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Policymaking and Gender

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Foreword

During the fall of 2012 Emanuela Lombardo, Ramón y Cajal Researcher at the Faculty of Political Science of Complutense University, Madrid, Spain, and Researcher in the European QUING project, was visiting professor at EDGE, Center for Equality, Diversity and Gender (for more information on EDGE see : <http://www.edge.aau.dk/About+EDGE/>). Her visit was financed by joint gifts from the Deans from the Faculty of the Humanities and Social Sciences at Aalborg University.

During her stay Emanuela Lombardo gave a number of lectures and participated in workshops at both FREIA and EDGE. One of these lectures was at a FREIA research seminar and was based on the following working paper, on *Policymaking and gender*. The paper is co-authored with Dr Petra Meier from the University of Antwerp in Belgium and Prof. Mieke Verloo, from the Radboud University in Nijmegen, the Netherlands. Also Mieke Verloo was Visiting Professor at EDGE and FREIA during the fall of 2011. Together, Lombardo, Meier and Verloo have also co-edited *The Discursive Politics of Gender Equality. Stretching, Bending, and Policymaking* (2009).

A final version of this FREIA working paper will appear in *the Handbook on Gender and Politics*, edited by Georgina Waylen, Karen Celis, Johanna Kantola and Laurel Weldon (Oxford University Press, 2013). The reactions upon the text were during the FREIA research seminar very enthusiastic, amongst others due to the observation that this overview is extremely useful. We are therefore very proud to present this extended version of the final text.

Aalborg, November 2012,

Pauline Stoltz

Editor, FREIA Working Paper Series

Policymaking and Gender¹

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1. Introduction

Starting with feminist activists and scholars challenging a lack of attention for sex and gender in policy texts and in policymaking literature, and accompanied by positive attempts at bringing women in and addressing the genderedness of policymaking, a new field of policymaking developed that involves the design and implementation of policies and strategies on (gender) equality. While there is thus a practice of ‘gender equality policymaking’, feminist policymaking studies are not a recognised field of study produced by an equally recognised community of scholars. As a result, research that analyses policymaking as gendered is still fragmented, even if there is a great number of studies by now that can be seen to be part of it. In this paper we link this knowledge from various sub-disciplines. In doing so we expand and build on earlier overviews and assessments of the state of the art, such as Hawkesworth 1994, Mazey 2000, Mazur and Pollack 2009, Orloff and Palier 2009. This paper furthermore reflects on gaps and promising new terrains of study that could help establish the field of feminist policy studies and the community of feminist policy studies scholars.

What do we mean when we refer to ‘policymaking’? And how is policymaking gendered in the sense of related to the (re)production or transformation of gender+ relations? Policymaking tends to be seen as encompassing the complete

¹ The final draft of this working paper can be found in the Handbook on Gender and Politics edited by Georgina Waylen, Karen Celis, Johanna Kantola and Laurel Weldon (Oxford University Press, 2013). Emanuela Lombardo would like to thank Birte Siim, Lise Rolandsen, Pauline Stoltz and the FREIA team for inviting her as visiting professor in Aalborg in September 2012.

cycle of activities ranging from articulation of problems, agenda setting, policy formulation, adoption, implementation, monitoring, evaluation, and legitimization (Parsons 1995). We want to emphasise that policy processes are always dynamic.

In this paper we see policymaking as an ongoing process of (planning and executing) interventions by states, including the establishment of institutions. As a result of these interventions or attempts at it, existing inequalities across all domains are affected in their nature or degree. The concept of 'gender+' equality refers here to gender as intersected by other axes of inequality. As such policymaking can (re)produce gender+ inequality or counteract it, it can further or hamper gender equality, either as reactive – critical - diagnostic (what is going on and how and why is that gendered) or as proactive – prescriptive - prognostic (what would need to be done to undo the genderedness of policymaking and what determines success and failure).

We see policymaking as a political process shaped by different material and discursive power configurations, in which many different actors engage for competing goals. This implies a necessity to study policymaking as context specific across time and space, as power configurations someplace sometime are constructed in interaction with broader processes such as (de)democratisation, globalisation, the rise of neo-liberalism, Europeanisation or New Public Management.

The notion of 'gendering' of policymaking is ambivalently used in the literature. Gendering can have a negative connotation, as when feminists critically point at the fact that 'policies are gendered', containing a gender bias and being more favourable to men, and can also have a positive connotation when it is used in a prescriptive way, as in the feminist call on the need for 'gendering public policies', making them more gender neutral or feminist. In this paper the different meanings of 'genderedness' will become apparent across the 5 sections.

One of the important contributions of early feminist studies has been to analyse the absence of women in the policymaking process and its impact for the gender biased normative frameworks underlying policies (section 2). Other contributions to the field study how political goals or interests that originate in various feminist movements fare in the policymaking process, and the construction of needs and interests as related to feminist goals (section 3). In this section the focus is not on gender bias but on differences in the form and content of the proactive goal of gender+ equality. In parallel, there is an analysis of the genderedness of policymaking, not only in the form of presence or absence of women in the process but also in other forms such as androcentrism of policies, and the genderedness of the logic of policymaking processes (section 4). Here

genderedness refers to gender bias mainly. The reflection on these studies feeds into an assessment of and reflections on the rise and fall of new strategies and policies for gender+ equality and to what extent policymaking processes affect these (section 5), which leads to the conclusions.

2. Bringing women in

A gender conscious criticism of policymaking can be drawn back to the 1970s, when feminist scholars from a broad variety of disciplines started criticising the absence of women in development planning. While not labelling their work as policymaking studies as they tend to be understood today, this literature pointed at the failures in the design, implementation, evaluation and ultimate outcome of development policies, due to the male bias in the development process (Elson 1995b).

Women had not been ignored in the first decade of development policies, but a reproduction of the Western bourgeois scheme reduced them to housewives and mothers in the private sphere, while men were positioned in the public sphere, defined as household heads, economic actors and agents in the development process (Moser 1989). Consequently, women in development (WID) issues focused on family needs and were directed towards welfare policies (Kabeer 1994), but – and especially – on how such policies had an adverse impact of development upon women and children (Lycklama à Nijeholt 1987; Tinker and Bramsen 1976) and upon the power relations among men and women (Rao et al. 1991).

Feminist scholars analysing development planning criticised a number of underlying assumptions, such as the presumed unitary character of the household, and the gender roles within it. Rather than unitary units in which resources are pooled and that are run by rules of altruism, households are bargaining units of ‘cooperative conflict’ (Sen 1987). Women, for instance, tend to spend a greater portion of money (or even all of it) on everyday nutrition and subsistence than men do. Increasing the main income of the household does not necessarily improve the level of nutrition, in that it largely depends who within the household earns that money and has the power to spend it. Also, Boserup (1970, 2007) in her seminal work on women’s role in economic development, documented extensively how women assure the nutrition of the family by being food producers and suppliers, for the family, but also for the local market. She also observed the growing female involvement (in low paid unskilled jobs) in the industry. Women played an important role in rural development (Benería 1982), the informal sector (Scott 1995) and industrial homework (Benería and Roldán 1987). Neo-Marxist feminists pointed out how the international division

of labour fed into the structural exploitation – and subordinated position – of women (Mies 1986; Mies et al 1988). Emphasis was put on the blindness of development planning for the relation between gender and class (Benería and Roldán 1987; Sen and Grown 1988) and between gender and poverty (Buvinic et al. 1983). Development processes and planning incited changes in the agricultural production with an increased production on a larger scale for the (international) market, an internationalisation of production processes and a development of the industry, much of which ignored the productive role of women, or, even worse, redistributed (the control over) existing production means, such as land, water or equipment, from women to men (Agarwal 1981, 1986; Shiva 1989). These evolutions, again, harm the nutrition of the household, but also further imbalance the power relations between men and women. Also, many households are female headed and their number is growing (Merrick and Schmink 1983). In some cases the woman is the income earner and the man the dependant member of the household, but often households are de jure or de facto female-headed, while not necessarily being counted as such in the statistics (Rogers 1980). In all cases women have different types of interests (Molyneux 1985).

This literature pursued a double strategy. On the one hand, it underlined the need to decompose household patterns and to consider the roles and positions of women beyond traditional stereotypes, in order to design development programmes that would be grounded in the existing gender relations and roles. Only so could these programmes deliver what they had promised, but also – and especially – empower women. Considering more in detail the existing inequality patterns would prevent development programmes to blindly reproduce or increase gender inequality. On the other hand, much of this literature underlined the need to consider women as actors to be involved in the development process, amongst others because of the roles they played, not only at home and in the production, but also in the community (Moser 1993). Given the crucial role of women in community management and politics when it comes to the provision of services and items of collective consumption, feminist scholars defined them as central actors in development planning so as to make development processes succeed. In that definition of a role for women as objects and subjects of policymaking, the feminist literature not only made a diagnose of what went wrong in development planning, but also put forward a prognosis of what to do. It is this prescriptive component that is especially interesting from the point of view of policymaking, and it also became one of the pillars for later trends in gender policymaking such as gender impact assessment, budgeting, evaluations and gender mainstreaming more broadly.

Inspired by these concerns, feminist scholars and policymakers in international organisations or development NGOs suggested alternative planning and

evaluation frameworks, as well as management strategies that were sensitive to gender as a factor in development processes (Devaki 1983). For instance, Overholt et al. (1985) developed a framework for project analysis for women in development. This framework looked into the general project objectives, assessed how these relate to both men's and women's needs, anticipated the project's effects on the life and social position of women and looked at their involvement with the project. Their work echoes the later strategy of gender mainstreaming in that the authors emphasise the utility of their framework not only for projects targeted at women, but especially for projects where women's roles have at the outmost been implicitly assumed. Similar frameworks have been developed for women's productivity in agriculture (Cloud 1985), small scale enterprises (Dulansey and Austin 1985), or technology transfer (Anderson 1985).

Sen and Grown (1988) or Moser (1993) more explicitly bring women in, not only as objects but also as subjects of development planning. They define entry points for women's organisations, as extra-familial associations, through which they can interact with other women from the broader community, allow for coordinated actions and the development of a collective voice, thereby increasing their influence vis-à-vis other social groups in development planning and counteracting the weakness of individual women.

The field has been developing ever since, more recent approaches criticising former ones for being too limited, but of main importance for the issue of policymaking is the fact that development planning was a field where women and gender have been brought into policymaking at an early stage compared to other policy areas. Also, feminist approaches to development planning had an eye both for the policies and for the process in which they were to materialise, bringing women in at both levels. Both issues reappear later when feminists got involved with policymaking, cf. gender mainstreaming and the emphasis on velvet triangles, involving women from various fields in policymaking processes. What seems to have come back on the agenda to a lesser extent is the aim for the empowerment of women underlying much of the early feminist interventions in development planning.

3. Feminist studies on policymaking and the construction of gender bias

The literature on gender+ and policymaking can be divided according to two main strands: works studying the extent to which feminist ideas, needs and interests make it to the political agenda and through the policymaking process, on the one hand, and scholarly work putting an emphasis on the construction of policy problems and solutions, and the framing of needs and interests, on the

other. While the former literature looks at policymaking as the responsiveness of political systems (and their critical success factors) to interests and needs, but sees them as more or less given and analyses why and how they are (not) taken into account, more recent discursive literature suggests that such needs and interests are rather constructed in policy discourses. The latter qualifies as a paradigmatic shift in literature on gender+ and policymaking, in which Bacchi's (1999) 'what's the problem? represented to be approach' has a prominent place. We will discuss the former approaches as especially relevant to understand the *process* of policymaking and how it is gendered or not, and the latter as more helpful to understand the construction of gender+ in the *content* of policymaking.

As concerns the first scholarly approach, Hawkesworth (1994), in her influential review of feminist policy studies, discusses some of the main American works that study the extent to which feminist ideas, needs and interests make it to the political agenda. Most of these studies analyse the preconditions for feminist success in gendering public policies and find that the creation of feminist policy networks of grass-roots and organised women and the use of a non-discrimination strategy had been crucial (Freeman 1975, Gelb and Palley 1982, Boneparth 1982, Stetson 1991). Kaplan (1992) focuses on economic (the country's wealth) and ideological factors (the ideology of the political system and organised religion) as hindering feminist success. Yet, they diverge in the assessment of equality strategies to gender policymaking. Freeman (1975) criticises the limitations of the reformist non-discrimination strategy in challenging male entrenched privileges, while Gelb and Palley (1982), Boneparth (1982), and Stetson (1991) praise the advantage of a reformist policy that might achieve some results precisely because it is not explicitly threatening male power.

The RNGS (Research Network on Gender and the State) project was the first major project in this first academic strand that explored comparatively the extent to which women's policy agencies in Western democracies are successful both in promoting women's representation in policymaking spheres and in bringing women's interests and gender issues into the political agenda (Stetson and Mazur 1995; Lovenduski et al 2005; Mazur 2002; Outshoorn 2004; Haussman and Sauer 2007). Studies centre especially on the agenda-setting and adoption stages of the policymaking process. Success is defined in RNGS in relation to the effectiveness of the women's policy agency in representing women's movement concerns and in gendering policy debates about abortion, job training, prostitution, political representation and other issues. Such effectiveness -Squires (2007: 64) synthesizes- 'will depend on the characteristics of the women's movement and the policy environment as well as the features of the agency itself, with accountability being more likely where the women's

movement is cohesive and institutional power more likely when the policy environment is favourable’.

European Union policy processes offer a good case to observe how and why feminist ideas are incorporated in policymaking, since the ‘multi-tiered’ (Van der Vleuten 2007) dimension of EU governance creates opportunities and constraints at different levels (supranational, national, and sub-national) and for a variety of institutional and civil society actors. Van der Vleuten’s (2007) ‘pincers’ model’ explains the adoption and implementation of EU gender equality policies in the member states thank to the action of actors that squeeze unwilling states from below, through the mobilisation of domestic feminist groups, from within, that is by femocrats or by domestic political or judicial pressure, and simultaneously from above, through the action of supranational institutions such as the European Commission and the European Court of Justice. Van der Vleuten’s model provides analytical tools that enrich the discussion started by Ostner and Lewis (1996), on the ‘needles’ eyes’ that the EU gender equality policy needs to pass through at the EU and national levels in order to be adopted and implemented, and by Hoskyns (1996) who links success in the implementation of EU gender policy with the EU responsiveness to the demands of the women’s movements at the domestic level.

Walby (2009) has reflected on success factors in gendering policymaking by developing a model that pays attention to the complexity and intersectionality of inequality regimes. She develops an explanatory framework based on complexity theory which studies the interrelation of systemic inequalities of gender, class and ethnicity within institutional domains such as the economy (paid and unpaid labour), polity (states and EU), violence (gender and ethnic-based) and civil society. For Walby, change in the systems is caused not only by negative feedback loops but also by positive ones ‘in a mechanism that drives small changes in a system onwards, escalating change’ (2009: 85). For instance her explanation of the early Swedish success in gendering policymaking is that the presence of women in decision-making was a ‘tipping point’ (2009: 82; 375), so that once the percentage of women in decision-making reached more than 40%, this sudden change destabilized the system and caused the incorporation of women’s needs in the political agenda.

This strand of feminist literature has been especially helpful for understanding the dynamics of policymaking processes, the different contextual factors that affect successful action in gender+ equality policies, the positioning and strategies of groups of actors from institutions and civil society, as well as the dynamic interplay of changes across policy domains. While this work recognises the varying nature of the content of gender+ equality policies, the way it deals with this variation is by relating it to the specific positioning and influence of the women’s movement and the relative openness of the political context. However,

it does not explore in depth what drives variations in the meaning of the content of gender+ equality policies and how this matters for policy outcomes.

This discussion is deepened by a second strand in the literature that focuses on how the meaning of gender and other equality policies is discursively constructed in policymaking processes and what normative elements do policy documents express (Bacchi 1999; Ferree et al 2002; Kantola 2006; Verloo 2007; Lombardo, Meier and Verloo 2009). This paradigmatic shift in the literature on gender and policymaking can be attributed to Carol Bacchi's (1999: 66) 'what's the problem? represented to be approach', which creates a conceptual framework for understanding the discursive construction of policy problems. In this approach, gender equality policies assume particular interpretations of what is the problem at stake. Indeed –argues Bacchi (1999: 66)- policy proposals have 'in-built problem representations', as for instance measures to increase women's representation in managerial positions that emphasise training programmes for women create the problem as women's (not men's!) lack of training. An important part of the 'what's the problem?' approach is to point at gaps and absences in policy discourse by asking 'what is left unproblematised' by [for example] formulating women's inequality as lack of access to the labour force' and by constructing the achievement of equality in the labour market as women's liberation (Bacchi 1999: 68). This formulation -according to Bacchi- ignores women in developing countries who have long participated in labour market but under systems of colonial exploitation which have not exactly freed them.

Discursive approaches such as Bacchi's have sought to uncover the norms embedded in particular constructions of policymaking strategies, which are far from neutral and rather reflect hegemonic assumptions and taken-for-granted beliefs. This is the case of the understandings of positive actions as '*preferential treatment*' or '*positive discrimination*' (rather than positive or affirmative action), whose name -Bacchi (2004) argues- hide the privilege of dominant groups, which are constructed as if they were actually discriminated by the actions targeted at the disadvantaged groups. Bacchi's approach has contributed to an understanding of how there can be slow progress or even unintended consequences in policies that are designed to foster gender+ equality because there are deeper cultural and institutional mechanisms that reproduce patriarchal power.

Drawing on Bacchi's approach, the discursive politics literature on gender+ and policymaking developed within European comparative research projects such as MAGEEQ (Mainstreaming Gender Equality in Europe) and QUING (Quality in Gender Equality Policies) have empirically mapped the variety of meanings of gender+ equality policies. The development of a specific methodology of critical frame analysis has enabled researchers to make the interpretative and normative

content of policy documents more explicit, by identifying the diagnosis of the problem, the solutions proposed, the roles assigned to the actors, the gender and intersectional dimensions of texts, and the norms and mechanisms involved in the construction of a particular policy issue (Verloo 2007). MAGEEQ research has discussed the framing of a variety of policy issues in Europe, from reconciliation policies being represented as a problem of labour market participation rather than one of unequal sharing of family responsibilities (Meier et al 2007), to the problem of domestic violence finally becoming a public matter on the political agenda (Krizsan et al 2007), to women's inequality in politics being predominantly framed as a quantitative problem of increasing women's numbers (Lombardo et al 2007), and gender policies showing stereotypes against particular women when gender intersects other inequalities (Roggeband and Verloo 2007; Lombardo and Verloo 2009). It also revealed the inconsistencies underlying many policies, whereby diagnosis or prognosis are missing, do not match, or do not correspond to groups considered to face a problem or the target groups towards which the policy measures are directed (Lombardo and Meier 2009).

This scholarship has contributed to the development of a discursive politics approach to explore processes of contestation and attribution of meanings to gender equality, during which the concept can be 'stretched' to incorporate new meanings (for instance when gender equality is conceived as intersecting with other inequalities), 'shrunk' (into non-discrimination in a strictly legal sense), or 'bent' to other goals than that of gender equality (such as economic growth) to fit into existing policy frames (Lombardo, Meier and Verloo 2009). While discursive processes can open up opportunities for actors to challenge particular constructions of gender equality, they can also contain negative consequences, as Hudson and Rönnblom (2007) argue in their analysis of Swedish regional development policies by showing that the power dimension of gender, that is the conflict element of it, is depoliticized, thus hindering opportunities for challenging existing gender hierarchical relations. Further developments in discursive politics analyses (Ferree 2009ab; Ferree et al 2002) have shown that different meanings of gender+ equality policies are rooted in different historical understandings of inequality, and have developed frameworks to understand why policies are framed the way they are (Verloo and Walby 2010).

Some discursive analyses have also allowed for grasping the shifts in the meaning/content of gender policies through the years. For instance, EU reconciliation policies have shifted from a focus on equal sharing of tasks within the family as a condition to create equal opportunities for women in the labour market at the beginning of the nineties, to more narrow framings centred on questions of employment, economic growth and competitiveness towards the end of the 1990s and 2000s when gender equality objectives were incorporated

in the European Employment Strategy (Stratigaki 2004; Lewis 2006; Lombardo and Meier 2008).

Rather than analysing the specific meaning of gender+ equality policies as in the former literature, other constructivist approaches to policymaking, often from international relations, have focused on processes of norms making, legitimating, and diffusion in policymaking by looking at the different levels of governance (Elgstrom 2000; True and Mintrom 2001). Elgstrom (2000), for instance, has analysed processes of norm diffusion regarding gender and development policies in the EU by exploring the policymaking process from agenda-setting to implementation through a combined constructivist and negotiation approach. In this process, gender norms had to compete with traditional norms about the priority of economic growth. However, once a gender document was approved, even in the soft form of a resolution, this became a reference point and opened up new opportunities for new gender norms to be incorporated into EU policymaking. The increasing EU governance through soft instruments as the Open Method of Coordination in the area of gender+ policy has attracted scholarly attention due to the facilitation of norm diffusion through social learning that it encloses (Beveridge and Velluti 2008), together with the limitations in achieving progress that persuasive incentives might have (Hafner-Burton and Pollack 2009).

In conclusion, while the first strand of the discussed literature has contributed to the understanding of the dynamics of policymaking, these discursive analyses have focused on understanding the meaning of gender equality policies and the opportunities and constraints opened up by discursive processes, thus being especially helpful for studying the content of policymaking. Both approaches are only starting to get connected in studies that ask how discursive and material opportunities and political dynamics are linked to gender+ equality progress in policymaking (Hafner-Burton and Pollack 2000; Ferree 2009b; Verloo and Walby 2010; Krizsan and Popa 2010; Lombardo and Forest 2012).

4. Challenging the genderedness of policymaking

4.1 Problematizing gendered policymaking

Be they more focused on its process or its content, feminist studies have unveiled the ‘androcentrism’ of policymaking. ‘The notion of androcentrism suggests that assumptions, concepts, beliefs, arguments, theories, methods, laws, policies, and institutions may all be ‘gendered’ in the sense that they are based upon, and they reinforce, male power advantage (Hawkesworth 1994: 105).

Feminists have worked to uncover androcentric biases hidden in social practices and concepts that were formerly considered 'gender-neutral' (Jones and Jonasdottir 1988). In particular, gender scholars have shown that public policies, organizational processes within public administrations, and broader political and economic processes of change, far from being gender neutral, tend to reproduce the male norm masqueraded as 'neutral' and to systematically disadvantage women (Rees 1998; Shaw 2000).

Examples of gender biased public policies and their gendered implications abound. Employment policies (and their analysis) have been criticised by gender scholars for their gender bias, as when they place the emphasis on higher employment rates for women but not on the quality of the work available to women (Rubery 2005; Rubery, Smith and Fagan 1999). Welfare policies that differentiate the type of benefits for employed and non employed people, granting for instance pension rights only to the former or penalising interruptions in the participation in the labour market or part-time schemes, tend to perpetuate a male bread-winner/female care-giver model that increases women's dependence from the male partner and promotes the feminization of poverty (Hawkesworth 1985; Sapiro 1986; Fraser 1989; Orloff 1996; Sainsbury 1996; Johnson, Duerst-Lahti and Norton 2007). Lower class, often migrant, women, working in the care (frequently informal) economy are especially penalised by welfare policies that tend to protect employed people and which end up perpetuating hierarchical relations not only between men and women but also among women (Ehrenreich and Hochschild 2002).

Not only public policies are gendered, but also organizational processes and political and bureaucratic practices are (Savage and Witz 1992). Newman (1995) shows that gender structures administrative practices and operational routines of state agencies, by creating different routines depending on whether agencies are male or female dominated. Political institutions, such as Parliaments and governments, are also pervaded by a 'deeply embedded culture of masculinity' (Lovenduski 2005: 48). Gender biases present in political institutions, which are based on 'unspoken assumptions about a traditional gendered division of labour' which would supposedly make men more fit and women more unfit for politics, create obstacles to women's political representation (Lovenduski 2005: 146-47).

Broader processes of policy change, from democratization to economic or institutional reforms, have also been criticised by feminist scholars for the gender+ consequences of the changes they bring about. Feminists have revealed how processes of economic liberalization have led to structural adjustment policies that have provoked cuts in state spending on welfare, health, and education which have negatively affected women and girls (due to family choices about spending which privilege the needs of men and boys), while

increasing the care burden for women due to the reduction of state provisions (Fraser 2009; Rai 2008: 66; Elson 1995a). Processes of state democratisation can open up opportunities or represent constraints on gender equality, -Rai (2008: 85-89) argues- depending on the political choices made in aspects potentially involved during such processes such as decentralisation, the role of political parties, monitoring mechanisms, leadership commitment to gender equality, and the presence of women in political institutions. Walby (2009) has discussed how the fact that different democratisation projects occur and interact simultaneously in specific contexts can create trends or waves that are beneficial or counterproductive for gender+ equality projects.

Europeanisation processes can also impact on the domestic level in many different ways by promoting or not progress in national gender+ equality policies, depending on the configuration of institutional, political and discursive opportunities that are opened for domestic actors in the member states (Lombardo and Forest 2012; Woll and Jacquot 2010; Schmidt and Radaelli 2004; Liebert 2003). Scholars have highlighted that gender+ equality has been absent from processes of EU Enlargement to CEECs (Bretherton 2001), but also that the EU has offered a variety of incentives that actors have then used for their strategic purposes to promote gender+ equal outcomes (Krizsan and Popa 2010). Also EU constitution-making processes have shown advances in furthering the protection of gender+ equality, but have nonetheless been criticised by feminist scholars for failing to effectively apply principles of gender mainstreaming endorsed in existing EU legislation to their own policy-making experiences (Kantola 2010; León, Mateo, and Millns 2003; Lombardo 2005; Millns 2007).

4.2 Proposing solutions to the genderedness of policymaking

Against the logic underlying processes of policymaking as gendered that constructs a gendered political reality, feminists have worked to expose the false gender neutrality of policymaking and to devise strategies to mainstream gender equality into policymaking. Gender mainstreaming, or the incorporation of a gender perspective into policymaking, is a 'contested concept' which has generated a variety of 'productive tensions in theory and practice' as Walby (2005: 321) argues. It has been conceptualised according to different quality criteria (Lombardo 2005; Lombardo and Meier 2006) and different visions of equality, with an emphasis on the 'transformation' of existing gender roles and policy practices that mainstreaming should achieve (Rees 1998; Squires 2005).

Feminist scholars have identified different political approaches to it. In the context of development studies, where mainstreaming first emerged, Jahan

(1995) distinguishes between ‘integrationist’ and ‘agenda-setting’ approaches. ‘Integrationist’ approaches to gender mainstreaming introduce a gender perspective into existing policy paradigms without questioning them (Jahan 1995). This has been associated with more technocratic applications of mainstreaming (Verloo 2005). This ‘expert-bureaucratic’ model, based on the inclusion of gender experts in policy machineries, has been adopted in a number of European countries, Australia, New Zealand and Canada (Barnett Donaghy 2002; Rees 2004). ‘Agenda-setting’ approaches imply a transformation and reorientation of existing policy paradigms, by changing decision-making structures and processes, prioritising gender objectives among competing issues, reorienting the mainstream political agenda by rethinking and re-articulating policy ends and means from a gender perspective (Jahan 1995). In this approach ‘women not only become part of the mainstream, they also reorient the nature of the mainstream’ (Jahan 1995: 13). This has been associated with more participatory forms of mainstreaming. Despite the transformative potential of the ‘agenda-setting’ model (Squires 2005; Shaw 2000), when it comes to implementation, integrationist approaches prevail as show the fact that many of the gender policies implemented in European countries after 1995 were a mere continuation of previous policies (Behning and Serrano 2001). One of the few cases of a participatory approach is the GM model of Northern Ireland, where gender is included in the ex ante evaluation of policy proposals together with eight other social groups, and an ad hoc Equality Commission has been established to monitor that public authorities are adequately consulting groups affected by the different proposals. Results point at positive and negative outcomes in that policy-makers become more acquainted with equality issues, but civil society lacks resources to continue their work (Barnett-Donaghy 2004).

To reorganise policy processes and mechanisms from a gender perspective, gender experts and practitioners have devised a variety of policy tools, many of which were already in use in development planning. They have pushed for the collection of gender disaggregated data, to be able to make a gender diagnosis of the situation and accordingly plan, implement and evaluate public policies in all areas. They have begun to give gender training to politicians and public administrators so that policymakers become familiar with gender equality issues and are ideally able to mainstream gender into policy processes. They have designed methods of gender impact assessment (GIA) to make visible the effect of public policies on gender inequalities, for instance giving visibility to the gender impact of economic policy that is based on the existence not only of paid economy, the one usually targeted by economic policy, but also on the unpaid economy of care predominantly performed by women (Himmelweit 2002). They have developed criteria to design GIA, as the one developed in the Netherlands (Verloo and Roggeband 1996) or in Belgium (Woodward and Meier 1998) which seeks to raise policymakers awareness of the gender impact of policies by

making them reflect on the structures of gender inequalities, located in the organisation of labour, intimacy, and citizenship, and on the mechanisms, such as norms and resources, which are reproducing inequalities.

Feminist economists have also defended the need for gender-responsive budgeting in mainstream public administration to integrate gender priorities into governmental plans by analysing the differential impact that budgets have on women and men, and introduce the changes necessary to answer the needs of both groups (Elson 2004; 1999a). With the support of international organisations such as UNIFEM and the Commonwealth Secretariat, feminist economists have elaborated tools to analyse budgets from a gender perspective (Budlender, Sharp and Allen 1998; Elson 1999b; 1997). Experiences as the Women's Budget Initiative in South Africa (Budlender 2000; Budlender et al 2002), which have brought together actors such as feminist activists, academics, NGOs, policymakers and legislators, reveal the importance of institutional/civil society collaboration to ensure that women's needs are adequately 'counted' and 'valued' in government budgets (Waring 1988).

5. Assessing the rise and fall of new strategies and policies

5.1 Rising strategies

The last decades have shown a proliferation of new strategies and policies for gender+ equality, generating studies describing and categorising these strategies and analysing the extent to which, how, and why these strategies are implemented (or not) in different policy contexts, how these strategies fare in policymaking dynamics and what is the potential of new strategies to gender policymaking. The most used categorisation is to distinguish between equal treatment, gender-specific actions and gender mainstreaming (Rees 1998; Verloo 2001; Squires 2005; Walby 2005). In such categorisation equal treatment is about equality *de jure* creating legal equality of opportunity, and gender specific actions include quota or positive action as well as specific projects targeting groups of women who are seen to be disadvantaged, while gender mainstreaming includes all systematic attempts to inform non-gender specific policies so that they counter gender bias in society and existing policies and produce gender equal policies.

What are the most important new strategies and policies? A closer look shows that there are actually new developments across the whole range of gender+ equality policies, even in the group of policies that are about equal treatment and positive actions.

In these policies, a new development in *equal treatment policies* is the *growing attention to multiple discrimination* and the legal institutionalisation of equal treatment across a wider range of inequality axes, combined with shifts in the institutional architecture of anti-discrimination bodies towards integrated bodies addressing multiple discrimination. Here these developments are debated and studied as part of gender equality policies, establishing them as gender+ equality policies, that can only work towards gender equality if intersectionality of gender with other axes of inequality is integrated. This addresses realities of inequality within the category of women that gives all women including lesbians access to assisted reproductive technologies except when they are single, as in Sweden (Kvist, Carbin, Harjunen 2009), or that, as in Denmark, allows all women to marry the partner of their choice except when this partner is from a non Western country and less than 24 years old, or that stresses the right if not the duty of all women to employment except when they are refugees or asylum seekers. Moreover, at least in the European context, a growing number of countries are *extending equal treatment to include legal measures against discrimination based on gender identity and gender expression*. Amazingly, these new measures are often not introduced as part of gender equality policies,

but pushed for and adopted as part of LGBTQI policies. Yet, all gender theory stresses that identity, behaviour and norms are at the heart of the construction of gender, and these new developments in equal treatment laws address what one could call the ‘genderising’ of our societies: the degree to which the dichotomous categories of gender as such are installed and the boundaries between these categories are institutionalised legally.

Within the category of policies that are usually labelled positive actions or targeted gender equality policies, there are not so many new developments although there seems to be *a growing number of such policies targeting men* (examples in projects for EC, Netherlands), and there is *an expansion of quotas for women in decisionmaking positions beyond the public sector* toward the corporate world (lead by Norway). As to *service delivery for gender equality related problems*, such as shelters for victims of violence against women, there are novel forms in which European states are trying to control these services using the European Directive on Goods and Services 2004/113/EC to tender these to the lowest bidder instead of to organisations with gender equality expertise, experience and commitment to feminism.

When it comes to the strategy of *gender mainstreaming*- the strategy that is most promising in addressing the genderedness of policymaking – there are two main new developments over the last years, both connected to the development of new tools and methods. One is the rising use of gender budgeting discussed in the former section and the other the emerging practice of organised gender training for public policy professionals. Thanks to the efforts of international and domestic actors, more than 60 countries have implemented gender-sensitive budgets (Rubin and Bartle 2005), which have sometimes included participatory mechanisms to involve civil society in the process. Yet, the implementation of gender budgeting tools has also been deemed inadequate and experts denounce that the necessary gender-disaggregated data in all policy areas are unavailable (Villagómez 2004).

A rising practice to gender policymaking is the training of civil servants and politicians. Experiences of gender+ training processes are emerging in different countries and reflections on how to improve such training as part of wider strategies to gender policymaking are growing among the community of trainers, consultants, development, and policy experts (Frey et al 2006; Oxfam 1995; 2007; QUING and TARGET research projects). Despite concerns that gender+ training being a market can create obstacles to knowledge-sharing, as in all processes of institutionalization of new professions, gender+ trainers are beginning to create communities of practice (CoP) for mutual learning and reflection, as the experiences of CoP in INSTRAW (<http://www.uninstraw.org/gtcop/index.php?lang=en>) and the EU show (<http://www.gendercop.eu/home>).

5.2 Pitfalls in policy implementation

One major feature of gender mainstreaming that has been studied is the slow development of this strategy and its ineffective implementation. Competing definitions and multiple meanings of GM co-exist, which meant that the way in which gender mainstreaming could be achieved in practice was far from clear and that it is more difficult to assess what it is that is actually implemented (Rees 1998; Council of Europe 1998; Mazey 2000; Verloo 2005). Gender scholars have denounced the ineffective implementation of gender mainstreaming, a strategy based on voluntaristic efforts rather than binding commitments (Verloo 2005; Walby 2005; Behning and Serrano 2001). As Mazey (2000: 343) states in a JEPP Special Issue, since gendering policymaking requires a critical review of policymakers' conceptualisation of policy problems, 'change will entail questioning of deeply embedded cultural values and policy frames, supported by institutions and powerful advocacy coalitions. For these reasons, gender mainstreaming is arguably a deceptively simple concept that is likely to be extremely difficult to operationalise'.

Many different reasons are given for this lack of implementation, ranging from mainstreaming being 'everybody's -and nobody's- responsibility' (Mazey 2002: 228), to organizational resistances (Benschop and Verloo 2006). A key reason for the scant implementation of gender mainstreaming consists precisely in the organisational characteristics that affect public policy implementation in general, which promote a more 'integrationist' and 'expert-bureaucratic' type of mainstreaming (McGauran 2009). It seems gender mainstreaming, although promoting some changes, cannot 'escape the genderedness of organizations' – as the case of the Human Resources of a Belgian Ministry shows (Benschop and Verloo 2006 p?)- due to the fact that power differences between the business and the feminist agendas determine compromises that hinder the transformative potential of mainstreaming. Experiences of mainstreaming gender into different sectors, from agriculture (Pruegl 2009), to development (Subrahmanian 2004) reveal mechanisms of cooptation of feminist goals of mainstreaming by policymakers due to power mechanisms (Stratigaki 2005).

A key weakness of the implementation of GM is the lack of specific bodies or units within governmental departments holding a responsibility for monitoring the application of the mainstreaming initiatives introduced (Beveridge, Nott and Stephen 2000). The consolidation of femocrats and the participation of gender experts in the policy process (Woodward 2003) is key to ensure that policy-making is based on 'gendered' knowledge (Beveridge and Nott 2002; Squires 2005). The creation of gender units in all governmental departments, an initiative that has been introduced (but not consistently implemented) in Spain since 2007 (Bustelo and Orbals 2007), could favour the implementation and

monitoring of mainstreaming initiatives. Elite expertise, however, is not enough for ensuring an effective implementation of GM. A favourable context for a successful implementation of gender mainstreaming seems to require a high level of gender equality awareness among policymakers who are not gender experts (Woodward 2003; Verloo 2001; Walby 2005).

Organizational resistance proves critical also to hinder the application of GM tools such as GIA. Roggeband and Verloo (2006) evaluate the impact, success, and failure of Dutch GIA through a political process approach. Their analysis shows that ‘especially in the absence of legal obligations, a needle’s eye has to be passed at each and every step of the policy-making process’ because the mainstreaming and GIA paradox is that the ‘actors trapped in gender discourses [gender-blind civil servants] are held responsible for transforming these discourses’ (p 629). The voluntary basis of the instrument and the limited resources and power of gender experts and NGOs who support the implementation of GIA can do little to contrast civil servants’ resistance to apply the gender tool.

Although gender targets, tools, and data are indeed crucial for the promotion of gender equality (Villagómez 2004), feminists have also denounced the pitfalls of the ‘gender tools business’ for the de-politicization of the feminist project. The governmental use of gender tools such as gender impact assessment, statistical data, benchmarks, targets and indicators, might involve a normalisation of the political project of gender equality into a technical and apolitical project where it is assumed that gender equality will be achieved through the compliance of a few procedures. This toolkit approach -feminists argue- might involve a ‘de-radicalization’ of feminism in terms of losing the power dimension of the gender struggle (Currie 1999) and leave the prevailing unequal gender relations untouched (Mukhopadhyay 2004). The increasing governmental reliance on technical solutions to the problem of gender inequality is judged as unlikely to transform mainstream political and organizational processes, power hierarchies, and unequal gender relations (Tiessen 2005; Verloo 2005).

One of the reasons suggested for this technicalisation of gender is that it is easier for gender advocates to sell and for policymakers to accept a view of GM based on a neutral ‘toolkit’ rather than complex and controversial issues, based on feminist premises, such as the challenging of power hierarchies, the transformation of working patterns, and a radical questioning of policy processes and actors (Lombardo and Meier 2006). Stratigaki (2005) similarly claims that barriers to gender mainstreaming in the EU are due to the patriarchal opposition to feminist goals implied in the strategy. The diffusion of a technocratic model of GM where bureaucrats, and sometimes experts, are the main actors helps to understand the prevalent spreading of the ‘toolkit’ model (Verloo 2005). Other approaches focus on the intentionality and rationality

inherent in the definition of GM as contributing to a ‘toolkit’ model (Celis and Meier forthcoming). This literature on the politicization of the strategy of mainstreaming contributes to an idea of policymaking as essentially political in that it can further or counteract power inequalities.

More recently, there has also been attention for the weakening of the support for this strategy across Europe, at the level of the rhetorical support for this strategy as well as in standstills in the development of accountability measures and sanctions connected to existing promises to deploy the strategy, and a breaking down of institutional arrangements around this strategy (Smith and Villa 2010). More generally, both state agencies working on gender+ equality and feminist movements seem to face hard times in that there is less financial and other support for them.

Although scholars of gender equality policies stress the complementarity of the various strategies there are almost no studies on the interplay between equal treatment, gender-specific actions and gender mainstreaming, with the exception of some studies showing that the introduction of gender mainstreaming risked the dilution of gender expertise and dismantling of the infrastructures created to support women’s policies, based on the mistaken assumption that gender equality is already in the mainstream (Mazey 2002; Hafner-Burton and Pollack 2000). In the EU this has led to the use of gender mainstreaming against positive actions and to threats of dismantling the EP Committee on Women’s Rights and Gender Equality (Stratigaki 2005).

5.3 Theorising the rise and fall of policy strategies

What then is the current state of theory on understanding the rise and fall, success or failure of gender+ equality policies? What are the dominant explanatory schemes? All in all, variations on the political process approach are among the most powerful set of theoretical notions, often combining elements of political opportunity structures, mobilising networks and framing dynamics including strategic framing. The impulse to this has been given by Hafner-Burton and Pollack (2000), who apply a social movement theory approach to analyse the application of gender mainstreaming in five areas of EU policy (Structural Funds, Employment, Development, Competition, and Science, research and development). They argue that three factors can explain the implementation of gender mainstreaming: political opportunities opened by EU institutions, networks of gender advocates, and the strategic framing of gender mainstreaming (emphasising gains in terms of efficiency) to make it fit with the dominant frame of a given Directorate General (e.g. Competition), to avoid potential resistance from policymakers that are more market-oriented and less

familiar with gender issues. Their study helps the understanding of why a strategy works in one context and not in another, as when these three elements are present simultaneously mainstreaming is more likely to be implemented than when some of the mentioned elements are missing.

Other scholars have used such frameworks in studies on the impact of shifts in political opportunities on the strength and nature of gender mainstreaming. Beveridge, Nott and Stephen (2000) showed how government decentralisation opened up opportunities for implementing gender mainstreaming and introducing more transformative approaches. They find that the devolved governments of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland have integrated the commitment to mainstreaming equality into policymaking more than at the central UK level by requiring gender impact assessment of all policies and subjecting to public scrutiny the governmental equality impact processes and tools developed (p 403). Moreover, the devolved governments have applied a more participatory approach to mainstreaming thus incorporating wider concerns of the population and promoting women's empowerment.

Given these premises, the challenge feminists face is how to get back to the political project of gender mainstreaming and bring the power dimension back on the policymaking agenda (Mukhopadhyay 2004; Hudson and Rönnblom 2007). Alliances and forums have been suggested as possible ways to deal with the challenge. Despite the dangers of 'cooption' of feminist agendas by the state, the collaboration of feminist activists and experts with state actors, the so-called 'velvet triangles' (Woodward 2004) has been key to further gender equality goals (Subrahmanian 2004) but also point at the difficulties in making this happen (Meier 2007). Scholars in politics and development tend to agree that to re-politicize gender, this collaboration need to work towards the creation of spaces for the empowerment of the most marginalised people so that they can express their voices (Mukhopadhyay 2004; Verloo 2005; Fraser 1989). Scholars show the relevance of 'velvet triangles' of feminist bureaucrats, trusted academics and the women's movement for implementing gender mainstreaming into policymaking (Lycklama à Nijeholt et al., 1998; Woodward (2004). Verloo (2005) argues that for mainstreaming to be a transformative feminist concept, it must be a strategy of both 'displacement' and 'empowerment'. The possibility to displace the continuously arising forms of inequality (displacement, see Squires 2005) requires a space for the expression of continuous feminist struggles (empowerment) (Verloo 2005).

Among practitioners and academics there is also proto-theorising that centers on concepts of social and policy learning, thereby shifting the focus away from political dynamics to socialisation or knowledge transfer (Beveridge and Velluti 2008). And in the European Union context, to a large extent also the fate of gender equality policies is studied as just another case of particular dynamics of

Europeanisation (Liebert 2003; Lombardo and Forest 2012), be it as top down processes or as convergence-divergence processes.

To assess these developments and the current state of the art in gender+ equality policies, it seems most useful to see gender+ equality as a feminist project that interferes and competes with other major projects pushing for social and political change (Walby 2009; Walby 2011). Among such major projects are here: neoliberalism, and changes in the form of capitalism related to globalisation and the attempts of states to control major financial players, and, for Europe, changes in the power of the EU and its parts (Member States, Commission, Parliament), as well as de-democratisation and the rise of proto-fascism² in formerly established new and old democracies such as Hungary and the Netherlands,

6. Conclusion

Policymaking is not a field that is labelled as such in the gender+ and politics literature. Its borders are not defined and there is not a specific academic community that self-defines itself or has been defined from other scholars as one working on 'gender+ and policymaking' as such. Yet, there is a lot of research on gender+ and policymaking from different fields and approaches. Be the focus more placed on the process or the content of policymaking, feminists have criticised the androcentric character of policymaking, showing that the way policies are made is not gender+ neutral but rather based on the male (heterosexual, white or other) norm. Androcentric policymaking creates gendered categories of privileged and unprivileged people in which women are systematically disadvantaged. If the existence of male biases and norms is, broadly speaking, represented as the main problem with policymaking, feminists have suggested different ways for tackling the problem by enhancing gender+ equal processes and policies. At the level of policy strategies the challenging of gender+ biases in policymaking was more explicitly placed on the agenda through gender mainstreaming. The prescriptive part of the work on gender and policymaking on how policies should be done was then particularly developed through works on gender mainstreaming, GIA, or gender budgeting.

Prior to that, in the literature on gender and development, feminists had especially developed the proactive dimension of gender+ and policymaking by stressing the role of women's empowerment for more equal policymaking (Moser 1993). The explicit focus on the need to mainstream gender into

² We use the label 'proto-fascism' since, without the presence of certain actors or political positions as a part of the whole, one could not have fascism, even if their presence is not enough to call a state system fascist (parallel to Wallerstein 1991).

policymaking catalysed works already existing on the making of policies, thus contributing to give more visibility to academic communities working on gender and policymaking (Hawkesworth 1994; Mazey 2000 special issue JEPP; Mazur 1999 and Mazur and Pollack special issue CEP 2009; RINGS network; Mageeq and Quing's networks) and joining the development and the policy communities.

Most research has focused on the preconditions for gender equal policymaking, the unveiling of the genderedness of policymaking at different stages of the process, from agenda-setting and articulation of problems, to policy formulation, and implementation (though there seems to be less research on evaluation, see Bustelo 2003) and the prescription of how policymaking could become more gender+ equal, particularly by mainstreaming a gender+ perspective into it. The proactive dimension that characterise works on gender+ and policymaking where knowledge is linked with praxis, can be connected to their origins in development studies, which have an interventionist approach to the field.

Other dimensions of the unequal character of policymaking have remained unchallenged or little explored. For instance, making abstraction of development planning, there are few feminist works addressing policymaking in areas that are not explicitly considered as gender-related areas, such as transport or agriculture, though there are works on the implementation of gender mainstreaming that focus on such areas and a couple of manuals on gender in the methodology of social sciences (Hawkesworth 2006; Ackers and True 2010; Ackers et al 2006) that can help scholars orient their work towards the analysis of 'non gender' areas through a gender+ perspective.

We also found that there is less research on why some policy proposals have worked better or worse and what can we learn for the future, in other words on the extent to which there is progress in gender+ equal policymaking. Some studies set benchmarks and targets to assess progress in gender equal policymaking (e.g. how many women are there in political institutions?) or discuss how specific developments in gender+ equality such as women's inclusion in the labour market or in political representation can be considered as signs of progress (Walby 2009). Other scholars (Ferree 2009b) have shown how assessing progress in gender+ equality policies is context-related and dependent on the specific institutional and discursive opportunities structure of one context so that what appears as quality policymaking in Europe for instance does not necessarily apply to the US context. In other studies (Fraser 2009; Rai 2008) the focus is placed on how processes such as neoliberalism and globalisation not only can have negative implications on gender+ equal policymaking, but are complexly intertwined with them.

In general there seem to be a need for more reflexive and empirical works on what are the quality criteria to assess progress in policymaking from a gender+ equality perspective. The question on what are the main chances of success for policy strategies that aim at furthering gender+ equal policymaking will require more reflection. In line with the notion of policymaking as an ongoing process, we think studies on the quality and success chances of gender+ equal policymaking, whatever the specific question they might be tackling is, would need to take into account that progress in policymaking cannot be assessed thinking of equal policymaking as a full finished story but would better be addressed as an ongoing and contested process.

The analysis of the different scholarly strands that focus more on dynamics or on the content of gender+ equality policies has also shown that connections between both approaches could be strengthened to the benefit of a more complex and complete understanding of gender+ and policymaking. In theoretical and methodological terms this means that there is room for studies that will adopt new discursive institutionalist and sociological approaches (Schmidt 2010) for studying the discursive, institutional, and actors' dynamics of policymaking in gender+ equality.

Concerning more reflexive works on the issue, in general we noticed that in the area of policymaking and gender there are very few empirical works focused on the privileged gender+ groups (e.g. middle class, heterosexuals, white men and women). That is, while gender+ theorising has highlighted power inequalities that policymaking creates, reproduces or challenges, and has pointed at the existence of privileged subjects that are set as the norm, there is a need of empirical works that target such intersecting privileged groups and their role in policymaking processes.

The emphasis in existing empirical studies on addressing women and their intersections (especially unprivileged women) rather than men and their intersections could partly explain why we find that the literature on gender+ and policymaking does not fundamentally question the use of the fixed set of categories of 'men' and 'women', something we formerly named 'genderising' (with similar meaning to what 'racialised' policies do by creating 'races' as such). That is, the gendered character of policymaking has been studied without a substantial challenging of the use of fixed gender categories so that for instance transgender issues may be considered as part of the gender+ literature and political agenda rather than part of the sexuality literature and agenda. Thus, an area for future research would be that of studying the degree to which policymaking is gender equal and constructs gender categories of women and men that exclude issues of gender identities and expression. Exploring how we could go beyond the use of categories of men and women in studies on gender+ equality and policymaking deserves more scholarly attention in the near future.

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