

## ABSTRACT

How, when, and why are the gendered effects of economic policymaking addressed in political discourse and practice? Feminist political economists and gender and politics scholars have demonstrated that the gendered nature of the economy and economic governance is insufficiently accounted for, and that the gendered effects of austerity and welfare state retrenchment tend to be obscured. Building on these literatures, this dissertation explores under what circumstances and in what forms political actors address the gendered effects of economic governance in political processes. It does so by focusing on a set of actors and institutional settings that provide important spaces of political contestation over gender equality, and the relation between gender and economic governance, but that remain underexplored in the previous literature: political actors in the news media, sub-national governments, and social partners. The empirical setting of the dissertation is Spain in the decade between 2010 and 2020. Due to its quasi-federal structure, its severe economic crises, and austerity measures that were adopted by distinct governments, Spain provides a productive setting in which to study the gendering of economic governance in these institutional settings. The dissertation consists of three solo-authored articles.

The first article (published in *Social Politics* [2022]) contributes to the scholarship on the gendering of economic governance by examining how the gendered effects of austerity and labor market deregulation are silenced in the public debate. Drawing on an original database containing media coverage on labor market deregulatory reforms in two of Spain's most widely read newspapers spanning a decade (2010–2020), the article explores under what conditions and by whom the gendered effects of austerity are silenced. I find that although politicians from leftist parties are more likely to address gender perspectives in their media appearances, the effect of political ideology varies with government-opposition dynamics. However, the experience of minoritized women and their precarious working conditions remains excluded from the debate. The findings suggest that reflections on the gendered effects of economic policymaking are more likely to be present in the public debate when it may be conceived of as strategically beneficial for garnering political support, but that this gender perspective does not challenge racialized inequalities in Spain.

In times of economic crisis and welfare state retrenchment, institutional design conditions the opportunities for sub-national political actors to resist the central government's policymaking. In countries where sub-national governments have significant power, actors on the sub-national level have a greater scope to resist retrenchment than in unitary states. The second article (submitted to *Gender, Work and Organization*) in this dissertation expands our understanding of when resistance to neoliberal policymaking is possible. Existing research has primarily examined opportunities for resistance in policy areas that belong to the sub-national governments and highlighted that when it comes to economic policymaking, the scope of action for sub-national governments is limited. In this article, I study sub-national governments in three Spanish regions and their reactions to central governments' adoption of deregulatory labor market reforms. The article relies on interviews with politicians and bureaucrats in sub-national governments, actors that have received limited attention in the literature on feminist resistance to neoliberal policymaking. I find that politicians and bureaucrats in regional governments with left-leaning parties have attempted to resist what they perceive to be harmful effects of these reforms, also when their formal scope is limited.

Having examined the discourses and practices of politicians and bureaucrats in the first two articles, the third article (published in *Social Partners and Gender Equality: Change and Continuity in Gendered Corporatism in Europe* [2022]) moves on to study another set of actors that have an important role to play in promoting gender equality in the labor market: trade unions and employer organizations. The article explores the relationship between the actors' conceptualizations of gender equality and their gender equality policy proposals. Homing in on Spanish social partners' policy proposals during a period in which they received renewed significance, following the

entrance into government of a new leftist coalition and a Minister of Labor with close ties to the trade union movement, the article provides a timely analysis of how the social partners' gender equality conceptualizations shape bipartite and tripartite gender equality agreements. The article employs mechanisms theorized in the feminist political economy literature, including the gendered subsidy, to argue that the social partners only reach a partial convergence on gender equality policies when this subsidy is obscured.

In sum, the dissertation contributes to debates within feminist political economy and gender and politics scholarships by examining the conditions under which political actors conceptualize and address the gendered effects of economic governance and the forms that this takes on in political discourse and practice. Together, the three articles demonstrate how political actors' gendering of economic policymaking in discourses and practices are conditioned by the actors' strategic considerations and engagement with institutional boundaries, such as government-opposition dynamics in political agenda setting and the distribution of policy responsibilities in decentralized political systems. The articles illustrate how the political actors' engagement or non-engagement with feminist perspectives shape their construction of the relationship between gender and economic governance in their discursive struggles and knowledge production about economic and gender equality policies. The dissertation's overarching theoretical contribution is to test and nuance existing theories by exploring their explanatory power in new institutional settings, thus complementing existing findings to better explain the political dynamics in institutional contexts that are underexplored in existing literature. Empirically, the dissertation explores how mechanisms theorized in the feminist political economy scholarship play out in these institutional settings. In doing so, the dissertation provides novel insight into how macro political contexts and institutions condition the gendering of economic policymaking by political actors.