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6. How to make what really matters count in economic decision-making: Care, domestic violence, gender responsive budgeting, macro-economic policies and human rights

Margunn Bjørnholt

Abstract

Bjørnholt offers a reflection on 25 years of feminist economics providing illustrative examples of how feminist academic critique, within and outside of academia, in combination with civil engagement has evolved, promoting change towards better economics, better policies and well-being for all. Mirroring the widening scope over time of feminist economics, Bjørnholt discusses the exclusion of care and other life-sustaining, unpaid work from systems of national accounts and efforts to make them count; efforts to achieve gender justice through gender responsive budgeting; the effort to bring society's attention to the extent of domestic violence and its consequences; and understanding economics as social provisioning, which considers the

responsibility to care for everything, including human rights and our shared living space Earth, when assessing the consequences of macro-economic policy.

Keywords

Feminist economics, care, national account, unpaid work, GDP, gender responsive budgeting, domestic violence, human rights, macro-economic policy, well-being

Introduction

How to make people matter and how to make economics and the economy promote well-being and the common good for all—women, men and children—is a common theme throughout feminist critique, theorizing and policy inputs. This directly relates to what should count as economic activity and economic decision making, and helps to determine the place of women in the economy. More than a century has passed since Charlotte Perkins Gilman raised these issues in *Women and Economics* (1898). Since then, there have been many different approaches to give visibility to women's work and values, including critiques of GDP as a welfare measure, equal pay and income distribution, women and globalization, and ecofeminism. The institutionalization of feminist critique in the economics discipline was precipitated by the Committee on the Status of Women in the Economics Profession in 1972; and in the 1970s and 80s, there was a proliferation of gender-based critiques of traditional economics. From its inception, feminist economics has been interdisciplinary, overlapping with a growing body of feminist sociology examining household work and task-sharing in the household, as well as analyses of how gender divisions of breadwinning and care produce and sustain gendered hierarchies and gendered

differences in earnings and power. With the founding of the the International Association for Feminist Economics (IAFFE) in 1992 and with its creation of the journal *Feminist Economics* in 1995, feminist economics became an academic field in its own right.

Feminist economists critique core assumptions, concepts, methods and knowledge claims in mainstream economic theory. They also critique male dominance and androcentrism in the discipline and profession of economics (see Benaria, Berik and Floro (2016) for an updated overview of these critiques), and they argue for a reformulation of the economics discipline to include care, the value of unpaid household work, and analyses of the economic consequences of gendered divisions of labour and the gendered consequences of economic decision making at all levels. Feminist economists share with other heterodox economists the critique of neglecting the process of provisioning (Nelson, 1993) and the indifference of the discipline to shortfalls of provisioning in terms of poverty, lack of healthcare and deteriorating social conditions. Power (2004) identified the social provisioning approach as a common ground for feminist economists, including five main areas of agreement that characterize it: (1) The need to value caring work and to place it centrally in analyses, (2) the use of human well-being as the definition of economic success, (3) emphasizing human agency and processes as well as outcomes, (4) the validity and importance of ethical judgments, and (5) acknowledging differences by gender, along with other stratifying factors such as race, ethnicity, class, and sexual orientation (Power, 2004). Gendered hierarchies of values also become cultural metaphors with implications for how economic decision making and policy understand core issues of the economy with regard to the core purpose of economics as social provisioning rather than maximization of wealth (Nelson, 1992).

Care figures centrally in feminist economic analyses. Today, feminist analyses of care include a continued concern for the value of unpaid work and its contribution to the economy, as well as theorizations of care as social investment (Himmelweit, 2014), as an input factor, and as a necessary precondition for other production (O'Hara, 2014). The theorization of care in feminist economics sees care as the foundation and indeed the secret mechanism that makes the whole economy work, the invisible heart argues Folbre (2001), alluding to and challenging Adam Smith's 'invisible hand'. Goodwin, Harris, Nelson, Roach and Torras (2013) have recently developed a contextual approach to economics, in which household production, care and social provisioning features centrally as the core sphere of the economy. The feminist economic approach emphasizes the use value of care and also presents a critique of the understanding of what constitutes the economy and economic production, in addition to central concepts in economic theory, such as the concept of 'goods'. According to Himmelweit, in contrast to goods in economic theory which are seen as tradeable assets with a monetary value attached to them, goods in the real world are socially embedded and relational (Himmelweit, 2013). Care for children reminds us of the relational nature of care work motivated by love (Folbre & Nelson, 2000).

By addressing the crucial question of how to make what really matters count in economic decision-making, we immediately bring to our attention what matters most of all—our love for our parents and our hope for humanity, our children, and their well-being, as well as how the conditions for children's well-being are shaped in the individual and societal trade-offs between love for what matters most and the demands and possibilities of economic life.

Over time, feminist economics has expanded to include a growing focus on institutions, states, macro-economics, human rights, and regulatory frameworks, including financial

regulation (Elson & Balakrishnan, 2011). In the remainder of this chapter, I will briefly illustrate this further development by presenting some topics from the wide and diverse field of feminist economics and their link to social change, advocacy and policymaking at the national and international level.

The aim is to highlight some examples of attempts to make people count in economic thinking, methodology, and decision-making. I will start with unpaid work, its exclusion from national accounting systems, and the ongoing work to find ways of measuring and including it. Care for children is a large part of unpaid work in the household, and the relational nature of this work – the love for our children – calls for a careful, innovative, and concerned approach to conceptualizing value assessments and considering their policy implications. Later, I will present gender responsive budgeting as a strategy for linking gender equality policy to public budgetary processes, which is a methodology, drawing on insights from feminist economics along with a more general concern with strategies of gender equality linking international commitments and implementation at state and sub-state levels.

My next area of concern will be violence against women. This is a key example of how an issue previously perceived as a private issue became a public responsibility as part of making the personal political during second wave feminism. It also became an economic issue as a result of feminist economic insights, making women's lives 'count,' and changing the view of domestic violence from 'family trouble' to criminal acts, which have serious consequences for the health and well-being of large numbers of women worldwide. Subsequently, the introduction of cost analysis into this field (i.e. the analysis of the cost of domestic violence to individual women and to society) was a tool to give economic visibility to this undercommunicated problem.

Finally, I will draw attention to the most recent development of feminist economic analysis: macro-economic policies and human rights. This will illustrate how feminist economics has expanded far beyond issues perceived as women's 'only' issues and towards a more general concern for ethical responsibility, justice, and institutional accountability, as illustrated by the purpose statement of the journal *Feminist Economics*: '*to improve the conditions of living for all children, women, and men*'. Together, these cases will illustrate some of the dynamics between feminist economic critique, theorizing, advocacy and policy development; thus, elucidating the interrelations between academic work and the ways in which theories, concepts and critiques may inspire, inform, and underpin social change.

Counting unpaid work, but does it count?

Over the last century, critiquing national accounting systems for excluding the value of women's unpaid work has been a cornerstone of feminist critique. Charlotte Perkins Gilman raised these issues in *Women and Economics* (1898) and in *The Home: Its Work and Influence* (1903). This was echoed some decades later by Margaret Reid in *Economics of household production* (1934). In the early 1970s Mariarosa Dalla Costa and Selma James (1973) and other Marxist feminists in the Wages for Housework campaign reshaped the discourse on women, reproduction, and capitalism, viewing the exploitation of women's care and domestic work, and its role in producing labourers for the formal economy, as the key to women's oppression. In 1985, the value of subsistence production was an important topic at the UN women's conference in Nairobi, drawing heavily from these insights. In 1988, Marilyn Waring's seminal work *If Women Counted: A Feminist Economics* brought together critiques of the exclusion of the value of unpaid work with the value of nature in economic thinking and national accounting. The book

became very popular and stimulated academic work, activism, and change across the world, including a change in the international standard of national accounts (UNSNA), which used these critiques as its main line of argumentation. In a text message to the author on March 9, 2015, Marilyn Waring recalls:

at the meeting of the United Nations Statistical Commission in it must have been 1992, a number of the central and south American delegations were led by women. In particular, I was told this story by the deputy chief statisticians from Mexico and Chile. *Counting for Nothing* [Marilyn Waring's book, best known as *If Women counted*] had been published in Spanish. 'We carried your book like a bible' they said to me. In the 1993 UNSNA Revision there were a number of changes, one of the most important being the changes in the boundary of production, which was expanded to include a number of key subsistence activities: the carriage of water being a key addition. They were supported by many African statisticians. Of course, in terms of the outcome, most of the countries where the expanded production boundary would have been of the most use, the statistical and logistical capability, and the resources, were seldom there to collect this data.

(Waring, 2015)

This case is illustrative of the ways in which scholarly work within feminist economics has been put to use to transform methods, policies, and institutional practices. It was only a partial victory though. Unpaid household work that leads to the production of goods (food for one's own consumption, collection of firewood, or water necessary for the household) is now considered part of the System of National Accounts. However, the unpaid time people devote to the care of family, friends and neighbours are still explicitly excluded, despite it being

increasingly acknowledged that it is care work mostly undertaken by women that makes possible much of the paid work that drives the market economy (UNDP, 2015). A quarter century after Waring's groundbreaking book, Bjørnholt and McKay (2014) demonstrate the wide influence of Waring's work worldwide in a number of areas.

Valuation efforts have gradually been gaining ground in national income accounting and estimates differ among countries that are attempting to measure the value of unpaid care work from 20 percent to 60 percent of GDP (Antopoulos, 2009). In India, unpaid care is estimated at 39 percent of GDP, 15 percent in South Africa (Budlender, 2010), and among Latin American countries, the value for Guatemala is estimated at between 26 and 34 percent of official GDP, and 32 percent for El Salvador (Durán & Milosavljevic, 2012). In 2008, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development published estimates of household production in 27 countries and highlighted that the value of household production as a share of GDP varies considerably. It is above 35% in several countries generally considered affluent—Australia, New Zealand and Japan and below 20% in Mexico and Korea (Ahmad & Seung-Hee Koh, 2011; Folbre, 2015.)

In Norway, unpaid work in the household was counted as production, and the first estimate of the value of housewives' unpaid production in the household was made as early as in 1882, and continued throughout the first decades of the twentieth century; but from the 1950s it was no longer included when Norway adopted the new international standard of national accounts (UNSNA) (Aslaksen & Koren, 2014), which includes only monetary flows as opposed to the Scandinavian tradition of distinguishing between the real economy, the production of goods and services, and the monetary economy. In Norway, unpaid work in the household is being counted once a decade using time use studies, and based on the data on time use, its

monetary value is also being imputed every decade, since 1988, when a large group of women's organisations sent a common letter demanding that Statistics Norway should calculate the value of unpaid work. In 2010, unpaid household work was still the single largest sector of the economy, 26% of GDP, although its share has declined since 1988 when it was estimated at 44% of GDP (Koren, 2012). Drawing on the Finnish experience, Varjonen and Kirjaleinen (2014) conclude that, in Finland, although unpaid work was counted, it was not very well understood in the public and it did not have the expected impact on policies. This is where gender responsive public budgeting may serve to fill a substantial gap in knowledge on policy impacts.

On a more optimistic note, time use studies and efforts to value unpaid work have proliferated in recent years and may gain increasing importance (Folbre, 2015). However, Pearson and Elson (2015) recently argued that the lack of data on household production, due to lack of time use studies in Europe, severely impedes on the possibilities to study the impact of the economic crisis in Europe. Despite being measured, at least to some extent, unpaid work still remains outside of regular macro-economic planning and decision making processes, and it is ignored in the thinking and models that inform macroeconomic policy.

Ironically, unpaid household work continues to be ignored, even in alternatives to GDP, which have to a large extent been developed as a result of feminist critiques, and which are intended to recognize gender disparities such as the Gender-related Development Index (GDI) and the Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM) (Folbre, 2015). Women who are not fully employed in paid work are still routinely seen as not contributing fully to the economy, being treated as an available 'resource' and as a labour market reserve to be drawn upon at a low cost in times of need. This argumentation may come disguised as 'empowerment of women' and economic growth,

and has gained new momentum as part of the new sustainable development goals adopted by the UN Agenda 2030.

International Monetary Fund director Christine Lagarde recently publicized estimates of GDP foregone by many developing countries as a result of restrictions on women's employment. Although policies that limit women's choices need to be criticized for a number of reasons, the underlying implication that women make no economic contributions outside the market illustrates how decades of feminist economic critique, theorization, and the documentation of unpaid work's value as well as its contribution to the economy continue to be ignored. (See Folbre (2015:16) for an elaboration of this argument).

Unpaid household work was put back on the agenda by the Stiglitz-Sen-Fitoussi Commission, which assessed various measures of economic development (Stiglitz, Sen & Fitoussi, 2009). It has always been recognized that gross domestic product (GDP) and per capita GDP cannot be interpreted as a measure of living standards. This was one of the reasons for the Commission's work. The committee pointed out the need for a broader measure of household income, which includes the value of unpaid household work. Furthermore, they argued that emphasis on market production may give a distorted picture of the standard of living, because part of what is measured as economic growth may just reflect a shift in production from household to market (35).

Charlotte Koren (2012) has demonstrated this shift in detail for Norway, arguing that the transformation from a housewife society to a dual earner society meant that parts of the production that previously took place as unpaid work in the household were made visible as it was transferred to the market and became part of the monetary economy, leading to a steady rise in GDP which was counted as economic growth. However, this growth did not reflect real

growth in consumption goods, argue Aslaksen and Koren (2014), as the work already took place—it was just not counted. Growing understanding of the interconnections between paid and unpaid work and the understanding that unpaid household work is productive implies a theoretical critique of the way growth is being measured and a critique of what came to be seen as the normal growth rates for OECD economies over the last fifty years. This case illustrates how the discussion of the place of unpaid work in the economy is far from trivial, but addresses the core of economic thinking, practices, and results with potentially wide-ranging implications for policymaking.

As pointed out by Marilyn Waring, this case runs parallel to the fact that nature with its irreplaceable qualities and values is not counted for in economic decision-making. Nature is only counted for in accounting when it is used as a resource for human production and consumption. The similar invisibility of women's work and nature is the core issue of ecofeminism (Mies & Shiva, 1993), feminist philosophies (Merchant, 1980; Warren, 1996) and an emerging topic in feminist economics (Nelson 1997; Mellor 2005; Aslaksen, Bragstad & Ås, 2014).

As a strategy of gender equality, counting unpaid work also runs up against a deep division within the women's movement and the currently preferred strategies of gender equality in OECD countries, which increasingly rely on family policies aimed at reconciling paid work and care, as well as reallocating care from women to men, drawing on the vision of the 'universal carer model,' which according to Nancy Fraser (1994) is the only family model that can deliver full gender equality, among the three models she presents as possible alternatives 'after the family wage.' The first alternative: making difference costless, compensating women's unpaid work within the male breadwinner/female home-maker model, has lost its appeal among feminists, and has increasingly come to be seen as incompatible with a modern gender equal life.

Feminist economic arguments for valuing unpaid work and placing care centrally in economic analysis is no longer supported by a strong women's movement willing to lobby for and promote this strategy. This is in contrast to the 1970s and 1980s, when care ethics, gender difference, and the value of women's experiences were still a stronger part of the feminist movement, providing a ground for making claims for the valuation of unpaid household work. Today, this branch of the women's movement has more or less dried up at least in developed countries. The dual breadwinner model, which places both parents in employed work with little support for care, might become the chosen strategy in many countries, considering the strong focus on women's labour market participation as the preferred strategy of gender equality. This was the other of the two models that Fraser (1994) saw as unfit to deliver full gender equality, as it relied on women becoming like men, and it did not recognize unpaid work/care, but relied on full outsourcing of care. In addition, there has been a dramatic change in labour markets, job security and wages, making claims of valuation of unpaid work even more difficult.

This unilateral reliance on full time paid work for parents as the main strategy of gender equality is particularly damaging in many countries with less developed family policies, but even in a developed country like Norway, which figures in international comparisons as a model of gender equality, the emphasis on paid work may become a new constraint. Norway provides a full package of policies for childcare, including a long and fully compensated parental leave with a quota for fathers, subsidized childcare for all children from the age of one, and other entitlements for working parents. A recent study of parents preschool children, however, found that the new model may not be unequivocally liberating and that it is also felt as a normative constraint among young Norwegian parents today (Bjørnholt & Stefansen, forthcoming). So, what about the well-being of children? How can public policy help make the well-being of

children compatible with the well-being of parents, and alleviate the burden of trade-offs in parents' allocation of time between their work and care for children?

Gender responsive budgeting

Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB) is a strategy that focuses on integrating a perspective on how to improve equality between women and men based on a gender analysis in every stage of planning, programming, and execution of government budgets; in short, to assess how the governments raising and spending of money contribute to the aim of achieving gender equality. While the main focus in gender budget work until recently has been on public expenditure, there is also an increasing focus on public revenue, how governments raise money through taxation, as well as the consequences of taxation, including tax evasion. Gender-responsive budgeting is increasingly understood as a crucial driver of implementing policies of gender equality through financial frameworks and programs. It was first launched in relation to the Beijing Platform for Action, arguing that '*limited resources at the state level*' should encourage implementation of gender equality policies and the mainstreaming of gender perspectives in all policy domains. It urged national governments to incorporate a gender perspective into the design, development, adoption and execution of all budgetary processes, as appropriate, in order to promote equitable, effective and appropriate resource allocation and establish adequate budgetary allocations to support gender equality and development programmes, which enhance women's empowerment and develop the necessary analytical and methodological tools and mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation (UN General Assembly, 2000).

Despite these commitments, progress was slow, and disproportionately relied on the advocacy and voluntary work of civil society. In this respect, the UK Women's budget group founded in 1989, was a pioneer. It is a network of leading feminist economists, researchers, policy experts and campaigners committed to achieving a more gender equal future, with renowned feminist economists like Sue Himmelweit and Diane Elson in lead roles. The group is still at the forefront of scrutinising government policy from a gender perspective, producing research and analysis, as well as running training workshops and developing resources to build the capacity of women and women's groups to participate in debates about economics and public budgeting.

In Scotland, professor of economics, Ailsa McKay, was similarly central in initiating and developing the Scottish women's budget group and later the research group, Women in the Scottish Economy (WISE). She became a respected partner and policy advisor to the first minister as well as to the ministers of finance (Campbell & Gillespie, 2016). In 2006, the European Gender Budget Network was founded, and in 2007 the network formulated a manifesto addressed to decision makers in the European Union, urging the implementation of GRB: "More than 10 years ago, governments committed themselves to Gender Budgeting at the World Women's Conference in Beijing. The call for gender budgeting is equally rooted in the EU commitment to gender mainstreaming and firmly based in the Treaty (...)." It recalled a number of previous commitments and initiatives:

- the decision of the gender budgeting conference under the Belgium Presidency in 2001 to implement gender budgeting in all countries by the year 2015.
- the resolution of the European Parliament on gender budgeting and its recommendations.

- the opinion of the Advisory Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men on gender budgeting and its proposals to take action.
- the opinion on Gender Budgeting by the Council of Europe.
- the recommendations of the European Women's Lobby on gender budgeting.
- the activities of WIDE, Women in Development Europe, and IAFFE, the International Association for Feminist Economics to promote the implementation of gender budgeting.

Another ten years on, after decades of initiatives, there has been continued advocacy and voluntary work at international, European, as well as national levels. A recent survey of GRB initiatives initiated by the International Monetary Fund concludes that gender budgeting has led to significant changes in budget legislation and administrative practices in a number of European countries (Quinn, 2016). Nevertheless, an unpublished survey among members of the European Gender Budget (EGBR) network (Mader, 2014) ironically revealed that the main criterion of success of gender budget initiatives in Europe was the altruistic and often unpaid voluntary work of members in the network.

Although the role of civil society advocacy and capacity building in this field is recognized, the extent to which success relies on civil society engagement, including the engagement by dedicated academics in roles as experts and advocates, is not often fully described nor understood. (See O'Hagan (2013) for a detailed comparative analysis of GRB-initiatives, providing a rich account of what it takes. Quinn, 2016, also includes civil society initiatives in her survey of GRB in Europe). In the Nordic region, the Nordic Council of ministers all agreed to implement GRB (Schmitz, 2006). However, ten years on, only Sweden, Iceland and Finland are represented in the IMF survey of European GRB initiatives while Denmark and Norway are missing (Quinn, 2016).

In Norway, which I know best, the commitment to gender sensitive planning has de facto been scaled back. The reason is, in my view, that in contrast to Sweden, where the Swedish Women's lobby took a lead role in developing material, training, and promoting GRB, in Norway, there has been no civil engagement with GRB. Thus the resistance and lack of interest, will, and know-how at political and administrative levels remain unchallenged and unchanged in Norway, in contrast to many other countries today, which increasingly see GRB as an important and necessary step towards improving democracy and providing justice for all. In 2016 and 2017 the International Monetary Fund has taken several initiatives to assess, disseminate and further develop GRB, drawing on and involving many of the key scholars and GRB advocates and practitioners (Quinn, 2016).

Violence against women— an economic issue?

Another area within which feminist economics has had an influence is the field of violence against women. Violence against women became a public concern in the 1970s, when experiences of violence, rape, and sexual abuse were reframed from a private issue to a political issue under the slogan '*the private is political,*' and women's groups established shelters for victims of violence. In the beginning they were based on solidarity and voluntary work, and those shelters that were rooted in radical feminist ideology were keeping their distance from the state; but in many countries the shelter movement obtained public funding from an early stage, thus holding society responsible for providing services and providing justice for victims of violence and abuse. The first shelter in the UK was set up in 1971 (Pizzey, 2011), and was soon copied in other countries. Parallel to the development of shelters for victims of violence, the

prevention of violence and protection of women and girls against violence was subsequently put on the political agenda of nation states as well as at the UN and at regional levels.

The UN 1993 Declaration on the elimination of violence against women was the first international instrument explicitly addressing violence against women, providing a framework for national and international action. Today violence against women is on the agenda of several UN bodies. In 2011, the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and girls became the second legally binding regional instrument on violence against women and girls. During the 2000s, national action plans and new legislation were introduced in many countries. The passing of international conventions and action plans as well as legislation at national, regional, and international levels is the result of continuous feminist mobilisation at all levels over decades.

As violence against women became a political priority at the international and national level, there was demand for action with budgetary consequences. Estimates of the cost of violence to society created an economic argument for violence prevention, as violence was found to be extremely costly to society, far exceeding public expenditure on violence prevention (Kerr, 1996; Walby, 2004 [2009]; Dolan, Loomes, Peasgood, & Tsuchiya, 2005; Yodanis, Godenzi & Stanko, 2000). In this way, violence against women and child sexual abuse was linked to the economy as a whole. One impetus to calculate the costs came from work with victims. According to Jülich (2014), in her work with adult victims of child sexual abuse in New Zealand in the mid to late 1990s, a frequent question was “Don’t they know what it [child sexual abuse] costs?” (113). This led her to develop a costing method and spreadsheet calculators to be deployed by community agencies. Later, the cost of child sexual abuse was included in cost of crime analysis in New Zealand.

Today, estimates of the costs of violence have become part of the standard repertoire in framing the problem and of arguments for violence prevention at the international as well as national level. This includes the development of methods (see for instance the manual by the World Health Organization and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2008)). According to a multi-country study commissioned by the World Bank (Duvvury, Callan, Carney & Raghavendra, 2013), the costs of domestic violence are estimated to amount to 1-2% of GDP. Cost estimates vary, but may include: the direct costs of violence in terms of public expenditure on treating and handling the consequences of violence in the health system, social system, educational system, and legal system; as well as the potential costs such as the loss of future public revenue due to the loss of health (including death) and the loss of income-earning capacity among victims of violence, potentially with repercussions over generations. According to a recent fact sheet by the European Women's Lobby, EWL Observatory on violence against women (2016), "Violence against women costs 226 billion euros each year, which represent almost 2 % of the annual EU budget."

Evaluating costs is, however, not without risks. First, there are methodological problems since there is insufficient data on violence and sexual abuse and since there is general agreement that crime statistics, health statistics, and prevalence studies do not present the whole picture. In addition, the way violence is presented in statistics may underestimate domestic violence. For example, the method of capping does not count the actual number of incidents experienced by victims experiencing repeated violence. In the UK, the cap is set at five incidents, thus underestimating the total number of violent crimes and the degree of victimization experienced by the most exposed groups (Walby, Towers & Francis, 2016). The problem of insufficient data comes is made worse by general problems in cost analysis, such as what to count and what price

tag to use? In conclusion, any cost analysis and in particular any cost analysis based on limited and insufficient data, such as in the case of violence, will be speculative, and due to unaccounted costs, will probably present an underestimate.

Nevertheless, estimates of the costs of violence to society, although uncertain, highlight the extent and magnitude of the problem by translating it into what can be seen as policy-makers' mother tongue: money. Estimates of economic costs can further provide activists and stakeholders with additional evidence to argue for public expenditure on prevention and services for victims of violence. Nevertheless, there is a danger in framing violence as an economic issue. Freedom from violence is recognized as a human right¹, and human rights obligations are already legally binding for states. Further, the duty to raise the necessary resources for the realization of human rights is also mandated by human rights obligations. Consequently, no further argument should be needed for states to take action. If violence is framed simply as an economic issue, a cynical view could be that this is a cost societies can afford. Or, even worse, if hypothetically, the costs of violence were found to be lower than the costs of prevention, violence could be ignored, because prevention would not be economically worthwhile. Note that this is hypothetical, keeping in mind that, today, the estimated costs, which are most probably underestimates, are huge, as compared to the amount of money used on prevention. This argument runs parallel to the ecofeminist debate about whether harm to Mother Earth can and should be brought onto the policy agenda by monetary value assessments and the dangers therein (Beder, 2001).

It is well established from prevalence studies that the risk of violence is related to socio-economic factors and that lack of economic means may keep victims of violence from leaving an abusive relationship. Further, financial abuse is today also recognized as a particular form of domestic violence (Acierno, et al., 2010). Feminist economic analysis has expanded and

deepened knowledge of the relations between violence and women's economic position within the household. Agarwal and Pradeep (2007) demonstrate that a woman's property status (owning a house or land) significantly reduces her risk of domestic violence while holding paid employment made little difference.

Finally, gender responsive budgeting, which is informed and inspired by feminist economics, has demonstrated the gendered effects of public spending on different groups. In the UK, due to several decades of work tracking the gendered effects of public spending by feminist economists in the UK (the UK Women's Budget Group), the gendered effects of austerity measures following the financial crisis could soon be measured, and among them, the effects for victims of violence (Fawcett Society, 2012). In this case, an increase in violence, following the economic downturn (Walby et al., 2016) coincided with cuts in the services to victims of violence (Towers & Walby, 2012).

The domestic violence case illustrates how a previously private women's issue was transformed into a public responsibility and how it was gradually pushed up on the political agenda by various forms and stages of feminist activism and capacity building, such as the provision of services to victims of violence and international advocacy. This case further demonstrates the value of gender responsive budgeting, which to a large extent has been advanced as part of scholarly and advocacy work in feminist economics over several decades. Although cost analysis may have limitations, once violence has become a public and political issue, it is also an economic issue.

Although, this work on violence against women may be seen as an example of relative success for feminism, it is also a field of struggle. The tools of measurement, methods, and interpretation of violence in personal relationships and in its relation to gender inequality in

society is the object of scientific dispute. Feminist activists and researchers who view violence itself as a gendered phenomena and who view violence against women as both an effect and a constitutive element in the gender order have had success in promoting this perspective within the UN, the Council of Europe, and in many countries. In contrast, some family researchers relying on large surveys have challenged the feminist perspective, arguing that men and women in couple relations are similarly exposed to and perpetrators of violence; although, there is agreement that women seem to be exposed to more violence, more severe violence, and are more often injured.

The academic debate between feminist and other perspectives has repercussions in the field of practice and on policies. Feminist perspectives are important when framing violence against women as a gender equality issue, in order to make claims for funding services for victims of violence and for prevention. Research that presents a more symmetrical picture of ‘common couple violence’ has, on the other hand, been used by organised men’s groups in favor of cuts and the retrenchment of financial support for services provided to victims of violence (see Loseke and Kurz (2005) and Straus (2005) for this debate). Organised opposition to women’s rights by masculinist groups has been growing worldwide in recent years (Boyd & Sheehy, 2016; Dragiewicz & Mann, 2016) and may be an important factor in shaping further feminist struggles in the future, and perhaps in particular, in domains of relative feminist success. This case illustrates that scientific struggles, research perspectives, methods and framings inadvertently stand in dynamic relation to political struggles in society and will be used in these struggles with potential consequences for policies, including public spending.

Moving on: macro-economic policy and human rights

Employing a human rights framework, feminist economists Radhika Balakrishnan and Diane Elson (2011) have created a useful and practicable framework for containing the economy within legal and moral bounds by using human rights as a tool for the evaluation of macro-economic policies and for holding governments to account. Their work represents a promising advancement from feminist economists' and activists' work on gender budgeting. In considering the economy as a whole, they argue for evaluating the macro-economic policy of governments according to the framework of human rights, including all relevant human, economic, social, political, civil and cultural rights. They assume as their point of departure that human rights are legally binding obligations, and thus suitable for holding governments accountable.

Their framework of analysis is based on the following key human rights principles: the need for progressive realization, the use of maximum available resources, the avoidance of retrogression, the satisfaction of minimum essential levels of economic and social rights, non-discrimination, and equality, participation, transparency and accountability. These principles were agreed on as part of The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), which was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1948, and which has later been extended in particular conventions, such as the Convention on the Elimination of all Discriminations Against Women (CEDAW), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (OHCHR) and *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights* (ICESCR).

In contrast to what has often been assumed, Balakrishnan and Elson argue that the human rights framework provides detailed and legally binding obligations that can hold governments accountable. Armed with this framework, human rights and their implications for macro-economic structures and processes, including fiscal and monetary policy, the right to work, public expenditure, taxation, economic and social rights, trade policy and pension reforms,

would feature more prominently in the evaluation of economic policies. In their latest book, Balakrishnan and colleagues (2016) further demonstrate how human rights have the potential to transform economic thinking and policy-making with far-reaching consequences for social justice by providing mechanisms to redress injustice.

The University Women of Europe have filed a collective complaint against 15 states who violate the European Social Charter for equal pay for equal work between man and women, arguing that women are not treated equal as they earn structurally less than men for equal work. In the same way, nature can be defended by court. In Norway, environmental organizations are currently bringing the government to court for not fulfilling their climate policy obligations. In the US, fifteen-year-old Xiuhtezcatl Tonatiuh Martinez along with other young environmentalists (Earth guardians) has sued the US government, arguing that his generation's rights are being violated by the nation's failure to take action against climate change. This is an interesting and promising way to raise visibility and public attention; yet, it also poses a dilemma, since court decisions shift the decision-making process to an area outside local grassroots political engagement and organization building. This needs not be an either/or question—we probably need both.

Concluding remarks

The above illustrations of selected topics which, in one way or another, may be seen as fitting under the wide umbrella of feminist economics, demonstrate how academic and political critiques as well as the development of new theories, methods and concepts are all closely related to political struggles at every level. They also illustrate how the feminist movement, broadly defined, has played a pivotal role in each of these cases.

The economy is one of twelve critical areas advancing women's rights according to the Beijing Platform of Action that was agreed upon at the fourth UN Women's conference in 1995. Twenty years after, however, the economy is the field in which the least progress has been achieved; though, in this same period, feminist economics has proliferated and grown into a field of its own. Although policies seem to remain largely unchanged by feminist economic analysis, there are also signs of change, illustrated by the inclusion of unpaid subsistence production in the UN Standard of National Accounts in 1993, the increasing use of alternative indicators of well-being, the implementation and institutionalization of gender responsive budgeting in many countries, and recent initiatives by the International Monetary Fund to further develop gender responsive budgeting.

The cases presented above, which include the valuation of care and unpaid work, gender responsive budgeting, domestic violence and the use of human rights in assessing macro-economic policy, all illustrate the dynamics between academic work, feminist critiques and activism, both within and outside of academia, as well as the role that feminist academic and activist involvement plays in developing critiques of international and regional institutions, shaping in particular the importance of the UN system and the European Union. This brief outline of selected topics from the field of feminist economics illustrates how academic critique, new theories, concepts, knowledge, new methods and indicators are important.

However, new knowledge alone is not sufficient to produce change. To the extent that feminist economics has contributed to making what really matters count in economic decision making as described in this chapter, successes have depended on a combination of several factors. These factors include the institutionalization of feminist economics as an academic field, the institutionalization and systematization of relevant statistics, and above all, the pivotal role

that feminist activism and advocacy plays in encouraging personal involvement, networking, and alliances between academics and activists. This latter aspect encourages experts and academics to actively employ their expertise within organised civil society groups and formal institutions to further the diversity of initiatives, approaches, and their policy impact.

This chapter has discussed how feminist economic critiques and theorizations have been employed to influence and change conceptual and regulatory frameworks as well as policies at the state and the international level. These examples of knowledge production and policy-making at the macro level are, however, not exhaustive, nor are they the only way in which feminist economics is relevant in conceptualising a better, more inclusive and better functioning economy that serves the well-being of all. The question of who the economy and economic activity should serve, and what is the aim of any economic activity, raised in feminist economics as well as in other heterodox economic traditions, will have to be at the core of any alternative to the current economic model, including local and regional, community, bottom-up initiatives to construct viable alternatives of social provisioning. The particular contribution of feminist economics is above all its contribution to the understanding of the centrality and importance of care, paid and unpaid and the importance of human dependency in any economy, society and and at all levels of the economy and society. There is a danger that the importance of household work and care will continue to be ignored also in alternatives to the current market economy, and I will end by urging all who are committed to build better, more democratic and more human systems of provisioning, to recognize, include, and value care and place it at the core of any alternative models of provisioning; be it sharing initiatives, community- or neighbourhood initiatives, barter systems, monetary innovations, cooperatives or new commons initiatives.

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