

***Displacing equality discourse.
Three policy directions underpinning
the resilience of gender inequalities***

Prepared for the International Conference
Revisioning Gender.
Complex inequalities and gender dimensions
13-14 June 2014

Jane Jenson
Département de science politique
Université de Montréal
www.cccg.umontreal.ca

Gender inequalities are resilient, despite decades of claims-making for socio-economic equality by numerous social movements and their allies. Despite rhetorical commitment to gender equality as a fundamental value at international, supranational and national level, we continue to see economic and social inequalities in long-familiar areas. Wage gaps remain between women and men. Women are still much more likely than men to have a part-time relationship to the labour market, with all the consequences that implies for financial and other kinds of autonomy. Access to well-paid and stable employment remains out of reach for many, but even more for women than for men.¹ The care deficit persists, and its effects are unequally distributed. Care work remains either unpaid or poorly paid, thereby magnifying inequalities in responsibility as well as income. Nonetheless – and despite analysis of persisting inequalities – policies to promote socio-economic equality have been downplayed, in favour of “gender awareness” and a new maternalism while pro-equality policies are increasingly confined to a rights-based framing.

Second-wave feminists claimed equal rights and equal protections. At the same time they railed against treating a stay-at-home mother responsible for care work in the home as the natural and desirable complement to the male breadwinner model. Decades of struggle by women’s movements and their allies spotlighted the structures of inequalities reproduced by this model and the need to replace it with employment and social policies as well as antidiscrimination protections that would promote women’s autonomy, employment and more equal gender relations in all spheres. It is, therefore, ironic that

¹ For the numbers see OECD (2012: Part III & IV).

this model is no longer central to the paradigm of public policy communities and yet gender inequalities continue to be resilient.²

Some of the patterns of inequalities are, of course, a consequence of the major socio-economic changes that have remade economies and societies over the last three decades and that have generated new social risks. These include economic restructuring in response to globalisation and liberalisation, altered family structures in reaction to profound changes in social norms, and rising inequalities in income as power relations are rebalanced in favour of capital. New social risks have clearly been created (Bonoli, 2005). This paper argues, however, that *the policy responses* to such large social changes and heavy tendencies help sustain these resilient inequalities. These responses are political and expressed through public policy interventions that contour social relations. Policy interventions, particularly labour and social policies, may either set limits on or reinforce inequalities of gender or other social relations. Policies may reduce the new social risks or actually increase them (Bonoli, 2005: 435; Rubery, 2011: 659).

Examining these responses, this paper identifies a major change. This is the displacement of the gender equality discourse within public policy interventions, and the reworking of claims, policies and practices related to gender relations. The equality discourse has been down-played within the universe of political discourse and its place in this discursive space taken over by other diagnostics which either write gender inequalities out, rename women as mothers, or fold gender inequalities into a discursive frame of multiple and intersecting inequalities.

Focusing on policy responses both to socio-economic restructuring and the diagnosis of new social risks, the argument of this paper is that over time there have been three important changes in the framing of gender inequalities within the universe of political discourse and in the policy practices following from this framing. This universe is a space in which socially-constructed meaning systems and practices jostle each other for social attention and legitimacy, a political terrain structured by power relations. It is also one on which, among other things, practices of “puzzling” about public policies occur, particularly in moments of uncertainty about the effectiveness of interventions and instruments.³ Third, it is the terrain upon which actors struggle for recognition and representation. The configuration of political discourse as well as institutional position and power provides greater representative legitimacy to some actors and their ideas than to others (Jenson, 1989: 238ff; 2012: 23-24; Hall, 1993: 289).

This reframing of gender relations within the universe of political discourse in response to the “puzzles” of economic restructuring and social inequalities has consequences, albeit often unintended, for the ways inequalities are addressed in public policy. One

² *Social Politics* was one of the first places where this displacement of the male-breadwinner model was systemically noted and analysed. See for example Lewis (2001) as well as the debate in vol. 4, #2 in 1997.

³ The notions of puzzling and powering are obviously a reference to Hugh Hecló's (1974: 305) argument in his seminal study of social policy learning in Britain and Sweden: “Tradition teaches that politics is about conflict and power. This is a blinkered view of politics.... Politics finds its sources not only in power but also in uncertainty ... Policy making is a form of collective puzzlement on society's behalf.”

central change in the universe of political discourse is the clear move in employment and social policies in Europe and other parts of the world towards promotion of the norm of the “adult worker.” This norm is ascribed to women heading lone-parent families as well as women living in couples. As this has happened, a focus on the challenges that women face to gain equality in the workplace and employment has been sidelined, as policy solutions such as part-time work and wage supplements for low-paid work gain popularity. In the area of care work (whether paid or not) the equality discourse has been even more displaced and the gender inequalities in the distribution of care, whether for children or adults, have been rendered virtually invisible, even as they widen. Gender has been written out. Second, as the social investment perspective has spread in the Global South as well as the North, it has, ironically, inscribed “gender awareness” into social policy at the same time as it has narrowed women’s identity to a maternal dimension and left aside issues of equality between women and men whether at work or at home. This is a “new maternalism.” Third, policy-makers have down-sized their tool box for addressing inequalities while folding gender differences into a wider range of social inequalities. They rely more heavily on legal and judicial protections, rather than combining such necessary policy instruments with more proactive ones promoting gender equality. This third change has been a response to struggles for recognition and representation by a range of new actors within the universe of political discourse.

These three shifts intersect and reinforce each other. Together policy interventions have turned away from gender inequalities, and thereby in some ways making them even more resilient because these interventions appear “innovative” or “modernising.” They help account for the resilience of the socio-economic inequality in gender relations listed in the first paragraph.

The adult-worker model – writing-out gender

We are all familiar with the universe of political discourse of the post-1945 years. Key to socio-economic analysis was the male breadwinner model that assumed a gender division of labour via full (male) employment accompanied by the stay-at-home wife and mother (Lewis 1992). Such assumptions about gender roles were used by employers to justify discrimination in hiring and employment as well as in pay, because social norms defined women primarily through their activities as carers – for children, for men, for the elderly, for the house. Public policy provided support for women to perform those roles either directly (via, for example, family allowances or survivor benefits and social transfers when a male wage was not available) or indirectly by fostering conditions for a high male wage or replacement for it (pensions, unemployment insurance, health care and so on).

Claims-making by feminists from the 1960s through the 1980s helped overturn these norms and policy assumptions and underpinned equal protection and antidiscrimination legislation at national and European levels as well as improved employment conditions. Policies to enforce equal pay for work of equal value were demanded, to combat sex-segregated labour markets, for example. Feminists also critiqued the assumptions written into policy design that perpetuated the unequal distribution of care, thereby hindering women’s access to employment on equal terms (Ungerson, 1997). These assumptions

ranged from the paucity of childcare services to the absence of parental leaves, family leave provisions and support for those caring for vulnerable relatives.

By the late 1990s it was evident that policy communities were generally promoting another model, that many have termed the adult-worker model (Lewis, 2001; Bonoli and Natali, 2012: ch. 1 and *passim*).⁴ In this perspective, women are no longer excused from participation in the labour force in order to care; they are expected to be able to “reconcile” work and family (in Eurospeak), that is to balance both work and family (Stratigaki, 2004; Mahon 2002, for example). This promotion of the adult-worker model, via politics of “activation,” is widely documented (recently, for example, Bonoli, 2013). The point here is not to do more of that, but rather to track a parallel process of writing-out the discourse and therefore the goal of gender equality.⁵

In order to do so, it is also important to make an analytic distinction between a policy discourse of “gender awareness” and one of gender equality.⁶ There can be a large amount of “policy talk” – or awareness – of gender relations and the important contribution of women to social and economic life without there being any commitment to equality. There can also be excellent analysis of patterned inequalities without any solid prescription for equality. Thus we are concerned to observe the writing-out of an *equality* discourse rather than of an *inequality* or a *gender* discourse.

This writing-out can be observed in the discourse of the European Union (EU). For the past 40 years the EU has consistently affirmed and reaffirmed that gender equality is a fundamental value of the Union. While this commitment has been translated into constitutional entrenchment via the treaties there has been, nonetheless, a systematic weakening of the policy instruments that might achieve this equality. This weakening can be observed in two ways.

First, an examination of the intersection of employment policies, increasingly reliant on “activation,” and gender is revealing. Here there has clearly been a move towards the goal of increasing the employment rate of women, but at the loss of notions that such employment can – let alone must – lead to equal outcomes. Several studies have tracked the steady erasing of gender equality goals from the European Employment Strategy, a policy that orients even if it cannot determine the policies of the now 28 Member States (Fagen, Grimshaw and Rubery, 2006; Jenson, 2008: 10). Beginning with the two Kok Reports (2003, 2005) gender equality has been downplayed in the employment strategy. The Employment Guidelines were integrated with those of growth and jobs and there were, for the first time, no targets for gender equality. There were, of course, targets for women’s employment rates and even services to support their achievement, but the

⁴ Just as with the male-breadwinner model, there are significant cross-national variations in the predominance and characteristics of this newer model. For a recent discussion see Karamessini and Rubery (2013: 6-7 and *passim*). Daly (2011) is also sceptical that the adult-worker model is full-blown.

⁵ This mechanism of writing-out has been identified previously, as the EU (Jenson, 2008) and Canada (Jenson, 2009) moved towards the social investment perspective.

⁶ On this distinction see, among others, Molyneux (2006). Gender awareness can have several names. For example the OECD calls for a “gender responsive approach” to public policy (OECD, 2012: 19 and *passim*).

notion of “good” or “better” jobs as a route to gender equality had disappeared. This writing-out of gender equality continues. Villa and Smith (2013) report that in the first draft of Europe 2020 it was not mentioned; queries from some “mystified” member states brought the words back, but the commitment was minimal (Jacquot, 2014: 2).

This writing-out of gender equality in economic strategy is made easier by a second modification of the EU’s approach to gender equality. The Commission’s interventions on gender equality, via its gender administrative machinery, have moved from promotion to rhetorical enthusiasm, and this despite institutionalisation (Jacquot, 2014; Jenson, 2008). For example, between 1982 and 2006 the Commission elaborated five action programmes for equal opportunities between women and men. As they developed through the years, they broadened the analysis of the underpinning structures of gender inequality. They also deployed tools to overcome them, within the double perspective of equal treatment and equal opportunities. The first led most often to using the instrument of legislation and the second to positive action via specific and targeted programmes.⁷ By the decade of the Lisbon Strategy, and its emphasis on policy coordination rather than legislation, however, the *Framework Strategy for equality between women and men* (2001-05) and the *Roadmap for equality between women and men* (2006-10) began to set out principles and call for Member State action that lacked policy instruments for action. The link to financing that shaped earlier programmes was broken. No incentives were proposed. Only the rhetorical commitment of the supranational institutions remained (Jacquot, 2014).

For its part, the Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) has come late to detailed analysis of patterns of gender inequalities in contemporary economies, and it is important that it do so. Yet its recent *Closing the Gender Gap. Act Now* demonstrates a pirouette-like flourish of writing out gender equality (even while talking loudly about it). The three areas in which equality might be achieved, according to the OECD, are education, employment and entrepreneurship. In the first case, there are quite specific policy proposals for “greater gender equality in educational attainment.” The expectation for adult women, however, is only “improved female labour market outcomes” (OECD, 2012: 18 and passim). Despite the excellent diagnosis of the causes of inequalities, when policy recommendations are proposed, equality is no longer explicitly the goal. The discussion turns almost exclusively on the hindrances – usually ones of values whether within the home or the workplace – that have generated the acknowledged inequalities. There are few strong policy prescriptions laid out. Rather, employers should try harder because it is their own interest to do so and governments should remove disincentives to employment.

In Sweden where gender equality is, as in the EU, a long-standing norm, the unequal structures of part-time work and gender segregated employment were long ignored because they were generating high levels of female employment and even some measure of change within the family division of labour. Yet Sweden currently has one of the

⁷ Jacquot (2010) summarises these two approaches before describing the new instrument – gender mainstreaming – added in the 1990s as the EU moved towards a strategy of policy coordination rather than relying on the Community Method.

highest wage gaps between men and women (only three OECD countries are larger) and the “price of motherhood” is also high (OECD, 2012: 170). Over time, this silence has had at least two consequences. One is that labour market policy has turned its equality lens to other problems, and in particular the integration of youth into work and the problems of immigrants.⁸ For its part, the Social Democrats’ 2013 programme has returned somewhat to its attention to gender equality, after writing it down if not out in earlier versions (Jenson, 2011). But here again, while the diagnosis of gender inequalities is strong, the action interventions remain focused on activation and fighting unemployment, with only sparse mention of good jobs or overcoming the gender segregation identified in its own analysis as part of the problem (SDP, 2013: 6; 12).

France is country which had traditionally boasted about its level of female employment. Yet it is hard to find a mention of gender equality in employment policies, where combatting youth unemployment is the goal. Indeed the writing-out has become so standard that the declining statistics are simply ignored. Women’s employment rate is now no higher than the 60% set as the EU’s target in 2000.⁹ Moreover, activation policies that have developed in recent years take a low-road strategy of supplementing low-wages rather than pushing for quality work that might lead to gender equality.

The argument made here can be summarised as follows. The discourse of gender equality that both resulted from equality-seeking claims and generated policy instruments to actively promote equality has been written-out of labour market policy in the turn to activation. Much of this discursive shift can be attributed to pressing needs of categories and groups such as “youth.” However, “youth” is not a sexually or gender homogenous category; the absence of a discourse about gender and youth renders invisible many to the same structures of inequality that “women” have known they face for decades. Another factor accounting for the discursive shift is the willingness of governments to entertain public policies to supplement low wages or policies that simply seek to ensure people are employed, whether the number of hours or the salary is equitable or adequate. Thus a rise in women’s employment rate can be promoted without it necessarily being accompanied by any goal of gender equality. These two factors underpinning the writing-out of gender equality in employment policies focused on activation are also explanatory when we turn to the new maternalism of social policy built from the social investment perspective.

The social investment perspective. Modernising maternalism

A perspective on social policy that can be termed one of social investment began colonising national, supranational and international universes of political discourse Europe and the Americas in the mid-1990s (Jenson and Saint-Martin, 2003; Morel, Palier and Palme, 2012). The social investment perspective took hold as policy communities “puzzled” to find a better response than straightforward neo-liberalism (Jenson and Levi, 2013; Mahon, 2010). In the eyes of some, it is now hegemonic in these multi-scaler universes (Cantillon and Van Lancker, 2013: 553). It is a policy perspective that

⁸ See, for example, <http://www.government.se/sb/d/16236>.

⁹ http://europa.eu/epic/countries/france/index_en.htm

emphasises the importance of employment supports for activation. But its central and defining feature is its call to focus public spending on human capital throughout the life cycle. An innovative feature of this human capital focus is the stress placed on early childhood education care (ECEC) in addition to the other stages of education and training. With the spread of the social investment perspective, ECEC replaced simple “childcare” as a policy direction, and its key objective is ensuring the preparation of the next generation. The social investment perspective also developed out of the recognition that poverty was not a transitory phase and that social mobility was often blocked. Rising low-wage work and changes to family forms were transmitting poverty from one generation to the next. Thus, there was a discursive melding of standard economic arguments about the value of employment with scientific evidence from the child development literature about the long-term and intergenerational effects of child poverty and the possibility that early interventions could mitigate these effects (Saint-Martin and Dobrowolsky, 2005). Through the 2000s and in several universes of political discourse, there was an effective displacement of policy communities’ attention from “poverty” in general to child poverty.¹⁰ The social investment perspective in discourse and actions, in other words, has been from the beginning, “child-focused.”¹¹

While it was never an inevitable that gender equality would be written out of the social investment perspective or that maternalism would return, after two decades it is clear that across the board there is a tendency to confine women either to invisibility as non-gendered “workers” or to their situation as mothers of young children. The first process and the mechanism of writing-out by proponents of the social investment perspective as well as within other perspectives have been described. This section concentrates, therefore, on the second.

The re-inscription¹² of maternalism in social policy in many of the spaces previously occupied by gender equality is exemplified first by Gøsta Esping-Andersen’s influential work¹³ on social investment which has been presented to, published by and adopted by several policy communities within the European Union and OECD world, and has been taken up by his followers (see for example, several chapters in Morel, Palier and Palme, 2012). Esping-Andersen, advocates his “new gender contract” to underpin a new welfare state and support a child-centred social investment strategy. The structure of the argument is straightforward.¹⁴ Post-industrial economies and modern families depend on women’s employment. But women are having fewer children. This has created a new

¹⁰ According to Mary Daly’s detailed analysis of the social inclusion domain in the first half of the Lisbon decade, by 2006 child poverty had emerged as a “strong issue” in the joint social inclusion reports while simple poverty (that is, of adults) had disappeared from the policy agenda (Daly, 2006: 10).

¹¹ This child-focus is clear in one of the founding documents of the social investment perspective for the European Union (Esping-Andersen *et al.*, 2002 which began as a report to the Belgian presidency of the European Council) but also in the positions adopted from the beginning by New Labour (Lister, 2003).

¹² It is a re-inscription because maternalism was a key discourse about gender more than a century ago, one that was replaced in much of the world by that of gender equality (see for example, Koven and Michel, 1990).

¹³ In 1997 he provided a first analysis of social investment to the OECD. Esping-Andersen *et al.* (2002) was originally commissioned by the Belgian presidency of the European Council in 2001.

¹⁴ The argument is presented in the 2002 book but is most developed later (Esping-Andersen, 2009).

challenge: finding a balance between employment and *maternity*.¹⁵ The defamilialisation of care for pre-school children will allow women to successfully combine employment and motherhood, and thereby allow Europe to avoid the demographic crisis facing it. But when women do work, it is not necessary that it is on the same conditions or for the same salaries as men. The “best mothers now combine motherhood and employment” (Daly, 2004: 145), even as the goal of equality in employment fades from view.

In addition, in practice the social investment perspective comes with a range of supports for “good mothering” or substitutes when it is deemed inadequate. New Labour’s investments in children, for example, included Sure Start programmes that “promote[s] a view of mothers as principally responsible for children’s development and well-being” (Clarke, 2006: 699). It was implemented in disadvantaged areas to provide children with the pre-school preparation and learning environment that experts considered to be missing in the home. Canada’s social investment interventions similarly emphasised some public responsibility for good mothering, particularly in marginalised communities (Jenson, 2004: 179).

A second example of this new maternalism comes from the international policy community. There is now little doubt that agencies of the United Nations, other international organisations and NGOs recognise women’s economic contributions as central to any successful development strategy. They are profoundly gender aware. Women are key targets in the now very popular micro-credit programmes, an example of an asset-building policy instrument in the social investment perspective. The 2000 Millennium Development Goals (MDG), like the OECD’s position described above, reflects awareness of women’s contribution to development within a broader social investment perspective focused on education and human capital.¹⁶ For example, the third MDG goal is to “promote gender equality and empower women,” a phrase that sounds very much inspired by a gender-equality discourse. The actual agreed target, however, is to “eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and in all levels of education no later than 2015.”¹⁷ The focus is girls. Of course, the place where adult women are consistently present is in the fifth MDG: to improve maternal health. While completely appropriate as a target, because childbirth remains potentially deadly and otherwise damaging to millions of women, maternity is only one of women’s multiple social roles. The absence of targets for other dimensions of adult women’s lives makes the MDG discourse of gender equality fluid and unpredictable.

Other parts of the development agenda have also turned towards a social investment perspective, especially in Latin America, where both ECEC and the much-touted

¹⁵ The emphasis was demographic, and therefore on maternity, rather than even parenting and work-family balance.

¹⁶ Craig Murphy writes of this shift, represented by the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) proclaimed in 2000, this way: “By adopting them, many powerful institutions – both governmental and intergovernmental – have come to embrace an egalitarian, human-centred view of development that was not common-place in the 1970s. Moreover, these institutions have accepted the central role of women, and of their empowerment, in any attempt to achieve the society-wide development goals...” (Murphy, 2006: 210-11).

¹⁷ See <http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/>.

conditional cash transfer programmes (CCT) are favoured policy instruments for social development (Jenson, 2010; Mahon, 2010). The logic of the design of these key instruments for social investments in the global South was quite similar to what we have seen for the MDG targets. They display gender awareness but only promise equality for girls. They are deeply maternalist, making transfers conditional on the behaviour of mothers (seeking health care for themselves and their children; ensuring their children remain in schooling).¹⁸ There is very little in the programme design that targets women's need and hopes for economic autonomy or security.

In summary, we can say that goals of gender equality are little present in the social investment perspective as it has developed over the past 20 years. It demonstrates, of course, profoundly gender awareness. This is guaranteed by the emphasis on demography and also because of the recognition of the links between lone-parenthood and other changes in familial norms that correlate with the poverty rate of families with young children. However, the concomitant turn to targeting child poverty as well as the emphasis on social transfers to mothers who mother "correctly," and the provision of services for those deemed not to so, as well as monetary transfers to enable mothering have occupied policy space, leaving little room in the universe of political discourse for consideration of women whose children are grown, who have no children, or whose identity is larger than or other than that of mother.

Folding in. Gender is one inequality among many

Over time there has been a major political mobilisation by groups seeking to broaden the representation of structural inequalities to move beyond a simple view of the commonalities of all women and all men. This has been a struggle of long duration, beginning with black feminists and women of colour, and then to include calls for adequate representation of sexual preference as well as multiple bases of inequality following from religion, citizenship, marginalisation and so on. The point here is not to describe this mobilisation and its successes in changing norms and policies, nor to identify the remaining challenges. That has been done elsewhere.

Rather, the point here is to draw out the consequences of both the discourse of intersectionality and the policy practices following from it for the discourse on gender equality. There are two consequences. One is that attention to intersectionality in itself has brought a shift from concerns with socio-economic inequalities to a diverse range of kinds of discriminations, exclusions and lack of rights. Second, the well-deserved attention to diversity has meant that the attention to socio-economic equality has declined. Other matters appear more pressing.

¹⁸ This policy emphasis on good mothering as the route towards social development seems to have taken shape without the involvement of the international administrative machinery for gender equality (Nagels, 2013: 26-75). The standard model of the CCT was promoted by UNICEF, the World Bank and the other international banks as well as national ministries in Mexico and Brazil responsible for social development, with little participation of the international or regional gender machinery (Ancelovici and Jenson, 2013).

The European Union provides a good example of folding-in, although it both followed national examples and subsequently inspired national governments. In the last two decades the EU has simultaneously reduced the budget going to gender equality measures and shifted the administrative centre of gravity. In the Amsterdam Treaty, gender equality and gender mainstreaming are fundamental values (articles 2 & 3) while article 13 identifies the possibility of pro-active measures on a wide range of potential grounds of discrimination. This constitutionalisation at first seemed to provide greater possibilities for combatting gender inequalities.¹⁹ Directives followed as did administrative machinery which went from being a relatively small Equal Opportunities unit to a full Directorate within the D-G Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, meriting not only its own four sub-units but also a part of the name of the Directorate-General itself. But the Treaty's logic – beyond the statement of values – was not particularly a social one. It rested on rights. Actors claiming such rights were not the same as those who had promoted gender equality, that is feminists inside and outside the bureaucracy of the EU (Jacquot, 2014: 13). They fit poorly into the socio-economic framing of the DG V.

Thus, in 2011, the Equal Opportunities Unit was transferred to another administrative location. It is integrated into DG Justice, where it became Directorate D, an Equality line that as well as gender equality covers in separate directorates equal treatment, rights of persons with disabilities non-discrimination, and Roma.²⁰ As Sophie Jacquot summarises this change: “far from being simply practical, this relocation has profound consequences for European policies of equality between women and men, its forms of actions, its nature, its very definition” [Jacquot, 2014: 13; translation by author]. Being within a world of justice and law, it is not surprising that immediate consequences were greater attention to issues such as violence and gender as a form of discrimination.

This movement from a socio-economic understanding of gender inequalities to one that folds gender in with a range of discriminations, exclusions and violence is not unique to the supranational EU of course. Indeed national governments had moved earlier to undertake such consolidation around anti-discrimination and rights-based reasoning. In Sweden gender equality became one of four forms of discrimination via an explicit folding-in process:

The Office of the Equality Ombudsman was formed on 1 January 2009 when the four previous anti-discrimination ombudsmen were merged into a single body. The Equal Opportunities Ombudsman (JämO) dealt with gender-based discrimination, the Ombudsman against Ethnic Discrimination (DO) focused on discrimination related to ethnicity, religion or other belief, the Disability Ombudsman (HO) was responsible for combating discrimination relating to disability, and the Ombudsman against Discrimination because of Sexual Orientation (HomO) monitored compliance with the rules prohibiting discrimination due to a person's sexual orientation.

¹⁹ As Jo Shaw wrote (2002: 217): “In sum, [there] is now a much wider gender equality norm than was the original Article 119 and the changed opportunity structure for gender equality policy-making contributes substantially to the polity-defining and substantive aspects of constitutionalism.”

²⁰ http://ec.europa.eu/justice/about/files/organisation_chart_en.pdf

Again, as in the EU, the administrative adjustment had far-reaching consequences for the diagnosis of the problem. The equal opportunities label disappeared, consolidating a shift away from the meaning developed by the Swedish government that “equal opportunities policy is fundamentally concerned with the ability of each individual to achieve economic independence through gainful employment” (quote from Eduards, 1991: 169) to a concern with multiple forms of discrimination and ways to protect against them.

The UK had acted even earlier, folding in responsibilities of three former commissions (the Commission for Racial Equality, the Equal Opportunities Commission and the Disability Rights Commission) to create the Equality and Human Rights Commission, that “monitors human rights, protecting equality across 9 grounds - age, disability, gender, race, religion and belief, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership, sexual orientation and gender reassignment.”²¹

Such folding-in is now the norm, meaning that gender inequalities share discursive space and limited resources with many others needing protection and advancement. The privileged place that claims for gender equality might have occupied in earlier decades is no more.

A concluding question

Socio-economic inequalities of gender are resilient. Gains have clearly been made in naming and overcoming unequal treatment with respect to sexual rights, marriage, and others. Yet the economic and social inequalities at home, at work, in politics and community life that motivated much of the feminist movement beginning in the 1970s have by no means been overcome. The argument made here is that gender awareness is never enough, nor is even detailed analysis of inequalities. My claim is that some of this resilience is due to shifts in political discourse that (i) wrote-out the discourse of gender equality at work when labour market policy adopted activation as a goal; (ii) that re-inscribed maternity as the role for women in the social investment perspective; and (iii) that folded equal opportunities into rights-based protections and abandoned proactive programming. Claiming economic equality is harder in the face of the politics of activation, when any job rather than a good job is the policy goal. Claiming social benefits and recognition is harder when only mothers are worthy. Claiming equal opportunities is harder when discrimination is the only grounds. And finally, claiming gender equality is harder when all three are presented by policy-makers as innovative and modern solutions to the era of globalisation, economic restructuring and new social risks. Are claims for economic autonomy and social independence old-fashioned? Or, is it time to reclaim the lost discursive space?

²¹ <http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/>

References

- Ancelovici, Marcos and Jane Jenson. 2013. "Standardization for Transnational Diffusion: The Case of Truth Commissions and Conditional Cash Transfers." *International Journal of Sociology*, 7: 3, 294-312.
- Bonoli, Giuliano. 2005. "The politics of the new social policies: providing coverage against new social risks in mature welfare states." *Policy & Politics*, 33: 3, 431-49.
- Bonoli, Giuliano. 2013. *The Origins of Active Social Policies. Labour Market and Childcare Policies in a Comparative Perspective*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Bonoli, Giuliano and David Natali (eds). 2012. *The Politics of the New Welfare State*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Cantillon, Bea and Wim Van Lancker. 2013. "Three Shortcomings of the Social Investment Perspective." *Social Policy & Society*, 12: 4, 553-64.
- Clarke, Karen. 2006. "Childhood, parenting and early intervention: A critical examination of the Sure Start national programme." *Critical Social Policy*, 26, 699-721.
- Daly, Mary. 2004. "Changing Conceptions of Family and Gender Relations in European Welfare States and the Third Way." In Jane Lewis and Rebecca Surender (eds), *Welfare State Change. Towards a Third Way?* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 135-55.
- Daly, Mary. 2006. "EU Social Policy after Lisbon." *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 44: 3, 461-81.
- Daly, Mary. 2011. "What Adult Worker Model? A Critical Look at Recent Social Policy Reform in Europe from a Gender and Family Perspective." *Social Politics. International Studies in Gender, State and Society*, 18: 1, 1-23.
- Eduards, Maud. 1991. "The Swedish gender model: Productivity, pragmatism and paternalism." *West European Politics*, 14:3, 166-81.
- Esping-Andersen, Gøsta. 2009. *The Incomplete Revolution: Adapting to Women's New Roles*. Cambridge, UK: Polity.
- Esping-Andersen, Gøsta, Duncan Gallie, Anton Hemerijck, and John Myles. 2002. *Why we need a new welfare state*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Fagen, Colette, Damian Grimshaw and Jill Rubery. 2006. "The subordination of the gender equality objective: the National Reform Programmes and 'making work pay' policies." *Industrial Relations Journal*, 37: 6, 571-92.
- Hall, Peter. 1993. "Policy Paradigms, Social Learning, and the State: The Case of Economic Policymaking in Britain." *Comparative Politics*, 25: 3, 275-96.
- Heclo, Hugh. 1974. *Modern Social Policy in Britain and Sweden. From Relief to Income Maintenance*. Essex, UK: ECPR Press.
- Jacquot, Sophie. 2010. "The Paradox of Gender Mainstreaming: Unanticipated Effects of New Modes of Governance in the Gender Equality Domain." *West European Politics*, 33: 1, 118-35.
- Jacquot, Sophie. 2014. « Vers un devenir symbolique de l'égalité entre les femmes et les hommes? Le démantèlement de la politique d'égalité de l'Union européenne. Presented to ECSA-C, Montreal, May.

- Jenson, Jane. 1989. "Paradigms and Political Discourse. Protective Legislation in France and the United States before 1914." *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, XXII: 2, 235-58.
- Jenson, Jane. 2004. "'Changing the Paradigm: Family Responsibility or Investing in Children.'" *Canadian Journal of Sociology/Cahiers canadiens de sociologie*, 29: 2, 169-92.
- Jenson, Jane. 2008. "Writing Women Out, Folding Gender In. The European Union 'Modernises' Social Policy." *Social Politics. International Studies in Gender, State and Society*, vol. 15: 2, 1-23.
- Jenson, Jane. 2009. "Writing gender out: The continuing effects of the social investment perspective." In Alexandra Dobrowolsky (ed.), *Women and Public Policy in Canada. Neo-liberalism and After?* Don Mills, ON: Oxford University Press, 2009, 25-47.
- Jenson, Jane. 2010. "Diffusing ideas after neo-liberalism: The social investment perspective in Europe and Latin America." *Global Social Policy*, 10: 1, 59-84.
- Jenson, Jane. 2011. "European Center-Left Parties and New Social Risks: Facing up to new policy challenges." In James Cronin, George Ross and James Shoch (eds), *What's Left of the Left. Democrats and Social Democrats in Challenging Times*. Durham & London: Duke University Press, 241-64.
- Jenson, Jane. 2012. "A new politics for the social investment perspective: Objectives, instruments and areas of intervention in welfare regimes." In Giuliano Bonoli & David Natali, *The Politics of the New Welfare State*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 21-44.
- Jenson, Jane and Ron Levi. 2013. "Narratives and Regimes of Social and Human Rights. The Jackpines of the Neoliberal Era." In Peter A. Hall and Michèle Lamont (eds), *Social Resilience in the Neoliberal Era*. NY: Cambridge University Press, 69-98.
- Jenson, Jane and Denis Saint-Martin. 2003. "New Routes to Social Cohesion? Citizenship and the Social Investment State." *Canadian Journal of Sociology*. 28: 1, 77-99.
- Koven, Seth and Sonya Michel. 1990. "Womanly Duties: Maternalist Politics and the Origins of Welfare States in France, Germany, Great Britain, and the United States, 1880-1920." *The American Historical Review*, 95: 4, 1076-1108.
- Lewis, Jane. 1992. "Gender and the Development of Welfare Regimes." *Journal of European Social Policy*, 2, 159-73.
- Lewis, Jane. 2001. "The Decline of the Male Breadwinner Model. Implications for Work and Care." *Social Politics*, 152-69.
- Lister, Ruth. 2003. "Investing in the Citizen-workers of the Future: Transformations in Citizenship and the State under New Labour." *Social Policy & Administration*, 37: 5, 427-43.
- Karamessini, Maria and Jill Rubery (eds). 2014. *Women and Austerity. The Economic Crisis and the Future for Gender Equality*. Milton Park: Routledge.
- Mahon, Rianne. 2002. "Child Care. Toward what kind of 'Social Europe'?" *Social Politics. International Studies in Gender, State and Society*, 9: 3, 343-79.
- Mahon, Rianne. 2010. "After-Neoliberalism? The OECD, the World Bank and the Child." *Global Social Policy*, 10: 2, 172-92.
- Molyneux, Maxine. 2006. "Mothers at the Service of the New Poverty Agenda: Progres/Oportunidades, Mexico's Conditional Transfer Programme," *Social Politics & Administration*, 40: 4, 425-49.

- Morel, Nathalie, Bruno Palier, and Joakim Palme (eds), 2012. *Towards a social investment welfare state? Ideas, policies and challenges*. Bristol, UK: Policy Press.
- Murphy, Craig. 2006. *The United Nations Development Programme. A Better Way?* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Nagels, Nora. 2013. *Genre et politiques de lutte contre la pauvreté : quels enjeux de citoyenneté?* Thèse de doctorat numéro 977, Graduate Institute, Genève.
- OECD. 2012. *Closing the Gender Gap. Act Now*. Paris: OECD.
- Rubery, Jill. 2011. "Reconstruction and Deconstruction. Why we need more of the social in European social models." *Work & Employment*, 25: 4, 658-74.
- Saint-Martin, Denis and Alexandra Dobrowolsky. 2005. "Social Learning, Third Way Politics and Welfare State Redesign." In André Lecours (ed), *New Institutionalism. Theory and Analysis*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 245-75.
- SDP [Social Democratic Party – Sweden]. 2013. *Political Priorities for the Future*. Stockholm: SDP.
- Shaw, Jo. 2002. "The European Union and Gender Mainstreaming: Constitutionally Embedded or Comprehensively Marginalised?" *Feminist Legal Studies*, 10, 213-26.
- Stratigaki, Maria. 2004. "The Cooptation of Gender Concepts in EU Policies: The Case of 'Reconciliation of Work and Family'". *Social Politics. International Studies in Gender, State and Society*, 11: 1, 30-56.
- Ungerson, Clare. 1997. "Social Politics and the Commodification of Care." *International Studies in Gender, State and Society*, 4: 3, 363-81.
- Villa, Paola and Mark Smith. 2013. "Policy in the time of crisis. Employment and Gender Policy in Europe." In Maria Karamessini, Maria and Jill Rubery (eds), *Women and Austerity. The Economic Crisis and the Future for Gender Equality*. Milton Park: Routledge, 273-94.