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Expertise in European Economic Governance: A Feminist Analysis

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Abstract

Recent years have seen a distinctive transformation in EU economic governance, including the introduction of a regime of oversight and recommendation as well as the establishment of new policymaking, oversight and expert institutions at both the European and member state levels. These changes raise questions about legal and political accountability, and about the current state of integration. Debates over the political nature of contemporary economic governance have, thus far, ignored the role that the politics of gender may be playing in constructing and legitimising this regime. While much research has documented the gendered impacts of this regime, there remains a gap in the literature concerning how gender influences the regime itself. This article addresses this gap by exploring two ways in which gender politics have shaped and legitimised the new regime. First, it explores the gendered nature of economic expertise within EU economic governance. Secondly, it explores the framing of the economic crisis, and show how the narratives of the crisis helped to create this gendered regime. The article explores the gendered nature of the process of seeking legitimacy in economic policy, and so the analysis helps to deepen the understanding of the politics behind economic policy more broadly.

Keywords

EU economic governance; Expertise; Gender; Legitimacy

According to Scharpf (2013), the economic governance regime of the EU can be understood as 'a legally and politically unconstrained expert regime' (Scharpf 2013: 12). In this reading, not only are experts and expertise central to economic governance in the EU, they in fact hold a position of uncontested and 'unconstrained' influence. There has been a shift away from politicised economic governance to the technocratic, an apolitical economic governance regime at the European level (Ruser 2015; Guerrina 2017). This shift has taken place at member state level, with the empowerment of the executive branch at the expense of parliaments (Maatsch and Cooper 2017; Jančić 2016), and at the European level, with a similar sidelining of the European Parliament in economic governance (Rittberger 2014; Guerrina 2017; Fasone 2014).

Like much of the political economy of ideas literature, Scharpf (2013) does not explore the gendered nature of this regime. Other political economy research that identifies the specific form of economic knowledge (Streeck 2011; Helgadóttir 2016; Fourcade 2006) within European economic policymaking does not analyse the gendered nature of governance either. This reflects broader trends in the EU studies literature, that have been convincingly critiqued elsewhere (Guerrina, Haastrup, Wright, Masselot, et al. 2018). There has been some work that recognises the gendered nature of the economic knowledge underpinning the EU's new governance regime (Guerrina 2017; Bruff and Wöhl 2016). However, this work takes this recognition as a starting point, rather than investigating how such expertise is gendered. There is a similar gap in the debates over the role of professional and academic economists in the adoption of austerity programmes in Europe and elsewhere in the early decades of the 21st century (Farrell and Quiggin 2012), as well as in the research agenda seeking to

understand why 'bad ideas' have triumphed in European economy policymaking (Schmidt 2016; Lehndorff 2012; Blyth 2013a). This literature identifies the role of experts, but for the most part it does not focus on how expertise as a narrative is itself part of this policymaking process. Additionally, the identified literature does not unpack or examine the gendered nature of expertise and expert influence.

The current EU economic governance regime can be seen as normalisation of the surveillance and guidance system developed for the member states which were in receipt of a Troika loan. This system of oversight, advice, recommendations and evaluation was represented by the physical presence of expert groups in each member state under a bailout programme. Additionally, there has been a promotion of a new expert regime through the establishment or, in some cases, an increased authority of national level fiscal advisory councils as required by the new rules adopted after the crisis. These institutions are specifically charged with providing expert advice to member state governments, and also with assisting in the reporting to the expert oversight system at the EU level.

In this article, I use a discourse analysis approach to examine the gendered nature of EU economic governance. More specifically, I apply an approach informed by feminist discourse analysis (Lombardo and Meier 2008; Lazar 2007), that appreciates the gendered dynamics of language and is attentive to power dynamics within discourses. This approach can highlight the work that gender is doing in particular discourses, such as providing coherence to policy programmes (O'Dwyer 2018a). The article maps the role of expertise in EU economic governance, identifying the institutional shifts that empowered a particular type of expertise, while also sidelining gender equality concerns. It uses in-depth analysis of key documents to highlight the centrality of expertise to EU economic governance. It also demonstrates the gendered power dynamic that emerges from the dominance of 'the expert', in particular through a process of depoliticisation of decision-making in economic policy. In so doing, this article offers an in-depth analysis of the depoliticisation of economic governance, while also problematising this process from a feminist perspective.

FINDING GENDER IN EXPERTISE

In this section I briefly set out what I mean by a gendered expertise regime. I outline indicators of both an expertise regime itself, as well as how it may be gendered. The following sections then examine whether such expectations are realised in EU economic governance.

Historically, there has been a clear link between expertise and gender, including in areas of economic expertise. The professions associated with expertise were traditionally closed off to women, and even now there tends to be a majority of men in the more senior level of the legal and economic professions (Jonung and Ståhlberg 2008; Ginther and Kahn 2004). This historical inequality has left a legacy of a particular understanding of expertise. In particular, it has shaped the way that experts are expected to look and speak. The public image of the expert is a particularly masculine image. It is also infused with racialised and class-based understandings of authority. So, the stereotype of an expert is a white, well-educated man, usually in a suit (Griffin 2013; Beneria 1999). This has aligned with various dominant types of expertise throughout history, from religious leaders, to philosophers, politicians and now, the expression of hegemonic masculinity in the time of advanced and globalised capital, that of the 'Davos man' (Beneria 1999). Economic expertise is gendered in substance as well as style. There is a striking male dominance in the field of economics (Ferber and Nelson 2009; Elson 1995, 1994; Bakker 2007). For example, in the United Kingdom, women make up just 24 per cent of academic economists (Tonin and Wahba 2015).

Additionally, positions of economic decision-making are male dominated. For example, an analysis of the main networks of financial governance after the Global Financial Crisis found an overwhelming male dominance in international financial governance, (Schuberth and Young 2011). Of the 76 people

awarded the Nobel Memorial prize in economics, only one has been a woman. Economics as a discipline and a profession is overwhelmingly male dominated. In a classic example of role-model theory, this dominance is self-perpetuating. As the majority of visible economic experts are male, male-ness itself becomes associated with economic expertise (West and Zimmerman 1987; Pearse and Connell 2015).

The analysis below documents my investigation of a gendered expertise regime in EU economic governance. Potential indicators of a gendered regime include the presentation of expertise as independent, objective, apolitical and preferable to other forms of decision-making. The gendered nature of such a regime will be observable in a construction of economic expertise that does not consider the inclusion of feminist or gender sensitive knowledge, and that does not see the male-dominance of expert groups and spaces as problematic. Additionally, a gendered expertise regime will result in depoliticisation of economic governance. This depoliticisation is discussed next.

Depoliticisation is not actually a process of removing all politics from a policy space. Rather, it is a process of removing some aspects of politics. Put another way, depoliticisation is the shifting of decision-making responsibility between political actors. In this sense, it is a very political move (Fawcett, Flinders, Wood and Hay 2017). It can serve to exclude ideas and actors through moving decisions to more exclusive forums, thus preventing contestation of policy choices. It is an act of silencing, and as such is deeply political. Depoliticisation can be both discursive and more structural. For example, it can result from a particular narrative around the respective roles of experts and elected representatives. But it can also result from the formal institutional rules of a particular policy area. Such rules can exclude political actors, while guaranteeing the place of experts or other non-elected or non-accountable actors.

Both discursive and structural types of exclusion and depoliticisation have potential gendered ramifications. Woodward's (2004) theory of 'velvet triangles' describes the necessary coalitions for feminist or gender equality policy to succeed in the EU. She identified three key actors or groups of actors in this process. Elected feminist officials, in particular from the European Parliament, work with 'femocrats' based in the Commission and with feminist academics and activists to collectively push forward a gender equality agenda. Subsequent research on the absence or presence of gender equality concerns, for example in migration policy, has supported this theory (Kantola 2010; Haastrup and Kenny 2016). This research points to the need for all three 'sides' of the triangle to be present in order to have feminist policy influence. The Velvet Triangle theory is therefore highly useful for examining a policy area where there have been changes in the levels of access for feminist actors. Depoliticisation prevents the mobilisation of velvet triangles in several ways: by excluding the input of the Parliament, by excluding femocrats and their expertise and by portraying gender equality concerns as political, and therefore inappropriate for depoliticised policymaking. Thus, depoliticisation can be understood as a gendered process, as it acts to exclude feminist analysis and to perpetuate gender-blind policymaking.

DISCOURSE AND THE PROCESS OF LEGITIMACY

I follow Scharpf (2013, 1999) in his distinction between input and output legitimacy, focusing on how output legitimacy is generated in the field of contemporary economic governance. While it has been fruitfully applied to discussions on legitimacy at the national level, this approach is also particularly useful for describing legitimacy in the EU, since it allows for the analysis of legitimacy even where democratic input and oversight may be lacking, or at are least different in character to that experienced at a national level. In Scharpf's (1999) seminal account, legitimate governance meets the criteria of both 'government by the people' and 'government for the people'. Input legitimacy is concerned with the processes of decision-making and with who participates in that decision-making. Input legitimacy is about 'government by the people': it concerns whether or not the citizens have an

adequate say in the rules that govern them. Decisions have input legitimacy when those taking the decisions are legitimate representatives and where all appropriate viewpoints are considered. Input legitimacy, then, is clearly often lacking in EU policymaking.

Therefore, output legitimacy is key in analysing and evaluating legitimacy with regard to EU economic governance. Output legitimacy considers the impact of decisions on economic and employment performance. Output legitimacy therefore concerns the standard of 'government for the people'. Output legitimacy has often been the focus of defenders of the European Union. In particular before the crisis, the benefits of EU membership and of EU legislation were said to legitimate the transfer of powers from national governments to the EU level. However, in the wake of the economic crisis and the transformation of economic governance that followed, output legitimacy has become increasingly contested (Seikel 2016; Jones 2015). These circumstances of contested legitimacy highlight the usefulness of understanding legitimacy as a process, rather than as a binary state. As Rosamond (2002: 160) notes, 'the project of economic integration cannot be accomplished without intensive activism on behalf of the generation of mass loyalties to "Europe"'. Thus, legitimacy is a constant aspiration and a constant process of communication and rhetoric.

In the aftermath of the crisis, and of the reforms it prompted, the role of discourse in shaping output legitimacy is increasingly important for scholarship. Weiler (2012) suggests as much when he points to the role of high-profile leaders providing a vision, or narrative, in legitimising the EU. Della Sala (2010) explored the role of myths and narratives in legitimising integration (see also Hall 2012) and McNamara (2015a; 2015b) has shown that the symbolism of the EU along with economic narratives (McNamara 1999, 1998) have served to embed a type of legitimising process that is inherently discursive and communicative. While the idea of 'throughput legitimacy' (Schmidt 2013) is also important for understanding the role of expertise, the focus of this paper is on the role that expertise is playing in output legitimacy. One of the key contributions of this paper is to show how this process of seeking output legitimacy is deeply intertwined with gender.

A GENDERED EXPERTISE REGIME

EU economic governance is built around the assumption of a 'technocratic' approach to economic decision-making, which assumes that there is a 'best practice' model to follow. As Scharpf (2016) and others have argued, expertise based decision-making has replaced political contestation (Scharpf 2016, 2013; Kreuder-Sonnen 2016). This is not a wholly new phenomenon. Throughout its history, the EU has been subject to criticism for its emphasis on technocracy or expert-led policymaking. In particular, the Commission's main resources are knowledge and expertise, as opposed to a budget or enforcement powers such as a police force. It has used these resources in the on-going power contests between the EU institutions (Radaelli 1999; Bartl 2017). There is a complex and often opaque network of experts designing, monitoring and implementing the regime. The technocratic character of European policymaking is not new and has been well documented (Radaelli 1999).

This analysis is not intended to be a complete mapping of economic policymaking at the EU level. Indeed, due to the informal nature of some such sites of decision-making, any such map will be somewhat incomplete. However, this analysis is certainly illustrative, crossing the multiple institutions involved, and capturing the gender breakdown of policymaking at various levels of authority. Additionally, given the overwhelming trend of male dominance that can be observed, it is an important starting point for evaluating the gendered nature of expertise in EU economic governance.

Table 1 outlines the gender breakdown of the key decision-making bodies in the EU's economic governance, covering the Council, Commission, Parliament and the European Central Bank. These groups make up the formal architecture of economic governance in the EU. While there is some clear

variation, each and every group is male dominated. This is starkest at the top level of decision-making, with the 'five presidents' all currently male. All of these positions have been historically held by men, with the exception of the President of the European Parliament, which has been held by women twice in its entire history. Within the current Parliament, there is also a, relatively, high number of women on the Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs, though at 23 per cent, it is far from a level of equality. It should be noted that some of these groups are populated based on the pre-existing position of the members. For example, ECOFIN is the Council configuration of finance ministers, and the Eurogroup is made up of finance ministers from Euro area states. As such, they are not impacted by direct gender equality initiatives in hiring and promotion. In contrast, the staffing of the Directorate General for Economic and Financial Affairs of the European Commission (DG ECFIN), which is subject to such initiatives, has an, again relatively, high number of women, with 32 per cent at the administrator level.

Table 1. Gender breakdown of decision makers in EU economic governance

Position/Level:	Male (%)	Female (%)
President (Parliament, Euro group, European Central Bank, Commission, Council)	5 (100%)	0 (0%)
DG ECFIN (Commissioner, Director General and Deputy Directors General)	3 (75%)	1 (25%)
DG ECFIN Director and Head of Unit Level	35 (73%)	13 (27%)
DG ECFIN Administrator Level	260 (68%)	120 (32%)
ECB Governing Council	23 (92%)	2 (8%)
Eurogroup	17 (89%)	2 (10%)
ECOFIN Council	25 (89%)	3 (11%)
European Parliament Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs	47 (77%)	14 (23%)

Sources: Europa.eu, ECFIN Organisation Chart, Commission Statistical Bulletin Active Staff by Directorate-General and Gender, <http://www.ecb.europa.eu/>. All accurate as of 22 March 2017

Overall this table illustrates a stark imbalance in the make-up of key decision-making sites. This has several implications for democracy (Schuberth and Young 2011), for decision-making quality (Walby 2015), for gender equality moving forward and for the working culture of these spaces (Guerrina 2017). Table 2 below adds to these observations. It lists the gender breakdown of two key review groups on economic governance: the European Council Task Force on Economic Governance, and the High Level Group on Financial Supervision in the EU, appointed by the Commission. Both were tasked with reporting on the causes of the crisis and with recommending reforms for the Economic and Monetary Union. As can be seen, both groups are male dominated, with the latter completely composed of male members. These reports form the basis of the story of the crisis and shaped the crisis-era reform of EU economic governance from the beginning. As such, their striking imbalance is a strong initial indicator of a gendered expertise regime.

Table 2 - Gender Breakdown of Membership of Review Groups on the Economic Crisis

Group:	Male (%)	Female (%)
European Council Task Force on Economic Governance	35 (92%)	3 (8%)
High Level Group on Financial Supervision in the EU (members and secretariat)	12 (100%)	0 (0%)

Sources: <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2010/10/pdf/strengthening-economic-governance-in-the-eu-report-of-the-task-force-to-the-european-council/>, https://ec.europa.eu/info/files/report-high-level-group-financial-supervision-eu-chaired-jacques-de-larosiere_en

As Schuberth and Young (2011) note in their analysis of the male dominance of global financial governance, there are still pervasive, though perhaps subconscious, biases around women and

economic knowledge: 'the ideological premise that women deviate from economic rationality, that they are inherently less rational, less proficient in mathematics, formal economics and science serves to justify women's exclusion' (Schuberth and Young 2011: 136). These gendered ideas about economic decision-making and rationality manifest in many ways, and while they are not nearly as prominent in current discourses as they may have historically been, their influence is still observable. For example, much work has been done to show how the symbolism and imagery used to describe the Global Financial Crisis reflects these gendered ideas about risk and rationality (Hozic and True 2017, 2016; Griffin 2013). The influence of these ideas about gender can still be seen today in the disparities in the academic and professional fields of economics (Kahn 1995; Ferber and Nelson 2009; Elson 1995). There are existing biases within our shared social understandings of economics and expertise that perpetuate the male dominance of these spaces. These biases create symbols and norms about expertise, which combine with existing and historical structural barriers to women's work and education to result in the overwhelming disparities discussed earlier. These biases are what make an all-male expert panel seem unremarkable. They are remarkable, however, as observable indicators of exactly these biases and discriminations.

The male-dominated expert groups described above do not just result from biases, they create and perpetuate them. Since all people, both men and women, are socially situated beings, they bring with them their own particular experience and therefore outlook to decisions. A decision-making space that is male-dominated is therefore likely to suffer from such homogeneity, through groupthink and lack of diverse opinions. This is not a result of male-dominance itself, but rather a result of the lack of diversity (Bartl 2017). As such, when other characteristics such as race and class or educational background are so widely shared amongst the group, other biases are also possible. This is especially notable given recent work that has shown a marked difference in the outlook of male and female economists (May, McGarvey and Kucera 2018). This is not to say that one outlook is inherently more correct, but rather to point to the clear connection between gender diversity and diversity in economic debates, and so to the connection between homogeneity of decision makers and homogeneity of viewpoints.

Within a set of EU economic governance documents that I have analysed (O'Dwyer 2017), the most common description word that accompanies 'expert' or 'expertise' is 'independent'. 'Non-political' is also a common description of experts throughout the documents, in particular when describing the makeup of expert or advisory groups (European Commission 2016). Expertise is called upon to legitimise the forecasts and reviews of the European Semester, the EU's annual cycle of economic policy coordination, and is presented as the opposite of political. This transfer of economic governance from the political sphere to an expertise sphere is clearly important in the legitimising strategy of the regime. The exercise of authority needs to be perceived as 'apolitical' in order for the sort of legitimacy being sought to be considered appropriate, as it is associated with 'objectivity'. The legitimacy being sought is very much of the 'output' type, following Scharpf's (1999) distinction. It is also concerned with convincing important external actors and groups of the legitimacy and correctness of policy decisions. This type of depoliticisation is often understood as technocracy, or the rule by technocrats or experts, and has long been of concern to democratic theorists (Ruser 2015; Fischer 2009, 1990; Coburn 2016) as well as to feminist scholars (Schuberth and Young 2011; Guerrina 2017; Fraser 2013).

This emphasis on expertise helps to normalise the exclusion of feminist influence on policy decisions. As discussed above, for feminist or gender sensitive contributions to have a tangible impact on policy, three groups of actors need to cooperate in 'velvet triangles'. Depoliticisation prevents this through the sidelining of political actors, including the European Parliament. The Parliament, in particular the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality, has traditionally been a key part

in 'velvet triangles' (Woodward 2004), through raising issues of gender equality and providing both resources and a forum for addressing them. Additionally, input from 'femocrats' into economic

policymaking is increasingly lacking, due in part to the transfer of gender equality policy from the European Commission's Directorate General for Employment to the Directorate General for Justice (Guerrina 2017; Cavaghan 2017). This institutional change combines with the discursive mechanism of depoliticisation to exclude feminist concerns from economic governance. Indeed, it is not only feminist concerns that experience this. Recent work has also highlighted the limited scope for social concerns within the European Semester (Dawson 2018; Clauwaert 2015).

Economic expertise manifests as a transnational phenomenon (Fourcade 2006). It is present in the global language of economics – a formalised, mathematical and abstract vocabulary that shapes debates on economic policy. Ability to interact in this language is one of the key legitimacy requirements for economic decision-making, both at the national and at the EU level. It is a key mechanism in reassuring economic markets of policy-makers abilities and aims (Schmidt 2014; Laffan 2014). It is through this language that the network of economic expertise is delineated. Ability to speak it is an essential entry criterion. This network has been analysed before, in the literature on the neoliberal economists of the Chicago school (Valdés 1995; Silva 1991), or more recently with regard to the EU, in the prominence of graduates of a particular university, the 'Bocconi Boys' (Helgadóttir 2016; Dellepiane-Avellaneda 2015; Blyth 2013b). Both the Chicago and Bocconi boys are indeed overwhelmingly male, a trait that goes unremarked by the majority of scholarship on their authority and reach.

This is part of the 'inevitable homogeneity' of such expert networks (Lord 2007; Bartl 2017). As Schubert and Young (2011:137) note, in regard to global financial governance, 'the various networks of knowledge-based experts are basically exclusive men's clubs, equipped with an authoritative claim to policy-relevant knowledge'. Moreover, the male dominance of decision-making spaces discussed earlier is not simply an example of gender inequality, or a consequence of implicit biases about gender and economic knowledge. It is, in fact, a key factor in legitimising the authority of those spaces. Quite simply, by being made up predominantly of a specific type of man (well educated, white, in a suit), they look like experts. Within male-dominated spaces, male-ness confers authority (Sanday 1981; Acker 1990). Additionally, men in such positions of authority and expertise do not face the obstacles to being heard that women in similar positions often face (Beard 2017, 2014). Male dominated economic expert groups perpetuate the stereotypes of gendered abilities with regard to economic knowledge, and simultaneously they are themselves perpetuated and legitimised through the fact of their male dominance. That the economic governance regime is communicated by these paradigmatic experts therefore helps increase the acceptance of this new regime among the wider constituency of experts.

Performance of the role of expert serves 'the transformation of economic knowledge into a technology of political and bureaucratic power' (Helgadóttir 2016: 394). What is interesting is how gender norms about economic expertise serve to normalise, and therefore legitimise the new regime. Male-ness is itself an implicit appeal to expert authority. In the same way that the use of formalised mathematical language has served to legitimise economic ideas (Helgadóttir 2016; Fourcade 2006), simply being perceived as male grants authority to the expert, in ways that are excluded to women and those who do not fit the stereotype of the male expert (Griffin 2013; Connell and Messerschmidt 2005). The existing male dominance of economic expertise sets an implicit expectation about the gender of experts, and men therefore benefit by meeting such an expectation. But male dominance in this area arose in part due to a complex collection of assumptions and norms around rationality and gender, some of which continue to shape social views on gender today (Schubert and Young 2011; Griffin 2015, 2013). These norms have been observed in public perceptions of male and female politicians, in corporate managers and in the classroom (Kahn 1992; Johnson, Murphy, Zewdie and Reichard 2008; Huddy and Terkildsen 1993; Bennett 1982; Alexander and Andersen 1993).

This performance of a particular type of male expertise is, of course, not open to all men. Additionally, there are some notable women in key positions of economic policy making. However, the overall performance of expertise is distinctively masculine, in a similar fashion to the masculinity of the Davos man or the examples of hegemonic masculinity in security studies and other fields (Kronsell 2016; Ferber and Nelson 2009; Connell and Messerschmidt 2005; Beneria 1999). In EU economic governance, like in many other fields (Beard 2017), there is a pre-existing image of expertise and authority for men, in a way that there simply is not for women. Crucially, by populating expert spaces with mostly men, EU economic governance is, inadvertently or not, benefitting from, and perpetuating, this bias.

According to Fischer (1990: 14) 'expert knowledge and technocratic practices have become key political resources sustaining increasingly undemocratic forms of decision-making'. This is what is taking place with EU economic governance. As Kreuder-Sonnen (2016: 10) notes, 'authoritarian structures are being stabilized by political and judicial deference to delegated (expert) authority which is trusted to expand the normative constraints on delegation only for the sake of a higher good, that is, economic stability'. The process of depoliticising EU economic governance involves congruence with a wider norm of depoliticised economic governance. From central bank independence, to balanced budget laws, this trend of removing economic policy from arenas of democratic politics is a key background to the depoliticisation of EU economic governance (Ruser 2015; Bartl 2017).

Just as we see an increase in the numbers of women in national parliaments, and in the European Parliament (Hughes, Krook and Paxton 2015), economic decision-making is being moved away from parliaments towards finance ministries, centralised executives and central banks (Maatsch 2016, 2015; Jančić 2016). These venues, of course, remain male dominated (Walby 2015; Schuberth and Young 2011). While it is not within the scope of this article to investigate the causality of such movements, evidence from organisational research into the effects of changing gender demographics of occupations suggest that there may be a connection between increasing female representation and decreasing authority (Johnson, Murphy, Zewdie and Reichard 2008). This gendered expertise regime is legitimised by setting implicit expectations of who experts are that, once met, serve to normalise an exercise of authority. It is not an answer to questions of legitimacy, but rather a mechanism for preventing the question from being asked in the first place.

Redistributive decisions take place in the context of gendered societies and economies. This is why economic policy can be so easily gendered through omission of gender analysis (O'Dwyer 2018a; Elson 1994). An economic policy that ignores the gendered nature of society and the economy results in gender bias by omission (O'Dwyer 2018a). Removing this policy from political contestation then removes the avenues for alternative analysis, which could counteract this bias. In particular, gender analysis is specifically impacted by the depoliticisation through expertise, as gender concerns are viewed as explicitly political concerns. Therefore, the third actors in the potential velvet triangle, feminist academics or activists, are also excluded (Guerrina 2017). These actors are excluded because their concerns are viewed as inappropriately political, and because by the very fact of being concerned with them, such actors do not fill the profile of the expert reified in the regime. How this dominance of expertise came about can be better understood by exploring the framing narrative of the crisis itself, as I do in the following section.

FRAMING THE DUAL PROBLEMS OF EXPERTISE AND POLITICS

In this section, I explore the role of the discourse of expertise in the problem framing process. A framing process is the way in which the parameters of policy debate are set (Lombardo and Meier 2008; Laffan 2014; Daviter 2007; Atikcan 2015). The framing draws boundaries around the potential policy responses to a problem, and also often implies the best solution. To put it differently, the

solution to the problem is embedded within how the problem is described. Two problems arise from the framing of the crisis. The first is the problem narrative of the economic crisis as a crisis of expertise. This is a story of the crisis as resulting from a lack of appropriate expertise, or a lack of compliance with the recommendations of that appropriate (or 'best') expertise. Secondly, there is the story of the crisis as one of politics itself. In this telling, the crisis resulted from the over-politicisation of economic policy. Clearly, the implied and embedded solution for this problem is a much greater role for experts, and a lesser role for politics. This section presents and discusses an in-depth examination of two key documents, exploring both what is absent from their analysis, and examining key quotations. These papers come from different time points: a European Economy paper¹ from 2010, 'The Stability and Growth Pact: Lessons from the Great Recession' (hereafter Lessons) with authors from DG ECFIN, the OECD and the Swedish Fiscal Council, and a Commission communication from 2012 'A Blueprint for a Deep and Genuine Economic and Monetary Union' (hereafter Blueprint). Both papers focus on EU economic governance reforms in the course of the economic crisis.

THE CRISIS AS A CRISIS OF EXPERTISE

The Lessons paper seeks to identify the flaws in the pre-crisis economic governance regime and connects them to proposed solutions and reforms. As the authors note, 'crises are catalysts for reform and change – they initiate a process of policy learning' (Larch, Van den Noord and Jonung 2010: 16). This paper then considers what reforms and changes have become possible in the wake of the crisis. As if to drive this point home, the paper opens with the famous quote from former White House Chief of Staff, Rahm Emanuel, proposing that 'you should never let a serious crisis go to waste. And what I mean by that is it's an opportunity to do things you think you could not do before'.

In Lessons, a primary cause of the crisis is a lack of expertise. This is portrayed as either a lack of personnel, or, more often, as a lack of follow through on, or acceptance of, the advice of experts. The paper identifies, for example, poor quality statistical and econometric information from some member states as a key flaw in the pre-crisis system (Larch, Van den Noord and Jonung 2010). This flaw is presented as a result of a lack of expertise. Further, in the Blueprint paper, it seems that it is specifically EU level expertise that was lacking: 'national economic policy-making paid insufficient attention to the European context within which the economies operate' (European Commission 2012: 3). It states that 'a major weakness of the pre-crisis surveillance arrangements was the lack of systematic surveillance of macroeconomic imbalances and competitiveness developments' (European Commission 2012: 6). The language of this paper is passive, and does not identify who exactly will be doing the overseeing and surveillance. However, by looking at the reforms that are proposed and have been adopted since, it is clear that it is not elected representatives, but rather 'independent experts' who will be the main actors in this reformed Economic and Monetary Union.

This narrative of the crisis as a crisis of expertise frames the establishment of a network of national fiscal councils, and at the European level, the European Fiscal Board. This board, which contains one woman in its membership of five, is made up of 'respected international experts' (European Commission 2016). While the documentation of the board insists that the selection process for the board membership did aim to 'strike a balance in terms of [...] gender' (European Commission 2016), this clearly has not resulted in an even or 'balanced' representation. This expert group is mandated to provide an independent assessment of national level budgets but is also charged with leading public debate on economic governance. As such, it is the expertise of the European Fiscal Board that is supposed to frame the discussion of EU economic governance, by establishing a basis of expert knowledge that informs debates at both the European and national level. It is therefore within the power of the experts to close off certain avenues of critique or analysis, this being reflected in how they frame the debate.

Finally, it is worth noting the absence of gender analysis from this narrative of the crisis. Issues such as gender inequality in the economy, or in particular the divergence in gender inequalities across member states, are not considered or even mentioned. In none of these key documents is there a consideration of the absence of gender expertise. Put another way, none of these documents considers the lack of implementation of gender mainstreaming to be worth investigating. Interestingly, the same cannot quite be said for the Global Financial Crisis, where part of the narrative of the crisis involves a gender analysis of decision-makers, perhaps best typified in the question of whether the crisis would have happened if 'Lehman Brothers had been Lehman Sisters' (Walby 2010; Hozic and True 2016). While this narrative is essentialist and partial and has not led to the inclusion of gender concerns in post crisis reforms in the US or elsewhere, it is still notably different from the narrative of the euro crisis. The consequence of this absence of any gender analysis is visible in the resulting solutions to crisis, both proposed and implemented. If a gender analysis is never part of the framing discussion of the problem, it becomes even less likely to be involved in the solution.

THE CRISIS AS POLITICS – 'JUNCKER'S CURSE'

'We all know what to do, we just don't know how to get re-elected once we have done it' - Jean-Claude Juncker. (quoted in Larch, Van den Noord and Jonung 2010: 26)

This formulation from the President of the European Commission, Jean-Claude Juncker, seems to strike a chord with many politicians and analysts. It reflects the bind which governments supposedly find themselves in when attempting to govern modern capitalist societies experiencing a crisis. The necessary adjustments or reforms to save the economy are too politically unpalatable to be applied. While both the Blueprint and Lessons papers that have been analysed above conclude with remarks of varying vagueness concerning strengthening democratic legitimacy, electoral and representative politics are presented as barriers to reform, and even a cause of the crisis.

Understandably, the criticisms of democratic politics in these papers are often indirect. The Lessons paper identifies a 'key pathology' of economic policy: pro-cyclical decisions in good times. It also connects the failure of expertise to prevent the crisis with an implementation failure of member state governments. Discussing the sluggish pace of economic reforms, it refers to the 'difficulty of most democratic governance structures to reconcile heterogeneous and conflicting interests' (Larch, Van den Noord and Jonung 2010), despite that being, of course, one of the purposes of democratic government. The language of 'pathology' implies that this type of pro-cyclical policymaking is inevitable, rather than the outcome of democratic contestation (Larch, Van den Noord and Jonung 2010). As such, the paper is not criticising democracy directly, but by describing what the authors view as an inevitable consequence of democratic politics as a contributing factor to the crisis, they establish the grounds for removing democratic control.

At the level of EU politics, the paper singles out the crisis of the Stability and Growth Pact, where France and Germany went unsanctioned for their non-compliance with their fiscal obligations under the pact in 2003. The paper identifies 'the large degree of discretion with which fiscal surveillance is implemented and the ultimate power of the Member States within the Council to implement or not to implement the provision [for sanctions]' as the main challenge to be addressed. What resolves these difficulties of representative politics is, of course, the crisis: 'the only element that is consistently found to spur reforms is crises: they amplify the sense of urgency and/or boost the costs of non-reform' (Larch, Van den Noord and Jonung 2010: 26). This story continues in the Blueprint, 'the introduction of the reverse qualified majority rule significantly strengthens the Commission's hand in decisions relating to sanctions on euro area Member States' (European Commission 2012: 5).

Speed and efficacy are key concepts in this discourse of justifying the removal of decisions from spaces of representative politics. The Blueprint praises the actions of the European Parliament which prioritised 'bringing the legislative proposals quickly into force', and the Council's decision to delegate the formation of its position to the Task Force, which 'enabled a swift emergence of consensus among member states in support of the proposals by the Commission' (European Commission 2012: 4). Speed and efficacy are often valorised in the pursuit of technocratic or expert led governance (Radaelli 1999; Fischer 1990), and their dominance can serve to exclude other values such as sustainability and equality, meaning they can play a role in building a masculinist technology of governance (Wöhl 2016; Bruff and Wöhl 2016).

The analysis of these key documents chosen from across the timeline of the reform of EU economic governance indicates a consistent and coherent view on the trade-off between efficiency and democracy. They demonstrate the rhetoric that enabled the emergence of the expertise regime in EU economic governance and indicate why this regime has led to such depoliticisation of economic governance. By limiting the input of national parliaments and the European Parliament in the economic governance system (Maatsch 2016; Guerrina 2017; Fasone 2014), the new regime closes off potential input from the spaces which, historically, have been the most likely to raise concerns of gender inequality (Woodward 2004; Lombardo and Meier 2006; Kantola 2010). The framing of the crisis as both one of a lack of expertise, and one of politics more broadly, has created a regime of policies without politics. This raises the question of who is being spoken to by the new regime, if not the voting or political public. And so, the analysis of this framing highlights the connections between expertise and output legitimacy that have been the focus of this paper.

CONCLUSION

It is commonplace today to say that we live in the age of expertise. Expert knowledge is indeed one of the most distinctive features of modern society: it is tightly woven into the very fabric of our existence. (Fischer 1990: 13)

Expertise is not, in itself, harmful. It is also not intrinsically anti-democratic. Expertise can inform democratic deliberation and guide decisions, in particular in technical areas. What I have argued in this paper is that there is a specific type of expertise dominant in the EU's economic governance system, and that this understanding of expertise is being deployed to legitimise the economic governance reforms that were initiated as a reaction to the euro crisis. This paper has explored Scharpf's (2016: 28) claim that 'in short, the present euro regime can only be maintained through a depoliticized technocratic regime on the European level'.

I have additionally discussed the gendered nature of depoliticisation by looking at who the experts are in EU economic governance, highlighting the overwhelming male dominance of the key decision-making spaces, and of the expert groups that informed economic governance reforms. I have shown how this expertise is normalised, and how it resulted from the framing of the economic crisis as a crisis of expertise, and a crisis of politics. Finally, I discussed how the particularly gendered idea of expertise, through its compatibility and congruence with wider ideas of economic expertise and depoliticised economic policymaking, has served to legitimise EU economic governance since 2008. This is particularly important since there has been a growing consensus that EU economic governance lacks democratic input legitimacy (Kreuder-Sonnen 2016; Gearty 2015).

In a context where the crisis era reforms to the EU's economic governance system have become increasingly normalised (Cavaghan and O'Dwyer 2018), and as this system is being broadened out to incorporate social policy (Dawson 2018), it is essential that our understanding of the ideas of expertise that are underpinning and legitimising this regime incorporate an analysis of gender, such as that outlined in this paper. Moreover, this analysis which, helps us to understand the connections

between authority and gender, race, and other identities seems to be a crucial step in interpreting and analysing our contemporary politics (O'Dwyer 2018b).

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ENDNOTES

¹ The Commission's European Economy paper series are not explicit representations of Commission positions, but rather they set the background for policy debates and discussions (http://ec.europa.eu/economy_finance/publications/archive_en.htm).

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