

## Whose Utopia? A Response to Gornick and Meyers “Institutions that Support Egalitarianism in Parenthood and Employment”

Shireen Hassim, Wits University

### Introduction

The Real Utopias Project, and Janet Gornick and Marcia Meyers’ paper on gender egalitarianism in particular, raise some unavoidable questions for those located outside the globe’s wealthy countries. Who is/can be part of this utopia? Can the vision of the dual earner/ dual carer model be universalised, and what steps would need to be taken to make this a vision for the global poor as well as the rich – and by whom would those steps need to be taken? One could respond with weary cynicism but I prefer to take my cue from the question posed by Erik Olin Wright: ‘what would it take to create social institutions free of oppression?’ He outlines real utopias as being those that are ‘grounded in the real potential of humanity, utopian destinations that have accessible waystations, utopian designs of institutions that can inform our practical tasks of muddling through in a world of imperfect conditions for social change.’ So I take as a common goal, regardless of global positioning, that the envisioning of utopias for those in the wealthier nations must, as a moral imperative, entail the possibility of universalising institutional principles and core values. At the very least, it must be one that reshapes the structure of economy and society in the United States, as Gornick and Meyers wish, while not being built upon or reinforcing existing exclusions of huge swathes of humanity from access to global resources. In other words, our ‘real utopia’ must be one that includes (in principle, and immediately or progressively) all of us.

Yet to imagine such an inclusive utopia raises a set of concerns that to some extent stands outside the framework of Gornick and Meyers’ paper. I outline these concerns as a collective challenge to think about what institutional principles should inform movements for social change in contexts other than those with which we are most familiar and beyond the north-south binaries. I am also convinced enough by the idea of real utopias to argue strongly that a progressive utopia must be one that is not built on the exploitation of the poor by the rich, nor one that speaks only to an elite. It must have the seed of universalisation; the waystations must be accessible to those currently excluded. If we do not extend this discussion we could reinforce the idea that social policy is part of the end-state of development and therefore not an appropriate or relevant debate for developing countries. The effect will be to consign poor people to the margins, as either not ready for inclusion (and the question then is, when will they ‘catch up’?) or as an unwelcome irritant. It seems to me inadequate to defer discussion of more inclusive models on the grounds that some states are simply not ready for them; states do not exist in isolation from each other – the poverty of poor nations is to no small extent the result of policies pursued by institutions under the control of rich countries. While some of these relationships of (particularly) crude exploitation might have their roots in more distant histories of conquest and colonisation than others, contemporary states and the relationships between them bear the traces of these histories. The rules of international trade and the institutions of global control over poor economies are a prime example of current relationships of exploitation and inequality.

I argue then, that any discussion of a real utopian transformation of institutions within the wealthy countries of the world must examine the relationship between these proposals and the conditions in the global South. There are two distinct ways in which the proposals elaborated by Gornick and Meyers might be criticized from this vantage point:

1. *Nonuniversalizability*. These proposals might only be viable in the wealthy countries. The point here is not just that these policies are not *achievable* in poor countries because of a lack of political forces with sufficient power to implement them; they are not *viable* without radical changes in the economic and institutional landscape of these countries. Capitalist development has taken different forms, giving rise to different kinds of institutional arrangements in rich and poor countries. In my view, theorists of radical democracy underestimate the impact of weak and fragile institutions, assuming that the necessary

institutions can be relatively easily created through political forces. If the task of strengthening and redirecting institutions is overwhelming, then the Gornick and Meyers proposals would not really be “real utopias” because they could not be universalized.

2. *Global Exploitation.* The possibility of these utopias in the wealthy countries might depend upon global inequalities and the continuing poverty of the poor countries. Here I am concerned with the possibility that the viability of the real utopia proposed is dependent upon global injustice. There are two versions of this criticism:

(i) The first is that the viability of the GM proposals depends upon the global care chain in which caregiving labour from the poor countries is imported to provide caregiving services in the rich countries. This is not simply a contingent fact; there would not be sufficient labour supply of potential childcare workers within the rich countries to provide these services.

(ii) The second is that these policies are only possible because the rich countries are rich, and a significant part of this wealth is the result of imperialism in one form or another. Even apart from the labor supply problem for childcare workers, in the absence of imperialism and the global inequality it generates and perpetuates, the rich countries would not have sufficient resources to underwrite the kind of family support policies (parental leaves plus generous childcare services) required for the GM proposals. For the purposes of this paper I will bracket this much larger question and focus on the care-chain problem.

### **Social protection legacies: must different paths, different institutions and different social values mean different utopias?<sup>1</sup>**

The social organisation of care work is one of the central challenges of the twenty first century, impacting directly on the well being of all people and on women’s ability to be full citizens. Various scenarios for addressing care needs emerged in past century in welfare states of the north, yet it is now evident that feminist tools developed in these contexts are not easily transported because of the very different material and cultural conditions in which poor women in developing countries live. Nor are developing countries homogeneous; economic, institutional and cultural variations across countries and regions shape the nature of both risks faced and forms of social protection available for women. This has led to globally skewed outcomes, with more than half the world’s population excluded from any type of statutory protection. In sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia more than 90% of the population are not included in any form of protection. Here I want to lay out some of these variations and spell out their implications for achieving gender equality through the central planks of an egalitarian social policy system as articulated by Gornick and Meyers.

Gornick and Meyers note that the rapid increase in women’s labour force participation in the second half of the twentieth century undermined the male breadwinner/ female carer model, and in Europe particularly this spurred the development of work-family reconciliation policies. However, more recent patterns of women’s entry into paid labour have not produced the kinds of relationships between work and protection that were evident in earlier phases of development of northern welfare states, nor are paid jobs in developing countries anything like the ‘good jobs’ of industrialised countries - that is, above minimum wage, unionised and benefit-carrying. Even in the advanced democracies, ‘good jobs’ are increasingly rare. So, while in general the vision offered by Gornick and Meyers of ‘a dual earner/ dual carer society, a society in which men and women engage symmetrically in employment and caregiving, and where gender equality, paid work, and caregiving are all valued’ (p.3) is an attractive one, the issue to consider is whether such a model can be

---

<sup>1</sup> This section is draws substantially on arguments presented in Shireen Hassim and Shahra Razavi, ‘Gender and Social Policy in a Global Context: Uncovering the Gendered Structure of ‘the Social’, in Razavi and Hassim, 2006. I am grateful to Shahra for her permission to use that work for this project.

universalised. Indeed, I might provocatively go even further and ask whether such a vision can be sustained for industrialised countries *only* on the basis of an asymmetrical global economy in which some countries barricade themselves off from the global condition of poverty while at the same time drawing on labour from poor countries to provide care.

Gornick and Meyers provide a comprehensive account of the historical context of the Nordic countries and the US welfare systems. The underlying pattern is that the increasing female employment rate ‘forced’ social actors and states to develop various mechanisms for reconciling paid work and care. The gains that were made by feminists, particularly in the Nordic countries, appear to have been made in relatively closed economies in which there is a virtuous circle between progressive political mobilisation and state policies: that is, with the right kinds of ideologies and strategies in place, political mobilisation can create a kind of social consensus that can change policies. This raises the question of whether greater egalitarianism in the north could ‘trickle-down’ to poor countries either by particular kinds of alliances and modes of mobilisation, or by setting the example of what the content of social policies should ideally be, or by changing the ways the relationships between the global rich and the global poor. Yet none of these options seem to be likely outcomes in developing countries. The rational model of policy making described by Gornick and Meyers is rarely apparent in many parts of the world, where even in democracies decision-making may be opaque and driven by the ‘hidden hands’ of donor and lending agencies and private interests, with state institutions being weak institutional partners. International financial institutions have been actively opposed to the emergence of anything like the social security systems of rich countries and have, furthermore, whittled away at state institutions and state capacities to deliver public goods. Low levels of waged labour, and weak representative associations such as trade unions further undermine approaches that depend on strengthening the relationship between employment and protection as the key strategy for egalitarianism.

These patterns are particularly evident in sub-Saharan Africa, where race, gender and location intersected in complex ways to create hierarchical societies with differentiated rights of access to state social provisioning. The indigenous population, and women in particular, remained locked into subsistence rural economies, with little access to welfare. The dominance of male labour migration intensified women’s responsibility for household reproduction and care in the subsistence-based rural economies, and concomitant marginality from the urban economy and any social benefits that came from it. Although governments in the golden age of post-independence development prioritised the provision of important social services like health, housing and education, their efforts retained a bias towards the more developed urban areas. But even in the urban economies, a dual labour market structure persisted that overwhelmingly privileged male workers and left women with weak access to welfare and social protection mechanisms that might free them from some aspects of care work. Re-arranging care work under these labour market conditions is an unviable prospect.

The small formal economy in most developing countries results in job security and work-related benefits being privileges available to a relatively thin stratum of workers, predominantly men and especially if they were unionised. While these particular benefits could have been extended over time to other sectors of the population (as it happened historically in the successful welfare states described by Gornick and Meyers, and more recently in Korea and Taiwan), since the early 1980s there has in fact been a global trend in the opposite direction: with increasing informalization of labour even hitherto “formal” workers have lost their work-related social benefits, such as access to health insurance and pension provision. For example, in Latin America in the 1980s and 1990s eight out of every ten new jobs created were in the informal sector, while the 1999 manufacturing wage was only 3 percent higher than its 1980 counterpart (Tokman 2002). Those who work in the informal economy are generally not covered by labour legislation for social protection and earn less, on average, than those in the formal economy (ILO 2002). In this context, not only work-family reconciliation but access to paid work itself has impacted on gender relations.

The surge in women’s labour force participation in developing countries has produced similar tensions in social reproduction to those identified by Gornick and Meyers. For many developing countries increasing poverty and the commodification are changing the

coping strategies of households and communities in a multitude of ways, causing upheavals in gender and generational patterns of work and responsibility. The commercialisation of social services, including basic services such as water and health care, makes it increasingly necessary for all household members—whether female or male, young or old—to take on paid work. Increasing levels of female education, later marriages, and changing aspirations and life styles, are also important social forces propelling women into the workforce. Yet, as in Europe and the United States, while the balance of contributions women and men make to households in the form of cash and care is changing, the changes impact more negatively on women who have added paid work to their existing responsibilities for care, than for men who in most countries have decreased the amount of paid work they do and increased their carework only slightly. Thus the gender division of labour is not so much disappearing as changing shape, as women enter the labour force and stay in employment for greater portions of their lives. Women’s ‘cheap’ labour in the global economy has had a noticeable impact, not least allowing poor countries a comparative advantage in conditions of economic liberalisation. Export-oriented development strategies in poor countries indeed depend on women’s wage labour for success. Yet while they may be responsible for a significant proportion of export earnings, it has been relatively difficult for women to extend debates beyond wages and workplace-specific issues to issues of social reproduction more generally (Pearson, 2004). A more common pattern is that existing social entitlements for women workers, particularly those arising out of more communal systems of reciprocal care, are further eroded. These developments have facilitated the re-familialization of risk and social provisioning. In a context where a significant proportion of the population cannot afford its basic needs, the imposition of fees for health care has been impoverishing. These reforms seem to be based on unrealistic assumptions about poor women’s ability to muster the economic resources needed to access services for themselves and their dependents and about their unlimited time and capacity to provide unpaid care when formal care remains out of reach. The demands on women’s time to provide are even more strenuous in countries that are experiencing an escalation of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, as home-based care and community care are expected to fill the gap caused by the erosion of health care systems.

As Gornick and Meyers elaborate, Nordic social democracies appear to have achieved relatively high levels of gender equality through female labour force participation and the redistributive mechanisms of social policy – exemplified by Sweden, which has been able to forge “participation parity” in the labour market with nearly equal numbers of women and men in the work force. They also recognise that this achievement masks the manner in which gender inequalities have been re-inscribed in new ways, modernising gender inequalities in much the same way as in developing countries. For example, a significant portion of women – over a third - work part time. As Gornick and Meyers point out, significant gender inequality in the sphere of caring persists, even though parental leave schemes and “daddy leave” quotas were designed to be gender-neutral. Gender segregation in the labour market and gender divisions of care work are global phenomena, albeit with different levels of intensity. In developing countries the increasing numbers of women who work in the informal economy add new layers of exclusion to the picture. According to the ILO (2002) informal employment comprises between one half and three-quarters of non-agricultural employment in developing countries. Informal employment tends to be a larger source of employment for women than for men in all developing regions except North Africa (ILO 2002); women are also more likely to work as own-account workers, domestic workers, and unpaid contributing workers in family enterprises than are men, while men are more likely to work as employers and wage workers (ILO 2002, Heintz 2005). Women informal workers tend to be over-represented in the more precarious and less remunerative segments of informal work. A recent study based on six countries confirms that women’s hourly earnings typically fall below those of men in identical employment categories, and that the gender gap in earnings is particularly pronounced among own-account workers while it is narrowest in public wage employment (Heintz 2005). Informal workers have the lowest levels of access to social protection and social services, including those that support care work.

Thus, despite significant increase in women's labour force participation and the erosion of the male breadwinner model, gender egalitarianism remains a distant goal. The emphasis in Gornick and Meyers' proposal on the formal paid labour market cannot address conditions in which such jobs are incredibly scarce (and where workers may have little bargaining power over the conditions of such work) and where employers in the informal labour market may be distant corporations over which states, let alone individual workers, can exercise any form of oversight.

Let me now turn to a second aspect of the model, relating to assumptions about the institutional character of the real utopia. One important lesson of the twentieth century for feminists is the key role that can be played by the state in reducing the extent of inequalities through the provision of a range of policies and financial supports that reduce the cost of gender difference. Gornick and Meyers' proposal presupposes the existence of a capable and responsive state – conditions which are at best only unevenly present in developing countries. Yet state capacities are particularly weak in developing countries. The 'activist' postcolonial nationalist governments in Africa, although initially committed to redistribution, did not expand the institutions established by colonialism (executive, civil service, police and army) in ways that consolidated democracy or even their long-term ability to sustain a developmental focus. In particular, institutions that would constrain executive power such as multiparty elections, judicial independence and, outside the state, institutions that might expand the legitimacy of the state and its capacity to represent diverse interests (such as vibrant civil society) were either severely restricted or actively repressed. By contrast, those institutions that were seen as either enhancing the capacity of elites to manage or to remain in power, such as the bureaucracy, expanded rapidly. Importantly, however, bureaucratic expansion was not tied to efficiency or to citizen responsiveness and for the most part the political system continues to operate in ways that do not depend on electoral responsiveness. As a result, in sub-Saharan Africa for example, many groups in society disengaged from making demands on the state and instead entrenching informal, traditionally based systems of governance and resource allocation. Citizens bypassed the state as the locus of their demands, meeting their needs through a combination of informal mechanisms and developing allegiances to local political actors rather than the state *per se*. These developments have a direct impact on the extent to which new models of care can be pursued. By contrast with Sub-Saharan Africa, Latin American and East Asian states have demonstrated that competent public bureaucracies that are at least internally accountable can be made responsive to the needs of women. In these regions states appear to be more able to act on political agreements struck between political parties and other actors. Although there are variations in the social composition and democratic credentials of states, on the whole Latin American states have been pervasive, relatively well-institutionalized and with a strong history of interventionism. In these contexts, the development of gender-equitable social policies was dependent far more on winning political support and social consensus over the direction of social policy than on state *capacity* to absorb women's demands.

By contrast with developed countries, the elaboration of social assistance and social security in developing countries has been rooted in the new global discourse of poverty, which has in turn fed into a bifurcated view of social policy. In rich countries, as Gornick and Meyers show, the core ideas of universalism remain relatively unscathed by the neoliberal turn. For poor countries however, the idea of welfare pluralism – that is, that social needs should be met by a partnership between states, markets, families and civil society – was pushed by international donor institutions. Yet the work-family policy debates in Europe and the United States, including those among feminists, remain disturbingly cut off from those governments' roles in developing country policy prescriptions. As Ruth Pearson (2004: 608) asks, 'given that feminists continue to defend welfare and social policies which support women workers in the north, where is the feminist resistance to the assumption that women workers in the developing countries should not or cannot 'earn social expenditure and welfare entitlements?'

The experiences of developed countries suggest that the most egalitarian impact results from universalistic programmes that are financed through taxation—not employment-

based contributions—and provide entitlements to benefits based on citizenship or residency criteria. These programmes may have a greater potential to be socially inclusive and to contribute to human welfare and development. Yet these are not easy to argue for politically in contexts where ‘fiscal restraint’ is the guiding principle of public policy, and where solidarity and social justice are not the underpinning values of the social policy system. To the contrary, very often the dependence on women’s unpaid labour continues to be justified by recourse to ideologies of ‘tradition’, ‘good motherhood’ and communitarianism (rather than solidarity) tends to devalue women’s claims to personhood and support on the grounds of the needs of ‘the community’. It is difficult to place these kinds of caring arrangements on Rosemary Crompton’s continuum as described by Gornick and Meyers: although some of the ideological aspects of the male breadwinner/ female carer model are evident, women are in fact not *only* carers. The dual earner/ female carer model may come closer to the reality although caring is often not ‘part-time’, as it is conducted *in parallel* with paid work (for example, in the case of homeworking). Yet, even then care is provided by more than one person in extended family settings – social arrangements in most of the world are still far from resembling the nuclear family model. Indeed, I am not sure whether we would want, as feminists, to privilege such a model. Furthermore, most poor households rely on income and survival strategies from several members (and from a variety of sources, wages being only one such), rather than a single ‘breadwinner’. In our universalistic and egalitarian model, further elaboration of a multiple carer/ multiple earner model is needed. The linear aspects of Crompton’s continuum are slightly troubling, as it suggests that modernisation will erode the overwhelming emphasis on child well being and introduce (as a product of struggle) gender equality concerns. Yet, as I have argued, greater entry of women into the public sphere *may* facilitate an increasing concern with equality rights but such convergence is by no means guaranteed. [Nor is it merely a matter of generating a sufficiently large surplus: oil economies of the Middle East have notoriously NOT lead to greater democracy or gender equality].

### **The implications of the global care chain for a real utopia**

One of the striking aspects of Gornick and Meyers’ paper is the focus on domestic policy models, both in the Nordic countries and in the United States. Although there is careful discussion of how changes in the European Union might have affected traditional welfare system models, there is almost no consideration of the globalised nature of the economy. This is understandable; after all, the best exemplar of their model, Sweden, has insulated itself from the ill-effects of neo-liberal globalisation relatively successfully. As I have argued in the previous section, there are a number of reasons for this: strong and relatively egalitarian formal economies, the strength and legitimacy of the state both as a set of political institutions that can act on citizen demands and as a legitimately *interventionist* state, and the continuing strength of the union movement. The coalition between unions and the state there has protected the labour market and retained the importance of state regulation, so that even migrant labour is drawn within the net of regulation and protection. Where migrants are employed in the care sector, they tend to be employed by the state under the same conditions as Swedish labour, and are not subject to the vagaries of individual employers who may be seeking cheap labour. This is a highly enabling set of conditions (and even within them gender segregation persists in both paid and unpaid work). It is not only developing countries that are far from possessing these conditions. For the United States, too, the picture is quite different, given its less regulated labour market, the large flows of legal and illegal migrants as well as the relatively weaker union movement. Indeed, research shows that immigrant women in the US (and Canada) are most likely to be overrepresented in marginal, unregulated and/or poorly paid jobs, many of these in the care sector (Boyd and Pikkov, 2006).

Problems of low pay and poor conditions of labour in the caring sector are driving away young people with options to work elsewhere in countries such as the United States and the United Kingdom (Folbre, 2006). The response of health care sectors and individual employers in these countries has been to import care workers. Indeed, Arlie Hochschild has argued that the increasing entry of women into the labour market in the US has created a ‘care

deficit' that is increasingly being filled by women from poor countries (who, ironically, create new care deficits in their home country as they migrate in search of better jobs – they are thus, Hochschild argues, linked in a global care chain). The global trade is estimated to involve between 1 and 1.7 million Asian women although it is important to note that the traffic is not only between poor and rich countries of the north: Filipino maids go to Hong Kong, Japan, Jordan and Syria in large numbers. The Scandinavian countries and the United States, according to UNRISD, have the highest percentage of migrant women employed in education and health (in Sweden, 27% of migrant female employment between 2001-2 was in these sectors). The problem of work-family balance is thus at least to some extent negotiated between states as opposed only to between individuals within a household, or households and the state.

The effect is the draining of skilled care workers away from developing countries by rich countries, so that even in countries where governments are committed to building up strong social sectors, such as South Africa, scarce tax resources are in effect being used to subsidise training of care workers for rich countries. Ensuring that these migrant/ immigrant workers access the full benefits of their labour, even if the US were to mimic the Swedish model, only solves one part of the problem. The drain on developing country resources remains a problem, and the vicious cycle of the politics of debt is reinforced. In some countries (eg Papua New Guinea) private institutes of training of care workers have sprung up specifically geared to providing 'qualifications' that meet Australian and New Zealand requirements for care workers (and therefore for work permits or immigration status). When they do find jobs, immigrant care workers are in what Boris and Klein call 'front-line care jobs' – those dealing with bodily hygiene, cleaning and cooking. In the United States, their average hourly wage is lower than that of all jobs in health care with the exception of janitors (Boris and Klein, p. 82). Part time workers, and those who are paid under the counter by their employers, are also excluded from social security (Boyd and Pikkov, 2006).

Can the gender egalitarian model be achieved in rich countries without intensifying the global inequality in care provision? This is a difficult question to address without further research. Gornick and Meyers do not quantify the labour market requirements to resource the dual earner/ dual carer model, but the overall direction of their proposals would of course shift the market towards better paid, better quality childcare. Whether this care can be provided within the domestically bounded model is an open question. It is presumed that to some extent shifting working hours and balancing care between parents would affect the need for more extensive paid childcare. However, the model is silent on the impact of the proposals for current global divisions of care work.

Balancing work and care then, will be difficult to achieve for all of the people living in the US, let alone more globally. It is perhaps in the global care chain that we see most clearly the ways in which, and institutions through which, unequal resources are distributed globally. The dual carer/ dual earner model is based on assumptions that, to use Goran Therborn's phrase, are perhaps 'fatally parochial in comparative perspective.'

### **Conditions for egalitarianism on a global scale**

Clearly the politics of egalitarianism cannot be confined to a discussion of what might work in the United States, but has to extend to consider universalisation on a global scale. In this section I discuss some of the conditions that need to be created, although it is by no means an exhaustive list, in order to shift internal household relations of power.

Beginning firstly with the economic level, we need to expand our model beyond the formal paid labour context. The reliance on paid employment as a key element of the Gornick and Meyers model has implications for macroeconomic policy, for it is a meaningless assumption if secure, high quality and well-paid jobs are not available. The right to paid work needs to be recognised. In some countries (particularly in what is called the classical belt of patriarchy), women's access to the labour market is severely curtailed by ideologies of seclusion and domesticity. In these contexts women are expected to put family responsibilities above employment, and their care burdens are continually reinforced rather than shifted.

It is conceivable that socialisation of care work will open possibilities for more jobs but great vigilance will be needed to ensure that this not seen as cheap labour provided by insecure workers from developing countries. International organising is clearly needed to improve labour conditions along all stages of the global value chain in production. Although there are debates about how best to improve working conditions - ranging from the limitations of voluntary transnational campaigns to concerns about the way international labour standards might limit investment and job creation in third world countries - there is broad agreement that globalization is linked to new employment patterns, presenting labour unions and women's groups with new concerns about how best to improve working conditions for everyone including those in informal and unregulated employment. In the first instance, although poverty and inequality need to be addressed within particular national contexts, the global context of care and of policy making also needs to be acknowledged more overtly. Proponents of gender egalitarianism would need to see their political terrain as including greater global redistribution that guarantees access to the basic means of survival as well as the power to determine the content of international regulatory frameworks. This would entail a global recognition that there should be a threshold of wellbeing below which no one should be allowed to fall (that is, wellbeing should be understood not just in terms of standards within an individual nation-state but as a solidaristic principle that should apply universally). This means that the institutions and rules of international trade need to be addressed so that fairer conditions of trade apply for poor countries – the global double standard needs to be removed. Of course, dealing with poverty will not automatically mean dealing with inequality, but it is a necessary step towards a better society.

One way to address the diminishing link between paid employment and women's quality of life would be to extend Gornick and Meyers' proposal to expand public support for care work. Small domestic tax bases in many developing countries preclude or limit local financing. To be sure, multinational companies have little interest in 'caring' for their workers. Yet they should not be allowed to drive down the cost of labour in developing countries and, ideally, they should be taxed to provide revenue for social protection. Ruth Pearson (2004), for example, suggests that demands for policy change should explicitly link women's work in export production to the provision of publicly supported reproductive services. She argues for a 'Maria Tax', modelled on the Tobin Tax, which would "require national governments to levy a tax on exporters reflecting the proportion of the workforce utilized to provide the commodity or service being sold to the global market. The revenue would then be reinvested to support women generally within the economy – such as childcare facilities, reproductive and occupational health facilities and education programmes." Not only would this contribute to women's welfare directly, it would also offer "mobilising and advocacy" possibilities by emphasising how the sexual division of labour still gives women overwhelming responsibility for reproductive tasks (Pearson, 2004: 618). If the kinds of proposals for employer regulation included in Gornick and Meyers' model are to be extended within the European Union, one conceivable 'waystation' might be to insist that the regulations extend to the operations of European companies wherever in the world these may be. The implementation of international human rights and labour conventions are crucial, both in creating fairer trading systems and in supporting gender equality advocates in hostile environments. As Gornick and Meyers point out, however, these normative frameworks need to understand all people as both working and caring citizens, rather than reinforcing the male-worker standard. This would seem to align well with the dual earner/ dual carer model.

Yet this requires a prior consensus on the value of care work. Care work needs to be recognised, legitimated and valued, and the provision of care needs to be seen as a matter for public policy for developing countries. Some attempts to do this – such as the gender-responsive budgeting initiative – are opening fruitful avenues for exerting policy pressure, but they are frequently not backed up by political commitment of governments or political pressure from below. To address gender inequality in any serious sense requires the gender division of labour be eliminated, but this might entail the defamilialisation of child- and elder-care needs, even though this will inevitably induce tensions with patriarchal and/or communitarian ideologies. Gornick and Meyers seem reluctant to go this far, preferring to

equalise responsibilities *within* households and even at times normatively privileging the nuclear family as the appropriate site for such activities. Part of the rationale for retaining care within the family is the unresolved question of quality of care; high quality care is not only expensive, it may nor necessarily address the non-commodifiable aspects of care such as affection and intimacy.

However, if care is to remain primarily a family-based (or household based) set of activities, then more effective incentives are clearly needed to persuade (coerce?) men into sharing care work. Struggles for democratisation are relevant to this process, as feminists frequently have to enlist the coercive power of the democratic state to ensure that values of equality are advanced in the face of conservative and traditionalist mobilisation. Feminist struggles in developing countries and developed countries alike show the importance of a democratic and interventionist state. In developing countries, where procedures of representation and accountability may be weakly present, even stronger (preferably constitutional) support is needed for recognition of women's rights to equality in order to buttress attacks from social conservatives. Rights-based arguments are frequently criticised in developing countries for supposedly promoting liberal individualism. Yet it would be perfectly feasible to argue for the recognition of ethical individualism (as opposed to ontological individualism – a distinction made by the feminist economist Ingrid Robeyns); this would recognise women's personhood without unduly privileging individual freedom over solidarity. Of course, the 'caring for' aspects of care are not amenable to commodification; however, cultural norms that prioritise the provision of this care by women do need to be challenged. As Gornick and Meyers show, the development of socialised systems of care has been plagued by problems related to the quality of care and particularly by new and rising norms of 'adequate' care. Yet concerns about the quality of care need to be addressed in their own right, not as a proxy for idealising female caring.

I have argued extensively that state capacity to make progressive social policy needs to be strengthened. In part, this depends on the extent to which developing country governments are allowed to respond to pressure from below (that is, a measure of economic sovereignty) rather than the external prescriptions of donor agencies. However, it also implies that there is a responsibility on advocates of egalitarianism in developed countries to actively advance such struggles in developing countries.

Finally, organised labour (in both formal and informal sectors) needs to be strengthened. In many countries, the tensions between trade unions and women workers, as well as trade unions and informal workers have limited the kinds of coalitions that need to be built around support for women workers (that is workers' needs beyond wages, for eg for transportation and child care). Unlike Sweden, where such alliances between feminists and male union leaders were forged early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, in developing countries many trade unions, if they exist at all, are deeply masculinist. Women's interests tend to be taken up by NGOs instead although new forms of unionism such as the Self-Employed Women's Union in South Africa, are emerging.

Gornick and Meyers' extremely stimulating paper brings to mind an observation by South African Constitutional Court judge Albie Sachs that in South Africa patriarchy is the only non-racial institution. In the context of this particular Real Utopias conference, I am tempted to argue that the feminisation of care may well be the most globalised of institutions.

## REFERENCES

- Boyd, Monica and Deanna Pikkov (2006) *Gendering Migration, livelihood and entitlements: migrant women in Canada and the United States*, Ottawa: IDRC Policy Report.
- Folbre, Nancy (2006) "Demanding quality" worker/consumer coalitions and "high road" strategies in the care sector", *Politics and Society*, Vol. 43 No. 1.
- Hassim, Shireen and Shahra Razavi (2006) 'Gender and Social Policy in Global Context: Uncovering the gendered Structure of the "Social"', in Razavi and Hassim *Gender and Social Policy in Global Context: Uncovering the gendered Structure of the "Social"*, Basingstoke: Palgrave.
- Heintz, J. (2005) *The Growing Informality of Labour Markets*. Paper presented at the UNRISD/CGGS Conference on Gender and Social Policy, Marstrand, Sweden, 28-29 May.
- International Labour Organization (ILO) (2002) *Women and Men in the Informal Economy: A Statistical Picture*. Geneva: ILO.
- Hochschild, Arlie (2000) "Global care chains and emotional surplus value" in W. Hutton and A. Giddens (eds.) *On the Edge: Living with Global Capitalism*, Jonathan Cape: London.
- Lund, Francie (2006) "Working People and Access to Social Protection", in Razavi and Hassim *Gender and Social Policy in Global Context: Uncovering the gendered structure of the "Social"*, Basingstoke: Palgrave.
- Molyneux, M. (forthcoming) *Poverty Relief and the New Social Policy in Latin America: Mothers at the Service of the State?* Programme Paper, Geneva: UNRISD.
- Pearson, Ruth (2004) "The social is political: towards the re-politicisation of feminist analysis of the global economy", *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, Vol. 6. No. 4.
- Rodrik, D (1999)
- Therborn, Goran (2006) *Between Sex and Power: Family in the World*, London: Routledge.
- Tokman, V. E. (2002) 'Jobs and Solidarity: Challenges for Labour Market Policy in Latin America'. In E. Huber (ed.) *Models of Capitalism: Lessons for Latin America*. University Park PA: Pennsylvania State University Press.
- Vivian, J. (1995) 'How Safe are "Social Safety Nets"? Adjustment and Social Sector Restructuring in Developing Countries'. In J. Vivian (ed.) *Adjustment and Social Sector Restructuring*. London: UNRISD/Frank Cass.
- White, G. (1996) 'Civil society, democratization and development'. In R. Luckham and G. White (eds.) *Democratization in the South: The Jagged Wave*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.