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Unpaid Work and Policy-Making
Towards a Broader Perspective of Work and Employment

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Abstract

While the discussion on the issue of unpaid work which took place at the World Summit for Social Development and at the World Conference on Women focussed mainly on the controversy of including unpaid work in national accounts and other statistics, this paper considers the issue of unpaid work from a policy perspective. It also attempts to clarify the role that unpaid work could or should play in socio-economic policy-making. The paper provides a working definition of unpaid work as well as valuable information on related issues such as: how much unpaid work is done and by whom; why some work go unpaid; the role of unpaid work in the economy; the differences and similarities of unpaid work between developing and developed economies; methods of measuring and imputing the value of unpaid work; the United Nations and the issue of unpaid work; and an assessment of activities carried out on the theme of unpaid work since the World Summit for Social Development and the World Conference on Women. Finally, the paper provides a systematic inventory of policies with respect to unpaid work, including employment and labour market policies.

Contents

Introduction

Unpaid work has been given increased attention since the sixties and seventies, when it - partially and hesitantly - reached the research agenda's of mainstream economics and sociology. For a long time economists had equated work with paid employment, while sociologists specializing in labour questions had left the issue for their (often less prestigious) colleagues occupied with the sociology of the family.

Thirty years later, the issue of unpaid work was heatedly discussed at two United Nations World Conferences, the Social Summit (Copenhagen, March 1995) and the Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing, September 1995). Government diplomats and NGO s' lobbyists not only negotiated language on measuring and valuing unpaid work, but also agreed - all be it implicitly - on a new way of looking at the world's work, i.e. comprising both paid and unpaid work. The controversy concerning the incorporation of unpaid work in national accounts and other statistics, however, has obscured the fact that recognizing unpaid work as work is a revolution in itself.

The consequences of this new vision have hardly been explored in the follow-up processes emanating from the two world conferences. Although it seems hardly possible to speak of unpaid work without discussing its counterpart, paid work, the relationship between both is not much studied. The role unpaid work could or should play in socio-economic policy-making has not yet been adequately discussed.

This paper tries to put forward some material to support the implementation processes of both the Copenhagen and the Beijing Conferences and considers the unpaid work issue - including the relationship between paid and unpaid work - from a policy perspective.

Section I provides a general summary of the issue of unpaid work:

Unpaid work does not simply consist of one specific type of activity, for instance housework, but it encompasses a variety of activities. Critical for the definition of the concept of unpaid work is the so-called 'third person criterion'. This criterion implies a production boundary containing non-market activities that in principle could be replaced by market goods and services.

United Nations studies and other research have estimated how much unpaid work is done and by whom. On average, unpaid working time amounts to hours a week which are comparable to hours worked in paid employment. The burden of unpaid work and paid work respectively are distributed unequally between men and women. As a result, 'men receive the lion's share of income and recognition for their economic contribution - while most of women's work remains unpaid, unrecognized and undervalued' (UNDP, 1995).

It is not some inherent trait which causes some activities to be paid or unpaid. The same activity may be paid or unpaid, depending on the social context. Economists have highlighted technological innovation, changes in productivity and relative prices. Students of women's studies have concentrated on the sexual division of labour. The unequal distribution of unpaid work between women and men is substantially linked to the sex-segregated labour market and the prevailing sex discrimination and domination of men's values in society at large. The paid and the unpaid sectors of the economy are each others counterpart, and changes in one part cannot be brought about without changes in the other. A very substantial share of human needs is satisfied by the fruits of unpaid labour. The economic significance of unpaid work must be gigantic. Economists, however, have had great difficulties in integrating unpaid work in their scientific endeavours. Some schools of thought are briefly discussed.

Unpaid work should not be confused with the concept of the informal sector. Most work in the informal sector generates income, however small and unrecorded that may be. The informal sector can be seen as an intermediate zone between unpaid work and regularly paid employment.

A portion of the citizens counted as doing unpaid work, are in fact 'discouraged workers' and should be counted as 'hidden unemployed'. Because they don't receive a social security benefit or welfare, their unemployment seems to cost nothing.

It is often said that the issue of unpaid work is very different for industrialized and developing countries. This is true as far as the sort of activities performed as unpaid work differs very much in societies of different stages of development. A common denominator, however, seems to be the infinite elasticity of unpaid work: apparently it can be stretched or contracted, if need be. The costs of shifts between these two sectors of the economy are largely invisible.

Section II summarizes the most important issues and controversies in this field and indicates the current state of research findings. The UN has contributed significantly to the progress in this field of study. This summary forms the necessary background for the policy questions dealt with later in this paper. After a short description of the methods for measuring and imputing the value of unpaid work, the arguments pro and contra the incorporation of unpaid work in the System of National Accounts are discussed. There is a short digression on the Wages for Housework movement, which was such an important actor lobbying this issue before and at the Social Summit and the Beijing Women's Conference.

Section III gives an overview of how the issue of unpaid work was put on the agenda at the two UN conferences.

Unpaid work as a women's or gender issue has a long UN history. Originally it was perceived as 'women's double burden', but after the First Women's Conference (Mexico City, 1975) another paradigm prevailed. Since then, the question of unpaid work has been seen as an issue of unjust distribution and/or inefficient allocation between the sexes. This should be brought back into balance by (a) promoting equal sharing of family responsibilities between women and men, (b) providing a better infrastructure of public or social services. Sex equality at the workplace and the sharing of domestic and parental responsibilities are interrelated. Therefore only combined strategies - aiming at both the sphere of unpaid work and the world of formal gainful employment - might be successful in changing the uneven distribution of unpaid work.

Unpaid work as a social issue has a much shorter history at the UN; it really dates from the preparatory process of the Social Summit itself. A dialogue took place between those who consider full employment a feasible goal, and those who thought that goal neither feasible nor desirable and promoted recognition of all sorts of 'useful activities' as work or employment in a broader sense. The consequences of this broadening of the concept of work were not examined, however. All energy went into the controversy of the valuation of unpaid work and its incorporation in national accounts.

The outcomes of both Conferences implied that unpaid work and its relation with paid work had to be taken into account in the formulation of socio-economic policies. But neither of the two Conferences spelled out how that goal had to be accomplished.

Section IV discusses the state of the art. The boundaries of paid and unpaid work are influenced by market forces determining the range of the private service sector and by political and budgetary factors determining the range of the public service sector. The choice between paid and unpaid work and profitability/political feasibility of social servicing are two sides of the same coin. The way public policies are affecting this choice is the focus of the section.

In order to create more conceptual clarity and to illustrate what we know and what still has to be more deeply researched, these policies are divided into two groups: specific or direct policies and indirect or 'mainstreamed' policies.

Specific policies are those explicitly aimed at unpaid work. Such an aim might be recognising or making it more visible; influencing the quantity of unpaid work in society or changing the distribution of unpaid work among different groups.

Various instruments can contribute to better *recognising unpaid work*: quantitative and qualitative data collection, presentation and analysis; imputation of the value in monetary terms and giving allowances for unpaid work, or actually paying for it!

Four elements of modern *gender equality policy* are discussed: (i) promoting a more equal sharing of unpaid work between women and men; (ii)

introducing changes in the organization of paid employment, in order to facilitate the individual combination of paid and unpaid work both by women and by men; (iii) the provision of public services, such as child care; (iv) the commercialisation of domestic labour.

This section considers measures which government can take to stimulate citizens to participate in *voluntary community work,* including a very radical alternative option: compulsory social service. I found practically no literature on voluntary work written from a policy perspective. Compared to the abundance of work on the unpaid housework and caring tasks of women and related issues, this may be called a striking gap.

Indirect policies relating to unpaid work: Affecting unpaid work is not the primary policy objective of these policies, but they do have (implicit) effects on unpaid work. Sometimes influencing unpaid work is built-in as an explicit secondary objective of a policy design. Mostly, however, mainstream socio-economic policies will have implicit effects on unpaid work. The ways in which wage and income policies, employment and labour market policies, taxation, social security and welfare affect unpaid work in one form or the other are discussed. The implicit influence of mainstream socio-economic policies on unpaid work is an unexplored area. References in the scientific literature are scarce, fragmentary and difficult to track down and coherent research and analysis in this field has hardly started. Analysis from a gender perspective evidently has made most progress, but that is not proportionately reflected in mainstream literature. The assumed dependency of women on the male breadwinner - implicit in social security and taxation systems - is a case in point.

Two, partly conflicting, policy considerations play a role here. On the one hand policy-makers have sometimes tried to do justice to existing patterns of allocation of paid and unpaid work and to protect the weaker party. On the other hand, in doing so they have - intentionally or unintentionally - built up barriers to change. This paradox - well known to experts in the field of gender equality policy - lacks interest from the leading actors in these fields.

Another theme is the recognition of unpaid work as 'socially useful activities' in social benefit regulations and activating labour market policies. Policy questions in this field involve difficult choices between respecting private preferences and demanding a *quid pro quo.* Policy programmes such as 'workfare' could easily pass the point where the citizen's right freely to choose an employment would be at stake.

This exercise in exploring the implicit effects of socio-economic policies on unpaid work does not allow a firm conclusion. Effects are diversified, depending not only on the policies concerned but also on the type of unpaid work that one has in mind. In fact, to quote Duncan Ironmonger, '(w)e need a major change in our view of reality.(...) The reality of the huge unpaid contribution of households to economic value needs to be accepted; adopted as a benchmark fact, it would change nearly all our deliberations about economic and social policy.' (Ironmonger, 1996, p.60).

Not only is such an acceptance among policy-makers far away, we also have only a very primitive insight into the interplay of non-market production and market production and how that is affected by government policies.

Section V examines how different groups of activists and academics use the concept of unpaid work for their own purposes. While they speak of 'unpaid work' as such, they are in fact focusing on specific unpaid activities by specific parts of the population and putting their favourite policy issues up front. The UN has offered a forum for all these different groups and tendencies to spread their views. Lacking an integrating theory and a shared body of knowledge, the result is vague and fragmentary.

The unpaid work issue should not be left to the 'women's sections' of national governments, NGOs, international organizations and the academic community. Although the importance of the issue from a gender perspective obviously stands out, it wouldn't be sensible to leave it at that. Even in a hypothetical world of perfect gender balance unpaid work has to be taken into account as a necessary element of private freedom and as a pillar of civil society and political democracy. In addition, even in

a world of full employment, a certain part of human needs would still be met by nonmarket activities. So unpaid work should be recognized, valued and factored in as a regular element in policy-making. Social policy that leaves the unpaid work issue out as if it were 'something else' is beside the mark.

I. UNPAID WORK – SOME BASIC FACTS, APROACHES AND DISCUSSIONS

WHAT IS UNPAID WORK?

Unpaid work can be understood to comprise all productive activities outside the official labour market done by individuals for their own households or for others. These activities are productive in the sense that they use scarce resources to satisfy human wants.

Housework, care for children and for sick and old people, do-it-yourself jobs and voluntary community work or work in political or societal organizations, subsistence agriculture, help in family businesses, building the family house, maintenance work, transport services etc have one thing in common: they could, at least in theory, be replaced by market goods and paid services. This so-called third person criterion[1] distinguishes unpaid work from consumption and from time and energy invested in one's own education (Bruyn-Hundt, 1996; p. 26). For the same reason, personal activities like sleeping and leisure activities fall outside the definition of unpaid work. Unpaid work consists of time used as an input (often together with the use of purchased goods and/or consumer durables used as capital equipment) in non-market production processes; unpaid work is part of a particular 'mode of provision' for human needs (Gershuny, 1983 and 1988).

If it is true that unpaid work is work that, in principle, also could be done in the context of an alternative 'mode of provision' by a paid worker, then, by implication the monetary value of unpaid work can be imputed. (The question of the value of unpaid work will be dealt with in Section 3). It is hardly thinkable, however, that all work would be paid, or - what amounts to the same thing - that unpaid work would not exist. Unpaid work is an essential element in the social fabric and an important factor for the quality of life.

Defining what unpaid activities will be taken on board in our discussion in this paper and what will be left out involves some brain-twisting decisions. For instance, using a lawyer's perspective, Raymond Le Guidec has discussed work done in prisons as well as the work-component in vocational training as forms of unpaid work (Le Guidec, 1996). These forms of unpaid work would not pass the economist's third person criterion test: neither the prisoner nor the trainee could hire somebody else to perform that work. In addition, work in prisons is not freely chosen employment.

Furthermore, most literature on unpaid work leaves out compulsory military service. Apparently, only professional soldiers should be viewed as people who 'work' (their salaries are included in the national accounts!) while conscripts are merely objects of a higher strategy. Oddly enough, when the idea of compulsory social service is discussed, nobody would deny that it is work - vital work - that is at stake.

The diversity of activities caught under the heading of 'unpaid work' makes policy discussions of unpaid work very abstract. Most authors using this general label focus on a particular type of unpaid work in a particular context, e.g. women's domestic work or voluntary caring work outside the home. To broaden the concept of work by including unpaid work and consider the policy implications, it is indispensable to discuss what forms of unpaid work are relevant in specific policy discussions.

HOW MUCH UNPAID WORK IS DONE AND BY WHOM?

The skewed distribution of work, paid and unpaid, between women and men, was made visible in the Human Development Report 1995. (UNDP, 1995, Ch. 4). A sample of 31 countries studied indicated not only that of the total burden of work, women do more than men (53% in developing countries and 51% in industrial countries), but also that of women's

[1] In a recent contribution Cynthia Woods has exposed some problematic implications of this criterion. See also par. 2.2. See also: Himmelweit (1995).

total work time - both in developing and in industrial countries - roughly two-thirds is spent in unpaid work and one-third in paid work. For men in industrial countries these shares are reversed. Men in developing countries spend even less of their total work time in unpaid work: roughly one-fourth.

Comparison of the results of time-use studies, which differ in design and methods, is a risky affair. In addition, tasks performed simultaneously are often under-reported and the intensity of effort is not counted. Nevertheless, two tendencies seem to have been well established:

- On average, unpaid working time amounts to a comparable number of hours a week to the number of hours in paid employment.[2]

- The burden of unpaid work and paid work respectively are distributed unequally between men and women. As a result, 'men receive the lion's share of income and recognition for their economic contribution - while most of women's work remains unpaid, unrecognized and undervalued' (UNDP (1995), p.88).

WHY IS SOME WORK UNPAID?

As the 'third person criterion' makes clear, there is - technically - nothing inherent in the work itself that causes some work to be unpaid. In principle, unpaid work can be done by a third person for money. The same activity may be paid or unpaid, depending on the social context. Which tasks are unpaid and how much time is spent in it varies with location and culture and among different groups of the population, depending on income level, composition of the household, age etc.

A very important factor determining the choice between unpaid work and buying market services is the price of such services (and their availability), as well as the price of the domestic capital goods (e.g. washing machines used in the unpaid domestic production process). Gershuny has shown how historically (at least in the Western world) 'the growth in the household economy (and in the closely associated communal sector) is promoted by the rising costs of purchased services relative to the declining cost of 'domestic capital goods' (Gershuny, 1983, p.35).

Despite this seemingly gender-neutral, classical economic reasoning, it can be no coincidence that the bulk of unpaid work is traditional women's activity in and around the household, like cleaning, cooking, washing, childcare, shopping, while in developing countries it is mainly women who toil for hours gathering fuel wood and water and tending subsistence land, producing foodstuffs for consumption by their households. (It is beyond the scope of this paper to review the 'domestic labour debate' of the seventies and reflect upon its academic aftermath. See a.o.: Pahl (1988), part III).

It must be borne in mind, however, that the unequal distribution of unpaid work between women and men is substantially linked to the sex-segregated labour market and the prevailing sex discrimination and domination of men's values in society at large (See e.g. Baxter and Gibson, 1990; OECD, 1991). Though 'patriarchy' as a concept now looks out of date, and feminist scholars no longer bother whether unpaid domestic labour is a source of 'surplus value', production and reproduction still constitute what is known as the sexual division of labour (Bullock, 1994, p.2).

It therefore may be enlightening to look at the unequal shares of men and women in the worlds of paid and unpaid work as the two pillars of the *sex-gender system* (Rubin, 1975). Both parts of that system are each others' counterpart, and changes in one part cannot be brought about without changes in the other (Glucksman, 1995; Humphries and Rubery, 1984). Conceiving the inter-linkages between paid and unpaid work in gender-neutral terms, as in the studies of Gershuny mentioned before, obscures a crucial factor in this complex.

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[2]Behind this average figure there are great disparities, even among industrial countries. According to the data used in the Human Development Report 1995, in Denmark a third of total work time is unpaid work, where in the Netherlands unpaid work counts for almost two-thirds of total work time. (UNDP, 1995, p.94, table 4.4; data of 1987). For the Netherlands in the period 1975-1990 it was calculated that the number of hours of unpaid work per year was between 1.5 and 1.9 times higher than paid work for the whole population of 12 years and over (Bruyn-Hundt, 1996, p.59).

THE ROLE OF UNPAID WORK IN THE ECONOMY - AND IN ECONOMICS.

Unpaid work by the world's men and women on average encompasses at least as much of their time as does paid work. A very substantial share of human needs is satisfied by the fruits of unpaid labour. This simple fact could be taken to imply that the economic significance of unpaid work must be gigantic. Economists, however, have had great difficulties in integrating unpaid work in their intellectual endeavors.

In Marxist economics, unpaid work, especially women's housework, is labelled *'reproduction'*. The concept of reproduction in Marxist economics refers to reproduction of the labour-force, both on a daily basis and between generations. Reproduction is to be distinguished from production, that is characterized by the phenomenon of surplus-value. Both spheres, however, are interdependent, as the organization of production presupposes and reinforces a certain way of organizing domestic work. Depending on the changing interest of capital and the state, parts of the reproductive functions of the family sometimes are taken over by public facilities and at other times transferred back to the family. Marxist philosophy also gives reproduction an immaterial meaning: women's caring role in the family reinforces the existing societal relations.(cf. Pahl (1988), Part III).

Neo-classical economics looks at unpaid work essentially as a form of consumption - a logical consequence of the emphasis put on market phenomena. Unpaid work, especially of married women, is taken into account in the study of (female) labour supply, but it is still treated as a form of leisure (c.f. the so-called labour-leisure analysis). John Kenneth Galbraith (1974), however, called the post-war American housewife a 'crypto-servant' for her critical role in the expansion and administration of private consumption. Ivan Illich (1981) became famous for his rather critical analysis of women's 'shadow work' that became a necessary complement to wage labour in modern industrialized economies.

Gary Becker's famous article 'A theory of the allocation of time' (1965) marked the beginning of a new school of thought: the New Home Economics. Becker considered the family as 'a small factory' where households divide their time between paid employment, unpaid household production and leisure. The school of New Home Economics explicitly or implicitly rejected the dichotomy between production and consumption. They envisaged a production function of the household, that reflects the production of commodities by combining market goods and time. Becker and his followers have been criticized by feminist economists for taking the household as a unit of analysis, and in that way obscuring conflicts of interest and over power inside the household (Ferber and Nelson, 1993).

Economists interested in unpaid work have mostly concentrated on micro-analysis of household work. Far less is known of the macro-economic significance of unpaid work. At the macro-level, 'an iceberg view of the economy' prevails: what is visible is actually only a very small part of what goes on in the economy (Naila Kabeer in UNRISD, 1977, p. 14). Feminist economists, however, are very rapidly making up for this omission by highlighting the overall economic importance of non-market work, such as subsistence production and caring activity.

Fewer economic data and analyses are available on various forms of voluntary community work; voluntary work - translated in the catchword 'civil society' - is more the domain of political philosophy. This paper concentrates on a socio-economic perspective and related questions of public policy.

UNPAID WORK AND THE INFORMAL SECTOR

Some authors (e.g. Offe and Heinze, 1992; Portes, cited in Benschop, 1995; Plantenga and Sloep, 1995) include unpaid work in their definitions of 'the informal sector' or 'the informal economy'. This may be a tempting suggestion, as both unpaid work and activities in the informal sector are largely unregistered and unrecorded in official statistics and are not reflected in the national accounts that measure a country's GNP. In that sense, both types of work are 'informal'. The difficulties with respect to

incorporation in national accounts and other statistics are comparable (see Section III).

For analytical purposes it seems more enlightening to adhere to the original meaning of the informal sector concept. Following the definition coined by the ILO in the seventies, the informal sector refers to the 'working poor' in urban areas of developing countries, working in very small-scale units, mostly self-employed or with some assistance of family members or hired workers. Their income-generating activities are informal in the sense that they are not registered and not recognized or regulated by the government (ILO, 1991, p.4). This definition was given a more rigorous form by the resolution adopted by the International Conference of Labour Statisticians in 1993. Units engaged *exclusively* in non-market production, that is subsistence units, are excluded from this definition of the informal sector, but it is recommended to make a special effort to include the unpaid work in family enterprises.

Unregistered employment is also a widespread phenomenon in many transition countries, (UN, 1997a, p.162). Similar forms of unregistered work in industrialized countries are described under the category of 'the black economy', indicating the evasion of income tax and social security contributions. In contrast to unpaid work, most work in the informal sector is done for money, however uncertain labour contracts and conditions may be.

The informal sector can function as a stepping-stone to regular employment for persons without (formal) paid work who want to regain their economic independence or supplement their (low) unemployment benefits. Transforming informal sector jobs into regular employment is therefore a subject often mentioned as part of active labour market policies. In that sense the informal sector can be seen as an intermediate zone between unpaid work and formal employment.

UNPAID WORK AND DISGUISED UNEMPLOYMENT

Statistical measures of involuntary unemployment[3] usually omit a large group of potential entrants to the labour force who simply do not qualify. They - mainly women - don't take active steps to 'seek work'. Although they want to work in paid employment, they see no feasible opportunities, due to slim job prospects or childcare commitments. These 'discouraged workers' should be incorporated in the estimation of hidden unemployment in the same way as the 'hidden unemployed' who enjoy a disability or early retirement pension.[4] Because of the visible costs of the social security benefits they are receiving, the latter group is often considered a main target for governmental labour market policies. the hidden unemployment of persons counted as doing unpaid work seems to cost nothing.

UNPAID WORK IN DEVELOPING AND DEVELOPED COUNTRIES: DIFFERENCES AND SIMILARITIES

The well-known image of unpaid work in developing countries is that of the hard life of poor people doing subsistence work, i.e. - according to the 1988 ILO definition: “providing food, shelter and a minimum of cash income for themselves and their households" (United Nations, 1995c, p. 114). The process of modernization and development implies that access to markets, improved household technologies, better public facilities and more availability of ready-made goods for consumption will cause less time to be spent in unpaid work. Often, economic adjustment programs have had an opposite effect: forcing women out of paid employment to replace the reduced public services by their unpaid labour (See a.o.Bakker, p. 16 ff). Moreover, it can be assumed - taking consumer behaviour in the Western world as an example - that economic growth will raise expectations and thereby induce more unpaid input into qualitative improvements of the domestic production processes.

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[3]The ILO considers an individual to be unemployed if he or she is currently umemployed, is activily seeking employment and is available for employment within some time period mutually acceptable to both the prospective employee and a prospective employer. For a critical reflection, see UN (1997a), p.132-133.

[4]An example of such an estimation is to be found in Langmore and Quiggin (1994), p. 22-24.

5 Unpaid work - some basic facts, approaches and discussions

The well-known image of unpaid work in developed countries is no longer of the full-time housewife, but of the dual-carrier couple or the single adult household struggling (or rather: juggling - see: Bittman, 1991) to combine gainful employment with the inevitable domestic drudgery and caring tasks. They experience the importance of the availability and accessibility of commercial and public services is: opening times in the retail trade are no longer trivial details. Care for the very young and for the elderly, too costly to be supplied as a professional service by the community, must be organized as voluntary work. This in turn necessitates leave arrangements in the labour market. In addition, gaps in private and public service delivery are sometimes filled by volunteers.

In other words, although the sort of work that is unpaid differs very much between societies in different stages of development, a common denominator seems to be the supposedly infinite elasticity of unpaid work: apparently it can be stretched or contracted, at will (cf. Connelly, 1996, p.25). The costs of shifts between these two sectors of the economy are largely invisible, however. This common denominator is often overlooked in the debate on unpaid work. (See also par. 2.2.).

II. THE VALUE OF UNPAID WORK

METHODS FOR MEASURING AND IMPUTING THE VALUE OF UNPAID WORK

In principle, there are two ways to measure and value unpaid work, the input method and the output method (Cf. Bruyn-Hundt, 1996, Ch. 3).

The *'input method'* counts hours worked in unpaid productive activities and assigns a price to it, using a comparable wage rate. *Time use surveys* are mostly used to tackle the quantitative side of the equation [value quantity x price]. Although there are many methodological problems connected with time use studies, they can in principle be solved by entering into (international) agreements concerning standard definitions etc. The price component could by calculated in different ways:

(a) The *opportunity cost method* values the unpaid working time of an individual at the wage rate he or she is entitled to expect at the labour market[5].

(b) The *market replacement cost method* values unpaid services at the price those services could be purchased in the market. As far as housework or household production is concerned there are two variations of the market replacement cost method.

The *global substitute* is considered to be someone who can perform all tasks of the homemaker. With this method the price of housework is the average wage of home helpers. The alternative is measuring the market replacement costs of *'specialized substitutes'*, assuming that different persons with different occupational qualifications or training would take over different household tasks (e.g. cooks, cleaners, nurses etc.). A general ambiguity of both versions of this replacement costs method is that they tend to reproduce the systemic wage discrimination of female workers, specially in so-called female occupations (Luxton, 1997).

Bruyn-Hundt (1996, p.39) rejects the specialized substitutes' approach, because the productivity of a specialist is higher than the productivity of a non-specialist. This method therefore overestimates the value of home production. Moreover, wage scales and definitions of functions of specialists tend to change over time, which makes it difficult to compare data for different years. The single market replacement is clearly the most practical method. It is this method that is used in the study of the value of household production in 13 industrial countries undertaken for the Human Development Report 1995 (UNDP, 1995, p.96). The eight OECD countries from which monetary estimates of household production have been compared, have mostly publicized various estimates using different varieties of the input method (OECD, 1995, p.16). Valuation of household production on the basis of gross housekeepers' wages is also recommended by Statistics Finland in their proposal for developing a household satellite accounts system commissioned by Eurostat (to be published in 1998, cf. Varjonen and Niemi).

The *'output method'* tries to measure the results of unpaid production by assigning a price to the quantities of goods and services produced. The output method is theoretically superior, but identifying physical units of output is difficult (OECD, 1995, p.12). Although it is feasible to think of square metres of floor mopped, and kilograms of food prepared, the quality of products and services can not be accounted for. For Bruyn-Hundt (1996, p. 46) this difficulty is a decisive reason to reject the output method. In practice, the output method is seldom used in its pure form, because of lack of data. Mostly, input measures are used as a proxy for output measures.

Duncan Ironmonger has introduced a way of tackling these difficulties by reflecting the production processes within private households in aggregate input-output tables. Final outputs, such as meals, are valued at market prices; the value of unpaid labour

[5] The main objection to this method is called "the homemakers paradox": the value of the same unpaid task (say a nice home prepared dinner) would be higher if done by my boss instead of by me, although I may be the better cook.

inputs are calculated as the residual item after deduction of the costs of capital and intermediate inputs used. Household outputs are categorized in six broad headings: accommodation, meals, (clean) clothes, transport, recreation and care. They are valued at market prices. (Activities such as shopping and cleaning are considered to be 'ancillary' activities; the outputs of such activities do not have to be counted). At an aggregate level, these data give insight into household 'industries', that provide goods and services in competition with parallel market industries (Ironmonger, 1996, 1997, 1998). Household input-output tables or estimations have been published for six countries - Australia, Canada, Finand, Sweden, Norway and the United States (Ironmonger, 1997).

It is beyond the scope of this paper to elaborate in greater detail the technical questions concerning the valuation of unpaid work or to give an extensive overview of the results of different measurement methods. Bruyn-Hundt (1996, p.50) has listed 33 calculations performed between 1921 and 1995 in various countries that range from 5.9 to 72 % of GNP! The great variety in approaches and methods makes this comparison useless.

The Human Development Report 1995 (p.97), using a uniform approach with extra gross wages of a domestic worker as the relevant market price (but undoubtedly still based on very different time-use studies), found that unpaid work accounts for 72% of GNP in Australia, 53% in Germany and 45% in Finland.[6] The report concludes that, whatever the method used, the value of unpaid work in industrial countries is considerable. *'It is at least half of gross domestic product and it accounts for more than half of private consumption'* (UNDP, 1995, p.97; italics in the original). On a global level (...), 'if these unpaid activities were treated as market transactions at the prevailing wages, they would yield huge monetary valuations - a staggering $16 trillion, or about 70% more than the officially estimated $23 trillion of global output' (....)[7] Of this $16 trillion, $11 trillion is the non-monetized, "invisible" contribution of women' (ibid.).

THE INCORPORATION OF UNPAID WORK IN THE SYSTEM OF NATIONAL ACCOUNTS

Since the first UN attempt to standardize national income accounting among its member states in the fifties, there has been a debate about whether unpaid work should or should not be incorporated in the System of National Accounts (SNA). Essentially, the arguments in favour and against this idea have been the following.

Pro: By incorporating the value of unpaid work in the national accounts, they would much more realistically reflect real growth and welfare of a nation and make comparisons between different points in time and between different countries more valid.

It would also provide more accurate measures of the effects of the business cycle, capital accumulation in private households and the distribution of real income over individuals or households. It would unveil the shifts between government-financed services and unpaid family care that occur as a consequence of increases or reductions of the public budget.

Incorporating subsistence agriculture would throw light on an important element of the process of development and highlight the need for investments in this sector. Making visible women's contribution in unpaid housework and childcare would illustrate the consequent loss in earning capacity and therefore support the need for training and retraining (Bruyn-Hundt (1996), p.76-80; UNDP, (1995), p. 97-98, Waring (1988), 284-285). In short, “measure it to make it count!” (Eisner, 1996)[8].

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[6] Bruyn-Hundt (1996, Ch.4) calculated for the Netherlands in the periode 1975 - 1990 that the value of unpaid work (at gross minimum wages plus employers' contribution to social security) has varied between 51 and 68 % of GNP. Using the wages of a home help as price component, these percentages are between 63 and 82 %.

[7] 'This estimate includes the value of the *unpaid* work performed by women and men as well as the *underpayment* of women's work in the market at prevailing wages' (ibid.; italics in the original).

[8] The arguments in favour of incorparating unpaid work in the system of national accounts, contain in my view two essential flaws: (1) the positive effects forseen in reality are often not the results of the

Contra: The arguments against the imputation of unpaid work in National Accounts are mainly of two types:

First, there are normative arguments derived from views what economics is about. Some say that unpaid activities as such fall outside the relevant production boundary, because they cannot be separately identified as activities in an economic sense (involving the choice to use scarce resources for one or more alternate purposes).

A similar argument is the idea that imputed income does not have the same significance as monetary income, because it does not give the consumer freedom to choose on what goods or services he or she can spend it now or later; the imputed income from unpaid work is bound to the output of the unpaid production process itself.

Second, there are more practical arguments, of which the difficulties of measuring and valuing unpaid work are most widely cited. However, as we have seen, these difficulties could in principle be overcome. This leaves us with the main argument against the incorporation of unpaid work in the System of National Accounts: it would damage its usefulness as an indicator for the development of the market economy. Time-series analysis of data on the business cycle, inflation, unemployment etc. would become impossible because of the changed definitions of incomes and expenditures in the SNA.

The most logical answer to that objection, of course, is to present both the 'old' and the 'new' version of the national accounts together. However, most economists working in this field seem to be inclined to relegate the measurement and valuation of unpaid work to so-called satellite accounts of the SNA (Bruyn-Hundt, (1996), p.75-76; 79-80), following the recommendation of the UN Statistical Commission for the preparation of such accounts that are “separate from, but consistent with” core national accounts. That is also the quintessence of the language adopted on this issue at both the Social Summit and the World Conference on Women in 1995.

While these arguments were being exchanged by economists in their learned forums and by government delegates in the preparatory processes of the UN World Conferences to be held in 1995, other officials had - as it were silently - introduced a major change concerning the incorporation of unpaid work in the System of National Account. The 1993 revision of the SNA recommended that all production of *goods* in households for their own consumption be included, but it still excluded own-account production of *services*. This means that (subsistence) agriculture and non-market production of goods for household consumption now fall inside the production boundary as recommended by the SNA, but that housework (including meal preparation), child and elderly care and other family related services are still excluded. (See: System of national accounts 1993; UN, 1995 c, p.107).

A recent analysis by Cynthia Wood (1997) has made clear that this distinction has a strong male chauvinist, first world bias: unpaid work in the third world that is likely to be replaced by paid work when the economy would be further developed is included, but unpaid work in the third world that looks like unpaid housework as it prevails in the first world is excluded. Anyhow, the 1993 revision of the SNA on this issue forms an inconsistent application of the third party criterion. Would it be exaggerated to suppose that this inconsistency can be explained as a decision dominated by senior male economists coming from first world countries who simply cannot grasp the idea that what a housewife does (what their wives do) might be called 'work' ?

According to Joann Vanek, as a result of the 1993 revision of the SNA, 'in developing countries the priority for improving statistics on unpaid work is change in the methods of collecting data rather than in the concept of what is considered economic' (Vanek, 1996, p.123). This has contributed to a further underestimation of the similarities of the issue in both parts of the world (cf. par.1.7).

In conclusion, Lourdes Beneria is in my view too optimistic when she asserts that “conceptually, at least, the battle against the invisibility of

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incorporation of unpaid work in the SNA but of its valuation in monetary terms as such. (2) Desirable changes in public policy are sometimes seen as a more or less automatic consequence of a changed system of national accounts (or other statistics for that matter), ignoring political will and the complexities of the policy-making process.

women's work seems largely to have been won" (Beneria, 1997, p.118). Women's domestic work is still uncounted.

It remains to be seen whether household production satellite accounts, such as developed by Statistics Finland for Eurostat, (cf. Varjonen and Niemi, 1998) can be implemented widely enough to fill that gap.

WAGES FOR HOUSEWORK?

The drive to discuss the incorporation of the value of unpaid work in the SNA at the UN stems for a very large part from the actions of a particular group of NGOs that has been active on the issue of women's housework for more than two decades[9].

The ideological background of this movement lies in the now 'classic' feminist-Marxist analyses of Mariarosa Dalla Costa (1972) and Selma James (1953/1972). The plea for a housewife's wage[10] brought a lot discord in the women's movement of the seventies and the campaign did not succeed in having its vision adopted by UN forums. With remarkable flexibility the demands were thereupon changed from wages for housework to recognition, measurement and valuation, apparently as goals in themselves. This made the demands of this campaign much more acceptable[11]. The proponents of this campaign celebrated the deal struck at the Beijing Conference as their greatest triumph,[12] but wages for housework may still be their ultimate - though temporarily hidden - objective.

The idea of wages for housework should be clearly distinguished from social benefits like child allowances or the concept of the 'family wage', *i.e.* a wage (for the male breadwinner) considered sufficient to support a family. A housewife's wage is to be understood as a personal reward for the housework and child care tasks of the (traditional) housewife paid to her by the state. This would give her - at least in the short run - a certain degree of economic independence.

In all proposals of wages for housework the pay is low and temporary, i.e. wages stop or decrease as soon as the children are grown up. The main objection to the idea of wages for housework is that it would not enhance women's economic independence in the long run, because it would discourage labour market participation and investments in education and vocational training of women. It would contribute to maintaining the traditional division of work between women and men instead of unfreezing it (Bruyn-Hundt (1996), p.164-168).

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[9] See the postings at the Beijing 95 - mailinglist at the occasion of the International Wages for Housework Campaign's Silver Jubilee (20 and 21 July 1997).

[10] This plea was first published by Selma James in a brochure written for the Women's Liberation Conference held in Manchester in 1972, titled *'Women, Unions and Work, or...What is not to be done'.* (Grotenhuis (1980), p.127).

[11] The representatives of these NGO's were criticized by many participants, both at and before the Social Summit and the Women's Conference, for their vehement rhethoric and all too loud and massive presence. The success of the campaign was perhaps attained not thanks to but in spite of its proponents!

[12] Cf. footnote 9

III. COPENHAGEN AND BEIJING REVISITED: THE UNITED NATIONS AND THE ISSUE OF UNPAID WORK

At the United Nations, the issue of unpaid work had reached the political agenda via two routes: first, already a quarter of a century ago, via the Women's Branch of the Organization, and secondly, quite recently, via a social or socio-economic angle, in the preparatory process of the Social Summit. These different origins have produced partly dissimilar views and policy recommendations.

UNPAID WORK AS A WOMEN'S OR GENDER ISSUE

The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) first took up the issue of women's unpaid work in the early seventies - then phrased as the issue of 'the family responsibilities of working women' and their 'double burden' (Resolution 2 (XXIII). The report prepared as a result of that resolution, however, was titled 'Working women and the sharing of household duties' (E/CN.6/613, 22 December 1977). This reflects the consensus established at the Mexico Conference[13] (1975) on the equity of the sharing of household chores between men and women and on the role of governments and society at large in facilitating the combination of family and work obligations. A similar shift in focus, from defining the unpaid workload of women as a problem of women, especially of working women, to a more comprehensive view including the roles of men and of the state, can be seen in the ILO. Recommendation 123 on the Employment of Women with Family Responsibilities (1965) was superseded by the Workers with Family Responsibilities Convention (ILO - Convention nr. 1956, adopted 1981).[14]

Since the Mexico Conference this twofold approach has become more or less accepted language in international forums on women's issues. The question of unpaid work is seen as an issue of unjust distribution and/or inefficient allocation between the sexes, that should be brought back into balance by (a) promoting equal sharing of family responsibilities between women and men, and (b) providing a better infrastructure of public or social services, child-care often being the first mentioned. The second UN World Conference on Women (Copenhagen, 1980) however clearly spelled out that besides child care, other basic public facilities and social services like housing, safe water and energy supply must be put in place, '(...) in order to alleviate the workload traditionally imposed on women in their performance of tasks essential for the survival of their communities, and to increase their levels of gainful employment and productivity (...)'.[15] In other words, here the issue was put in a development perspective.

The same twofold approach mentioned before was very clearly expressed in the Nairobi

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[13]Report of the World Conference of the International Women's Year, Mexico City, 19 June - 2 July 1975, in : *The United Nations and the Advancement of Women 1945 - 1995*. New York: United Nations, 1995 (The United Nations Blue Book Series, vol. VI). See Mexico Declaration, par 5; World Plan of Action, para's 101, 130 and 132.

[14]The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (adopted 1979) contains in Article 5 provisions of the same kind on debunking the dominant gender ideology and ensuring joint family responsibility for children's upbringing.

[15]Programme of Action for the Second Half of the United Nations Decade for Women., para. 129. Report of the World Conference on the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace, held in Copenhagen, 14 - 30 July 1980. See UN (1995).

Forward-looking Strategies, adopted at the end-of decade conference in 1985[16].

An interesting post-Women's Decade event was the Expert Group Meeting on Social Support Measures, held in Vienna, 14-18 November 1988, in preparation of the 33rd session of CSW (E/CN.6/1989/6 and Addendum). This meeting especially highlighted the interrelationship between sex equality at the workplace and the sharing of domestic and parental responsibilities and emphasized that only combined strategies - aimed at both the sphere of unpaid work and the world of paid employment - would be successful in changing the uneven distribution of unpaid work.

The same double approach to unpaid work as a question of private redistribution and public intervention can be found in the Platform for Action adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing, September 1995). At the Beijing conference, that two-fold approach in itself did not arouse much debate or controversy, although some diplomatic fine-tuning was necessary to arrive at a wording that reflected the respective roles of governments, NGOs and private citizens[17]. At Beijing, the focus was on the measurement and valuation of unpaid work and its incorporation in national accounts. In the end, a text on that specific aspect could only be adopted as part of a package-deal[18] that embraced a wider framework of recommendations on the role of women in development, improvements in statistics and gender analysis and making visible and changing the unequal distribution of paid and unpaid work between women and men.

In conclusion, the outcome of the Beijing Conference implied that the unpaid work of women had to be more recognized and had taken into account in the formulation of socio-economic policies, but it did not spell out how that goal could be accomplished other than by better measurement and statistics.

UNPAID WORK AS A SOCIAL ISSUE

As can be concluded from the previous section, the Women's Branch of the UN (DAW, CSW, and four World Conferences) have been quite active on unpaid work as a substantial policy issue. The 'social sector' of the UN, especially the Commission for Social Development, has in comparison been lagging behind. Mostly, the question of unpaid work was hidden under the heading of 'the family'. This perspective did not bring any new focus of analysis. Such a novelty had to wait for the preparatory process of the Social Summit[19]. The final outcome of this process was a section in the Programme of Action on 'A broader recognition and understanding of work and employment' (Ch.3E).

The focus originally was the drive to extend the concept of work to include unpaid work, mainly to recognise all sorts of 'social activities' like volunteer work and 'semi-employment' that often replace employment for those 'not that employable' - a typical welfare approach. The background of this outcome was the dialogue between those who advocated full employment for all as a feasible goal, and those who thought that goal neither feasible nor desirable and promoted recognition of all sorts of 'useful activities' as work or employment in a broader sense. The first group clearly won the debate. This can been seen in the rather vague contents of the recommendations concerning these 'useful activities'. When the discussion became influenced by the inputs from women's NGOs and femocrats inside governments, both the recognition of (women's) unpaid

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[16]Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women, para 121. Report of the World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace, held in Nairobi, 15 - 28 July 1985. See UN (1995).

[17]See e.g. the Platform for Action, para's 173 g and 179 c. Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing, 4-15 September 1995). A/CONF/177/20.

[18]Cf. Platform for Action, para's 156, 165, 204 b, 206 e, f, g, and 209.
Par. 206 f sub (i) acknowledges that the unpaid work done in agriculture, particularly in subsistence agriculture, and other types of non-market production activities are since the 1993 revision included in the SNA.
Cf. Vanek (1996), p.124.

[19]Report of the World Summit on Social Development, Copenhagen, 6-12 March 1995 (A/CONF.116/9).

work and the demand for more flexibility in allocating time over paid and unpaid work were also incorporated under this heading. In addition, Commitment 5 of the Copenhagen Declaration paid tribute to the principles of equal partnership and shared responsibilities of women and men and other familiar women's demands. Although much energy of delegations at the Social Summit had to be allocated to the controversy of unpaid work and its measurement in the national accounts[20] - a debate that in fact was a dress rehearsal for the Beijing World Conference on Women that was to take place some months later - the real novelty was this broadening of the very concept of productive work.

The outcome of the Social Summit implied that unpaid work and its relationship with paid employment had to be taken into account into socio-economic policy-making. The Summit, however, did not formulate the agenda for the implementation of such a vision.

THE UN AND UNPAID WORK AFTER 1995

After the Copenhagen Summit and the Beijing Women's Conference, the issue of unpaid work reappeared at the agendas of various inter-governmental gatherings, though the outcomes of these discussions up to now can only be characterized as uneven and fragmentary.

Commission on the Status of Women

The Commission on the Status of Women in its 40th session (1996) discussed child and dependent care, including sharing of work and family responsibilities. Both the Secretariat's report (E/CN.6/1996/5) and the Agreed Conclusions 1996/3 (E/CN.6/1996/15, p. 14 ff) covered familiar ground, by focusing on increasing the role of men (esp. via education), reforms in labour and social security legislation and the introduction of a family support system.

At its 41st session (1997) the CSW took up the theme Women in the Economy. The Secretariat's preparatory documentation (E/CN.6/1997/3) and the panel discussion and dialogue held during this session (E/CN.6/1997/9, p. 44) paid only meagre attention to unpaid work. The Agreed Conclusions 1997/3 (ibid., p. 12 ff) only touched upon the issue of measurement and valuation and the sharing of unpaid and paid work between women and men.

Commission for Social Development

The Commission for Social Development, in charge of the follow-up to the Social Summit, discussed the employment issue as its priority theme at its 35th session (1997).

Whoever might have expected here a further discussion of unpaid work as an element in economic policy-making, would have been very disappointed. Although the agenda contained an explicit reference to 'a broader recognition of work and employment' (Ch.3E of the Copenhagen Plan of Action), the Secretariat's preparatory document (E/CN.5/1997/3), mainly prepared by the ILO[21], almost ignored this theme, as did the panel discussion held during this session. The EU Presidency criticized this omission in their intervention in the debate and remarked that 'these questions clearly deserve to be further discussed - not only from the angle of conceptual clarity, but also for its practical relevance in the framework of job creation and the fight against long term exclusion from the labour market of the most vulnerable groups'. However, the result was only one paragraph in the resolution that held the Agreed Conclusions (E.CN.5/1997/11, res.35/2, para 24) - a ceremonial compensation that did not involve anything new.

Statistical Commission

[20] In contrast to the Beijing Platform for Action, the texts adopted at Copenhagen Summit do not give evidence that delegates were aware of the 1993 changes of the SNA.

[21] The document leaned heavily on the ILO World Employment Report 1996/97, which almost completely left out unpaid work.

The Statistical Commission held its 29th session in February 1997. Unpaid work is not mentioned in the report of this session (E/CN.3/1997/29). The Commission did consider, however, the statistical implications of recent major UN conferences and adopted the MNSDS, i.e. the Minimum National Social Data Set, prepared by a working group a year before. Unpaid work is not included on that list of 15 indicators, but is mentioned in a list of indicators 'that are also seen as valuable and relevant for monitoring and evaluating progress' (E/CN.3/AC.1/1996/R.4, Appendix). The report of the Commission's Task Force on National Accounts (E/CN.3/1997/12) does not mention future activities concerning the measurement and valuation of unpaid work or its incorporation in national accounts or satellite accounts. There is a (rather vague) reference to the start of the process of updating the 1993 System of National Accounts, however (ibid. para 33).

IV. POLICIES WITH RESPECT TO UNPAID WORK

For the purpose of social and economic policy-making it may be useful to explore the boundaries between unpaid work on the one hand and commercial and public servicing on the other. How is it decided whether a given human need is fulfilled by unpaid work or by goods and services bought in the market or supplied by the government? The New Home Economics (cf. Becker, 1965) would answer that that would depend on taste (i.e. non-economic preferences), relative prices, income levels, opportunity costs of time used for unpaid work etc.

Mainstream economic literature does not mention, however, that behind these well-known factors there is also government intervention which influences availability and profitability of services. The choices people make between unpaid work and goods and services bought in the market or from the community, are also influenced by economic policies regarding infrastructure, the encouragement of economic growth and development, the issuing of business licenses, vocational training, price regulation, taxation, subsidies and the like. Economic policies, so far, have not been studied for their explicit or implicit effects on the boundary between paid and unpaid work. Only the criticism by feminist economists on the gender effects of structural adjustment policies has initiated that type of analysis (cf. par. 4.4.3).

Mostly, the economic policies indicated above are discussed with a view to stimulating aggregate demand, economic growth and employment, or because of the inherent positive effects of such public services as education, health and the like. In addition, specific labour market policies are directly aimed at combating unemployment (e.g. Langmore and Quiggin (1994), Ch.8 and 10 respectively). Only very seldom do such policies also explicitly intend to influence the world of unpaid work; the obvious example being childcare.[22]

In other words, the boundaries of paid and unpaid work are influenced by market forces determining the range of the private service sector and by political and budgetary factors determining the range of the public service sector. The choice between paid and unpaid work and profitability/political feasibility of social servicing are two sides of the same coin. The way public policies are affecting this choice is the focus of this section.

TWO TYPES OF PUBLIC POLICIES WITH RESPECT TO UNPAID WORK

In the literature there are only scattered remarks on the relevance of public policies for unpaid work. These policies can be divided into two groups:

- ***Specific or direct policies*** are explicitly aimed at unpaid work. They might be recognizing it or making it more visible; influencing the quantity of unpaid work done in society or changing the distribution of unpaid work among different groups in society.

- ***Indirect or 'mainstreamed' policies*** are not designed and implemented with a view to affecting unpaid work as a primary policy objective, but they have implicit effects on unpaid work. Sometimes influencing unpaid work is included as an explicit secondary objective of a policy. Mostly, however, mainstream socio-economic policies have implicit effects on unpaid work.

In the following paragraphs of this section these two types of policy-making with respect to

[22] One could also think of subsidies to NGO's that organize voluntary services, or tax exemptions for allowances received for 'unpaid' work. An interesting example is a recently announced measure of the Netherlands government to subsidize firms that offer 'home services' such as cleaning and maintenance work. The stated policy goals of this measure are not only combating both unemployment and moonlighting, but also supporting the two-career family and the elderly to carry out their domestic drudgery (Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment, 1997).

unpaid work will be discussed including making an inventory of different concrete measures and taking stock of some theoretical and research findings that seem relevant. Very soon it will become clear that this sort of data are very difficult to find and that coherent research and analysis in this field have hardly begun.

SPECIFIC POLICIES ON UNPAID WORK

The three sections that follow will discuss various measures aimed at better recognizing or 'making visible' unpaid work, unpaid work as a policy target in gender equality policy and government measures to stimulate voluntary community work.

Making unpaid work visible

Boosting the recognition of unpaid work has always been cited as the first aim of any policy-making in this field. The most obvious and simple measures are data collection, presentation and analysis. Time use studies seem to be the most enlightening research for this purpose. Much has still to be done regarding its further refinement, its international comparability and its use in all regions. National statistical offices, and behind them the government ministries responsible for their budgets, have the central role to play in this respect.

Other types of research and analysis could also contribute to making unpaid work more visible. Much has been written about subsistence production in developing countries and many studies on (women's) housework, mainly in industrialized countries, have been published.[23] Much less is known of voluntary community work and of the role of men.[24]

A second step in making visible the importance of unpaid work for society as a whole is imputing its value in monetary terms. Imputing a monetary value for unpaid work is a necessary condition for its inclusion in national accounts or satellite accounts and in the models used for economic policy-making (Bruyn-Hundt, 1996, Ch.7; Ironmonger, 1995, Plantenga & Sloep 1995).

A special case of recognizing unpaid work is giving an allowance or financial compensation for it, in other words paying for it. There is clearly a distinction between paying a reimbursement of expenses on the one hand and paying a reasonable hourly wage on the other. The first is of special importance in supporting voluntary community work; it is more a compensation for costs, e.g. for transport or utensils used, rather than a remuneration. Nevertheless it would help to give a feeling of being recognized as a community worker. The second, a wage for unpaid work, sounds like *a contradictio in terminis*. Above, I explored the debate on wages for housework and rejected such a policy because it would not contribute to making the distribution of unpaid work between men and women fairer and would not be effective in guaranteeing women's economic independence.[25] In principle, implementation of wages for housework (and paying for other forms of now unpaid work) would mean transferring some productive activities from the unpaid sector to the paid labour market. Alain Supiot (1996) criticized bringing unpaid work within the scope of paid employment, precisely because 'the result would be to eliminate such work, to deny its intrinsic distinctiveness'[26]. He argues that 'any socially useful work

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[23] The classic examples are Boserup (1970) and Oakley (1974).

[24] 'Universality' is mentioned as the first of a list of evaluation criteria for unpaid work policies proposed by Status of Women Canada (1995) in a paper written for the OECD Working Party on the Role of Women in the Economy. 'Policies should be based on the recognition that unpaid work is undertaken by women and men, both in and out of the paid labour force. The implications of recognizing only the unpaid work done by selected groups in society, for example full-time homemakers, require careful scrutiny' (Status of Women Canada, 1995, p.7).

[25] Cf the criteria autonomy, choice, and gender equality mentioned in the Canadian paper quoted in note 25.

[26] Supiot, 1996, p.611-612. In Supiot's view unpaid work is 'not performed under contract, but by virtue of a set of rules governing a person's position in society' (p.611). This vision obscures the fact that unpaid work is not only done by e.g. housewives and the unemployed, but in various forms and quantities by everyone. By ignoring the universality criterion, mentioned in footnote 25, the author supposes a hypothetical 'intrinsic distinctiveness', that - in my view - can only lead to a biased view of unpaid work. As indicated before, unpaid work is not unpaid because of some inherent trait of the work itself. All

should (...) be underpinned by a coherent set of labour rights and a legal status that would recognize it as being part of a normal working life without detriment to its distinctiveness' (Supiot, 1996, p. 612). It is unclear whether he envisions a separate set of labour rights for unpaid workers, different from the rights of the gainfully employed, or identical labour rights. Identical labour rights, without introducing any form of direct wage payment, do not make much sense. Special labour rights of unpaid workers could come into conflict with privacy rights and the optional character of unpaid work.

The more generic idea of a basic income for all adult citizens could also contribute to some form of recognition of unpaid work. However, as such policy proposals are mostly discussed in the context of reforming employment and welfare policies, this basic income strategy should be classified as an indirect policy approach *vis à vis* unpaid labour.

Another variety of the plea for 'recognizing' unpaid work can be heard in the debate among feminist jurists on the ethics of care and the inclusion of care as a fundamental right in the constitution and/or in other legal texts. Many participants in that debate seem to fall into the same trap met in the wages for housework debate and in the plea for a 'legal status' for unpaid work. They tend to highlight care as a feminine value. By requesting recognition for that value they contribute to entrenching instead of loosening the existing male and female role models.[27] These debates disclose an important dilemma: the modalities chosen in recognizing unpaid work should be weighed against policy goals in other areas, especially against the goals of gender equality policy. Recognizing unpaid work *as such* without asking: 'what for ?' does not seem a fruitful strategy.

In conclusion, many proposed strategies for better recognition of unpaid work are linked to the uneven distribution of paid and unpaid work among different groups in society. As a consequence of this uneven distribution, some groups lack purchasing power and economic independence. The drive for better recognition of unpaid work can be interpreted as an attempt to compensate for these unequal power relations, without repairing the original imbalance. In a hypothetical world where unpaid work was more evenly distributed and did not form a barrier to reach a reasonable level of gainful employment, there would be less need for this recognition. Everybody would do his/her own unpaid work as a normal aspect of life that would not demand a special recognition.

Unpaid work and gender equality policy

Modern gender equality policy-making in the field of work and employment is based on the assumption that women's empowerment requires their economic independence and relief of domestic drudgery. In principle, four types of policy reforms are relevant here:[28]

(i) Promoting a more equal sharing of unpaid work between women and men;
(ii) Introducing changes in the organisation of paid employment, in order to facilitate the individual combination of paid and unpaid work both by women and by men;
(iii) The provision of public services, such as child care etc.;
(iv) The commercialisation of domestic labour.

Paths (i), (ii), and (iii) are now accepted elements of policy-making for women's equality, at least in theory. Path (iv) is much less discussed. These different policy directions will be reviewed, all be it in very broad outline. The purpose of this exercise is not to make a detailed evaluation of gender equality policies, but to determine how these policies fit into the broader framework of unpaid work policies.

Equal sharing Direct State interventions to persuade men to accept an equal share of unpaid work are relatively rare. The intra-family allocation of work is no matter for the mounted police. Most government policy-making in this area relies on round-about ('soft') measures such as education and

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types of work can be paid or unpaid, depending on the social context and the topical economic conditions.

[27] Marjolein van den Brink a.o. eds.(1997) reflect this debate in the Netherlands.

[28] Bittman (1996); see also OECD (1991) and the UN documents referred to in Ch. 3 of this paper.

information. As a consequence, the 'bargaining at the kitchen table' takes place on an individual basis. An additional disadvantage of this strategy is the presupposed presence of someone with whom to share your household chores. Lone mothers and singles of all ages and sexes lack such a 'sharing partner'.

The tendency of past decades towards more sharing of unpaid work - decreased for women and increased for men, but less than proportionally (see a.o. UN 1995(b), Ch. 5) - seems primarily related to the increased labour force participation of women and the increased (at least verbal) support of the value of sex equality. Whether a 'stalled revolution' (Hochschild) or a 'lagged adaptation' (Gershuny), these processes form a dangerous target for direct government measures.

Re-arranging paid work Much more public support may be expected for measures by governments, business and the trade unions to change the organisation of paid work in a so-called family-friendly way. Treatises on policies to balance work and family can now even be found in a college textbook - albeit a feminist one! (Blau, Ferber and Winkler, 1998, Ch. 10). Forms of maternity and parental leave and leave to care for sick dependants are much less controversial than the issue of working time. While most experts would agree that a general reduction of daily or weekly working hours would be the most effective measure, such a policy receives weak though growing support. That leaves 'flexibility' as a magic means. There are many indications, however, that part-time work functions more as a trap than as a bridge, because it does not relieve women of their prime responsibility for unpaid family work and does not bring them enough earning capacity to guarantee their economic independence. (OECD (1994), Ch.3; Baxter and Gibson (1990); Bittman (1996)).

With the exception of maternity leave, the policies mentioned under (i) and (ii) seem to have a typical bias related to industrialized countries; they are seldom seen as very relevant for developing countries, be it for cultural or economic reasons (Bullock (1994), p.21; UN (1995b) p.69).

Public services The domestic labour debate pursued by leftist academics and activists in the seventies produced various treatises on the socialization or collectivization of unpaid work, especially of housework and caring tasks. The utopian tendency of most proposals on communal living arrangements and so on made them look obsolete when individualization and privatization triumphed in the eighties. This runs the risk of throwing out the baby with the bathwater.

Palmer, Elson and other scholars concentrating on development issues have highlighted the importance of publicly financed infrastructure (roads, transport, water facilities etc.) which contributes to raising the productivity of women's unpaid work in fetching the essentials of life (water, fuel, food etc.) and social services (health, education etc.) which diminish the burden of caring tasks on women (See UNRISD, 1997; Kerr, 1994). Far from being the illusion of old-fashioned leftists, state investment in infrastructure and public services is essential for relieving women of their double burden and supporting a reallocation of unpaid work between women and men.

Infrastructural investments and public expenditures for social services will in most cases be implemented in the course of general development policies, not so much specifically to lessen women's unpaid work. Child care facilities[29], however, seem in most cases primarily motivated by the wish to help (both) parents to perform their caring responsibilities in such a way that they are able to take up paid work outside their home. A related group of policy measures consists of forms of income support for caring work, such as child allowances or mother's allowances. These imply that the income support is restricted to the caring parent who is not in (or leaves) the labour market (Bradbury, 1995). Such a 'home carer's allowance' - if paid only to a non employed parent - clearly discriminates against those parents who choose to stay in the labour market and therefore conflicts with economic independence as a stated aim of gender equality policy.

Commercialization of unpaid work A fourth component of gender equality policy aimed at relieving women's domestic drudgery would be encouraging private businesses producing goods and

[29] Although childcare facilities may be privately organized, they are (semi-) public services as long as they are at least partly financed from the public budget, be it directly by state expenditures or indirectly by tax deductions.

services which are good substitutes for unpaid work, or reduce the time necessary to spend in it. To a certain extent, these market alternatives develop spontaneously, as the growth of the market for so-called consumer durables and for fast food products makes clear. On the other hand, Governments seldom consider how to stimulate market developments of this kind, e.g. by lowering the value-added tax (VAT) on these products (Bruyn-Hundt, p. 182). Such a policy approach would also have to comprise tax deductions or transfers (subsidies) to trades like laundries, cleaning services, repair and maintenance etc., and other stimulating measures such as vocational training and a flexible business licensing policy. Tax deductions or an income tax credit for people who combine unpaid work with paid work could stimulate (or reward) the substitution of unpaid work by market goods and services.

Economic policies *vis à vis* the private sector seem only by coincidence to be motivated by policy goals as described in this section. In most cases other policy goals (stimulating economic growth, combating unemployment, levelling income distribution) seem to dominate – a reason why such policies would have to be put in the category of indirect measures.[30]

Policies with regard to voluntary community work A third group of policies specifically aimed at influencing unpaid work consists of measures relating to voluntary community work (i.e. work for the sake of others or for society at large, undertaken optionally, without pay, in an organized setting). Informal care on a more private basis, such as care for dependants, relatives or neighbours, is mostly not covered by this concept. In particular, informal care for the elderly when outside one's own home, tends to fall between the cracks.

However defined, voluntary community work is the essence of civil society. A country where voluntary community work has no place could not be called a democracy.

Some voluntary work, such as activities in political parties, trade unions and other non-governmental organizations, can easily be, and mostly is, combined with paid employment. Other types of voluntary work, such as many caring tasks, demand such continuous and time-consuming effort, that such a combination is very difficult. Policy-making aiming at this second type of voluntary work must therefore answer the question where the income support of the volunteers should come from. Mostly, this question is neglected or implicitly answered by supposing that such volunteers are dependent family members, mostly 'non-working' women, or retired people with an income based on their former employment.

In so far as governments want to activate their citizens to participate in voluntary work - to strengthen the fabric of society as such or to better integrate citizens outside the labour market - they could in principle follow two lines of action:

(i) Stimulate and support the volunteers; and/or
(ii) Support the organisations with which the volunteers work.

(i) Stimulating and supporting the volunteers

Examples of this first group of policy measures are tax exemptions for the reimbursements of expenses received by the volunteers. Paying the volunteers directly is another possibility. For instance, Langmore & Quiggin, (p.217) argue for extending child care allowances to those who have a 'full-time job' caring for disabled or elderly family members or to volunteers with community services who are contributing much of their time to socially useful activities.

Richard Freeman (1996) has found that for the most part volunteers are people with higher potential earning or greater demands on their time. - Standard labor supply substitution behaviour, which predicts that people will volunteer less when opportunity costs of time (wages) are higher, explains

[30] As an exception I found for the Netherlands an advisory report of the Social and Economic Council, holding the plea that private services become a more regular part of the market sector and a parliamentary request for a investigation into the possibilities of government measures in that respect (Niphuis-Nell (1977), p.295 and 322). Moreover, the Netherlands government has announced the introduction of wage subsidies for 'home services' (see note 23). In the European Union recently a discussion has started on lowering the VAT for labour-intensive businesses.

only a minor part of differences in volunteer behaviour. Many people volunteer only in response to a request to do so. This suggests, says Freeman, that volunteering is a 'conscience good or activity'- something people feel morally obliged to do when asked, but which they would just as soon leave to someone else.

If this finding has validity, then refined campaign strategies mobilizing this conscience - comparable with fundraising for public or private charities - deserve more attention.

Another form of promoting unpaid work consists in activating special categories of the population, e.g. immigrants, older citizens or the unemployed. Pahl (1987) has illustrated the so-called Matthew Effect: those in employment are best situated to finding more work, formal or informal. Gainful work brings them not only the necessary social contacts but also the money to buy tools and materials, or finance other work-related expenses.

Encouraging unpaid work for the long-time unemployed therefore entails the question of basic income support. Such a policy is often directed at the reintegration of the unemployed into paid employment. In that case (voluntary) community work is not encouraged for its own sake, but as a stepping stone to 'a real job'.

(ii) Supporting the organisations with which the volunteers work

Governments could pursue a policy of facilitating and supporting private organisations. Tax exemptions or subsidies to these organisations, financing training courses or sectorial measures to stimulate voluntary activities in sports clubs, fire brigades, social work etc. are all possibilities.

Service exchanges - where people could swap their unpaid services with each other by means of vouchers - are another way to facilitate unpaid work (See Offe and Heinze, 1992). Government support (or tolerance) of these non-money exchanges, however, are destined to remain only a marginal affair. It is hardly thinkable that any government would knowingly have its tax base eroded in that way (Pixley, 1993, p.200).

Private firms could also promote voluntary work, e.g. by sponsoring community projects or exchanges of personnel. Schools, sometimes do this.

Some authors advocate a very radical alternative to stimulating voluntary community work: the introduction of a compulsory social service - taxing the citizens' (unpaid) time rather then their money income (See e.g. Balbo and Novotny, 1986). This alternative is sometimes discussed as a means to correct the male bias in military conscription policies. However, compulsory social service as a state imposed duty misses the character of a freely assumed obligation, that is essential for the right to work (See a.o. Pixley, Ch. 7). Compulsory social service would therefore come into conflict with the prohibition of slavery and forced labour and the human right to freely chosen employment.

There is extensive literature on voluntary work in specific fields, such as health care or education. However, with the exception of the debate on 'workfare'-type policies, I found practically no literature on voluntary work written from a general socio-economic policy perspective.[31] Compared to the abundance of work on the unpaid housework and caring tasks of women and related issues, this is a striking gap. Looking back at the language the Social Summit devoted to this issue,[32] so far policy-making *vis à vis* voluntary community work is a wasteland.

Indirect policies relating to unpaid work

Introduction Indirect (or 'mainstreamed') policies are not designed and implemented with a view to affecting unpaid work as a primary policy objective. But they *do* have effects on unpaid work that are mostly unknown and not accounted for. The implicit influence of mainstream socio-economic policies on unpaid work is an unexplored area. References in the scientific literature are scarce, fragmentary and

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[31]Mellor's analysis of the voluntary sector in the UK in the eighties stands out as an exception (Mellor, 1985). A recent report of the Netherlands' Advisory Council for Social Development. *(Uitsluitend vrijwillig? Maatschappelijk actief in vrijwilligerswerk. Rijswijk, november 1997)* was also a useful source of information.

[32]Cf. footnote 20. See Programme of Action, para's 65 and 72. Two rather vague paragraphs lacking a clear cut vision that could form a basis for an integral policy approach.

difficult to track down. Therefore in this section only some indications can be given of the possible links between 'general' policies and unpaid work.

The emphasis on measuring and valuing unpaid work criticized in earlier parts of this paper has left its mark on policy discussion relating to unpaid work. Some researchers and writers active in the study of unpaid work seem to think that if all unpaid work were measured and valued, it would - as it were, automatically - be taken into account in the formulation of social and economic policies (e.g. Waring, 1988, p.284). Others stress that all discussion on the policy relevance of unpaid work is useless speculation as long as unpaid work is not properly documented and measured. Both views are flawed. Although measurement and valuation of unpaid work is necessary, it is not a sufficient condition for its incorporation as a factor in the policy-making process. What really counts here is insight and political will, helped by some bureaucratic skills. Moreover, some factoring-in of unpaid work could very well be undertaken even in the absence of refined statistics. Sometimes, knowing the existence and the direction of a relationship is more relevant than figures and digits.

Hilkka Pietilä (1996) has given an interesting sketch of 'the human economy in toto', made up of the household, cultivation and industrial production. Her perspective, however, seems to be mainly an ecological one.

Plantenga and Sloep (1995) have explored how to incorporate the effects of government policies on female labour supply in a micro-macro economic model. For that purpose they replace the traditional choice between leisure and working time by a choice between leisure, formal working time and unpaid work (or in their terminology: 'informal working time'). Bruyn-Hundt (1996, p. 140 ff) has gone one step further and indicated a way to implement unpaid work in a whole macro-economic model. Both Plantenga and Sloep and Bruyn-Hundt comprise all relevant policy categories (labour market policies, taxation, social security, but also health care and education) in one 'box' and do not distinguish between direct measures and indirect effects. In addition, these pioneers cannot make clear what is the content of these equations. For instance, as long as it is unknown how much unpaid care capacity is available in the family sector, the effects of more stringent policies of discharging a patient after hospitalization cannot be measured.

Ironmonger (1995) has drafted a model of the household economy (defined as 'the system that produces and allocates tradeable goods and services by using the unpaid labour and capital of households') and presented some estimated variables based on real world data.

This model of the household economy can be integrated with a complete macro-economic model of the economy. The eventual model will depict the 'total' economy with 'household industries' juxtaposed to market industries. Analyses of the effect of public policy measures on unpaid work that make use of such a model have yet to be published.

Since the development of approaches and data necessary for the incorporation of unpaid work in economic policy models is still in its infancy, consideration of the policy implications of unpaid work will be indicative and descriptive.

Wage and income policy Wage and income policies implicitly touch unpaid work mainly in two respects: (i) Wage setting policies may suppose a certain division of paid and unpaid work in the household, as is the case with the family wage; (ii) Income policies may differ in the extent to which they require that the receivers of income are willing to accept an offered job in return. The basic income approach does not entail such a work requirement.

The family wage

A well known indirect way of recognizing unpaid work is granting to the male breadwinner/head of the household a (minimum) wage level that is supposed to include some 'reward' for his wife's unpaid household work and a compensation for the fact that he has to support his 'non-earning' wife. In that case, wage is seen as a family wage.

It could also be said instead that such devices are a way of *not* recognizing the wife's unpaid work. When the breadwinners' statutory wage level is higher than that of his colleague who is single, the implication is that a 'non-working' wife is a net burden to the family. In other words: what she costs

(livelihood) is higher than what she brings in (in kind production of goods and services; economies of scale). Needless to say calculations of the value of housework do not support such a view (Bruyn-Hundt, 1996, Ch. 6). The practical relevance of this kind of reasoning is not great anymore, as the equal pay philosophy has done away with this type of explicit wage differentiation and introduced a general (minimum) wage setting instead. The philosophy is still relevant in social security and welfare, however, where different household types are allocated different rights.

Another mechanism in which differentiation between various household types is built-in is the income tax.

A basic income

Basic income strategies - often under different labels and in different technical forms, such as a guaranteed income or negative income tax[33] - are advocated from a variety of perspectives (See, a.o. Van Parijs, 1992).

Recognizing and rewarding unpaid work is one of the motives directly relevant for our discussion. Mostly, however, a basic income is supported as a remedy against the problems of surveillance and control in the implementation of social security and welfare regulations. Moreover, such proposals are often guided by such policy goals as reducing the number of the people counted as looking for paid work and offering an alternative for the unemployed. In such schemes stimulating 'work beyond employment' is the necessary counterpart of welfare reform.

The Australian sociologist Jocelyn Pixley has convincingly debunked this 'post-industrial' strategy as a utopian dream that overestimates the benevolence of the state. No state will be prepared to give its individual citizens a lifelong guaranteed income at a socially acceptable level enabling them really to choose whether to take up paid work or not. Only an income guarantee at a minimum level or below is thinkable. In practice, projects based on this philosophy have only further marginalized the unemployed.

Moreover, accepting a split between 'work' and a money income seems to have legitimized 'work-for-the-dole': in Pixley's words, 'a primitive form of state conscription or indentured labour' (Pixley, 1993, p.213).

Bruyn-Hundt (1996, p.169) thinks that a basic income would induce a fall in female labour supply and encourage more women to specialize in unpaid work. As this does not bring them the opportunity to build up their earning capacity, this strategy will be detrimental for their economic independence in the long run. These are essentially the same disadvantages as quoted in the wages for housework discussion reviewed earlier in this paper (par. 2.3). De Beer (1995), however, predicts that a basic income will lead to a change in the distribution of paid work at the micro level. In his view, male breadwinners will reduce their paid labour time, while their female partners will be stimulated to enter the labour market. These effects would result in a slight increase in the number of people in the labour force, but in a decrease in aggregate hours. (To what extent this change in the distribution of paid work would influence the distribution of unpaid work is an element not included in this model).

The difference between these two predictions is caused by different labour supply elasticities used in the simulation models. In my view, the validity of these exercises is limited. Major system changes like the introduction of a basic income are very difficult to incorporate in such models.

Many researchers agree that a great disadvantage of a basic income - at least in its minimal version - would be its negative effect on labour supply, especially for women with a working partner. The basic income strategy therefore conflicts with economic independence and equal sharing of paid and unpaid work as stated aims of gender equality policy (cf. Jansweijer, 1997).

Employment and labour market policies

Mainstream reflections on employment and labour market policies usually ignore unpaid work. In this section, three of these often neglected subjects are considered:

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[33] A negative income tax will diminish if other independent income is brought in; a basic income does not: it is an individual income (Bruyn-Hundt, p.168). A common feature, however, is that this state benefit is allocated without the recipient being forced to actively seek paid work and accept any suitable job available.

- employment policies, especially job creation, and its antithesis, public sector budget cuts in the framework of structural adjustment policies;
- labour market policies and the hidden unemployed, including 'work-fare';
- allowing for unpaid work in human resource management.

Employment policies

Where governments pursue a policy of direct job creation via the public budget in most cases the first aim is countering unemployment. Sometimes a secondary aim - or an unintended effect - of such measures is that tasks that were previously unpaid will be performed at a professional basis. Examples are informal care of children and the elderly, some types of community services such as surveillance and police work, or some functions in recreation. The unemployed who are hired for these new jobs will generally not be the same persons as those who did such work unpaid before, be it only because the latter do not all qualify as 'unemployed' in the prevailing legal sense.

So the side effect of job creation for one group of the population may entail 'job' destruction for others, *i.e.* decreasing opportunities for domestic or voluntary work. The extent of these implicit effects would depend on the type of unpaid work lost. An expansion of professional childcare might be a blessing for stressed working parents, but an invasion of professional workers in the animal shelter or at the local sports club may deprive some senior citizens of a way to give sense to their lives.

In the discussion on integrating unpaid work in national accounts and in GNP, it has often been observed that a measured amount of economic growth or a measured increase in the labour force may give a distorted picture, because the unpaid work foregone is not counted.

Moreover, government policies to stimulate economic growth and employment could have different implications for unpaid work depending on which sector of the economy or which industries they concentrate. Emphasis on public facilities, infrastructure and housing will strongly influence the productivity of unpaid work, as will affordable consumer durables. Government support for the development of small-scale firms and private service delivery would be a stimulus for substituting unpaid household and maintenance work with paid services. These questions do not seem to have been studied.

Government budget changes in the opposite direction are more commonly scrutinized for their effects on unpaid work. Where governments, for macro-economic reasons, contract the public budget, this has the implicit effect of shifting work previously in public services to the unpaid sector of the economy.

Structural adjustment programmes have been criticized heavily for overlooking this effect (cf. Bakker, 1994; Connelly, 1996; Elson, 1994 and 1995a; Kerr, 1994). The feminist experts working in the area of development policies have made abundantly clear how such policies implicitly call upon women to fill the gaps in social servicing with their unpaid labour. Structural adjustment policies suppose an unlimited supply of female domestic labour - 'able to stretch so as to make up for any shortfall in incomes and resources required for the production and maintenance of human resources' (Elson, 1995c, p.179).

In reality, of course, that supply is not infinitely elastic, and therefore such policies in many cases have resulted in a deterioration of health and educational levels. This also makes the claimed efficiency gains doubtful: 'What is regarded by economists as increased efficiency may instead be a shifting of costs from the paid economy to the unpaid economy' (ibid., p.178).

There does not seem to have been any research on the question of how structural adjustment policies affect the unpaid work of men. In a recent overview of case studies, Elson concludes however, that 'there is strong evidence that unpaid domestic work has remained an almost exclusively female task.' (Elson, 1995b, p.237)

It must be emphasized that these (implicit) effects of major changes in economic structures and policies are not only relevant for developing nations but also in the industrialized countries and in countries in transition. However, they have been given much less attention there (See a.o. Bakker, 1994).[34]

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[34]Nona Glazer has published a study of

In conclusion, to establish the side-effects of employment policies on unpaid work both the input and the output side should be taken into account: (1) the unpaid work abandoned (or not) by those who will be the newly employed; (2) previously unpaid work now replaced by the goods produced and the services delivered by the newly employed.

In case of adjustment policies, budget cuts etc. the same - but now oppositely phrased - reasoning should lead to examining (1) some workers loosing their jobs and therefore - to varying degrees - more 'inclined' to unpaid work; (2) the production of some goods and services being shifted to the unpaid sector.

Labour market policies

Labour market policies can have an important indirect effect on unpaid work and its distribution between different groups in society. The main question in this respect is to what extent governments are prepared to include the hidden unemployed in their general policy designs. As indicated above, the reservoir of job seekers is always greater than the group registered as such. A large proportion is left out because they do not fit in the definition of unemployment: mainly subsistence workers and full-time housewives, but also some recipients of disability and early retirement pensions.

Many studies are written about special policies for specific groups in the labour market and many governments implement such specific policy programmes. But very little is known of the indirect effects of mainstream labour market policies on the chances of the hidden unemployed (women and men). In as far as these groups are left out and do not qualify for participation in work programmes, training schemes etc., governments apparently think that their citizens who fill their days with unpaid work and/or leisure activities do so following a genuine, personal choice and do not care for paid work and all that it represents in terms of (self)esteem, fulfilment, power and independence.

Policy programmes of the 'workfare' type are a case in point: where jobs (or training opportunities) are offered or imposed as a condition of receiving - or instead of - unemployment benefits or welfare, those unemployed without such a benefit will not qualify. And even if these groups did formally qualify, it would remain to be seen whether the designers of these policy programmes would have taken into account the specific situation of clients with a heavy unpaid workload. In the huge literature on labour market policies and 'workfare' there are no apparent references to this question.

Concluding this section, one additional remark must be made. 'Workfare' could under certain conditions be seen as a form of unpaid work, in the sense that work is performed without a fair wage as compensation. 'Work-for-the-dole' is heavily criticized - not only for its ineffectiveness in providing the participants with better opportunities to get a real job (King, 1995), but also as an infringement of state obligation to guarantee the civil right to freely chosen employment (Langmore and Quiggin, p.160; Pixley, Ch.7). Others, such as Standing, have added that workfare contributes to 'eroding the universal right to income support' and 'represents a movement away from national insurance principles of social security' (Standing, 1990, p. 689). 'Workfare' can only be an acceptable strategy if it offers the possibility of a real job at reasonable wages to all citizens looking for paid work. Otherwise it will easily become not so much a form of unpaid work but rather - together with compulsory social service - a form of state conscription.

Human resources management

Schools, vocational training institutes, private companies and public employers are sometimes asked to take into account the unpaid work experience of their applicants.

Two types of arguments are used. First, it is said that women re-entering the labour market after a period of full-time housewifery have built up great experience as managers of the family ('a small firm'), that can be of use in many occupations and functions. Secondly, applicants can say that their experience in voluntary community work does qualify them for related functions in paid employment.

'worktransfer', i.e. shifts in tasks from paid workers to unpaid consumers/family members, resulting from rationalization strategies both in private retailing shops and in public health care institutions in the US. (Nona Y. Glazer, *Women's Paid and Unpaid Labor: The Work Transfer in Health Care and Retailing*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993).

The first argument, though perhaps true in many cases, is difficult to sustain. These management skills are hard to check; allowing for a housewife's credit in personnel policies would then become a disguised - and therefore controversial - form of affirmative action. A more honest strategy would be to eliminate the gender bias implicit in traditional job evaluation schemes that undervalue organisational and social skills typically held by women in contrast to the manual and technical skills held by men (OECD, 1991, p.19).

The second argument - allowing for volunteer experience - makes more sense. Many jobs in new sectors, such as in information technology or in professionalized social action (public affairs, lobbying, advocacy etc.) are fulfilled by people who learned their trades pursuing their hobbies or as a volunteer. Their self-taught skills may indeed be easily transferable to the world of paid employment. In these cases, unpaid work would be an appropriate stepping stone to a paid job. This mechanism deserves more support in implementing policies to reintegrate the long-term unemployed in the labour market.

Taxation

The implicit effects of tax systems on unpaid work are threefold:

- Income tax is levied on money income only;
- Most income tax systems feature a gender bias;
- Commodity taxes can influence the efficiency of unpaid work or the substitution of unpaid work by purchased products or services.

- **No tax on unpaid work**

Income tax systems generally do not tax households for the welfare they enjoy from their unpaid production of goods and services for their own consumption. As an OECD study published in 1975 has pointed out, this 'imposes a bias favoring unpaid work in the home compared with paid work in the labour force'.[35] The same is true for unpaid work performed outside the home, be it for one's own household or for others.

A justification for only levying income tax on money income may be that the imputed income inherent in in kind production of goods and services is bound to that particular production. It cannot be saved and used to purchase other goods and services. (The same argument is sometimes used in the discussion on the incorporation of unpaid work in national accounts. See: Bruyn Hundt, p.76). In other words, income from unpaid work gives less consumer sovereignty than does monetary income.

The service exchanges set up in the world of 'alternative work', where the volunteering participants 'sell' their services not for money but for vouchers (cf. par. 4.3.3 above), can be interpreted as a smart way to overcome this disadvantage. But if the vouchers issued by these exchanges were to be used on a large scale as quasi-money, the tax authorities would certainly not keep silent.

Some authors have proposed to correct the bias favoring unpaid work by introducing a tax levied on a fictitious earned income.[36] A more realistic strategy to correct this bias is incorporating in the income tax system some form of tax exemption or deduction for people who perform (full-time) paid employment and therefore have less time to do all their household and caring work themselves. This would be of special importance for the costs of child care.

- **Gender bias in tax systems**

Gender bias in tax systems concerning paid work very often implies a disincentive for (married) women to enter or stay in the paid labour force and therefore influences the allocation of unpaid work. Gender bias in the personal income tax may occur in different forms. In her useful overview, written for the International Monetary Fund, Janet Stotsky distinguishes between explicit and implicit forms of gender bias under two different tax regimes,

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[35] M. Darling (1975), *The Role of Women in the Economy*. Paris: OECD, p. 91; cited in Bruyn-Hundt (1996), p. 178.

[36] E.g. Cuvellier (1979, 1993) proposed that a housewife should pay income tax and social security contributions on a fictitious income equivalent to half of her husband's earnings. Cf. the critique by Mary Wilkinson (1996).

respectively joint and individual filing of the tax form.

The most obvious gender bias is the progressive marginal tax rate that discourages the paid employment of secondary workers in a system of joint filing where the incomes earned by the spouses are added. Other forms of gender bias are to be found, *inter alia*, in the allocation of exemptions, deductions and other tax preferences and in the allocation of non-labour or business income. The so-called 'marriage penalty', *i.e.* the higher taxes a working couple has to pay after they marry, works in particular as a disincentive to the participation of women: labour supply elasticity of married women is greater than that of men and single women. This well established fact[37] of a gender difference in labour supply elasticities is linked to many related factors, such as the availability and the prices of facilities like child care and parental leave, determining net benefits of market work, and to other factors, such as the local institutional settings and the prevailing norms and values. In other words, the effects of tax system (dis)incentives on labour market behaviour - and therefore on the allocation of unpaid work - should not be studied in isolation but as part of a wider complex.

Taxes on goods and services

A third component of the tax system's implicit influence on unpaid work is the regime for taxes on goods and services, already mentioned above.

Broad-based consumption taxes, such as value-added tax, retail sales taxes and excise taxes, and also foreign trade taxes such as import duties, will indirectly influence unpaid work by their effects on the prices of goods and services that can be substituted for unpaid work or make unpaid more efficient: tools and material used in subsistence agriculture and production in developing countries, consumer durables, or consumer investment goods like washing machines, do-it-yourself equipment, fast food and all sorts of 'home services'.

Social security and welfare

Three possible ways in which social security and welfare system may impinge upon unpaid work are:

- Direct and indirect gender bias;
- Risk cover for unpaid workers;
- Regulations concerning unpaid work done by the recipients of social security and welfare benefits.

- **Gender bias**

Gender bias in social security and welfare tends to confirm women in their 'choice' for unpaid work and contribute to discouraging them from entering the labour market. Like the disincentive effects of taxation, this discouragement is difficult to isolate as a single factor and seems to work more as part of a complex of several cultural and institutional constraints.

Direct sex discrimination in social security and welfare is vanishing as it is forbidden by international law and national legislation in many countries. More complex is indirect discrimination or gender bias[38], that largely stems from the initial phase of social security systems, when it made sense to assume a fixed division of gender roles within the family. Such indirect gender bias may take several forms or be given different labels: family-based, means-tested benefit systems, that discourage the 'secondary' earner; breadwinner subsidy elements, such as supplementary benefits; a system of 'derived rights' for the 'dependent' spouse; credit-sharing arrangements, e.g. in pension entitlements; differential outcomes of employment-based social security regulations for male and female workers, given the often shorter employment history and lower earning capacity of women (Cf. OECD, 1985, Ch.VI).

Indirect gender bias in social security and welfare finds its origin in the unequal allocation of paid work among men and women, and therefore still has some justification. Conflicting policy considerations also seem to play a role here. On the one hand policy-makers in the past have tried to do justice to existing patterns of allocation of paid and unpaid work and protect the weaker party. On the

[37] Cf. James (1992)

[38] According to now accepted legal doctrine such gender bias would not qualify as indirect sex discrimination in as far as the differential effect of the regulation under consideration has an objective justification.

other hand, in doing so, they have - intentionally or unintentionally - built barriers to change. This paradox - well known to experts in the field of gender equality policy - is one of the most difficult problems that future social security and welfare reform has to solve. Of course, social security will have to enhance women's economic independence, but to what extent should it also allow for extra protection for women, especially for older women, in as far as they have not had the opportunity to fully realize that economic independence? 'Or is such protection assuming dependency and stimulating women to continue to opt for dependency?' (Sjerps, 1996, p.9).

The paradox inherent in assuming female dependency is hardly challenged in recent international social security discussions. Many authors in mainstream literature still seem to take that dependency for granted (See e.g. Maydell, 1994, p.505).[39]

- **Risk cover for unpaid workers**

In countries where social security entitlements, in particular covering disability and old age, are not linked to citizenship but to employment, risk coverage of non-employed people is problematic. Partial solutions may be found in systems of derived rights, such as survivors' benefits, with the built-in gender bias mentioned above. In addition, some employment-based social security regulations give credit for specific periods that the insured worker has been out of the labour market to fulfil his or her (mostly the latter) child-rearing responsibility. A safety net provision, such as a state welfare or universal pension system at a minimum level, may or may not be in place. This complex issue is only briefly mentioned here; a more detailed treatment is beyond the scope of this paper (See e.g. OECD, 1985).

The issue is not only how social security arrangements provide for people who drop out of the labour market to care for children (maternity or parental benefits, child allowances and tax rebates). It also relates to the position of those how give (full-time) care to elderly or disabled relatives or perform the same sort of caring work as voluntary community workers. Should cash payment be put in place? (cf. Hoskins, 1996, p. 49). What regulations do cover the risks of sickness, disability, accident and injury of these unpaid workers?[40]

- **Unpaid work by recipients of social security and welfare benefits**

As a rule, social security and welfare law forbid not only irregular paid work but also volunteer work: the unemployed are supposed to spend their time by finding a job, not by doing unpaid work. The continuing high unemployment, in particular in the industrialized countries, has undermined this rule. This is partly caused by pressure from the unemployed themselves - who want to spend their time in a meaningful way or see the sense of doing volunteer work and so enlarging their work experience. Moreover, policy makers have redefined the policy issue of the burden of unemployment benefits from a social security to a labour market matter: activating the unemployed is now considered the first step to their reintegration into the labour market.

In this way, unpaid work is given a recognized place in so-called 'activating labour market policies'. This recognition can take various forms: from passively permitting unpaid activities under certain conditions and in individual cases, to actively offering volunteer work opportunities to specific target groups; from organizing new 'work projects' and making participation a condition for receiving benefits ('workfare'), to benefit transfer, *i.e.*

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[39] An exception is an Australian analysis of social security reform that has progressively removed the assumption of female dependency on the male breadwinner from the income support system and replaced it with stimulation of economic independence through paid employment (Briggs and Bond, 1995).

[40] The OECD-publication mentioned before proposes a solution for this problem that boils down to making this unpaid work paid. ' ...(A)llowances for the elderly and disabled should be sufficient to enable them to purchase care and relatives should be eligible to act as paid care-givers. Under such a system, the caring relative would be able to maintain social security coverage for pensions and other benefits in the same way as any other employed person' (OECD, 1985, p.143).

using the benefit money to subsidize newly created jobs for the unemployed.

Governments and social security authorities have to make difficult judgements in this context in order to find a balance between free choice and obligation towards the community. Would the long-term goal of economic independence for all women be enough justification for pressuring a lone mother receiving welfare to accept workfare or a subsidized job, if the pay she received would barely be enough to finance day care for her young children, if she found such care at all? Would preventing 'social exclusion' be enough justification for 'forcing' a drop-out - very busy in (unpaid) alternative work of his own making - into 'volunteering' in a work project to learn 'working habits'?

The answers given to these kinds of dilemmas will really be indicative of the public or political recognition the unpaid activities in question are granted.

Other policy areas

The reality of the huge unpaid contribution of households to economic value needs to be accepted; adopted as a benchmark fact, it would change nearly all our deliberations about economic and social policy.' (Ironmonger, 1996, p. 60). Not only is such an acceptance among policy-makers far away, we also have only a very primitive insight into the interplay of non-market production and market production and how that is affected by government policies.

Various issues in this context deserving data collection and analysis include: consumption and investment choices; the contribution of unpaid labour to human capital formation; the effects of new technologies on unpaid work; the effects of the business cycle in shifting work from the paid to the unpaid economy and *vice versa*; including unpaid work in the analysis of income distribution; comparative research on the impact of different socio-economic policy regimes on gender relations and family welfare (Bruyn-Hundt, 1996; Plantenga & Sloep, 1995; Forum, 1996).

If policy-makers became aware of all these effects and took them into account, unpaid work would be 'mainstreamed' as a regular element in the policy-making process. In so far as policy-makers still have a blind spot for unpaid work, the possible implicit effects would not occur to them. And if they did occur to them, then the lack of reliable data would make it very difficult to take these effects into account. Instruments like checklists and impact statements may help mainstream unpaid work as a regular factor in socio-economic policy-making. Techniques, however, can never replace insight and political will.

V. CONCLUSION: UNPAID WORK - WHOSE ISSUE IS IT?

Section I emphasized that there is no inherent trait in unpaid work that makes that work unpaid. All work can be done both as wage (or self-employed) labour and as unpaid activity: it is the specific historical and local context that makes some work paid and other work unpaid. Given the variety of activities that makes up the rather amorphous concept of unpaid work, it is important to specify what forms of unpaid work seem relevant in specific policy discussions.

In fact, this is not always done. As the third and fourth Sections have illustrated, different groups of activists and academics use the concept for their own purposes; while they speak of 'unpaid work' as such, they are in fact focusing on specific unpaid activities by specific parts of the population and advocating their favourite policy issues.

Women-in-development and some other development experts concentrate on the role of women's subsistence labour and domestic production as an indispensable factor of economic growth and human development. Women's empowerment and reform of macro-economic adjustment strategies are their prime goals. Gender equality experts (femocrats and NGOs), especially those from industralized countries, focus on women's economic independence and advocate equal sharing of paid employment and unpaid caring work between women and men. They lobby for policy reforms that would support such change and help eliminating hidden gender bias in existing regulations. A segment of the women's movement - those who don't believe in reallocation of work - still wants women's housework to be 'recognized', if not financially then statistically. They collide with statisticians and economists fighting each other in an arena of their own.

Some welfare experts and advocates for the unemployed - those who don't believe in full employment - are concerned about a legitimate place for volunteer or alternative work and argue for 'socially useful activities' to be recognized under a broader concept of work.

Last but not least, some policy-makers jump on that bandwagon, pleading for 'workfare' to solve their problems in financing the burden of social benefits and reducing unemployment.

This rough sketch pictures different actors each claiming the unpaid work issue from their particular perspective and for their particular political goal. Looked at in this way, what happened and is still happening at the UN becomes more understandable. The UN has offered a forum for all these different groups and tendencies to spread their views. But lacking a rallying theory and a shared body of knowledge, the result is vague and fragmentary. Should each part of the UN concentrate on its own aspects of the issue? Or would an integrated approach be possible?

The importance of the issue of unpaid work from a gender perspective obviously stands out, but it wouldn't be sensible to leave it at that. The first argument is that a gender perspective must be mainstreamed in all policy areas, including in social policy. Secondly, however, it is important to realize that the issue of unpaid work would not 'disappear' if the gender aspect could be thought away. Even then a certain part of human needs would still have to be met by non-market activities. Even in a hypothetical world of perfect gender balance unpaid work will have to be taken into account as a necessary element of private freedom and as a pillar of civil society and political democracy. Social policy that leaves the unpaid work issue out as if it were 'something else' misses the point.

In addition, even in a world of full employment, people would continue to engage in work outside the labour market. It is neither feasible nor desirable that all work should be done for the market.

Therefore, unpaid work should further be studied in all its different forms and should be recognized, valued and factored in as a regular element in socio-economic policy-making. Further study on this issue should have two thrusts:

First, the concept of unpaid work and its place in the economy at large deserves more in-depth research and analysis. What does that broader picture of the economy look like and will it be possible to

develop some paradigm of unpaid work that transcends the diversity of all that different unpaid activities and the various perspectives of their advocates in theory and practice? And what would that mean for mainstream economic theory and modelling?

Second, the concept of unpaid work should, be put between square brackets and attention focused on the different sorts of unpaid work. If the three broad components - subsistence production, domestic work and voluntary activities - are compared, the last mentioned category is the most underexposed. Much high-flown philosophy on 'civil society' has not yet yielded concrete insights into questions such as why people work 'for nothing' and how their willingness to do so fluctuates with, for instance, economic circumstances and government intervention.

Further unravelling the economics of voluntary work could essentially contribute to a broader recognition and understanding of work and employment.

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