

Introduction: Comparative Gender Mainstreaming in a Global Era

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Abstract

This article analyses gender mainstreaming as a new and essentially contested form of feminist politics and policy. The article addresses the different forms that gender mainstreaming takes, in different countries and different policy domains, in order to push forward the theoretical debates. Gender mainstreaming often draws on transnational processes, involving transnational networks and agencies and transformations of the discourse of universal human rights, challenging the traditional focus on national processes. These developments are facilitated by the rise of global processes and institutions, such as the UN. Tensions can arise as a result of actors seeking to mainstream quite different models of gender equality: based on equality through sameness; through equal valuation of difference; and through transformation. The intersection of gender with other complex forms of inequality has challenging implications for a primary focus on gender within gender mainstreaming. Nevertheless, certain forms of gender mainstreaming have, despite their evident weaknesses, provided a new basis for feminist solidarity and action at a global level. Gender mainstreaming is a leading-edge example of the potential implications of globalisation for gender politics.

Keywords

gender mainstreaming, equality, comparative gender relations, gender theory, gender politics

INTRODUCTION

Gender mainstreaming is a new form of gendered political and policy practice. It is an international phenomenon, originating in development policies, and adopted by the UN at the 1995 conference on women in Beijing, and taken up by the European Union (EU) and its member states. Gender mainstreaming

is a process that seeks to advance gender equality by revising all mainstream policy arenas. It is simultaneously intended as a way of improving the effectiveness of mainline policies by making visible the gendered nature of assumptions, processes and outcomes. During its development there has been a significant two-way traffic between feminist theories of gender relations and gender equality practitioners (Beveridge et al. 2000; Mazey 2000; Behning and Pascual 2001; Verloo 2001; Walby 2001; Woodward 2003).

The principle of gender mainstreaming was initially developed by feminist development practitioners in the 1970s and launched at the UN conference on women in Beijing in 1995 (Meyer and Prügl 1999). Its origins lie especially in the context of feminist work within development, where different ways of including gender equity within development processes and goals had long been explored (Moser 1993; Jahan 1995; Kabeer 2003). Since the UN conference, gender mainstreaming has been adopted by the European Union as the basis of its gender policy, which has been deepening and become more wide-ranging since the Treaty of Amsterdam (1997).

Gender mainstreaming is a global initiative but is not evenly developed globally. The implementation of gender mainstreaming is uneven even when led by a common transnational political entity, such as the EU. Thus, the understanding of gender mainstreaming raises complex questions as to the relationship between global, regional and national levels of governance. Unlike some more conventional forms of politics and policy, gender mainstreaming is not primarily situated within a national or country framework, but rather has been transnational from the start. This poses particular challenges to the understanding of the processes of policy development, since they include issues of international regimes, globalisation, transnational politics and practices of political and policy transfer from one location to another.

So, what is the relationship between developing countries, the US, the EU, the global and the national, as sites in the development of different types of gender equality policies? Which politics are takers and which are makers of gender mainstreaming policy and why is this (Behning and Pascual 2001; Mósesdóttir and Thorbergdóttir 2004)? Do the policies remain the same or are they hybridised as they interact with different local conditions (Barry 2004; Ferreira 2004; Laas 2004)? How important are developing institutions of global governance and the political spaces that are associated with them, for example those of the UN and UNIFEM (Pietilä 1996; Elson 1998; Meyer and Prügl 1999; Rai 2003; True 2003)? How important is the developing discourse on universal human rights (Peters and Wolper 1995; Kelly 2005) and is this a western, globally hybridised, or locally varied tradition (Woodiwiss 1998; Ferree 2004)?

This special issue of *International Feminist Journal of Politics* has a focus on comparative gender mainstreaming. How and why do gender mainstreaming practices between different countries vary? There is a range of different models of 'gender equality' being mainstreamed (Eveline and Bacchi; Rees)

into a variety of policy domains (Grosser and Moon; Kelly; Veitch), in the context of divergent economic, political and social circumstances in different countries (Mósesdóttir and Erlingsdóttir), especially between North and South (Moser; Pillinger), all of which shape the process. A discussion section led by views from practitioners (Moser; Pillinger; Veitch) follows the main articles on gender mainstreaming.

WHAT IS THE 'GENDER EQUALITY' THAT IS BEING 'MAINSTREAMED'?

The variety of definitions and practices of gender mainstreaming may be understood either as a result of confusion that can be resolved by attending to the difficult task of the development of an appropriate definition, or it may be understood as the result of essentially contested processes that inevitably produce varying outcomes in different contexts. One analytic strategy is to seek out underlying principles in an effort to abstract the essential characteristics of the phenomenon. For example, Rees (this issue) identifies three underlying areas of principle: regarding the individual as a whole person; democracy and participation; and justice, fairness and equity. Further, she suggests that there are sets of tools that can be identified with each of these principles, including work/life balance, gender disaggregated statistics and gender budgeting. This has similarities with Nussbaum's (2000) neo-Aristotelian approach to gendered well-being, which is grounded in notions of human needs and capacities and invokes a universalistic perspective. In a contrasting analytic strategy, gender mainstreaming is seen as an 'empty signifier' (Council of Europe 1998), which can be filled by an almost limitless variety of content as a result of the social construction (Bacchi 1999; Verloo 2001, 2005) of this phenomenon. Eveline and Bacchi (this issue) focus on the processes by which the gender equality content of gender mainstreaming is socially constructed in varying ways according to the underlying theory of gender relations and the national political context. They show the links between the various forms of theorising of gender and the ways of doing and creating gender that are implied in the diverse ways that gender mainstreaming constructs its project.

Although all accounts of gender mainstreaming imply significant changes to gendered institutions, a range of different visions or models of gender equality have been invoked. Three models of gender equality have often been identified as key (Rees 1998). The first model is one in which equality based on sameness is fostered, especially where women enter previously male domains, and the existing male norm remains the standard. The second is one in which there is a move towards the equal valuation of existing and different contributions of women and men in a gender segregated society. The third is one where there is a new standard for both men and women, that is, the transformation of gender relations. Rees (1998) describes the first as 'tinkering' with gender inequality; the second as 'tailoring' situations to fit the needs of women; the third is 'transformation', in which there are new

standards for everyone, replacing the segregated institutions and standards associated with masculinity and femininity. There is question as to whether the first two models actually constitute gender mainstreaming, because they retain the gender standards of the status quo. For Rees (1998), only the third strategy constitutes gender mainstreaming and has the potential to deliver gender justice because this is the only strategy that involves the transformation of the institutions and the standards necessary for effective equality.

Eveline and Bacchi (this issue) and Rees (this issue) provide contrasting approaches to the theorisation of gender equality and to the various strategies devised within the framework of gender mainstreaming to move towards it.

BROADENING THE ARENA FOR GENDER EQUALITY POLICIES

Traditionally gender equality policies and politics have focused on areas where it is possible to compare the disadvantaged position of women with the privileged position of men. Gender mainstreaming goes beyond this, with the ambition of subjecting all policy areas to gender equality practices. Thus the advancement of gender mainstreaming has entailed the broadening of the arenas of gender equality actions.

Employment is the field where the most development of gender equality practices has occurred. This has proceeded furthest where it is clearly possible to see the disadvantages of women as compared to men. However, recent developments have attempted to take gender equality principles beyond such obvious areas, to those where there are indirect as well as direct impacts. For example, in the UK this has entailed going beyond straightforward issues such as direct discrimination against women in matters of pay (Pillinger 1992), to policies to reconcile more effectively working and family life (Dex 2004), the investigation and remedying of gender inequities in the government's budget (Women's Budget Group 2004), and the consideration of the implications of the position of women in the labour market for the mainstream agenda of productivity (Walby and Olsen 2002).

Employment is key to many EU interventions for gender equality because of the centrality of economic development to its core remit and the consequent development of the European Employment Strategy. This area has seen more advanced application of the principles of gender mainstreaming than many other policy areas (Pollack and Hafner-Burton 2000; Behning and Pascual 2001; Mósesdóttir and Thorbergsdóttir 2004; Mósesdóttir and Erlingsdóttir this issue).

While employment has been a major economic arena in which gender mainstreaming has occurred, this is not the only one. The mainstreaming of gender into governmental finance decisions through gender budgeting has been another major focus of activity. Gender budgeting is a gender mainstreaming tool that includes a gender equality perspective in financial decision making at the highest levels. It is a process of disaggregating budgets by gender in order

to discover the extent to which policies that have gendered implications are differentially funded. It is a process that has developed globally, not least in the South (Sen 2000; Budlender et al. 2002; Sharp and Broomhill 2002; IDRC 2005).

Grosser and Moon (this issue) further extend the field of gender mainstreaming in the economy with their argument that the mainstreaming of gender benefits the corporate social responsibility agenda, which is simultaneously good for both business and the wider society. They argue that the value of a company can be affected by its treatment of a wider range of stakeholders than is usually included. This is work that goes beyond the domains of the economy to that of governance. In a similar manner, Vinnicombe (2004) makes the business case for women directors in terms of the benefits of diversity in the Boardroom for competitiveness and productivity.

In the area of violence against women, there is a more complex move, involving the mainstreaming of violence against women into human rights discourse and thereby to a range of policy arenas (Walby 2004a; Kelly this issue). This is a field which developed later than employment policy and which has not drawn so strongly upon the powers of the EU, not least because the competence of the EU in this area is more limited (Hanmer 1996; Walby 2004b). Rather, much development has occurred as a result of the creation of global feminist networks which have changed the ostensibly timeless universal discourse of human rights so that women's rights have become recognised as human rights (Peters and Wolper 1995; Kelly this issue). This is mainstreaming, in the sense that gender has entered mainstream policy and political domains, and involves far-reaching changes to global conceptions of human rights.

INTERNATIONAL REGIMES, HUMAN RIGHTS AND GENDER MAINSTREAMING?

Policy developments have traditionally been considered within the context of specific countries. However, the development of gender mainstreaming has not been centred in nationally based processes, but from the start has involved transnational processes.

In the analysis of globalisation there is a question as to how exactly politics and policies are transferred from one location to another. As Chabot and Duyvendak (2002) note, many contributors to this field are more interested in the political, economic and cultural implications of global developments than in the empirical processes by which transnational transfers of political practices develop. The focus here is on the way in which political processes are involved in globalisation. It has been suggested that new ideas and social movements usually develop first in the West, especially the US, then are transferred to the rest of the world though this notion of one-directional

transfer has been heavily criticised and other directions of movement suggested (Chabot and Duyvendak 2002; Snyder 2003).

The process of policy and politics transfer has sometimes been described as a process of diffusion. However, the concept of diffusion has connotations that limit the range of ways in which this transfer can take place. In particular, some processes involve unequal power so that changes may involve degrees of coercion or compulsion. Gender mainstreaming is an example of a policy development that is not a simple process of diffusion from core countries to the periphery (Chabot and Duyvendak 2002), but rather one in which there is complex hybridisation and the development of variations in its forms in different locations. The process of gender mainstreaming is associated with a range of processes. These include: advocacy by civil society groups and movements within a country; transnational advocacy networks (Keck and Sikkink 1998; True and Mintrom 2001; Zippel 2004); epistemic communities and expert networks (Hoskyns 1996), perhaps drawing on the legitimation of universal human rights (Peters and Wolper 1995; Kelly 2005); isomorphic development within the European organisational field (Wobbe 2003); legal compulsion from a trans-national polity such as the EU (Pillinger 1992); legal necessity following other political decisions, such as joining the EU (Barry 2004); a mix of forms of soft law and targets, as in the EU open method of policy coordination (Behning and Pascual 2001; Rubery et al. 2001; Mósesdóttir and Thorbergdóttir 2004). The process may involve a mix of processes, for example, pressure from national civil society groups in dialogue with transnational experts (Women's Budget Group 2004; Pillinger 2005; Veitch 2005).

Gender mainstreaming is a practice that is at least as well developed (if not better) in the South as in the North (Moser this issue). It has often involved transnational actors, such as international aid agencies in interaction with both northern funders and southern planners. Further, there are important international political networks that support activities in ways that defy conventional notions of nation and state (Keck and Sikkink 1998; Moghadam 2005; Pillinger this volume).

The development of a discourse of universal human rights (Nussbaum 2000), associated with the development of international organisations (Berkovitch 1999), forums and political spaces connected with UN developments, such as conferences for women has been an important contribution to these processes (Meyer and Prügl 1999; Walby 2002). The human rights approach has over the past decade been extended to violence against women (Peters and Wolper 1995; Kelly this issue). The UN Human Rights conference in Vienna in 1993 made a declaration that women's rights were human rights and that gender-based violence was a violation of these rights and must be eliminated. This UN declaration defined violence against women as a form of discrimination in order to establish a link to the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). The process leading up to this declaration as well as since has been a global development,

utilising political spaces opened up by the UN and global communications. The declaration resulted from a global coalition of women from every continent who created a new interpretation of human rights and lobbied for it. In this way it contrasts with the development of gender mainstreaming in employment and related economic domains, which, in European countries, at least, have been far more dependent upon developments within the EU than at the global level. Kelly (this issue) addresses the development of a human rights discourse and its implications for the mainstreaming of concerns with violence against women into social policy.

However, it is important to distinguish between different kinds of rights traditions, in particular between human rights, civil rights, and equal rights, since they make different kinds of claims with differing levels of legitimacy in different domains (Ferree 2004). The human rights discourse might appear to allow for the expression of many of the equality concerns across a range of forms of structured social inequality simultaneously, while still claiming the possibility of universally relevant standards. Yet, historically the human rights approach has been more concerned with minimum standards than with full equality. So it is to be expected that there will be considerable variation in the implications of 'rights' discourse, according to the form of this discourse and the domain and location of its application.

There has been a rapid development of national machineries for the advancement of women in over 100 countries between 1995 and 1997 (True and Mintrom 2001). However, the form and resources of these national gender machineries is highly uneven, as can be seen in the country reports on these matters to the 2005 review of the UN Platform for Action, Beijing+10 (Beijing + 10 2005). They vary in the positioning of these machineries in relation to other government departments (for example whether attached to the Prime Minister's Office or some other ministry), whether there are associated dedicated ministers or not, whether there are established consultative relations with civil society organisations, whether tools such as gender impact assessment and gender budgeting are developed and routinely in use, and the extent to which they have specially trained personnel and resources of their own (EU Presidency 2005).

The EU has become an important actor in the development of gender mainstreaming in the contemporary period. It has used a range of instruments to pursue its gender equality agenda, from the hard law of legally binding directives (Pillinger 1992; Hoskyns 1996) to the softer process of the open method of policy coordination (Behning and Pascual 2001; Mósesdóttir and Thorbergdóttir 2004; Mósesdóttir and Erlingsdóttir this issue). These powers rest in the Treaties that constitute the legal basis of the powers of the EU, starting from Article 119 on equal pay in the 1957 Treaty of Rome and developed most especially in the Treaty of Amsterdam (1997). Whether or not they will become further deepened in a European Constitution is yet to be known (Shaw 2002; Lombardo 2005).

Gender mainstreaming has been especially associated with the Open Method of Coordination in which member states draw up National Action Plans (NAPs) for presentation to the European Commission on the European Employment Strategy (EES). The EES is a wide-ranging strategy that has undergone several rounds of revision and now includes issues of social inclusion. In the earliest version equal opportunities for women and men was one of four pillars. Currently gender equality is one of ten guidelines and includes both gender mainstreaming and specific equality measures (European Commission 2003). The Open Method of Coordination involves member states submitting plans as to how they will reach common agreed targets concerning, for example, the closing of gender gaps in employment and the raising of the provision of child care. It is intended that member states reach these targets in a way consistent with their national contexts. There is considerable discussion as to whether the open method of policy coordination is effective and the extent to which its impact is uneven (Behning and Pascual 2001; Rubery et al. 2001; Zeitlin and Trubeck 2003; Mósesdóttir and Thorbergdóttir 2004; Mósesdóttir and Erlingsdóttir this issue; Rees this issue). Mósesdóttir and Thorbergdóttir (2004) in their analysis of the policies within the member states of the EU towards gender equality and towards the knowledge based society note that there exist several country-specific social models, rather than one European model. They examine gender mainstreaming within the EES and assess its implications for gender equality, noting the importance of the distinction between the hard legally binding directives and the soft nature of the EES based on textual arguments data and persuasion, and conclude that the drafting of the NAPs can be merely a formal exercise of translating the EES into already existing employment measures and results.

While it is clear that gender mainstreaming is a major development in gender politics and policies at the discursive level, the extent of its impact in developing policies that make a difference to women's lives is the subject of much discussion in the papers in this issue. In addition, it is harder to measure impact on lived social relations than to discover the content of policy texts.

There is variation in the practice of gender mainstreaming between different policy domains. Pollack and Hafner-Burton (2000) find that gender mainstreaming is implemented quite differently in different policy areas within the EU. They discover differences in the implementation of gender mainstreaming between five issue areas of the European Union: Structural Funds, employment, development, competition, and science research and development. They explain these differences in terms of three factors: political opportunities, mobilising structures and networks, and variations in strategic framing by advocates of gender mainstreaming.

Behning and Pascual (2001) present a series of comparative case studies of gender mainstreaming in the European Employment Strategy, arguing in conclusion that the implementation of gender mainstreaming is significantly shaped by the nature of the pre-existing gender regime in different countries,

which show identifiable continuities with national paths of development of gender inequalities. Barry (2004) describes the enormous impact of the EU on Ireland following its membership of the EU in 1973. This was not least because the nature of the regulation of gender relations in employment in Ireland was so far from the established EU model. For example, Ireland had to remove its marriage bar that banned married women from working in the civil service and other areas of employment, in order to comply with EU equal treatment laws. Ireland was also a major recipient of Structural Funds, which accounted for 40 per cent of National Development Plan expenditure, and a condition of this funding was compliance with EU policy on gender equality (Barry 2004). By contrast, countries that also received substantial Structural Funds but where women's employment was already high enough to meet EU targets, such as Portugal, were not subject to such pressures to change their gendered employment regulations for this reason (Ferreira 2004).

This is likely to be the case also for most of the ten countries that joined the EU in May 2004, since many had established high rates of female employment prior to 1989 (Laas 2004). The different levels of civil society activity, from formally organised non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to looser types of grassroots activities, are also likely to make a difference, as Ferreira (2004) argues in the case of Portugal. The EU provides much of the specific legal impetus behind developments in gender mainstreaming in the UK (Rees 1998; Walby 2001b). The UK government adopted gender mainstreaming as the basis of its gender policy in 1998 (Cabinet Office 1998) and since then has been developing a series of instruments to implement this policy (Veitch, this issue), although with somewhat uneven impact (Beveridge et al. 2000).

The transnational level has been a component of the development of gender mainstreaming in almost all places and domains. There is little policy development that has remained at a national level. The origins of gender mainstreaming were in development politics, involving transnational aid agencies. Feminists have made effective use of the emerging institutions of global governance, utilising UN processes and expanding the discourse of human rights so as to include women's rights to the elimination of male violence. The EU has become a transnational actor that is very important for the contemporary development of gender mainstreaming, with strengths in promoting the policy in abstract, but with weaknesses in implementation. The US is noteworthy for the absence of gender mainstreaming among its gender equality policies. The transfer of the policy is thus not simply from the most powerful countries to weaker ones, but takes a more horizontal form that hybridises according to local conditions.

DIVERSE INEQUALITIES

Gender equality and gender mainstreaming do not take place in isolation from other forms of inequality. Many other forms of difference and inequality

internally divide the category 'woman'. There has been increasing attention paid to the nature of the relationships between these diverse forms of inequality and their implication for the theory and practice of gender mainstreaming (Hankivsky 2004; Squires 2005). On the one hand, attention to other inequalities may dilute the effort spent on gender mainstreaming if resources are allocated elsewhere, if there is loss of focus, if there is loss of appreciation of the specific structural causes of inequality, or if there is competition over the priority accorded to different forms of inequalities. On the other hand, the outcome of gender mainstreaming may be strengthened if there were concerted actions of previously separate communities and initiatives on agreed priorities for intervention, and if it were to lead to a strengthening of procedures for deliberative democracy (DTI 2004; Squires 2005).

The development of EU equality policy is currently shaped by the process of implementation of Article 13 of the Treaty of Amsterdam, which provides a legal basis for the removal of discrimination on at least six grounds: gender, ethnicity and race, disability, religion and belief, sexual orientation and age, and which comes fully into effect in 2006. This potentially repositions gender mainstreaming within a wider mix of equality and diversity issues. The implications for gender mainstreaming appear complex. For example, there is a question as to whether these regulations will entail the creation of more equality commissions, one for each of the strands, or whether existing equalities bodies are to be merged into a new body that addresses them all. Would the integration of the relevant governmental agencies entail the dispersal of expertise, loss of contact with the specific constituencies, and a diluted approach, or can it be an opportunity for levelling up to the best legislation for any one of the groups, more efficient deployment of resources, and a stronger approach? Are the equality tools needed by diverse disadvantaged groups sufficiently similar that they can share institutional spaces rather than each needing their own?

In response to this EU initiative, the UK is revising its own equality commissions. The UK is creating a new single Commission for Equality and Human Rights (DTI 2004) that addresses all equalities issues together with human rights issues. This is to replace the three existing Commissions for gender (Equal Opportunities Commission), race and ethnicity (Commission for Racial Equality) and disability (Disability Rights Commission) and additionally address the inequalities associated with religion and belief, sexual orientation and age and human rights issues. Despite disparate legislation for each of these issues, there is no proposal for a single integrative act, merely modifications to existing acts, leaving different legal standards for complaints and interventions. However, there is a renewed commitment to the implementation of a duty on public bodies to promote gender equality, in a manner comparable to the existing duty in relation to race and the promise of one for disability. The implications of these proposed changes have yet to be seen.

The development of new institutions to address a wider range of inequalities has proceeded along with the development of complex theoretical debates

about their intersection (Scott 1988; Felski 1997; Fraser 1997; Walby 2001a). To some extent, they overlap with the debates on sameness/difference discussed above (Young 1990; Ferree et al. 2002), though with the addition of some new concepts, such as that of 'intersectionality' to capture the mutual constitution of gender, race, class and other inequalities (Crenshaw 1991; Collins 1998). While early concerns focused on the cross-cutting of gender inequalities by ethnicity and class, the inequalities and differences now considered are more numerous, extending at least to include sexuality, disability, religion, nationality and age. Indeed, class is now more often treated implicitly, embedded within concepts of 'poverty' (Kabeer 2003), 'social exclusion' and 'pay', than as a focus of theoretical debate. Ferree (2004) addresses the inter-relationship of gender, race and class politics within the context of frame theory and comparative national institutional developments. She shows how different contexts provide different opportunities and obstacles for the development of gender equality projects, which are, accordingly, shaped by these conditions.

The relationship between gender inequality and other complex inequalities is an important but unresolved debate in both gender mainstreaming practice and in feminist theory. The dilemma of either abstracting and naming disadvantaged categories or of integrating with consequent loss of visibility and focus is common to both arenas. There is a two-way street in the exchange of ideas and analysis that makes this a fertile area for both theory and practice.

THIS ISSUE

Gender mainstreaming is a new and essentially contested form of feminist politics and policy, existing in the tension between the mainstream and interventions to secure gender equality. The papers in this issue address the extent to which gender mainstreaming has made an impact on the world, often concluding that while there has been some progress, there is much that has not changed. Most papers suggest that the greatest advances have taken place in the development of the concepts and terminology and in the establishment of some form of gender policy. On the question of whether these changes have yet led to substantive changes in women's lives, the papers range from cautious to sceptical, overall suggesting uneven development at this time.

As Kelly argues, there has been a rapid and substantial incorporation of gender equality into human rights discourse, as a result of the activities of the violence against women movement with potentially far-reaching consequences in positioning these gendered issues on agendas of policy bodies long thought remote from such concerns, but which has not yet delivered substantive changes. Mósesdóttir and Erlingsdóttir, analysing what is arguably one of the more advanced examples of gender mainstreaming in EU employment policy, show how this development has been limited by its discursive construction as well as the failure to empower key gendered actors. Grosser

and Moon show how gender mainstreaming might lead to the inclusion of gender equality issues in corporate governance via the corporate social responsibility agenda, but report potential rather than substantive developments. Rees argues that gender mainstreaming does have transformative potential for gender inequality, but that its development has been uneven and weakened by its subordination to other policy goals. Veitch shows how signing up to the principles behind gender mainstreaming by the UK government is insufficient to achieve change unless resources are also allocated.

The content of the 'gender equality' that is being mainstreamed is not a universal given, but rather varies according to context and over time. Eveline and Bacchi explore the theoretical underpinnings of various conceptualisations of gender equality that have been invoked by gender mainstreaming practitioners and argue for the importance of treating gendering as a process of gender-as-becoming, rather than as something that is fixed. They demonstrate how this theoretical approach helps us to understand differences in gendered policy development in different countries. Rees discusses the implications of three different models of gender equality, based on equality through sameness, equal valuation of difference, and transformation for the uneven development of gender mainstreaming. The intersection of gender with other complex forms of inequality has challenging implications for a primary focus on gender within gender mainstreaming.

Gender mainstreaming is a leading-edge example of the potential implications of globalisation for gender politics. Gender mainstreaming often draws on transnational processes, involving transnational networks and agencies and the discourse of universal human rights. These developments are facilitated by the rise of global processes and institutions, such as the UN. Kelly shows how feminist activity to eliminate violence against women became a transnational global movement that mainstreamed violence against women into the discourse of human rights. In successfully declaring such women's rights as human rights they transformed the concept of human rights and created a new discursive platform for further feminist action. This new articulation of feminist demands has potential pitfalls as well as advantages and it remains an open question as to its ultimate effect. Moser shows how transnational aid agencies have been important in innovating gender mainstreaming terminology, policies and practices, though with weaknesses in implementation. Pillinger shows the importance of transnational trade unions in gender mainstreaming around issues of the gender pay gap. Certain forms of gender mainstreaming have, despite their evident weaknesses, provided a new basis for feminist solidarity and action at a global level.

Kelly's article broadens the range of gender mainstreaming beyond the more usual economic issues by focusing on violence against women. She examines the processes by which women's concerns about violence were mainstreamed into the discourse on universal human rights at a global level. This process was

not initially conceived as one of gender mainstreaming, although on reflection it might be considered as an example of one. It is rather the mainstreaming of violence against women into human rights discourse. The use and transformation of the discourse of human rights is seen simultaneously as a source of strength in that it was a vocabulary and machinery that facilitated the transcending of differences between women, and provided access to the UN, yet also to have limitations precisely because of a shift from a focus on domination and oppression.

Eveline and Bacchi treat the content of the concept of 'gender equality' that is being mainstreamed as an open question rather than one that can be derived from fundamental principles. In order to identify and illuminate the content of 'gender equality' in gender mainstreaming practice, they apply insights from the history of gender theory, showing how different developments in gender theory are reflected in the diverse meanings of gender equality found in gender mainstreaming practice in different countries, particularly Ireland, Canada and the Netherlands, but moderated by the diverse political environments. They argue for the importance of developing an active sense of 'gendering' rather than the use of 'gender' as a rather static adjective.

Mósesdóttir and Erlingsdóttir provide a comparison of the implementation of gender mainstreaming in Austria, Denmark, Finland, the Netherlands, Spain, Hungary and Iceland, some of which were subject to the EU, some not. They focus on the European Employment Strategy, a policy area where gender mainstreaming has been most developed, and on the selection of the actors who motivate the process. They argue that a problem creating poor and uneven implementation has been the poor representation of women in elected bodies and among the social partners, who might be charged with leading the process. Nevertheless, they argue that the EU has played a positive role in promoting gender mainstreaming.

Grosser and Moon widen the arena for gender mainstreaming, arguing for its extension to the agenda of corporate social responsibility (CSR). CSR includes practices such as widening the range of perceived relevant stakeholders and increasing their participation. Gender mainstreaming could mean increasing the proportion of women on the Board as well as changing policies at corporate level. Gender mainstreaming here has the potential to take gender equality issues to new domains; however, the link with CSR is only just beginning to be made.

Rees sets out a model of gender mainstreaming that draws on universal principles. The uneven development of gender mainstreaming is seen as a consequence of divergent economic, social and political circumstances. She examines the varied development of the concept and its application to practice in various countries of the European Union. She argues that the tension between gender equality and the mainstream remains strong, with gender mainstreaming often used as a means of delivering on mainline policy goals, but nevertheless remains confident of its transformative potential.

The 'Conversations' section of this issue focuses on the diverse applications of gender mainstreaming as experienced by its practitioners around the world. Moser provides a nuanced assessment of the successes and challenges in gender mainstreaming in countries of the South, involving northern-based international aid agencies, in four different stages. Stage one, the development of the terminology, and stage two, getting a gender policy in place, have seen the greatest advances. However, stage three, implementing gender mainstreaming, and stage four, evaluating or auditing practice, are much less advanced. There are problems of policy evaporation, invisibilisation of gendered successes, as well as resistance. Yet, despite these problems, the development of robust methodologies and good practices in the South may provide useful insights for those in the North for whom gender mainstreaming processes are perhaps not quite as far advanced. Pillinger describes processes of gender mainstreaming in gender pay equity work in the campaigns by public service workers around the world. The international networks supporting these interventions show immense flexibility and strength in difficult circumstances. Veitch provides an insider's view of gender mainstreaming in the UK government since 1997, providing a detailed account of its successes, remaining challenges and potential for the future. Both Veitch and Pillinger conclude that building capacity is an important part of the process of gender mainstreaming.

These papers contributed to and draw from an ESRC funded seminar series on gender mainstreaming. Others are published as a special issue of *Social Politics* (2005).

CONCLUSIONS

Gender mainstreaming is a new development in feminist practice that seeks to normalise policies for gender equality. While most frequently understood as a specialised tool of the policy world, it is also a feminist strategy that draws on and can inform feminist theory. It is subject to two-way development as a result of both theoretical analysis and policy practice, which interact in this arena.

Gender mainstreaming is essentially contested since it is constituted in the tension between the 'mainstream' and 'gender equality'. There are many different forms of gender mainstreaming, not least because of the different visions of and theories of gender equality and of the social and political processes that might constitute routes towards such a goal. Gender mainstreaming is always situated in the context of other diverse and intersecting inequalities. The practical recognition of such intersectionality is a current major concern. Gender equality practitioners have gone beyond the analysis of stable categories of women and men to more subtle and complex accounts of fluid gender-inflected discourses. For both, it goes beyond the practice of adding women as a separate topic, to the integration of gender into the heart of the practice or concept.

Gender mainstreaming has involved new forms of political practice and alliances. In particular, it involves elected women in parliament, the development of specialised gender machinery in government, as well as gender expertise in civil society from universities to grassroots organisations. Expertise is a form of power, often neglected in conventional analysis, which is increasingly deployed by those representing gendered interests in and against the state. Practitioners report the importance of building the appropriate expert capacity in order to implement gender mainstreaming.

Gender mainstreaming is highly diverse with uneven impacts. It is situated within the development of transnational global politics, of multi-lateral forms of governance such as the UN and the transnational polity of the European Union, as well as the development of diverse global discourses of human rights that transcend country boundaries, each of which have disparate outcomes when in articulation with country differences.

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