2013 edition also focused on care. The introduction noted that

this edition aims...to generate knowledge on a link in the chain of social reproduction which has long been sidestepped by public policy....It is a core issue because sharp inequalities and gender discrimination come into play and work strongly against women, who bear the care burden as they do unpaid care work in the household and paid work outside the home; lower income families are the hardest hit because they cannot afford to buy care. This feeds back into the vicious circle of inequality (CEPAL 2013b: 11).

It called for quality, universally available care services for children, the elderly and those with disabilities, including the creation of decent work for care workers. The edition, produced under Rico's guidance, included a chapter on gender inequality in the labour market and its implications for wider socio-economic inequality (2014) while in the 2015 edition there was a small but thoughtful section on institutionalising care policies, calling for 'a set of inter-sectoral public and private actions, integrated into the social protection system of the country and delivered in a coordinated way to provide direct care to people and to support households in caring for family members' (CEPAL, 2015b: 52).

This gendered perspective did not filter into the first two documents of CEPAL's equality trilogy prepared for the 2010 and 2012 sessions. By 2014, however, *Compacts for Equality* was prepared to acknowledge the contributions of feminist thought to 'broadening the semantic and political field of equality', noting that 'only since the subject [of care] was taken up in the feminist literature and the gender approach has it been possible not only to see it as critical to social reproduction and the economy, but also to grasp clearly the acute gender inequality in the time and effort put into this activity and the failure to treat care giving as work' (ibid: 101). Two sections of the chapter on the world of work, moreover, focused on gender inequality in the labour market and unpaid work. In other words, DGA has used its position within the organisation to make SDD an ally and through this alliance it has succeeded in making gender equality and the work of care part of the organisation's core discourse.

Conclusions

This examination of how two IOs think through the implications of changing gender relations has shown that there is considerable overlap in way the OECD and CEPAL have come to see the issue of work-family tensions. Yet there are also important differences. Thus both agree that publicly supported childcare services have an important role to play but whereas the OECD sees these issues through the lens of social investment, CEPAL combines elements of a social investment perspective with one centred on the care economy. This is not to suggest that the OECD has been completely constrained by the limits of the original social investment discourse. Although CEPAL picked up on the issue of the unpaid work done by women earlier than the OECD, the latter has learned to see this dimension as well. Thus both organisations support the employment of time use surveys to document this aspect of gender

inequality and both advocate the sharing of domestic care work. Thus the OECD encouraged adoption of 'daddy months' as pioneered by the Scandinavian countries. For CEPAL, however, such measures are insufficient as long as the informal economy remains an important employer of both men and women. Although the informal economy is often seen as a problem for countries of the South, as the OECD itself admits, 'nonstandard' employment now accounts for one third of total employment in the OECD (2015: 18). Thus, depending on the way parental leave insurance programs are configured, many women and even a significant number of men would not be eligible for paid parental leave in the OECD countries of the North as well as the South. In addition, CEPAL's broader neo-structuralist project aims to progressively eliminate the informal sector by spreading 'decent work' for women as well as men across the economy.

There are also two related issues that ECLAC's care economy-centred approach helps it bring into focus that the OECD fails to see: paid domestic labour and the growth of transnational care chains. The prevalence of paid domestic work in Latin America is widely recognised but it is becoming more prevalent in the North as states try to deal with the growing demand for care in a context marked by fiscal austerity (Lister et al, 2007; León, 2014; Carbonnier and Morel, 2015). Moreover, it is often migrant women who are the paid domestic workers. This development has given rise to 'global care chains': women from poorer countries migrate to wealthier ones in the South and in the North to carry out domestic work, often leaving behind children or ageing parents whose care needs must be met by others (Hochschild, 2000). While CEPAL has done much to shed light on the 'reconciliation' issues thus raised, for the most part the OECD remains oblivious.

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