Gender and Sexual Politics: A Central Issue for European Studies

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A New CES Research Network

Gender and sexuality issues have been widely discussed in Europe throughout the past few decades. Most European societies, despite still important cross-country disparities, have undergone unprecedented social transformations. Facing claims by feminist, homosexual and other social movements, European states have started to acknowledge the gendered and/or sexualized nature of their actions. At the same time, the European Union (EU), the Council of Europe and other regional and global institutions have emerged as potential allies to social movements, while contributing to social and political convergence across the continent in a decisive way.

The academic world has not been immune, and works on gender and sexuality have proliferated, often adopting an interdisciplinary perspective. European studies are no exception and, as Laura Frader reminds us in her contribution, the Council for European Studies (CES) has welcomed gender papers since the first conferences. However, gender and sexuality issues long remained of secondary interest. This mini-forum emphasizes how the field of European Studies has transformed since the founding conferences. There are not only more research and more publications on gender and sexuality in Europe, but topics and approaches have also become much more diverse. Therefore,

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the study of Europe would not be complete today without considering both gender and sexuality.

The main aim of this mini-forum of *Perspectives on Europe* is twofold. First, it sheds light on the diversity and the richness of two maturing bodies of scholarship. Indeed, the papers in the mini-forum demonstrate the vitality of research on gender and sexual politics in Europe and present some key features of current academic debates, often in a comparative perspective. Beyond emphasizing the core relevance of these two research lines, this mini-forum contributes to a dialogue between two bodies of research that have often matured in an independent way. Fostering academic dialogue, bringing scholars together to build up knowledge and contribute to the institutionalization of gender and sexuality studies are the core goals of the new CES Research Network on Gender and Sexuality Studies. This mini-forum is also the opportunity to celebrate the birth of the network and to contribute to the development of the vibrant gender and sexuality perspectives within the Council for European Studies community.

Launched in March 2012, the Gender and Sexuality Research Network brings together scholars working on gender and sexuality and aims to enhance research around a vast range of topics regarding gender and sexuality, across the various disciplines of the social sciences (anthropology, law, history, political science, sociology, etc.). While a strong regional emphasis is put on European countries and the EU, the research group also encourages comparative research that locates Europe or European countries in a transatlantic or international context. The Gender and Sexuality Research Network strongly supports diversity in methods and approaches. Although this mini-forum gathers mostly articles from sociology and political sciences, it advocates the need for interdisciplinary research and seeks to welcome a more diverse membership in the future.

The goals of the Gender and Sexuality Research Network include:

* Developing a strong network of scholars to stimulate collaborative work and joint publications;*

* Encouraging panels on topics of interest to members; and*

* Providing a platform where members from different countries and disciplines can strengthen intellectual ties and disseminate their work.¹

### Mini-Forum on the Politics of Gender and Sexuality in Europe

The papers gathered in this mini-forum attempt to highlight the diversity of current academic debates while interrogating the specificity of gender and sexuality politics in Europe. Although exhaustivity is beyond the capacity of such a mini-forum, we have tried to present some key discussions in European Studies. This mini-forum includes European, North American, junior and more established authors, who all belong to the new Gender and Sexuality Research Network.

The papers, which often originate from comparative research projects, question the nature of Europe. The EU and other political and social actors have often claimed the uniqueness of Europe in terms of equality, social acceptance and even public policies. According to such account, there would be something distinctive about the region, confirming the specificity of Europe as

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¹ To learn more about or join the Gender and Sexuality Research Network, please consult the webpage of the network (www.councilforeuropeanstudies.org/research/research-networks/gender-sexuality) or contact the co-chairs directly at isabelle.engeli@uottawa.ca and david.paternotte@ulb.ac.be).
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a space of shared values. The papers gathered here explore these claims in various ways, and all examine whether there is such a thing as a unique European flavor when it comes to gender and sexual politics. The first two papers examine the machinery of gender politics in Western Europe and explore how transformative policies can take place. The next three articles focus on the construction of Europe as a space of shared values about gender and sexuality. The last two articles bring these claims forward by examining current challenges in a context of increasing religious and cultural diversity.

Dorothy McBride and Amy Mazur’s paper draws on the outstanding scholarly contribution of the long-term international collaboration of the Research Network on Gender Politics and the State (RNGS) to discuss why, under which conditions and to what extent state feminism in Europe has substantially transformed gender relations, promoted women’s rights and challenged patriarchy through state action. They argue that while democratization has been widespread and transformative state feminism has occurred in most Western European countries, substantive change in gender relations still remains rare in government affairs.

Claire Annesley, Isabelle Engeli and Francesca Gains adopt a comparative perspective to assess the conditions under which gendering executive attention has occurred in Western Europe throughout the past few decades. Moving from the parliamentary arena to the executive one, their contribution sheds new light on the debated impact of women’s descriptive representation in political offices on the effective promotion of gender equality. They argue that while democratization has been widespread and transformative state feminism has occurred in most Western European countries, substantive change in gender relations still remains rare in government affairs.

Alison Woodward’s paper reflects on the interaction between the growth of gender studies as a discipline in Europe and the broadening of ambitions and achievements regarding the promotion of gender equality within the EU. She provides an important and challenging insight on the contribution of the gender perspective to a more fine-grained understanding of the European integration and its democratic legitimacy, but also on the implication of these institutional ties for the future of gender and politics research in Europe.

Phillip Ayoub and David Paternotte examine the importance of the idea of Europe in the history of transnational lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) activism and its influence in the expansion of LGBT activism in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE). Relying on a constructivist account of European identity construction, they highlight that founding activists did already consider Europe as a specific set of values, which would help them gain more rights across the continent. This visionary insight, which preceded any institutional design, became central when the movement started to develop itself in the CEE. There, it met the willingness of some local activists, who were looking for powerful means to expand their rights. This article shows the importance of civil society actors in building a European identity.

Answering to recurrent interrogations by American colleagues, Angella Wilson’s paper attempts to define what makes Europe so unique when it comes to LGBT rights. Indeed, she has been regularly asked why Europe was doing better than the United States in terms of LGBT equality. In her contribution, which is based on a forthcoming book, she emphasizes the crucial role of the ‘political economy of care’, which is too often overlooked in discussions on LGBT politics. According to Wilson, this would be one of the main differences between Europe and the United States, and it would explain to a large extent recent European advances.

Eléonore Lépinard’s contribution sheds light on the complex relationship between gender equality, feminist movements and multiculturalism, which is currently crystallizing on
the Islamic veiling issue and other topics related to gender and Islam in Europe. Her paper discusses the dilemma posed by religious accommodation and the veiling issue to Western feminism on the basis of a comparison between France and Canada. Against accounts that oppose gender equality to the recognition of religious and cultural diversity, Lépinard emphasizes the serious consequences on European Muslim women that are emanating from the lack of intersectional perspective within the mainstream feminist movements as well as in public policies and political interventions. She also explores the challenges to European identity and its association to gender equality, as well as current changes in the regulation of religion across the region.

Finally, Paul Mepschen and Jan Willem Duyvendak’s article echoes Lépinard’s insights while examining current debates on LGBT politics in Europe. Discussing recent debates on the emergence of sexual nationalisms, it shows how a culturalization of citizenship, a fear of Islam and a normalization of homosexuality are all creating new exclusions across the continent. Relying on Dutch debates on homosexuality and integration of cultural minorities, the authors argue that gay rights and sexual freedom are increasingly turned on their head to stigmatize other parts of the population.
State Feminism in Europe: A Transformation of Gender Relations

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Since the 1970s, governments in Western Europe have established dozens of government agencies with explicit goals of advancing the status of women and/or promoting gender equity. Such agencies as the 1975 Belgian Consultative Commission on the Status of Women, the Ministry of Woman’s Rights in the early 1980s in France, and the Italian Ministry for Equal Opportunities in the 1990s seemed to have the potential for becoming centers of subversion against male-dominated politics within the state. In 1995, the Research Network on Gender Politics and the State (RNGS) organized to find out just how important such women’s policy agencies, often called gender equality mechanisms, have been in promoting women’s status and challenging patriarchy through state action.1 One of the major things RNGS did was to further develop and empirically apply the concept of state feminism. The network introduced the notion of movement state feminism, defined as the successful partnership between state gender mechanisms and women’s movement actors in gaining favorable policies and representation to promote movement goals. By opening the state to participation by new groups – women’s movement actors – and including their demands in policy, movement state feminism expands democratic descriptive and substantive representation within the state arena. Enhancing the presence of women’s movement actors is descriptive representation, and including ideas in government policy is substantive. Such changes in representation further the democratic goal of advancing a previously excluded group. The result has great

1 For more on RNGS, go to http://libarts.wsu.edu/polisci/rngs/.
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Potential to put a dent in traditional gender relations.

While state feminism expands democratic opportunity, not all movement state feminist outcomes are themselves transformative. Some women’s movement goals with respect to state policy may be limited and narrow. Only alliances between feminist movement actors and feminist insider agencies – those that are influential in policy processes – have the potential to transform gender relations through enhanced representation, because only feminist actors explicitly demand the outcomes that challenge gender hierarchies inside and outside the state.

This essay reports on the pattern of both democratization and transformative state feminism found by the RNGS project in 11 Western European countries from the 1960s to the early 2000s. After a brief review of the evolution of the concept of state feminism and a summary of the RNGS project, we suggest that while democratization has been widespread and transformative state feminism has occurred in nearly every country at some time, substantive change in gender relations remains rare in government affairs.

**Evolution of the Concept of State Feminism**

The concept of state feminism developed in the context of changing relationships between women’s movements and states beginning in the 1970s. After the decline of grassroots autonomous protest against the state associated with the second wave, movement actors began to see the state more favorably as a way to overcome social and economic gender inequality. Scandinavian scholars named the growing interest in the idea that the polity could be women friendly as state feminism or ‘feminism from above’. While most Scandinavian scholars used the term to refer to some type of interaction between activists outside the state and sympathetic feminists inside the state, a few focused on women’s policy agencies (Dahlerup 1986; Nielsen 1983), but none offered a definition of feminism. Woman-friendly polity meant the smooth relationship for women between their family, working and public life.

It was not unusual for the Scandinavian gender scholars to see the state as a potential friend to women, but it was definitely a surprise when the Australian researchers, with an active tradition of feminist skepticism toward the state, began to challenge the idea that the state was an impenetrable patriarchal monolith and accepted the growing number of Australian women’s policy agencies in the 1980s. Work of Australian scholars Pringle and Watson (1992) and Franzway, Court and Connell (1989) challenged the claim of the monolithic patriarchal state by observing that states, in fact, comprise many different arenas for political and administrative action. Some, like women’s policy agencies, could be avenues for promoting a feminist agenda rather than enemies.

**The RNGS Study and Conceptualization of State Feminism**

In the 1990s, a group of European scholars started to look at the agencies forming in their countries. They contributed case studies of the origins of these relatively new agencies, their organization, and relation to women’s movements to the edited volume, *Comparative State Feminism* (McBride Stetson and Mazur 1995). This book was the first to use the concept of state feminism to refer explicitly to the activities of women’s policy agencies. At the same time, the comparative analysis

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2 For more on the evolution of the concept, see Mazur and McBride (2007) in a forum on ‘state feminism reconsidered’ in the journal of *Politics and Gender*. 

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**The concept of state feminism developed in the context of changing relationships between women’s movements and states beginning in the 1970s.**
in the book was limited due to key problems with conceptualization and research design. RNGS was formed to address these weaknesses, to develop a more coherent and rigorous research design, and to pay closer attention to refining the concept of state feminism.

To carry out the RNGS research design, more than 40 experts on gender policy signed up to study more than 100 individual policy debates that took place between the 1960s and 2000s on abortion, job training, political representation, prostitution and priority topics of the 1990s (called ‘hot issues’). They studied these in one of 13 post-industrial democracies (Austria, Belgium, Canada, Finland, France, Great Britain, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain, Sweden and the United States). Completing the debates and reporting the results for each of the issues in the study took more than 10 years. These studies of separate issues used methods of process tracing and descriptive statistics. As the case studies were completed, the concept of state feminism was refined and the state feminism theoretical framework began to take shape. The framework combines features of the initial RNGS research design and research model with ongoing comparative analysis of policy debates, as well as insights from four bodies of theory: representation, social movements, institutionalization, and framing and policymaking.

The framework proposes that women’s movements are more likely to receive favorable responses from the state when they ally with women’s policy agencies. That alliance is observed first by looking for the extent to which there is agreement between actors and agencies on motivational and strategic frames expressed on the issue under consideration in a debate. Secondly, looking at the extent to which agencies gender the issue frames used by policy actors reveals the success of the agency as an ally. The strongest allies – which promote movement goals by gendering issue frames – are called insiders. The success of the women’s movement actors is found when the policy content at the end of the debate coincides with movement goals (a substantive outcome) and when movement actors are included as part of the policy sub-system at the end of the debate (a procedural – or descriptive – outcome).

When agency/movement alliances achieve these movement procedural and substantive goals, the result is movement state feminism; when insider agency/movement alliances achieve explicitly feminist movement procedural and substantive goals, the result is transformative state feminism. This delineation of two types of state feminism – movement and transformative – arises from the conceptualization of women’s movement and feminism in the framework. This conceptualization is, for many, one of the most important contributions of the RNGS state feminism framework; it offers, for the first time in comparative gender politics research, a tool to study women’s and feminist movements cross-nationally and throughout time. Briefly (see the full description in McBride and Mazur 2008), for the state feminism framework, the women’s movement is defined as having two components: the discourse developed by women as they contemplate their own gender consciousness in relation to society, and the actors – such as organizations, individuals and groups – are the focus of empirical research; they are identified as part of the women’s movement by their discourse.

Women’s movement discourse has three essential components: identity with women as a group; language that is explicitly gendered; and ideas that are expressed as women representing women. Feminist discourse has the same components, but is a subcategory that includes other features: the goal of changing the status of women in society

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3 There are books that cover each of the issues published during this period: abortion (McBride Stetson 2001); job training (Mazur 2001); prostitution (Outshoorn 2004); political representation (Lovenduski et al. 2005); and ‘hot issues’ (Haussman and Sauer 2007).

4 RNGS developed a typology of women’s movement activities. The most successful type is the insider, and the other types are marginal, symbolic and anti-movement.
and politics and the challenge to gender-based hierarchies and structures of subordination of women. Just as the women’s movement actors are those who express movement discourse, the feminist movement actors are those who express feminist discourse; thus, the feminist movement is a subcategory of the women’s movement.

To summarize, the state feminism framework delineates two types of agency movement alliances: movement state feminism, where agencies help movement actors gain procedural and substantive responses, and transformative state feminism, where agencies successfully aid feminist movement actors to achieve feminist substantive and procedural responses. With the accumulation of both kinds of substantive and procedural success over time, governments become more democratic. Only with the accumulation of feminist success do gender relations in governments become transformed. The extent to which agencies were effective in promoting these outcomes shows the extent to which state feminism has promoted real change.

State Feminism, Democracy and Transformation in European Countries

Our book, The Politics of State Feminism: Innovation in Comparative Research (2010), reports on the entire RNGS project, the mixed methods approach and the state feminism theory. Here, we summarize our findings first on state feminism and democratization and then on the incidence of transformative state feminism in European countries of the study.

Overall, patterns of democratization due to the success of women’s movements vary, as does the usefulness of women’s policy agencies as allies. We divided the countries into three categories based on the rate of movement success over the range of debates and decades. Having an insider agency – central and influential in policy sub-systems where debates are won or lost – seems to be less important for countries with overall high success rates (67 percent – 100 percent). Among the three countries with the most women’s movement success throughout the period – Sweden, Austria and Italy – agencies were important only in Sweden, especially with the support of the dominant left-wing parties and unions. The women’s movement actors in Austria were able to rely on the effective support of the left-wing party, and Italy’s movement’s cohesion and solidarity in pursuit of demands for abortion rights and political representation explained their high ranking, regardless of any intervention from the women’s policy agencies.

Belgium, Ireland, Finland and Great Britain showed moderate rates of women’s movement success in the study (50 percent – 57 percent). For 3 of the 4, the alliance with an insider agency was important. In the Belgian debates it did not matter whether the women’s policy agency was an effective ally inside the state. In the others, insider agencies played a backup role. The backup role – which appeared as well in the overall theory of state feminism – means that when usually favorable conditions for success are not present in a particular debate, the presence of an insider agency took them over the top. For example, in Finland, a more open policy sub-system was enough to bring success for movement activists. But when that was not present in a debate, such as during the 1991–1993 debate regarding gender quotas, the Council for Equality meant the difference between success and failure.

In the countries classified as low success polities – Germany, France, Spain and Ireland – only between 11 percent and 33 percent of the debates showed successes for the women’s movement actors. Insider agencies turned out to be a major contributing factor to many of the successes they did have. In France, for example, only 3 of the 15 debates studied found movement success, but 100 percent of those were due to the influence and support of the ministries for women. Only 1 of the 9 debates studied in the Netherlands showed success; the lone successful debate was achieved with the alliance of the Department for
Coordination of Equality Policy.

The analysis of patterns of state feminism and democratization in European countries reflects the complexity of the contexts and conditions affecting the activities of women's movement actors. Overall, women’s movement actors found success in 47 percent of the policy debates studied in European countries. Of these, 48 percent had insider agencies. In only a few of these cases did we find that the insider agencies were the most important factor leading to success, but in those cases, they played an essential function in expanding representation for women’s movement actors in that debate.

Transformative State Feminism in European Countries

Using the definition of feminism and feminist movement developed by RNGS and described earlier in this essay, we explore the extent to which alliances between feminist movement actors and feminist women's policy agencies have changed gender hierarchies in policy and representation. Feminist perspectives and feminist agencies were not rare in the debates, but transformative state feminism was. Here, we summarize the cases and countries where feminist insider agencies helped actors to achieve feminist success comprising those cases of partial success – feminist policy outcomes or representation of feminist actors – and those cases achieving both, that is, complete transformative state feminism.

Such successful feminist alliances were observed in only 16 debates, or 17 percent of the 94 European debates studied. These successes were found in every country except Spain: three each for Austria and France, two for Finland and two for Sweden, and one each for Belgium, Germany, Great Britain, Ireland, Italy and the Netherlands.

Only one feminist outcome occurred in the 1970s. The others were evenly divided between the 1980s and 1990s. Feminist activists were successful at least once in debates on all of the issues, but more on those pertaining to political representation (4), prostitution (5) and abortion (4). Two debates on national top-priority issues, called ‘hot issues’, turned out feminist.

Although these cases don’t show a major shift in European domestic policy debates toward a transformation of gender relations in policy and process through state feminism, they do reveal the potential for women’s policy agencies to work from inside the state to undermine ingrained gendered hierarchies. In the area of political representation policy, the feminist outcomes produced policy that undermined sex discrimination in the civil service in Austria, established gender quotas for the legislature in Belgium, inserted a parity law in France, and secured an equal rights and representation law in Germany. In the 1980s, the Finnish Gender Equality Council declared that prostitution was a product of patriarchal culture and led the process of decriminalizing the act while maintaining penalties for pimping. In 1989, the Deputy Minister for Women’s Rights in France similarly argued that prostitution was sexual slavery and oppression of women; she was instrumental in defeating an effort to open state-run bordellos.

Transformative state feminism has been responsible for maintaining a feminist position with respect to abortion rights. For example, reflecting the feminist demand that women have a right to gain access to facilities for abortion, two Dutch agencies from within the Ministry of Health took up the feminist position that women should have abortions on demand, and ensured that the network of clinics and hospitals complied. The French Delegate Ministry for Rights of Woman successfully promoted the law that would
reimburse women for abortions; their goal was to challenge inequalities burdening women due to reproductive differences.

While it may be expected that transformations in gender relations in policy and process would be more likely in abortion and prostitution debates, we have also found that, while very rare, such changes are not impossible in areas that are not as clearly gendered. In the mid 1990s, for example, the Department of Equality and Law Reform in Ireland was effective in challenging barriers to equal participation in employment by focusing on bringing women into state training programs to mainstream equal opportunities.

Conclusion

The RNGS studies, through the collaboration of more than 40 researchers and the application of a common analytical framework, have provided valuable insights about democratic processes and gender issues in Western European countries and, more broadly speaking, post-industrial democracies. States have been responsive to demands from women’s movements, and often these women-friendly and feminist responses have been a product of alliances between women’s policy agencies and women’s movement actors. While women’s policy agencies are not essential ingredients in women’s movement success and enhanced representation across the board, they are important players and, in some countries, playing an important backup role when all else fails. We also see that European states are permeable to feminist ideas – the very embodiment of transformative change in gender relations that challenges the status quo – both in terms of the entry of feminist ideas and actors into state arenas and, in some situations, transformative state feminism. To be sure, the recipe for women’s movements success, state feminism and feminist state transformation is complex and often context specific, but we now know, thanks to RNGS, that European democracies have the capacity to transform gender relations by means of a complex ongoing process of women’s movement-gender machineries partnerships. As such, we can say that European democracies are becoming more democratic.

References


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Gendering Executive Attention: The Impact of Women’s Representation

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Introduction
The extent to which governments in Western Europe give attention to gender equality issues is relatively low, compared with other core issues of government. Nevertheless, there are numerous examples of gender equality-related issues that have reached the political agenda since the 1960s. In particular, the kind of gender equality demands that challenge the traditional sexual division of labor between men and women have received growing attention across Western Europe throughout this time, despite the fact that their cost and redistributive scope are likely to invoke considerable friction and resistance to policy change. This raises the question of when and why gender equality issues succeed in gaining executive attention and reach the government agenda for change.

This is particularly interesting because while a great deal of feminist research has investigated the ‘substantive representation of women’, that is, the link between rising female representation and gendered policy change (Lovenduski and Norris 1995), much of this work focuses on the rise of representation by women in Parliament and specific policy outcomes such as

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domestic violence and abortion rights (Franceschet and Piscopo 2008; Swers 2005; Weldon 2002). Less is known about the start of the process of policy change, which entails feminist advocacy for gender policies securing executive attention (Kenney 2003).

Our research throughout the past three years has sought to address this question by exploiting the emergence of new datasets that code to a common codebook the extent to which different policy agendas receive parliamentary and executive attention indicated by the appearance of these policies agendas in official documents. These data allow feminist policy scholars, for the first time, to track the development of feminist policy demands of various types, including those which challenge the sexual division of labor, as they gain executive attention across the countries participating in the project. We report here our findings on the relationship between parliamentary and executive female representation and the appearance of costly gender equality policies in government annual speeches in four Western European countries.

The Impact of Women’s Representation

A flourishing scholarship of gender and politics research examines the relationship between descriptive representation and substantive representation of women and investigates the extent to which the growing presence of women in political offices positively impacts on women-friendly policy outcomes. Research examining the link between women in legislatures and policy change has delivered mixed results. Several studies have pointed out that the presence of women, as individuals or as a group, in a variety of legislative settings is likely to exert a positive impact on women-friendly policy outcomes on a range of issues from child-care programs, maternity leave and family related issues to equal wage policies and political rights (see, for instance, Bratton and Ray 2002; Bonoli and Reber 2010; Kittilson 2008). On the contrary, Weldon (2002) did not identify any linear effect regarding the percentage of female state legislators on the likelihood to adopt policy regarding violence against women. In a similar vein, the analysis of Franceschet and Piscopo (2008) on the impact of political quota adoption on women representation in Argentina concludes that quotas do not favor women-friendly policy outcomes.

More recently, this literature has moved on from an over-simplified interpretation of the ‘critical mass’ argument (Celis et al. 2008) that would expect decisive policy change to occur only once a certain threshold of women Members of Parliament (MPs) – say 30 percent – is reached. Recent research has problematized the idea that a greater number of female representatives will directly lead to a more effective substantive representation. Not all women share the same policy demands, and it might be the case that lone ‘critical actors’ are more important than the overall number of elected women (Childs 2004).

Although the focus of most research has been on parliamentary actors, a growing body of research has turned to examining how the feminization of executives impacts on the processing of policy demands.

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1 See www.comparativeagendasproject.com. The authors would like to acknowledge and thank the country research teams for their assistance.
is necessary to identify which institutional settings wield political resources and power in a given political system to accurately assess the agenda-setting capacity of women in politics (Chappell and Hill 2006; Annesley and Gains 2010). In parliamentary democracies, political resources for agenda setting are increasingly controlled by the government and it may be the case that female executive actors, rather than female legislators, may be more successful in lobbying government (Annesley and Gains 2010; Atchinson and Down 2009).

The contradictory results flowing from research on women in Parliament and the need to examine the effect of women in government leads to two hypotheses, which we report on here.\(^2\) An increasing number of female representatives may increase overall parliamentary concerns about gender equality policies and constitute positive incentives for government in dedicating more attention to such issues. Our first hypothesis, therefore, posits that executives will pay more attention to gender equality issues as the number of female MPs rises (H\(_1\)).

However, the key resources for agenda setting are controlled by government actors and it may be that female executive representatives are able to lobby more successfully for gender equality policies to receive limited government attention. Accordingly, our second hypothesis postulates that executives will pay more attention to gender equality issues as the number of female ministers rises (H\(_2\)).

Gendering Executive Agenda

To test our hypotheses, we investigate the impact of women’s representation on gendering executive attention toward issues related to the sexual division of labor in four European countries that are all parliamentary democracies but that diverge in terms of gender regimes and social security systems: Denmark, the Netherlands, Switzerland and the United Kingdom, from 1960 to 2007. We draw on new datasets on governmental agendas created within the Comparative Agendas Project (CAP)\(^3\) that use a common policy issues classification of government activities across political systems. The CAP data, thus, allow for comprehensive and reliable comparison across policy domains, countries and institutional settings (Baumgartner, Jones, and Wilkerson 2011). In this analysis, we rely on the government’s statements of policy priorities and commitments for the period 1961–2007 for our four countries taken from: the Queen’s ‘Speeches from the Throne’ for the United Kingdom (Jennings, Bevan, and John 2010) and the Netherlands (Breeman et al. 2009), the so-called ‘messages’ from the Swiss government (Varone et al., forthcoming) and the Prime Minister’s annual addresses to the Parliament in Denmark (Green-Pedersen 2007).

As the time period under investigation – 1961–2007 – is rather short and the overall promotion of gender equality regarding sexual division of labor is relatively limited, we conducted a pooled binomial logit model with bootstrapped standard errors (Efron and Tibshirani 1994; Kittel and Winner 2005). The dependent variable is coded ‘1’ in a given year when the promotion of gender equality regarding the sexual division of labor is mentioned at least once in the executive agenda, and ‘0’ otherwise.\(^4\) To measure women’s representation, we use the percentage of parliamentary seats occupied by female MPs in the lower or single House at the time when the speech

\(^{2}\) For a fuller exposition of determinants of gender-equality policy demands receiving government attention across a range of policy domains, see Annesley et al. 2010, and Annesley, Engeli, and Gains 2011.

\(^{3}\) See www.comparativeagendas.org.

\(^{4}\) More specifically, the issues addressing the sexual division of labor include (1) the promotion of women’s participation in the labor force, such as measures regarding minimum wage, part-time professional activities, and women’s access to vocational training and workforce development; (2) the eradication of gender discrimination at work, such as unequal pay; (3) the improvement of the gender balance between work and care activities through the development of child-care programs and the introduction of maternity/paternity/parental leave; as well as (4) the removal of discrimination against women in pension schemes and taxation.
was delivered. Female ministerial participation was computed as the percentage of female ministers (with or without portfolio) within a cabinet at the time of the speech.\(^5\)

Our first hypothesis is drawn from the contested argument that women’s increased formal representation in legislatures leads to substantive representation by prompting higher attention to issues related to gender equality on executive agendas. Our analysis lends some support to this hypothesis and suggests that women’s representation in Parliament matters for gaining more executive attention to the type of gender equality policy we examine here (logit coefficient: .087 / bootstrapped standard error (s.e.): 0.41). Figure 1 plots the simulated predicted probabilities of the effect of women’s representation in Parliament on gendering the executive agenda (King et al. 2000). As Figure 1 shows, an increase in the number of female MPs significantly increases the likelihood of the presence of gender equality issues related to sex equality in the division of labor on executive agendas.

This result is very much in line with previous studies that have shown that women representatives have widened the legislative agenda to raise attention toward gender-related concerns in the United States, Western Europe and Latin America. It also confirms several research findings pointing out that a higher presence of women in Parliament enhances the likelihood of women-friendly policy outcomes regarding equality at work, child-care programs and maternity leave (Bratton and Ray 2002; Bonoli and Reber 2010; Kittilson 2008; Schwindt-Bayer and Mishler 2005; O’Regan 2000). Our analysis shows that increasing the number of women MPs not only impacts on gendering parliamentary agendas and related

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\(^5\) To control for time dependence effect, i.e., when the occurrence of an event may increase the likelihood of subsequent events, we include cubic polynomial of time in the model (Carter and Signorino 2010). The logit coefficient in our model proves to be non-significant.

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Figure 1: The effect of women’s representation in Parliament, simulated probabilities
policy outcomes, but also provides executives with strong incentives to gender their policy priorities, at least as far as equality at work and in caring responsibilities are concerned.

On the contrary, our findings reported here suggest that the feminization of executives seems not to exert any significant impact in gendering executive agendas (logit coefficient: -.042, bootstrapped s.e.: .023). This result appears somewhat puzzling at first sight. We expected that more women in Cabinet should increase the executive attention to gender equality issues. There are four possible explanations for this paradox: First, the feminization of executives tends to follow a slower and less linear progression than the feminization of the legislature. Indeed, the supply of women ministers is largely dependent upon a supply of representatives from the legislative arena in most political systems (Annesley and Gains 2010; Annesley et al. 2012). There is, therefore, a lagging effect. Second, in a similar vein to critiques of essentialist claims of substantive representation by increased numbers of women in legislatures, we argue that increasing the number of women in executive roles does not imply an automatic increase in the supply of feminist advocates.

Third, cabinet nomination represents a selective process where members are selected by the head of the government to be in charge of a particular set of issues (Beckwith 2007; Annesley et al. 2012). Often women’s segregation in executives within low-key portfolios with limited resources acts to weaken their capacity to promote gender equality from inside. So while being in government tends to increase their potential agenda-setting power, women who are confined into small and scarcely resourced ministries will not be likely to impact on agendas outside the range of their limited portfolio. The result does not mean that some individual women ministers may not act as critical actors, and effectively lobby the Cabinet from the inside, as some single case studies have shown for particular policies at a particular point in time (Annesley 2010) – or that this situation is not dynamic. Nevertheless, there is not an overall statistically significant relationship between an increase in women’s presence as executives and governmental promotion of gender equality over time in the four countries that we have investigated here.

Finally, recent research has demonstrated a link between the likelihood of costly gender equality issues reaching the government agenda and the performance of the economy.

Finally, recent research has demonstrated a link between the likelihood of costly gender equality issues reaching the government agenda and the performance of the economy (Annesley and Gains 2012). It may be the case that executive actors are only able to find space for costly gender equality policy when the economy is growing.

Conclusion

Gender equality issues are relatively recent demands, and in the case of the promotion in the sexual division of labor, are potentially costly. Drawing on data from the comparative agendas project in four European democracies, our analysis makes a contribution to the existing scholarship on gender and agenda setting, and investigates patterns in gendering Western European executive attention.

We find some evidence of the strength of female representation as a political determinant in that there is a statistically significant relationship between the number of female representatives and the presence of gender-equality policy initiatives to address sex inequalities in paid and unpaid work on government agendas. The challenge to linking descriptive representation to substantive representation comes in part because
of the contested claim that being female should relate to feminist policy goals or that women acting for women agree with one another. Although the statistical link between the number of female representatives and governmental attention to gender equality issues does not prove a causal relationship, our finding would support the idea that increasing female representation does increase advocacy for executive attention and reduce the cognitive friction on policy agenda change, at least in respect of the gender-equality policy area under examination here.

Our analysis, however, did not find strong support for the relationship between feminization of the executive and the likelihood of gender equality issues that address the sexual division of labor getting government attention. The lack of a relationship between feminization of the executive and gendered executive agendas suggests there is a time lag between the increase in ‘female’ and increasing ‘feminist’ representation and this representation feeding feminist advocacy in political executives.

This review provides a small exemplar of the way in which the use of the policy agenda data permits testing of hypotheses on engendering government agendas to allow for the possibility of putting ‘gender on the agenda’ and permitting a more detailed examination of the determinants of gender policy change, both of the type we discuss here (see also Annesley et al. 2010) and across a wider range of countries and policy domains (Annesley, Engeli, and Gains 2011).

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The Council for European Studies (CES) has long supported research on gender relations and welcomed the participation of women in its international conferences, fellowship programs and governance structures. However, like the broader society of which it is a part, the Council has not stood still on these issues. Rather, its commitment to the inclusion of women and support for the study of gender and sexuality has grown over time, driven forward by the efforts of individual Council members as well as the changing currents of academic research and broader societal patterns. The crucial moment of transition almost certainly occurred in the 1980s.

Founded in 1970, the Council for European Studies was overwhelmingly male-dominated in its first decade of existence. Between 1970 and 1979, women were all but absent from the Council’s leading governance committees and were consistently outnumbered in the ranks of fellowship winners by their male counterparts. True, women had some role in the lower level selection committees and research groups that organized much of the Council’s programming. However, even there the inclusion of women was rare and due almost entirely to the participation of a small cadre of pioneering young female academics in Political Science and History. For example, in the snapshot year of 1972, Lynn Lees represented the Council on a joint planning group with the Inter-University Consortium for Political Research (ICPR), Nancy Roelker chaired an ad hoc group on the practicability of establishing a center for American researchers in Paris, and a workshop proposal on “Male-Female Roles in Advanced Industrial Societies” submitted by Jean Lipman-Blumen was recommended for further action by the Executive Committee. But otherwise there was little female participation. Most well-established Europeanists at that time were male, and their dominance was reflected in the Council’s membership. Only among the office staff of the Council were women a clear majority.

By 1979, it was clear that things were changing. The First International Conference of Europeanists, held in Washington, D.C. in 1979, boasted 600 participants, many of whom were women speaking on topics pertaining to the study of women. For the Second International Conference, held in 1980 also in Washington, D.C., the Council made an active effort to encourage women’s participation by including Joyce Reigelhaupt (Anthropology, Sarah Lawrence College) on the Conference Committee and featuring a session dedicated to “The Politics of ‘Women’s’ Issues,” chaired by Anne Armstrong and Herbert H. Lehman. Elsewhere at the 1980 conference, Louise Tilly and Sheila Kammerman chaired and commented on a panel about family policy and population growth in Europe, while throughout the conference female scholars presented their work...
on a variety of non-gender subjects. For example, some wrote about national economies and trade unions (Peggy Kahn), protest movements, politics and the state (Margaret Somers), experiments in social democratic management (Atina Grossman), and tax reform in Scandinavia (Barbara Haskell). Dorothy Nelkin and Yasmin Ergas presented papers alongside Alain Touraine on panels devoted to “Protest Movements and Actions Against the State;” on “Health Care Crises and State Intervention” (Deborah Stone, Rosemary Taylor, Lesley Doyal and Antoinette Chauvenet); on “Economic Development, Dependency, and Regionalism” (Jane Schneider and Sue Ellen Charlton), and Sylvia Bashevkin presented research on political attitudes of women in France, Canada and the US on a panel, “Legitimacy of Challenges to Legitimacy.” Yolande Cohen and Jane Jenson presented papers on the panel, “Protest Movements of the 1960s.”

The Third International Conference of Europeanists (1982) focused on the theme of “Periods and Cycles in Europe, Past and Present, and included a panel on “Women’s Position: Cyclical Change or Evolution?” proposed by Judith Friedlander and Rayna Rapp. The program also included panels on “Women and the Holocaust” with Gisela Bock, Judith Friedlander, Selma Leydesdorf and Marjan Schwegman; “Women and Public Power,” with Claudia Koonz, Mieke Aerts, Temma Kaplan and Karen Sachs. In 1985 (at its Fifth Conference), a panel on representations of rural life and regional identity included Susan Carol Rogers, Ellen Badone, Deborah Reed-Dannahay and Elizabeth Evans; Janice McCormack spoke on “Liberalism vs Socialism: What Difference Have They Made for the French Economy;” and Carol Schmid spoke on the Green party in West Germany. The panel, “Modified Biographies, Refashioned Identities, and Changing State Policies” included papers by Jane Jenson, Marion Estienne and Chiara Saraceno. Many others participated in panels throughout this conference and others.

This interest in women’s issues at the Council’s conferences continued throughout the 1980s and by the late 1980s had garnered such momentum that the Council began to insist on gender diversity at its international conferences (with, admittedly, varying degrees of success).

Still soon the Council’s commitment to the inclusion of women began to be felt at the level of organizational governance. In sharp contrast to the 1970s, women began to be represented in meaningful numbers on the Council’s governing Executive and Steering Committees—such pioneering Council members included Natalie Zemon Davis, Louise A. Tilly, Molly Nolan, Jane Schneider, Joan W. Scott, Victoria de Grazia, Glenda Rosenthal, Susan Tax-Freeman, Nancy Scheper-Hughes, Lynn Hollen Lees, Susan Carol Rogers and Theda Skocpol, among others. Furthermore, during the 1980s the Newsletters of the Council (during the Editorship of Marion A. Kaplan) actively took note of developments in the field of women’s studies and major research themes at conferences, including the place of women in the division of labor, at work and in collective action; the gender-based dimensions of social policies and welfare states; the place of women in political parties and political representation; women’s networks; and women’s movements generally. Scholars such as Louise Tilly, Temma Kaplan, Sonya Rose, Jane Jenson, Jean Quataert, Chiara Saraceno, Bianca Beccalli, Laura Balbo, Molly Nolan, Jane Caplan and Lois Kuter as well as many others presented their research on women and work and women’s changing identities.

The impact of women’s participation on the Council’s international conferences, its research and programming agenda and its governance structures was both rapid and profound. Thanks in part to the Council’s own early investments in its female fellowship winners, but most particularly to the active pioneering work of the generation of women Europeanists that came to the fore in the late 1970s and early 1980s, women were represented within the Council for European Studies at ratios of rough parity with their male peers by the early 1990s. And by 1998, the Council
for European Studies boasted its first female head, Victoria de Grazia, who became Chair in 1998 and who had been among the Council’s first cohort of fellowship winners in 1971.

The achievements of the 1980s were merely the beginning. Since then, the emergence of strong scholarly interest in the gender dimensions of the welfare state also brought new participants and new themes to the Council’s conferences as did the appearance of new political and social movements in Europe. At the institutional level, women continued to serve on the Executive Committee and to take a leading role in Council governance. Following Victoria de Grazia’s term as the first female Chair, other women took up the mantle of leadership, including Kathy Thelen, Michéle Lamont and Cathie Jo Martin. And with the founding of the Gender and Sexuality Research Network in 2011 (co-chaired by Isabelle Engeli and David Paternotte), the Council continues to demonstrate its commitment to both the study of gender and the meaningful inclusion of women in positions of leadership alongside their male peers.
Gender and European Union Politics
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Introduction

From a silken thread guaranteeing equal pay for equal work in the 1957 Treaty of Rome, the policy promoting gender equality in the European Union (EU) has taken on the proportions of a mythic achievement. Protections guaranteeing equal treatment in many sectors of society, and policy promoting equality between women and men cover the EU member states like a blanket. In terms of treaty law, directives and number of citizens affected, both the ambitions and the terrain covered by gender equality policy support an EU claim to be world best. One cannot understand EU integration without taking into account how gender relations have shaped it.

Gender in EU politics, both in the narrow sense of representation and political practice and in the broad sense in terms of policy and outcomes, is an obvious area for social scientific investigation. The growth of gender studies as a discipline and the broadening of ambitions and achievements of gender equality in the EU have gone hand in hand. The EU, in its sum as a major player in global politics and in its parts of member states and institutions, is an object for political study from a gender perspective. But, equally, the EU institutions have been agents in shaping that research. Through its ambitions to improve the position of women in science and stimulate gender research as a scientific field, as well as through its commissioning of targeted policy support research, the EU

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has underwritten the growth of a community of scholarship on gender and EU politics. The EU has been instrumental in stimulating the collection of empirical data on politics and policy from a gender perspective. This research has made evident the importance of changes in gender relations for the EU at large. Thanks to EU-financed research, both the role of the EU in changing gendered politics and the differential experiences of gender relations in countries varying from Sweden to Malta have become palpable.

As an indication of the size of the sector, there is now a biannual conference on gender and politics in the European Consortium of Political Research (ECPR) – next at the University Pompeu Fabra in Barcelona in March 2013 – that attracts more than 300 participants. Active gender and policy/politics networks exist in the European Sociological Association and in the ECPR (Dahlerup 2010). The European Journal of Women’s Studies is a dedicated journal on gender studies that includes frequent politics pieces. There are multiple book-length treatments on EU gender policy and politics (Beveridge and Velluti 2008; Kantola 2010; Abels and Mushaben 2012; Van der Vleuten 2007, etc.), and increasingly, textbooks on EU politics also offer dedicated chapters on gender and EU politics (Prügl 2007), although this is still the exception.

In the scope of this brief overview, only a few of the interesting trends and scholars can be mentioned. The focus is on recent work on a few themes referring specifically to the EU itself, but gender and politics scholars have illuminated all areas of EU politics, from agriculture to organized crime. Particularly important themes in terms of quantity of research and links to EU policy ambitions are the representation of women in decision-making, EU gender equality policies, the welfare state, and the impact of the EU gender experience internationally. These will be discussed briefly below.

**EU Politics and Gender – Women as New Players in Politics**

One facet of the ‘mythic’ status of gender equality as an EU achievement is the visible change in the face of EU political decision-making. EU politics is obviously gendered by the increasing presence women. The ambition to improve the number of women in decision-making is a key demand of the European Women’s movement and also took early pride of place in the EU Action Plans for gender equality. The development and exchange of ideas on how to increase the number of women in top decision-making positions stimulated the collection of data and research. In the 1990s, Europe took a leadership role in using targets and quotas in political parties and electoral systems (Dahlerup 2006). In terms of gender balance, the European Parliament is one of the top parliaments in the world, with 35 percent of the seats held by women. European parliaments in the Nordic countries, the Netherlands, Belgium and even Germany have dominated lists on the percentage of elected women in parliaments. Thus women in politics in the EU are a real force both as parliamentarians and – increasingly – as top leaders. The processes by which this came about are the subjects of increasing research. How have interactions between national and transnational political actors, social-movement activists and citizens ultimately led to EU member states choosing top female leaders such as Angela Merkel? As an example, women in the European Parliament together with their colleagues in the Commission (where the one-third rule has become an informal threshold since the Santer Commission in 1995) petitioned successfully so that at least
One woman was appointed to the new top seats of the EU. Ultimately, Catherine Ashton was named in 2009 as High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy.

One of the mechanisms pushing change is the role of EU women’s policy machinery. The EU includes a number of dedicated institutions, including the Committee on Women’s Rights in the EP (FEMM) and the recently opened European Institute on Gender Equality. They act as watchdogs and stimulate progress on gender equality. Among other issues monitored is the presence of women in European national politics and in the institutions of the EU. A dedicated website\(^1\) provides statistics on the representation of women in all areas of decision-making, from business board rooms to non-governmental associations. Achievement in changing representation in the bureaucracy of the EU Commission itself has been closely watched and researched (Hafner-Burton and Pollack 2009).

Another important area of EU politics is its interaction with civil society (the women’s movement organizations). The EU women’s movement provides many illustrations of the potential role of civil society in transnational decision-making (Rolandsen Agustín 2011). Organizations such as the European Women’s Lobby (Strid 2009) keep the demand for parity in EU decision-making on the table, while explicitly expanding the agenda to go beyond women, employment and politics to issues such as violence and trafficking (Zippel 2006).

New Substance – Gender Equality Policy

The debate about whether the increase in the number of women involved in decision-making in the EU also leads to women-friendly political content is extremely difficult to investigate. However, even if the effectiveness of women’s agency remains a subject for further research (see Annesley, Engeli and Gains in this issue); it is abundantly clear that the EU is a source of models regarding policy. It has exported gender policy and models of gender equality machinery to the member states with explicit mechanisms, and is thus a clear example of Europeanization. The expansion of the EU from 12 to 27 member states occurred at a peak period in gender equality policy. The obligation to do gender mainstreaming and promote gender equality was part of the Treaty of Amsterdam (1997) that was exported to all of the new member states. This generated non-discrimination law and positive duties as well as stimulating comparative data collection, indicators of gender equality and standard setting. Both the conceptualization of the links of these policies to feminist thinking (Squires 2007) and the actual impact of new policy instruments such as gender mainstreaming, gender budgeting or the open method of coordination provide illustrations of the EU’s reach and limits as policy entrepreneur. Gender mainstreaming, which requires that policy be screened to ensure that gender equality is promoted, is part of the EU’s treaty duties. Given that implementing gender mainstreaming is an extremely difficult task, following the progress of transmitting gender equality has been an important theme in EU funded research.

As part of the EU’s own effort to gender mainstream in its institutions and policies, the position of gender in EU-funded scientific research has been under the spotlight, both in terms of women in science and in terms of the inclusion of gender in scientific research content. The EU has played an important role in funding the creation of a scientific community that explores the intersections of gender and politics in member states. A number of major comparative European research projects have focused on varying facets of the changing substance of gender politics and policy in the EU and the mechanisms that have promoted this. The Research Network Gender Politics and the State collected quantitative and qualitative data on the roles of women’s policy machinery, the women’s movement and politics

in changing the debate and outcomes on issues ranging from abortion and prostitution to women’s representation and the labor market, with mainly European cases (McBride and Mazur 2010). The large projects MAGEEQ (Multiple Meanings of Gender Equality – A Critical Frame Analysis of Gender Policies in Europe) (Verloo 2007) and QUING (Quality in Gender+ Equality Policies)2 (Lombardo, Meier, and Verloo 2009; Lombardo and Forest 2012) looked deeply into the discourse and values reflected in the different national approaches to gender equality, as well as examining the evolution of discourse and practice in EU politics. FEMCIT (Gendered Citizenship in Multicultural Europe)3 considered the evolution of citizenship for women in all their diversity, including sexuality and ethnicity in different countries of Europe, taking insights from gender scholarship to develop more refined conceptions of citizenship, as well as providing valuable insights into national cases (Halsaa, Roseneil, and Sümer, forthcoming). The expansion of Europe and imposition of EU gender models in newer member states is an important theme that runs through all of these cross-national projects, and was the particular focus of EGG, the Enlargement, Gender and Governance project (Galligan, Clavero and Calloni 2008).

Another emerging theme is that of the diversity of women. In the wake of the EU Treaty of Amsterdam, which mandates combating discrimination on the grounds of race and ethnicity, religion or belief, sexual orientation, age, disability and gender, a restructuring of thinking about equality was spurred. While the differences between women in Europe have always been an issue, the concrete policy aspects of backgrounds of migration, sexual orientation and religion combined with gender have become palpable, and the politics around equality policy have been infused with concern for diversities and inequalities. The example of gender policy itself has become a model for other programs aiming to ‘mainstream’ equality. Especially influential has been the concept of intersectionality in legal and political studies (Schiek and Chege 2009), which has shaped the debate about multiple discriminations in the EU.

The European Welfare State

The European State is a welfare state, and care and politics go together. The welfare state is a fundamental construct in all EU member states, and an essential underpinning enabling women and men to play out their citizenship roles. A particular contribution from gender studies is the conceptual expansion of the idea of citizenship beyond political and economic citizenship to include social and intimate citizenship. In EU politics, women have been problematic players at times, showing disinterest or even fear. A particular concern for Nordic women, for example, has been about the role EU integration would have on welfare rights and the organization of care. Thus another major substantive field of research on gender and EU politics has been on the welfare state and its transformations in the Europeanization process and effects on gender relations in the economy and in the family (Guerrina 2005; Rubery 2008). Coupling this with citizenship crosses the lines between sociology and political studies. Theoretically, the idea of gender regimes (Walby 2004) in different countries in Europe becomes an important lighthouse in guiding research on changes due to European integration. Major collaborative research projects on the transformation of the welfare state and gendered citizenship and combinations of work and care reflect this (Lewis 2006; Lister et al. 2007).

Gender Experience Internationally

Finally, returning to the EU belief that gender equality is an exportable achievement, there is considerable research being done on EU in the international context. The EU has been an

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2 QUING (Quality in Gender+ Equality Policies) may be visited at www.quing.eu.
3 FEMCIT (Gendered Citizenship in Multicultural Europe) may be visited at www.femcit.org.
important voice in gender policy development at the level of the United Nations. For example, the Beijing Platform for Action of 1995, which has become a major stimulator for such things as parity in politics and gender mainstreaming worldwide, was inspired by gender debate in Europe and the participation of EU policymakers in regional preparatory meetings. Gender equality policies such as gender mainstreaming, and models of gender relations formed in the EU are packaged and promoted by EU agencies and highly influential outside the EU framework. In the most recent EU Roadmaps for Equality between Women and Men (2006–2010) and Strategy for Equality between Women and Men (2010–2015), one of the priorities is pursuing gender equality with EU external partners. As a global power, gender justice is one of the things that the EU hopes to export. Through development aid and neighborhood and accession policy (Bretherton and Vogel 2008), EU models on gender infiltrate far beyond the borders of the 27.

Conclusion
This short sampler of four of the many topics being pursued today in terms of gender and EU politics demonstrates that the prism of gender offers new windows for investigating the process of EU integration and its democratic legitimacy. Current themes such as Europeanization, symbolic power and norms, citizenship, participation and democratic deficits, and certainly the role of intersections and identity in the construction of Europe are all reflected in ongoing gender and politics research in Europe. There is rich material for study of the mechanisms of transfer of both norms and policy, and also for the study of political participation, agency and representation. It is a shame that these insights are still so seldom integrated in general EU handbooks and training packages. Research will continue to be needed on the mechanisms of policy diffusion, descriptions and explanations of success, failure and stagnation in different settings and policy success. Given the explicit ambitions of the EU to export its gender model to other countries, there is also ample room for research in international relations. There are, of course, challenges as well. The role of the EU itself as a funder of gender and politics research is a dual-edged sword. The funds have been essential for establishing the field and providing access to the wider frame of Eastern and Central Europe. However, funding has the hidden cost of creating a gender research elite, and perhaps curtailing truly critical thinking. Broadening the frame of gender to include sexualities, masculinities and race is also a continuing challenge. For example, how do varieties of masculinity affect the EU’s political style and approach, such as its current neo-liberal focus and increasing fascination with security and defense issues? Such questions come too seldom under a gendered lens. The EU provides a moving target full of changing gendered relationships in a multinational setting. Seeing its politics through the prism of gender is an essential corrective to studies of European integration.

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Building Europe: The International Lesbian and Gay Association (ILGA) and LGBT Activism in Central and Eastern Europe

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Europe has long been a propitious region for transnational activism. Despite linguistic diversity, short geographic distances and efficient transport networks have incentivized activist collaboration across borders. Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) movements are no exception, and the first displays of transnational exchanges can be traced back to the nineteenth century, if not earlier. However, the more recent developments of modern technologies, cheap air travel and, especially, deepened multi-level governance structures, both through the Council of Europe (CoE) and the European Union (EU), have accentuated these historical trends. For LGBT activists, ‘Europe’ goes beyond strict institutional categories. The movement experience has been embedded in various institutions and connected through various transnational ties across the region as a geographical, political and (sometimes) cultural entity.

In this article, we emphasize the role played by transnational LGBT activists in building Europe, with a focus on their activism at the European level and on the ground in the Central and Eastern European Countries (the CEEC). We argue that these movements were inspired by specific ideas – democratic values and human rights responsibilities – about Europe, and that they tried to realize them through activism. We also posit that, in turn, this activism has contributed to the project of building Europe, mostly within political frameworks like the EU

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and CoE, as well as to an inherent understanding that LGBT rights are by definition linked to the idea of contemporary European values. Adopting a constructivist approach to European identity construction, which recognizes that agents and structures are interacting and mutually constituted (Katzenstein 1996), we address two central issues: How do transnational LGBT activists represent Europe, and what kind of Europe are they building through their strategies and actions?

In our story, LGBT civil society actors are nested in the normative macro-European structures. This environment, within which these actors function, is material, but also socially constructed. Europe is a normative framework that constitutes LGBT actors’ interests and strategies, and in turn these actors (re-)create European structures and institutions by linking them to LGBT rights.

We begin by outlining the emergence of transnational LGBT activism in Europe and show how it was inspired by a specific idea of Europe. Thereafter we shift our focus to the case of the CEEC to look at how this idea has been deployed in activism there, and subsequently how it cements LGBT rights as constitutive of European values.

Transnational LGBT Activism in Europe

The first attempts to build structured networks of LGBT groups across Europe occurred in the 1950s, when the Dutch COC (Cultuur- en Ontspannings Centrum) set up the International Committee for Sexual Equality (Rupp 2011). This initiative followed a long tradition of gay cosmopolitanism, and echoes the informal contacts between gay activists during the first half of the twentieth century. In the 1970s, radical movements also attempted to turn their informal exchanges into a more persistent transnational structure.

The first enduring transnational LGBT organization, however, only appeared in 1978, when the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association (ILGA) was created in Coventry, United Kingdom. Despite its global vocation, the ILGA has always considered Europe among its main priorities, a phenomenon which was long reinforced by a mostly European membership. Indeed, the ILGA has always been inspired by a certain idea of Europe and, crucially, of its usefulness for the progress of LGBT rights. From the start, founding activists believed that Europe had a specific meaning in terms of democratic and human rights values. They also thought that European institutions (the EU and CoE), along with the United Nations, could eventually be used to increase pressure on reluctant states and gain rights from above.

Early ILGA activists viewed Europe as both a community of values and a strategic means with which to enhance their rights.

Early ILGA activists viewed Europe as both a community of values and a strategic means with which to enhance their rights. Interestingly, this idea of Europe was not limited by an institutional design, but merged the European Economic Community (EEC) and the CoE into the same normative entity – an imagined and experienced community that enshrined certain fundamental rights for minority peoples. Mobilization was not yet facilitated by institutional opportunities at the time, and relied on a strong normative commitment about what Europe should be. While engaging the CoE may have been logical in the 1980s, engaging the EEC for these means was visionary for that time.

This double definition of Europe – both a normative and a strategic one – led to specific forms of collective action and strategies of mobilization, which from the start focused on institutional and reformist politics. The 1978 Coventry meeting was originally designed to prepare for the 1979 European elections, and to discuss the need for

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1 The ILGA was called the International Gay Association until 1986.
an observatory status at the CoE – which the ILGA finally obtained in 1997. More surprisingly, contacts with the European Commission were also envisaged, candidates to the European Parliament elections were contacted, and the idea of an “all-party group of Euro-MPs favorable to gay rights”\(^2\) – finally created in 1997 – was discussed. These strategies appeared to be fruitful, as the ILGA played an instrumental role in landmark decisions, such as the historic 1981 report on the discrimination of homosexuals approved by the CoE, the 1984 Squarcialupi Report, and 1994 Roth Report (the latter were both passed by the European Parliament).

This vision of Europe and the way it has inspired transnational activism across the continent became particularly visible when LGBT activists decided to establish a European umbrella organization, ILGA-Europe, in 1996. New political opportunities at the EU level – along with a separate process of regionalization and globalization of the ILGA – contributed to the birth of an exclusively European organization. The breakthrough 1994 Roth Report had been a success, and activists saw the 1996 Intergovernmental Conference on a new European treaty as an opportunity not to be missed. In contrast to the 1970s, strategies were now largely induced by institutional change, and the ILGA’s new orientation – building a close relationship with European institutions – was decisively responding to new European opportunities. The ILGA attained an advisory role when it became an official partner of the European Commission as a result of the Treaty of Amsterdam, and core funding has come from the EU since 2000. This institutionalized relationship has allowed ILGA-Europe to professionalize and develop into one of today’s most powerful and well-funded transnational LGBT groups worldwide.

The Project of a United Europe

The expansion of LGBT activism in the CEEC is a privileged case study that provides another angle from which to grasp the dynamics described above. Here, we will track this specific idea of Europe, and assess the ways it has inspired CEEC LGBT activism and how it is entrenched in the strategies of mobilization focused on institutional and reformist politics. Especially for LGBT advocacy organizations in this region, we argue that Europe provided not only a material resource, but also a normative frame for shaping and fueling mobilization. The idea of ‘Europe’ as both a community of values and a strategic means with which to enhance rights was key for LGBT activists. In what follows, we posit that by working within European networks and employing European discursive frames, LGBT activism in the CEEC also contributes to rebuilding the meaning of Europe, from the ground up.

LGBT activists in the CEEC have long been connected to an idea of Europe that embodies values of fundamental rights. While state-socialism was repressive of gay and lesbian activism, spaces for such activism existed to various degrees and in various forms across states in the region before 1989 (Chetaille 2011: 121–123). The presence and mobilization of the lesbian and gay movement was substantially more advanced in many ‘western’ European states, however, where the 1960s/1970s sexual revolution and the politicization of the HIV/AIDS crisis created a greater space for activism much earlier. Those ‘western’ states, within the auspices of the EU, the CoE and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, provided a natural arena for LGBT activists to develop ties, too. Especially after the fall of the Berlin Wall, activists in post-socialist states saw an opportunity to connect the advancement of LGBT recognition – both legally and socially – to European integration.

The ILGA established an East European Pool in 1981, regional meetings were organized between 1987 and 1996, and its first EU funding was dedicated to a project designed to foster democracy and civil society in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Russia. European activists wanted to include both ‘western’ and ‘eastern’ Europe within the same European organization when they

founded ILGA-Europe. Within that organization, they have developed various strategies to identify partners and to foster activism in both EU and non-EU post-socialist states (through capacity-building workshops, study visits, scholarships and access to funding, etc.). Since 2001, the organization has been running a network of national representatives, the EU network, which meets twice a year and fosters pan-European networking opportunities. Many activists in the CEEC – particularly those from Latvia, the former Yugoslavia, Poland and Romania – responded by integrating themselves at the macro-European level and joining even the earliest ILGA-Europe boards. Within the ramifications of a normative commitment to Europe, they did this because of the transnational support, the resources and the know-how it provided, and because they saw a discursive opportunity to frame the issue as a shared European one in their own domestic realms, where they linked furthering LGBT rights to the responsibilities associated with being part of modern Europe (Ayoub 2012). Europe provided the normative vantage point with which to associate the LGBT issue.

European LGBT solidarity across borders endowed the movement in the CEEC with various resources to promote the issue. Actors at major organizations, and smaller ones in the CEEC, had access to material resources for campaigns and projects through grant applications to ILGA-Europe, and sometimes directly to the European institutions. Organizational funding for campaigns and projects in the CEEC also came directly from other European states (particularly the Netherlands, Sweden, Great Britain and Norway), domestic organizations in those states and major international foundations, such as George Soros’ Open Society Institute. For example, in Poland, Campaign Against Homophobia’s ‘Let them See Us’ campaign – which involved 27 billboards showing same-sex couples holding hands – was funded in large part by the Dutch Embassy. A similar phenomenon took place in Romania, where the movement established itself in a challenging domestic context (same-sex relations were illegal until 1996 and an anti-gay propaganda law existed until 2000) with the aid of personal commitments by some expatriates, including US academic Scott Long and US Ambassador Michael Guest, and the support of transnational groups such as the ILGA, the International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission and foreign embassies and international human rights foundations (Carstocea 2006).

Within and alongside Europe’s material resources, LGBT activists were often able to use the ‘idea of Europe’ to frame the LGBT issue as a European norm. As European institutions adopted a normative structure that advanced the visibility of the LGBT issues3 – by introducing the issue into the legal framework of member states – the activists involved in the CEEC developed frames that linked the issue to modernity and the responsibilities associated with being European. For EU and Council of Europe members, these frames legitimized the LGBT issue through the constitutive effect of shared membership in a European community. While the topic is often domestically opposed on the grounds of rejecting the imposition foreign states’ values, the incorporation of many the CEEC states into a common European community makes the issue less foreign. The ability to persuade is at its zenith

3 Examples of this include the pressures from the Council of Europe, which led to the decriminalization of homosexual acts in countries such as Ireland, Romania and Cyprus, Article 13 of the Amsterdam Treaty, the 2000 Employment Anti-Discrimination Directive, the European Charter for Fundamental Rights, and the 1993 Copenhagen Criteria for accession.
when “the socializing agency or individual is an authoritative member of the in-group to which the target belongs or wants to belong,” and Europe has this advantage (Checkel 2006, 364).

For LGBT activists, framing LGBT issues in the language of ‘European’ democratic values was employed because Europe resonated in many CEEC member states at the time of the 2004 wave of accession (Ayoub 2012). Examples of this frame include the T-shirts worn at controversial LGBT demonstrations in Poland around the time of accession, which read ‘Europe = Tolerance’. In Poland, the Warsaw LGBT equality marches’ themes also used European frames. For example, 2006 and 2010 themes were ‘Culture of Diversity’ and ‘Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité’ (alluding to the French Revolution). Making the LGBT issue European is also apparent in addressing right-wing critics in the CEEC, as LGBT activists involved could reframe their message as one of European responsibilities. Since LGBT marches in Warsaw in 2005 and 2006 included many Germans – whose involvement in domestic affairs resonates poorly for historical reasons in the region – organizers purposely shifted attention away from the fact that Germans were protesting for LGBT rights by highlighting that Europeans were protesting for democratic values. Foreign visitors involved in CEEC demonstrations also say that they see their LGBT activism linked to their shared values, solidarity and responsibilities as Europeans. For example, Claudia Roth – a former member of the European Parliament, current co-chair of the German Green Party and a vocal voice for LGBT recognition – says that “among friends one must say what does not work, especially among member states of the EU” (interview 2011). Across the board, a frame of LGBT issues as European – and thus indirectly also Polish, Latvian, Hungarian, Slovenian, Romanian, and so on, because they are members of this shared community – is evident.

The fact that transnational activists so often call for mobilization of support and recognition of LGBT peoples in a language of European values and responsibilities suggests that they contribute to building Europe in a certain image from the ground up. Linking back to the first section on the ILGA, the work of CEEC activists suggests that ‘Europe’ is both a bottom-up and top-down process. While LGBT issues are linked to Europe’s normative structures from above, by using ‘Europe’ as an argument for demanding LGBT recognition from their states and societies, the activists on the ground in the CEEC subsequently, and indirectly, recreate the idea that Europe is united around the LGBT issue. In turn, the link between being European and accepting LGBT people is established, and the understanding of LGBT rights as a European value is further cemented.

Conclusion
In this piece, we argued that an idea of Europe is linked to LGBT activism, both at a transnational level and in the CEEC, through its role as a set of values and as a useful means with which to gain rights. We have shown this by exploring the visions and strategies developed by the ILGA and ILGA-Europe to realize the project of a united Europe. From the beginning, the ILGA had a clear vision of what Europe should be, and how it could contribute to the advancement of LGBT rights in national arenas. The founders’ insights were later strengthened through the establishment of ILGA-Europe, which played a crucial part in the expansion of LGBT activism in the CEEC. We have found that the idea of Europe is equally pertinent to activism in this region, both as a resource and as a value. By linking LGBT rights so closely to Europe in their work, activists in the CEEC contribute to the project of building Europe as a set of values that adhere to those rights.

Such an understanding of Europe, as an imagined and an experienced community through time, has important implications. First, where there is no mass consensus around a European value-based identity in the public sphere (Díez Medrano 2009), we do recognize a link between LGBT rights and European values. In this sense, Europe appears both as a set of values and
normative commitments (shared and felt by ILGA and CEEC activists), and a strategic means by which to demand rights in various domestic realms. By discussing the contours of Europe that social actors imagine, we have shown that these beliefs—and, more importantly, the various ways they are embodied—further contribute to building Europe, an insight that is crucial for the future of European integration.

Second, this paper invites us to unpack the ‘special relationship’ that unites issues of sexuality and Europe, and, more specifically, the issue of LGBT rights in the construction of a common European identity. Scholars have studied the connections between sexuality and nationalism, a topic which has come into a new light due to the recent debates on ‘homonationalism’ (see Duyvendak and Mepschen in this issue). In an attempt to aid the building of a common European identity, European institutions have promoted the values of the LGBT activists they would endorse, decisively contributing to the expansion of activism further eastward. While this can be viewed as a social movement success, crucial questions remain. In particular, we must continue to question who and what is left out in this process. The expansion of LGBT activism in the CEEC reveals a complex politics of co-optation and a selective endorsement of claims and issues. Furthermore, as Carl Stychin (1998) argued, ‘national’ identities are often also constructed against an ‘other’. This leaves the question of who becomes LGBT-Europe’s ‘sexual other’, which could include EU countries (e.g., Poland) or neighbors (e.g., Russia or Turkey), or the construction of Muslim and immigrant communities as threats.

**References**


Why is Europe Lesbian and Gay Friendly?

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I’m often asked this question by American academics and activists working hard to change the political culture in the US so that lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered citizens can benefit from basic equality and human rights. How is it that so many European countries have policies that protect citizens from discrimination based on sexual orientation and recognize same-sex couples? Throughout the years, I have answered this question differently, depending on the latest research or current tenor of political debate. In this short piece here, I want to rehearse some potential answers to this question that have emerged in the relevant literature and to consider a narrative missing from that literature that has significant potential in framing a European-American comparative discussion. After reviewing four possible answers, I then explore how another narrative regarding political economies of care might bring to light nuances in such a comparative analysis.

How Friendly?

Before doing so, it is worth spending a moment defining ‘friendly’ as a term of policy assessment. First, policy literature, particularly that produced by feminists, uses phrases such as ‘women-friendly policy’ or ‘family friendly policy’ as a means by which to measure changes in policy and subsequent outcomes based on a binary gender rubric (Hernes 1987; Jones 1990; Borchorst and Siim 2002). Some employ the spirit of this friendliness to consider possible

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policies that might lead to, in the words of Joni Lovenduski, a “feminization of politics” (2005). Such criteria considers to what extent a party or particular government 1) acts for women, 2) takes on women’s concerns into policy and/or 3) makes a difference to women’s lives. For the record, I can’t quite imagine a ‘homosexualization of politics’, although ‘queering’ policy, politics and the state seems to be a popular academic phrase that refers to a range of methodological and identity related issues (Roseneil 2004). In the course of investigating policies throughout the past half-century, it is evident that the primary concern of policymakers is with same-sex desire – criminalizing, regulating, tolerating or accepting it. Transgender issues appear occasionally on the political and judicial agenda, but, interestingly, these are most often kept separate from discussions of sexual activity and instead focus on a (misplaced) binary notion of moving from one gender to another. For the purposes of analysis of policy developments here, I will focus on policies pertaining only to same-sex desire, as these policies have shifted significantly in many European countries throughout the past 20 years.

Second, to be ‘friendly’ can mean so very many things. It may imply an empathetic mutual understanding of different positions and struggles. But it can also describe ‘Facebook friends’ or those that publicly smile and wave without ever really knowing, or caring. Friendly may be slightly better than tolerating, but the depth and extent of the relationship remains unclear and fluid. As such, posing the question in these terms does not necessarily imply that I consider policies in Europe as indicative of a lesbian and gay utopia, but rather an acknowledgement that much of contemporary policy shifts away from, for example, criminalization.

Finally, even if one is seen to be ‘friendly’ this does not imply that the sentiment is mutual. Some lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) citizens are not satisfied with current rhetoric in policy and political debates regarding constructions of sexual desire and identity categories. Most are all too aware of the extensive reach of the normative hand of the state in individual lives. Some see the expansion of policies, such as same-sex marriage, as more inclusive, while for others such expansion invokes caution. Carl Stychin, for example, worries about the potential complacency or conservatism that may result from a law that includes gay men and lesbians but continues to normalize (Stychin 2003). Normalization can lead to political complacency. “Same-sex sexual communities” – and I would add social science academics – “must themselves continue to be interrogated for their own exclusion and marginalizations (such as around race, gender and social class)” (Stychin 2003, 968). There is a tension in LGBT scholarship between those who are comfortable with such continual interrogation, those who are not, and those who believe it to be the end in itself. Outside the academy, there are plenty of LGBTs who advocate ‘friendly’ policies because they share in the values the policies articulate, or just because it makes their lives more liveable.

Possible Answers...

A quick survey of contemporary academic literature offers four key possible answers to the question posed. The first, most expertly captured in Jeffrey Weeks’s book, entitled The World We Have Won (2007), maintains that from the moment of the Stonewall Riots in New York in 1969, the ‘gay’ movement has made a significant impact on the cultures, politics and policies of the Western world. Familiar new social movement literature outlines the importance of key political moments where activists took to the streets demanding change. Likewise, historians and ethnographers compile moving accounts of activists organizing as a community in order to protect individuals from harm, and provide basic care, as the discovery of HIV/AIDS led to homophobic backlash, marginalization and, in some cases, the denial of medical care and welfare. In time, activists, now experienced in engaging with the institutions of the state, became
more professionalized in securing financing from non-profit organizations, in provision of care and services as well as in the art of political lobbying and rational, elite persuasion. For example, Ricardo Llamas and Fefa Vila note the development of a ‘homocracy’ from two fundamental aspects of Spanish activism: “an establishment of social centers” and “provision of social services around AIDS prevention and information hot lines” (Llamas and Vila 1999, 226–27). It is clear that the ‘gay movement’ matured and, now more inclusive of a range of non-heterosexual identities, has become a more sophisticated political actor in most Western democracies.

With such political professionalism developing in Western democracies, there began to emerge a few moments – brief and sporadic at first – in political discourse, in which a few leading politicians or local policymakers would take a risk by calling into question the traditional notions of equality, justice or rights – brave attempts to reframe the debate and raise the opportunity for a redefinition that was more inclusive of lesbian and gay citizens. As these moments increased, a second narrative emerged mapping these as indicators of an ideological shift. A few European countries were able to set the bar for good practice in non-discrimination and inclusivity to which others could aspire. Reflecting on these moments, Kees Waaldijk employs a policy developmental model that outlines how this shift might take place over time within any one country and how this might lead to increased policy sharing (1993). Others, such as Kelly Kollman and David Paternotte, map the reframing of human rights to include same-sex relationships as a global phenomenon (Kollman 2009; Tremblay, Paternotte, and Johnson 2011). This narrative suggests that an ideological shift does have its challengers. The history of modern political theory attests to the difficulty of agreeing on even the most basic values of liberal democracy. Within the LGBT academic community – just as within all philosophical discourse – the reaction to shifting values is often: “Whose justice? Which equality?” (Wilson 1993). Backlash to inclusivity in the Social Chapter, for example, continues to mark the European debate where social conservatives from the political right feel threatened by attempts to expand the umbrella of justice or rights to include non-heterosexual citizens. Arguably, for each of these ideological shifts there is a counter argument against new definitions of justice or equality. This opposition has been significant in each European country – those that are now more ‘friendly’ and those, such as Poland, which continue to be substantially less/un-friendly.

A third explanation points directly to the construction of the European Union (EU) as unique political terrain for introducing social change. To be sure, the construction of the EU did present windows of opportunity in which inclusive policies could be framed as economically beneficial. Developing social policy interventions was justified if member states’ laws were distorting competition or damaging the creation of economic union, for example, by inhibiting the free movement of labor (Hantrais 2000). Of course, social affairs were limited to the lowest common denominator of what was politically feasible and facilitated economic interdependency. The harmonization envisioned in Article 117 was understandable, as the six original signatory countries had similar welfare regimes; however, as member states increased, so did the social policy diversity. Despite this diversity, the subsidiary role of the EU institutions (Hix 2005), or a detailed European blueprint for social protection, what emerged throughout the decade that followed – by way of green and white papers on more specific social policy issues, social action programs and judgments in the ECJ – has been the fleshing out of fundamental values around fair treatment in employment, responsibility for public health, environmental protection and non-discrimination.1 The driving force behind these

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incremental articulations of European social values continues to be economic competitiveness.

With regard to lesbian and gay friendliness, this third narrative regarding opportunities presented in the development of EU economic and social policies must be set against the structural difficulties that seem to undermine the coherent advancement of lesbian- and gay-friendly EU policies. On the one hand, the link between the commitment to economic integration and the need for social policies to facilitate it offers unique possibilities for policy development. For example, institutional conversations about employment, equal consideration under the law, and free movement of workers provide opportunities for discussing discrimination based on sexual orientation without directly confronting specific hostile national constituencies. Beck and others note the ample opportunities within the European solution to achieving social justice within a capitalist market system (see Beck, van der Maesen, and Walker 1998). However, the subsidiary nature of European institutions and the open method of coordination leave significant scope for national interpretation. Therefore, while there has been a creation of opportunities to discuss economic inclusion for lesbian and gay citizens, there is no guarantee of agreement on issues of social values, particularly beyond the remit of economic efficiency and competition (Berger 2004). Narratives about commitments to harmonization or expectations of the developing European Social Model must be balanced with a nuanced appreciation of the diversity of cultural values that may be at odds with the social inclusion of lesbian and gay citizens. Moreover, the expansion of the EU further challenges an assumption of shared social values. To that end, the ideological, historical and institutional context of the EU serves as only one part of the explanatory narratives about why Europe is lesbian and gay friendly.

A fourth narrative can be found in quantitative data regarding the shift in social attitudes towards gay men and lesbians, or as most often articulated in data sets, ‘homosexuality’. For example, the 2007 Pew Research Center Global Attitudes Project found that in Western Europe, “clear majorities say homosexuality is a way of life that should be accepted by society.”2 Similarly, longitudinal evidence is detailed in work such as the British Social Attitudes Survey, which found in 1983 that 62 percent thought homosexuality was always or mostly wrong, but by 2008 only 36 percent held this view.3 These data resonate with similar findings from the US tracking the shift in attitudes throughout time. In a PS: Political Science & Politics symposium on same-sex marriage, for example, Gary Segura summarizes this literature, noting that when “more respondents attribute homosexuality to nature, rather than nurture, opposition to same-sex marriage declines” (Segura 2005). Such attitudinal changes act as a precursor to and a justification for legislative and judicial intervention that supports inclusivity of lesbian and gay citizens. There is increasing evidence, then, suggesting that the advancement of friendly policies may be facilitated by changing social attitudes, and that these changes are particularly accommodating in Western Europe.

There is increasing evidence, then, suggesting that the advancement of friendly policies may be facilitated by changing social attitudes, and that these changes are particularly accommodating in Western Europe.
Western Europe.

Each of these possibilities provides a rational narrative that may help one articulate an answer to ‘Why is Europe lesbian and gay friendly?’ Arguably, there is more than one answer to the question. It seems most likely that it is the overlapping dynamics of multiple narratives that gives a contextualized picture of what is unique about some European countries in this particular area of policy development. However, I believe the literature seems to have one significant gap that, when addressed, could offer further explanation regarding the peculiarities of policy changes in Europe and, importantly, shed light on the differences between Western and Eastern European countries, as well as address the North-South divide. It is this missing narrative that I want to acknowledge briefly and indicate why it is fundamental to any explanatory analysis.

Political Economies of Care

What is noticeably absent from the above narratives is what has come to be a standard analytical lens for understanding the development of policies regulating family life: the political economy of care. For example, Mary Daly and Jane Lewis define the political economy of care as the dynamic of “how care as an activity is shaped by and in turn shapes social economic and political processes” where care as an activity sits at the “intersection of state, market and family (and voluntary sector) relations” (Daly and Lewis 2000, 296). However, taking gender as the determining factor in care analysis has mired much of the literature at the intersection of binary constructions of gender and, in particular, heterosexual negotiations of care. Undoubtedly, care is about gender relations, and given the predominance of heterosexuality, it is unsurprising that this is the focus of the majority of academic work. However, I think outside that particular box.

Employing the lens of the political economy of care takes the gaze beyond considerations of welfare and family policy in order to see that “the concept of social care is not exhausted by its utility for a gender focused analysis” (Daly and Lewis 2000, 296). Moreover, such an approach enables a consideration of the trajectories of change and the interrelations of the actors, or investors, in the provision of care. An analysis of the political economy of care has the potential to widen the research gaze to include the multitude of ways in which care is negotiated by various investors and the power dynamics of this negotiation beyond just the familiar rubrics of the welfare state and the division of labor in the heterosexual family. For example, considering the political economy of care enables an understanding of the transgressive potential of the state to redefine aspects of care, such as the family, when necessary to meet other political or economic goals. It sheds light on the potential to capitalize politically on the way in which the needs of welfare force the state to construct alternative settings for care, e.g., children’s care, elderly care, hospitals/hospices, housing shelters, etc., and to recognize alternative sources for care, e.g., the voluntary/faith-based sector as well as non-heterosexual families. As Daly and Lewis note, the potential of an analysis of the political economy of care is in “its capacity to capture trajectories of change in contemporary welfare states” and, in considering various investors in care, one can see that the “state assumes a central role but shares the limelight as (just) one agent of change” (Daly and Lewis 2000, 296). There are other agents of change, and many resisting change. This narrative captures that complexity as it manifests itself in the dynamics of care provision.

By considering the political economy of care as it manifests in various European countries, we can begin to locate a more nuanced understanding of how and why lesbian- and gay-friendly policies have developed, or not, and why they are largely in areas of family policy such as same-sex marriage, adoption, fostering, etc. One of the primary investors in care provision has been those working in the Christian tradition providing a direct safety net for children and the elderly, as
well as advocating values of social justice through state provision of services. In each European country this investment of values and finances has manifest itself differently. In Sweden, where state and church elites shared similar values and were themselves occasionally interchangeable, state care provision was understood historically as one expression of Christian charity. This is not a claim that the majority of the Swedish electorate is composed of fundamentalist Christians, nor to discount the impact of secularization in Europe. Despite that secularization, the involvement of the Christian church elites in both the provision of service and the setting of the values frame for the development of the welfare state cannot be underestimated. The historical involvement of Christian churches, particularly in post-World War II welfare settlements, and the resulting political economy of care in each country, is unique. However, one common factor is the normative interpretation of ‘the family’. When mapped closely, making use of literature from other areas of the discipline, such as religion and politics, one can see patterns emerge regarding the development of lesbian- and gay-friendly policies – and, equally importantly, in the unfriendly opposition to such policies. The role of Christian values – ranging from left-leaning social justice, Reformed Protestant individualism or social conservativism – in relation to the political economy of care gives a distinctive flavor to questions about how, why and under what circumstances policymakers are compelled, or not, to expand policies redefining the family to include same-sex couples.

As American and European academics and activists investigate the potential of policy sharing or strategic interventions, it is important not to underestimate the function of the political economy of care. In some cases, such as Spain, the overwhelming demographic shifts combined with an already residual welfare state – and the organization of lesbian and gay activists – engendered a fertile terrain for the expansion of the definition of ‘family’ and tapped into a reserve army of potential carers. In other cases, such as Italy, the historic investment of the Catholic Church in direct care provision and in culturally defining the heteronormative family model limits the political economy of care to a set of ‘pre-approved providers’ and, in so doing, marginalizes those providing care outside that model. These examples serve to encourage a more interdisciplinary approach to understanding this area of policy development and to contextualize the expansion of lesbian- and gay-friendly policies. Further considerations of the political economy of care will add nuance to interpretations of ‘friendliness’ and bring to light fundamental aspects of individual countries’ political culture that tell us exactly how deep that friendship may run.

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References


Dangerous Encounters: Gender and Multiculturalism in Europe and Beyond

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There is probably not a more debated, and mediatized, issue in European feminist politics today than Islamic veiling in its multiple forms, from the simple headscarf to the full veil, and, by extension, other types of ‘religious’ practices all associated in public opinion with Islam, such as arranged/forced marriages, polygamy, or the use of Shari’a to solve family disputes.¹ These debates classically oppose gender equality with multicultural accommodation, i.e., the accommodation of religious or cultural practices of minority/immigrant groups. Indeed, practices such as veiling are perceived by many Western women from the non-Muslim majority (but also within Muslim minorities) as inherently oppressing to women. From the perspective of many feminists, the presence of this symbol of gender inequality, and its potential diffusion in society, logically implies a risk of regression for all women’s rights, rights which have been only recently secured and are often under (budgetary) threat in many European countries.

Many Western feminist movements have long fought against religious

¹ For an overview, see the special issue of Ethnicities on “The Rights of Women and the Crisis of Multiculturalism,” eds. Anne Phillips and Sawitri Saharso, vol. 8, no. 3 (2008), and Politics, Religion and Gender: Framing and Regulating the Veil, eds. Sieglinde Rosenberger and Birgit Sauer (New York: Routledge, 2012).

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extremism or the influence of the Catholic Church on civil society and politics – France or Italy are good examples – and they understand their taking issue with veiling politics as yet another fight directed against a form of religious extremism which happens to be Islamic this time. In the context of current immigrant-integration politics, however, the stakes at play are higher than usual and should make us pause. Indeed, at a time when a return to a civic assimilationist concept of the nation – which makes it harder for immigrants to access European countries and later on to acquire citizenship, and which promotes cultural homogeneity rather than diversity – is growing throughout Europe, the opposition of gender equality and Islam, a religion widespread among immigrants, has immediate political currency and often has legal effects as well with the multiplication of legislative initiatives to ban forms of Islamic veiling.

The Multiculturalist Backlash ... In the Name of Women's Rights

Nowadays, critics of a multiculturalist approach to immigration issues argue for restrictive regulations vis-à-vis Islamic religious practices in the name of women's rights. Nationwide debates questioning the compatibility of Islam with Western culture and the prerequisites for inclusion of Muslim citizens and migrants in the national body politic focus on gendered symbols and gender relations. Gender equality has suddenly gained a new visibility and a new status: it is presented as a national achievement, a cultural specificity of Western democracies, and a new legal norm that should take precedence over the norm of religious freedom. How we define gender equality now determines who will be considered as capable of assimilating and what practices are or are not politically and socially desirable in Western societies.

The debate opposing feminism and multiculturalism is not new in feminist theory. It was launched in 1997 by the publication of Susan Moller Okin's important essay, “Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women?,” in which she argued that granting specific rights to minorities is detrimental to women's individual rights because these rights generally favor a traditional, hence patriarchal, interpretation of a group's culture. Many feminist scholars have criticized her essay, arguing, among other things, that the framing she proposed conflates culture and religion, de-historicizes cultural practices, obscures more pressing concerns about women's inferior socio-economic status, fuels processes of racialization of minority cultures and racism, diverts attention from gender inequalities within the majority culture, and introduces relationships of power between women along racial lines.

However, despite important criticisms at the theoretical level, Okin's liberal feminist views that religious accommodation is detrimental to women are shared – with some variations, depending on the countries – by a wide majority of self-defined feminists in the Netherlands, Germany, France and Denmark, as well as in Québec, for instance. Some feminist organizations have been at the forefront of demands to legislate and ban headscarves in French public schools or the full veil in French streets, or to ban the reference to Shari'a in family arbitration procedures in Ontario, Canada. This active involvement in religious accommodation issues and, more broadly, immigrant-integration politics, deserves some scrutiny on the part of gender studies scholars but also students of immigrant-integration.

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4 See Rosenberger and Sauer, Politics, Religion and Gender.

Feminist Movements and Islam: The Challenge of Intersectionality

From the perspective of gender studies, it is an important topic to explore, both at the theoretical and the empirical levels. Indeed, feminist organizations, born out of what has been called the ‘second-wave’ of feminist movements in the 1970s, are now confronted in a particularly pressing way to the question of including a diverse array of interests, identities and needs held by immigrant women and women of color. Can the usual software of feminist practice – focused on gender equality, bodily autonomy, universal rights for women and the fight to end violence against women – accommodate this new variety of identities? Is the immigrant experience, and more broadly, the experience of racialized women from minority groups in Europe soluble in Western feminism?

To ask this question is to ask whether Western feminism should be changed by its encounter with intersectionality. Intersectionality is a concept that has gained prominence in gender studies during the past decade. It designates the social location of minority women at the intersection of several axes of domination, such as gender and race (but also class, sexuality, disability or age), and calls for an approach that takes into account the simultaneity of these oppressions, which define a specific social experience. For instance, women of color are often doubly discriminated against in employment; they suffer specific forms of sexual harassment or stereotyping and intense forms of cultural marginalization. Intersectionality theory argues that the intersectional location of women of color means that they have a specific identity, which cannot be subsumed under by gender identity alone, and that they hold specific political interests which are under-represented in mainstream anti-racist or feminist movements.

For feminists, the critique runs deep, since intersectionality demands that gender identity – the core identity of feminist organizations and the source of solidarity among their members – not be prioritized over other identities that are also sources of oppression or marginalization (such as racial membership). So far, the few empirical studies that we have suggest that, with notable exceptions such as Britain, the answer of European feminists to the questions raised by intersectionality in the context of debates regarding religious accommodation is, generally but not always, a resounding no. In other words, feminists believe that gender identity comes first and that political platforms focusing on women’s universal rights are inclusive of minority women’s specific interests. This does not mean that mainstream feminists ignore that there are differences between women. Intersectionality between class and gender is often recognized by feminist organizations, for instance, with a special emphasis in their political platforms on the degradation of women’s paid labor and the feminization of poverty. The same is true for migration: many women’s organizations support migrant women’s struggle to have access to their rights and improve their legal status.

Hence, what really poses problems for mainstream feminists are Muslim women’s religious identity, and the practices that the identity entails. This is vividly illustrated by the French case.
parental/marital pressure. This approach to veiling makes it a feminist requirement to mobilize in favor of prohibitive bans, especially if they concern young girls or if they target practices which are deemed extremist and even more patriarchal – such as full veiling, which was banned by French legislators in 2010.

This approach focusing on veiling as a patriarchal practice renders invisible the practical consequences of these bans for Muslim women who want to wear the veil. Indeed, the growing discrimination that veiled women face in employment, and the harassment that they experience in the French public space⁶ fall out of the picture. Whereas discrimination on the ground of religious belief is illegal, the situation of quasi-systemic discrimination in employment that veiled Muslim women experience is not identified by feminist organizations as a social problem that needs to be redressed, and is left out of their political platforms. Here the consequences of non-intersectional feminist approaches for European Muslim women appear clearly: whereas informal and formal prohibitions on veiling in workplaces amount to indirect discrimination adversely impacting women – a form of discrimination now made illegal thanks to European anti-discrimination directives – feminists have not be concerned with combating them in the name of gender equality. This lack of support in favor of Muslim women’s rights has direct implications: only very few women decide to press charges on the ground of religious discrimination, and discriminatory practices against veiled women are not perceived as socially or legally undesirable.

One could argue that France represents an extreme case. This might be so. However, the dilemma that religious accommodation and veiling issues poses for Western feminists is the same everywhere. Indeed, deep down, feminist debates about veiling are debates about the definition of women’s autonomy and emancipation, values at the core of Western feminist organizations’ identity and political commitment.⁷ Following the dominant conception, veiled women lack autonomy and should be educated to emancipate themselves. However, this dominant approach might prove unsatisfactory in de facto multicultural societies. Indeed, framing veiled Muslim women as an improper feminist subject implies excluding women who are already culturally and socially marginalized from the feminist project. Hence, it appears that many European feminist organizations have not yet taken stock of the manifold implications of intersectionality when it comes to Islam. It is therefore crucial to develop research to examine the variety of feminist practices of inclusion/exclusion of minority women in the European context in order to assess the transformations of feminist movements.

The Role of Feminist Organizations in Immigrant Integration

These issues are also of importance for scholars of immigrant integration. Indeed, feminist organizations are part and parcel of immigrant integration policies on the ground. Many of them help migrant women in their quest for a regular status, a home or a job. They also play an important role at the local level in mediating between families with an immigrant background and local authorities. Seldom explored is their role in relaying, or counteracting, official immigrant-integration policies and shaping immigrants’ path to integration. While they help immigrant women to apply for naturalization or residency, to navigate their way on the labor market or to obtain refugee status, do feminist organizations relay official discourses on integration, be it multiculturalist or civic-assimilationist, or do they disrupt restrictive

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⁶ The only data we have, gathered by a non-profit organization, the Collectif contre l’Islamophobie en France, point to an increase, especially since 2008, with 152 acts (access discrimination, verbal attack or physical attack) against individuals, 115 of them specifically targeting women, in 2010; see CCIF Rapport annuel 2010.

immigration policies by giving their support to undocumented and/or unwelcomed female migrants?

Preliminary results from my comparative fieldwork exploring the attitudes of women’s rights organizations toward migrant women in France and Canada suggest that the picture is highly complex. In Canada, many migrant women have organized by themselves, creating organizations devoted to women from their community, largely conceived. Their priority is to help migrant women on their own terms and to address their specific needs. This might also imply a – successful – critique of mainstream women’s movements for not being attentive to the plight of migrant women, pressing them to include their priorities in their political platform (e.g., with immigration law and status). This form of feminist organizing has been supported by the official policy of multiculturalism in Canada and therefore also relays its main ideas: tolerance for diversity, self-organization of communities, and participation of immigrants in economic and political life as future Canadians.

In France, on the contrary, feminist organizations targeting migrant women are often born out of the mainstream women’s movement, rather than from migrant communities. Although in their daily practices they also help migrant women on their own terms, receiving women in their centers whatever their religious dress and practices, providing to them training and support, and helping them find the resources they need, their official discourse generally relays the dominant narrative of veiling as oppressive to women. Hence, Muslim women are included, as victims in need of help, but their identity and specific interests do not appear in the feminist movement’s political agenda. French non-governmental organizations focused on women’s rights tend to convey the idea that integrating in French society means renouncing the visibility of one’s religious identity.

**Gender Equality vs. Religious Freedom: For a More Nuanced Approach**

Finally, beyond feminist movements or immigrant integration policies, the opposition between gender and multiculturalism is also transforming the regulation of religion in Western liberal states. The encounter between gender equality and the regulation of Islam is in fact actively reshaping the boundaries of secularism in several European countries. Indeed, bans on veiling in various areas of social life – through judicial decisions or local regulations, such as in Switzerland or Italy, or through legislation, such as in France and Belgium – are redefining the content of secularism in general, and for Muslims in particular. With prohibitions, or, more rarely, accommodations, courts and legislators are determining which religious practices are acceptable in liberal states and which are not, thereby redrawing the line between state neutrality and religion.8

Partial bans on veiling tend to erase the visibility of Muslim religiosity within the public sphere, and to expand the state’s capacity to secularize not only the state’s apparatus but also the whole public sphere. For instance, until 2000, in France, from a legal point of view, state neutrality meant that the state must treat all religions equally and that public-school civil servants should not indoctrinate children with religious beliefs. Following the various political debates on the Muslim veil, this notion has been expanded to now imply that all civil servants cannot show their

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religious identity while at work, and that even in the public space, forms of religious visibility can be threatening to the social order. Hence, in the process of arbitrating through legislative bans the supposed incompatibility between gender equality and religious accommodation, the boundaries of French secularism have been clearly redrawn to favor an erasure of religious identities. Here again, France might be exceptional in terms of the breadth of its bans, however, these processes are not exceptional and demand close scrutiny in order to evaluate how secularism is being transformed through multiple debates opposing gender and multiculturalism.

Gender equality has become a core legal and political value in Europe, in part thanks to the process of European integration. The legitimation of this value has been won the hard way by feminists and must be preserved, but it seems important to reflect on how it can be made inclusive of all women and compatible with multicultural societies. The Canadian case might offer some insights. Similar debates pitting feminism against multiculturalism are taking place in Canada, although in a much minor key compared with Europe. They are dealt with more even-handedly than in most European polities, especially because some institutional and legal features of the Canadian political system have proven more amenable to mediating the tension between gender equality and religious accommodation. Among them is a case-by-case approach, through the judiciary rather than through legislative politics, which has proven more flexible in assessing the compatibility of religious practices with gender equality, and which refuses to make a hierarchy between constitutional principles such as religious freedom and gender equality. It is only in concreto, with each case of potential incompatibility, that adjudication is realized. This means that gender equality is a central constitutional principle that must be protected, but its absence or presence is evaluated in a precise instance. Practices that might be harmful to women are examined through their concrete consequences, rather than evaluated on the basis of their potential effects abstractly imagined from the point of view of the majority. This way of adjudicating over these difficult issues avoids portraying all veiled Muslim women as victims, but still allows for a careful examination of gender equality issues. Moreover, Canadian judges can rely on an extensive conception of antidiscrimination, which makes it easier to make visible indirect discrimination based on gender in cases of restrictions of religious practices that might affect disproportionately women.

This in not to say that Canada has reached a perfect balance, and that it preserves both gender equality and religious freedom. The balancing exercise is a very difficult one, and evaluations of the Canadian approach differ depending on one’s political views. However, in an era of backlash against multicultural values, Canada has managed to hold to its political priority of respect for diversity and promotion of inclusion, to resist interpretations of secularism – which tend to limit religious diversity – and to do so without abandoning its commitment to gender equality. This has been an intense journey for Canadian feminists, especially in Québec, who wonder if the battle to avoid the stigmatization of Islam is not detrimental to gender equality. However, the open public debate and the strong constitutional commitment to both values of religious freedom and gender equality provide safeguards to navigate these dangerous waters, and offer interesting lessons to learn from for European countries.

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European Sexual Nationalisms: The Culturalization of Citizenship and the Sexual Politics of Belonging and Exclusion

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A tumultuous conference in Amsterdam, early 2011, on Sexual Nationalisms: Gender, Sexuality and the Politics of Belonging in the New Europe, bore witness to the academic and political thorniness of the issues at stake. The conference, organized by the Amsterdam Research Center for Gender and Sexuality (ARC-GS) at the University of Amsterdam and the Institut de Recherche Interdisciplinaire sur les enjeux Sociaux (IRIS) at EHESS in Paris, brought together more than 80 scholars and hundreds of participants to discuss the entanglements and convergences of liberal and progressive feminist and gay rights politics with anti-immigration policies in Europe.

The Netherlands in European Perspective

The Dutch case, in our view, provides quintessential examples of the sexualization of European anxieties about cultural and religious diversity. In no other country have discourses of gay rights and sexual freedom played such a prominent role. These narratives are part and parcel of a wave of aversion to (public) Islam in Europe. Recent examples include legal measures against the burqa in Belgium and France (see Lépinard in this issue), the constitutional ban on minarets in Switzerland, the debates about the veil in various European countries,

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and the electoral rise of the explicitly anti-Muslim politician Geert Wilders and his Freedom Party in the Netherlands. Islam and multiculturalism have become subjects of heated debate in numerous European countries, including the UK, Denmark, Belgium, France, Germany, Italy and the Netherlands. The convergence of gay rights discourses with these debates unveils a shift in the social location of gay politics in Europe. Gay issues have moved from the margins to the center of cultural imagination and have been recast as an ‘optic, and an operative technology’ in the production and disciplining of Muslim others (Puar 2007, xiii). Cases of homophobia among Muslim citizens are highlighted, epitomized as archetypal, and cast within Orientalist narratives that underwrite the superiority of European secular modernity. To understand this new politics of sexual nationalism we highlight two developments (Mepschen et al. 2010): the rise of Islamophobia already discussed and the culturalization of citizenship. We briefly focus on these Europe-wide trends before turning to more specific, albeit not unique, characteristics of Dutch social history that may explain why the Netherlands is such an extreme case of sexual nationalism: the remarkable leeway given by the Dutch state to new social movements and hence the enduring influence of ‘the long 1960s’, the strong focus on individual and sexual freedom; and a far stretching, albeit limited, ‘normalization’ of gay sexuality in recent decades.

The Culturalization of Citizenship and the Rise of Islamophobia

The ‘culturalization of citizenship’ in Western European societies denotes the increasing importance attached to culture and morality in shaping citizenship and integration policy (Duyvendak 2011; Geschiere 2009, 130–68; Schinkel 2008). It constitutes a deeply ingrained cultural essentialism that simplifies the social space by symbolically dividing society into distinct, internally homogeneous cultural entities, reducing opponents to a knowable and perceivable essence: his or her culture. This understanding of culture grounds a cultural protectionist outlook: a delineation of cultural diversity as problematic and perilous and a concomitant emphasis on the need to construct and defend European cultural heritage as an alternative to non-Western influence. The ‘sexualization of citizenship’ denotes a temporal politics shaping an imaginary of modern individualism versus subjectivities embedded in tradition, community and family. In order to criticize Muslims as backward and as enemies of European culture, gay rights are now heralded as if they have been the foundation of European culture for centuries.

Sexual Freedom and Secular Nostalgia

In recent decades, secular ideologies and moralities have gained great momentum in the Netherlands, and have become increasingly influential. As the religion scholar Peter van Rooden argues: “Dutch Christianity died when the collective, ritual and ir-reflexive religious practices in which it had articulated itself [...] gradually became less important in the lives of believers, in the wake of the popularization of the discourses and practices of the expressive and reflexive self” (2004, 22). This dynamic was part of a broader historical process of ‘de-pillarization’ — the crumbling of the hierarchically organized religious and socialist subcultures (‘pillars’) composed of their own media, schools, institutions and political parties. These pillars, which formed the basic mode of social organization in the country, faded away after the 1960s (Kennedy 1995). Virtually all institutions associated with the old order were attacked as traditional and authoritarian; de-pillarization and secularization were thus interpreted and delineated as a break from oppressive, paternalistic structures. In the process, the religious had become framed and seen as out of sync with progressive secular moralities: as ‘other’. Muslims have been the most conspicuous objects in recent years of what Sarah Bracke refers to as ‘secular nostalgia’ (2011). They are framed as trespassing on a secular
moral landscape, distorting the dream of a unified, secular and morally progressive nation (Duyvendak 2011).

Sexuality has been key in shaping this secular nostalgia. Compared with other Western European countries, the Dutch authorities’ corporatist and consensual style afforded greater political influence to the new social movements. The ‘long 1960s’ (Righart 1995) had far-reaching effects – especially in the realms of morality and sexuality – and led to the country’s ‘liberal’ policies on drugs, euthanasia, abortion and lesbian/gay rights. After an initial period of cultural polarization, large segments of the Dutch population have distanced themselves from moral traditionalism. The percentage of Dutch citizens who agree with the proposition that ‘homosexuality is normal’ and who support gay marriage exceeds that in other countries (Gerhards 2010). In this context, expressions of homophobia have increasingly been represented as ‘alien’ to secular, Dutch ‘traditions of tolerance’. This was aptly illustrated when Khalil El-Moumni, an imam working in Rotterdam, insisted on national television in May 2001 that homosexuality was a dangerous and contagious disease (Hekma 2002). The imam had tread on one of the cornerstones of Dutch cultural self-representation. The Dutch Minister of Integration grilled El-Moumni and other imams in a meeting in which ‘Dutch values were explained’. He and others stated that legal action against El-Moumni should not be ruled out. Sociologist Gert Hekma recalls that the Prime Minister used “the full 10 minutes of his weekly interview [...] to tell Muslims to respect the Dutch tolerance of homosexuality,” although the Prime Minister himself was clearly uncomfortable speaking about the issue in public (2002, 242). In a poll on the website of a mainstream gay and lesbian monthly, 91 percent of respondents agreed that “newcomers should tolerate our tolerance or should leave” (Prins 2002, 15). A commentator in the populist daily De Telegraaf argued that El-Moumni’s views could only be found in “the medieval deserts of North Africa.”

The discourse of Pim Fortuyn, whose ascent on the political stage took place shortly after the El-Moumni affaire and – perhaps more significant – after 9/11, capitalized on the trope of sexual freedom as inherently Dutch and was pivotal in ingraining it deeper into the Dutch self-image. He described Islam as a backward culture and a threat to his personal way of life: “I refuse to start all over again with the emancipation of women and gays.” Fortuyn presented himself as a liberated gay man whose way of life and cultural gains were threatened by ‘backward’ Muslims and leftist immigration policies. Fortuyn successfully connected sexual liberation and secularization as markers of the modern, individualistic character of Dutch (national) culture and painted Muslims as trespassers on sacrosanct secular terrain.

The Politics of Normalization

A third facet of Dutch social history is pertinent here: Dutch gay identity and politics have undergone a far-reaching process of ‘normalization’ that has stripped sexual politics of its deviant and radical character in a more profound way than in many other ‘Western’ countries (Duyvendak 1996). The Dutch gay community has been deeply affected by the emergence of what Lisa Duggan refers to as a ‘new homonormativity’ (2002): articulations of lesbian and gay identity that no longer threaten but replicate and underscore heteronormative assumptions and structures. This is an important
The commodification of gay identity and community that followed created a new kind of idealized gay persona. The campy, nonconformist gay man of the 1960s and 1970s counterculture transformed into a champion of bodily perfection, consumption and affluent individualism.

Gay culture and identity, with its focus on unattached, self-fashioning and self-regulating individuality, became folded into a discourse of neo-liberal citizenship. Migrants, on the other hand, have come to be framed as embodying the values and properties that in neo-liberal societies are delineated as problematic: their alleged piety and preference for community and tradition, and their relative social marginalization. To become ‘individual citizens’ in a post-industrial, neo-liberal society, old values had to be unlearned. Gay rights became the litmus test for this integration.

The role of neo-liberalism notwithstanding, in the Netherlands an ‘assimilationist’ strategy focusing on equal rights rather than ‘queerness’ or radical social change characterized the movement almost from its inception. “The Dutch gay and lesbian movement has accommodated itself to the parameters of the political, cultural and power balance” (Schuyf and Krouwel 1999, 161). Duyvendak (1996) has shown how, unlike in countries such as France and the United States, the Dutch state in the 1980s gave gay men a significant role in managing the HIV/AIDS crisis affecting their community. The radicalization of AIDS activism that shaped the French, US and other ‘queer’ movements played a very small role in the Netherlands, where radical articulations of queer activism remain marginal.

‘Normalization’ does not imply that heterosexual normativity has been surpassed (Seidman 2001). Rather, the popular representation of gay identity has changed from a deviant other to the mirror image of the ideal heterosexual: ‘Normalization is made possible because it simultaneously reproduces a dominant order […] [L]egitimation through normalisation leaves in place the polluted status of marginal sexualities and all the norms that regulate our sexual intimate conduct’ (Seidman 2001, 326). Homonormativity produces “a politics that does not contest dominant heteronormative forms but upholds and sustains them” (Duggan 2002, 179). Paradoxically, it is the de-politicized character of Dutch gay identity, ‘anchored in domesticity and consumption’ (Ibid.), which explains its entanglement with neo-nationalist and normative citizenship discourses. Dutch gay identity does not threaten heteronormativity, but in fact helps shape and reinforce the contours of ‘tolerant’ and ‘liberal’ Dutch national culture.

Conclusions

As argued, the rise of sexual nationalisms in Europe must be understood as part and parcel of the culturalization of citizenship and the concommitant politicization of home in Europe (cf. Duyvendak 2011; Holmes 2000). Processes of culturalization not only unfold in the form of the spectacular success of nationalist and anti-Muslim political parties like the Dutch PVV, the Danish Folkeparti, or the French Front National (Art 2011), but need to be understood more broadly as a zeitgeist, affecting and transforming political relations and policy within European nation-states at the level of immigration control, ‘integration’ policies, securitization and urban regulation. This discourse can be placed within a broader relational context, ‘neo-liberalism’, and be understood as part and parcel of the project to reinforce or restore the authority of state institutions over the production of (national) citizenship and political
subjectivity and the regulation of labor markets and urban marginality, just as this authority is “being undermined by the accelerating flows of money, capital, signs and people across national borders, and by the constricting of state action by supranational bodies and financial Capital” (Wacquant 2008, 76).

Movements for cultural protectionism have thus proliferated throughout Europe, including Western Europe, and have developed and popularized discourses that pit native, ‘autochthonous’ communities against outsiders with, allegedly, aberrant morals and devious intentions (Geschiere 2009; Schinkel 2008). In these discourses the world is represented as divided into different, inimical cultures, and the ‘national cultures’ of Europe are framed as in need of protection against the effects of globalization and immigration (Baumann 2007). Proponents of this new ‘culturism’ (Schinkel 2008) frame migrants as outsiders and emphasize a perceived need for their cultural education and their ‘integration’ in a Dutch, European or ‘modern’ moral universe. Muslim citizens have become the most conspicuous objects of these ‘discourses of alterity’ (Schinkel 2008). Indeed, the rise of neo-culturalism has gone hand in glove with the framing of Muslims as backward, intolerant and incongruous with ‘European’ secular modernity.

As Willem Schinkel argues, the very notion of ‘integration’ that is so central to this logic is what brings ‘society’ into being as a stable, delimited object. Integration discourse is, he argues, “one way to discursively demarcate the space occupied by ‘society’. The idea of a ‘Dutch society’ is fixed precisely through the production of a marker of ‘society’ vis-à-vis the ‘non-integrated’ ‘outside society’ that is part of the process of globalization unsettling the notion of ‘Dutch society’” (2011, 99). Following this approach, nationalism must be understood as a discourse of alterity, symbolically casting (post)migrants out as moral and sexual others, ‘non-integrated’ because of their alleged (universal) homophobia. The figure of the homophobic (post)migrant outsider thus symbolically demarcates the space occupied by the universally homo-tolerant insider.

From the point of view of both immigration and integration studies and the study of sexuality, it seems necessary to get beyond the ‘integration’ imperative. In a critique of Dutch homo-emancipation policy, which is often looked at as a model for sexuality politics, Suhraiya Jivraj and Anisa de Jong have recently warned against a reification of the Dutch model. They argue that the focus on speakability and visibility “fails to grapple with the complex subjectivities of diasporic queer Muslims” (Jivraj and De Jong 2011).

This is a solid critique. We argue that social researchers as well as policymakers and activists need to take seriously the diversity and complexity of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning (LGBTQ) cultures and the possibility that queer post-migrants might choose forms of sexual emancipation, of sexual freedom, that deviate from ‘modern’, ‘normative’ articulations (Wekker 2006). At the heart of this approach is a critique of exclusionary assumptions about Muslim and migrant sexualities, and of the temporal politics that has become entwined with progressive discourses.
References


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