"Economic Governance in the European Union: Effects on Gender Relations, Employment and Social Reproduction"

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1. Introduction

Gender mainstreaming and other measures to augment the labor market participation and living conditions of women have been implemented within the European Union (EU) in the past decades. These strategies stand in contrast to austerity policies now fostered in the most affected member states during economic crisis. To date, some studies with a special focus on how private households cope with implemented austerity measures have explored the augmentation of women's unpaid work or loss of paid work in private households (e.g. Herrera 2012). Other studies have focused explicitly on more household care constraints during economic crisis and its effects on women (Toffanin 2011). A recent study by the OECD on "Taxing Wages" and the quality of work also shows that women are disproportionality affected by the crisis through cuts in social expenditures and the rise of involuntary part-time work (OECD 2014a). All of these studies imply that the economic crisis has a direct effect on social reproduction. Social reproduction (SR) is understood here as encompassing affective labor such as caring for dependents and the elderly, cooking, washing, cleaning, time for leisure and replenishment and social reproductive work that includes the wider community. Social reproduction encompasses further the reproduction of the human labor force, situating social reproduction within the global political economy and its means of production (Bakker and Gill 2003).

The article sets out to analyze the effects of supranational EU economic governance such as austerity for private households and on the employment situation of women and men. The article shows which effects EU economic governance enforced by binding sanctions have on private households, the gendered segregation of paid and unpaid work, social reproduction and gender relations especially in two country cases: Spain and the Republic of Ireland. The article argues that in order to understand the financial and economic crisis in the European Union and hegemonic policies, we need to focus on the losses of paid and rearrangement of unpaid work for both women and men, but also how gendered norms are renegotiated or maintained. Gendered norms foster or change gendered representations within the gendered division of labor in the international political economy and in social reproduction (True and Hozic 2016, forthcoming). How gendered social reproduction is related to supranational governance within the EU will thus be explored.

Theoretical premises and approaches from development studies and the gendered international political economy have been able to grasp developments in private household social reproduction and the changing working conditions for women and men during the economic and financial crises in Asia and Latin America (Elias and Gunarwardena 2013; Elson 2013). The article thus begins with an exploration of studies on economic and financial crises in Asia and Latin America and asks if gendered effects differ or have analogies to the situation within the EU (section 2). The article then sets out to offer a governmentality related framework of analysis to explore recent economic governance and neoliberal restructuring through norms of competitiveness employed in the EU (section 3). Which effects economic governance has on private households, social reproduction, and the working conditions of women and men in particular will be shown in two short case studies focussing on Spain and Ireland in the last section (4).

2. Financial Crises and the International Political Economy

The EU has been a driving force to some extent of gender equality policies for member states in different periods (Ostner and Lewis 1995), implementing gender mainstreaming, gender budgeting and other measures to augment the labour market participation and living conditions of women. These policies, enforced by soft or hard law, are now opposed by austerity policies implemented in member states which have been hit hard by the financial and economic crisis since 2008; or fell under the scheme of structural adjustment measures by the European Central Bank (ECB), the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and European Commission (EC) – the former so-called "Troika" – and who have adjusted their national state deficit spending by austerity measures such as cuts in public expenditure and welfare services. Analyses of the impact these measures have had so far on gender equality policies and on the labour market participation of women have shown negative effects for women due to cutbacks in the public sector in the years especially after 2010 (Walby 2009; Klatzer and Schlager 2011; Rubery 2011; Feminist Economics 2013; Kurz-Scherf and Scheele 2013).

Until now, studies show that women are disproportionally affected by austerity measures especially in Greece, Great Britain, Spain, Ireland, Italy and many other member states (Young et al. 2011; DG Justice 2013; Karamessini and Rubery 2014), and have emphasized the negative effects austerity policies have on gender equality policies, the public sector and changes in women's employment and division of work in different member states (Rodrigues and Reis 2012; Annesley and Scheele 2011; Serrano and Gonzalés-Gago 2013). But few studies have explored so far how austerity affected the means for social reproduction in private households in the everyday and the nearer community (Le Baron 2010; Toffanin 2011).

Within global capitalist production, social reproduction is still regarded as a presumed asset within the international division of labour, and institutions of global governance like the World Bank have only recently drawn more attention to social reproduction as such (Bakker and Gill 2003; Bakker and Silvey 2008; Elson 2010 and 2012); questions of social reproduction also often tend not to be discussed within a state-theoretical setting as Isabella Bakker pointed out (Bakker 2007). Furthermore, how women are integrated into the production cycle by specific neoliberal policies promoted by the IMF and the World Bank, are often studied with reference to empowerment programmes giving loans to women or local communities (Marchand and Runyan 2011; Wichterich 2012). This implies that international institutions like the World Bank and the IMF play a major role in local communities and the nation-state setting. Therefore, nation state's relations of forces, their specific gender regime and symbolic gender order must be considered when seeking to understand which hegemonic actors and (supranational) institutions play a role in reshaping, modernising or continuing hierarchical hetero-normative gender orders on the global (Bezanson 2006) and nation state level in gendered social reproduction and gendered divisions of paid work.

International institutions such as the IMF, the World Bank and nation-states have implemented structural adjustment programmes in the global South already in the past decades (Bergeron 2011; Young 2003). The gender international political economy (GIPE) literature has subsequently analysed the consequences of the past financial and economic crises for so-called "developing countries", the Asian crisis, the Pacific, Argentina and Brazil (Fiszbein et al. 2003; Young 2003; Walby 2009; Waring 2010). GIPE scholars, among others, have analysed the crisis of social reproduction occurring during economic crises in different regions of the world (Bakker and Silvey 2008; Bezanson 2006; Bedford and Rai 2010; Bergeron 2011; Pearson and Sweetman 2011). Moreover, the impact the Asian and Argentinian crises have had on private households has been analysed in several small scale and a national representative household survey for Argentina (Fiszbein et al. 2003; Horn 2009; Knowles at al. 1999). Some small scale studies exist, which have looked at the impact economic crises have had on social reproduction in households in Mexico city (Benería 1992), in Indonesia (Knowles et al. 1999), and for informal sector workers in ten cities of the world since 2008 (Horn 2009). All of these studies show increasing unpaid care work by women and girls and increasing informal paid work of women in the private sector (Elson 2012). In Indonesia, the Philippines and Thailand women and children in poor households were affected by health problems because of the need to reduce food expenses and to eat less (Knowles et al. 1999).

Diane Elson, among others (Benería 2007; Rai et al. 2013), has warned against long lasting depletion in social reproduction and conceptualized how the impact of financial crises could be analysed for developing countries (Elson 2010). The question remains open, if these theoretical frameworks are applicable to the EU and its different gender regimes. Developments in these countries might not be structurally homologous to recent developments within the EU, because of different welfare state arrangements and a still existing public sector. A common feature is, though, that households often adjust in reaction to economic downturn by using unpaid labour "to replace services that had been purchased in markets before the crisis" (Fukuda-Parr et al. 2013: 22). More pressure on the individual and especially women are thus common features during economic crises.

In the following section, the effects of EU economic governance measures enforced by binding sanctions for countries receiving bailout and the specific new binding legislation since 2010 for all member states – Europlus Pact, Sixpack, Fiscal Compact – will be retraced from a power-theoretical gender perspective to highlight neoliberal policy responses and norms (Woehl 2008). The article then focuses on two case studies in section 4, Spain and the Republic of Ireland, since both have been severely affected by 'financial meltdown' (Schuberth and Young 2010), excessive mortgage debt and the Republic of Ireland fell under the scheme of loans given by the former "Troika" since 2010.

3. Gendered Neoliberal Restructuring in EU Economic Crisis Governance

The political rationality of neoliberalism as neoliberal governmentality (Foucault 2008; Woehl 2016) has contributed to the present economic crisis insofar as neoliberal and neoclassical economic knowledge focusing on growth and competitiveness have been hegemonic forms of economic knowledge and policies (Brodie 2014; Bakker 2014; Roberts 2014; Wöhl 2007). A state theoretical governmentality approach retraces the genealogy of the modern state and supranational state formations and the means of governance at their disposal. In doing so, governmentality grasps the micro-, meso- and macro practices of governmental actions, its neo-liberal technologies and subject formations (Cruikshank 1999). Governmentality not only includes governance of states or state-like institutions through politics and policies, but also the scattered forms and techniques of self-guidance and leadership by others. This highlights the need to examine specific geo-political situations, in which particular problems of governance appear and in which methodologies and strategies of governing people and things are simultaneously constructed as knowledge of the 'best practices' of governing (Dean 1999). Governmentality scholars have especially focused on the ambivalent effects neoliberal policies have had for social reproduction and on women's empowerment programs (Cruikshank 1999; Brodie 2003; Schild 2002). Neoliberal ideas such as the freedom of the market combine a discourse of personal responsibility, competitiveness, individualism and market-orientated rationality with the withdrawal of the state from ensuring former welfare policies and have used resources of civil society in the past to implement these changes (Schild 2002). Neoliberal governmentality in this sense has restructured western nation states and the economy from a Fordist system to a competitive economic and state system (Jessop 1990), has influenced the political system of representative democracies (Brown 2005) and affected the means of social reproduction by cuts in welfare services and in social protection in most western democracies and the global South (Bezanson and Luxton 2006; Bakker and Silvey 2008; Katz 2001a). Global neoliberal restructuring (Marchand and Runyan 2011: 3), has meanwhile lead to a privatization of public services (education, health, pensions, childcare), and a "locking in" of neoliberal policies by supranational institutions with severe consequences for social reproduction.

Neoliberalism as neoliberal governmentality also seems to have a normative influence on democratic institutions themselves insofar as neoliberal ideas put into question the liberal tradition that it is the state that governs the economy and not the economy that sets normative standards for the state, democracy and society (Brown 2005; Wöhl 2011a). We can see this today in the way main institutions of democracy are dismantled of their powers within the European Union: national member states who signed the Fiscal compact have agreed to let the European Commission supervise their national state budget and respond to suggestions made by the Commission for budget consolidation, which are often bound to austerity measures, before their respective national parliament is consulted (Fischer-Lescano and Oberndorfer 2013). While the current economic and financial crisis challenges especially representative democracies by shifting parliamentary to executive powers on the national and supranational level within the EU (Streeck 2011; Bieling 2012), priority to overcome the economic and state debt crisis is given to neoliberal political rationalities in economic governance leading to austerity policies. One of these new governance processes is the so-called 'Sixpack' legislation from 2011. With this legally binding legislation of five ordinances and one directive, the stability and growth pact from 1996 is strengthened through a further procedure of competitive restructuring.[1] The European Commission wishes to install a procedure geared towards the avoidance and correction of macroeconomic imbalances through the threat of binding sanctions against member states. This is being pursued with the national financial ministers within the European Council and national member state governments (Klatzer and Schlager 2011). Thus, the role of the European Commission will be enhanced: in future the executive judgment of the Commission, in particular also the imposition of sanctions against member states, in effect can act through the so-called 'Reverse Majority Rule' (Oberndorfer 2011). This enables the Commission's proposals to be accepted as valid if they are not prevented within 10 days by the European Council's veto with a simple majority. The political rationality behind this and the argument in favour of this procedure is that it provides *quick* and *effective capabilities* for action during the current (and possible future) financial and economic crises and enhances *competitiveness*; but it also limits processes of democratic decision-making, since this ten-day span for examination, deliberative consideration, and possible veto by the European Council is very short and unrealistic. Moreover, the European Parliament is not involved in the process, despite its oversight function in the EU's institutional architecture. Only the Council can veto propositions of the Commission within 10 days. This means that austerity measures and structural adjustment programs can now be required in all member states which lie above the state deficit spending goal of 3 % GDP or trespass the 60 % state debt threshold without having to consult national parliaments. In the case of Eurozone countries, governments can additionally be fined if they do not respect the limit (Woehl 2014). Austerity measures falling under the new Excessive Deficit Procedure, such as higher taxation or cuts in public spending, would concern a majority of member states. The Commission can clearly recommend member states with excessive deficits to cut social expenditures to limit their structural deficit as has been the case in Greece, Portugal, Ireland and Spain.[2] The focus of the new economic governance measures is therefore clearly on expenditure, which was already attested by the

[1] This legislation was confirmed by the European Council on 4th October 2011 and passed the European parliament in December 2011.

[2] European Economy, Occassional Papers 65, 2010, http://ec.europa.eu/economy_finance/publications/occasional_paper/2010/pdf/ocp65_en.pdf last accessed 20.06.2012

"Europlus Pact" signed in March 2011 and which called for sustainability in public finance by lowering pensions, health care and social expenditures.[3] Not very clear so far is the time span of adjustments proposed by the Commission: member states are allowed to consider different options than those concerning austerity if they have negative or very low growth rates.[4] But as Sylvia Walby remarks, "the history of austerity measures as the policy response to financial turmoil is one in which women (and children) have often emerged as the losers, as state funded education and health programs are cut back and women bear the burden of this work in other ways" (Walby 2009: 16).

A key consequence of these economic governance measures and austerity policies is that a form of masculine economic knowledge, with its norm of competitiveness for growth, is privileged over alternative economic solutions and historical gendered knowledge of economic crisis management (Ferber and Nelson 2003; Walby 2009). The symbolic realm of ideas plays a key role as a culturally constructed gendered symbolic order during the financial and state debt crisis, because assumptions of competitiveness, risk affinity, liquidity, growth and austerity – to name but a few – are highly gendered masculinized codes and imaginations (de Goede 2004; Griffin 2012). A specific neoclassical orientated economic knowledge underpins the discourse around the implemented austerity policies and their economic decisions. This implies that competitiveness and growth within a neoliberal rationality of governing are neglecting gender equality policies such as gender budgeting and gender mainstreaming within austerity policies (Karamessini and Rubery 2014), although all member states decided to implement these measures on all levels of policy making. Shirin Rai and Georgina Waylen conclude, "in times of crisis, the focus on restoring growth continues to displace the debates on gender justice. Feminist work continues to inhabit the margins of mainstream economics, development studies, and political economy as well as policymaking at the national and international levels"(2013: 23). Gendered economic knowledge and alternative forms of economy are not even discussed in this context (Young and Scherrer 2010). More broadly, a knowledge/power complex (Foucault 2008) led by institutional actors such as the IMF, the ECB, the European Commission, and Europe's Financial Ministers has drawn a line from structural adjustment measures already installed from the 1980s onwards in Chile, Mexico, Argentina and Brazil to the austerity measures now being aligned in Greece, Ireland, Italy, Portugal and Spain (Rodrigues and Reis 2012). Member states which exceed the newly imposed threshold by the Fiscal Compact of a structural deficit of no more than 0.5% nominal of GDP could be forced via yet more financial sanctions to implement austerity measures against, for example, the will of member state citizens and the spirit and letter of supranational law. This can be seen as a form of "new constitutionalism" (Gill and Cutler 2014: 7 ff.; Gill 1998) within the EU because it installs competitiveness within supranational law. In case of the Fiscal compact, even primary EU law is circumvented through an international law contract to install these policies.

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[3] The Europlus Pact, p.19 in the Council conclusions, 24-25. March 2011, http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/ec/120296.pdf last accessed 20.06.2012

[4] Eurostat News release 6. February 2012, http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY_PUBLIC/2-06022012-AP/EN/2-06022012-AP-EN.PDF, last accessed 20.06.2012

From a gender perspective, we see severe results of these structural adjustment programs and austerity policies in different member states: the unemployment rate of women in comparison to men is higher in Ireland, Spain, Greece and Portugal (EUROSTAT 2012; Serrano and Gonzáles Gago 2013). The total unemployment rate in these countries lies above 25% (except for Ireland at 13,6% in September 2013, Spain at 26,6%)[5], with youth unemployment above 55% in both Spain and Greece and unemployment in Greece for women aged from 16 to 24 at 60% compared to men in the same age group at 45%. Women are disproportionately affected by these macroeconomic policies, since questions of social reproduction, public health and welfare services are not even considered within the new deficit and debt thresholds. Gender budgeting measures have also been ignored in austerity policies (Schratzenstaller 2013). This shows that the crisis of social reproduction becomes more intense in times of macroeconomic crisis, and that the private sphere is once again serving as a key social realm for the provision of women's unpaid work (Katz 2001a and 2001b). The House of Commons library in England has estimated that austerity cutbacks in the budget installed by the British government in 2010 will make 'women…pay over 6 billion pounds (72 percent) of the 8 billions "saved" by cuts in welfare benefits and changes to direct taxes' (Young et al. 2011: 9). The impact this will have on personal households is unforeseen yet. This shows that state policies only consider interests concerning especially women insofar as they are compatible within neoliberal competitiveness. Any aspects undermining competitiveness in the EU-wide labour markets were removed in the past, through freedom of establishment and services for corporations, private persons and companies (Ryner and Schulten 2003). Masculinized norms of competitiveness, risk affinity, and individual responsibility are meanwhile still hegemonic norms and political rationalities for establishing this neoliberal masculine-orientated rationality and masculine symbolic order (Connell 1995) in everyday cultural practices, in gendered social reproduction within the global political economy and state policies in different EU member states.

4. The Case of Ireland and Spain

Spain and Ireland were fast growing economies before 2008 making their cases different to the situation in Greece and Portugal, where there was no similar development before the economic crisis (López and Rodríguez 2011; Ó Riain 2013). Although they fall under different welfare state regime types, there are a number of reasons why a comparison is especially interesting: Both countries have experienced a wave of immigration because of economic growth before 2008 and both have a strong catholic civil society tradition. After 2008, both had very high mortgage debt rates in private households and a decline of their export of over 20 % in 2009 (Antonopoulos 2009). Both member states applied structural adjustment programmes setting conditions for high state deficit member states.

[5] See http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/statistics_explained/index.php/Unemployment_statistics for all data if not mentioned differently, last accessed 29.11.2013

For these reasons, Spain and Ireland are especially interesting for comparative case studies especially since resistance against these measures has evolved differently. As Antonopoulos already predicted in 2009, „income poor households will also witness a rise in women's time poverty"(2009: 23) since women and girls are more likely to take over care work in private households and care for elderly and sick family members at home. Women from Eastern European countries and other immigrants, such as Ecuadorians in Spain (Hererra 2012), often take over social reproductive work in private households of Western European countries. This means these women and their families will also be effected by austerity measures, now even for a second time if they experienced crisis in Latin America already, since former employment or payment in private households might be reduced or cancelled. But not only immigrant women are effected, as the case of Ireland and Spain show, already many Irish and Spanish high educated young women and men leave the country to find jobs in other EU member states, Australia or in Northern America. Ireland's state deficit laid at 7,2 % of GDP in 2013 while Spain had an estimated state deficit of 10,6% in 2013. Ireland has meanwhile fulfilled the conditions of a reduced deficit and left the ESM by the end of 2013.

While Greece received loans from the Troika because of its high state debt (Karamessini 2013), Ireland did not receive loans because of a formerly high state debt, but of the failing banking sector down turning the economy and raising the structural deficit (Sequino 2010; Barry and Conroy 2014). As Ó Riain (2013: 85) remarks, already in 1992 Ireland was on the same low level as Spain concerning employment for the 25 to 54 year olds, recovered in the years after 2000 and fell back to the same level as Spain in the years following 2007. Spain and Ireland are also interesting for comparison because they still have a strong norm of the male breadwinner, even though Spain can be considered as dual breadwinner model today, and civil society mobilisation was especially high and visible in the international media in Spain in comparison to Ireland. Political and community organizing in Spain lead to political protest against austerity and has mobilized people in their everyday life to take action in form of public kitchen services and community organizing against housing evictions as further described below (Lombardo 2014).

4.1. Spain

Spain is considered as a dual breadwinner model today, but the social security system still supports the full-time employment norm as a condition for receiving full benefits (Gonzáles Gago and Kirzner, 2014, 229). Even though changes to promote gender equality have been initiated, for instance through the creation of the *Instituto de la Mujer* in 1982 and the introduction of the right to divorce in 1981, progress towards gender equality was rather slow. Since Spain's accession to the European Communities in 1986, directives from the supranational European level supported gender equality policies.

In March 2007 a law to effectively support the equality between women and men passed parliament and a Ministry for Equality was established which was supposed to support the programme for gender equality between 2008 and 2011. Allegedly due to financial reasons, this ministry was closed again in October 2010 (Castellanos Serrano and Gonzáles Gago, 2013, 211). This highlights the politics around gender equality policies in Spain and its highly symbolic meaning: they seem to be affordable only in times of economic stability and growth. Meanwhile, the gendered division of labour and social reproductive work has only changed slowly. Men still spend most of their time for paid employment and leisure, while women are more often employed in short term and part time occupations, and take over care work. Even though more women enter low-paid work in order to support the family income, this has assumingly not led to a change in gender norms for couples until now, even if the husband is unemployed. For 2012, the gender pay gap was estimated at 17.8% (EUROSTAT, 2012), slightly above the EU-27 average. The situation on the labour market has also changed dramatically since the onset of the crisis in 2008: 24.8% of all contracts were fixed-term, with women at 25.9% and men at 23.8% in the last quarter of 2010. The proportion of part-time work stood at 13.3%, 23.4% for women compared to 5.3% for men (Castellanos Serrano and Gonzáles Gago, 2013, 208), meaning that women are still assumed to take over social reproductive responsibilities.

Spain was considered a dynamic economy with high GDP growth rates of 3.7% on average between 1995 and 2007. Until 2007, Spain was thus seen as an example within the EU creating one out of three new jobs in the EU-27. Jobs increases occurred especially in tourism and in construction. Spain also experienced a wave of immigration, leading to a cultural and economic modernisation and to more women entering the paid labour market. However, Spain has a tradition of a segmented labour market and a high rate of structural unemployment, meaning that cyclical downturns in the national economy can have severe effects (López and Rodríguez, 2011). This demonstrates that the Spanish economy was able to rely on certain industrial sectors before 2008, on asymmetries within the labour market and on the norm of the male breadwinner.

Thus, the positive panorama changed dramatically after 2008. Mortgage debt rates in private households soared to very high levels, while Spanish exports suffered a decline of over 20% in 2009. Between 2012 and late 2013, Spain received support from the European Stability Mechanism, to counter financial instability (ibid.). Since women and girls are more likely to take over care work in private households and care for elderly and sick family members at home they also have more time restraints and less leisure time, while women also try to compensate for the loss of men's paid work by entering the labour market even in low-paid jobs (Antonopoulos 2009). In particular women immigrants, e.g. from Ecuador, often take over social reproductive work in private households, meaning that these women and their families are affected by austerity measures due to reductions in employment in private households (Hererra 2012). Many Spanish highly educated young women and men now leave the country to find jobs in other EU member states or overseas. After the subprime mortgage crisis in 2008, women were also disproportionally affected by not repayable mortgage loans and evicted from housing together with their families.

At the same time, alternative forms of economy, such as community kitchens, were established. Community organizing augmented, e.g. with the national *Indignados* movement which began on 15 May 2011 and with the *Plataforma de Afectados por la Hipoteca* (Platform of Those Affected by Mortgage Debt, PAH) which gained strong momentum and eventually brought Spanish parliament to reconsider a law on housing evictions (Wöhl, 2013). Effective strategies to prevent housing evictions were also supported by the population and especially those responsible for executing them, such as local fire fighters. Resistance against housing evictions and other political decisions of the government concerning austerity has also lead to nationwide demonstrations, a general strike in November 2012 and assemblies in front of the houses of parliament members. This was strongly criticized by the governing conservative *Partido Popular* who passed several laws that, if implemented, could have the effect of undermining the right to free assembly and other basic democratic rights (ibid.).

Meanwhile, Germany and Spain signed a bilateral agreement on youth vocational training because over 55 per cent of the Spanish youth between 16 and 24 years are unemployed and have no prospect of finding employment in Spain. Taxes have been raised and simultaneously, cuts in public spending implemented, with the biggest of them affecting education and health services (Gonzáles Gago and Kirzner, 2014, 242). The one-time payment of 2,500 Euro for the birth of a child, introduced in 2008, was cancelled in 2010 and the retirement age will be raised successively from 65 to 68 years. Parental leave for fathers from 13 to 28 days was suspended and the minimum wage was not adjusted to inflation (Lombardo 2014). The pension reform also augmented the years needed to be entitled and loans in the public sector were cut by at least 5 per cent. As a result of these policies, the risk of falling into poverty has risen to 21.8 per cent in 2011. By the end of 2010, fixed-term employment contracts in Spain were twice as high as the EU average. The dissolution of the equality ministry also had the effect that no efforts were made to implement gender budgeting in consolidation packages. Since the *Partido Popular* came into government in 2011, even the gender parity within the Spanish government was abolished, with the gender relation in cabinet changing to four women and nine men (Castellanos Serrano and Gonzáles Gago, 2013, 212).

All in all, the government’s response to the crisis has especially affected women of lower class status, immigrant women and young people, both male and female. The above-mentioned cuts and policy changes will have further severe effects on the time constraints, social reproduction and working conditions for these groups.

4.2. Republic of Ireland

The Republic of Ireland is classified under the corporate welfare state regime models, relying on the family and a strong catholic tradition (Mc Laughlin 1993) even though more (neo-)liberal elements evolved in the 1990s. Especially, wage cost reduction, cuts in public spending and restricting union power in their capacity to negotiate through the social partner model called “National Partnership Agreements” were implemented. Corporate taxes were very low, leading to foreign direct investments especially from the United States in the years that followed (Allen 2000: 15 ff.). Ireland was considered as the “Celtic Tiger” in the years between 1990 and 2001 and for a shorter period between 2003 and 2007 because of high economic growth due to foreign direct investment and a fast growing construction sector. A wave of immigration led many people, especially from Poland and other new member states, to come to work in Ireland in this period. Ireland was hit hard by the financial crisis in 2008. Especially the property market and construction sector caved in, comparable to the situation in Spain. Ireland had to nationalize the biggest national bank as a result of the financial crisis and pay-cuts and pay-freezes in the private and public sector succeeded. The “National Partnership Agreements” ended in 2009, the private sector thus returned to company bargaining while the public sector still has bargaining on the national level (ETUI 2014).

Since cuts in public spending and only moderate wage raises during the Celtic years already occurred, more and more people fell into poverty since 2008. Cuts in welfare services especially hit those on the lowest incomes hardest by the budgetary changes. Health care expenditure by the government fell by 7 % since the onset of the crisis (OECD 2014b: 52) and larger out of pocket payments, hitting vulnerable and low-income groups most, augmented.

Low-income households were adversely affected by the cuts to social transfers and by changes to taxation, specifically the introduction of the Universal Social Charge, widening of tax bands and reduction in tax credits. As women are concentrated in lower income groups, they suffered a disproportionate impact (TASC 2009). Everyday costs of living have augmented since 2010 especially those affecting women and private households such as child care costs, hospital services, monthly rent and bus fares (Oxfam 2014). The maximum retirement age was raised from 65 to 70 years of age and pension entitlements have been reduced. Cuts have also been made to care allowance, disability payment, one parent family payment and a range of other former welfare services. In 2009 child benefit payments were not only reduced but also restricted to a certain age. Since the Irish welfare model relies on a strong male-breadwinner norm, reduction in childcare and other care arrangements especially hit women more than men.

The loss of paid work in 2013 for both women (11% unemployed) and men (17,7 % unemployed) increased rapidly since 2008, with a rise in youth unemployment up to 30,8 % until April 2013. The long-term unemployment rate in Ireland was the highest in comparison to all OECD countries between 2007 and 2012, with a 30% rise in the more than one-year unemployed compared to the total unemployed in Ireland within this time span. Involuntary part-time employment for men rose up to the high level of 53,2 % of the total part-time employment rate, while women’s involuntary part-time employment rose by 8% between 2007 and 2012 and that of men in the same years by 4% (OECD

2014b: 99). While there is an increase of full-time working hours, especially the employment of immigrants fell in comparison to native-born Irish and immigrants returned to their countries of origin because of job-losses. The emigration of over 300.000 Irish citizens abroad from which four out of ten where under 24 years of age also shows how hard the crisis has affected the lives not only of young people (Oxfam 2014: 2). Meanwhile, 23 % of households in risk of poverty have a head of household in paid employment (Barry and Conroy 2014). While still more men lost their job in construction since 2008, the higher unemployment rate of men does not include the unpaid work of women done in private households and restraints women, especially single mothers, have to cope with. After a wave of housing evictions, especially poor single mothers, whose husbands have left them afterwards, are confronted with homelessness and difficulties to feed their children.

"Many families don't have enough money to buy food, which impacts on children going to school. We have seen some families move the food around their cupboards so their children think they have been to the shops to buy food." June Tinsley, Policy Officer with Barnardos, Ireland's leading children's charity (quoted in Oxfam 2014: 3)

5. The Challenge: Analysing social reproduction within the international political economy in times of economic crisis

As shown, the financial crises impacted on the lives of women, men and young people to different extent within the EU with regard to gender, class and ethnicity. Theoretical premises and empirical studies on the Asian and Latin American crises show similar, but also different effects especially in private sector work for women. Norms of competitiveness and privatization prevail in all regions of the world in crisis, with the EU now implementing these norms via international law and in binding supranational legislation for all member states. The effect this has had in form of austerity has impacted on the lives of women, men and young people especially in those countries receiving loans from the supranational level such as Ireland and Spain. Poverty levels rose, depletion in social reproduction is augmenting, with women still levying the burden of unpaid work. At the same time, the norm of the male breadwinner model is put to the test in specific countries, since the male labour force and men's full time employment is declining. If this will change gender relations in the long run is an open question though, while it has not so far changed the gendered division of unpaid social reproductive and paid work.

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