

Presentation at  
the first Max  
Planck Summer  
School for  
Women in  
Political  
Economy,  
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Sept. 11-14, 2023

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Vienna & EUI  
(AY 2023-24)

Under the radar: women in  
(comparative) political economy

# Structure

1. CPE has a gender problem
2. The male world of CPE: substance & boundaries of the field
3. What do we need women in social sciences for?
4. Enlarging the CPE agenda: taking reproductive politics seriously

1. CPE has a gender problem

# CPE has a gender problem. What are we going to do about it?

← Tweet



Arianna Tassinari  
@Ari\_Tassinari

.@ManuMoschella at #SASE2022 @SASE\_Meeting points out the gender elephant in the CPE room: 50 ppl in the session on new growth models volume (which features 1/3 women contributors), but only 7 women in the whole room. CPE has a gender problem. What are we gonna do about it?



5:37 PM · Jul 9, 2022

**NEUI** ROBERT  
SCHUMAN  
CENTRE

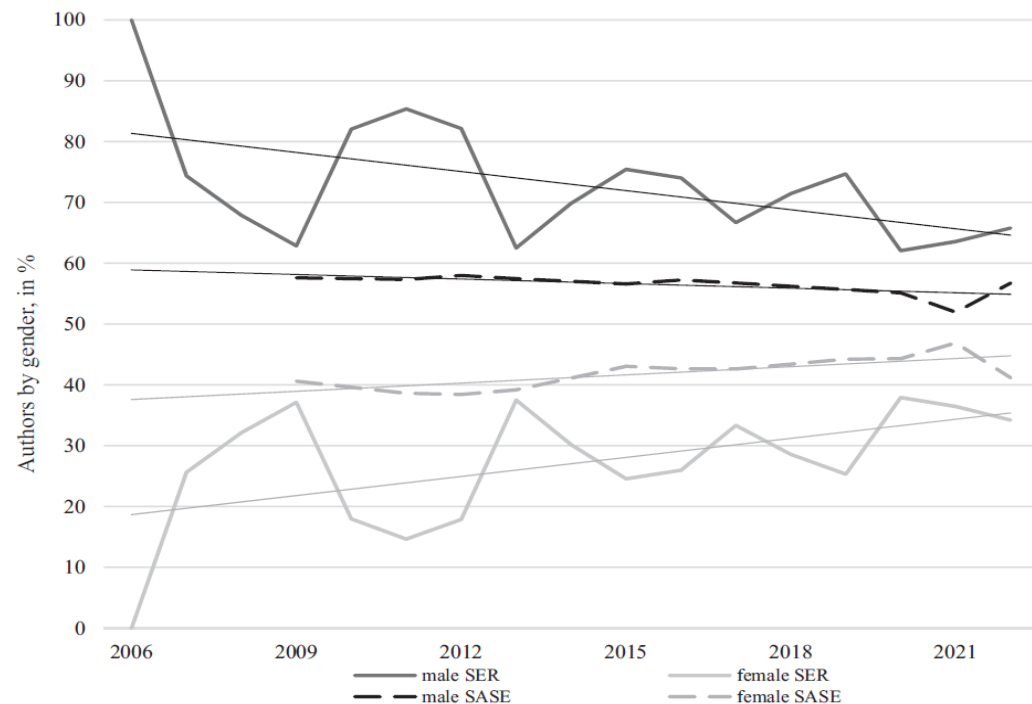
**Under the radar.**  
Female scholarship in  
political economy.



<https://youtu.be/lw1atXi4E4g>

# Gendered publication patterns (SER)

## Development of authorship by gender, SER



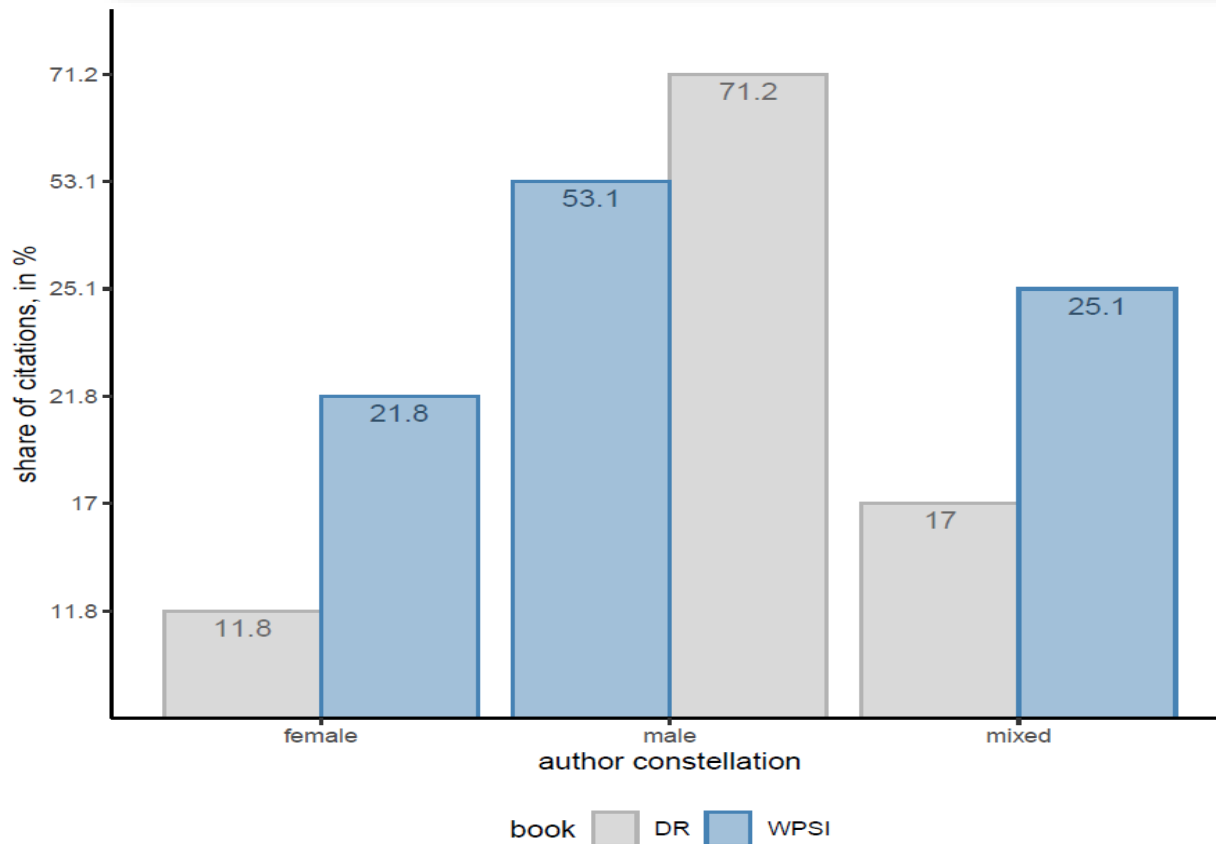
- Share of female authors
  - shows a general increase, but is still low (32% 2018-2022)
  - significantly lower than share of female SASE participants
- no “leaky pipeline“ => very few women submit their work to SER

# Topics in SER and male islands

Most gender segregated topics	Male authors	Female authors
Comparative Capitalism	84	16
Welfare state, pensions	82	18
Fiscal policy, sovereign debt	81	19
<b>Male islands</b>		
Segmentation of work, platform work	44	56
Human resources, training	43	57

- Comparative Capitalism: men are much more likely to submit work than women
- Welfare state & fiscal policy: women were almost as likely to submit as men, but have much lower acceptance rate
- Most topics in SER are (strongly) male dominated, while women have few such islands
- Review process possibly reinforces male islands

# Gendered publications in Diminishing Returns & World Politics of Social Investment



- DimRet clearly a strongly male dominated publication
- However, male publications also dominate in WPSI
- Broken down by publication type, less than 10% of articles cited in DimRet are written by women
- What explains this state of affairs?

2. The male world of comparative capitalism: substance & boundaries of the field



# A male view on the world shapes the content of the field

- The golden age (of wage –led growth) takes a special place
- The narrative of the field’s evolution focusses on manufacturing
  - End of mass production
  - Neocorporatism
  - VoC: comparative advantages
  - GM: demand and the role of producer coalitions
- Privileged social actors: producer coalitions
- While manufacturing’s shrinking space is being privileged, capitalism’s service & knowledge based restructuring is seen as derivative, and the state has been almost entirely removed from the analysis. This way, women remain invisible

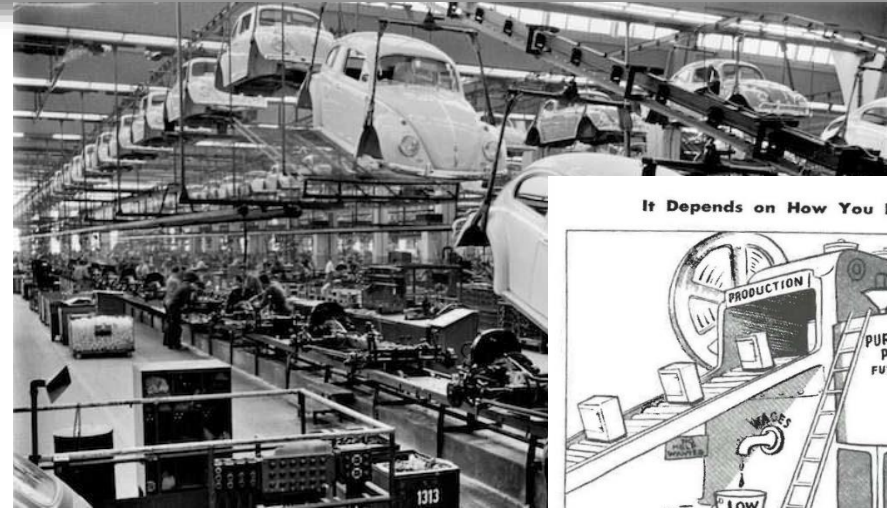
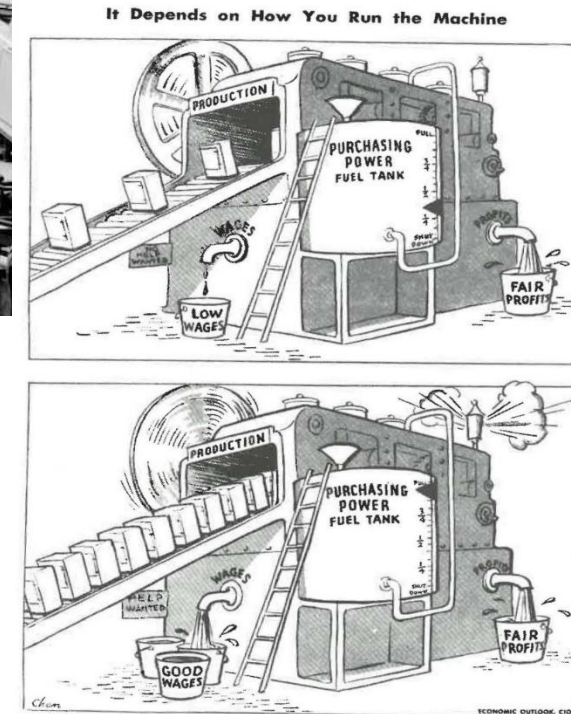
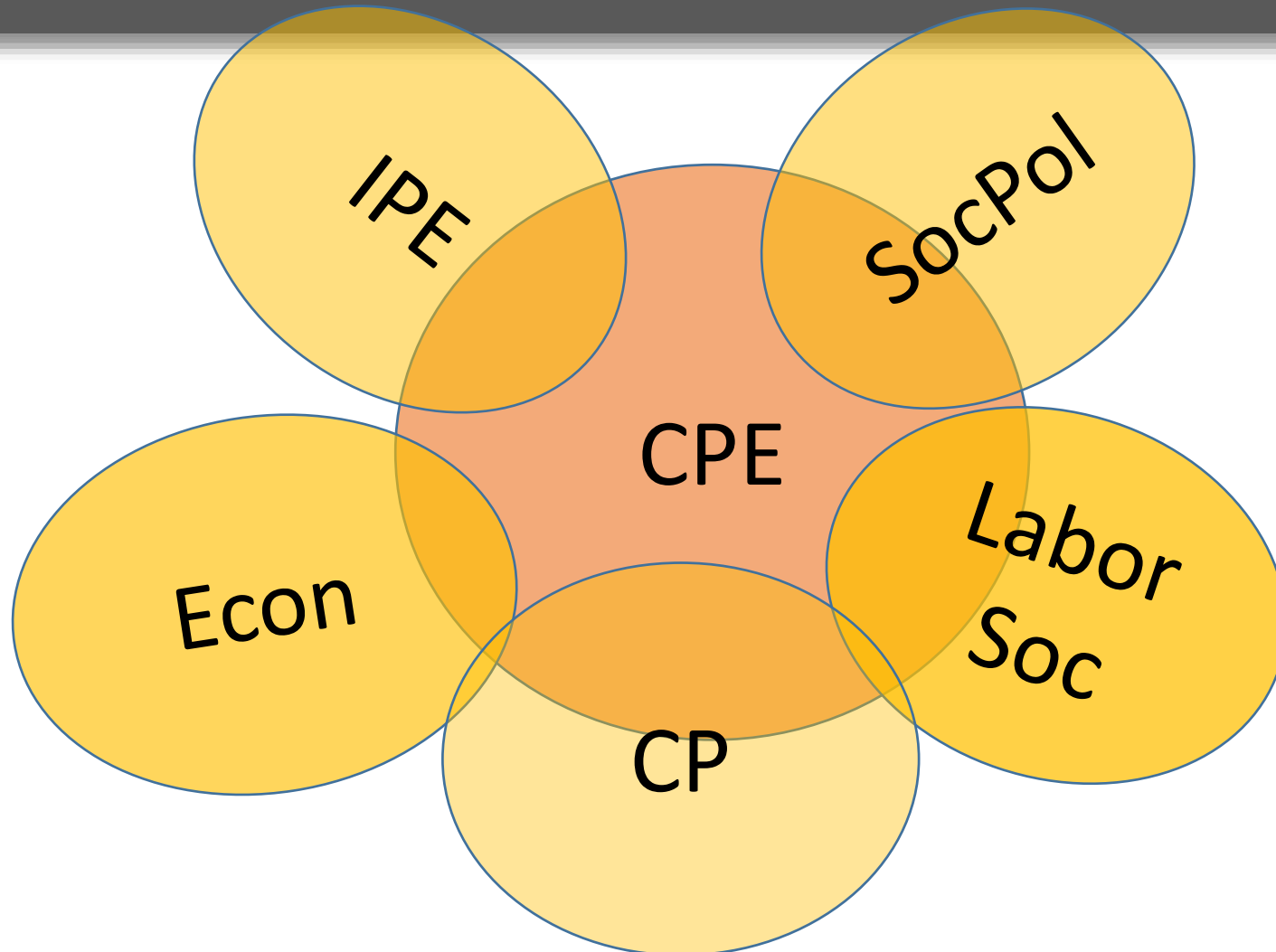


Image by Alden Jewell

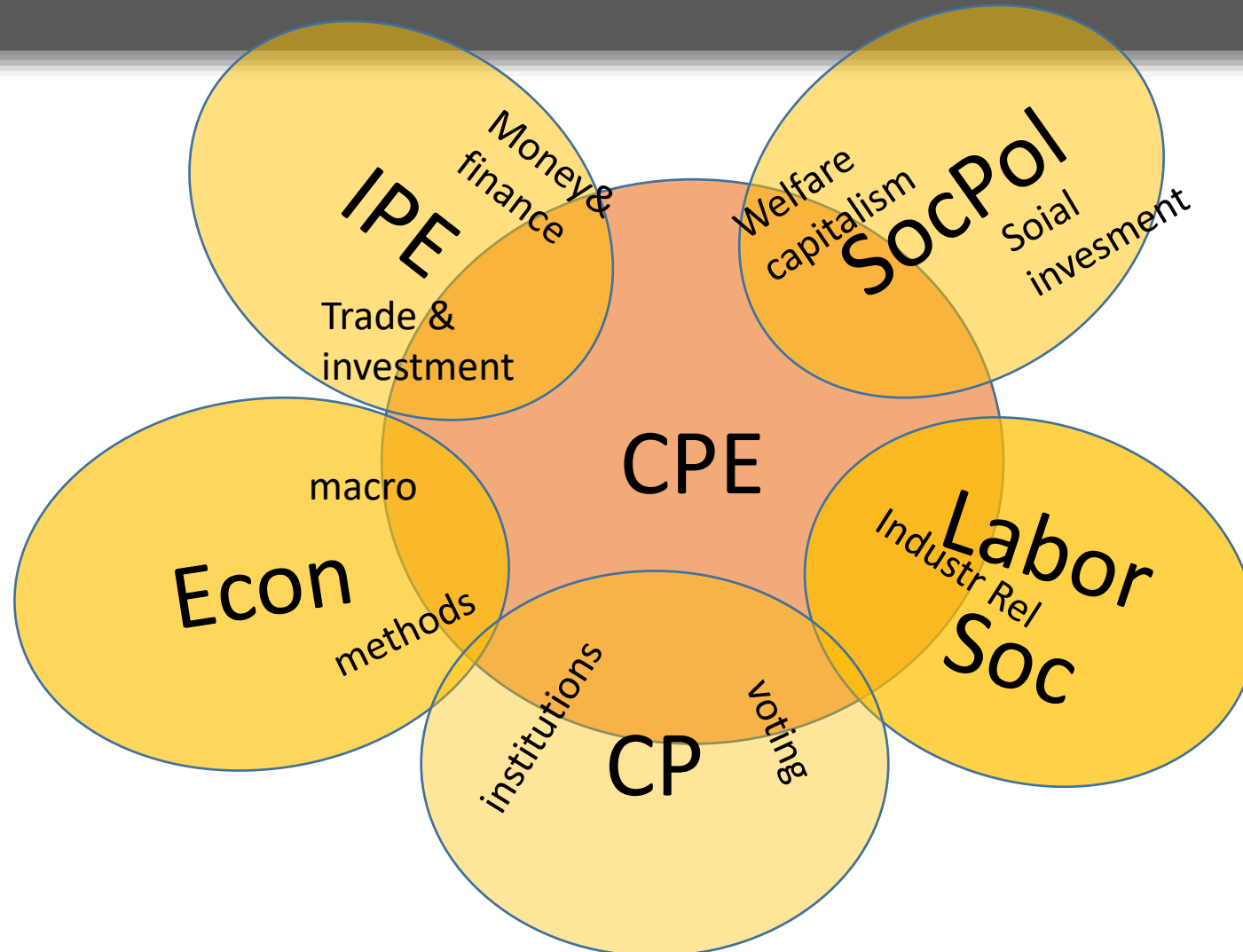


Securing high purchasing power for workers was the centerpiece of labor's postwar agenda, as jobs, wages, and high production were all thought to depend on it. "Economics to Keep the Peace," *Economic Outlook* (publication of the Congress of Industrial Organizations) 7 (March 1946). (Courtesy of the AFL-CIO)

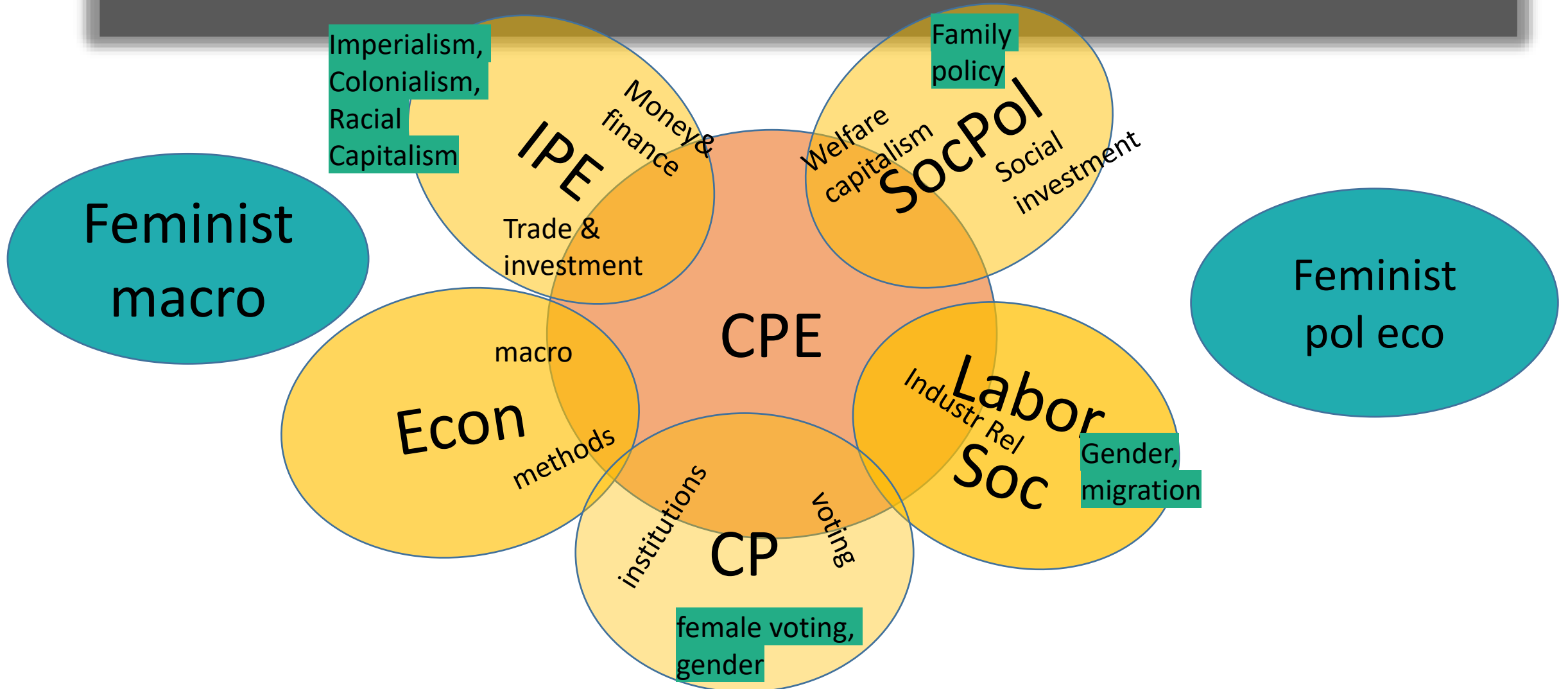
# The field's boundaries & external relations



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# The field's boundaries also discipline women in the field

Why do women in political economy not work on gender?

- For good reasons:
  - “Because it does not add anything“
  - “I was never interested in gender“
- For not “seeing gender“
  - “It never occurred to me that (...) had a gender dimension“
- Recognition
  - “Look at me, I am so cool engaging with men!“
  - “If I want to be taken seriously, I have to focus on serious issues“



# The field's boundaries also discipline women in the field

- Institutional discouragement
  - “I was unable to publish my gender focused paper in mainstream pol-eco journals”
  - “I was explicitly discouraged from engaging with gender in my dissertation”
- Fear of (double) marginalization
  - Working on gender would have put me in a marginal position in the field
  - We work on small peripheral states, which made it already difficult to navigate CP. Adding gender to the mix would have made things worse
- “I felt so profoundly resentful of the constraints gender has placed on my personal life, that the last thing I wanted was to have to contend with it in other spheres.”



3. What do we need women  
for social science for?

# Justice as a worthy goal

“For card-carrying feminists, the exclusion of women from sharing fully in the academic career is reason enough to care about gender domination in the academy. Justice itself is a worthy goal.” (Teele 2023: 430-1)

but



# “What we do is science! Why do we need women for that?”

Do we need diversity in academia to fulfill the specific mission of (political economy) knowledge production? Does it matter who produces the knowledge?

- What we do is social science, and that needs diversity. Otherwise, we are simply not seeing things
- “If, as Weber says, science can help you uncover facts, but it cannot tell you which questions to ask, then it is in deciding which questions to ask where lived experience proves key”

(Teele 2023: 430-1)

# Deciding which questions to ask

I argue that while returning to older and partially more critical traditions in political economy, the GM literature however also reproduces “one of [CPE’s and, D.B.] IPE’s most pervasive and long-standing blind spots relat[ing] to gender, households and social reproduction” (Le Baron et al. 2021: 287). Given that social reproductive labor has been a center site of post-Fordist restructuring, and that “the questions that have animated political debate ... in the past half century ... have reproductive labor cannot help puzzling with Brigg (2016: 2): “When social scientists ask what is public, what is private, what work is, what the economy is, how do reproductive labor just drop out?”



BEHIND EVERY  
SUCCESSFUL  
MAN  
THERE IS A  
SURPRISED WOMAN

 **wschelkl** Mai 31

 *Hervorgehobener Text*

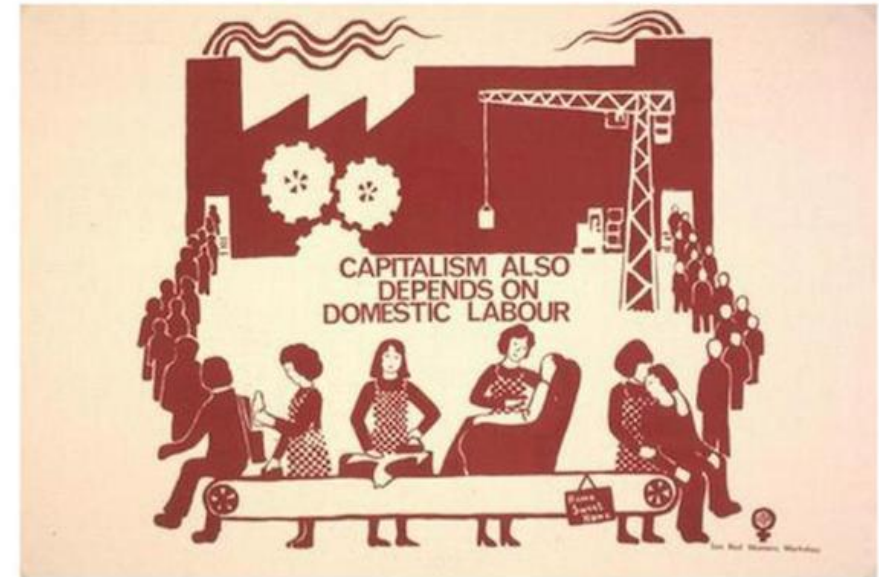
 **wschelkl** Mai 31

but is this not really consistent if GM theory looks for dominant sectors and political elites as driving forces -- you do not suggest that the reproductive labour is instead calling the shots? So would you be prepared to criticise this power-centred perspective?

Enlarging the CPE agenda: taking reproductive politics seriously

# The politics of social reproduction

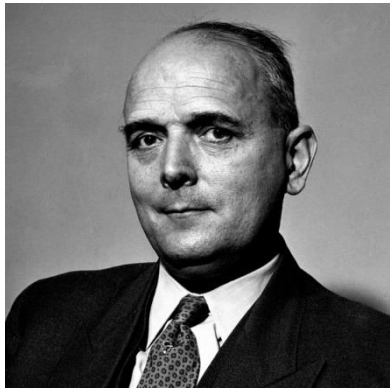
- What is the relation between the restructuring of social reproduction and growth in contemporary European capitalism(s)?
- Social reproduction appear in the GM literature as dependent variables shaped by the interests of the *dominant producer coalition*
- Proposition: productive and social reproductive politics lead a partly independent life and ultimately co-produce the growth model and its change over time



# Balanced & export-led GM and the politics of social reproduction

- Sweden and Germany are both export-led, but export growth generates more consumption in Sweden than in Germany, thus boosting growth of import-competing goods and sheltered services
- These differences are largely due to differences in patterns in wage bargaining, union strength and the size of the public sector. Baccaro&Pontusson 2016, Pontusson & Erixon 2023
- However, why has Sweden a sizeable public sector and strong public sector unions, and Germany not?

# Inter& post-war reproductive struggles laid some of the foundations of the different GMs



Thus, the mother at home, especially since the father is largely not at home, is even more important today than it used to be. A mother at home often replaces cars, music chests and trips abroad, which were all too often paid for with time stolen from her children. (Franz-Josef Würmeling in the 1950s)

If they [women] are to be integrated more fully into our society than has been the case so far, changes in individual attitudes of both men and women, adjustments in the labor market, and action by public authorities, will all be necessary. (Alva Myrdal and Viola Klein in the 1940s)





# Further puzzles of social reproduction



## The Social Disinvestment State Unleashed

NOEMI LENDVAI-BAINTON 19th April 2018



# Conclusions: CPE's gender problem needs to be addressed

- Disciplinary housekeeping to overcome institutional barriers and structural biases towards women in the field
- Broadening the scope of the field to make women in political economy visible
- Engaging systematically with insights from neighboring fields to develop new research directions
- This is ultimately not about women. It is about making the invisible visible, which is necessary if CPE wants to have something relevant to say about contemporary conflicts and tensions in capitalism