

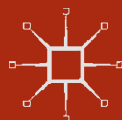
Gender and the Economic Crisis in Europe

Politics, Institutions and Intersectionality



GENDER AND POLITICS

Edited by
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Gender and Politics

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Johanna Kantola • Emanuela Lombardo
Editors

Gender and the Economic Crisis in Europe

Politics, Institutions and Intersectionality

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Helsinki and Madrid, 1 November 2016

NOTE

1. 'Against Patriarchal and Capitalist Attacks: Feminist Disobedience!' (translation from the Catalan).

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Gender and the Politics of the Economic Crisis in Europe

Johanna Kantola and Emanuela Lombardo

INTRODUCTION

Since 2008 the Western world has lived through one of its most serious economic crises. What started as a financial crisis in the US with the collapse of the Lehman Brothers, spread to Europe as a general banking crisis that brought down national economies of countries such as Iceland, Ireland, Greece, Spain, Portugal and Italy. The gendered consequences of the crisis are significant and are analysed in gender scholarship from different disciplines. Feminist economists show that as a result of the cuts to the public sector services, benefits and jobs, women's unemployment, poverty and discrimination have increased across the countries with minority women from different racial and ethnic backgrounds or with disabilities being disproportionately affected (Karamessini [2014a](#);

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Pearson and Elson 2015). Feminist political scientists and sociologists document how the harder economic climate has been combined with conservatism as evidenced, for example, by hardened attitudes in the European Parliament and Spain towards abortion, increases in the levels of domestic violence as well as women entering prostitution (Kantola and Rolandsen Agustin 2016). The rise of the populist right and left parties, anti-Islamic and anti-Semitic sentiments as well as racism and resentment towards migrants have included attacks on migrant women and veiled women (Athanasίου 2014). At the same time progressive gender and wider anti-discrimination policies, policy instruments and institutions that might counter these trends have suffered from significant cuts to their resources (Lombardo 2017). Feminist cultural studies analyse the ‘commodification of domestic femininities’: the idealization and promotion of female resourcefulness at times of recession and cuts in family income in various television programmes and series (Negra and Tasker 2014: 7).

The aim of this book is to analyse how the economic and social crises are deeply intertwined with political ones. Indeed, it makes sense to write about crises in plural as opposed to a single financial or economic crisis (Hozic and True 2016: 12; Walby 2015). A politics perspective shows the shifting boundaries between politics and economics, where economic power has taken ever more space from political decision-making with its dominant rhetoric that ‘we have no alternative’ to austerity (cf. Hay and Rosamond 2002). Such rhetoric and policy choices reflect the neoliberal political ideologies of governments and EU politicians (Pontusson and Raess 2012) and have led to processes of de-democratization in EU’s political and economic decision-making (Klatzer and Schlager 2014). The long-standing crisis of democratic legitimacy of the EU has reached new heights with the crumbling of social rights of European citizens, for example, in Greece, with the troika of the European Central Bank (ECB), European Commission (EC) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) dictating austerity politics on member states. A politics perspective further highlights how political institutions—such as two-party systems—have been challenged with populist responses from both political left and right in the European states. Civil society movements and activists have mobilized in masses to resist austerity politics across Europe, proving the resilience of counterpower forces in European societies. In the polity of the EU, economization, de-democratization and politicization are interconnected European processes. In this way, the institutional and policy shifts;

their top-down and bottom-up Europeanization through hard and soft law and discourses; and political resistance by civil society actors are at the core of political analyses of the crisis.

This book charts these developments in relation to gender. The book, first, asks how the political and economic decision-making institutions and processes of the EU have changed as a result of the economic crisis and with what consequences for gender equality and gender equality policy. Have the EU's austerity politics been gender mainstreamed to take into account their differential impact on women and men? How has EU's long-standing gender equality policy been affected by the economic crisis? Second, the book analyses processes of Europeanization as gendered. These expose the gendered impacts of interdependent dynamics between EU and domestic politics in times of crisis. How are member states' gender equality policies, institutions, regimes and debates Europeanized in times of crisis? What changes does EU austerity politics produce in member states' gender equality institutions and policies? Third, the chapters of the book focus on the feminist resistances and struggles around the economic crisis. Civil society's resistance against austerity politics and in favour of democracy shows that political contestation is at the core of this crisis and has important gender dimensions. What is the role of gender and intersectionality in civil society's anti-austerity struggles? What are feminist strategies of mobilization against neoliberal, conservative and racist politics?

This introductory chapter sets the scene for these complex issues about the gendered politics of the economic crisis in Europe. In this chapter, we first map different feminist approaches to analysing the crisis. We show how different gender conceptualizations and analytical strategies change the object of analysis in relation to the crisis. Second, we explore the gendered politics of the crisis: institutions of the EU, processes of Europeanization, and resistances and struggles. Finally, we introduce the book's chapters.

FEMINIST APPROACHES TO ANALYSING THE ECONOMIC CRISIS

Feminist scholars adopt different analytical approaches to the gendered politics of the economic crisis and each analytical perspective sheds a different light on the questions. We focus on five feminist perspectives: (i) women and the crisis, (ii) gender and the crisis, (iii) deconstruction of gender and the crisis, (iv) intersectionality and the crisis and (v) post-

deconstruction of gender and the crisis (see also Kantola and Lombardo 2017a, b). The adoption of any of these approaches changes one's definition on the key concepts of this book—politics, institutions and intersectionality—and one's definition of the crisis itself. The distinctions between the approaches are analytical as most research combines them in a quest to answer empirical real world puzzles. We suggest that analytically frameworks such as these help to discuss the underpinnings of the approaches and their compatibility.

A number of feminist economists map the effects of the crisis on women by using an approach that we call a *women and the crisis* approach. This signifies analysing the different waves of the crisis where men's employment in the private sector, for example, in construction businesses, was worst hit at first, and how in the second wave, the public sector cuts started to erase women's jobs, as well as the public sector services and benefits that women relied on (Bettio et al. 2012; Karamessini and Rubery 2014). In the field of politics, this has signified studying the numbers of women and men in economic decision-making and banking. Walby's (2015: 57) question, 'Would the financial crisis have been different if it had been Lehman Sisters rather than Lehman Brothers?', makes us ask whether a more diverse composition of corporate boards would have moved financial leaders to take less risky decisions (for a critical discussion see Prügl 2016; True 2016). Feminist scholars have argued that it has been a men's crisis in the sense that men have been the dominant actors in the institutions that have inflicted the crisis and attempted to solve it (Pearson and Elson 2015: 14). Whilst taking 'women' and 'men' as relatively unproblematic and unitary categories, the approach has the strength of providing factual evidence for policy makers about statistical patterns of the crisis as well as arguments for activists about who is represented in the institutions involved in solving the crisis and whose voice is heard in policy making.

Second, a lot of the feminist research draws upon a *gender and the crisis* approach where the focus is on the gendered impacts on the crisis. A focus on gender as opposed to women calls for an understanding of the wider societal structures that reproduce the continuing patterns of domination and inequality. Gender norms underpin the three spheres of economy: finance, production and reproduction resulting in women's overconcentration in the reproductive sphere (Pearson and Elson 2015: 10). The neoliberal policy solutions to the crisis that require cutting down the public sector rely on and reproduce traditional gender roles that delegate major responsibility of care for women. This leads to shifts in the national

and European gender regimes (Walby 2011, 2015) and the EU austerity policies represent a ‘critical juncture’ that could revert long-term progress achieved in gender equality in Europe (Rubery 2014). Gender policies—including gender mainstreaming in the EU—and gender equality institutions have been downscaled in a number of countries at a time when they would be needed the most to counter the gendered effects of the crisis (Klatzer and Schlager 2014). A gender analysis that illustrates the patterns of the feminization of poverty and increases in gender violence points to the ways in which the economic, political and social consequences of the crisis are gendered in complex ways. At the same time there is increasing space in gender and crisis approaches to understand how gender intersects with other categories of inequality such as race and ethnicity, disability and class to result in differentiated impacts of the crisis.

Third, *deconstruction of gender and the crisis* approach discerns the ways in which the crisis is discursively constructed and how these constructions are gendered and gendering. The approach makes it possible to understand how some solutions are favoured over others and how gender is silenced, sidelined or employed in particular ways. In other words, discursive constructions of gender offer particular subject positions and close off others. These constructions have effects, they can politicize or de-politicize the crisis in particular ways and they impact on perceived solutions. With this feminist approach scholars inquire: who defines and narrates the crisis, and how is the crisis constitutive of new and old political identities, institutions and practices? (See Hozic and True 2016: 14.) How is knowledge about the crises conditioned and informed by patterns of power? (Griffin 2016: 180). Penny Griffin suggests that there is a prevalence of governance responses that ‘centralise women’s “essential” domesticity or fiscal prudence, prevailing representations of men as public figures of authority and responsibility, and techniques of governance that exploit these’ (Griffin 2015: 55). Such techniques include, according to Griffin, gender quota systems based on the assumption that the presence of women’s bodies balances out hypermasculine behaviour, or austerity measures that are instituted on the foundational assumption of women’s reproductive work as inferred but unpaid.

Fourth, *intersectionality* approaches explore the inequalities, marginalizations and dominations that the interactions of gender, race, class and other systems of inequality produce in times of crisis, such as the differentiated impact of austerity policies on migrant minoritized women or men (Bettio et al. 2012), female refugees in countries like Greece (Athanasidou

2014) and younger unemployed women and older women who see their pensions reduced or cut (Bettio et al. 2012; Karamessini and Rubery 2014). Heteronormativity is deeply implicated in the dominant narratives about the economic, social and political crises although their implications are detrimental to LGBTQ communities (Smith 2016: 231–232). For example, in the UK, there has been a silence about the impact of the government's austerity policies on sexual injustices with the issue of same-sex marriage dominating the agenda (Smith 2016: 232). Intersectionality shows how different organizations and movements representing different groups can be pitted against one another in a seeming competition for scarcer resources, or, alternatively it can point to new alliances and solidarity at times of crisis (Bassel and Emejulu 2014). Populist right parties seeking to protect 'our people' can resort to racist or even fascist discourses that challenge the human rights of racialized others in European countries (Norocel 2013). European media and politicians continue to demonize Greeks as 'whites but not quite' drawing on racialized constructions of otherness, underpinned by presumed 'laziness' and 'criminality' (Agathangelou 2016: 208).

Finally, *post-deconstruction and the crisis* approach has yet to enter gender and politics research (see Kantola and Lombardo 2017a). We use the term post-deconstruction to signal a diverse set of debates on feminist new materialism, corporealism and affect theory that come analytically (not chronologically, Lykke 2010: 106) 'after' reflections on the deconstruction of gender (Ahmed 2004; Hemmings 2005; Liljeström and Paasonen 2010). These approaches are interested in understanding what affects, emotions and bodily material *do* in gender and politics, beyond discourses. The economic crisis makes the analysis of issues such as the material underpinning of the current political economy, its entrenched relations to neoliberalism, states' biopolitics and emotions and affects and their bodily impacts particularly important (Coole and Frost 2010; Athanasiou 2014). Emotions and affects, such as anger, shame, guilt and empathy circulate in the economic crisis—think of the rage of Spain's *Indignados* movement and how important these emotions are to understand socio-political developments around the crisis. Post-deconstruction analyses suggest that these emotions are not individual but social and involve power relations (Ahmed 2004). For instance, the neoliberal 'austerity' agenda has been accompanied by a moralizing discourse 'that passes on the responsibility to citizens together with a feeling of guilt, making easier for governments to impose public expen-

diture cuts and to increase social control of the population' (Addabbo et al. 2013: 5). Another example is that of Northern women politician's expressing empathy towards 'the other women' in the South, that can read as an affective expression of power that fixes the Southern countries' economic and gender policies as failed (Kantola 2015; Pedwell 2014). Feminist analyses using these approaches show that neoliberalism and violence constitute the vulnerabilities of the bodies affected by the crisis and protesting against it (Athanasίου 2014). Popular left and right parties whose popularity the crisis has increased play with emotions and affects too with tangible results for many.

GENDERING THE POLITICS OF THE CRISIS

Authors in this book take different perspectives on gender and the politics of the crisis. While we have not suggested a particular theoretical framework or gender approach to them, we asked them to be reflexive of the theories that underpin their analyses of the crisis. We have, instead, focused on three issues that, in our view, significantly capture the political dimension of the crisis from gender perspectives: (i) austerity politics and *institutional and policy changes* in the EU before and after the 2008 economic crisis from the analytical perspective of gender and intersectionality; (ii) the political dynamics of interaction between the EU and the member states or the *Europeanization of gender equality and policies* in times of crisis and (iii) the gender and intersectional patterns of *resistances and struggles* against austerity politics.

Austerity Politics, Institutional Changes and Gender Equality Policy in the EU

The first 'political' aspect of the crisis that this volume addresses from a gender perspective includes the *policy and institutional changes* that took place in the EU during the economic crisis. Following the financial crisis, the EU and its member states have pursued an austerity agenda, strengthening the deregulatory impetus within a new economic governance regime that has marginalized the values of gender and wider social equality within the EC's 'Europe 2020' economic strategy¹.

The book chapters analyse the institutional changes that these policy shifts have resulted in the EU and member states particularly, asking questions such as: how are the shifts in the EU economic governance regime

in crisis times and in the EU institutional balance affecting gender equality policy agendas and struggles for wider equalities?

The political response applied in Europe after the 2008 economic crisis has been that of *austerity politics*. Austerity policies are a ‘set of measures and regulatory strategies in economic policies aimed to produce a structural adjustment by reducing wages, prices and public spending’ (Addabbo et al. 2013: 5). Feminist and other scholars have criticized both the rationale behind austerity politics and its social and political consequences. According to this critique, austerity solutions are based on the transformation of a financial crisis—the result of an overfinancialization of the economy and the prioritization of the requirements of financial capital at the expense of paid and domestic economies (Walby 2015)—into a public debt crisis (Rubery 2014; Busch et al. 2013; Bettio et al. 2012). The conversion of the financial crisis into a public debt crisis pushed European states to buy out the unsustainable levels of banks and household debts built up within the financial sector—bailing out failing banks—in an effort to restabilize the markets, which in turn then began questioning the ability of states to finance them (Rubery 2014), thus rendering borrowing on newly established sovereign debt increasingly expensive and unsustainable (Karamessini 2014a; Busch et al. 2013). This has had implications for the repertoire of policy responses, which policy makers could conceive of and the kind of impacts, which policies have subsequently had. In Busch et al.’s words, the EU, in line with neoliberal economic analyses, ‘has interpreted the main cause of the crisis as debt and, based on this reversal of cause and effect’ it has implemented severe austerity rather than growth measures, especially in the Eurozone countries, with negative social and equality impacts for the already indebted Southern European states (Busch et al. 2013: 4).

The EU’s neoliberal economic regime and its emerging institutional configuration have heavily influenced the policies adopted in the aftermath of the crisis, by constructing a new economic governance regime that has reorganized the coordination of economic policy along the lines of ‘disciplinary neoliberalism’. The latter ‘involves both a discourse of political economy and a relatively punitive program of social reform’ (Gill and Roberts 2011: 162). Strict rules of fiscal and monetary policies in this system are imposed on member states that have bailed out failing banks. The main institutional actors contributing to shape this new economic governance regime are the European Council, the ECB, ECOFIN or the Council of Economic and Finance Ministers, the EC, and political

leaders of the member state governments, Germany enjoying the greater relative power in this process (Klatzer and Schlager 2014). The European Parliament has limited voice in this new economic governance regime, for instance it does not control the European Stability Mechanism and the European Semester, as the surveillance of member states' economic policies tends to be jointly conducted by the 'troika' (EC, ECB and IMF).

EU policy responses to the crisis have first and foremost comprised efforts to encourage and coordinate states' reduction of sovereign debt, through various instruments and discourses designed to enforce states' reductions in public spending. The austerity agenda includes measures that promote deregulation and liberalization of the market, including the labour market, through the reduction of labour rules, the decentralization of collective bargaining from state to enterprises and cuts in wages (Busch et al. 2013; Klatzer and Schlager 2014). The EU new macroeconomic governance regime comprises institutions, rules and procedures to coordinate member states' macroeconomic policy. 'Europe 2020', the European Commission Strategy on employment, productivity and social cohesion, sets the framework for the surveillance of member states' economic policies through new governance mechanisms. These are the 'Euro Plus Pact', the 'Stability and Growth Pact', the 'Fiscal Compact' and a 'Six-pack' of EU regulations that tie member states into a commitment to keep their annual budgetary deficit below 3 % and their debt below 60 % of GDP, targets established with the adoption of the European Monetary Union (EMU) (Klatzer and Schlager 2014; Maier 2011). The new economic governance tools challenge representative democracies by moving powers from parliamentary to executive branches of politics both at the national and supranational levels (Bruff and Wöhl 2016: 98).

In particular, the 'Stability and Growth Pact' includes expenditure and debt rules and severely increased sanctions for Eurozone countries. The 'Macroeconomic imbalance procedure' gives the EC and ECOFIN the power to guide member states' economic policy and sanction in compliance. The 'Fiscal Compact' is an international treaty that severely constrains member states' (except UK and Czech Republic) fiscal policy and imposes debt reduction. The 'Euro Plus Pact', adopted in 2011 by the initiative of German Chancellor Angela Merkel and French President Nicolas Sarkozy, puts pressure on member states to adopt reforms in the labour market, health and pension policies with the aim of achieving greater market liberalization. It sets the basis for the EU intervention in wage policy, since it considers wage policy as a key factor for

promoting competitiveness (Klatzer and Schlager 2014; Busch et al. 2013). A so-called Six-pack of EU regulations has entered into force in 2011 to implement the ‘Euro Plus Pact’ with the objective of ‘enforcing measures to correct excessive macroeconomic imbalances in the euro area’ (see Bruff and Wöhl 2016: 98–99). The ‘European Semester’ has reinforced the EU surveillance of member states’ economic and budget policy procedures and decisions, establishing an annual cycle of preset economic targets that member states have to achieve (Europe 2020), translation of these targets into country objectives through National Reform Programmes, which go together with Stability Programmes (where each member state plans the country’s budget for the coming three or four years), EU recommendations to member states, and European Council and Commission monitoring of implementation and imposing of financial sanctions to member states in case of incompliance. The ‘European Stability Mechanism’, through an intergovernmental treaty adopted in 2012, establishes the rules for providing EU financial support to member states in economic difficulty; loans are subject to strict conditionality and structural economic reforms through a process controlled by the EC, in cooperation with ECB and IMF.

While these macroeconomic policies aim to stabilize the European economy, stimulate growth and achieve price stability, they also aim to narrow the definition of the role of government in the macroeconomic arena, thus reducing the ability of the state to act as the financier and employer of last resort (Rubery 2014; Maier 2011). These policies are not therefore politically uncontested, due, among other things, to the high social costs in terms of increasing inequality (Klatzer and Schlager 2014; Rubery 2014). Indeed, gender analyses of EU policy responses to the crisis criticize that gender has not been mainstreamed either in policy design or implementation of ‘crisis measures’ (Karamessini and Rubery 2014; Bettio et al. 2012; Villa and Smith 2014; Villa and Smith 2011; Klatzer and Schlager 2014). This is an issue discussed by Elaine Weiner and Heather MacRae in this volume (see Chap. 4). Only in 9.8 % of the cases of national policies implemented in response to the crisis was there some assessment of the measures from a gender perspective (Bettio et al. 2012; Villa and Smith 2011). The European Employment Strategy, which had formerly integrated gender into its agenda, has progressively made gender invisible, so that it would have disappeared completely from EU2020 if it had not been reinserted in the last minute after amendments from

specific member states (Villa and Smith 2014). Even the European Economic Recovery Plan makes no mention of ‘gender’, ‘women’ or ‘equality’, a fact that was criticized by the Commission’s Advisory Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men. As gender experts denounce, ‘the “urgency” of a response to the crisis seems to have pushed gender mainstreaming further down the priority list’, including the basic presentation of gender-disaggregated statistical data (Bettio et al. 2012: 97–98). Despite broad consensus in the European Parliament’s FEMM Committee (Women’s Rights and Gender Equality Committee) about the importance of tackling the gendered aspects of the crisis, political contestations came into play and shattered this consensus between the diverse political groups about the importance of gender perspective further undermining the role of the European Parliament in promoting a gender perspective to the austerity politics (Kantola and Rolandsen Agustin 2016).

In Chap. 2, Sophie Jacquot analyses the fate of the EU gender policy in the midst of the economic crisis and arrives at a rather bleak conclusion. The economic crisis has exacerbated the already ongoing stagnation in EU gender policy (see Jacquot in this volume). Parallel to the shifts in the EU macroeconomic governance regime in the aftermath of the 2008 crisis, EU gender equality policies experienced a number of institutional and policy shifts that locate the EU as ‘the most striking example of a U-turn in the importance attached to gender equality as a social goal’ (Karamessini and Rubery 2014: 333). Although gender was not effectively mainstreamed into the EU macroeconomic policies even before the crisis, as Villa and Smith (2014) argue, it was indeed mainstreamed in the EU employment policies in the 1990s through the European Employment Strategies.

However, the EU has shifted its priorities and gender equality is not treated as a social goal and it is not integrated in employment policies any longer. The shift in context, according to Villa and Smith (2014) helps to understand this gender invisibility in the EU employment agenda. In the 1990s, the rise in women’s employment improved labour market performance in the member states and was thus considered important for the EU economy, the neoliberal model was accompanied by developments in the social democratic model, and the entry of gender equality supporters such as Sweden and Finland all favoured the integration of gender into the EU employment policies. The economic crisis context is less favourable to gender equality, not only due to a stronger neoliberal ideology in member governments, but also because ‘the key actors in favour of gender equality had been sidelined both internally in the Commission and

externally among member states' (Villa and Smith 2014: 288), a development we discuss in more detail below.

In this respect, a significant shift in the institutionalization of gender equality in the EU occurred in the EC in January 2011, when responsibility for gender equality moved from DG Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities to DG Justice, Fundamental Rights and Citizenship, together with two dedicated units on gender equality policies and on legal matters in equal treatment. The responsibility for gender equality in the workplace is still in DG Employment, but there is no longer a dedicated unit on gender equality left in the DG (Woodward and Van der Vleuten 2014). This administrative shift, which occurred in the second Barroso Commission in 2010, unrooted the portfolio for equal opportunity and non-discrimination from their traditional base in DG Employment and Social Affairs, provoking deep political and strategic consequences on EU gender equality policies (Jacquot 2015).

The shift might be detrimental to gendering European integration in a moment in which a new EU economic governance regime is being built in response to the 2008 financial crisis to strengthen the coordination of national economic, labour market and social policies (Klatzer and Schlager 2014). It came precisely at the time in which the Council and the Commission, through mechanisms such as the European Semester and the 'Six-pack legislation', tightened control over member states' economic and employment policies, with the consequence that the institutional shift of gender equality from DG Employment to DG Justice 'distanced gender equality from employment policy and spread gender equality input thinly across the Commission' (Villa and Smith 2014: 288). This could weaken the EU Equal Opportunities unit's capacity of mainstreaming gender into economic and social initiatives.

While the institutional shift from DG Employment to DG Justice boosted new developments in 'justice', evident in the legally binding directives² against gender-based violence, Jacquot (2015 and in this volume) argues that it contributed to locate gender equality even more within a legal perspective of rights, and it changed the interconnectedness of the administrative, political, academic and activist actors specific to the functioning of the 'velvet triangle' of EU gender equality policy (Woodward 2004). In relation to the rights-approach, the change risks to address EU gender equality only through a reactive, individually based, anti-discrimination approach, rather than through a proactive, group-based, preventive approach, as that exemplified by positive action and gender mainstreaming measures (Lombardo and Bustelo 2012). With respect

to the gender expert networks, the shift destabilized the ‘velvet triangles’ constructed around DG Employment in decades because some of the historical experts were specialist in gender discrimination in the labour market. It also promoted a more managerial approach in which the Commission considered these experts, rationalized in 2011 from the former three networks (Legal Experts Network, EGGE Expert Group on Gender and Employment and EGGSIE Expert Group on Gender, Social Exclusion, Health and Long-Term Care) into one single network as European Network of Experts on Gender Equality ENEGE, to save costs and improve management. Moreover, the gender expert networks are hired to provide information and services to the Commission rather than as scientific and legal experts that advise the Commission on how to advance the cause of gender equality, as they formerly did (Jacquot in this volume).

The increased weight of member states in times of economic and institutional crisis, with a greater role of the Council of Ministers, also blocked developments in EU gender equality policies, as exemplified in the withdrawal of the revision of the maternity leave directive proposal and the blockage of the women on corporate boards directive proposal (Jacquot in this volume). The enlargement to Central and Eastern European countries further favoured the spread of neoliberal ideologies and, in some cases, more traditional notions of gender equality (see chapter on Poland by Zbyszewska in this volume; Villa and Smith 2014: 288). This shifting context, radicalized by the urgency to respond to the Eurozone crisis, tilted the balance between economic and egalitarian goals towards a promotion of neoliberal economic goals. In the crisis context the EU shifted its priorities and seemed to forget its commitments to gender equality goals (Karamessini and Rubery 2014).

The Europeanization of Gender Equality and Policies in Times of Crisis

The second aspect of ‘the political’ that this volume analyses is the political dynamics of interaction between the EU and the member states or the *Europeanization of gender equality and policies in times of crisis*. This includes the analysis of member states’ gender equality context, the political and institutional changes in domestic equality institutions and policy making that are related to EU policy responses to the crisis, and the study of how austerity politics and its gender and intersectional dimensions are

constructed differently by different actors. The chapters challenge the normative underpinnings of the EU austerity politics and its domestic impacts, asking questions such as: how are gender and other inequality policies, politics and regimes of production and reproduction Europeanized in crisis times? How do the domestic debates on austerity politics construct political priorities and articulate the balance between competing economic and equality ideologies?

Europeanization refers to the dynamic interaction between the EU and the member states that allows to explain the domestic impact of Europe through the analysis not only of the transposition of EU directives (Radaelli 2004; Börzel and Risse 2000), but also of the soft mechanisms of policy learning, norm diffusion through financial incentives, actors' interactions and discursive usage of the EU (Lombardo and Forest 2012; Liebert 2003; Eräranta and Kantola 2016). Applying gender approaches to Europeanization during the crisis allows us to explain both convergent and differentiated impacts of the EU austerity measures in the member states, that are due not only to transposition patterns, but also to interactions between national and EU actors and domestic discursive usages of the crisis and of the EU (Lombardo and Forest 2012; Lombardo in this volume; Zbyszewska in this volume). As suggested above, EU's policy responses to the crisis have important gendered implications in the member states, not only for gender equality, but also for equality policies, in the direction of the dismantlement and restructuring of equality institutions and policies in different member states (Bettio et al. 2012).

The impact of EU policy responses to the crisis on member states' gender equality varies depending on factors ranging from the characteristics of *gender regimes*, especially in relation to women's integration in waged labour and extent to which employment and social policies are able to free women from unpaid work of care (Karamessini and Rubery 2014; Wöhl 2014; Walby 2009); gender differences in employment, particularly because, despite women's increased integration in the labour market, their higher presence in public sector occupations (education and health) and their greater involvement in part-time and temporary jobs, make women more vulnerable to be made redundant in times of recession and austerity (Rubery 2014); and intersectional differences of class, migration (e.g. migrant women encounter more disadvantages in the labour market than native women), nationality, geographical location (e.g. regional disparities in women's employment rates) and age (e.g. young women's difficult integration in the labour market and old women facing higher