

DISSERTATION SUMMARY

Essays on social reproduction, distribution, and the political economy of paid and unpaid work in selected Latin American countries

My dissertation consists of three essays that use the theoretical insights of Social Reproduction Theory (SRT) to analyze the Cuban economic reform periods after the 90s -emphasizing distributional aspects- and the relationship between childcare provision and maternal time allocation in Ecuador. It contributes to the SRT literature by using it as a framework to analyze Global South and “in transition” contexts while inquiring about the role of the state in shaping and directly contributing to social reproduction processes. Each essay interrogates questions at different levels, from theoretical to methodological to empirical, and applies a variety of qualitative and quantitative tools to explore both the processes behind labor power re-production and the labor embodied in them.

Essay 1, “*Childcare provision on maternal time use in Ecuador*,” investigates households as one of the primary sites of social reproduction. Using time-use data, I explore the relationship between institutional and non-parental childcare provision on maternal unpaid time use, using a seemingly unrelated regression approach (SUR) and taking Ecuador as a case study. While most of the literature on this topic focuses on maternal employment effects, I ask how out-of-home childcare affects the amounts – and types- of time that mothers devote to active childcare, supervisory childcare, and housework and how these effects compare to those resulting from the co-residence of household members likely to assist with childcare. The paper also details the actual utilization of different types of institutional childcare in the Ecuadorian context in 2012, showing the relevance of the type and design of public and private institutional childcare. Results suggest that institutional and kinship childcare presents a complementary relationship for mothers’ active unpaid care time, while female kinship is associated with significant reductions in maternal time regarding supervisory childcare and housework. The size of the effects suggests kinship care is associated with greater reduction in maternal unpaid work time overall, while out-of-home childcare is associated with greater reductions for mothers with no co-resident adult female kin. My results point toward a need for more holistic approaches when considering the social organization of care and maternal time allocation in global south contexts.

Essay 2 (co-authored with Katherine Moos), “*The Distribution of the Cost of Cuban Social Reproduction in 2016: the relative contributions of domestic and diasporic households*,” outlines a conceptual and methodological proposal that identifies the main components of Cuba’s total cost of social reproduction in 2016. The distributional arrangement behind the social reproductive work occurs in different but interconnected sites (the household, the market, the state-owned paid sector, abroad) and is the result of historical and institutional processes where the ‘social reproduction bargain’ is disputed and when the state has, due to the characteristics of historical processes, a major responsibility. Hence, we critically analyze the role of the state and emphasize that the Cuban costs of social reproduction are financed by people’s work, from within and outside the Island, including unpaid domestic and care household work. Results suggest an increasing and substantial role of Cuban diasporic and domestic households in sustaining social reproduction, more important than remuneration and government transfers. We also argue that the

transformations in the distribution of the costs of social reproduction in Cuba have consequences on the legitimacy and support of the government and the revolution, whose meaning is also increasingly contested.

Essay 3, “*Dynamics of social reproduction in Cuba: distributional and gender consequences of the post 1990s economic and social reform periods*”, focuses on how the crises and reform processes in a post-1990s Cuba have re-shaped the roles of the state, the market and the family. Using a historical – institutional approach, this essay inquires the ways in which the social reproduction responsibilities have been re-distributed among these agents, with an emphasis in the caring of dependents and its gendered consequences. I argue that the re-configuration of the costs and responsibilities of the social reproduction and its analysis over time is linked to the “definition” of the social contract, or social reproduction bargain, which has also changed both explicitly and implicitly, with unequal consequences for different groups. The paper supports the hypothesis that, as economic activity contracted and the social reproduction bargain explicitly changed, the Cuban state shifted more responsibility for social reproduction onto the household sector, leaving women to bear the greatest burden. However, although results might mirror the consequences of the ‘re-privatisation of the social reproduction thesis’ the conditions, circumstances, and processes under which those results are visible require a more nuanced approach to understanding the varying forms of state involvement and their implications for social reproduction in specific contexts.