

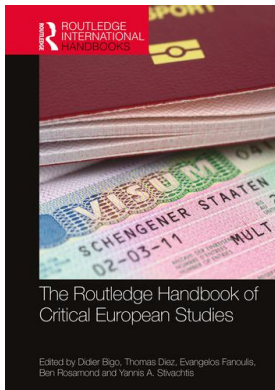
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Gender approaches

Gabriele Abels and Heather MacRae

Introduction

Beginning in the early 1990s, gender scholars started to investigate the process of European integration. Since then, they have analysed how women and gender relations shape the European Union (EU) and its policies, as well as how EU gender equality policies affect national gender regimes. Although the research focus has been, more often than not, policy-driven, it has brought with it consequences for theorising European integration. This literature ‘has helped to shed light on otherwise hidden effects and drivers of European integration’ (Abels and MacRae 2016, 10), illuminating the EU’s gendered nature and the gender-blindness of established theories.

After a phase of rather implicit theorising, the last fifteen years have seen a growing body of literature explicitly aimed at the gendering of European integration theory. The first contributions came from Abels (2006), Hoskyns (2004), and Kronsell (2005), later followed by Galligan (2019), Kronsell (2012, 2016) and Locher and Prügl (2009). Recently a full-blown textbook was published (Abels and MacRae 2016), and a recent ‘Handbook on Gender and EU Politics’ (Abels et al. forthcoming) contains a section on gender and integration theories.

Nonetheless, the relationship between gender scholarship and mainstream integration theory is anything but clear. In 2009, Locher and Prügl (2009, 183) asserted that ‘gender perspectives do not constitute substantive theories of European integration’. Kronsell (2012, 23) similarly confirms that it is ‘safe to say that ... many key concepts used in theorizing integration have remained virtually untouched by gender analysis’. Meanwhile, as Diez and Wiener (2019) argue gender scholars deliver important pieces to the unfinished ‘mosaic of integration theory’. Moreover, gender approaches (amongst others) are, as Wiener (2019, 261) declares, ‘clearly the most prolific approaches, generating multiple perspectives on theory and practice of European integration’, and thus now provide insights not only to policies, but also to the study of polity and politics in European integration. Manners and Whitman (2016, 3) consider feminist scholarship to be a vital part of the chorus of ‘dissenting voices’, which ‘attempt to theorise Europe differently and advocate another European trajectory ... [and which have been] largely excluded and left unheard in mainstream discussions over the past decade of scholarship and analysis’. Based on Manners’ and Whitman’s position, we could assume that gender voices are not marginalised in the mainstream

because they are *gender* voices, but because they are dissenting voices and, hence, simply share the fate of the rest of the ‘dissident chorus’. Is this really the case?

We argue that gender voices actually face a dual marginalisation. Firstly, they are marginalised in the mainstream *as part of* the dissenting, polyphonic chorus. Secondly, they are too often also marginalised as feminist voices *within* this dissenting chorus of critical approaches. We certainly do not deny that gender chapters have made it into some important textbooks. These are especially important contributions because they bring together more classical theories and critical approaches and, thereby, encourage dialogue (Bieling and Lerch 2012; Wiener and Diez 2004, 2009; Wiener, Börzel, and Risse 2019). In fact, several of the critical approaches in this handbook refer to feminist and gender perspectives (see especially Kinnvall and Manners in this volume). The inclusion of gender chapters is certainly a sign of the growing recognition of gender perspectives and a good starting point for dialogue. As Hoskyns noted in 2004: ‘Certainly progress has been made and far more material is now available. The areas for theorizing have opened up and significant gender material is beginning to be used in the European politics mainstream’ (Hoskyns 2004, 233). Overall, however, she argues that it is ‘hard to evaluate exactly where we are in terms of the success or otherwise of gender perspectives in influencing study of the EU and the development of theories’ (ibid.).

In this sense, the contemporary poly-crisis, which is a good case to test the usefulness of current theoretical developments, is simultaneously a good case to test the degree to which gender analyses and gender theorising have been integrated and ‘mainstreamed’ into EU studies. Overall, we do not find gender approaches to be widely included in studies on the EU crisis. For the most part, the literature is dominated by mainstream theories plus some critical approaches (e.g. IPE or, see Eriksen in this volume, normative Habermasian reflection). Although some scholars do argue in favour of combining approaches and theories, they do not include gender – despite, for instance, the obvious gender effects of the ‘eurozone crisis’.¹ This gender marginalisation is only slowly changing (see Börzel and Risse 2019, 244–245). Against this background, Guerrina et al. (2018) even speak of a ‘gender problem’ in EU studies.

We do not shift the blame to the ‘male-stream’, this would be too simplistic. In fact, most of EU gender studies remain relatively blind to integration theory (Abels and MacRae 2016, 23). Kronsell (2012, 40) argues: ‘For gender to be taken seriously in integration studies, we need to engage directly with existing theories.’ Consequently, we have called for precisely such an engagement:

There remains very little systematic dialogue between gender perspectives and the existing theories of European integration. This silence is problematic from both sides. Certainly, gender remains side-lined and marginalized in integration studies. Mainstream scholars in their search for a ‘reliable theory’ have not turned to gender studies to enrich their findings about the nature of the integration process. Concurrently, gender scholars have not raised their voices in the ‘mainstream’ theoretical debate ...

(Abels and MacRae 2016, 10)

In this chapter, we illustrate that gender scholarship has contributed and continues to contribute to our understanding of the EU. In so doing, it brings important issues into the dialogue. This is especially important and potentially fruitful given that even after ‘[h]alf a century of uninterrupted theorizing about Europe has produced a situation where one would expect that little remains to be said ... EU scholarship is still in search of a reliable theory’ (Chrysochoou 2009, 3). Manners and Whitman confirm this perpetual ‘search mode’ several years later when they argue that ‘both the EU and EU studies are in analytical and normative crisis’ (2016, 5).

Our key argument is that this situation of multiple – scholarly and political – crises offers an opportunity for gender-sensitive readings and theoretical approaches. Gender approaches can enrich the toolbox or ‘mosaic’ of integration theories by providing critical reflections as well as empirical and theoretical insights. They also provide a clear normative foundation rooted in feminism. However, gender approaches should not simply add elements to the already rich mosaic. To be taken seriously, they need to be integrated and ‘mainstreamed’ in the sense of gendering European integration theory (Abels and MacRae 2016).

This chapter proceeds as follows: First, we introduce the historical and intellectual background against which gender approaches to EU integration have developed in the last 15 years. In the following section, we outline some of the contributions of several key theorists, focusing on those that speak directly to other critical approaches. We then turn to some key criticisms of gender approaches and, finally, reflect on potential future developments.

The development of gender approaches in EU studies

Theorising European integration is shaped by ‘external’ (political) as well as by ‘internal’ (academic) drivers (Rosamond 2019, 84). These drivers are also visible in gender EU studies. Since the 1990s, historical, sociopolitical and academic developments have dramatically altered the landscape of the EU and relatedly, EU studies. The 1992 Maastricht Treaty was a major *external driver*, giving rise to new directions in EU studies and prompting contributions from more feminist academics interested in the EU. In addition, in the mid-1990s, we can observe important progress concerning gender in international and EU politics; prominent examples are the UN 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the inclusion of the new principle of gender mainstreaming in the EU’s 1996 Amsterdam Treaty.

Internal drivers also came into play because of paradigmatic shifts both in gender studies and in EU studies. Since the mid-1990s, we observe enormous progress regarding the inclusion of women in the study of politics. Along with this, we have seen a growing acknowledgement that ‘add women and stir’ scholarship is insufficient; rather the focus has to shift to the analysis of gender as a relational category (see Celis et al. 2013). This development is stimulated by the rise of social constructivism as a meta-theory in the social sciences and its profound impact on gender studies. As a result, gender is no longer perceived as a ‘naturalized presumption’, but an ‘analytical category’ (Hawkesworth 2013).

Simultaneously, a shift in theorising European integration, involving ‘constructing the EU’ (Diez and Wiener 2019, 8), was also taking place. This phase coincided with the rise of other critical approaches – in Manners’ and Whitman’s wording: ‘dissident voices’ – including social constructivism, post-structuralism, international political economy, postcolonial and normative political theory and, recently, practice approaches. The focus is

on substantial questions about ‘constructing’ (and limiting) European integration. It is answering these questions that the critical and constructivist approaches in IR theory were taken up alongside or combined with insights from the ‘constitutional turn’ later in the second phase, which, sparked by the Maastricht and Amsterdam Treaties and the increased public debate about the legitimacy of European governance, brought normative questions about the EU’s constitution from political theory to the heart of the analysis of governance.

(Diez and Wiener 2019, 12)

This shift – spilling over from IR to EU studies – provides a more favourable environment for gendering integration theory. Given feminist normative, constitutional and democratic

considerations, gender approaches ‘share the critical and problematizing line with discursive approaches, building in part on the advances of feminist approaches in other disciplines’ (Diez and Wiener 2019, 13).

Before introducing gender contributions to integration theory, it is important to sketch out what we mean by gender and gendering. There are, in fact, different notions of gender. Gender scholars share the ontological premise that gender is an ascriptive social category and not a ‘natural’ biological condition (Hawkesworth 2013). They assume that gender relations go hand in hand with social power structures creating divisions – such as the separation between the public and the private sphere – and hierarchies and inequality, which usually work against women and their interests. With regard to the EU, gender scholars use various tools and methods to identify and analyse hierarchies and power relations. This includes the study of national gender regimes and the potential emergence of an EU gender regime. Furthermore, gendering European integration theory means adopting a gender lens, which ‘allows us to illuminate the hidden biases and assumptions upon which many traditional categories of analysis are built’ (Abels and MacRae 2016, 11). This includes, for instance, assumptions such as that the state acts as a gender-neutral institution; that actors are non-gendered beings; that there is a ‘natural’ division between public and the private, the international and the domestic, as well as the economic and the social spheres. These challenges may be undertaken in different ways, depending on the specific gender and feminist approach adopted (for the five different approaches see Kantola and Lombardo 2017a) on the one hand, and on the specific integration theory or approach subject to a gender lens on the other hand. In sum, different gender approaches will deliver different analyses about the nature and process of European integration. Consequently, there cannot be a single feminist theory on European integration, but there must be multiple and varied approaches. In this respect, gender approaches align with the majority of approaches today who do not engage in ‘grand theorizing’. However, some ‘malestream’ approaches and theories – as well as some critical approaches – are more compatible with gender theorising than others. The overall aim of gender approaches is ‘to give visibility to values and situations normally ignored or marginalized, thus helping to create more inclusive and better-grounded histories and theories’ (Hoskyns 2004, 217; see also Locher and Prügl 2009).

In line with many textbooks, we apply a broad interpretation of what integration theory is, because ‘theoretical innovations have gone beyond a fairly narrow interpretation of what theories are and what they are good for in order to understand European integration and the surrounding processes and their implications’ (Abels and MacRae 2016, 14–15). This pertains to gender as well as other approaches and conceptual frameworks.

Major claims and developments in gendering integration theories

In this section, we illustrate different strands and outcomes of the gender project of the past two decades. Despite variation, all gendered interpretations of integration theories agree that mainstream approaches and theories have a blind spot (i.e. gender and gender relations; see Abels and MacRae 2016).

One of the first analyses of European integration from a gender perspective, Hoskyns’ *Integrating Gender: Women, the Law and Politics in the European Union* (1996), is proto-typical for future gender approaches in terms of its integration of micro- and macro-level analyses. Hoskyns (1996, 4) argues that ‘paradoxically ... the integration of states (and of markets) has the effect of destabilising existing patterns of social integration, including those relating to gender’. The empirical focus of her study is on the development of gender equality policy in the EU – a widespread focus in gender and EU studies. Furthermore, her work represents an important shift away from

an over-reliance on International Relations theories to explain EU integration. She proclaims that ‘not only were these theories [neo-functionalisms and intergovernmentalism] unhelpful’ to analyse her material, ‘but also that the way they attempted to order the European arena marginalized (important) issues and approaches’ (ibid., 17). To break away from this, Hoskyns adopts approaches taken from Comparative Politics and combines both structure and agency in her analysis, although her emphasis remains on women’s agency, which she assumes has an impact on interests, norms and perspectives (ibid., 10). Networks, especially feminist networks, with their ‘capacity, by no means always realised, to stretch down into the grassroots politics of the member states and up into the EU decision-making process’ (ibid., 17), play a crucial part in her work.

Hoskyns does not claim to create a theory of European integration, but she critically assesses existing theories. At the time, only two theories were mainstream: Neo-functionalism and intergovernmentalism. The first Hoskyns views as potentially fruitful because of its emphasis on supranational law and its recognition of the role societal actors play in shaping EU policy. However, its focus on mainly economic actors renders it too narrow in focus. Her critique of intergovernmentalism is not surprising. She does not see much use for this approach as it is too state centric and does not allow for actors and interests from beyond the state. In her review of Hoskyns’ work, Abels (2006) concludes that this classical study bridges the ‘add women in’ and the gender approach. The empirical case analysed by Hoskyns sheds light on the ways in which European publics are shaped and acting, while simultaneously illustrating the gendered nature of the process of European integration.

A decade after Hoskyns, van der Vleuten (2007) took a much more explicitly theoretical approach. She aims to explain why the member states – represented by an exclusively male body of delegates – included the ‘equal pay for equal work’ provision (Article 119) in the 1957 Treaty on European Economic Community. This provision subsequently served as a constitutional reference point for the development of equality policies since the 1970s. van der Vleuten argues that the inclusion can be explained by, what she terms a ‘pincer effect’. National governments are constrained by domestic actors pushing from below, at the same time, supranational actors push from above. She argues that national governments do not consider only economic costs in shaping domestic preferences, but must also consider political and ideological costs. This recognition of internal and external pressures on national governments provides important nuances to intergovernmentalist approaches. In a later work (2016), van der Vleuten maintains that modifying various forms of intergovernmentalist approaches by including a discussion of the domestic pressures involved in shaping national preferences can make the theory somewhat more useful for gender analyses. She further emphasises that the strong emphasis on state leaders and the quality of leadership, which was important in Hoffmann’s classical intergovernmentalism, needs discussion through a gender lens. She concludes that the ontology and epistemology of intergovernmentalism cannot be stretched far enough to integrate critical gender perspectives, yet, it can be applied in a more gender-sensitive way (ibid., 94–95).

In 2005, Kronsell published a seminal article in which she reflects on a total of six established theories of European integration – ranging from intergovernmentalism and neo-functionalism, multi-level and network governance to supranationalism and constructivism and critiques each for its gender blindness (see also Kronsell 2012). She finds the first two to be particularly difficult to gender and, although the others (especially constructivism) are more open, they too, have blind spots. Kronsell notes that, despite fundamental differences, mainstream theories share some remarkable similarities. She points to four main issues: (1) An inherent state-centrism, (2) a view of the state as unitary actor, (3) their non-structural view of power and (4) an understanding of national interest defined as the state’s control over national resources and the emphasis on

security issues. She thus critiques integration theories for their emphasis on ‘the male-as-norm unquestioned and invisible’ and for the fact that they ‘work from a simplistic view of power’ (Ibid., 1035–1036). For her, the strength of a gender, that is ‘feminist viewpoint is its understanding of how hierarchies of gender power are expressed in embedded institutions’ (Ibid., 1036).

In her most recent contribution to the debate, Kronsell focuses on power and masculinities in European Common Security and Defence Policy. Drawing on the concept of gender regimes, she argues, ‘if masculine power is embedded in European integration and not carefully examined, it is simply reproduced’ (Kronsell 2016, 104). For Kronsell, gender regimes can be related to ‘variable’, ‘shifting’ and ‘relational’ gender identity constructs (Ibid., 105–106), which ‘can be traced at different levels (macro, meso, micro), but also in different sectors’ (Ibid.). Looking at the macro-level (global politics), she identifies that in the security field, there at least two identity constructs: An ‘EU protector masculinity’ and a ‘vulnerable other femininity’, which both are deeply embedded in EU institutions. Gender regimes are not unique to the security sector but can be seen in other sectors as well:

[D]ifferent gender regimes exist across issues including security, agriculture and climate, but likely also in crisis management, environment, transport and research, for example. To establish what type of EU gender regime is relevant in these sectors, we may ask the following questions: how are masculinities and femininities constructed in relation to gendered path dependence through institutional practices? What do power relations between different identity constructs look like? How do power relations emerge in decision-making as the result of gendered logics of appropriateness?

(Kronsell 2016, 115)

In contrast to Kronsell, who was critical of multilevel governance (MLG) approaches in her earlier work, Abels (2016) sees real potential for these approaches, particularly in combination with a policy network approach. This perspective is very much in line with Hoskyns’ classical work, which illustrated the power of actor networks linking and crossing policy levels. Similarly, Simona Piattoni (2010) offers a useful understanding of multi-level governance as a theory of mobilisation among different actors and across different levels. However, network approaches need to be gendered to fulfil the needs of gender analysis; again, the inclusion of gendered power towards relation is vital. The beauty of MLG is, firstly, to inspect the (often male) homosociality of actor networks due to the strong focus on agency; secondly, the focus on sector-specific networks allows to analyse the framing of policies and its implications for policy-making and actor mobilisation (Abels 2016, 116–118).

A new contribution to the mosaic of integration theory comes from geography and was recently adopted by Lang and Sauer (2016; see also MacRae 2010). They argue that level-based concepts (federalism and MLG) are too static because they rely on formal levels of authority. In contrast, Lang and Sauer refer to ‘scales’ as a more open concept, which highlight the dynamics of ‘scalar politics’:

[W]hat drives European integration is a messy set of multi-scalar and inter-scalar policy processes in a plurality of spaces with many more entry and resistance points than federalist or governance theories allow for. Feminist analyses, we submit, have historically paid close attention to scales in policy making and activism, seeking to explain women’s policy successes as well as marginalities and exclusions as a result of the interplay between different scaled arenas of activism and political spaces within the EU.

(Lang and Sauer 2016, 217)

They argue that scaling approaches have four advantages, which could also offer advantages to main- or malestream theories. They counter state-centric approaches by viewing interactions as a dynamic ‘processes of scaling, re-scaling and de-scaling’ (Ibid., 231); they highlight the democratic question by analysing ‘institutional form, inter-scalar and trans-scalar proximity, resources, and experience’ and the ‘deeply ambivalent outcomes that scaled EU politics have generated for women’ (ibid.). Finally,

If scales and scaling are foundational principles of how the EU operates, then any theory would have to take into account the complexities of different scaling processes going on in different places, communities, and member states at any given time. Scales of intervention and regulation increasingly happen aside from, besides, or below the nation state.

(*ibid.*, 232)

Several authors have criticised that gender approaches have focused too much on agency at the expense of institutions. Locher and Prügl (2009, 196) argued quite early on that ‘relationships of agency at different levels and their embedding in different opportunity structures presents a weakly explored frontier of feminist research’ and needs further investigation in order to identify drivers of European integration. Recent developments in ‘feminist institutionalism’ (see Hastrup and Kenny 2016; MacRae and Weiner 2017) have taken up this critique. Feminist Institutional approaches (FI) bring a gendered lens to new institutionalist analyses of the EU, thereby bringing new elements into the institutionalist research agenda. New institutionalism encompasses various strands (Lowndes and Roberts 2013) all of which share a general understanding that ‘institutions matter’ and that norms, values and policies are co-constitutive. Furthermore, new institutionalists share a general interest in the forces of institutional continuity and change (Pollack 2009). However, until recently, they have presented these as ‘gender-neutral, which ostensibly silences aspects of institutionalisation that feminists have long considered crucially important for understanding political processes and their outcomes’ (Haastrup and Kenny 2016, 197). Here, the application of a gender lens through FI can be particularly enlightening.

Such a lens draws on many of the tools developed by institutionalist analyses, but begins from the premise that institutions are inherently gendered. Focusing on both formal and informal rules and norms, FI recognises that ‘gender relations are construed not only as “institutional” – that is, playing out within institutions – but also “institutionalised” – i.e., incorporated into the very structure of institutions’ (MacRae and Weiner 2017). It is thus crucial to analyse and acknowledge the gendered elements of power which are continuously at play within and among the institutions (Ibid.; see also Hastrup and Kenny 2016). Through its understanding of gender as profoundly entangled in institutions, FI highlights how formal and informal rules and norms can influence the policy process and reproduce instances of hegemonic masculinity within EU institutions and policy processes. Thus, FI can offer important insight into for example how and why policies continue to be gendered, despite institutional attempts to ‘mainstream’ gender equality.

Foucauldian governmentality and other poststructuralist approaches have also attracted much attention among gender scholars. This can be primarily attributed to governmentality’s focus on the relationship between governing and power and knowledge (see also Lawrence in this volume). However, although governmentality approaches are widely used by gender scholars for studying national politics and in other work on EU governance,

they have been far less prolific in gender EU studies. Yet, there are good reasons to utilise a governmentality lens:

Looking at technologies of power on different levels (micro, meso and macro) and sites they [governmentality approaches] can therefore be an added value to feminist research on European integration since much of the feminist literature draws on knowledge as a key site of subjectivation. A governmentality approach combines knowledge production and subjectivation with governmental rule and therefore describes certain knowledge/power complexes through institutionalization.

(Wöhl 2016, 237)

The EU is a 'contested geopolitical space', in which different kinds of power relations 'can take on ambivalent forms which can be repressive as well as enabling and empowering' (ibid., 239). According to Wöhl, the specific kind of neo-liberal governmentality exercised in and by the EU is a form of gendered technology. It illustrates 'how a gendered symbolic order is embedded within norms, policies, politics and law, taking into account how technologies of governmental power historically have shaped the gendered division of labor, of societies, of states and supranational institutions in ambivalent and limiting ways for all genders' (ibid. 241). In addition, it allows the researcher to trace subject positions linked to ethnicity and class and how they intersect with gender. In so doing, the construction of norms and representations can be identified as power techniques. The gendered division of public/private and its impact on shaping nation states is a key contribution of gender scholars to governmentality approaches (cf. ibid., 242–243). Wöhl concludes that the potential of this approach is that 'once engendered, [it] can thus provide key insights on the (re-)construction of differing subject formations through discourses and governmental technologies and describe the macro-political technologies going along with them' (ibid., 250). Unlike Gramscian approaches, which also recognise policies and polity formations as inflicted by coercive power, governmentality 'does not conceive them as hegemonic' (ibid.).

Other gender approaches, such as Wilde's 'civic constitutionalism' (2016), share the neo-Gramscian understanding of civil society as a power-laden social sphere. However, Wilde (2016, 273) tends to focus on gendered power relations and divisions in civil society 'as a power dispositive in European integration and asks about opportunities for re-configuring gendered power and dominance structures in the form of empowerment and counter-hegemony'. She argues that critical approaches also often ignore the gendered nature of hegemonial structures that exist within civil society (see also Bieler and Salyga in this volume).

Finally, social constructivism is widespread in gender studies. This is perhaps not surprising, given that gender is often understood as a category constructed by social and institutional practices. In this sense, gender scholars are all social constructivists. However, gender scholars have only recently begun to make systematic use of social constructivism for studying the EU, even though some of the pioneering gender scholars identified the value of social constructivism quite early on (cf. Hoskyns 2004; Kronsell 2005; also Locher and Prügl 2009). With regard to internal divisions in social constructivism, gender scholars are often on the reflectivist epistemological side, adopting a more interpretative position 'interested in the role language and discourses play in the construction of reality' (Lombardo 2016, 125, 130; see also Lombardo and Forest 2012.). What makes social constructivism fruitful is, firstly, viewing the EU as a dynamic and constantly changing polity; secondly, the opportunity to address social structures and agents as interlinked and mutually constitutive, and thirdly, its emphasis on ideas, meanings, norms and discourses (cf. Lombardo 2016, 126–127). Simultaneously,

gender approaches challenge these three tenets of social constructivism by adding a gender perspective on power and (soft) norms by, for example, ‘unveiling the inequality of norms and analysing processes of contestations and transformation of such norms’ (ibid., 131). Also, they investigate who has power in EU institutions; they look at ‘how hegemonic masculinity is institutionalised with the EU’ (ibid., 133). According to Lombardo, the feminist interest in power not only as ‘power over’ but also ‘power with’ allows to identify agents and processes of empowerment (ibid., 134). In addition, she emphasises that the contribution of gender scholarship to social constructivism cannot be a gender only analysis. It ought to be intersectional in order to develop ‘an understanding of European integration that is more aware of the constitutive effects of EU norms and institutions on embodied European women and men, whose gender intersects with their social class, ethnicity, or sexuality, producing dynamics of privileges and exclusions’ (ibid., 124). Thus, with regard to some intersections these approaches can profit from postcolonial readings of European integration (see Kinnvall in this volume). Finally, through social constructivism, gender scholars have contributed to framing approaches, which highlight processes of framing and contestation in policy-making (a key example is Critical Frame Analysis developed by Verloo and Lombardo 2007).

Key points of critique from and of a gender perspective

In sum, gender approaches can be used to critique and nuance a range of mainstream, but also critical theories. While there is, as illustrated, a myriad of gender approaches, they share at least four key characteristics. First, they all see gender as central to the process of EU integration and the construction of power therein. EU institutions are viewed as gendered actors in which hegemonic masculinity prevails. Second, there is a strong, but not exclusive focus on agency including the role of ‘femocrats’ and feminist movements. Third, they view the state as a diverse actor with preferences shaped through social struggle. Fourth, they are critical of binary divisions such as public/private or supranational/domestic.

Clearly some of these insights are not exclusive to gender approaches. In fact, ‘gender approaches and many other critical and constructivist approaches are rather complementary and work with similar concepts and ideas’ (Bieling and Diez 2016, 290). For example, a relational concept of power and a strong focus on agency is also applied in discursive and, recently, practice approaches to European integration (see contributions by Carta and Saurugger in this volume). The exclusive contribution of gender scholars is, firstly, to emphasise the gendered nature of EU integration and its manifold manifestations; secondly, to offer a broader understanding of power in the context of European integration (cf. Weldon 2019); and, thirdly, to take an explicit normative approach linked to feminism as a political ideology (not implying that there is only one feminism).

While some gender scholars open up their analysis to intersectional issues and thus easily link their insights to other critical approaches, especially those related to class and ethnicity/race issues, others still apply a gender analysis as a relational analysis with both (or all) genders and engaging in the de-construction of gender. Many policy-oriented studies in particular still restrict themselves to only a selection of feminist approaches – especially impact on women – as outlined by Kantola and Lombardo (2017a).

This is a key point that is central to some critiques of feminist approaches. For instance, Diez and Wiener (2019, 13) make the point that ‘focusing on how European integration and EU policies build on and (re)produce a particular image of “women” and “men”, implicitly or even explicitly favouring one over the other’ actually limits the potential of gender approaches. In order to avoid the reification of gender binaries, it is necessary to investigate the construction of

different masculinities and femininities and de-essentialise the category of gender (see Bieling and Diez 2016, 288–289). Some scholars from the field of gender studies and critical masculinity studies are beginning to apply this perspective to the EU (see Kronsell 2016; Lombardo 2016). Hearn et al. (forthcoming) claim, for instance, that

current social and political events across Europe provide much topical and fruitful material for critical analysis and reflection on men and masculinities: men in power, polarisation of public debates regarding gender issues, and assessment of ‘crises’ of men and masculinities. The place of men and masculinities is increasingly clear in EU politics, party politics and policy-making.

Future developments

Kronsell (2016, 106) rightfully argues that ‘[f]eminist theory belongs to a critical theory tradition with theories that share an interest in power, change and emancipation’. In this sense, critical approaches are more ‘natural allies’ for gender approaches, especially discursive, critical, postcolonial and practice approaches (see contributions in this volume). They share, for example, a number of characteristics such as a post-positivist ontology, a critical view on power, or an emancipatory ambition. However, this alliance still necessitates that such critical approaches enrich their ontological, epistemological and normative toolbox with ‘gender tools’, which can allow for a ‘theorization of how masculinities and femininities are constructed, reproduced, and sustained in the European integration process’ (Galligan 2019, 193). While some critical approaches seem to be more prepared to do so, others remain reluctant. In addition, applying a gender lens can also bring fruitful insights to other, more mainstream or classical integration theories, which are generally still gender-blind (see Abels and MacRae 2016). Bieling and Diez (2016, 285–286) praise gender approaches for their

illuminating practice, which aims to reveal the hidden gender dimensions of European integration. Though gendering primarily refers to the theories of European integration, the concrete results are more extensive than some readers may have presumed. The gendering of the selected theories is not confined to their epistemological and normative dimensions, but also concerns the ontological dimension, which provides a specific understanding of the key dynamics of the integration process.

This ontological dimension is key to linking gender to other critical approaches. One of the key challenges for the future of theorising European integration is to build theoretical bridges in order to better describe and explain often contradictory and ambivalent developments in the sociopolitical process of European integration.

For gender scholars, a key concern is how to tackle the ‘fundamental changes to the conceptual, methodological, and normative paradigms’ (Celis et al. 2013, 16) resulting from a need to integrate intersectionality. This coincides with a more complex conceptualisation of men and masculinities and diverse forms of femininities shaping European integration in manifold ways. Last, but not least, gender EU studies have to move beyond analysing equality policies. These are certainly important, but they are only part of the story. The challenge is to develop theoretical innovations ‘that better link structure, action, and ideas’ (ibid., 17). This will require future ontological, epistemological and normative innovations to be developed in a dialogue with other critical and possibly even mainstream approaches.

Note

1. For a theoretical interpretation of the poly-crises see, for many, Caporaso 2018; Genschel and Jachtenfuchs 2018; Schimmelfennig 2018. For a critique of the “malestream” see Cavaghan and O’Dwyer 2018; Guerrina et al. 2018; Kantola and Lombardo. 2017b.

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