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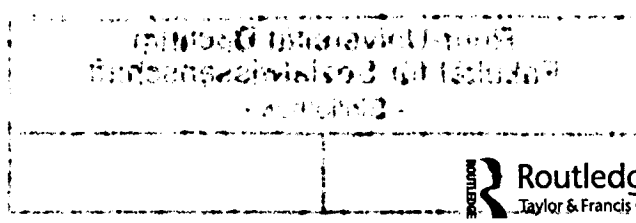

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Gendering the political economy of the European social model

Roberta Guerrina

Introduction

As a new European Commission assumes its position at the end of 2019, it is apt to assess the direction of travel of the European social model, particularly in relation to outgoing Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker's ambition to renew the European social dimension and relocate social issues at the heart of the process of European integration. In his first speech to the European Parliament following his election Juncker stated:

> Huge challenges await us. It is up to us to shape these challenges. If we want a role to play in the future we have to play it now. It is up to us to ensure that the handwriting of the European Social Model is clearly visible in everything we do. Because Europe is a protective shield for all of us who can call this magnificent continent their home. (Juncker 2014)

This statement was issued as a response to the increased footprint of populist and Eurosceptic parties following the 2008 financial crisis. Recognition that trust in the EU has been at an all-time low, this new narrative was supposed to re-engage citizens with the wider European political and economic project. The European Social Model was intended to provide a 'shield' for the citizens of Europe, by driving growth and employability. In this context, equality and social inclusion were implicitly folded into the social Europe discourse.

The question that this opening statement by Juncker and his Commission failed to address was about the position of social justice in the context of this revitalised Europe. This omission raises important questions about the direction of travel and which 'foundational' norms come to the forefront of European integration as it navigates it way out of the crisis. Related to this is a more specific, but no less important, question about whose prosperity is this project advancing and how these trends are reshaping the European gender regime (Cavaghan and O'Dwyer 2018). Specifically, by exploring the gender regime of the European social model, it is possible to shine a light on how different interests at the heart of European integration reproduce socio-economic hierarchies.

This chapter examines the latest developments in European social and employment policy from a feminist standpoint. Specifically, it examines trends in the way the mainstream literature

has treated the impact of Lisbon and the financial crisis on European social and economic cohesion as core principles of European integration. The analysis unfolds as follows. The chapter opens with a summary of the historical development and key features of the European Social Model. Starting with an exploration of the mainstream literature on the nature of the European social dimension, it introduces a discussion of the impact of both the Lisbon Treaty and the financial crisis on European social and economic cohesion as core principles of European integration. This analysis is followed by a discussion of the evolution of the EU as a normative social and gender actor. Introducing feminist analysis of the way gender, and specifically the equality principle, was included in the process of European integration, this section highlights the constraints of a social model predicated on neo-liberal economic rationalities and the limits of the functionalist logic to social justice. The discussion thus the analysis of gender regimes as an alternative approach to understanding the gendered and racialised nature of the European social dimension. Taking the financial crisis as a critical juncture for the European social policy, this chapter unpacks the impact of the crisis on the EU's gender regime and the future of gender equality policies in Europe. More pointedly, it draws attention to how the crisis, whether real or manufactured, reproduced gender hierarchies. This chapter finishes by exploring the idea of the de-evolution of a racialised gender regime and its impact on the politics of social cohesion and equality in Europe.

Defining the European social model

Discussions about the role of the EU as a social actor remain a fairly niche area of research. However, Whyman et al. (2012) point out that the development of a social dimension is what sets the EU apart from other international organisations and other emerging forms of regional cooperation. This silence in EU scholarship, now more widely preoccupied with issues perceived to be of higher political interest such as external affairs, economic and monetary union and Brexit, is indicative of a failure to acknowledge the salience of social politics, particularly at a time of crisis and rising Euroscepticism. Perhaps more pointedly, it is interesting that this is a policy domain that has largely been ignored, at least in mainstream EU studies scholarship, in the context of the politics of austerity following the 2008 financial crisis.

In the simplest terms, the idea of a European Social Model is about finding a way to combine economic growth and social responsibility (Bercusson 2009). At the heart of it are key foundational norms embedded in the Treaties and the EU Charter, such as equality and fundamental rights, which the EU so often invokes and draws upon in its discursive acts. Included in some kind of embryonic form in the founding treaties, it was the Lisbon Treaty, effective from 2009, that was supposed to embed these principles into the EU's social, political and economic fabric, by expanding the scope of the principle of 'mainstreaming' (Bercusson 2009). First introduced in the Treaty of Amsterdam (1997) as a vehicle for integrating equality between men and women into all areas of EU activity, mainstreaming as a policy strategy has been extended to environmental and social affairs. This is an interesting and significant turn, in so far as Lisbon adopts this model in order to ensure the horizontal integration of social issues in the work of the Union (Bercusson 2009). The idea underpinning this approach is that social policy and social issues, such as gender equality and environmental protection/climate change, require a holistic approach to policy-making. The cross-cutting nature of these issues thus requires us to think beyond specific policy domains or policy silos. This is, of course, something that women's rights/equality activists have historically campaigned for, in so far as it requires policy makers to think about the structural nature of inequality. However, if the history of gender mainstreaming in the context

of the EU teaches us anything, it is that this approach requires both embedded knowledge of the issues and, perhaps more importantly, the political will to affect change beyond the introduction of reporting and monitoring mechanisms (Alonso 2017; Allwood 2014; Masselot 2007; Cavaghan 2017a). This approach in turn requires a rebalancing of key priorities in favour of social justice and equality over competitiveness and growth (Bercusson 2009, 105; Cavaghan and O'Dwyer 2018; Emejulu and Bassell 2018). Without such rebalancing, it is unsurprising that many gender scholars found gender mainstreaming – both as a principle and as a strategy – fundamentally deficient in the context of the financial crisis and associated austerity policies (Cavaghan 2017a).

In order to understand the process that produced these silences, it is useful to go back to the foundations of the European social dimension. The Treaty of Rome included a number of social provisions, but three are particularly worthy of attention: Article 117, seeking to improve the living and working conditions of workers; Article 118, outlining key health and safety measures and Article 119, introducing the principle of equal pay for men and women. It has been widely argued that the European project was never solely an economic endeavour. However, the history of European integration has also been marked by a disjuncture between the normative foundations of the Treaties and the policy prescriptions that followed in the way of secondary law and soft-policy initiatives (Whyman, Bainbridge and Mullen 2012; Guerrina 2005; Kantola 2010).

The introduction of a number of action programmes in the 1970s and the development of the equality *acquis* through case law and the Equal Pay and Equal Treatment Directives laid the foundations of the European Gender Equality Agenda. The treaty foundations provided the legal competency for policy entrepreneurs in the European Commission to develop this area into one of the most wide-reaching agendas in the field of European social policy (Guerrina 2005). These are important developments as they created a body of legally binding measures and supportive institutional mechanisms for the principle of equality to become embedded in the process of European integration. It is, however, important not to overstate their reach and assume that the social dimension or gender equality are actual drivers at the heart of the project (Whyman, Baimbridge and Mullen 2012). Resistance to the full actualisation of these agendas came both from within the Commission as well as from some member states. A functionalist logic about the role of social policy and equality as supportive pillars of the single market, either by preventing social dumping or averting an impeding demographic crisis, crystallised the marginal position of social policy and social rights in European integration. The UK's opt-out from the 1989 Community Charter on the Fundamental Social Rights of Workers cemented this trend (Guerrina 2005; Woodward 2008; Cavaghan 2017b; Guerrina 2008).

Of course, Article 2 of the Treaty of Maastricht (1992) sets out the main aims of the European social model: (1) Working towards full employment; (2) Balanced and sustainable development; (3) Economic and social cohesion. None of these ideas are particularly new, but they help to re-affirm the highly commodified nature of the European social dimension (Hantrais 2018; Fagan and Rubery 2018). Rooted in multilevel governance, the European Social Model was intended to provide opportunities for key stakeholders and interest groups to come together in order to ensure the operationalisation of the principle of economic and social cohesion (Bercusson 2009: 88). However, as Whyman, Baimbridge and Mullen (2012, 2–3) summarise, despite this ambition, the European social dimension has remained largely undefined and aspirational. Perhaps more worryingly, over the years it has become co-opted in the pursuit of 'higher' political priorities. Officials are always ready to reference to core foundational norms and values, which include social cohesion and equality, as drivers of EU action. However, there

is scant evidence that the European Social Model is little more than the collection of hard and soft policy measures and case law, all of which were introduced in order to facilitate the functioning of the common market (Whyman, Bainbridge and Mullen 2012; Ter Haar, Beryl Philine and Paul Copeland. 2010). Arguably, it is because of this functionalist logic that the European social dimension has failed to fulfil its potential, as originally envisaged by Commission's 1994 white paper A way forward for the Union' (European Commission 1994). The Lisbon Strategy (2000), the Open Method of Coordination as operationalised by the Lisbon Strategy, and the European Employment Strategy (1997) were supposed to provide a way forward for European social policy (Beveridge and Velluti 2008). However, the very nature of this form of soft policy governance allowed for the marginalisation of this policy agenda in the context of the 2008 crisis.

The Financial Crisis has become an important test of the European social dimension. The limits of economic and social cohesion, as underlying principles, became apparent through the mechanisms instituted in the context of the European Semester and the Stability and Growth Pact to support post-crisis European economic governance (Cavaghan 2017c). Since 2008 the trend has been to retrench social provisions, thus highlighting the vulnerability of the European social dimension as a building block of the European project (Whyman, Bainbridge and Mullen 2012). As Romano and Punziano (2015) point out, the 2008 crisis re-opened the debate about the nature, scope and impact of the social contract, and by extension the social underpinning of the European project. Their argument points to the way in which the crisis, and specifically austerity policies, undermined social cohesion. As they explain, 'the economic crisis and, more specifically the austerity measures that are introduced to tackle it, is increasingly causing a deterioration of the living conditions of the working class, not to mention individuals excluded from the labour market, for whom the ongoing restrictions on social and economic rights generally result in even deeper material deprivation' (Romano and Punziano 2015, 3). The story of the distance between European social policies and the people of Europe is also often presented in an overly simplistic way. This point is particularly relevant in the context of the political debate started in the UK after Brexit, but now taking root in many parts of Europe around the 'left behinds'. This process not only reshapes the social contract, it also unravels the very foundations of social cohesion and solidarity that are supposed to be the cornerstones of the process of European integration (Romano and Punziano 2015). This is an important consideration, but it is only surprising if we ignore the vast body of feminist work on European social and employment policy. Feminist analysis of the crisis as well as the EU's social policy and welfare regime has long pointed out the deeply gendered and racialised nature of those models, which ultimately rely on gender hierarchies and divisions of labour in the private sphere. More on this in the next sections of this chapter.

While austerity programmes and policies have an impact on the nature of the social contract (Romano and Punziano 2015) and the EU's approach in the wake of the 2008 crisis matters, this is also only a limited way of thinking about social policy and the European Social Model. The material consequences are extensive and important. As Romano and Ponziato (2015) point out, poverty rates have increased across Europe, as the crisis legitimised significant cuts in national welfare provisions. Statements from EU officials double down on this retrenchment. Take for instance Mario Draghi's comments after being appointed as the President of the European Central Bank in 2012 that the European Social Model is 'gone', which set the stage for the debate about the nature and reach of the European Social Dimension post-crisis (Hermann 2017). This highlights the transition, that is currently under way. For Romano and Punziano (2015, 8–9) is evidence that the roots of the European social model were not as deep as anticipated by many

commentators and scholars. Moreover, the dominant narrative often used to justify these choices is that 'the former type of social solidarity is no longer sustainable under current circumstances' (Romano and Punziano 2015, 8).

Hermann's (2017) work also demonstrates the structural reforms embarked upon by the member states in the context of the financial crisis have undermined the foundation of social models at the national level. As he explains, 'the shift from the Open Method of Coordination to Economic Governance could increase pressure on other countries to introduce similar reforms even if they are not on the verge of bankruptcy' (Hermann 2017, 52). This analysis points to an increase in the commodification of the European Social Model. Even Juncker's social pillar focuses centre employment and labour market activation in the context of his social mainstreaming agenda (European Commission 2019). This is something that has been consistently highlighted by gender scholars as one of the key limitations of the European social dimension, which is grounded on gendered assumptions about activation, employability and value. For instance, the social and economic value of care is largely overlooked, unless deployed to support work-life balance policies aimed at increase women's labour market activation at the 'service' of economic growth.

In the context of the latest crisis, it poses a challenge to the way the Commission has gone about integrating economic growth and social/economic cohesion (Ter Haar and Copeland 2010). Part of the issue at stake here is related to the objectives of the policy agenda, which favour economic growth above all else. As Cavaghan and O'Dwyer (2018) found, this approach tends to overlook the way growth, recovery and austerity affect different socio-economic groups. This, Cavaghan and O'Dwyer (2018) find, is affected by implicit bias in the way we formulate, decide and then implement policies. Cavaghan (2017a) adds that the shift towards macro-economic policies further harms marginal groups in so far as the emphasis on aggregate outcomes and associated metrics shifts attention from everyday politics that affect the lives of women, and particularly women of colour.

The European Social Model has always been and continues to be a highly contested concept/principle, and it is an aspiration that requires significant political will, which is lacking at this juncture in the history of European integration (Whyman, Bainbridget and Mullen 2012). Most of the literature and analysis conducted on the evolution of the European Social Model focuses on the EU's approach to managing and adapting to different types of welfare regimes. However, what is often overlooked is the way social policy is itself shaped by gender norms. This is all the more striking considering the footprint of the gender equality *acquis* in the EU. A more detailed engagement with this body of work would also have highlighted the impact of adhering to a functional logic to support social cohesion on the future prospects of a European social dimension. As Romana and Punziano (2015) point out, the discursive push to centre European values, including mainstreaming social priorities, in the wider narrative of the EU as it seeks to navigate its way out the crisis, should not be taken as an indicator that social policies and politics are being elevated to the top of the policy agenda. Rather, the absence of a meaningful discussion of social justice and solidarity, coupled with a move towards soft-policy governance, highlights the loosening of the social regulation agenda. This is a result of two overlapping trends. Firstly, the European social dimension has always been fairly hollow, focusing mostly on those areas of policy not to be considered core to national welfare provisions. Secondly, it has largely been devoid of any meaningful engagement with the idea of a European society or social realm. Taken together these points to a fairly superficial project from the outset that has been hollowed out by the same market rationalities that were initially deployed to include social policies in the Treaties in the first place (Daly 2006, 463–464).

The EU as a social and gender actor

The emergence of the EU as a social actor is inextricably linked to its role as a gender actor. The European Commission's role as a policy entrepreneur in both areas has allowed for the development of this policy domain, but it has also defined the boundaries of its social and gender regime (Bain and Masselot 2012). Critical actors operating in the Commission were able to navigate the complex institutional structures and mediate competing interests by compromising on the way key principles, such as equality between men and women, were operationalised through the European *acquis*. Linking social rights to employment and activation through economic rationalities helped to embed this agenda, but ultimately commodified the principles thus weakening the links to social justice (Woodward 2008; Jacquot 2015).

The introduction of the principle of equal pay in the founding treaties has led to the mythologisation of the EU's role as a gender equality actor (MacRae 2010). Bain and Masselot (2011) extend this analysis further pointing to the way gender equality law has been used as a vehicle for the development of the EU's identity. The inclusion of Article 119 in the Treaty of Rome indeed provided a platform for the establishment of the European equality agenda, though the founding fathers' reasons for including these provisions should not be overstated. Indeed, equality came to be part of the process of European integration in order to ensure the functioning of the newly established common market and thus prevent social dumping. Since the signing of the Treaty of Rome in 1957, the EU has developed an extensive gender equality framework that spans beyond employment policies to include the mainstreaming of gender in *all* policy areas. Following the Defrenne case in 1976, the European Economic Community first and then the EU developed an extensive body of legislation to protect women's employment rights and access to the labour market. The 1990s proved to be particularly important as the European Commission and European Parliament worked to institutionalise the principles through a range of binding provisions, for example, the 1992 Pregnant Worker Directive, and soft policy measures, for example, the 1992 Childcare Recommendations (Guerrina 2005; Kantola 2010; Jacquot 2015).

The 1996 European Commission's communication 'Incorporating equal opportunities for men and women into all Community policies and Activities' (European Commission 1996) sets out the EU's approach to gender mainstreaming, whereas the inclusion of the principle as a Treaty provision in 1998 as part of the Treaty of Amsterdam was supposed to signal the organisation's commitment to this principle. Gender Mainstreaming has since been included in the Treaties, first as Article 3(2) TEC of the Treaty of Amsterdam and then with an expanded reach in the Treaty of Lisbon.

The European Commission has responsibility for the operationalisation of this strategy in order to achieve the overarching aims of the European equality agenda. Structural Funds and employment policies have been two areas where gender mainstreaming has been largely institutionalised. The inclusion of the equality pillar in the European Employment Strategy being an example of this. Beyond these narrow areas, the EU2020 strategy and the Euroepan Semester were also supposed to ensure gender was mainstreamed throughout the policy process, thus increasing awareness and sensitivity to the structural obstacles and institutional biases to achieving equality of opportunities (Cengiz 2019; Hubert and Stratigaki 2016).

Gender Budgeting is a key tool of gender mainstreaming in economic governances as it is based on the explicit acknowledgement that macro-economic policies are inherently gendered (Guerrina 2020; Rubery 2002; Cavaghan 2017a). However, the patchy and piecemeal way in which gender budgeting and other gender mainstreaming tools have been adopted across the full policy spectrum underscores the limitations of this policy strategy. This is why

Jacquot (2015) has argued that Gender Mainstreaming enabled the dismantling of institutional platforms and mechanisms that have historically contributed to the development and institutionalisation of gender equality in the EU. This process of dilution that has accompanied mainstreaming can only be understood if we look at way social and economic policies underpin the EU's gender regime. In this context, gender mainstreaming thus becomes the vehicle for the diffusion of gender practices and norms through the process of European integration.

From European gender regimes to the EU as a gender regime

Feminist critiques of gender regimes theories emerged as a response to the widespread adoption of Esping-Andersen's (1990) *Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism* as an analytical frame for understanding the development of distinct European social models. At the heart of his work is the idea that welfare regimes can be situated on a spectrum between commodification and de-commodification. Whereas the Social Democratic regime is highly decommodified, and thus access to social and welfare benefits is not linked to participation in the labour market, the Liberal Welfare regime is highly commodified. The European social dimension has sought to integrate the diverse welfare regimes of the Member States. In this context, it is seen as a hybrid of the Conservative Corporatist and the Neo-Liberal model (Guerrina 2002). Jane Lewis (1992) provided a detailed critique of mainstream approaches, drawing attention to how Esping-Andersen's regimes are blind to the gendered nature of social and economic provisions. She developed an alternative model of welfare regimes that placed gender divisions of labour in the family front and centre of the analysis. In this context, she argued that there were three broad times of welfare regimes: (1) The strong male breadwinner model; (2) the modified male breadwinner model; (3) the weak male breadwinner model. This provided an entry point for gender scholars looking to expose the gendered nature of the European social model, and the EU's social *acquis* in particular. With the introduction of the European Employment Strategy first and then the Lisbon Strategy, activation became the driver of European social policy. In particular, increasing women's access to the labour market and retention of women with caring responsibility took centre stage. The 2000s were thus marked by a new range of policies on reconciliation between work and family. It is in this framework that gender scholars looked to the transition from the male breadwinner model to the adult worker model. The focus was on the role of EU policies in the transition from the male breadwinner to the adult worker model (Guerrina 2015; Giullari and Lewis 2005; Annesley 2007; Lewis 2001).

Walby (2005) took this analysis further exploring the idea that the EU is in fact a gender regime in its own right. For Walby, gender divisions of care work in the family are important. But, she argues, that is not sufficient to understand how gender regimes operate and the way they shape social, political and economic institutions. Walby's gender regime model includes four levels of abstractions: (1) Social system; (2) Gender inequalities along the public-private continuum; (3) Political and policy domains; (4) Social Practices. This is a complex model that seeks to capture the relationship between economic structures, social practices and the relationship between political domains and, in so doing, aims to show how gender inequalities are (re) produced. Identifying the biases underpinning policy making processes is key to understand the emergence of a gender regime. Given the way the EU has evolved as a system of economic governance, Walby argues it also plays a key role in regulating inequalities. As she further explains, the principles of social and economic inclusion 'are not only a form of ideological political legitimation but are given effectivity in the institutional structure and practice of the EU. This historical compromise is embedded within social, economic and political institutions and policy frameworks' (Walby 2005, 13). This fits into her more complex theory of society in which 'the

distinction between social relations and social institutions allows for the possibility of more than one set of unequal social relations within any institutional complex, and thus the theorization of complex inequalities that are note reduced to a single dimension' (Walby 2009, loc 2104). This opens for a reassessment of the nature of work and the economy that moves beyond the ideas of commodification and decommodification. By examining the way care work/caring is linked to social cohesion, and in turn how this value been positioned in the process of European integration and in turn how this, it is possible to unpack the gendered nature of the project itself (Walby 2009; Caracciolo di Torrella and Masselot 2012).

The focus of much of this analysis centred around the trajectory of the European social model and the enduring tensions between the deregulation and the preference for soft policy governance (as defined by the Open Method of Coordination) on the one hand, and the kind of structural change required for the adult worker model to become a reality. At the height of this debate, the focus of gender and mainstream scholars was on the expectations and broken promises of the European Social Dimension. By the mid-2000s, there was a vast body of work looking at this opportunities and constraints of the emerging socio-economic norms (Walby 2005; Annesley 2007; Velluti and Beveridge 2008). Gender budgeting came to be seen as a way to operationalise gender mainstreaming in economic governance, specifically to integrate the principles of social justice and equality into macro-economic policies. As outlined previously, this approach to economic governance would, therefore, require a detailed understanding that economic policy is not gender neutral and in specific tools are required to increase awareness of its gendered and racialised consequences (Huber and Stratigaki 2016; Elson 2004). The timing of this debate and analysis is, however, significant.

The onset of the 2008 financial crisis marks a critical juncture as European institutions, namely the Commission and the European Central Bank, institute new policy measures to stabilise the single currency. As the attention of policy makers shifted from social inclusion to economic stabilisation, gender equality and social justice fairly quickly slipped down the list of priorities. Despite the fact that the Commission continued to advocate the mainstreaming of gender in European economic governance, the policy drivers had shifted. The perceived urgency of the financial crisis, 'threatening' to unravel the project, was prioritised over other concerns. The EU2020 strategy (European Commission 2010) was supposed to shift the discussion towards 'smart, sustainable and inclusive growth'. Building on this commitment, the European Pact of Gender Equality (2011–2020) required the EU to adopt an integrated approach to macro-economic and social policy (Council of the EU 2011). More than 10 years since the onset of the crisis, the European social model seems to be de-evolving into a loose set of policies and practices in support of macro-economic policies (Cavaghan 2017a; Rubery 2015; Hantrais 2018)

The EU's gender regime in the context of crisis

The analysis presented in the previous section leads to one fundamental question: What kind of gender regime is the European Social Model, and how will it be affected by the politics of crisis? Originally a niche research area championed by feminist political economists, there is now growing consensus that the post-2008 politics of austerity had a detrimental impact on gender equality across Europe. Cavaghan's (2017a) detailed analysis of the EU's macro- and micro-economic policies and strategic approaches provides ample evidence of how the 2008 financial crisis can be seen as a test bed for the EU's commitment to gender equality policies. Rubery (2015) doubles down on this analysis highlighting the impact of austerity on the modest progress made by the EU and its members in the 50 years since the signing of the Treaty of Rome.

There is now plenty of evidence about the gendered impact the crisis. Civil society organsations, the Commission and the European Parliament have been mapping the impact of austerity policies on different socio-economic groups, however official narratives remain largely blind to the gendered and racilised impact of austerity. The European Women's Lobby Report (2012) drew attention to the multi-layered nature of the crisis, placing cuts to services that facilitate women's activation front and centre. These findings are supported by Bettio et al's (2013) report for the European Commission, which highlights the importance of applying gender lenses to the analysis of the crisis. Both reports highlight the complexity of this issue. In order to understand the full impact of the crisis, it is necessary to understand how austerity measures interact with gender regimes. Whereas the crisis did not lead to a significant change in women's employment patterns and activation, fiscal consolidation measures have had the most marked impact on entrenching 'existing disparities among European countries with regards to women's position in the labour market and more generally, gender equality may be widening back again' (Bettio et al. 2012, 205). This points to the challenge of advancing social justice and intersectional policies in the context of crisis. The functionalist logic and economic rationalities used to justify the inclusion of the equality principle in the process of European integration has to be called into question. The crisis demonstrated the dangers of such an approach, which requires advocates to buy-in to the dominant economic model (Ahrens et al. 2014).

Unpacking the racialised and gendered foundations of the European social dimension and its associated gender regime provides important insights into the implicit and explicit biases reproduced by the politics of crisis. Building on Hopkin and Rosamond's (2018) argument about how the idea of crisis produced optimal conditions for the ideologically driven project of austerity, O'Dwyer (2018) highlights how this rhetorical entrapment ultimately undermined the feminist insights into the political economy of the crisis itself. If we overlay this analysis to the work on gender regimes, we can see how this process is not only restructuring economic and political governance in Europe, it is also advancing a neo-liberal, private gender regime that will undo the limited gains to women's employment rights achieved in the 1990s and the early 2000s.

Walby's (2018) detailed analysis of the sociology of crisis shows how 'Europe is being remade in the crisis'. This is a bold statement, but her analysis draws attention to the silences in European policies. For instance, the proposals for the future of European governance focused on growth and competition are almost entirely silent on their implications for gender equality. Specifically, she argues that '(b)y neglecting to discuss the gender dimension, they miss the opportunity to consider how to advance the EU's fundamental values of equality and democracy. This requires the explicit treatment of gender relations in EU strategies for economic growth and for security' (Walby 2018, 318). In a similar vein Cavaghan and O'Dwyer (2018) found that the Commission's narrative of recovery can only be pursued if the interests of under-represented and marginal groups are ignored. This 'implicit' bias in the EU's narrative of crisis and recovery provides useful insights into the hierarchy of interests driving the project and the EU's approach to dealing with the latest crisis.

It is in this context that Emejulu and Bassel (2018, 110) make a compelling argument for moving beyond the binary of EU studies that has been dominated by macro-economic interests to look at the politics and ethics of care. In many ways, even the gender regimes theories privilege systemic and top-level analyses over the politics of the every day. They further highlight how the privileging of the dominant economic agenda has left women, and particularly women of colour, to manage the very real consequences of a policy agenda that reifies an economic model based on a racialised gender regime. Emejulu and Bassel (2018) thus found that the way that women of colour interact with the state gender regime in the context of austerity it

exacerbates their marginal position. It also highlights the reliance of the economy of undervalued and underpaid labour by women.

As women of colour are pushed out of the formal economy, the gender regime relies on 'other' women to fulfil those functions. This highlights the racialised and gendered nature of the transition of gender regimes in the UK, and Europe more widely. As (white) European women have become activated, increasing their participation in the labour market, they have come to relied on the women of colour to fulfil some of the domestic and caring work. This leads us to challenge the depth of the transition towards adult worker models embedded in European social policy and its focus on activation.

Additionally, Emejuly and Bassel (2018) also explain the crisis juxtaposed the interests of white working classes to those of migrants. This produces a form of rhetorical entrapment similar to that discussed by Hopkin and Rosamond (2018) and is performed politically in the context of the growing anti-European sentiment of populist movements driving European politics at the close of the decade. This in turn drives home Walby's (2018) point that it is in the context of this political crisis that the nature of European democracy is being redefined.

Conclusion

The first two decades of the twenty-first century provide important insights into the impact of a highly commodified social model on advancing equality and social inclusion. Beyond the well-established critiques of the EU's approach to gender equality as being defined by neoliberal principles of access to labour market and activation, the analysis presented here highlights how it reproduces racial and gender hierarchies. Drawing on gender regimes theories provides a new, and much needed, assessment of the way the European social dimension has historically been co-opted to legitimise the economic drivers of the European project. Women's economic activation and participation in the labour market are worthy policies. However, they rely on the reification of the care-work binary. In this context, reconciliation between work and family life, although framed in gender neutral terms, is intended to allow mothers to continue to fulfil their role as primary carer in addition to contributing the official labour market. As the establishment of care structures that allow women/mothers to participate in paid work remain limited, this process has led to the commodification of care. In this context, care work has become 'outsourced' to women of colour and migrant women. In this context, Emejulu and Bassell (2018), therefore, argue that care is linked to the politics of becoming. The European social model thus juxtaposes the interests of different groups of women. In this context, the EU's gender regime is one that is stratified along racialised gender hierarchies. The 2008 crisis should thus not be seen as producing a new gender regime, but as reifying existing trends whereby equality and social justice are not just secondary to economic growth, they cannot be a threat to the hegemonic economic order.

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