

The pandemic as a portal: policy transformations disputing the new normal

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DAWN Discussion Paper

1. Abstract

The pandemic caused by the COVID-19 virus produced a global health crisis that has intensified profound inequalities and accelerated political transformations. Among others, these transformations are manifest in different policy areas that are likely to shape the world that is yet to come in the pandemic's aftermath. Following Arundhati Roy's commentary about the pandemic as a portal into a transformative future, DAWN's Policy Transformations Project seeks to identify some of the traits of the worlds to come. We see four major interconnected policy trends that constitute our working hypotheses: (a) policies that are stagnant and path dependent; (b) policies that increase corporate capture of the political space; (c) policies that increase biopolitical control and expand the ongoing authoritarian trend; and/or (d) policies that are transformative and progressive, where the crisis effectively acts as a portal with potential to expand feminist social justice and democracy. Using a feminist intersectional and interlinkages approach, this Discussion Paper examines trends in policy transformations in macroeconomics, labour policy and workers' rights, migrations and human mobilities, and care and social protection. It proposes an analytical framework that is expansive enough to accommodate for local, national, and regional contexts, while providing common grounds for a global comparative approach. It seeks to be a tool for feminist research to inform our actions in shaping the post-pandemic world.

2. Introduction

A few months after COVID-19 had become a global phenomenon, Arundathi Roy referred to the then-emerging pandemic as a portal. Pandemics have historically “forced humans to break with the past and imagine their world anew,” she argued (Roy, 2020). Albeit briefly, the massive health crisis that turned the world upside down and brought the capitalist centres to a halt with significant ripple effects that continue to be felt and likely shape the future.

Lockdowns severely reduced human mobility locally and transnationally, and we experienced an unprecedented number of border closures in an effort to reduce the spread of the virus (Gamlen 2020). The pandemic slowed down trade, limited distribution and access to protective gear, medical equipment, as well as food and other goods. It has now been over a year since the first case of COVID-19 was reported in China with the pandemic having exacerbated and deepened global inequalities. So far globally it has produced over 96 million new poor, a significant rise in unemployment and critical GDP contractions (ILO, 2020; UNW, 2020). Millions of jobs have been lost, whilst others have become more precarious, informalised and unsafe as women are overrepresented among the frontline health workers and the informal sector around the world (UNW, 2020).

The pandemic has also increased the amount and intensity of the hours of care work carried out at the household level. Unpaid care labour increased by up to forty-nine per cent among women in a context where on average women already spend at least three times more time providing this kind of work (UNW 2020). Having schools closed or moved into remote learning, has brought the responsibility over children’s academic education to the households where women and adolescent girls are increasingly expected to provide extra care labour, often in contexts of precarious housing, evictions, with limited access to water and sanitation shedding light on already-existing housing and water crises at a time when they have proven ever so critical for survival.

Governments and global governance institutions have been forced to change the way they work thus altering policies in all realms and at different levels. Social protection and social security systems have expanded in terms of coverage and kind, attempting to increase both the reach and capacity of these policies to support the population. Labour regulations have been shifting at record speed in ways that have adapted to the intensified digitalisation of work, and increased deregulation. New emergency financial packages have been rolled out while external debt payments were suspended, albeit temporarily, for highly indebted countries. Even though creditors have insisted on the temporary nature of these policies, the terms of debt payment suspension have been renegotiated as it becomes increasingly obvious that the crisis we are witnessing is not temporary but rather structural. This means that the crisis is multidimensional (affecting many aspects of life and policy realms), it is also longstanding and has deepened in the current conjuncture. In parallel, policies oriented toward increased biopolitical control, labour deregulation and surveillance which were slowly being implemented prior to the pandemic are now being pushed more radically. This is the case of digital surveillance mechanisms, border closures and the securitisation of migration manifested also in benign-looking policies such as the immunity COVI-Pass implemented in Western Africa (UNSG, 2020).

The policy transformations that have taken place during this short but intense period are critical to the new normality that will emerge as the dust settles in the years to come. DAWN stands firm on the contested nature of the new normality that is emerging. The pandemic has acted as a catalyst to already existing phenomena and processes such as the increasing inequality within countries in the global South and the global North. Antigender, nativist and xenophobic politics have taken centre stage in countries throughout the world and the crisis of care has been intensified and exposed. To understand and act upon this reality, DAWN seeks to closely examine policy changes that have taken place during the pandemic, which have produced (or are likely to produce) significant changes.¹ More than examining responses to the pandemic *per se*, we seek to examine policy changes that have taken place during the period of

exceptionality produced by the pandemic, shedding light on how they project into the future in the following four policy areas:

- a) macroeconomics
- b) labour policies and workers' rights
- c) migration and human mobilities
- d) care and social protection

These policy areas are meant to serve as thematic starting points on which to peg research and analysis that identify and highlight the interlinkages between different political and policy processes. Shedding light on these interlinkages is a critical move to avoid siloing discussions that are complex and interdependent in nature, as well as it is key to moving away from political fragmentation in a time when collective organising is as important as ever. For example, we are interested in analysing the interlinkages between macroeconomic policies such as emergency packages provided by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (WB) in reaction to the pandemic, in ways that enquire about the sustainability of the emergency social protection policies that have been implemented often with these funds. Are the temporary emergency CTs dependent on new debt? Are they sustainable? We emphasise the need for an intersectional lens that enables us to observe the power inequalities that often shape and are reproduced by policy responses, and affect groups differently on the basis of their gender, class, race, caste, ability, citizenship status and territorial location (among others). This would mean, for example, examining whether there are conditionalities attached to the emergency CTs and if so, what communities and forms of behaviour are being favoured over others? Is legal status or geographic location, for example, limiting access to social protection? Are policies emerging in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic reproducing systems of oppression or are they attempting to alter these systems?

1- Alongside the analysis of policy transformations, DAWN is also focusing on issues specifically related to health in the current context. The Pandemic Portals: Feminist People's Vaccine Project focuses on mobilising a feminist response to the People's Vaccine Campaign bringing a gender lens to access to drugs, vaccines, therapeutics and PPE's in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

We seek to approach these themes through research at country level in the Caribbean, Latin America, Africa, Asia and the Pacific. We foster analysis that unearths interlinkages between policy areas, political processes and institutions. In tandem, these need to be cognisant of how gender, class, racism and migration/citizenship status (among others) affect the positionalities and conditions of the living of individuals and collectives that affect and are affected by them. Furthermore, pandemic policies (and we expect that there will be others to emerge in the near future) place a strong emphasis on the governance of populations and bodies (Correa, 2020; Horton, 2020), thus, regulating local and transnational mobilities, living arrangements, access to and social services. This biopolitical turn has deep gendered, racialised and class implications in terms of what bodies and collectives are being regulated, whose survival is being brought to the fore, whose presence and behaviours are deemed acceptable, and whose livelihoods have been made precarious (or even more precarious) in the pandemic and what can we expect of the pandemic aftermath?

This Discussion Paper provides an analytical framework that explores some of the main issues arising in the four policy areas, the ways they are interlinked as well as some of the intersectional aspects that have emerged. It does not pretend to be exhaustive but rather, its purpose is to enable collective analysis and advocacy that is attentive to global and regional commonalities and particularities across countries and policy areas in the context of the pandemic and its aftermath. It focuses on specific policy areas whilst also illustrating how they are interlinked. Furthermore, it identifies overarching themes that may emerge in different ways, considers the prevalence of climate change, biopolitical control, and the digitalisation of life in all spheres of life. In what follows, we will present **DAWN's feminist methodological approach**, centring intersectionalities and interlinkages in our politics and analyses. We will then introduce the **four working hypotheses** to help us think comparatively from a global lens which pays particular attention to local, national and regional realities. We will then explore each of the **four policy areas** identifying key themes and interlinkages, and spell out generative research questions. Finally, the **closing remarks** will seek to highlight the interlinkages between the different hypotheses, emphasising the expansive nature of the framework and

its function in our analysis of policy transformations in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

3. Intersectionalities and DAWN's interlinkages approach

The policy transformations taking place during the pandemic are shaped by existing power relations based among others on gendered and racialised politics, class, migratory status and location (among other intersections). Similarly, changes in specific policy areas are interconnected with other policy and political discussions.

By intersectionalities, we intend to shed light on the complex relations and positions of power of different individuals and groups within societies. Choosing an intersectional approach implies that we are interested in unearthing the way gender, class, race, ethnicity, citizenship/migratory status, and different abilities (among other social positions) may affect power relations, social and political outcomes. Thus, an intersectional approach requires that we account for the complex settings in which policies are being discussed and implemented. For example, research on the macroeconomic implications of the losses experienced in the tourism sector in a given country may require that the analysis accounts for the gender composition of the labour involved, and the regional and racial dynamics that may be affected. One may ask, for example, if there are some groups more supported than others, or whether there are some forms of labour affected more than others. Moreover, a territorial lens may identify regions and populations that are most affected. In the case of analysis on care and social protection it is of special interest to identify whose care needs are attended for, what are the forms of care provided, and who are the main care providers (accounting for class, age, territorial location, citizenship status, gender, etc.). This does not mean that gender, race, class, migration status, etc., will have the same effect in every case, or that they would all be equally relevant at once. What is important, however is that the

interactions between these categories and their impact on power relations are seriously accounted for.

We use the term interlinkages to emphasise the multidimensional nature of the current crises and their policy implications. Thus, while approaching policy changes through specific policy areas, DAWN seeks to address them in ways that recognise both the complexity and the interlinkages between them. It is a clear tenet for feminist economists, for example, that the social organisation of care is itself a macroeconomic issue, because unpaid care labour sustains the economic system and reproduces labour power. Similarly, issues of human mobility may have substantive labour implications when considering, for example, policy changes related to internal or transnational migrant workers and/or social protection policies.

The analysis of the transformations taking place at the current needs to account for how they may affect existing care systems, livelihoods, and inequalities. It also needs to account for related civil society mobilisations, struggles, as well as the effect of these policy changes on political rights. With a focus on care and livelihoods, we seek to identify the effects that a particular policy may have in the distribution of unpaid care labour. In the case of macroeconomic adjustments, this may translate into the assumption that women's and girls' unpaid care labour acts as a buffer to austerity politics, as has been evidenced throughout different structural adjustment programs, whereby social services are defunded and their labour is externalised to households. This category would also help identify the effect of changes in migration regimes to care and livelihoods in origin countries of and countries of residence, accounting both for effects in remittances but also on the types of care provided and under what conditions.

By focusing on inequalities we emphasize the need to account for the effects of policy changes in social, economic and power inequalities. Closely related to intersectionality, accounting for inequalities implies to ask, for example, whether policies rely on existing gender orders whereby feminised labour is economically devalued and unaccounted for. Are racialised subjects accessing social protection policies at a similar

rate as their non-racialised peers? Controversies around the potential access to vaccines by Palestinians in Israel and by Venezuelan migrants in Colombia and Chile are recent cases in which discrimination based on citizenship and migratory status is integrated into social policy in the context of COVID-19 (BBC, 2021; Amnesty International, 2021). It is in these contexts, that a benign health policy (vaccine provision) has accentuated existing forms of oppression and exclusion.

By paying attention to social mobilisation struggle and political rights, we seek to account for the way social mobilisations, civil society organising and resistance has been affected, limited or perhaps has emerged in the context of specific policy processes. It is also possible that policy changes underway are the result of civil society organising. This aspect of the analysis is especially important given the concerns over increased surveillance being presented as a justified measure. The analysis of any policy transformation in this context requires then to scrutinise its implications in terms of its potential relation to political rights, persecution and other forms of biopolitical control. Similarly, under the auspices of the pandemic as a period of exception, many political and policy changes are being made through antidemocratic means, with little consultation via expedited procedures. Albeit cognizant to the urgency of the times, we are convinced that the political changes and potential losses during this period may have a significant effect on the times to come and thus consider it critical to account for this aspect while exploring the policy transformations taking place. Identifying these and related trends will be essential to foster and strengthen resistance to oppression and inequality, and cultivating transformative feminist futures.

4. Hypotheses

We propose four broad working hypotheses on the policy trends that are emerging in the pandemic world. We expect to see policy transformations that (a) are stagnant and path dependent; (b) increase corporate capture of the political space where

private sector control over policy processes; (c) increase biopolitical control expanding the ongoing authoritarian trends; and/or (d) are transformative and progressive, where the crisis effectively acts as a portal for policies that are feminist and expand democracy and social justice.

There might be gradations and nuances in the way these hypotheses are reflected in the policies that have emerged in these times of COVID-19. It is also possible that countries that advance progressive agendas on the one hand may act regressively on another. Thus, we must proceed with caution with these typologies, acknowledging their limitations while also highlighting their utility to produce comparative analyses in the future. Relatedly, these hypotheses are meant to be a starting point that can be adapted as research advances.

a. Muddling through, also known as business as usual. The capacity for strategic planning and identification of new policy and program options may be so weak that a government is unable to respond in innovative or creative ways. Instead, it may carry on with the same old policies even though there may be an uneasy awareness that more is needed. The same result could flow from the dominance of short-term political gains because of the moment in the election cycle, or because the political confluence is too fragile and risky for a government that may be precariously holding on to power.

b. Taking an approach that gives private corporations more leverage over public policy. DAWN's ongoing critique of corporate capture of the state through public-private partnerships (PPPs) provides many insights for this. PPPs are usually justified and strongly promoted by the Bretton Woods Institutions (BWI), the World Bank, IMF, regional development banks, etc. - as helping to tap private finance, technology and marketing skills for public purposes, especially when governments are cash-strapped and weak on know-how. The reality is of course somewhat different as our research shows, especially when viewed from the perspective of gender equality and women's human rights. In the context of the COVID-19

pandemic, the related economic near-collapse, and huge demands for health-care and social spending, the temptation for governments to make Faustian bargains with the private, for-profit sector is very high, and many are succumbing to the BWI's siren song on this.

c. The pandemic has served as an opportunity to further authoritarian biopolitical practices at the hands of the state. In this case, policy changes are geared toward increasing control over people's bodies, populations, territories and political rights. This may be through the criminalisation of human mobilities, further precarisation of labour, evictions, and access to food and other forms of humanitarian aid. In this context, livelihoods are made dependent on political loyalties and client-like relations with the state and the political parties in power.

d. Moving towards progressive, feminist policies, even partially. Fortunately, we do see some evidence of at least some governments moving in this direction, and we hope to identify and analyse how they are doing so, and how they are managing the complexities of funding and politics, as well as the conditions and specific contexts that are making this possible. In these cases, Roy's portals indeed hold space for feminist transformations toward more egalitarian, inclusive and democratic societies.

5. What policy changes?

The pandemic has generated multidimensional effects that affect all spheres of life, governance systems, and levels of government from the local to the transnational. Forcing a halt in the economic apparatus has generated a moment of exception in political, social and economic terms. The pandemic accelerated ongoing political and policy processes in ways that are often to the detriment of democratic practices and human rights, whilst also having generated conditions for innovation. It has affected a multiplicity of areas of life, altering the world of work, highlighting the centrality of care

for our survival and the inadequacy of the macroeconomic austerity that had become the mainstream policy doctrine for the past four decades.

Given the multidimensional nature of the set of the ongoing crises, we have selected four general policy areas to critically engage with a feminist lens from the global South:

- a) **Macroeconomics**
- b) **Labour policies and Workers' Rights**
- c) **Migration and Human Mobilities**
- d) **Care and Social Protection**

These policy areas were selected in an effort to produce feminist analysis that takes account for the ways global governance and the state are transforming and projecting into the (post)pandemic future.

a) Macroeconomics

Fiscal policy, trade, monetary policy and the political economy of debt are feminist concerns that affect the relations of power globally, nationally, locally and within the intimacy of the household. The size of the economic crisis ignited by COVID-19 is not like anything the world has experienced in generations. The global external debt reached close to 100 percent of the global GDP, which faced a contraction of 4.7 percent (IMF, 2020a). The economic shock imposed by the pandemic confronted societies and governments with the consequences of decades of austerity politics and corporate capture that dwarfed global governance systems' and governments' abilities to respond (Rodríguez Enríquez, 2020a). After decades of systemic precarisation of their working conditions, the pandemic has exposed care and health workers on the frontlines (Bertossa, 2020). Given the severity of the economic shock that we have experienced globally and the urgent need to reset the system, the pandemic may effectively act as a portal into new and transformative political economies, or rather, into the deepening of already sharp global inequalities. By looking into *Policy Transformations during the pandemic period*, DAWN seeks to identify some of the macroeconomic policies with

which countries in the global South are confronting the crisis, as well as the ones that they setting up for the years to come.

The conditions under which countries are bracing the storm are radically unequal. The Bretton Woods Institutions (BWIs) agree on the critical importance of public spending in the context of the pandemic and its aftermath. However, what is less clear is how such expenditures are to be funded. By October 2020, Governments had rolled out significant financial emergency packages that amounted to 11.7 trillion USD, or twelve per cent of the global Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (IMF, 2020a). This sizeable response was experienced unevenly with richer countries having significant fiscal space and assigning 20.3 per cent of GDP to wage subsidies and liquidity support to corporations, whilst emerging markets had considerably less policy room, assigning only six per cent of their GDP to job retention schemes and wage subsidies and other measures. In contrast, but not surprisingly, low-income countries only managed to assign 1.8 per cent of GDP using budgetary sources, of which 0.3 per cent was directed to the health sector (IMF, 2020a, p. 26). The contrasting fiscal space is marked, by unsustainable levels of external debt that many countries found themselves in from the start of the crisis. Not only are debt levels high but an important part relies on short term bonds. In South Asia, for example, since 2010 bonds and private creditors have increased their share of debt compared to other creditors. Even before the pandemic, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Maldives and Bhutan already had structurally high debt to GDP ratios with a high prevalence of short-term bonds and it has been forecasted that this will worsen during the pandemic (WB, 2020a; UNCTAD, 2020a).

The financial mechanisms made available to developing countries by the BWIs act as temporary band-aids in a context that calls for a new Marshall Plan and global inequality is patent in the financial tools available to governments. Whilst heavily indebted countries mostly relied on their existing budget, rich countries relied on alternative mechanisms to inject liquidity into their economies. The Federal Reserve of the United States implemented swap lines of between thirty and sixty billion USD to nine rich and middle-income economies, renewable until March 2021² (Reserve,

2020). In contrast, countries in the global South have little alternative other than relying on non-concessional loans (including short term bonds in the case of middle-income countries) that increase their debt vulnerabilities (WB, 2020a), or rely on IMF's and WB's policy options. The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and others have repeatedly suggested that developing countries should be able to fund their recoveries through expanded Special Drawing Rights (SDRs) (UNCTAD, 2020b; Gallagher, Ocampo, and Volz, 2020; Ellmers, 2020a; Tippet, 2020). However, expanded SDRs have not been picked up as a viable financial strategy by the IMF. Rather, the latter has relied on Rapid Credit facilities and instruments, grants for debt relief and short-term liquidity lines to address balance of payment deficits among countries that meet specific requirements (i.e., that have "very strong policies and fundamentals") (IMF, 2020b). Both the WB and IMF advocated for bilateral debt relief until the end of June 2021 through the Debt Service Suspension Initiative (DSSI) which was approved by the G20.³ Even though the WB managed to convince the G20 to come on board, it has not joined the temporary suspension and continues to expect to be paid in a timely fashion. In fact, countries that have arrears with the WB are ineligible to the DSSI. This is of particular significance for Africa, where the WB is the creditor with the largest debt stock⁴ (Brautigam, 2020). The Chinese government have publicly called on the WB to join the initiative, while the WB has also insisted on having the Chinese Development Bank (CDB) join the DSSI, however there is ambiguity on whether the CDB qualifies as a commercial bank or as a bilateral lender (Huang and Brautigam, 2020). In any case, including the CDB in the DSSI would be of little consequence for Africa.

It is clear that the current financial mechanisms are insufficient to face the crisis. This is especially the case for countries in the global South, and within that the small

2- These temporary swap lines injected sixty billion USD per country to Central Banks in Australia, Sweden, South Korea, Brazil, Singapore and Mexico, and thirty billion USD to Denmark, Norway and New Zealand.

3- The WB and IMF have requested that the G20 extend this relief until the end of 2021, which will be examined in the upcoming spring meetings.

4- Controlling for Angola's large debt to China, which together with Pakistan concentrates thirty-four per cent of China's loans to seventy-two low-income countries.

island economies, highly indebted countries and small economies in general who are severely affected. The dearth of financial mechanisms available to countries in the global South is compounded by the decline of foreign direct investment (FDI) and remittances. On the one hand, the decline of FDI, which had already begun before the pandemic, has had a stronger impact among richer countries where it declined by seventy-five per cent compared to a sixteen per cent decline in the developing world (UNCTAD, 2020a). On the other hand, despite earlier forecasts of a sharper decline, remittances will only have decreased by 7.2 per cent in 2020, and it is expected that it will fall by 7.5 per cent in 2021 (WB, 2020b; 2020c). Despite its smaller scale, this decline has a more critical effect on least developed countries and small economies where remittances represent between fourteen and thirty-nine percent of the GDP (UNCTAD, 2020a).

There is a wealth of alternatives on the table besides those pushed forward by the IFIs, a key one being taxation. At global and national levels, taxation is an income generating tool where governments have more leeway to innovate. However, most conversations about it tend to be neglected due to the increasing corporate capture of global governance, policy processes and national governments (Ellmers, 2020a; 2020b). The global sectors that are seeing exponential growth in times of crisis need to be examined and regulated. Digital giants have increased their value between seventeen and ninety-one per cent during this period, creating immense profit globally and yet are seldom taxed globally or in countries other than the US (Fredriksson, 2020). As we know, tax innovation is not limited to the digital sector and offshore corporate profits but also includes wealth and financial transactions (among others) and eliminating tax evasion (Tippet, 2020). In line with this, civil society has been pushing for other transformative reforms for years and the current crisis emerges as an urgent call for bold decisions. The context calls for development finance strategies that are closely aligned to green transitions that address biodiversity loss and climate change, and that recognise the global structures that have fed fossil fuel dependency in the global South. Macroeconomic transformations cannot afford to ignore the ongoing climate emergency, and the urgency of this is nowhere more evident than in Small Island Developing States where ocean acidification and rising sea levels are a quotidian

existential threat (De Schutter, 2020; Fresnillo, 2020; Paolo Yu, 2020). What global institutions and governance mechanisms are taking this forward or rather limiting it? What governments are picking up on these alternatives and developing their own? What is the role of national institutions, public sector including public banks in these policies? Closer examination into the terms of financing of the current national emergency policies, require also that global governance structures are brought into account, recognising existing power inequalities that reduce the policy space left to governments in the global South. What global institutions and processes are effectively enabling transformative approaches and which ones are reproducing power inequalities in the global, regional and local arenas? Identifying the economic sectors that are being protected and the policy mechanisms implemented to support them (subsidies, tax breaks, bailouts, etc.) will necessarily have an impact on climate change and the distribution of and access to energy and natural resources. Answers to these and related questions will begin to tell the story of the world to come.

b) Labour Policies and Workers' Rights

The pandemic has served as an alibi for the intensification of the already-ongoing regression of labour standards across the world. These changes are taking place through legislative and administrative channels, altering laws and regulations, weakening existing protection mechanisms for formal and informal workers. They are also taking place through an upsurge of abusive labour practices and further precarisation of labour conditions. The increased demand for paid and unpaid care labour has amplified the labour exploitation and precarity of women and girls. The pandemic produced unprecedented losses of employment, working hours and income among workers. Those in the informal sector are experiencing the worst effects of the crisis (WB, 2020a). During the first month of the pandemic, informal workers experienced income drops of sixty per cent globally, and eighty-two per cent in Asia and Latin America (ILO, 2020b). All of this has taken place while some sectors of the economy have experienced dramatic profit increases. The pandemic has exacerbated already existing intersectional inequalities in terms of kinds of work, income, gender, geographic location and country of origin, among other positions and has dramatically reduced employment and income gains made by women over the past ten years (CEPAL/ECLAC, 2021).

The gendered aspects of the labour crisis abound. Women are over represented among healthcare and social care workers but unsurprisingly the wage gap with their male counterparts remain significant⁵ (WHO, 2019). Unemployment hit specifically feminised sectors such as services and hospitality, where up to nine of every ten workers are women (Gutierrez, Martín and Ñopo, 2020). Millions of jobs were lost in these sectors, and working hours reduced. Alongside, school closures and intensified demands for unpaid reproductive labour in the form of health care, cleaning, cooking, most of which relied disproportionately on the labour of women and girls. In this context, it is not surprising that women's participation in the paid labour force declined more sharply than that of their men counterparts. In Latin America, for example, it dropped by 10.4 per cent compared to 7.4 per cent for men (OIT-LAC, 2020). Relatedly, fifty per cent of women workers saw a decline in their working hours compared to thirty-five per cent of men at the global level (UNW, 2020). In particular, women who work as paid domestic workers have been among the most exposed to the health and economic risks imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic. Already one of the most precarious labour sectors, domestic workers were among the first to lose their jobs without access to unemployment insurance and other labour protections (UNW, 2020). They were also among the first fatalities of the virus, as was the case of Cleonice Gonçalves, a domestic worker in Brazil, and fifth fatality registered in the country in March 2020 (Slattery and Viga Gaier, 2020). A significant portion of domestic workers are internal or international migrants. The migrant condition compounds their exploitability and adds to their precarity in the context of the pandemic. They often lack space of their own to rest during work breaks and are removed from their community and informal protection systems to sustain them during the crisis. In the case of international migrants this results in increased deportability which in turn renders them more exploitable (Antona, 2020).

On the one hand, countries with stronger social security systems and with greater experiences of tripartite and social dialogue have been able to respond rapidly

5- According to Amnesty International (2020), health workers, including cleaning staff, have experienced wage reductions, income reductions and have been laid off during the COVID-19 pandemic in South Sudan, Pakistan, India, Indonesia, Guatemala, and Egypt.

and inclusively. For example, Argentina created an emergency program ‘to assist work and production’ (Decreto 332/2020) (Presidencia de la nación, 2020) in which eligible employers would receive a wage subsidy for a period of time to avoid workers dismissals. Representatives of workers’ and employers’ organisations were involved in the adoption of this measure (ILO, 2020c). On the other hand, countries with greater dependence on the service sector, higher levels of informality and weaker safeguards against the termination of employment have experienced much higher job losses (ILO, 2020a). Furthermore, the existence of relatively strong social security systems did not prevent the increased precarisation of certain sectors such as delivery workers of platform companies. In Argentina, for example, platform e-commerce companies have been able to reduce their responsibilities toward delivery workers while increasing their margins significantly. Delivery workers were deemed “essential by law”, as they enabled consumption for those households where people managed to stay at home during lockdowns. However, the essential character did not come with proper access to basic biosafety gear or social security. In this case, as in the case of domestic workers, migration often compounds the precarity of these workers (Valencia Castro, Partenio and Hidalgo Corder, 2020; Partenio, Forthcoming). The extreme precarisation of this sector emerges in stark contrast with the large profit margins concentrated within e-commerce and other large platforms.

Teleworking has been one of the International Labour Organisation’s (ILO) policy recommendations to protect workers in the workplace from the virus while allowing them to maintain their jobs (ILO, 2020a). The adaptation of these work arrangements, which already existed long before COVID-19, has been accelerated by the pandemic alongside the rapid development of the digital economy. The concept of teleworking generally applies to workers in a formal employment relationship. Its recent implementation on a full-time basis (instead of as a temporary or partial arrangement) has been used as a justification to revise already existing labour regulations or create new ones, in some cases to the detriment of existing workers’ rights. In the Dominican Republic, for example, the Labour Ministry issued by way of an administrative resolution that established a new regulatory framework for telework. This framework leaves it

up for negotiation as to who covers the costs implicit in teleworking, which should be covered by the employer in a conventional working arrangement. It also requires the drafting of a telework contract even where there already is a pre-existing contractual relationship, thus creating ambiguity about the possibility of changing essential elements of the original labour contract such as salary, hours of work and/or job description (Cuervo, 2021).

A more extreme example of how COVID-19 and the related economic crisis have been used as a justification to deteriorate labour rights can be seen in India. Three major pieces of labour legislation were introduced and passed by parliament in record time in September 2020: The Industrial Relations Code, the Code on Social Security, and the Occupational Health, Safety, and Working Conditions Code. A total of twenty-nine laws were consolidated in these three labour codes, as well as on the Code of Wage altered in July 2019, which were passed by parliament without any debate. In 2020, the government replaced the original bills with new versions that were passed hurriedly by both houses of parliament. Thus, the pandemic served as a perfect opportunity to radically change labour relations in India to the detriment of workers in different ways. Changes in the Industrial Relations and the Occupational Safety and Working Conditions Codes radically reduced the government's oversight and regulatory role in terms of labour relations, and outsourced it to third parties. These changes also watered-down employers' responsibilities and produced ambiguous safety standards while further weakening unions. Furthermore, the government is entitled to establish exceptions in the application of the code to new industrial establishments thus further deepening the precarisation of labour rights. Among other changes, the new Code on Social Security moves towards a mixed scheme where social security is funded with private and public resources, reducing government's responsibility and leaving workers exposed to the private sector. Although the new code is presented as an opportunity to incorporate informal workers into the social security system, the new legislation really just offers an open canvas for "suitable welfare schemes" which would operate in a piecemeal way further fragmenting the labour force and the social security system (Sood, 2020).

The moment of exception produced by the pandemic exacerbated already existing labour inequalities, and deepened them significantly. It has also unleashed dramatic legislative changes that have gone through with little or no democratic overview, weakening labour protection regimes for formal and informal workers and increasing the power of the private sector. Furthermore, the costs of the crisis in terms of women's labour participation are of a serious concern: not only are labour conditions worsening especially for women, the poor, illegalised and racialised subjects, the market is also driving them out. This is especially so for women due to the increasing dependence for their unpaid labour. Women's level of indebtedness is also increasing, especially among single heads of households, who have seen their income decline sharply and have acquired debt in order to access food and cover basic needs. In this context it is critical to examine the deep transformations taking place in the labour market in terms of legislation, policy and practices that are instrumental to social and biopolitical control. The deregulation of labour, favours predator behaviours in the private sector and reduces government intervention in the economy. In this context it is necessary to address questions about the role of the public sector in mitigating and containing the **macroeconomic** and social effects of the multidimensional crisis unleashed by the pandemic. How does labour regulation fare among government responses to the crisis? Has labour regulation become part of the assumed "costs" of the pandemic in the name of avoiding unemployment or protecting capital? How and in what cases have employers lobbied for deregulation and have they pushed for their agendas both overtly and through informal practices (such as abrupt reductions of wages and working hours)? What are the states that are carrying these transitions forward? What is the position of the increasing role of the digital economy in this deregulation process? What have been the exceptions where workers (especially women, rural workers and informal workers) have been effectively protected in the midst of increasing unemployment and sharpening exploitation and precarity? And have there been cases where governments have supported or relied on cooperatives and social economy enterprises as part of their strategies to mitigate the pandemic crisis?

c) Migration and Human Mobilities

Alongside the intensification of labour precarity, precarity of status became more acute among migrants, refugees and asylum seekers. Internal and international migrants constitute among the most precarious sectors of informal work. Unable to access unemployment insurance, sick leave and other labour protections granted (at least in principle) to workers in the formal economy, informal workers have been constantly forced to choose whether they abide by the lockdown measures to stop the spread of the virus vis-à-vis hunger. The precarities inherent to their labour conditions are compounded by the housing crisis in densely populated urban centres, lack of access to water and sanitation, and the precarity of status that limit their access to social protection measures such as CTs which are assigned on the basis of nationality or in region or state of origin. Among them, women migrant informal workers tend to be among the most invisibilised (Rajan, Sivakumar, and Srinivasan, 2020; IHRB, 2020).

The wake of the pandemic saw massive mobilisations of hundreds of thousands of internal and transnational migrants. There was a major movement of internal migrant workers in India, and Venezuelan migrants in Peru, Ecuador and Colombia who had attempted to return home in the face of stringent lockdown measures and the severe interruption of their livelihoods. Migrants and migrant workers faced strict lockdowns, sharp income losses and had limited, if any, access to most forms of social protection due to their legal or territorial status. Many soon found themselves evicted by their landlords (who often were their employers) and forced to return to their places of origin where informal protection systems were in place for them through their families and communities. The conditions of these returns were in themselves a health and safety hazard. People walked long distances, had scarce access to other means of transportation and in some cases travelled as full family units including children, infants, pregnant women and the elderly. Moreover, similar to the conditions many workers found in their places of residence while in the cities, it was very difficult or not possible, to practice appropriate hand washing and to keep social distancing while on the road, which potentially exposed them to further contracting and spreading the COVID-19 virus (Fernández, 2020; IHRB, 2020).

Border closures, alongside strict lockdowns further increased the challenges faced by international migrants and asylum seekers and highlighted the biopolitical turn of the pandemic. Even though borders were closed to incoming migrants (and often to citizens too) deportations continued to take place in the US, Mexico and other places, sometimes in violation of the right to seek asylum (Riggirozzi, Grugel and Cintra, 2020). In other contexts, migrants have not been officially deported but their living conditions have forced them to embark on return trajectories. Approximately fifty-four per cent of Venezuelans in Colombia live without formal migratory status, which limits their access to formal work, most social policies and health services beyond humanitarian aid (Colombia, 2020). In the wake of lockdowns and evictions, over 130 thousands of them took to walking and hitching rides back to their home country (HRW, 2020). However, with social and health services already under enormous pressure, compounded by the stigma around them as potential carriers of the COVID-19 virus, migrants' access to shelters, access to alternative transport, as well as their capacity to enter Venezuela and return to their communities of origin was severely affected. Social stigma has also been registered as a potential cause of homelessness, internal displacement and increased gang recruitment in other contexts, such as the case of Guatemalan deportees (PROVEA et al., 2020; Pardo, 2020; VTV, 2020; Martínez-Gugerli and Ramsey, 2020; La Opinión, 2020a, 2020b, 2020c; Contrapunto, 2020; Riggirozzi, Grugel and Cintra, 2020).

The situation of internal and international migrants in the wake of the pandemic sheds light on structural political and policy problems. Labour informality thrives among migrant workers, which adds complexity to their structural exclusion: their social position is marked by the intersection of class, migratory status, gender and racialisation. The non-portability of social security and social protection rights and policies leaves internal and international migrants at the margins of emergency CTs and unemployment insurance. This marginalisation is not exclusive to catastrophic situations such as the current global context, but are part of the everyday life of migrant workers, particularly among those considered unskilled. A new series of policies emerged at this juncture, for example, the need to facilitate the portability of social protection and social security rights (which is explored in the [section on Care and Social Protection](#)). Another stream

of policy changes involves the flexibilisation of regularisation processes for migrants in the context of the emergency such as the case of Portugal and Argentina (Argentina, 2020b). What remains unclear is how transient these emergency measures are and what impact they have on the status of migrants in the long term.

Human mobility (within and beyond borders) is central to livelihoods in communities around the globe (Stevano, Ali and Jamieson, 2020; Llavaneras Blanco, 2020). Restrictions to human mobility have been one of the most severe policy consequences of the pandemic. Even in cases where regulations appear to have been made temporarily flexible in order to keep their national agricultural production afloat⁶, labour migration schemes are on their way to becoming more stringent and temporary. Strict linkages between particular employers and workers' permits are part of a global trend where migrant workers are exposed to exploitative labour practices, since their visas depend on their labour contract. Physical segregation of migrant workers in specific compounds and dormitories are likely to increase in the current age of quarantines, increased racism and xenophobia, thus increasing their housing insecurity. Family reunification, effective access to social security, and paths into permanent residence or citizenship will decrease significantly, especially for those categorised as unskilled or low-skilled labour (Vertovec, 2020). Not surprisingly, the mobility of workers classified as "highly-skilled" is likely to remain comparatively unaltered once the pandemic storm subsides, while the surveillance of low-skilled workers is likely to increase and has already increased in certain places (Lin and Yeoh, 2020).

A concerning example of increased surveillance is the development of an immunity passport, whereby individuals that are thought to have gained COVID-19 immunity could apply for a digitalised passport that would enable them to travel transnationally. Gavi and Mastercard are developing such a passport (that they are calling COVI-Pass), which adapts older projects focused on the digitalisation of vaccine registries in remote rural

6- Such as the cases of the US and Canada, which rely on agricultural workers from Central America and the Caribbean, and the UK's reliance on labour from Eastern Europe.

contexts in the current COVID-19 juncture. Its proponents describe the COVI-Pass as a digital solution to vaccine registration in contexts where there is weak access to identity documents. The project combines biometrics, contact tracing, cashless payments, national identification and law enforcement, and was raised as an area of concern by the Special Rapporteur on Contemporary Forms of racism, racial discrimination and xenophobia and related intolerance (UNSG, 2020). Operating without regulation and without a human rights framework, this project raises concerns over the privatisation of access to identity, as well as private control over human mobilities in a context of securitised and digitalised migration controls. In fact, it scarcely comes as a surprise that West Africa is the testing ground for this initiative, considering the increased digitalisation of migration controls and the externalisation of borders carried out by countries within Europe to reduce the influx of migrants and asylum seekers from Africa and the Middle East (Gavi, 2020a; 2020b; Klobberdanz, 2020; UNSG, 2020).

Policies on migration and human mobility are changing drastically and severe border restrictions have been enacted as sanitary policies. In contrast, evictions and deportations have continued to take place despite epidemiological concerns, the most recent taking place in February 2021 in Chile where 138 Venezuelans and Colombians were expelled in a flight that the Chilean Minister of Interior described as the first flight of a “process of expulsion” (Riggirozzi, Grugel and Cintra, 2020; DW, 2021). Access to refugee protection has been diminished as border and mobility restrictions are reducing asylum seekers’ abilities to even claim asylum. Migration detention centres, physical segregation of migrant workers and increased surveillance are areas of deep concern. These exclusionary practices are part of policy changes that are taking place in the name, or in some cases despite, the COVID-19 pandemic. In this context, cases may examine what governments, for example, have decided to expand access to social protection (thus linking migration and social protection policy analysis)? How have deportations and expulsions fared in the context of the pandemic, and what regularization processes have begun? These analyses are likely to shed light on many interlinkages with issues of labour rights and access to care and social protection, as well as with issues pertaining to digital justice and biopolitical control. Producing evidence-based analysis on the policy transformations in migration, border closures,

and access to protection and citizenship rights will illuminate our understanding of the geopolitics of the pandemic aftermath.

d) Care and Social Protection

The COVID-19 pandemic shed light on the deep-seated inequalities of the existing social organization of care. This inequality is manifested in the distribution of care responsibilities and care labour among families, communities, government and the private sector, as well as among women and men. Before the pandemic, women and girls were already spending two to three times more time doing unpaid care work than men and boys, and it is estimated that the rate has increased by forty-nine per cent in the case of women (UNW, 2020). Acting as a countercyclical buffer, unpaid care labour has been key to the way societies have absorbed the pandemic shock. Social distance measures and lockdowns have been made possible by the availability of unpaid care work in households and communities (Rodríguez Enríquez, 2020b). Increased household cleaning to prevent the virus from spreading is most likely to have fallen on the shoulders of women and girls, especially in those contexts of precarious housing and limited access to running water and electricity. Families have had to provide healthcare from home and in most cases children and youth have been unable to attend schools, some of which have gone into remote or other modes of distance learning. Not only has unpaid labour increased and become ever more critical for everyday life, but there are significant disparities in the way households, women and girls, have been overburdened based on income level, geographic location, race, ethnicity and caste, migratory/citizenship status, as well as access to housing, basic services and internet connectivity, among others.

Despite variation in estimations, it is assumed that at least ninety-six million people fell into poverty due to the global economic aftermath of the pandemic (UNW, 2020). Income levels per household declined and communities and households, in particular the women and girls within them, had little alternative but to act as buffers to the crisis, thus compounding both time and income poverty. With the sharp increase of unemployment levels and significant decline in household income, millions of families have had to rely on social security and social protection systems, mostly in the form of CTs and food

programs. The pandemic has exposed the limitations of the existing social insurance systems that are biased in favour of formal labour and citizens, and have historically turned a blind eye to informal workers and migrants (as discussed in [sections 5.b](#) and [5.c](#)). According to the COVID-19 Global Gender Response Tracker (2020), globally, sixty-seven per cent of the social protection measures applied in response to COVID-19 focused on social assistance, only thirty per cent on social insurance and a negligible three per cent on care services. The three main types of social assistance registered by the tracker are CTs (forty-four per cent), housing, utility and financial support (twenty-four per cent), and in-kind support (twenty per cent). Not surprisingly, CTs, turned out to be the most immediate way to support the everyday needs of households hit by the crisis, which is indicative of increasingly commodified services and a weakened public assistance program.

Bango and Salvador (2020) examined the main ways in which CTs were adapted to the pandemic context in Latin America. They identified three main trends: increased amounts assigned per transfer, increased coverage, and the creation of new CT policies. Countries like Argentina and the Dominican Republic experimented with all three forms of policy adaptation, whereas the majority experimented with the creation of new policies specific to the pandemic. In most cases the new CT policies targeted informal workers, people who were recently laid off, and the unemployed. A few policies focused on children and youth who are no longer accessing school provided meals (in Bolivia) or on vulnerable children and the elderly (in Guatemala). Children, youth and the elderly were also targeted by expanding the coverage and/or increasing the amounts assigned through already existing policies. What is less clear is the for how long would these policy changes be in place, the role of conditionalities and the portability of the right to social protection. Part of the answer to this lies with a larger question about the way these policies are being funded, particularly considering the deepening debt crisis, and the global economic contraction. Where is the funding coming from? Is it part of national or local budgets or is it part of the credit lines, grants and financial instruments provided by the IMF, the WB, and private sources? Or rather, have there been forms of macroeconomic innovation that have enabled positive transformation in care and social

protection? It is necessary to pay closer attention to the institutional mechanisms through which cash-transfers are operated and how much room for democratic policy innovation national and local governments have. Is social protection being provided via public-private partnerships? Are they carried out by existing institutions or by temporary or extraordinary institutional mechanisms? Again, the issue of funding will prove an essential piece of the puzzle. And it is clear that there have been economic winners in this crisis (in the digital sector, for example) which renews the urgency of implementing creative fiscal reforms geared toward tax justice that identify sustainable funding mechanisms, and highlights the interlinkages between care, social protection and macroeconomic policies.

There have been significant feminist critiques to CTs, specifically focused on the way their design, eligibility criteria and conditionalities may reproduce inequalities, especially gender inequalities. Conditionalities may impose extra labour on already overburdened individuals and families, potentially limit women's labour participation and enhance existing inequalities in the distribution of unpaid labour (Rodríguez Enríquez, 2018). Moreover, in the current pandemic context, school attendance (which is a common conditionality) has been complicated by the temporary closure of schools and erratic distance learning strategies (some of which are explored below). The current emergency has allowed for the flexibilisation of the targeting and conditionalities associated to the CTs. In some cases, eligibility criteria have been relaxed, as in the case of Pakistan's means tested CT *Ehsaas Kafaalat* or have been eliminated as in the case of food access programs in Delhi and Gujarat in India (WB, 2020a). In other cases, conditionalities have been temporarily lifted, as in Argentina's Universal transfer per child and per pregnancy (Cannataro, 2020).

The increased need for CTs and other forms of income relief reinforce the validity of already existing discussions about social protection floors for all and universal income programs. The pandemic has demonstrated the fragility of existing labour arrangements and existing income sources. It has also shed light on the lack of savings of the majority of the population whose livelihoods depend on everyday income, often

through informal work. ILO Resolution 202 (2012) reaffirms social protection as a human right that includes basic income and health care guarantees. CTs and universal pensions have been the most common, albeit partial, applications of the Social Protection floor principle. Shifts in the direction of universal income programs that are not limited to pensions and instead reach all age groups would represent transformative changes. Similarly, the inclusion of Universal Health Coverage within these policies would entail a positive and transformative shift (Sen, 2020). However, the trend of privatisation of social protection, or their execution via public-private partnerships as in the recent legislative changes in the India Social Security system (mentioned in [section 5.c](#)) represent significant obstacles in that direction.

Social, political and economic reliance on unpaid labour tell the story of absent, overwhelmed, or weakened public institutions many of which had deteriorated after decades of austerity politics, privatisation, and fragmentation. Weaker institutional capacity and service provision translated into poor delivery, overburdened households, and overworked women and girls. Public education systems in particular faced the challenge of temporarily transitioning into remote or distance learning in the context of poor internet and phone connectivity, as well as with families and teachers with limited to no access to computers or smart phones, thus limiting their capacity to effectively participate in distance learning.⁷ In South Asia, 391 million primary and secondary students have been kept out of school with significant challenges to reach them remotely and it is expected that this may cause up to 5.5 million students to drop out in the region (WB, 2020a). This not only translates into a deficiency in the educational attainment and future limitations in the labour force, but also creates significant concerns about the state's capacity to reach children and youth. After all, schools are not only places where learners access academic education but often, schools are also where they can access meals, health, and social services.

7. In Sub-Saharan Africa, for example, eighty-nine per cent of students do not have access to household computers and eighty-two per cent lack connectivity to internet (UNESCO, 2020). According to ECLAC-UNESCO, in Latin America, while between seventy per cent and eighty per cent of students in richer households have a laptop, this percentage drops to between ten per cent and twenty per cent for students in poorer households (ECLAC-UNESCO, 2020).

The pandemic has exposed the centrality of care and social policy in general. School closures and distance learning and increased reliance on at-home health care and cleaning among others, have amplified our reliance on unpaid care labour, especially overloading women and girls and pushing women out of the labour market. Hence, one of the risks that this period presents, is that the expulsion of women workers from the labour market becomes normalised and that the amplified reliance on their unpaid care labour becomes directly or indirectly a policy measure by which publicly provided care services continue to be weakened and their costs externalised. Contrastingly, there is the potential for the pandemic to open up the opportunity to develop integrated public care systems. Such systems would integrate social protection policies, social insurance and social services with the goal of redistributing and reconfiguring the social organisation of care. These transformations would not only facilitate the redistribution of care labour and responsibilities, but would also have positive externalities such as the creation of new jobs, as well as facilitating women's and other unpaid care providers' economic autonomy by freeing up time for them to work and study (Rodríguez Enríquez, 2020b).

The federal government in Argentina and the municipal government of Bogota (Colombia) are two cases where the pandemic served as a catalyst for the development and implementation of integrated care systems. In both cases this institutional development was part of the plans for the newly elected governments. In the case of Argentina, the system, which is still in its early stages, seeks to defamiliarise care provision, and shift care responsibilities from the household to the community level and the state. The policy is based on the principle that care is a necessity, a right, and a form of work thus addressing issues related to service delivery from the perspective of care recipients but also from the perspective of care providers. Part of the development includes the creation of an Inter-Ministerial group that seeks to coordinate and strengthen existing policies. The policy also includes carrying out "Territorial Care parliaments" that are open dialogues between federal government, provincial, and local constituents with the goal of creating a policy that accounts for local needs and perspectives. Part of the emergency measures taken in the context of the lockdown

implemented during the first months of the pandemic were done taking care labour and needs into account. For example, a new kind of paid leave was created for public workers with children whose daycare or school had been suspended, as well as leave for workers that are parents or tutors of children who are six years old or less (Argentina, 2020a; Carbajal, 2020; Ministerio de las Mujeres, 2020). The case of the city of Bogota includes the adaptation of existing infrastructure to increase the provision of care services for children, the elderly, and those with disabilities. In tandem, the program seeks to revalue and redistribute unpaid care work. New services include training programs for care providers to facilitate labour inclusion, educate men in care activities such as cooking so that care labour is redistributed within households, and provide leisure activities for women who provide unpaid care labour exclusively. The program also includes the provision of community washing machines as well as access to home appliances in economically depressed areas, on the understanding that infrastructure and technology are a central aspect of care, especially from the perspective of rural communities, and urban poverty (Castiblanco, 2020; Gobierno Distrital de Bogotá, 2020).

Bogota and Argentina are incorporating a territorial focus to their policy designs which seeks to enable a closer relation between communities, local politics, and service provision. A similar territorial approach has been used in the state of Kerala, India, where decentralised governance has been central to their emergency response program. Autonomous local governance institutions called panchayats have been part of the distribution of relief measures that includes food provisioning for vulnerable groups, rural-job guarantee schemes and utility and water payments, among others (Nayak Mukherjee, 2020).

Bringing care policy to the local level and recognising the importance of access to water and electricity, waste management, infrastructure and technology (i.e., home appliances) which are critical for a social organisation of care that accounts for the material aspects that are so prevalent in the global South. If care is inclusive of the realities of rural communities and the urban poor, it necessarily accounts for access to shelter, clean water, and infrastructure. The pandemic has made it clear that the labour

and resources that are essential to the sustainability of everyday life are not homogenous but rather contextual. Societies with large informal economies, labour precarity and weak institutional settings rely heavily on community landholding, and collective food production as a form of social protection. Access to and control over usable land, as well as the protection of oceans and biodiversity are indeed linked to care and social protection in rural communities.

Care is deeply related to access to water, housing and shelter. Precarious access to housing, overcrowded dwellings and scarce access to water have been critical obstacles in people's ability to abide with the pandemic control regulations within the global South. The issue of evictions for example, is of particular concern, considering the rising unemployment, increased poverty and the lack of housing security among the urban poor. The number of people living on the streets increased in large cities even in the context where eviction bans were implemented, such as in Sao Paulo (Brazil), Manila (The Philippines), Mogadishu (Somalia), Cape Town (South Africa), among others (i.e., the evictions of migrant workers in India and Colombia) (Beltran, 2020; Faria, Nobre and Moreno, 2020; NRC, 2020). In some cases, evictions were promoted by local governments such as in Cape Town, where the Supreme Court had to intervene to stop the ongoing evictions of urban dwellers on public land in the midst of the pandemic. In that case, the South African Human Rights Commission, together with a social movement (Housing Assembly) and one person who had been evicted presented their case to the South African High Court in light of the actions of the City of Cape Town, which included forceful eviction of urban dwellers carried out by a private company subcontracted by the City. The Court ruled prohibiting any eviction during the State of Emergency related to the pandemic, and also requested that when evictions are carried out lawfully, the Police must be present and warrant that they are done in conformity to the constitution and protecting human dignity. Despite the positive position taken by the High Court, the temporary nature of the Eviction Ban, the hiring of subcontractors to carry out the evictions, as well as the global nature of the eviction crisis, raises alarms about the forms of livelihood and care systems that may emerge in the aftermath of the pandemic. We are cognizant that housing, water and access to other essential services

are rightly and most frequently seen as issues in and of themselves. However, from a southern feminist approach, we are interested in furthering our analysis about them in a way that highlights the material aspects of care and social reproduction.

Our analysis of care and social protection policies in the pandemic context and its aftermath is inclusive of policies related to land, housing, water and sanitation as part of how livelihoods, care and social protection. Who has access to safe shelter and under which conditions? What factors and institutions are determining people's access to water, energy and housing and how, if at all, has this changed during the pandemic? Has climate change and environmental degradation further affected access to care and social protection in the current context? Alongside these material aspects of care and social protection, DAWN seeks to pay attention to the ongoing development of integrated care and social protection systems, examining the potential of the pandemic as a portal into more progressive policies that defamiliarise and also de-privatise care provision. While some policies are moving in this direction, we recognise that there are also trends towards privatisation or further fragmentation of policies and services especially in the context of the macroeconomic crisis. That is why care and social protection policy transformations need to be examined paying close attention to labour and macroeconomic policies, given that unpaid social reproductive work has historically operated as a buffer to labour and macroeconomic shocks.

6. Closing Remarks

This Discussion Paper sets an analytical framework for all research and analyses to be produced as part of DAWN's analysis of the policy and political transformations taking place in the global South in the context of the pandemic. It does not aspire to be exhaustive but rather to set general terms that enable context-specific work to be conducted at national and regional levels in ways that allow for comparative analysis at the global level. The questions and reflections posed at the end of each subsection on policy areas seek to illuminate some of the issues and interlinkages that could be highlighted in the analyses of particular policy changes. They seek to be expansive rather than exhaustive. However, what is critical to the analysis is that it:

- applies a feminist intersectional and interlinkages approach;
- focuses on policy changes taking place during the exceptional context of the pandemic;
- ties back to one or more of the four main policy areas: macroeconomics, labour policies and workers' rights, migration and human mobilities, care and social protection; and
- considers the effects that policy and political transformations may have in terms of care systems and livelihoods, inequalities, and civil society mobilisations, struggles and political rights.

The policy areas under discussion are not only interlinked themselves but also linked to other critical policies and issues. In particular, climate change and environmental degradation, biopolitical control and the growing prominence of the digital sphere in power relations are elements that emerge in all political spheres and policy realms. Climate change is perhaps the most significant crisis among the many that

existed before the pandemic and intensifies the effects of the pandemic at every level of life. It affects the conditions under which care and social protection are provided and is increasingly pushing people away from their places of origin. It could also shape the macroeconomic systems that are developing in the context of the crisis in the years to come. Moreover, biopolitics has emerged as one of the most common threads that bind together policy responses to the pandemic, with clear effects on gender and racial politics, considering for example how these policies affect whose bodies belong where, whose labours are deemed essential, and whose bodies are protected or excluded. Furthermore, the digitalisation of life is producing critical consequences for labour relations and capital accumulation, it is permeating into access to education and communication, and is being applied to processes of biopolitical control such as biometric migration management tools. It is expected that these issues may appear with more or less prominence in our analyses depending, among others, on local, national and regional political contexts.

DRAFT for discussion

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