

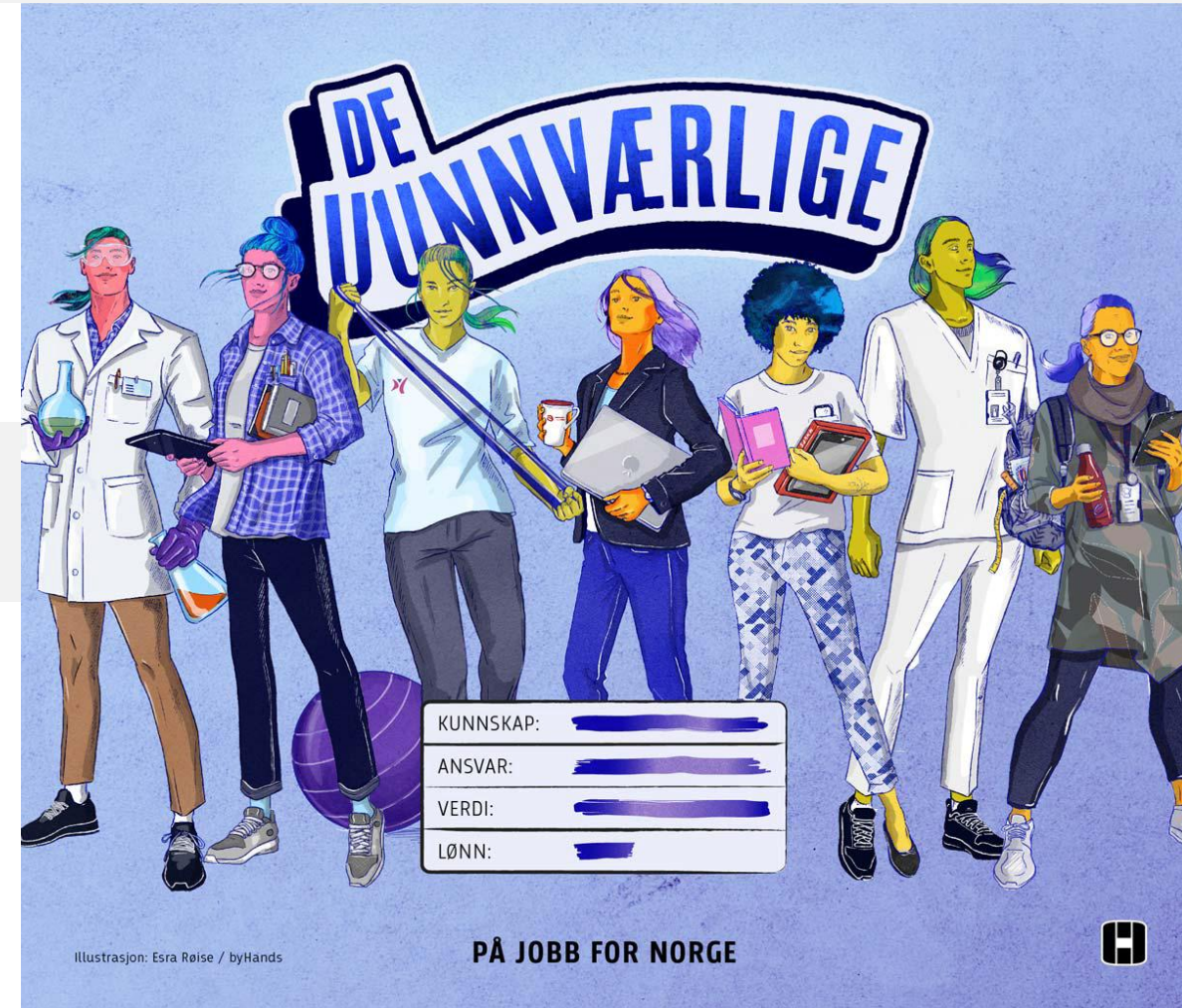
Negotiating the economic and social value of care work: A FPE framework to assess the outcomes of care collective bargaining

Veronika Lemeire

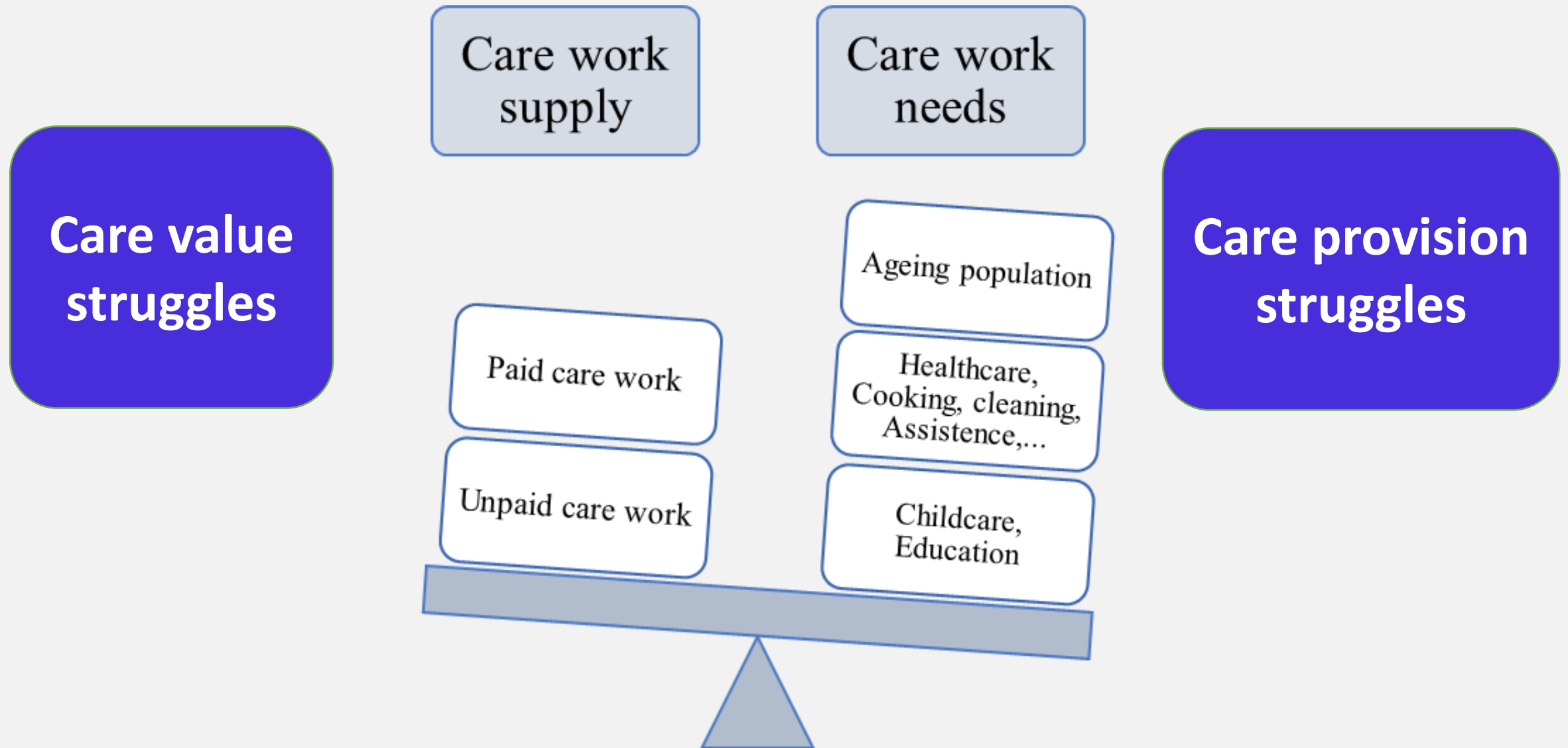
Veronika.lemeire@uhasselt.be

School of Social Sciences, Hasselt University, Belgium

25 October 2025,
Gendering Macroeconomics Conference, Forum for
Macroeconomics and Macroeconomic Policies (FMM),
Berlin



Demographic transition, care crisis and care struggles



Overview

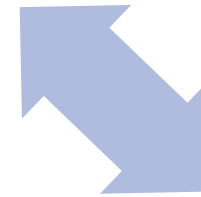
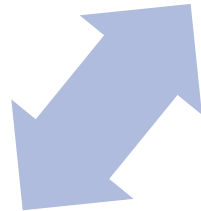
- Gendered care work and class relations
- Valuation of care work in industrial relations
- Methodology:
 - Comparative multilevel case studies
 - Qualitative-quantitative data
- Findings from previous research on Belgium and exploratory investigations



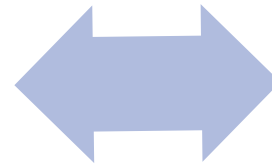
**Capitalist
contradictions in
social reproduction
needs**

Care shortages

Labour shortages for care
professionals



Care inequalities
gender, racial/ ethnic,
class



**Care
undervaluation**
in labour market, social
protection, and
discursively

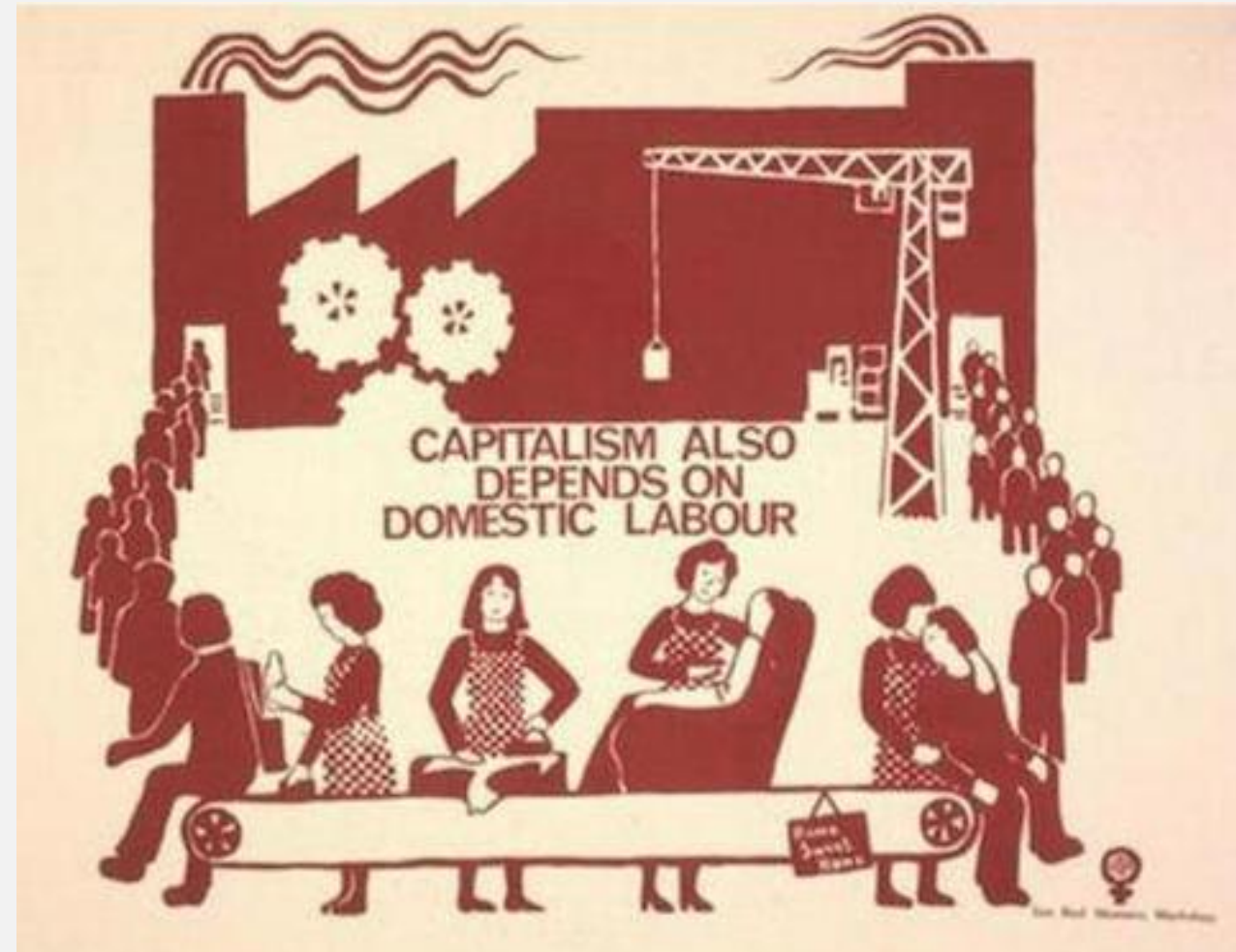
An integrated perspective on gendered care work and class relations

Capitalist economic production *depends on* reproductive care work for supplying the adequate labour forces necessary for capitalist accumulation

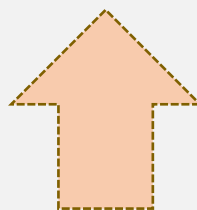
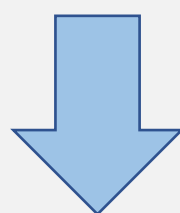
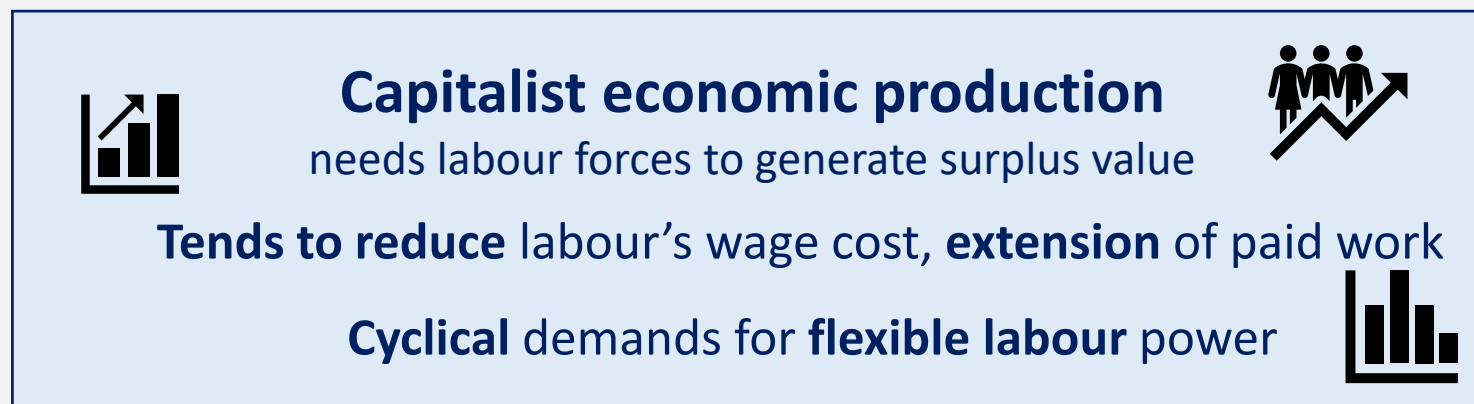


Social reproduction process *subjugated* to and partially *outside* capitalist production process

Bhattacharya 2017, Brenner 2000, Fraser 2014, 2016, Picchio 1992, Vogel 2013[1983]

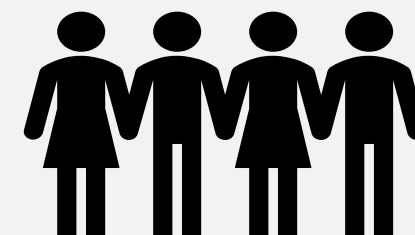
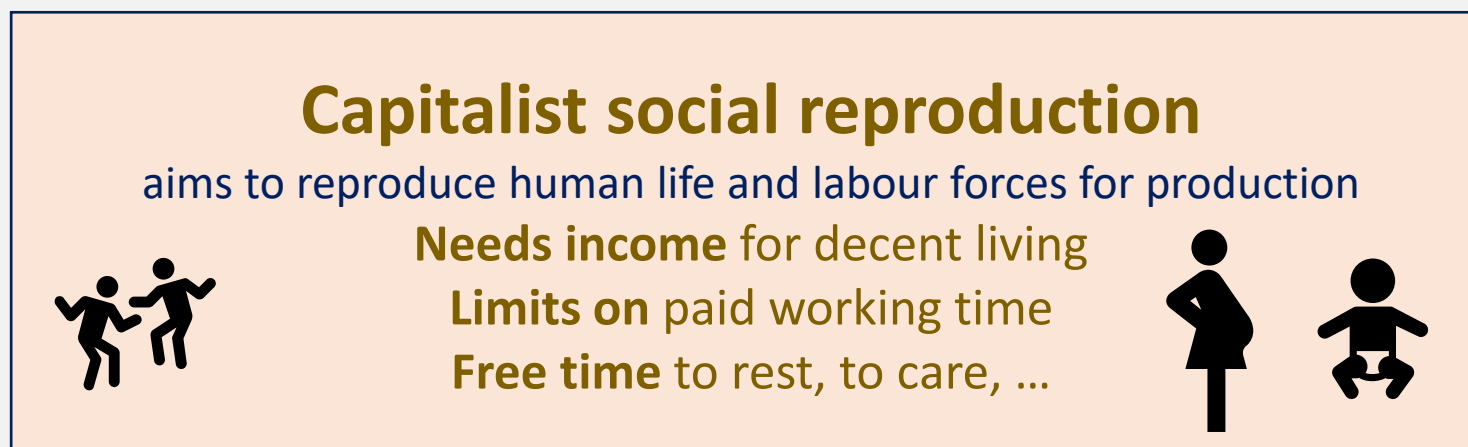


Gendered care work in capitalist society



State-capital-labour
relations

The text is centered within a brown rounded rectangular box, which is positioned between the two main process boxes.



Impact on gender equality

Valuation of care work in labour relations

	Formal paid care work	Informal care work (unpaid – partly paid)
Valuation mechanism	Labour market: direct economic-monetary value	Welfare state: Fraction indirect economic value Part socially valued, part invisible
Labour relations structures		
Capital-labour organisations		
Bargaining outcomes		

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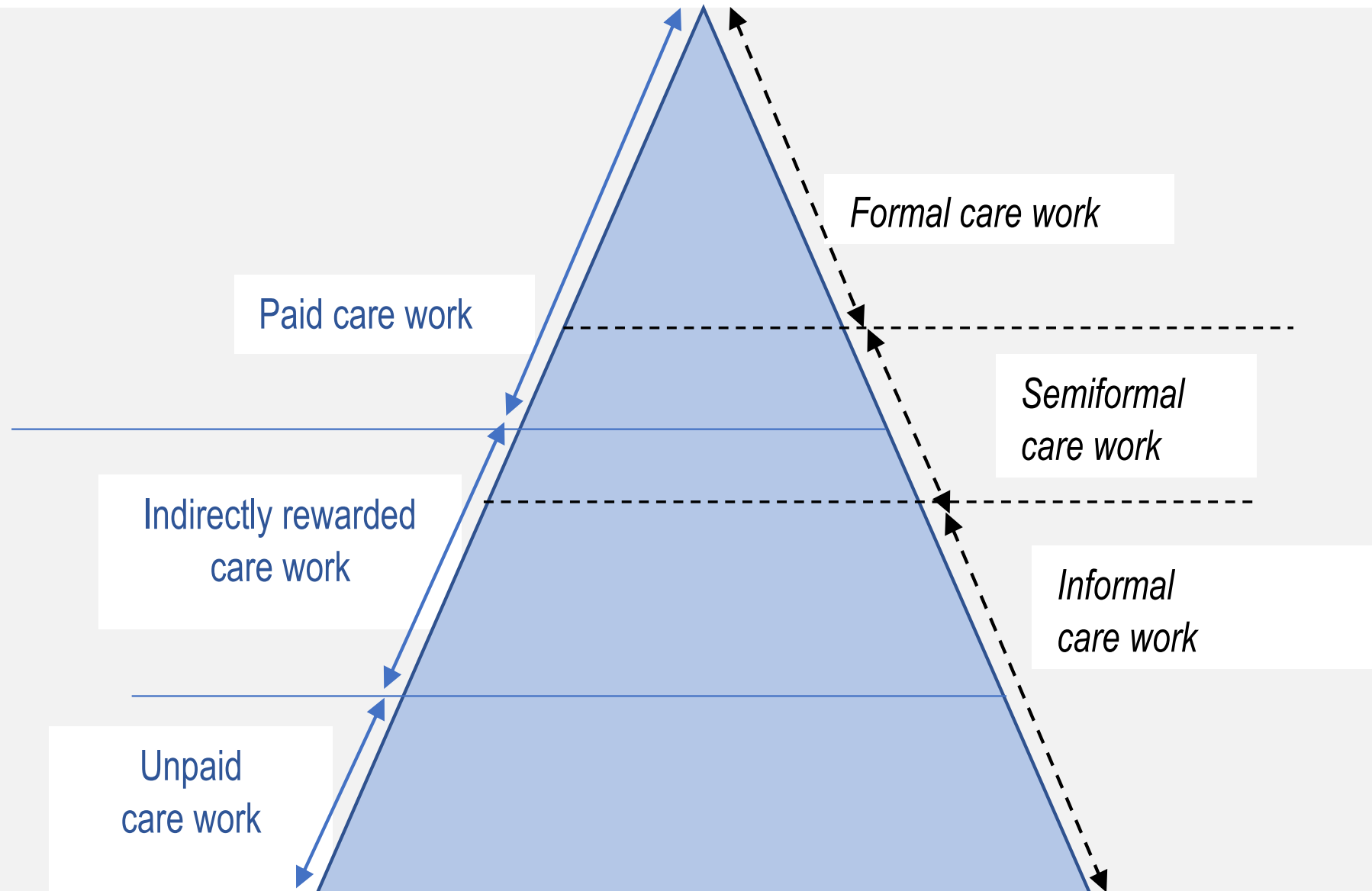
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Bargaining outcomes	Real pay rise, care investment, working condititons, ...	Social benefits, paid care leaves,...

Care work: (un)paid and (in)formal



Research questions

- How have **capital-labour institutions** negotiated **the value of formal and informal care work** over time?
 - Which impact of **macroeconomic cycles** and **policies** on care valuation?
 - Which gendered and intersectional **outcomes**?

Mixed qualitative - quantitative methodology

Multilevel comparative case studies:

- Social partnership market economies with different gender-care trajectories
 - Germany: stagnant GPG, conservative welfare state, EMU
 - Norway: stagnant GPG, social welfare state, non-EU
 - Belgium: low and declining GPG, conservative welfare state, EMU

Data:

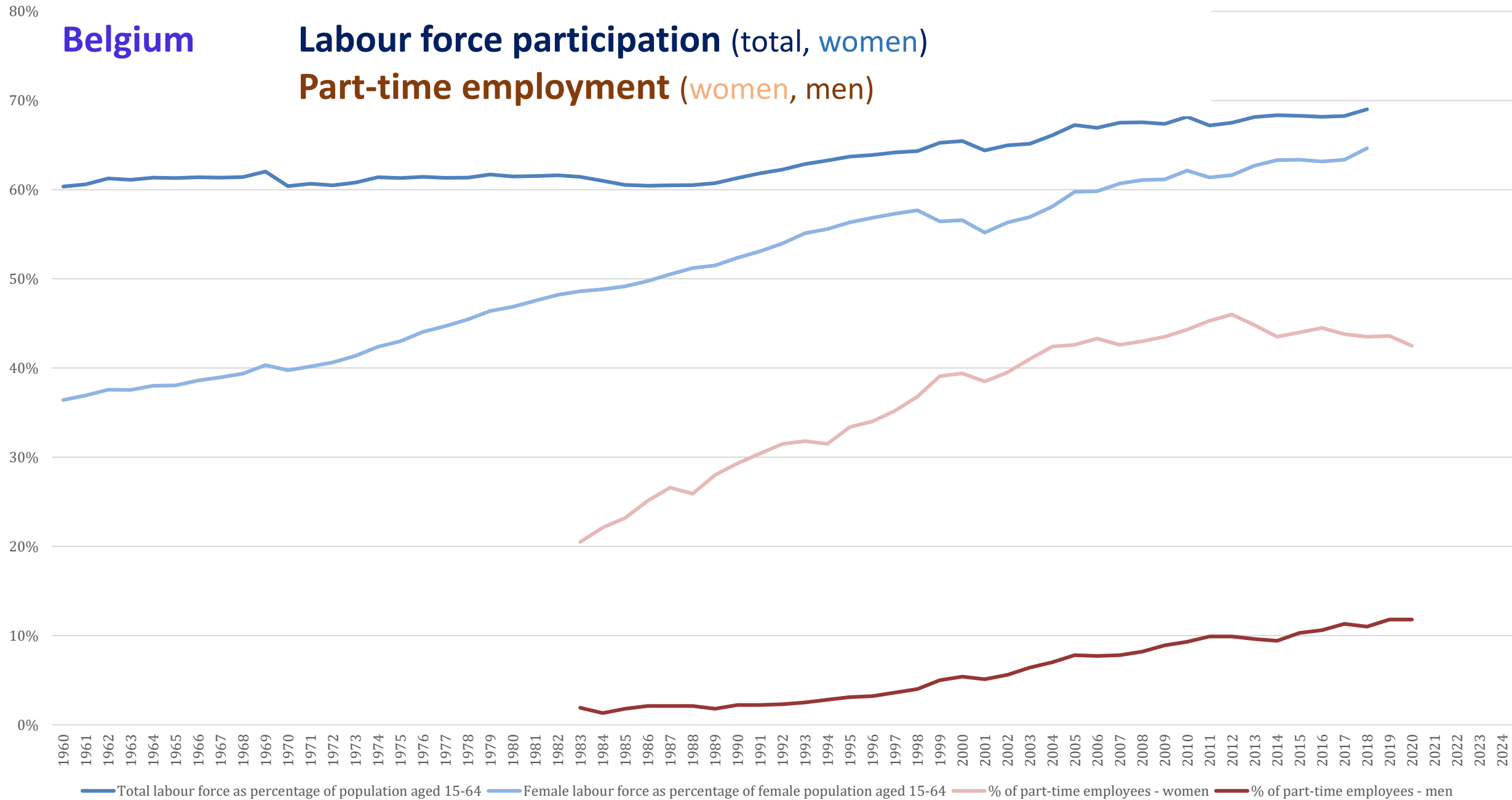
- Qualitative outcomes of collective bargaining and social dialogue
- Quantitative indicators on care work value (wages, social benefits), working times, gendered time use, gender inequalities
- Macro-economic indicators, EU economic policies
- From 1999 to date (EMU)

Key indicators <small>(Eurostat, OECD)</small>	Germany	Norway	Belgium	EU average
Trade union density	14,1%	50.4%	49.1%	
Collective bargaining coverage	49%	69%	96%	
Women's employment	77,6%	77,4%	68,3%	70,8%
Women's part-time work	48,9%	28,5%	37,3%	27,9%
Gender pay gap 2006	22,7%	16%	9,5%	
Gender pay gap 2023	17,6%	12,8%	0,7%	12%
Proportion low wage earners 2006-2022	20,3% 18,98	6,48% 8,45%	6,82% 15,86%	15,73% 14,72%
Public debt	62,66%	44%	105%	
Care services	Mixed public-private	Public sector	Mixed public-private	
Fertility	1,47	1,40	1,39	

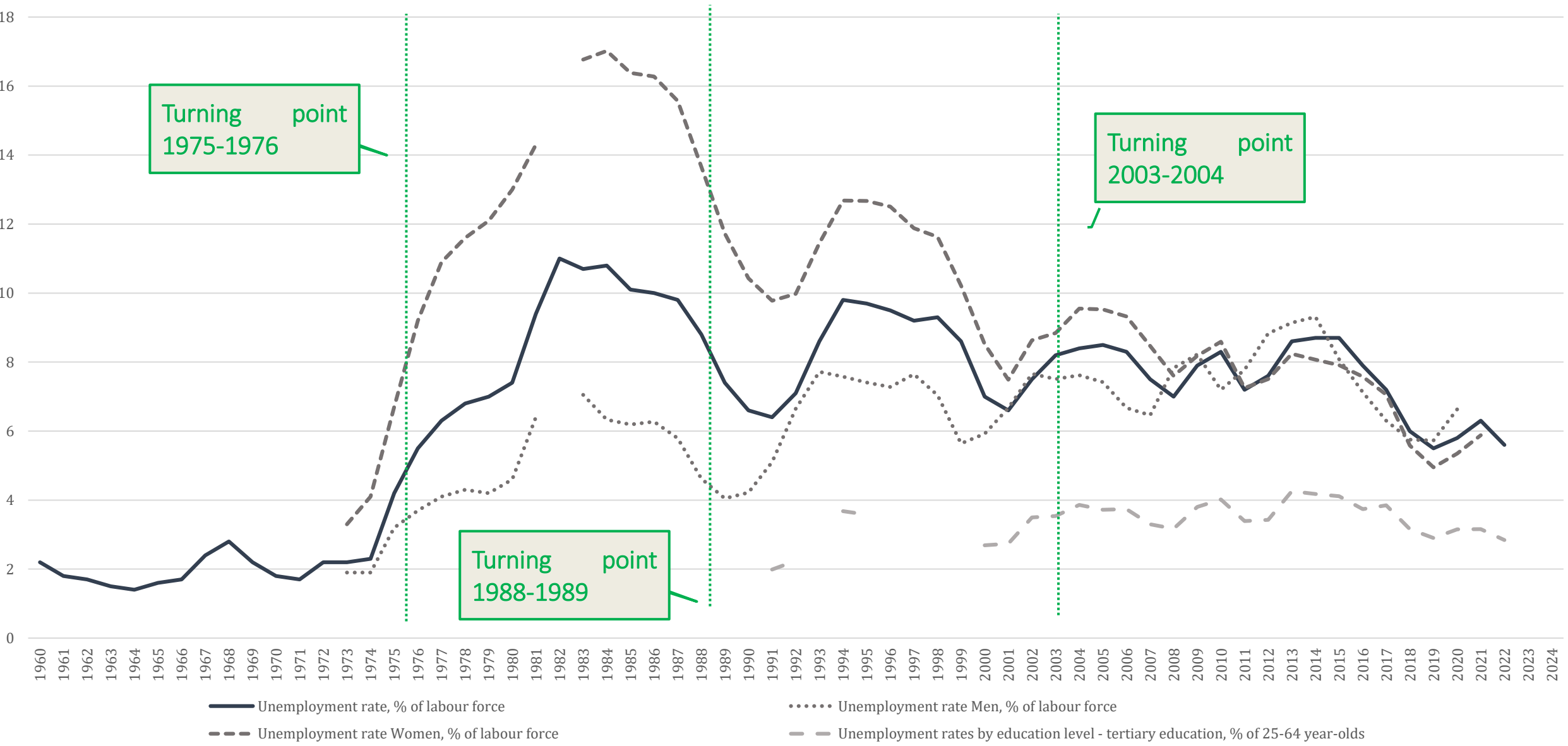
Belgium

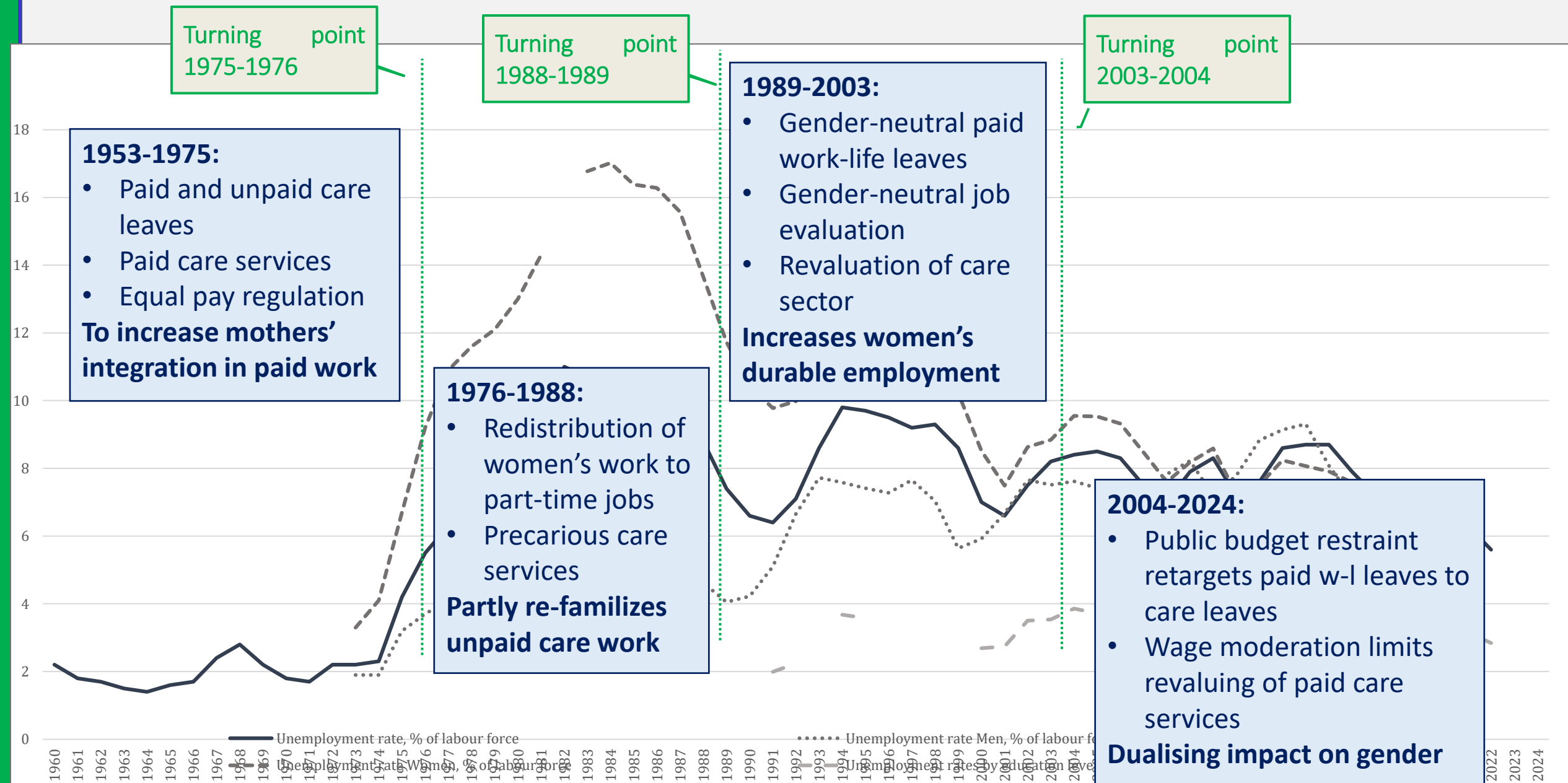
Labour force participation (total, women)

Part-time employment (women, men)



Belgium: Unemployment rate (total, men, women, tertiary education)





TURNING POINTS: Alterations in content of working time agreements
changes in the production's need for labour forces

Preliminary findings of exploratory investigations

- Various collective bargaining strategies to reduce wage disparities and revalue care workers' wages:
 - Focus on lifting care workers' low wages or revaluing women's professional skills?
 - Different wage moderation processes in collective bargaining with different impact on revaluation for different groups of care/ women workers
- Impact of EU policies
 - Equality policies provide opportunities for negotiation care work
 - Pay transparency, minimum wage directive, EU Care strategy
 - Macro-economic policies (wage moderation, austerity) may hinder revaluation

Discussion

- Care sector collective bargaining:
 - Structural constraints of capitalism and increased workers' agency in care work
 - Social partnership provides a platform to negotiate contradictions and undervaluation (Hansen et al 2021, Lemeire 2024)
- Mobilisation of care workers in trade unions and emerging care coalitions
 - Potential for future revaluation strategies
 - In depth qualitative research needed



Questions?
Thank you for your attention !