Undoing gender in EU’s social innovation policies?

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Abstract: EU’s new policy strategies for growth and innovation include a strong commitment to promote social innovation – in contrast to the earlier focus on technological innovation – potentially decreasing the identified gender gap in innovation. The article scrutinises this potential of ‘undoing gender’ in Europe 2020 and Innovation Union by means of the new scientific concept ‘gendered social innovation’ and the discourse analytical approach ‘What’s the problem represented to be?’. The results expose that the broad approach to innovation identified on a general level in the strategies, seems to open up public innovation support to wider societal participation and benefit with a more equal inclusion of women and men in innovation, by including a broad range of sectors, industries, organisations, disciplines and innovation types. On a more specific level, possible reinforcement of existing gender patterns is identified, however, due to excluding elements in parallel strategies of smart specialisation, critical mass and excellence.

Keywords: critical mass; excellence; gendered innovation; gendered social innovation; innovation policy; smart specialisation; social innovation; social innovation policy; undoing gender.

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1 Introduction

Social innovation – in terms of the development of new goods, services, methods etc. that are social in their means and/or ends – is highlighted as one of the main tools of the European Union to deal with societal challenges such as poverty, unemployment, ageing populations and climate change. The new policy strategies for growth and innovation of the EU include a strong commitment to promote social innovation (European Union, 2010a). This social perspective on innovation contrasts with earlier innovation policies in EU and its member states, which mainly have focused technological product innovation and high-tech service innovation. The technological focus implied a narrow range of sectors, industries, organisations, disciplines and innovation types being acknowledged in
policy and research, following a distinct gendered pattern where men as actors, men-dominated areas and perceived masculine activities were prioritised. The public resource distribution and other forms of public legitimacy to innovation processes have thus to large extent served to reinforce segregating and hierarchical notions of gender, with men/masculinities as the norm (Lindberg, 2012; Pettersson, 2007; Pettersson and Lindberg, 2013).

This excluding prioritisation pattern in innovation policies contrasts with EU’s ambition of inclusive innovation where the importance of broad engagement among citizens is emphasised. It also deviates from the EU strategy of gender mainstreaming, prescribing that a gender perspective is to permeate all activities on all levels of public policy. It can thus be regarded as a matter of democracy whose needs and ideas are allowed to shape the future society. The narrow view on innovation also affects the theoretical knowledge development, restricting the scope of data and conclusions on how new ideas are formed, implemented and disseminated in organisations and society. In order to address these gaps of knowledge and democracy, this article identifies and analyses new paths to gender inclusive innovation policy. Such paths are distinguishable in the new EU policy strategies Europe 2020 and Innovation Union that seem to open up public innovation support to wider societal participation, by expanding the focus from technological to social aspects of innovation. This expansion might imply a more equal inclusion of women and men in innovation, but such a transformative potential has to be scrutinised more in detail before it can be considered as a scientifically validated conclusion. In this article, such a validation is carried out by investigating to what extent the focus on social aspects of innovation in the new EU policy strategies serves to ‘undo gender’ in public promotion of growth and innovation.

2 Research design

Since the purpose of this article is to identify and analyse new paths to gender inclusive innovation policy by studying EU’s new policy strategies for growth and innovation, the methodology used in the study is a textual analysis of two key policy documents: Europe 2020 and Innovation Union (European Union, 2010a, 2010b). The methodological approach of discourse analysis is employed to analyse the texts by their statements on social aspects of innovation (cf. Fairclough, 2010; Phillips and Jorgensen, 2002). The gendered implications of these statements are analysed by means of the discourse analytical approach ‘What’s the problem represented to be?’ as outlined by the political scientist Carol Lee Bacchi (1999). By applying this approach to the policy strategies studied in this article, is it visualised how various sectors, industries, organisations, disciplines and innovation types are benefited or disadvantaged in a gendered manner, depending on how problems are represented and what solutions are proposed. This gendered visualisation is then further analysed by means of the additional theoretical perspective of ‘gendered social innovation’, in order to distinguish the potential of the studied strategies to truly challenge and change gendered structures in EU’s promotion of growth and innovation. The study was carried out as part of the R&D project ‘Gendered Social Innovation’ managed by Luleå University of Technology, Sweden, during 2013–2015 with financing from Sweden’s public innovation agency VINNOVA.
3 Theoretical framework

This section presents the theoretical framework used to analyse the data, including the scientific concept ‘gendered social innovation’ (Lindberg et al., 2015) as well as the analytical approach ‘What’s the problem represented to be?’ (Bacchi, 1999). This combination of theories makes it possible to elucidate the potential of truly challenging and changing gendered structures in EU’s promotion of growth and innovation.

The concept ‘gendered social innovation’ was recently launched in order to pinpoint the specifically gendered aspects of the social dimension in innovation. The concept refers to the development of socially transformative solutions to identified societal challenges of gender inequality and unmet social needs among women or men as underrepresented or underprivileged groups in various areas, e.g. innovation (women), entrepreneurship (women) or child/elderly care (men). The aspect of newness in gendered social innovation refers partly to the identification of hitherto insufficiently addressed needs and challenges of gender equality in various areas, partly to the development and application of new solutions that innovatively transform gendered structures (Lindberg and Nahnfeldt, 2013; Lindberg et al., 2015). Gendered social innovation was constructed by merging the pre-existing scientific fields of gendered innovation and social innovation.

Social innovation has in several studies been defined as the development and implementation of new goods, services, methods, organisational forms, societal structures etc. where social inclusion is prominent in the process and social change is evoked as a result of the process. The social aspect in social innovation refers to the three normative components of 1. identified societal challenges and/or social needs among underrepresented or underprivileged groups 2. inclusive development where the underrepresented or underprivileged groups are involved 3. social improvement for individuals, organisations or society.

The aspect of newness in social innovation partly refers to the identification of insufficiently addressed social needs and societal challenges, partly to the social newness of the solutions developed to address them in terms of new to the world, new to the specific context or a new combination of existing components (European Union, 2013; Hansson et al., 2014; Lindberg and Nahnfeldt, 2013; Mulgan et al., 2007; The Young Foundation, 2012).

Gendered innovation has in several studies been defined as the development and implementation of new goods, services, methods, organisational forms, societal structures etc. where gendered awareness and inclusion is prominent in the process and structural change of gendered patterns is evoked as a result of the process. The aspect of gender refers in this context to the segregating and hierarchical gender patterns that characterise many parts of organisations and societies, where men and women are kept apart and where activities and characteristics linked to men and certain masculinities are ascribed a higher value than the ones linked to women and certain femininities. The aspect of newness in gendered innovation refers to the innovative transformation of gendered structures in organisations and society (Alsos et al., 2013; Andersson et al., 2012;
As part of the gendered innovation field, the scientific concept ‘undoing gender’ has been employed in order to pinpoint and analyse processes where segregating and hierarchical notions of gender are diminished. It can thus be used to elucidate the potential of truly challenging and changing gendered structures in organisations and society. The need for the perspective of how gender can be undone is the common pattern of segregation and hierarchy between men and women as well as between certain femininities and masculinities in many organisations and societies (cf. Hirdman, 1990). The consequences of gender segregation and hierarchy often take the form of uneven distribution of power, resources and status between women and men, as is the case in the area of innovation (Lindberg, 2012; Pettersson, 2007). The exact pattern can vary with time and place, though, and even be undone in certain situations and contexts (Butler, 2004; Deutsch, 2007; Martin, 2011). It is complicated to fully eradicate gendered patterns, though, since changes in existing organisational and societal mechanisms can evoke resistance and restoring responses (Abrahamsson, 2014; Gunnarsson et al., 2003).

Bacchi’s (1999) discourse analytical approach ‘What’s the problem represented to be?’ visualises gendered impacts of policy priorities. The approach helps identify the range of actors, areas and perspectives involved in the identification and solution of policy problems. The chain of problem representation, solutions, roles and effects is highlighted as part of the approach. The first linkage in the chain of problem representation highlights how a specific problem area/topic is identified and described. Depending on how the problem is represented certain solutions are perceived as more suitable than others. The chosen solutions, in turn, lead to different actors being attributed different roles as acting subjects or passive objects. This chain of problem representation, solutions and roles ultimately leads to various effects that people experience in practice, denominated by Bacchi as ‘lived effects’. Such effects include concrete experiences of, for example, unequal resource allocation or unequal opportunities to develop new innovations. By applying Bacchi’s approach to the policy strategies studied in this article, is it visualised how various sectors, industries, organisations, disciplines and innovation types are benefited or disadvantaged in a gendered manner depending on how problems are represented and what solutions are proposed. The gendered visualisation is in the article further analysed by means of three additional theoretical perspectives – social innovation, gendered innovation, undoing gender – in order to distinguish the potential of the studied strategies to truly challenge and change gendered structures in EU’s promotion of growth and innovation.

4 Data

In this section, the statements on social aspects of innovation in EU’s new policy strategies for growth and innovation is depicted in order to distinguish their potential gender inclusiveness. The account is structured by means of Bacchi’s (1999) approach, distinguishing

1  identified problems and needs
2  suggested solutions
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3 spectrum of acknowledged sectors, industries, organisations, disciplines and innovation types.

These dimensions are firstly outlined for the strategy Europe 2020 (European Union, 2010a) and thereafter for the strategy Innovation Union (European Union, 2010b).

4.1 Europe 2020

The policy strategy Europe 2020 is EU’s main strategy for growth and innovation, replacing the former Lisbon Strategy (2000–2010). The problems and needs formulated in the strategy encompass a number of grand societal challenges that the EU member states need to manage in order to maintain and increase their welfare levels. These challenges include e.g. globalisation, demographical changes, ageing populations, unemployment, resource scarcity, economic crisis and climate change. There is a perceived social need of lowered unemployment, heightened productivity, improved competitiveness and increased social cohesion. The main solution to handle these challenges is three priorities – smart, sustainable and inclusive growth – depicted as mutually reinforcing. Smart growth implies the development of an economy based on knowledge and innovation, ensuring that innovative ideas can be turned into new products and services that create growth, quality jobs and help address European and global societal challenges. Sustainable growth encompasses the promotion of a more resource efficient, greener and more competitive economy. Inclusive growth refers to ensuring social and territorial cohesion by diffusion of the benefits of economic growth to all parts of the Union, including its outermost regions, and by ensuring access and opportunities on the labour market for all throughout the lifecycle.

Empowerment is highlighted as an important element of inclusive growth, enabling people to anticipate and manage changes in their private and professional life. Higher employment levels, modernisation of the labour market and investments in education, skills and lifelong learning are expected to facilitate empowerment. The focus on empowerment is intended to mobilise the strengths that Europe is stated to possess: the talent and creativity of the citizens, strong values, democratic institutions, consideration for economic, social and territorial cohesion and solidarity, respect for the environment, cultural diversity as well as respect for gender equality. The last strength – gender equality – is, according to the strategy, in need of public promotion in order to increase labour force participation that in turn is anticipated to evoke growth and social cohesion.

As solutions to the identified societal challenges seven flagship initiatives has been launched in adjacent to Europe 2020. Three of these initiatives are described as having special significance for innovation: Innovation Union intended to ensure that innovative ideas can be turned into new products and services that create growth and jobs. An agenda for new skills and jobs intended to modernise and increase mobility in the labour market by increasing people’s empowerment through life-long skills development. European Platform Against Poverty intended to ensure economic, social and territorial cohesion by combating poverty and social exclusion. This is to be attained by raising awareness and recognising the fundamental rights of people in poverty and social exclusion, enabling them to lead dignified lives and actively engage in society. It is stated in Europe 2020 that social innovation needs to be promoted in order to enhance the lives of the most vulnerable groups in society. Innovative education, training and employment are some suggested forms of social innovation. Deprived communities, discrimination of
e.g. disabled people, and difficulties in the integration of migrants are three areas mentioned as in need of social innovation.

The spectrum of sectors, industries, organisations, disciplines and innovation types acknowledged in Europe 2020 is partly broad. Innovation across all sectors of the economy (i.e. the private, public, non-profit sectors) is expected to improve competitiveness and foster job creation. Public authorities on all levels (i.e. national, regional and local levels) are expected to contribute to the realisation of the strategy in order to bring the strategy closer to the citizens. Social partners and civil society as well as the citizens of Europe are encouraged to help implement the strategy by engaging in partnerships and taking action in various areas of the strategy. In the flagship initiative ‘An industrial policy for the globalisation era’, it is stated that the Commission will work closely with stakeholders in different sectors, including businesses, trade unions, academics, non-profit organisations and consumer organisations when formulating the framework for a modern industrial policy promoting the competitiveness of Europe’s primary, manufacturing and service industries. Europe is in the strategy described as having a strong industrial base, a vibrant services sector, a thriving high quality agricultural sector and a strong maritime tradition. The tourism sector is also highlighted as important to develop further, alongside efforts within the area of education, training and lifelong learning.

4.2 Innovation Union

The strategy Innovation Union is one of EU’s seven flagship initiatives to catalyse progress within the three priorities of Europe 2020. It aims to ensure that innovative ideas can be turned into products and services that create growth and jobs. The problems and needs formulated in the strategy are the grand societal challenges, such as climate change, energy supply, scarcity of resources and demographic changes. Health and security, sustainable provision of water and high-quality affordable food as well as the creation of new jobs are perceived as urgent social needs to be fulfilled by innovative measures. The solution proposed in the Innovation Union is to promote excellence (i.e. high international scientific quality), smart specialisation (i.e. priority of a few strong focus areas) and critical mass (i.e. a sufficient number of actors in the focus area). It concluded in the strategy that Europe has world leading researchers, entrepreneurs and companies, as well as unique strengths in terms of values, traditions, creativity and diversity. The creativity and diversity of the European people and the strength of European creative industries are perceived as offering huge potential for new growth and jobs through innovation, not least for SMEs. In order to make use of this potential, the European strengths in design and creativity must according to the strategy be better exploited. This requires the employment of a broad concept of innovation, including research-driven innovation as well as innovation in business models, design, branding and services with the aim of adding value for users.

The strategy encompasses extensive discussions on how to increase the social benefits of innovation, where the promotion of social innovation is highlighted as an especially important element. Europe is depicted as having strong traditions in social innovation and providing among the world’s most dynamic public services. Social
innovations are portrayed as innovative in themselves, by empowering people and creating new social relationships and models of collaboration that serve to fulfil social needs and tackle societal challenges, thus increasing society’s capacity to innovate. Proper support structures for realising social innovations are however lacking in the union, in contrast to the structures for business innovation, implying a need for intermediaries and networks specialised on this specific type of innovation. Public sector innovation is portrayed as an adjacent area for increasing the social benefits of innovation. The evolving needs and expectations of public service users implies a strong demand for innovation in the public sector. The strategy acknowledges the urgency of developing a better understanding of public sector innovation at the EU level in order to improve the quality and efficiency of public services. At local level, citizen-centred approaches to service development and delivery have started to evolve in several member states. To incite employees to continuously develop new and better ways to perform their daily work tasks are underlined as central in order to ensure that the health sector will have a competent, motivated and flexible workforce able to deliver high quality services to a growing number of elderly people in Europe.

The spectrum of acknowledged sectors, industries, organisations, disciplines and innovation types in Innovation Union is partly broad. A wide range of stakeholders, including businesses, local authorities, social partners, foundations, NGOs, is invited to support the strategy. The importance of involving all actors and all regions in the realisation of the strategy is underlined, mobilising not only major companies and a few high-tech areas but a wide range of small and medium sized companies in all sectors as well as actors from the social economy and the citizens themselves. Involving citizens, users and consumers in the innovation process is being promoted as a way to develop products and services that better meet social needs and to reach new markets. Cooperation between universities, research and business is also encouraged, for example by the establishment of European Innovation Partnerships mobilising all key stakeholders and providing platforms for open innovation and citizen engagement.

The industries acknowledged as important in the strategy are partly industrial (e.g. manufacturing, aerospace, telecommunications, energy and environmental technologies), partly cultural (e.g. creativity, design, public services). Most proposed partnerships primarily concern the former ones (climate change, energy challenges, raw materials, greenhouse gas emissions, digital society, smart mobility, agriculture, food production). One partnership concerns the active and healthy ageing partnership, anticipated to result in medicines for the elderly, new treatments or diagnostic tools, new institutional or organisational approaches and new solutions allowing for a better life quality for the elderly. The scientific disciplines acknowledged in the strategy follow the same pattern: a sufficient supply of science, maths and engineering graduates is depicted as crucial for future innovation, besides skills in creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship. In research, excellence is to be fostered in terms of high international scientific quality in a few areas, since research funding is increasingly allocated on a competitive basis where only the most excellent research environments are granted funding. Specific areas of existing and potential excellence are rarely mentioned in the strategy, except from a few cases of engineering and technology: Information and communication technology (ICT), micro- and nano-electronics, biotechnology, new materials and advanced manufacturing.
5 Analysis

In this section, the statements on social aspects of innovation in EU’s new policy strategies for growth and innovation are analysed in order to identify and analyse new paths to gender inclusive innovation policy. The gendered implications of the statements are in this section analysed by means of Bacchi’s (1999) approach, visualising how various sectors, industries, organisations, disciplines and innovation types are benefited or disadvantaged in a gendered manner, depending on how problems are represented and what solutions are proposed. This gendered visualisation is then further analysed by means of ‘gendered social innovation’ as an additional theoretical perspective, in order to distinguish the potential of the studied strategies to truly challenge and change gendered structures in public promotion of growth and innovation.

Regarding how various sectors, industries, organisations, disciplines and innovation types are benefited or disadvantaged in a gendered manner, depending on how problems are represented and what solutions are proposed, a complex pattern is exposed in the statements in the EU strategies. The main problems to be solved are represented as partly social, partly economical and partly technological, focusing a number of grand societal challenges such as demographical changes, ageing populations, unemployment, economic crisis, globalisation and climate change as well as more specific needs of improved health and security, sustainable water and food provision and the creation of new jobs. The proposed solutions are mostly based on a broadened view on innovation, where a broad range of innovation forms, sectors and organisations are to be involved in the development of new ways of handling the societal challenges and specific needs. Innovation in the public sector, social innovation and involvement of users, citizens and the civil society in innovation processes is part of the broadened approach. Empowerment is another crucial element, intended to harness the talent, creativity and values of the European citizens as well as of the democracy, solidarity, cultural diversity and social/territorial cohesion of the union and its member states. At the same time, excellence and smart specialisation is prescribed in order to mobilise a sufficient critical mass of actors and resources for attaining smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. This implies the distinction of a few niche areas to be prioritised in the promotion of innovation and growth in each region and country. Some examples of such distinctions at the European level are provided in the studied strategies, singling out primarily industrial areas, such as manufacturing, raw materials, agriculture, environmental technologies, biotech, telecom and ICT, alongside a smaller and less well-defined group of cultural areas, such as tourism, creativity, design, education, health and other public/private services. This priority pattern implicitly, and to some extent explicitly, underlines the importance of engineering and technological sciences in innovation.

In order to esteem to what extent these problem representations and suggested solutions serve to ‘undo gender’ in EU’s promotion of growth and innovation, the social, gendered and innovative aspects have to be pin pointed. In the light of existing research on gendered social innovation, three normative components of identified societal challenges or social needs, socially inclusive development and social improvements can be distinguished to various extent in both the problems and the solutions. The identification of societal challenges and needs forms the basis for the problem representations. Social inclusion characterises the intended development of solutions. Social improvements are envisioned as a result of the outlined policy efforts. The social newness can be distinguished in both the identification of insufficiently addressed social
needs and societal challenges, and in the ways of harnessing the creativity among a broad spectrum of sectors, organisations and citizens when developing solutions to address these needs and challenges.

Gendered awareness and inclusion can be explicitly distinguished to some extent and implicitly to larger extent. Gender equality is explicitly acknowledged as an important part of both Europe’s common values and the public efforts of labour force participation, social cohesion and growth. Implicitly, gendered awareness and inclusion can be distinguished in the strategies’ broad approach to innovation, where the sectors and industries employing most women are acknowledged as important alongside the varied innovation types developed there. This challenges segregating and hierarchical gender patterns in innovation by diminishing the gap between women and men as well as reducing the difference in estimation of activities and characteristics linked to men/masculinities compared to the ones linked to women/femininities. The gendered newness, referring to the innovative transformation of gendered structures in organisations and society, is in the EU strategies thus to be perceived in their potential to identify and establish new paths to gender inclusive innovation policy. The concept ‘undoing gender’ helps pinpoint how such paths have to diminish segregating and hierarchical notions of gender in order to truly transform gendered structures in the public promotion of growth and innovation. The transformative potential of the EU strategies is thus esteemed by their ability to highlight and promote innovation in a wide range of sectors, industries, organisations, disciplines and innovation types, covering both men-dominated, gender-balanced and women-dominated ones.

The EU strategies seem to possess this ability in their general problem representations and suggested solutions. In their specific acknowledgement of industries and disciplines, however, this ability is less distinguishable. The prescribed promotion of excellence, smart specialisation and critical mass serves to counteract the broad approach to innovation promoted on a general level in its narrowed prioritisation. The segregating and hierarchical gender patterns are reinforced by the prioritisation of technological innovation in industrial settings. The ‘smart’ part thus seems to outweigh the ‘inclusive’ part of Europe 2020’s promotion of smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. The consequences of this narrowed chain of problem representation, solutions and roles are concrete experiences among underrepresented and disadvantaged groups of unequal resource allocation and unequal opportunities to develop new innovations, restricting whose needs and ideas are allowed to shape the future society, as delineated by the term ‘lived effects’ employed by Bacchi (1999). The gendered aspects of these lived effects are that the uneven distribution of power, resources and status is especially prominent between women and men, since the specialisation primarily favours areas dominated by the latter ones.

As stated earlier, the exact pattern of gender can vary with time and place and even be undone from time to time, where gender becomes irrelevant in the specific context. The transition of the EU’s strategies from theory to practice can thus be determinant for the extent to which their general potential of challenging and changing gendered structures is realised in each region and country. The simultaneous potential of inclusiveness and exclusiveness of the strategies makes the evoked gender pattern dependent on the extent and manner of implementing the strategies of smart specialisation, critical mass and excellence. The extent to which the relevance of social needs, social inclusion and social change is acknowledged can be esteemed partly by each country’s or region’s choice either to adopt a specialisation strategy or to promote innovation a multitude of contexts,
partly by their choice to prioritise a selection of innovation actors, areas and forms representing either a broad or a narrow spectrum as part of their specialisation strategy.

The gendered chain of problems, solutions, roles and effects, outlined by Bacchi (1999), can thus be modelled in a more or less gender inclusive/exclusive manner when realising the EU strategies. Reinforcement of segregating and hierarchical gender patterns in innovation can be evoked by realisations where the identified societal challenges are reduced to technological and economical issues, where the suggested solutions mainly involve the development of new technological solutions by large industrial organisations based on engineering and technological sciences. Correspondingly, the undoing of segregating and hierarchical gender patterns in innovation can be evoked by realisations where the identified societal challenges are defined as intertwinements of social, technological and economical aspects, where the suggested solutions involve the development of social, organisational, service-based and technological forms of solutions by people and organisations in the public, civil and private sectors, based on humanities and social sciences as well as engineering and technological sciences.

The undoing of gender is not just a matter of incitements and decisiveness, though, since existing structures can be tenacious due to strong underlying norms of gender segregation and hierarchy. The dominant actors being favoured by the existing priority pattern might actively counteract efforts to even out the distribution of power, resources and status in the area of innovation. Even if efforts are carried out in a manner that seems successful in the short run, open and veiled resistance and restoring responses may gradually revoke the process in line with lingering gendered norms. The priority of technological product innovation in industrial men-dominated settings may thus remain or reappear also where inclusive approaches to innovation are deliberately implemented. In the light of existing research, the crucial components of gendered social innovation can be used both to detect and to counteract responses of resistance and restoration. The promotion of inclusive innovation would have to be truly socially transformative in terms of being based on insufficiently addressed societal challenges of gender inequality or unmet social needs among women or men as underrepresented or underprivileged groups in various areas and in terms of promoting the development and application of new solutions that innovatively transform gendered structures. Each prioritisation pattern can be accordingly esteemed by its gendered social inclusiveness, detecting and counteracting possible responses of resistance and restoration.

6 Conclusions

This section draws conclusions on new paths to gender inclusive innovation policy from the study of EU’s new policy strategies for growth and innovation. Since excluding prioritisation patterns in innovation policies contrasts with EU’s ambition of inclusive innovation and the EU strategy of gender mainstreaming, and since the narrow view on innovation also affects the scope and explanatory power of the theoretical knowledge development, it can be regarded as a matter of democracy and scientific advancement whose needs and ideas are allowed to shape the future society. These gaps of knowledge
and democracy have been addressed in this article by identifying and analysing new paths to gender inclusive innovation policy. The gendered implications of the statements on social aspects of innovation in EU’s strategies on growth and innovation have been analysed by means of Bacchi’s (1999) approach, visualising how various sectors, industries, organisations, disciplines and innovation types are benefited or disadvantaged in a gendered manner, depending on how problems are represented and what solutions are proposed. This gendered visualisation was then further analysed by means of ‘gendered social innovation’ as an additional theoretical perspective, in order to distinguish the potential of the studied strategies to truly challenge and change gendered structures in public promotion of growth and innovation.

The broad approach to innovation identified in the strategies seems to open up public innovation support to wider societal participation and benefit, by expanding the focus from technological to social aspects of innovation, on a general level. This expansion seems to imply a more equal inclusion of women and men in innovation, as so far they diminish segregating and hierarchical notions of gender by including a broad range of sectors, industries, organisations, disciplines and innovation types. A closer examination of this gender inclusive potential reveals, however, possible reinforcement of existing gender patterns if strategies of smart specialisation, critical mass and excellence are implemented in a gender exclusive manner. In order to counteract responses of resistance and restoration when implementing inclusive innovation, the transformation of EU’s strategies from theory to practice could be guided by the main components of gendered social innovation in order to be truly transformative, basing the efforts on insufficiently addressed societal challenges of gender inequality or unmet social needs among women or men as underrepresented or underprivileged groups in various areas and promoting the development and application of new solutions that innovatively transform gendered structures.

The EU strategies underline the importance of an active innovation policy in order to incite the development of innovative solutions to existing needs and challenges. These solutions might not otherwise have seen the light of day because of the absence of a clear-cut market or due to market failures where the free market does not work optimally to satisfy social needs or the lack of proper support to other innovations than technological ones. According to the EU strategies, innovation policy can contribute to a well-functioning framework, an innovative public sector, public demand for innovation and direct efforts to incite innovation by advisory services, financial support, innovation networks, incubators etc. Innovation policy is thus able to influence which actors are given the opportunity to realise different types of innovations in various areas. So far, the innovation policies have mainly promoted innovation in a narrow spectrum of sectors, industries, organisations, disciplines and innovation types, in a distinct gendered pattern, but an active innovation policy could just as well be able to allocate resources in a way that better promotes innovation in a broader spectrum guided by social incitements, alongside the economic and technological ones. This could require alterations of existing markets or the creation of entirely new markets, which is especially significant for gender inclusive innovation with predominant social elements, where traditions and support structures are largely lacking.
References


