What’s the Problem?
– An Analysis of EU’s Gender Equality Policy

Alma Joensen
Abstract

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Author: Alma Joensen

For the past decade, EU’s gender equality policies have undergone some changes that have affected the way in which the problem with gender equality is now represented. This case study analysis explores what the problem with gender inequalities is represented to be in EU’s Strategy for Equality between Women and Men, 2010-2015, and whether there are any presuppositions or assumptions underlying EU’s representation of the problem. The method used for analysis is Carol Lee Bacchi’s approach: What’s the Problem (represented to be)?, which is a post-structuralist approach that pays much attention to language and discourse. EU’s gender equality policy is then compared with Sylvia Walby’s theory on the patriarchy, that explains gender inequalities as being systematically produced through a system of social structures. The main conclusion is that EU’s gender policies are tailored to fit the political priorities of the union, which are to achieve the objectives of the EU 2020 Strategy. The problems are mainly being represented from an economic perspective, and furthermore the EU dismisses the notion that gender inequalities are a result of our social structures, and rather explains the problem of gender inequality as being the problem of women.
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Part I – Introduction to the Study

1.1. Introduction – EU and Gender Equality

For the past decades, gender equality policies and directives have been present on EU’s agenda, but during that time the shape and character of the policy has changed and the topic has both fallen and risen on the list of priorities. Gender Equality was first introduced in the EU through the Treaty of Rome with the inclusion of the principle of equal pay. After that, many directives and laws on gender equality were passed, in the manner of the traditional community method of the EU, i.e. enforcement of legislation in member states, ensured by the European Court of Justice. Despite these efforts, gender inequalities remained a big problem within the EU area, but it was acknowledged by many that the method of hard law mechanisms did not tackle issues such as "employment segregation, persistent pay gaps, the widespread acceptance of gender stereotypes and tolerance of sexism [...] domestic violence and persistent homophobia". These problems lead to the EU adopting a new approach towards gender equality, gender mainstreaming. One of the main reasons for the EU taking up this approach was due to the results of The United Nations’ conference on Women held in 1995 where countries committed themselves to promoting gender mainstreaming. What this meant, was that the countries committed themselves to mainstream a gender perspective into all policies and programmes, so that, before decisions are taken, an analysis is made of the effects on women and men respectively. In 1996, the EU accepted this challenge and adopted a communication on Mainstreaming. Since then, gender policies in the EU have been dealt with in the manner recommended for gender mainstreaming: the dual approach, integrating gender dimension in all policy areas, as well as implementing specific measures. What mainly changed with this new approach towards gender equality was the manner of implementation. Since gender mainstreaming was introduced in the EU, gender equality policies moved from being a subject of the community method, towards being implemented by the new modes of governance. The community method has often been referred to as “hard law” mechanism (that includes enforcing

1 Beveridge and Velluti (2008): 2
2 Rees (2005): 558
3 Commission of the European Communities (1996).
4 The European Commission (2010): 4
legislation and law directives) and the *new modes of governance* as "soft law" mechanisms or coordination tools (that do not include enforcement by law). This shift in the manner of implementation tools, means that gender policies are to a lesser degree subject of legislature and directives, and more a subject of cooperation and coordination mechanisms such as monitoring, reporting, benchmarks and indicators. The overall coordination of the implementation of the dual approach of gender mainstreaming and specific measures is now in the hands of the European Commission, and it is up to the member states to react and participate. As there are no sanctions in place for countries that fail to implement the gender policies under this approach, the Commission’s role is mainly to provide them with tools and information, and oversee the overall progress.

1.2 Problem Formulation

When the dual approach of gender mainstreaming and specific actions was adopted it was seen as a response to the failures of gender equality policies under the community method, and was expected to offer "new understandings of 'the problem' and of 'the solution'. It moved away from a primary focus on legal rights and individual claims for equal treatment, towards gender mainstreaming that has "helped to refocus attention on issues of political participation and, more generally, to raise issues about governance and participatory modes of democracy". Furthermore, the introduction of gender mainstreaming aimed at including more actors into the gender equality process, i.e. policy makers, service providers and civil society groups and employers.

Not everybody agrees that the new approach has lived up to the praising it has received. Sophie Jacquot points out that although gender mainstreaming was seen as being promising in the beginning; the story is not the same today, as many see it now as being a disappointment. She is worried that the institutionalisation of gender mainstreaming is lacking the critical feminist or gender studies standpoint, seeing that the implementation is now in the hands of administrations while the influence of gender equality experts and women's groups has been weakened. Rósa Erlingsdóttir and Lilja Mósesdóttir are also concerned about the manner of implementation and that "the work in the field of gender equality is mostly managed by public officials,

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5 Beveridge and Velluti (2008): 2
6 Beveridge and Velluti (2008): 3
7 Jacquot (2010): 120
whereby external actors such as academic experts and the women’s movement play a limited role.” They point out that the people in charge of the implementation are usually provided with very little power and insufficient funding, “and in some cases [are] unaware of the problems at stake concerning women’s representation, gender segregation and the pay gap”. Erlingsdóttir and Mósesdóttir are also concerned about the concept of gender mainstreaming and how that message has been brought across. They point out the lack of empirical analysis on how gender mainstreaming has been implemented so far. They furthermore argue that much is left unclear, for example that the “[d]efinitions of the concept are in most cases vague and all-encompassing leaving considerable room for interpretations. Hence, there is a lot of confusion about what the concept actually means and how it should be put into practice”. Jill Rees shares Erlingsdóttir and Mósesdóttir's concerns about the concept and idea of gender mainstreaming. She argues that despite the endorsement of gender mainstreaming “there remains considerable confusion as to what gender mainstreaming is and there has been uneven development in the adoption of gender mainstreaming tools”. She points out that the different overlapping official definitions of gender mainstreaming create confusion, especially among those responsible for implementing it.

1.3. Aim and Research Question

It is clear that there exist many contesting opinions on whether the EU is dealing with questions related to gender equality in a successful manner. What I am mainly concerned with, is how the lack of sanctions and legal measures towards the member states influences how the problem with gender inequalities is represented in EU’s gender policies. As was mentioned above, the implementation of gender policies now primarily rests upon political participation. From that I draw the assumption, that without the political will of current member states’ governments, the implementation of gender mainstreaming and gender equality strategies will be dismissed. My hypothesis is thus, that in order for the member states to make EU’s gender equality agenda a political matter, the representations of the problem in the policies need to

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8 Mósesdóttir and Erlingsdóttir (2005): 517
9 Mósesdóttir and Erlingsdóttir (2005): 513
10 Rees (2005): 555
11 Rees (2005: 556)
be tailored to fit the overall agenda of the EU and the main political priorities of the member states.

The aim of this study is therefore to test this hypothesis, and analyse how the problem of gender inequalities is represented in EU’s current gender equality policy.

1.4. Theoretical Framework

1.4.1. Carol Lee Bacchi - What’s the Problem represented to be?

Carol Lee Bacchi has developed an approach to policy analysis that is appropriate for this study, an approach called What’s the Problem (represented to be)¿. The main focus of her approach is on how the problem itself is represented and what lies beneath. She bases it on the idea that "how we perceive or think about something will affect what we think ought to be done about it", and that "every policy proposal contains within it an explicit or implicit diagnosis of the 'problem', which [she] calls a problem representation". She therefore finds it vital that the analyst "includes identification and assessment of problem representations" and she argues "that every postulated 'solution' has built into it a particular representation of what the problem is, and it is these representations, and their implications, we need to discuss". Bacchi’s post-structuralist approach allows the analyst to study how the use of language and the discourse surrounding a given problem representation affects the way in which the problem is understood, and what possible presuppositions and assumptions underlies it. Further, the analyst reflects upon which solution lies in the problem representation, and how the effects differ when some things are seen as problematic while other things are left unproblematic.

The What’s the Problem? Approach is a social constructionist one, as it suggests "that it is impossible to contact an interpretation-free reality". Bacchi argues, that any description or representation of a problem is a “material for analysis rather than presumed truth or even presumed beliefs”14, since “all we have access to are contested claims about the existence and nature of social problems.”15 The approach has mainly been criticized for lacking objectivity and for focusing on the problem

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12 Bacchi (1999): 1
13 Bacchi (1999): 21
14 Bacchi (1999): 48
15 Bacchi (1999): 59
representations, which those that disagree with the post-structuralist method, find to be irrelevant in the policy analysis process. Bacchi however argues that the definition of the problem cannot be understood as value-free or as a simple objective fact. She insists that “no political actor, neither analyst nor theorist, stands outside these processes”, but rather, “that we are all implicated in the structuring discourses of our era and our cultures”. Bacchi notes that values are a key ingredient in discourse, “marshalled to assign meaning and to designate roles”, and she takes as an example, that labelling abortion moral or ethical is in itself a value labelling.\footnote{Bacchi (1999): 48} The What’s Problem? Approach, thus emphasises the “implications which flow from a particular representation or interpretations” and argues that these implications “have effects on people’s lives, effects which need to be commented on and assessed”.\footnote{Bacchi (1999): 54} The approach creates the possibility to take up these issues, and encourages the analyst to reflect upon “the overall shape of policy initiatives, what they encompass and what they leave out”.\footnote{Bacchi (1999): 63} The What’s the Problem? Approach thus implies that the role of the analyst is to “(1) reflect upon the shape of claims made about social problems; (2) consider the implications which flow from the shape of these claims; and (3) reflect upon what is missing from the shape of some claims and what implications follow from this.”\footnote{Bacchi (1999): 59}

1.4.2. Sylvia Walby - Theory on Patriarchy

Another theory, that I will base my analysis on, is Sylvia Walby’s theory on patriarchy. According to her, many writers before have seeked to explain gender inequalities as being related to one causal element. "For instance, violence is considered central by Brownmiller (1976), Hanmer (1978), Stanko (1985) and others. Institutional heterosexuality is considered central by Rich (1980) and MacKinnon (1982). Others, such as Hartmann (1979), in her analysis of segregation, consider paid work to be central."\footnote{Walby (1990): 13} According to Walby, relying on only one causal element when explaining gender inequalities makes it difficult to explain and understand variation and change. Walby therefore solves this problem with her theory on patriarchy, which includes more than one causal base. She thus argues that “there are six main structures

\footnotesize{\begin{itemize}
\item \footnote{Bacchi (1999): 48}
\item \footnote{Bacchi (1999): 54}
\item \footnote{Bacchi (1999): 63}
\item \footnote{Bacchi (1999): 59}
\item \footnote{Walby (1990): 13}
\end{itemize}}
which make up a system of patriarchy: paid work, housework, sexuality, culture, violence and the state”, and that “[t]he interrelationships between these create different forms of patriarchy”.  

Walby argues that this theory is realist, “in the sense that it is engaged in an identification of the underlying structures of social life”, and she argues that there are “deep social structures, the discovery of which is key to our understanding of gender relations”.  Walby defines patriarchy “as a system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women”. She however makes it clear that this cannot be generalised for each and every individual, which is why her use of the term social structures is very important. It implies the "rejection both of biological determinism, and the notion that every individual man is not in a dominant position and every woman in a subordinate one". She explains, that in relation to each of the structures “it is possible to identify sets of patriarchal practices which are less deeply sedimented”. Further it is important to note that “[t]he six structures have causal effects upon each other, both reinforcing and blocking, but are relatively autonomous”, and that they are “real, deep structures and necessary to capture the variation in gender relations in Western societies”.

1.5. Method and Material

The aim of this study is to answer the question: What is the problem with gender inequalities represented to be in EU’s Strategy for Equality between Women and Men, 2010-2015? The method used for this case study is to analyse EU’s abovementioned strategy, with Bacchi’s What’s the Problem? Approach. Through the approach, I will also include a comparison of the problem representations in the EU strategy with Walby’s theory on the patriarchy.

For the past decade, the EU has developed and adopted several documents where gender equality policies have been included. The main documents though being EU’s Roadmap for Equality between women and men, 2006-2010, and the follow-up

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21 Walby (1990): 16  
22 Walby (1990): 19  
23 Walby (1990): 20  
24 Walby (1990): 20  
26 Commission of European Communities (2006)
document, EU’s *Strategy for Equality between women and men, 2010-2015*. As analysing all of EU’s gender policies would be a very extensive project, I will limit my analysis to EU’s latest and current gender policy document, the *Strategy for Equality between women and men, 2010-2015*.

The details of Bacchi’s approach were explained above, but in order to structure the analysis, I will follow a set of questions that Bacchi has suggested as guidelines for What’s the Problem? Analysis:

- “What is the problem of (domestic violence, abortion etc.) represented to be, either in a specific policy debate or in a specific policy proposal?
- What presuppositions or assumptions underlie this representation?
- What effects are produced by this representation? How are subjects constituted within it? What is likely to change? What is likely to stay the same? Who is likely to benefit from this representation?
- What is left unproblematic in this representation?
- How would “responses” differ if the “problem” were thought about or represented differently?”

To further structure the analysis, I will divide it according to Walby’s six patriarchal structures. Each chapter will therefore cover issues that are relevant under each issue, according to Walby’s definition of them. As Walby’s theory, to a large extend, is able to capture and explain the whole spectrum of the social structure that produces gender inequalities, I find it to be relevant to structure reflections on what is seen as problematic and what is left unproblematic.

### 1.6. Reliability and Validity

By closely describing all steps in the research and interpretation process, as well as making the language and structure as accessible and understandable as possible, I can ensure the reliability of the study. With reference to validity, the case I have chosen for analysis is EU’s latest document on equality between women and men. This is EU’s gender equality policy for 2010-2015, and it is therefore a highly relevant case.

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for the study that focuses on how the problem with gender inequality is represented in EU policies. Furthermore, for these reasons, the results of the study can be treated as a general analysis of how the EU deals with questions related to gender equality.
Part II – Analysis of EU’s Strategy for Equality between Women and Men (2010-2015)

2.1. Gender Inequalities related to the Household

- What is the problem of gender inequalities within the household represented to be in EU’s Strategy for Equality between Women and Men 2010-2015?

In EU’s strategy, gender inequalities within the household are mainly represented from an employability perspective, that is, how the family and the household affect women's ability to take part in the labour market and develop their career. The obvious underlying assumption of these problem representations is that there is a tension between paid work and the household when it comes to getting as many people as possible to participate in the labour market, and to have independent income. Thus, the presupposition is that there exist economic challenges connected to household and women.

What is seen as problematic in these representations, and how are subjects constituted within them?

In the introduction to the strategy it is stated, that "[p]arenthood keeps female employment rates down, and women continue to work more unpaid hours than men at home". Firstly, it is parenthood that keeps female employment rates down, i.e. parenthood is considered the problem in this particular representation. Secondly, women continue to work more unpaid hours than men at home. This formulation of the text leads us to believe that the problem there is women, as they are in the role of the 'doer'. The subject women is constituted in this manner in more cases, for example it is stated, that "[m]any women feel that they still have to chose between a career and their children", and further, that "[t]he impact of parenthood on labour market participation is still very different for women and men in the EU today because women continue to shoulder a disproportionate part of the responsibilities involved.

28 The European Commission (2010): 3 [bold letters are my changes]
in running a family." Can the solution then be, that women should stop continuing to work more unpaid hours than men, should stop feeling that they have to choose between the household and a career, and should stop shouldering the larger part of household responsibilities? One might find this to be a very simple analysis of the text, but as the strategy never explains what causes women to act in this manner; it remains difficult to understand the meaning of the representation in a different way. Furthermore, if the underlying assumption of the problem representations would in fact be that there does exist a social structure or another reason that causes women to act in this way, it would be more appropriate to rephrase the sentences and state for example, that women are forced to continue/ to choose/ to shoulder etc. This is important for the analysis, as it highly influences the effects that are being produced by these problem representations.

But what is left unproblematic in this representation? Would the effects or the responses differ if the problem would be represented differently?

According to Walby, the household makes up one of the six structures of the patriarchy, that interacts with the other structures and systematically reproduces gender inequalities. Her definition of the household structure, is that "it is through these that women's household labour is expropriated by their husbands or cohabites", and further, that "[t]he woman may receive her maintenance in exchange for her labour, especially when she is not also engaged in waged labour". Most importantly she sees the household to be integral to the social structure, and writes that "[h]ousewives are the producing class, while husbands are the expropriating class".

It is very clear when analysing EU's strategy, that unlike Walby's theories, there exists no assumption that these gender inequalities are integrated in a social structure. Surely, the strategy sees gender inequalities within the household as having a negative impact on the labour market, however, it fails to see the social structure as a whole. An example of this, is that the strategy only addresses the effects the household has on the labour market, but doesn't turn the example around, and so doesn't acknowledge that the inequalities within the labour market also have negative impact on equality within the household. This is obvious in the example mentioned above,

29 The European Commission (2010): 4 [bold letters, my changes]
30 Walby (1990): 21
that "[p]arenthood keeps female rates down". The problem in this presentation is parenthood; when it is to a large extent the structure of the labour market that places obstacles for women with children, and consequently keeps female employment rates down. As the patriarchal structure is left unproblematic, it is not likely that things will change or that women will benefit from EU's representation. That is, if the solution is to take some of the household responsibilities out of women's hands and get them into the labour market, it is not likely to be successful while the structural discrimination still exists both within the household and on the labour market. Furthermore, what is also left unproblematic, is the situation of men. Walby makes it clear that "[h]ousewives are the producing class, while husbands are the expropriating class", meaning that there exists a very unequal power (in)balance. The strategy makes no references to the position of men, and thus leaves it unproblematic. It is only seen as problematic that women do take on most of the unpaid work and responsibilities in the household, but it is never seen as problematic that men don't. The effects of the representation would surely be different if it would be stated that "men do not shoulder household responsibilities", or that "men continue not to work unpaid hours at home".

2.2. Gender Inequalities related to Paid Work

- What is the problem of gender inequalities related to paid work represented to be in EU’s Strategy for Equality between Women and Men 2010-2015?

The problem with gender inequalities in relation paid work has very similar presuppositions as the problems represented within the household, and much of the issues connected to paid work in EU's policy have already been dealt with in the previous chapter. The underlying ideas and assumptions in the representations dealt with here, are that women need to take part in the labour market in a more effective and efficient manner, in order for the EU to achieve the overall goals of the union. Gender inequalities in relation to paid work are therefore seen as being problematic because they pose economic challenges for the union, and the main goal is to get women to take part in developing the economy.
What is seen as problematic in these representations, and how are subjects constituted within them? As mentioned previously, the current economic challenges are EU's biggest concern. In the introduction to the strategy it says, that "[i]n order to achieve the objectives of Europe 2020\textsuperscript{31}, namely smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, the potential and the talent pool of women need to be used more extensively and more efficiently".\textsuperscript{32} What is mostly interesting here is that gender inequalities within the labour market are primarily seen as being problematic for \textit{economic growth}, instead of mainly being seen as problematic for the lives of \textit{women}.

Firstly, what most of these problem representations mention is the low employment rate of women, since one of the objectives of the EU2020 strategy is to reach 75\% employment rate for both women and men. But why is the low employment rate of women seen as problematic? In the beginning of the chapter that focuses on paid work it is mentioned that "[e]conomic independence is a prerequisite for enabling both women and men to exercise control over their lives and to make genuine choices". This argument, which refers to the importance of \textit{equal opportunities} for women and men, is however challenged with another argument in the next paragraph that is much less concerned with \textit{equal opportunities} and \textit{economic independence}, and more concerned with the \textit{economic and financial impact}. It is stated that "[g]etting more women on to the labour market helps counterbalance the effects of a shrinking working-age population, thereby reducing the strain on public finances and social protection systems, widening the human capital base and raising competitiveness".\textsuperscript{33} The problem is thus that \textit{the labour market needs more people} and that unemployed women are a \textit{social and financial burden} for the state. In the context of low employment rate it is mentioned that "particular attention needs to be given to the labour market participation of older women, single parents, women with a disability, migrant women and women with ethnic minorities".\textsuperscript{34} From this, it is obvious that women who also face other forms of discrimination are mostly being under-represented on the labour market, and thus seen as being the main problem factor. The specific obstacles for these groups are not listed, however it is mentioned that the employment rate of migrant women is especially low, and that they need specific

\begin{thebibliography}{999}
\item \textsuperscript{31} [EU2020 is EU's overall political strategy towards the year 2020] COM(2010) 2020.
\item \textsuperscript{32} The European Commission (2010): 3
\item \textsuperscript{33} The European Commission (2010): 4
\item \textsuperscript{34} The European Commission (2010): 4 [Italic letters, my changes]
\end{thebibliography}
support. Then it is stated that "[m]aking them more aware of their rights and facilitating their integration and access to education and health care is crucial". It is positive that the problem here is moved away from being connected to the inactivity of the women themselves and in turn directed towards the member states that need to facilitate integration and access.

Secondly, many of the problem representations of gender inequalities related to paid work focus on inequalities within the labour market, that is, gender segregation and the gender pay gap. It is acknowledged that "[t]he root causes of the gender pay gap extend well beyond the question of equal pay for equal work", and that "there is a gap between women's educational attainment and professional development, which means that special attention should be paid to the transition between education and the labour market". Without acknowledging that there exist patriarchal structures that systematically produce gender inequalities, there are still examples such as this one where a link is being made. However, the text goes on stating that "[t]he causes of the pay gap also derive from segregation in the labour market as women and men still tend to work in different sectors/jobs". Explaining the labour market segregation as a male/female tendency really undermines the fact that women don't have equal access to all sectors/jobs. Furthermore, it is written that "[m]any women work part-time or under atypical contracts: although this permits them to remain in the labour market while managing family responsibilities, it can have negative impact on their pay, career development, promotion prospects and pensions". This representation of the problem includes many unclarities. Do women want to work part-time or under atypical contracts? When it is written that this permits them to remain in the labour market it sounds as if part time work and atypical contracts are an opportunity for women, again undermining the fact that many women are forced to work less paid work due to inequalities within the household. It is a very strange statement to claim that part-time work can have negative impact on their "pay, career development, promotion prospects and pensions", when it is very clear that it does, and that it is a problem.

35 The European Commission (2010): 4
36 The European Commission (2010): 6 [bold letters, my changes]
37 The European Commission (2010): 6 [bold letters, my changes]
What effects are produced by these representations? What is likely to change/stay the same? And who is likely to benefit?

When reflecting upon which effects are produced by these representations I wouldn't look at what is included in them, but rather what is not included. These representations only address economic challenges, and the fact that women don't contribute enough to the economy. The effect the labour market discrimination has on individuals is being dismissed, the inequalities within the labour market are being undermined and thus left unproblematic. Painting such a picture of the situation can only have negative effect on the understanding of the problem at hand. It is difficult to see whether the goal of this part of the strategy is in fact to improve the situation of equality between men and women, as it mainly comes down to tackling economic challenges. Telling who is likely to benefit from this strategy thus remains difficult.

Walby's definition of the patriarchal structure of paid work is that "[a] complex form of patriarchal closure within waged labour exclude women from the better forms of work and segregate them into the worse jobs which are deemed to be less skilled". Walby thus explains the gender segregation as being formed by the patriarchal structures where women are excluded from the better jobs. As mentioned above, the EU strategy dismisses any such structure, and refers to the gender segregation as a male/female tendency to choose different jobs/sectors. This is an issue that the strategy clearly leaves unproblematic. Related to this, is that the benefitting position of men in accessing better jobs and developing on the labour market is never being referred to, thus the fact that men occupy the better jobs/sectors and do not take on as much unpaid work, is also left unproblematic. As the strategy doesn't acknowledge the patriarchal system of structures that produce gender inequalities, it fails to acknowledge obstacles related to paid work caused by other structures. An example by Walby, is how the patriarchal structures of sexuality and violence interact with the labour market structures, i.e. that "sexual harassment acts both to control women with work and to exclude women from certain types of work. [...] This is when sexual harassment is used by men to prevent women from entering a field of employment which has previously been all male".

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38 Walby (1990): 21
39 Walby (1990): 52
Walby poses three questions she finds mostly relevant when it comes to discussing gender inequalities related to paid work: Why do women typically earn less than men? Why do women engage in less paid work than men? Why do women do different jobs from men? EU’s strategy acknowledges that women typically earn less than men, that they engage in less paid work than men, and that they do different jobs. However, those questions are mainly being answered with references to women’s responsibilities within the household, as mentioned both in this chapter and the previous one. Walby disagrees with such simplification of the issue. According to her findings, "[t]he labour market is more important and the family less important as the determinant of women’s labour force participation than is conventionally assumed". She agrees that it surely is true "that a women today considering employment decisions will be constrained by her domestic circumstances", however she argues that it "does not not provide an explanation of the structures which constrain a women’s ‘choice’", and that it "does not explain why women do not have the same access as men to the better jobs". Thus, according to her, the causal link between the labour market and the family, to a large extend, doesn’t go in the direction as conventionally assumed, as is the case in EU’s strategy. The direction rather goes from the labour market to the family, due to numerous obstacles for women to access and participate in the labour market, also caused by the other patriarchal structures.

2.3. Gender Inequalities related to Culture/ Cultural Institutions

- What is the problem of gender inequalities related to culture represented to be in EU’s Strategy for Equality between Women and Men 2010-2015?

Gender inequalities related to culture or cultural institutions are relatively little touched upon in EU’s strategy. The problem representations within the strategy that are relevant under this heading are those that mention gender roles and the cultural institution of education. Gender inequalities related to culture can be found difficult to observe and act upon, as they are to a large extend based upon normative ideas and ideologies that influence all aspects of society, and thus are more easily explained if

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40 Walby (1990): 25
41 Walby (1990): 56
42 Walby (1990): 57
there is an assumption that there exists a structural production of inequalities throughout the different spheres of society. There is an underlying assumption in EU’s strategy, that for example there exist gender roles that highly influence the lives of individuals and the society, and that need to be eliminated. However, this notion is barely visible in the different parts of the strategy, and thus I think that a presupposition to this problem is that the problem surely exists, but that it is too complex or controversial to address in a sufficient manner.

What is seen as problematic in these representations? How are subjects constituted within them and what effects do they produce?

Gender roles and gender stereotypes are not tackled as a specific topic in the strategy, but in the chapter 'Horizontal Issues' it is stated, that “[r]igid gender roles can hamper individual choices and restrict the potential of both women and men. Promoting non-discriminatory gender roles in all areas of live such as education, career choices, employment and sport is thus an essential contribution towards gender equality”\textsuperscript{43}. Firstly, the reference that the roles can hamper individual choices, rejects the patriarchal structures and the systematic productions of gender inequalities. The problem with gender roles are instead represented as an individual problem, that might happen to some and not others. Secondly, in the sentence that follows, it strikes me how much importance this specific problem receives, as it is being referred to as essential contribution towards gender equality. This statement makes me wonder why the issue doesn’t get more attention in the strategy, and especially why the influence on education, career choices and employment hasn’t been included as an example in the problem representations related to paid work, for example to further explain the male/female tendency to chose jobs/sectors of different wage and value. The topic is surely titled as being a ‘horizontal issue’, but it would be more effective to then include it ‘horizontally’ in the strategy. In the introduction to the strategy, the problem of gender roles is presented in a similar manner, where it says that “[g]ender roles continue to influence crucial individual decisions: on education, on career paths, on working arrangements, on family and on fertility“. However, the paragraph continues stating, that “[t]hese decisions in turn have an impact on the economy and society. It is therefore in everyone’s interest to offer genuine choices equally for women and

\textsuperscript{43}The European Commission (2010): 10 [bold letters, my changes]
men throughout the different stages of their lives. There, the individual problem is made a social problem, and even seen as a structure that influences individuals throughout the different stages of their lives. There is still the constant need to underline the negative impact on the economy prior to other problems. The decisions have an impact on the economy and society, as if the economy wouldn’t be included when a reference is being made to the society. Further, it is therefore in everyone’s interest to fix the problem. Is it because of the economic challenges or social challenges? The word therefore refers to both; however the formulation can have different meanings, depending on what catches the attention of the reader, and thus is important when discussing the effects of the representation.

The cultural institution of education is the other example that is relevant mentioning under this heading. Education plays a very little role in the strategy. Access to education and gender inequalities within education are not mentioned specifically, and in fact only mentioned in the examples on gender roles, and in relation to paid work. In the discussion on the problems of the pay gap, it is stated that “[t]here is a gap between women’s educational attainment and professional development, thus special attention should be paid to the transition between education and the labour market.”

Firstly, education is only mentioned in relation to the labour market, but education in general, as an institution influencing the choices and lives of individuals, receives little attention and is not included in any solution or action. Secondly, the link between women’s educational attainment and professional development is only seen as problematic, but not the link between men’s educational attainment and professional development. Men play a dominant role in the labour market, especially in the ‘better’ jobs/sectors and higher positions, but at the same time men have lower educational attainment than women in the EU. Shouldn’t it then be understood that the link between educational attainment and professional development can only explain the gender inequalities in the labour market to a very little extent. The effects produced by this representation of the problem would be different if the problem was that the link between educational attainment and the professional development in the labour market is gender biased, benefitting men more than women.

44 The European Commission (2010): 3 [bold letters, my changes]
45 The European Commission (2010): 6 [bold letters, my changes]
What is left unproblematic in these representations? What is likely to change/ stay the same? And who is likely to benefit?

According to Walby, [i]deas about masculinity and femininity are to be found in all areas of social relations; they are part of the actions which go to make up the patriarchal structure”. She is mainly concerned with the questions of “how individuals come to adopt personal identities as masculine or feminine, and how the content of these are determined”. Furthermore, she finds these to be “significant for the generation of a variety of gender-differentiated forms of subjectivity”. What is included within her definition of the structure is thus a composition “of a set of institutions which create the representation of women within a patriarchal gaze in a variety of arenas, such as religions, education and the media”. 47

2.4. Gender Inequalities related to Violence

- What is the problem of gender inequalities related to violence represented to be in EU’s Strategy for Equality between Women and Men 2010-2015?

EU’s strategy acknowledges the problem that there exists gender-based violence. The strategy however doesn’t go much into explaining what the problem is, but rather refers to directives and other legal tools that the EU has adopted. Furthermore, a conclusion in the strategy is to adopt an “EU-wide strategy on combating violence against women”. The matter is thus barely covered, and saved until later.

What is seen as problematic in these representations? How are subjects constituted within them and what effects do they produce?

The only mentioning of violence in the strategy is this paragraph: “There are many forms of violence that women experience because they are women. These include domestic violence, sexual harassment, rape, sexual violence during conflict and harmful customary or traditional practices such as female genital mutilation, forced marriages and honour crimes.” The fact that it is noted that there are many forms of violence that women experience because they are women, shows that gender-based violence is both acknowledged and accepted as a problem. There is however no actual

46 Walby (1990): 90
47 Walby (1990): 21
48 The European Commission (2010): 8 [bold letters, my changes]
problem representation, and neither the causes nor effects of gender-based violence are addressed in the strategy. There is therefore also no reference to violence as a factor influencing the problem with gender inequalities in other topics, such as household or paid work.

What is left unproblematic in these representations? What is likely to change/ stay the same? And who is likely to benefit?

Walby is more direct when addressing the issue of violence, and thus refers to it as "male violence against women". What this includes is “rape, sexual assault, wife beating, workplace sexual harassment and child sexual abuse”. When comparing this list to the acts mentioned in EU’s strategy, (i.e. domestic violence, sexual harassment, rape, sexual violence during conflict and harmful customary or traditional practices such as female genital mutilation, forced marriages and honour crimes), much is similar, but a difference that is worth mentioning, is that the latter part of acts mentioned in the EU strategy, are issues which are traditionally linked to migrants and cultural minorities in Europe. Walby does not mention actions that are typically not linked to western culture, but however mentions acts that have traditionally been seen as ‘private’ and not ‘political’. Walby argues that male violence should be considered as one of the six patriarchal structures, “despite its apparently individualistic and diverse form”. She notes, that “[m]ale violence is widely considered to be individually motivated and with few social consequences though with the trauma caused to a few women”, and that “[i]t is the last place to which most people would look as a typical example of social patterning of the relations between men and women”. Walby strongly disagrees with this, and those that dismiss violence as being a key factor on the grounds that it is too marginal and individually based, and argues “that male violence against women has all the characteristics one would expect of a social structure, and that it cannot be understood outside an analysis of patriarchal social structures.”

If we compare EU’s strategy to Walby’s theories on violence, we can say that many issues are left unproblematic, although the EU has acknowledged the issue. The fact that neither the causes nor effects of the problem are touched upon in the strategy,

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49 Walby (1990): 21
50 Walby (1990): 128
either tells me that the EU has little knowledge on the issue, or that the topic is too sensitive or controversial for the EU to be able to address the problems sufficiently in this strategy. This could be related to Walby’s statement, that it is uncommon that male violence against women is seen “as a typical example of social patterning of the relations between men and women”. Furthermore, when it comes to defining the problem, causes and effects of male violence against women, Walby proposes an alternative approach: “[T]o adopt the definition of women themselves” as it “captures more than any other method the extent of the impact of violence on women”.51

2.5. Gender Inequalities related to Sexuality

- What is the problem of gender inequalities related to sexuality represented to be in EU’s Strategy for Equality between Women and Men 2010-2015?

Gender inequalities related to sexuality are not included in the strategy, neither directly nor indirectly. Sexual harassment and violence was mentioned in the list of acts that are seen as being problematic, however that was categorized under violence, in accordance to Walby’s definition of each structure. I will though note that these are overlapping issues, as the structures interact. As gender inequalities related to sexuality are left out of the strategy, I will start this analysis with references to Walby’s definition on the patriarchal structure of sexuality, to inform the reader which issues it refers to. That will lead me to the discussion on what is left unproblematic, and then reflections on why that might be the case, and which effects it can have.

The questions Walby poses within this structure are mostly related to women’s sexuality and sexual orientation, for example “[w]hy are women criticized for forms of sexual conduct for which men are considered positively?” and “[w]hy do some people prefer sexual contact with people of the same sex and some with the other sex?” Walby notes that the answer to these questions is far from being simple as there exist many different theories and ideas, and that some see it as being the foundation of men’s control over women while others leave it untouched. Sexuality is therefore “either irrelevant or central to most analyses of social relations”.52 On gender

51 Walby (1990): 129
52 Walby (1990): 109
inequalities related to women’s sexuality today, Walby takes the standpoint of radical 
feminism. She argues that “[t]here has been a move away from the more rigid private 
form of control of women’s sexuality towards one that is freer and more public”.

What she refers to there is the double standard, that is, the sexual liberation of women 
that has both positive and negative consequences, as it has opened the gates for the 
expansion of the major industry of pornography, which “incitement to sexual hatred 
and abuse of women is highly problematic for women”. 53

In relation to Walby’s question on sexual orientation, she argues that heterosexuality 
is an important patriarchal structure that interacts with other structures, for example 
the gender inequalities within the household and the family. She agrees with radical 
feminism that heterosexuality is not only an individual preference, but a socially 
constructed institution, and central to the patriarchal structure of sexuality. “This 
reverses the traditional practice of setting up lesbianism and male homosexuality as 
unusual and in need of explanation, an approach predicated upon heterosexuality as 
the norm and hence not in need of explanation”. 54

As previously stated, the EU strategy makes no references to gender inequalities 
related to sexuality. That can either be for the same reasons as mentioned in the 
chapter on violence, that there is little knowledge on the issue, or that it is too 
controversial and sensitive to be tackled in such a strategy. To add to the latter 
explanation, perhaps the gender inequalities connected to sexuality are seen as being 
private and thus not political.

What effects are being produced by not including the problems of gender inequalities 
related to sexuality? What is likely to change, and who is likely to benefit?

Firstly, I find it strange, that the strategy dismisses the issue of sexual orientation and 
heterosexuality, an issue highly related to the question on gender. Ironically, the 
strategy itself is extremely heteronormative, as it is titled “Strategy for equality 
between women and men”, and dismisses the fact that gender and gender inequalities 
go beyond women and men. The strategy should for example have included sexual 
orientation and heteronormativity in the part on gender roles, and in relation to ideas 
on masculinity/femininity within the household and the family. The one’s who are

53 Walby (1990): 127
54 Walby (1990): 119
likely to benefit from the exclusion of this problem from EU’s strategy, are most likely those governments, politicians or groups that hold high conservative, heteronormative ideas about sexuality and the construction of the family. However, if EU’s strategy would have included the matter, it could have been understood as an encouragement for the social and political acceptance of other sexual orientations than the heterosexual ‘norm’. But that is an opportunity the EU decided to pass, probably to avoid an uncomfortable debate or prevent possible dismissals of the strategy.

The second issue brought up, was related to the exploitation of women through the extreme pornification of the society, especially in relation to culture and media, where women are degraded and violated through harsh stereotypical images of their bodies and sexuality. How can it be, that a problem of this size and visibility, is dismissed by the EU? The fast expansion of the pornographic industry can partly be explained by constant or increased demand from society. Is that why the EU leaves it unproblematic? Is it perhaps because of the huge financial amounts the industry makes every single day? Or because it increases the employment rate of women in the EU? Is it OK to exploit women’s sexuality in this way?

These issues that are related to sexuality are possibly the most serious matters the strategy chooses to leave unproblematic. Whatever the reason may be, silencing these two major issues can only have negative consequences, and only benefit those that continue to make the problem grow.

2.6. Gender Inequalities related to the State

- What is the problem of the state represented to be in EU’s Strategy for Equality between Women and Men 2010-2015?

What I will include under the heading of the state, firstly EU’s references to gender inequalities within decision-making, and secondly, discussions on the state as a patriarchal structure. Note however, that when discussing decision-making, there are references to both the state and the labour market, however as they are discussed as one entity in the strategy I will include both under this heading, for the sake of better consistency in my analysis. The presupposition of the problem representations on
decision-making are similar to what has previously been the case under the other headings, that equality in decision-making will ensure economic gains.

What is seen as problematic in these representations? How are subjects constituted within them and what effects do they produce?

The strategy includes a chapter that is fully dedicated to *Equality in Decision-Making*, which is positive, as the under-representation of women in the high and most influential positions remains a huge obstacle for the overall gender equality within politics and the labour market. In the beginning of the chapter it is stated, that “women continue to be under-represented in decision-making, despite the fact that they make up nearly half the workforce and more than half of new university graduates in the EU”. This formulation is similar to what was common in the first two chapters on the household and paid work. The problem is that *women continue* to be under-represented, instead of writing that *women still are* under-represented, or that *men continue* to be *over-represented* in decision-making. The problem is thus something that *women are doing/not doing*. The latter part of the sentence only strengthens this representation of the problem, as it is stated that women continue to be under-represented *despite the fact that they make up nearly half the workforce and more than half of new university graduates*. Why do women continue to be under-represented when *they still make up* nearly half of the workforce and more than half new university graduates? This formulation makes it sound that since women are sufficiently represented in the workforce and in universities, they shouldn’t *continue to be under-represented*. To me it sounds as if the behaviour of women remains a mystery to the EU, as x doesn’t make y. Especially, since there is no further attempt to explain *why* they are under-represented. Furthermore, there are no reflections upon *why men continue to be over-represented although they only make up half of the workforce and less than half of university graduates*. This fact isn’t represented as a mystery to the EU, perhaps since it isn’t a mystery, just an explanation left untouched. Further in the text, the economic perspective comes in strong. Firstly, it is stated, that “[t]he prevailing gender imbalance in science and research is still a major obstacle to the European objective of increasing competitiveness and maximising innovation potential”, and secondly, in case of someone not understanding *why* the unequal distribution of women and men in decision-making is a *problem* in the first place, the
EU kindly informs the doubtful readers that “[r]esearch shows that gender diversity pays off, and that there is a positive correlation between women in leadership positions and business performance”. 55 Good to know! I just mentioned above that there is no further attempt to explain why women are under-represented in decision-making, but from this statement, it is possible to draw the conclusion that one of the x-factors is the assumption that women are worse leaders than men.

What is left unproblematic in these representations? What is likely to change/ stay the same? And who is likely to benefit?

What is left unproblematic in this representation, is firstly the position of men, as I just mentioned, and secondly the so-called glass-ceiling that prevents women from entering higher positions in decision-making both within politics and the labour market. The glass-ceiling consists of numerous obstacles to women, hindering them from climbing to the top of the ladder. For example, references could have been made to other gender inequalities mentioned in all the other chapters of the analysis, i.e. that women are in most cases held accountable for managing the household and the family; that women are forced to take up atypical contracts or part-time jobs (partly due to the idea that they are responsible for the household) that negatively impacts their career development; that the gender roles prevent women from entering leadership positions, as the stereotypical leader is traditionally seen as being a man; that the gender inequalities present throughout the cultural institution of education continues to be reproduced in the labour market; that the gender stereotypes affect the decisions of individuals to choose their path, which prevents women to enter science or research; that “sexual harassment acts both to control women with work and to exclude women from certain types of work [and] is used by men to prevent women from entering a field of employment which has previously been all male”56; and that the degrading image women portrayed by the sexual exploitation of women through the major industry of pornography and sexist advertising, reflects in continuous degrading in the labour market. These are just several examples that I can mention in relation to what I have brought up earlier in the analysis, and each of these problem representations can have different effects, as explained in the previous chapters.

55 The European Commission (2010): 7 [bold letters, my changes]
56 Walby (1990): 52
Women are surely not the ones that are benefitting from this representation, where women are described in a foolish way, for continuing to be under-represented in decision-making, despite the fact that they nearly stand equal with men when it comes to employment rates and number of university graduates. As if they have the same opportunities as men, but are just not playing the right cards. Furthermore, it is not benefitting women, that the EU feels the need to point out that the idea of women leaders, is in fact positive.

According to Walby the state is usually defined “either as a specific set of social institutions, as that body which has the monopoly over legitimate coercion in given territory, or in terms of its function, for instance, that body which maintains social cohesion in a class society”. In the previous definition she is referring to the Weberian tradition, and in the latter one she refers to Marxism. She though notes that “[m]ost accounts contain notions that the state is a centralized set of institutions that force is available to it as a form of power underpinning it, and that it is a focus for political interest”, and further that "[w]hile being a site of struggle and not a monolithic entity, the state has a systematic bias towards patriarchal interests in its policies and actions".

How is the state represented in EU’s strategy? It is relevant to finalise the analysis of the strategy by reflecting upon the level of responsibilities given to the state, as the actual implementation of it is in the hands of the European Commission and the EU member states. The underlying presupposition is that the state is only responsible for a minimum amount of interferences, in the form of for example, encouragement and awareness raising. At least that is the case when it comes to achieving gender equality. It is though very clear that the state is considered to have a great responsibility when it comes to reaching the economic goals of the EU2020 strategy, and to ensure that the economic sustainability and competitiveness of the EU as a whole is increased to reach the objectives. As the strategy doesn’t accept the notion of the social structure referred to here as the patriarchy, the direct connection to the state as a set of social institutions responsible for social cohesion also gets lost. The assumptions this brings, is for example that women and their activity/inactivity are

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57 Walby (1990): 150
58 Walby (1990): 21
often seen as the problem, but not the mechanisms within the society and the state’s institutions, that structurally reproduce gender inequalities. This overall notion is highly problematic for the goal of achieving gender equality, as it results in the root of the problems never being tackled, but only the surface. Furthermore, only the surface that is relevant for the political interests and priorities of the EU and the member states, at a given point in time.

2.7. From the Roadmap to the Strategy – What has changed?

As explained in the introduction to the study, the two main documents focusing on gender equality, that the EU has developed in the past decade, are EU’s Roadmap for Equality between women and men, 2006-2010, and the follow-up document, EU’s Strategy for Equality between women and men, 2010-2015. After analysing the strategy, I thought it would be interesting to briefly look at the Roadmap that the Strategy is supposed to follow up on, and see if there is anything there that is striking in comparison to what I have interpreted so far. The overall comment is that the Roadmap is much more explanatory than the Strategy, when it comes to defining the problems, and shows a better understanding of the gender inequalities at hand. However, the presuppositions underlying the Roadmap are also of economic nature, as it was written while the so called Lisbon Strategy was being implemented, which objectives were growth, employment and social cohesion. The Lisbon Strategy though has a slightly different and more diverse perspective on the social issues than the current EU2020 strategy, probably because the latter one is written as a response to the economic downturn. It refocuses the attention to the economic challenges, and thus prioritises social challenges that are caused by the current economic situation, such as unemployment and poverty that increase the risk of social exclusion.

There are several examples of problem representations in the Roadmap that differ from the ones in the Strategy, and therefore change the effects they produce. Firstly, the Roadmap does not represent women’s activity/inactivity as being the problem for the respective gender inequalities. Rather the problem’s are explained with formulations such as “women are confronted with”, “women are faced with”, or

59 Commission of the European Communities (2006)
60 http://europa.eu/scadplus/glossary/lisbon_strategy_en.htm
“women are forced to”. Secondly, men were hardly ever mentioned in the Strategy, but in the Roadmap the position of men is mentioned more frequently, such as when it is stated that “[f]ew men take parental leave or work part-time”, or that “[m]en should be encouraged to take up family responsibilities”. Thirdly, in the Roadmap there is a separate chapter titled “Eliminating Gender Stereotypes in Society”, while in the Strategy, this issue is only mentioned once under horizontal issues. The three sub-chapters focus on gender stereotypes in education, training and culture; gender stereotypes in the labour market; and gender stereotypes in the media. Fourthly, the representations of the problems in the Roadmap are more often backed-up with references to the other issues, showing that there is at least some understanding of intersectionality and the fact that the gender inequalities interact. However, overall the Roadmap dismisses the structures, and fails to touch upon the root of the problems, in the same manner as the Strategy does. To answer the question in the title: “What has changed?” my answer would be that the gender inequalities that remain difficult to explain, or are seen more as private and not political, such as culture and violence, have been reduced or removed in the Strategy. Perhaps, these issues were considered too complex or controversial in the Roadmap, leading the EU to remove them from the follow-up strategy, to make it more “user friendly” and avoid the strategy to be dismissed. Furthermore, women are increasingly becoming the scapegoat in the problem representations, while the men are found irrelevant, and the economic presupposition plays a much stronger role in the argumentations following the problem representations.
Part III – Conclusions

3.1. So, what is the problem represented to be?

Each of the chapters in the analysis has focused on answering this question by looking at specific issue one at a time. My overall conclusion of the analysis reflects the comments I repeatedly brought up throughout the strategy.

Firstly, the economic perspective that I have referred to numerous times above, occurs as a red thread throughout the strategy to remind the reader again and again why gender equality is important, in case if the fundamental right and equality of opportunities arguments aren’t strong enough to ensure that the strategy is taken seriously. Instead of aiming at achieving gender equality, economic challenges are repeatedly posed as being the main goal of the strategy, which undermines the real challenges a strategy for gender equality should be dealing with.

Secondly, when EU’s strategy is compared with Walby’s theory on patriarchy, it is obvious in almost all cases, that the EU never acknowledges the root of the problem, that is what causes this problem, and what makes it problematic. To quote myself from earlier in the analysis: “This overall notion is highly problematic for the goal of achieving gender equality, as it results in the root of the problems never being tackled, but only the surface. Furthermore, only the surface that is relevant for the political interests and priorities of the EU and the member states, at a given point in time”.

Thirdly, there are some issues, both I and Walby claim to be important when explaining gender inequalities that the strategy chooses to dismiss. These are particularly issues related to violence and sexuality. Women movements in the 1970s fought for the notion that the “private is political”, a slogan that has been famous ever since. I mentioned both in the part on violence and sexuality, that perhaps the division between on the one hand what is private, and therefore personal, and on the other hand what is public, and therefore political, can partly explain why some issues have been left untouched. Issues that have traditionally been considered as private, are usually also considered sensitive and controversial, which can also explain why the strategy leaves them out.
Fourthly, there are many references throughout the strategy where women are represented as being the problem. In contrast, men are hardly ever mentioned, meaning that their situation is left completely unproblematic. There is a big resistance against making men the scapegoats, or questioning the benefitting role the preserve in the society, so instead, gender equality is represented as being a women’s problem, relevant to women only.

3.2. Gender Equality for Smart, Sustainable Economy and Growth

In the beginning of the study I set out with the hypothesis, that in order for the member states to make EU’s gender equality agenda a political matter, the representations of the problem in the policies need to be tailored to fit the overall agenda of the EU and the main political priorities of the member states.

I tested this hypothesis throughout my analysis by asking the questions: What presuppositions or assumptions underlie this representation? What effects are produced by it? And who benefits from it? In the beginning of the conclusions I noted that the red thread in the strategy is the economic perspective and the goal of overcoming economic challenges. The current political agenda and main priority of the EU today, is to achieve the objectives of the EU 2020 strategy: smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. The EU 2020 strategy is being referred to several times in the strategy, and it’s economic or labour market related objectives are being pinpointed when found relevant. As I have found out with my analysis, that EU’s gender policies are tailored to fit the political priorities of the union, my hypothesis is right. What further confirms my hypothesis is the comparison I made with the Roadmap for Equality between Women and Men, 2006-2010. By briefly comparing the main results of my analysis with the Roadmap, it was clear that EU’s current strategy has a much stronger focus on economic challenges and growth, which in turn reflects the general move within EU’s political agenda.

3.3. Personal Reflections

The method and the theories I chose for carrying out this analysis have given me the possibility to encounter some very interesting results. Surely, other methods and theories could have been applied to study how the EU deals with questions related to gender equality, but when it comes to answering the research question and reflecting
upon the ideas I set out with, I believe I found a way that resulted in some highly relevant results. Bacchi’s approach wasn’t only good because it helped me unpacking and understanding the problem representations in EU’s strategy, but most importantly, as it also gives the analyst the task of reflecting upon what was left unproblematic or simply left out. Walby’s theory on the patriarchy was also extremely useful when carrying out that task and when it came to structuring the thesis in a way that allowed me to pose the overall picture of gender inequalities next to the picture painted in the strategy. Some issues that I encountered again and again when analysing the strategy - such as the fact that the EU never addresses the roots of the problem and the interaction of different structures – were partly made so visible due to effects of the mixed approach in my analysis. That is, the strategy has a very liberal and individualistic tone, so when being analysed with a post-structural approach (that has a focus on language and discourse), and being compared to gender inequalities represented in a realist structural theory, the results include some deep reflections and interesting interpretations that otherwise wouldn’t have been found. No one can claim to have the definite answer to how to analyse these very complicated social matters, but as long as the method allows me to find something really interesting, and the reliability and validity of the study is ensured, this approach is relevant.

An interesting follow-up on my study would be to make a research on the implementation of EU’s Strategy for Equality between Women and Men, at the member states’ level, and explore how the problems and the solutions that are represented in the strategy are interpreted and put into practice. An immediate problem that I see is however, that the member states are not obliged to report on their activities or progress in relation to the strategy in any ways, so it would be extremely difficult to find sufficient data, especially for a comparative research on the member states. A qualitative case study of the implementation in single EU state would still be very interesting, but then again, probably rather extensive and expensive.
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