

Feminist Political Economy and its Explanatory Promise

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Feminist EU studies have recently witnessed an expansion in attempts to theorise European integration (see Abels and MacRae 2016, 2020), accompanied by efforts to analyse the profound institutional and political shifts brought about since the financial and Eurozone crises (Kantola and Lombardo 2017). Surprisingly, insights from feminist political economy (FPE) (e.g. Bakker 1994; Elias and Roberts 2018; Young et al. 2011) have not yet been extensively incorporated into feminist EU studies. This chapter lays out some of the core concepts and analytical foci in FPE literature that have the potential to deepen our understanding of the gendered character and impacts of EU integration.

The approaches of critical political economy (CPE) that pay attention to the mutual constitution of the ‘political’ and the ‘economic’ – as well as societal power relations in the processes of European integration – have been increasingly applied to studying the EU since the early 1990s. The global financial crisis of 2007/08 and the ensuing ‘Eurozone crisis’ have spurred these activities. Critical political economists have shown how European integration and the EU’s socioeconomic governance have become increasingly neoliberal since the mid-1980s (van Apeldoorn 2002; Gill 1998). They have further pointed out how the EU’s crisis response and its new post-crisis economic governance structures have enhanced neoliberal capitalism, created class-based and other inequalities, reshaped the democratic sphere in the EU, prioritised particular economic ideas and reshaped the relationships between different policy areas (Bruff 2014; Crespy and Mentz 2015; Ryner 2015). The multidisciplinary and wide-ranging field of FPE – with influences from Marxist/socialist feminism, gender and development scholarship, Black feminist scholarship and feminist economics, amongst others – adds to CPE approaches by paying specific attention to how power, gender and the productive and reproductive economies intertwine (Elias and Roberts 2018). Whilst most FPE

literature has focused on global political economy and development, there has been an increasing interest in the application of FPE to the EU.

We argue that FPE concepts and approaches can be used to analyse the EU in various policy areas, ranging from the internal market to agriculture, trade, defence, gender equality policy, development and climate change (see policy section in this volume). To date, however, macro-economic policies and economic governance are the policy areas in which these ideas have been applied most (e.g., Bruff and Woehl 2016; Cavaghan and O'Dwyer 2018; Klatzer and Schlager 2019; O'Dwyer 2017; Young 2018). In this chapter, we show the analytical potential of FPE in these fields, which have also been the focus for most CPE scholars. As we argue, the EU's macro-economic policies, such as fiscal and monetary policies, as well as the governance mechanisms through which they are implemented, are pivotal for the future of gender equality in the EU because they actively maintain gendered and racialised hierarchies in the economy in the EU (Cavaghan and O'Dwyer 2018; Klatzer and Schlager 2014). Macro-economic policy and economic governance are also the fields in which gender and EU scholars have mainly applied FPE approaches. Focusing on these fields, we illustrate the strengths and potential of FPE in theorising the EU's wider development.

CPE approaches to EU integration

CPE has been applied to multiple policy areas, including the internal market, the Economic and Monetary Union (EMU; see Scheele in this volume), trade policies (see Garcia in this volume), the euro crisis and its management (see Kantola and Lombardo in this volume), and the EU's socioeconomic governance. CPE approaches are characterised by a focus on the interrelations in the economic and political spheres. They often draw on historical materialist and neo-Gramscian approaches and take capitalism and class as their central concepts. These

theoretical and methodological starting points set CPE apart from ‘traditional’ perspectives on European integration. CPE sees the integration processes and EU governance as being intrinsically linked to the dynamics of global capitalism and the wider restructuring of the global political economy. CPE scholars have also conceptualised integration as a hegemonic project of dominant transnational and national social forces and stressed the unequal effects of these processes for different social classes and groups as well as the societal conflicts.

(Cafruny and Ryner 2012)

CPE scholars have highlighted how the European integration process has become increasingly neoliberalised since the mid-1980s. They have typically emphasised how this trajectory reflects shifts in the global political economy and identified the social and political forces and concrete actors that have supported the hegemony of the neoliberal project at the expense of social democratic alternatives (van Apeldoorn 2002). CPE scholars have further argued that the EMU and its constitutional and other legally binding enforcement mechanisms have reinforced the neoliberal discipline, strengthening financial capitalism in the EU and separating economic policies from political accountability (Gill 1998). The successes of the neoliberal project have led to an asymmetry between policies promoting market efficiencies and those promoting social protection and equality, whereby the former are increasingly regulated at the EU level and the latter left to the member states (Scharpf 2002).

Since the financial and Eurozone crises, CPE approaches have been used both to explain the causes of these crises and to understand their political and social effects. In the following, we focus on some key contributions connected to the EU’s response to the financial and Eurozone crises: (1) the rationale and distributional effects of the austerity-focused policy response, (2) the political and democratic impacts of new economic governance structures

implementing austerity and (3) the consequent shifts in the relationship between the EU's economic and social goals.

The EU responded to the financial crisis by encouraging 'austerity' – large-scale cuts in public spending – nominally to reduce sovereign debt (Blyth 2013). This approach assumed that cutting public spending would reduce national debt and promote private sector confidence and investment, thereby ultimately restoring growth. However, critics have pointed out that the evidence supporting this approach is, at best, contextual and nuanced rather than unequivocal (Clarke and Newman 2012). Austerity's distributional impacts have also been well documented. Austerity re-allocates the costs of the financial crisis away from the private financial institutions that caused it and towards the public – particularly its poorest sectors – whilst mobilising a moral narrative that states overspent and that everyone needs to 'tighten their belts' (Blyth 2013; Clarke and Newman 2012).

CPE approaches have also examined the measures put in place to coordinate member states' implementations of austerity, drawing attention to the constitutionalisation of austerity and the de-democratisation and de-politicisation of economic policy in the EU (Bruff 2014). The successively adopted new sets of rules – the 'Six Pack', the 'Two Pack' and the 'Fiscal Compact' – strengthened and complemented the debt and deficit rules of the 'Stability and Growth Pact' – adopted in 1997 – to ensure the stability of the EMU. They introduced, amongst other things, new sanctions, a requirement to include a balanced budget rule in national legislation and the annual process of economic surveillance and coordination called the European Semester (Bruff 2014; Oberndorfer 2015; see Scheele in this volume for more details). The reconfiguration of policy rules has shifted power from national and EU-level democratic bodies to executive branches and non-transparent, technocratic financial

bureaucracy. It has also made austerity a permanent policy by constraining member states' policy choices. CPE scholars have referred to this shift as 'authoritarian neoliberalism' (Bruff 2014) or 'authoritarian constitutionalism' (Oberndorfer 2015). These concepts draw attention to the way in which the post-crisis reforms of EU economic governance restrict the possibilities for future generations to overturn the permanent austerity and the undemocratic policy-making processes that maintain and marginalise dissenting social groups and oppositional politics. From the CPE perspective, new EU economic governance rules help to institutionalise and maintain the neoliberal political–economic order and defend it from efforts to push for greater democratisation (Bruff 2014).

CPE has also made visible how the EU's strengthened economic governance has shifted towards a technocratic expert regime that relies on a specific form of economic knowledge and ideas. These include, for instance, ideas about constitution-like rules as the basis of market-society characteristic of ordoliberalism, a German variant of neoliberalism (Ryner 2015), heterodox economic assumptions accepting and tacitly promoting the supremacy of the market (Bruff and Tansel 2019) and economic ideas promoting austerity (Helgadóttir 2016). The economic knowledge that disseminates these ideas masks their deeply political ideological commitments with a veneer of technocratic inevitability.

Finally, CPE scholars have argued that the post-crisis shifts in the EU's socio-economic governance have further subjugated the EU's social goals and policies to the objectives of budget discipline and macro-economic balance (Crespy and Menz 2015), which are supported by the ever-stronger rules and surveillance and sanction mechanisms (de la Porte and Heins 2015). Although some commentators describe a gradual 'socialisation' of some economic governance processes (Zeitlin and Vanhercke 2018), social policies must still conform to the

EU's market-making logic (see Milner in this volume). In CPE literature, the economy/social relationship has thus been mainly discussed in terms of policies, governance mechanisms and actors, rather than in terms of knowledge and epistemologies.

CPE approaches have, therefore, highlighted how EU monetary and economic integration has reshaped the contours of the political arena, restricting opportunities to contest economic policy at the member-state level and enhancing the power of EU institutions. They have also helped us to understand the ideational underpinning of the EU's economic policies and governance and highlighted the imbalance between economic and social integration. Whilst these approaches have emphasised the category of class, they have tended to neglect concerns about gender and race. As we will show below, by neglecting these analytical angles, CPE approaches miss important dynamics that legitimise EU economic governance, core aspects of its ideological basis and some of the most important structural factors mediating distributional impacts.

FPE – Conceptualising the economy and identifying gendered impacts

In contrast to CPE, FPE is characterised by a significant degree of intellectual and methodological eclecticism. What unites FPE, however, is its focus on 'how gender is performed, enacted, embodied, constructed, institutionalised and reconstituted in the global economy and how these processes work through other many and varied structures of oppression ... and are in turn actively resisted' (Elias and Roberts 2018, 5). Broadly speaking, FPE literature points out the central role of gender (inequalities) in the maintenance of capitalist economies and the state (Elias and Roberts 2018; Woehl 2014). Where CPE focuses on the co-construction of the political and the economic, FPE goes further. It points out that the functioning of the economy and much of economic policy depend on the maintenance and

reproduction of particular relations between the state and households, which are held in place by the gendered socialisation of human bodies (Griffin 2010, 87.) The delegation of care work to households, in which mainly women perform this labour –unpaid – is one of the most important of these relations (Elias and Roberts 2018, 5). Similarly, the low wages paid for work as nursing, childcare and elder care, or in domestic work such as cleaning, rest on a undervaluation of care and reproductive work and the people typically regarded as suitable for it (Elias and Roberts 2018). These female-dominated jobs and public care services are often seen as a cost, rather than an investment (Elson 2017). Feminists argue in contrast that this situation constitutes a reproductive tax extracted from women to subsidise the productive economy (Rai et al 2014). The current Covid-19 pandemic illustrates the productive economy’s reliance on this reproductive subsidy particularly well. Under-funded health and elder care systems unable to cope with the pandemic have led to a near total economic shut down in an effort to suppress transmission so that health care systems will not be overwhelmed. As a result, responsibility for care work and education, has been moved back into the home where workers struggle to perform their normal paid work whilst also having newly intensified caring duties. Early studies have indicated that these shifts are exacerbating gendered and racialised inequalities (Amnesty International 2020; EIGE 2020).

Multiple, more detailed theoretical perspectives and empirical studies flow from these core premises of FPE.

FPE’s insistence on the centrality of gender to the functioning of capitalism is one of the key differences distinguishing it from CPE. It also places FPE at odds with many of the central assumptions in dominant approaches to economics. Core amongst these entrenched assumptions is a tendency – particularly within neo-classical economic paradigms – to argue

that economic policy is ‘gender neutral’ (Bakker 1994). This perspective is, in turn, premised on several disciplinary concepts and commitments that discourage consideration of the interactions between different ‘levels’ and sectors of the economy.

First amongst these is the presumed division between the ‘productive’ sector – that is, paid labour – and the (social) reproductive sector in which (predominantly unpaid) care work is performed. FPE points out that the productive economy is *dependent* on the care sector, which creates functioning humans who can work (Caglar 2009, 166). This dependency is, however, consistently ignored in most economic modelling and economic policy. Instead, dominant approaches simply assume an unlimited supply of care (Rai et al. 2014).

Two other disciplinary assumptions have been problematised by FPE scholars: divisions between the macro-, meso- and micro-economy and the concept of ‘homo economicus’ or the rational economic man. Neo-classical disciplinary assumptions of the kind often used to underpin austerity policies are premised on the assumption that the individual behaviour of a self-interested ‘rational economic man’ is the driving causal force in the economy at all levels – micro, meso and macro. Within this paradigm, macro-economic analysis is nothing more than the study of the aggregate effects of individual activities (Bakker 1994, 8; Caglar 2009, 163). This differs from heterodox approaches, which accept that macro levels of the economy may have their own dynamics that are more complicated than the aggregate effects of individuals’ actions (Caglar 2009, 163). These concepts are an important target of feminist critique because they underpin economic policy-makers’ common arguments that social impacts are not a macro-economic concern. Within the neo-classical mind-set, macro-economic policy and analysis is *by definition* not concerned with individuals, but rather with aggregate measures that can be modelled, such as output levels, rates of growth and budget

surplus/deficit (Bakker 1994, 8). Under these logics, the social impacts of economic policies (like austerity) and the gender inequalities they entrench are decoupled from the policies causing them.

FPE scholars have challenged these assumptions by thoroughly demonstrating the social impacts of macro-economic policies (Gill and Roberts 2011). However, the presumed separation between the economic and the social, which seems absurd from a feminist perspective, remains influential in mainstream economic thinking and practice. As a result, FPE perspectives argue that these ideas and disciplinary assumptions maintain a ‘strategic silence’ (Bakker 1994; Young et al. 2011), which serves both to constitute and to obscure unequal economic relations between men and women (Bakker 1994). They also underpin increasing tensions between the capitalist economy and social reproduction, discussed below.

In addition to these kinds of critiques of economic disciplinary assumptions, FPE approaches have shown how both gender and race can structure many economic transactions so that women and men (and other people whose identities may not conform to binary gender classifications) participate in markets on unequal terms (Bakker 1994, 5; Gill and Roberts 2011). These dynamics are relevant both within and amongst countries. FPE scholars show how states often exploit women’s subordination, marketing their under-paid labour as a competitive advantage to attract international manufacturing (Dedeoglu 2013). In this way, global production chains that bring affordable goods to the Global North, such as food, clothing and technology, are often rendered possible by continued gendered exploitation (Dedeoglu 2013).

State and corporate claims of non-responsibility for social reproduction have also resulted in it, too, becoming a globalised commodity, with stark gendered and racialised impacts. As states

continue to retrench public services, a small proportion of highly educated women can buy-in labour to perform care work, which the state supports and subsidises less and less. Usually, this labour takes the form of either female migration or ethnicised labour– a practice that gender-selective and racist national border regimes often facilitate (Sauer and Woehl 2011). The migration ‘care chains’ (Hochschild 2000) established by these policies also mean that gender regimes are no longer ‘fenced in’ by the nation state, instead stretching between countries sending and receiving migrants (Hochschild 2000; Sauer and Woehl 2011). This has clear effects on classed and racialised hierarchies amongst women.

In order to contest these gender-biased and gender-blind understandings entrenched in mainstream economic policy, FPE scholars have devised concepts and measures that capture the gendered inputs into the economy and the gendered outcomes of policy. These include the application of human rights perspectives to macro-economic policy (Balakrishnan et al. 2010), gender budgeting (see below), social infrastructure (Elson 2017) and attempts to theorise ‘depletion’ (Rai et al. 2014). These concepts and approaches attempt to account for the input of social reproductive labour, the impacts of investing in it and the impacts of cutting state support for it. They provide analyses that span different ‘levels’ of the economy and expose the interrelations between the productive and reproductive economy and the economic and social.

Finally, FPE has also pointed out global patterns in the production and mobilisation of economic knowledge. These critiques have identified the types of knowledge commonly held in esteem in economic policy-making. Peterson (2012, 9) highlights the grip of ‘positivism, modernism and masculinisation’ in economic policy-making. She describes positivism in terms of ‘rationalist approaches’ characterised by dichotomised thinking and stable definitions

of homogenous and discrete phenomena that enable calculation and prediction as well as control over ambiguity, contestation and critical reflection. She describes modernism as privileging of western-centric knowledge-production, governed by individualism and instrumental rationality and with a tendency to devalue the voices of ‘others’. Finally, masculinism is the tendency to base economic theory on essentialised notions of a generic atomistic and self-interested man (for a discussion of masculinities see Hearn et al. in this volume). These kinds of approaches drive mainstream economic analysts to pursue ‘objective’ measures of the impacts of, for instance, the crisis rather than analyses that concede the complex social and cultural realities leading to it (Griffin 2013).

The dominance of positivism, modernism and masculinism in economic policy-making also underpins a tendency to confer onto white male perspectives the mantle of ‘expertise’ whilst rejecting competing perspectives from peripheral or marginalised voices. Basing economic theory explicitly on (western, white) *men* also glosses over relationships between differently located people, thus normalising inequalities. FPE approaches, in contrast, emphasise multidisciplinary approaches, which include analyses of inter alia gendered practices and processes in institutions, such as the World Bank or multinational corporations; sites of analyses, such as the household; and methods such as ethnography – foci traditionally overlooked by ‘malestream’ political economy scholars (Elias and Roberts 2018).

Finally, FPE concepts have been applied to show how the dominance of these epistemological tendencies in economic policy-making shape the possibilities for feminist interventions in economic policy. A key example of this is the widespread tendency to support gender equality policies with arguments and empirical knowledge about efficiency, business benefits and positive effects on employment rates, economic growth and competitiveness. FPE analyses

argue that promoting gender equality measures on this basis ignores the historical and structural causes of gender inequality, legitimises neoliberal economic policies and corporate capitalism, reproduces gendered understandings of the economy and reduces gender equality commitments to an investment strategy (Elomäki 2015, 2020). Such promotion also restricts the justifications feminists can use in support of gender equality measures to arguments premised on efficiency, whilst drawing feminists into the frustrations of working within restrictive ‘technicalised’ policy development and implementation processes (Ferguson 2015).

FPE in EU studies

As stated at the outset, FPE approaches have, surprisingly, not yet been extensively or systematically applied to the study of European integration. The policy area in which FPE approaches – or their influence – can be most readily seen in feminist EU studies is the EU’s economic governance. Feminist researchers have applied some of the concepts from FPE to illustrate that the economic goals and macro-economic policies pursued are gender-biased and that the EU ignores women and marginalised groups as citizens and as economic actors (Bruff and Woehl 2016; Cavaghan and O’Dwyer 2018; Klatzer and Schlager 2014, 2019; Young 2018). In particular, the reconfigurations of the EU’s economic governance after the economic and euro crises have been used to justify cuts to gender equality policies and public services (Kantola and Lombardo 2017; see also Kantola and Lombardo in this volume) and have reshaped gendered subjectivities in conflicting ways. In the wake of austerity-driven cuts to public services, women find themselves lumbered with more care work, performing traditionally conceived feminised roles whilst also experiencing more pressure to behave in competitive and risky ways traditionally conceived as masculine (Bruff and Woehl 2016). FPE concepts have been particularly useful in drawing attention to how the EU’s fiscal rules and austerity policies set limits on the potential scope of the welfare state, thus driving a crisis

in social reproduction as households and individuals are forced to absorb more and more reproductive work and risk (Klatzer and Schlager 2014; Woehl 2017; Young 2002, 2018). These redistributions of work and risk have affected migrant and Black and minority ethnic women the most acutely, deepening existing intersectional inequalities between women (Bassel and Emejulu 2017).

Whilst CPE scholars have described authoritarian neoliberalism and authoritarian constitutionalism, FPE scholars have examined how EU economic governance constitutionalises masculine norms (Bruff and Woehl 2016, 93). EU-level and national fiscal bureaucracy, such as the European Commission's Directorate-General for Economic and Financial Affairs (DG ECFIN), the European Central Bank (ECB), the 'Eurogroup' and national ministries of finance – who have gained in power and influence – are more male-dominated than the European Parliament and national parliaments that have been side-lined, or those parts of the European Commission which have traditionally led EU gender equality policy (Cavaghan 2017a; O'Dwyer 2019). Analysis has shown that the male domination of these economic institutions corresponds to masculine norms, informal institutional rules and the practices within them (Klatzer and Schlager 2019, 51–53). Feminists have found these institutions very difficult to access, encountering stiff resistance to gender mainstreaming efforts and spurious and under-conceptualised critiques of the relevance of gender equality in macro-economic policy (Cavaghan 2017a, 61; Hoskyns 2008, 12).

Feminist scholars have also drawn explicit attention to the gendered forms of expertise and gendered epistemologies underpinning EU economic governance (Cavaghan and O'Dwyer 2018; O'Dwyer 2019). This adds to the mainstream political arguments that have pointed out the dominance and consequences of the ordoliberal ideas within the EU's economic

governance (e.g., Ryner 2015; Helgadóttir 2016). Building even further on CPE analysis, feminist approaches have also shown that the EU's efforts to legitimate its economic policy through a discourse of neutrality or expertise also excludes feminist concerns – which do not fit easily within the veneer of objectivity – from economic governance discourses (O'Dwyer 2019, 169). FPE analyses have thus highlighted whose interests are included as 'economic concerns' in EU economic policy-making and whose are not.

This has been linked to the well documented 'down-grading' of the EU's gender equality policy and a closing of policy opportunities for feminist activists (Jacquot 2015). Feminist actors targeting the EU now confront policy processes that are dominated by economic actors and concerns in which social goals have been subsumed by macro-economic ones (Cavaghan 2017b, 210). In this context, EU gender equality policy has increasingly become framed in a discourse of (individualised) 'rights' and economic benefits, which fits well with neoliberal tendencies to eschew engagement with structural inequalities (Elomäki 2015; Jacquot 2015).

This summary shows the promise of FPE perspectives to highlight the important role of economic policy and ideology in the EU's gender regime. FPE analyses span different levels and sectors of the economy, elaborating links, for example, between economic ideology promoted at the EU level and the gendered subjectivities promoted to citizens in member states. These analyses also show the interrelationships between evolving EU economic governance processes and the declining levels of democratic control. They illustrate how power has shifted away from institutions and parts of the European Commission that are traditionally more open to gender equality claims and towards institutions, such as DG ECFIN, in which entrenched economic disciplinary assumptions place limits on the acceptability and intelligibility of gender equality claims. Understanding the jargonistic

vocabularies and methods of these parts of the Commission is much easier when we draw on FPE. Hence, FPE provides promising frameworks with which to theorise links between the EU level, member states and individuals, thus highlighting very important phenomena that are currently shaping gender equality outcomes.

Moving forward – key issues

In this final section, we explore the possibilities of – and barriers to – a feminist transformation of the EU’s gendered macro-economic policies and economic governance processes informed by FPE theoretical thinking. We also discuss EU policy fields in which FPE approaches could be applied in greater depth.

Gender budgeting – and to a lesser extent, gender mainstreaming – have been seen as a way to implement the critical insights of feminist economics and FPE in practice (O’Hagan 2018;). Gender budgeting is a feminist strategy for bringing an intersectional gender lens to macro-economic policies and budgets and pushing these in a more gender-equal direction. Its radical potential lies in the way it challenges entrenched gender-biased understandings of the economy that underpin macro-economic policies (O’Hagan 2018). However, in EU policy-making, the promise of gender budgeting has not been actualised. Efforts to integrate a gender perspective into macro-economic policies and economic governance as part of the EU’s commitment to gender mainstreaming have been disappointing – and often met with hostility (Hoskyns 2008; O’Dwyer 2017; Villa and Smith 2014). The few examples of gender budgeting or gender mainstreaming that can be found in EU macro-economic policies do not challenge the gender biases entrenched in EU macro-economic policies and economic epistemologies. Instead, only gender equality commitments that support existing macro-economic priorities of growth, jobs and competitiveness have been adopted (Hoskyns 2008;

O'Dwyer 2017). Even these rather meagre gender equality commitments can be undermined, however, when they are passed to member states for implementation, and budgetary discipline remains the ultimate priority (Cavaghan and Elomäki 2020). The apparent legitimacy of the gendered economic model, which is blind to the importance of reproductive labour, and the economic policies that sustain inequalities therefore remain largely intact in the EU.

FPE helps us to understand these disappointing outcomes. It throws our attention onto how the institutional barriers to gender budgeting and gender mainstreaming that have been identified by gender and EU scholars are intertwined with economic ideological and epistemological barriers. The disciplinary divisions between the macro- and micro-economies explain why the EU's macro-economic policies have been resistant to gender equality claims whilst gender perspectives have been integrated into the EU's employment policies – an area traditionally understood as micro-economic policy (Cavaghan 2017a; Hoskyns 2008).

Moreover, the hierarchy and associated boundary between the economic and the social – the productive and the reproductive economy – serves to exclude certain concerns, such as the unpaid economy and the crisis of social reproduction (enhanced by the economic crisis) from the EU's core economic agendas. These barriers are also connected to power and privilege. Re-configuring the distribution of social reproduction would erode the 'tax' currently being extracted from women that subsidises the productive economy. It is therefore not a surprise that policy-makers resist tackling these injustices, which have benefited capitalist accumulation and supported gendered and racialised power relations.

FPE approaches therefore have a double role to play in the feminist transformation of the EU's macro-economic policies and economic governance. On the one hand, FPE insights can inform the efforts to challenge these policies. On the other hand, a broader application of

FPE-informed research is needed to examine the full array of EU policies and the ways in which integration re-configures power and relationships that extend from individual subjectivities within households up to the highest levels of EU policy-making.

Many areas of EU policy that have not been thoroughly researched by feminists are ripe for the application of FPE approaches. Young (2018), for example, points out that FPE has not engaged sufficiently with the impact of EU monetary policy, such as quantitative easing. Similarly, trade has not been extensively explored using the full range of FPE concepts. A handful of existing analyses have highlighted gender equality issues related to EU trade policy (see Garcia in this volume). True (2009), for example, has shown that EU trade policy – thoroughly imbued with neoliberal assumptions – shapes the inclusion of any gender equality clauses into the familiar ‘business case’ mould. Garcia and Masselot (2015) have shown that even these conceptually weak rhetorical commitments are not adequately implemented. FPE perspectives on trade also hold the potential to theorise the effects of EU disintegration when we try to work out, for instance, how the UK’s exit from the EU and the new trading relationships it might build could affect gender equality in the UK, the EU and third countries (see Guerrina and Masselot in this volume).

It is also surprising that, despite acknowledgements of the impacts that austerity has had on social reproduction – and migrant women in particular – and the fairly large body of research on EU migration (see Krause and Schwenken in this volume), feminist EU studies have not turned to FPE to join these findings together and to theorise the role of the care chain in migration within and into the EU. Such an analysis would provide an excellent opportunity to examine the radicalised and classed relationships – not just between men and women, but also between women – that state and corporate non-responsibility for social reproduction –

supported by a myriad of EU policies – embeds as a part of the EU’s broader gender regime. Nor have the relationships between EU economic ideologies and climate policy and the environment been extensively explored (see Allwood in this volume), yet FPE has provided many analyses of these phenomena in other international arenas (Elias and Roberts 2018).

FPE’s analytical vocabularies thus have considerable potential to elucidate the links between multiple levels of the EU polity and the ways in which gendered economic goals and concepts structure activities throughout them. This focus on the economic (conceived in a feminist political sense) sets FPE approaches apart from competing feminist approaches to the analysis of European integration. FPE perspectives push us to understand the links between EU economic ideologies – and the processes putting them into action – and the lived experiences of businesses, households and individuals. They show us how integration has shaped the gendered contours of the political arena and highlight the importance of gendered epistemologies and hierarchies between policy areas, thus providing analytical tools that can be applied to many policy areas. The application of FPE perspectives in feminist EU studies thus has the potential to deepen and widen feminist theorisation of the EU as a whole, providing fresh perspectives that could help to show the full complexities of the role of gender (inequalities) in the maintenance of the European project. FPE concepts should also play a crucial role in studying the gendered and racialised effects of the multiple crises caused by the Covid-19 pandemic and the gendered and racialised effects of the containment and recovery measures.

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