

Call for Papers

Reimagining EU Politics: Embracing Feminist Epistemic Justice and Decolonial Perspectives

Guest Editor: Assoc. Prof. and Jean Monnet Chair Rahime Süleymanoğlu Kürüm

This special issue aims to foster a meaningful exchange between epistemic injustice approaches in feminist philosophy and the conceptual and empirical aspects of gendering EU politics. Its primary objective is to establish a conceptual framework of “feminist epistemic justice” to challenge and disrupt prevailing patriarchal structures that shape the production of knowledge. Central to feminist epistemic justice is the recognition of intersectionality, acknowledging that women’s experiences and knowledge are diverse, influenced by factors such as race, class, ethnicity, sexuality, and disability. Therefore, this special issue seeks to challenge and dismantle androcentric distortions by adopting a feminist and decolonial approach and providing visibility to intersectional voices in shaping and interpreting the everyday implications of EU policymaking. The inspiration for this research originates from the Jean Monnet Chair on Feminist Epistemic Justice in the EU and Beyond (FEJUST), funded by the European Commission. Selected articles will be published in the special issue “**Reimagining EU Politics: Embracing Feminist Epistemic Justice and Decolonial Perspectives**” to be published by the **Journal of Gender Studies**. The initiative seeks to enrich theoretical perspectives in EU studies by incorporating decolonial perspectives, including but not limited to epistemic injustice, recognition theory, and feminist standpoint theory. By scrutinizing power hierarchies in knowledge production and policymaking within the EU, this endeavor aims to address gender-insensitive policy outcomes.

Epistemic injustice approach is deeply rooted in the debates on the coloniality of knowledge and the efforts to decolonise knowledge systems. Miranda Fricker (2007) defines epistemic injustice as “distributive unfairness in respect to epistemic goods such as information or education”. She defines two types of epistemic injustice: testimonial and hermeneutical. Testimonial injustice occurs when a hearer gives low credibility to a group due to the prejudice against this group, such as gender, age, race, ethnicity, thereby assigning it low credibility as a knower (Boni and Velasco, 2020). Credibility assessment in Western societies tends to favour powerful groups or those privileged in society, such as male, middle-class, and white people over young or old women (white or colour) (McConkey, 2004; Fricker, 1998), or economically and politically more powerful women over others through social reproduction (Cin and Süleymanoğlu-Kürüm 2021).

Testimonial injustice also contributes to second type, hermeneutical injustice which arises when a group – through being denied equal participation in the generation of social meaning- is deprived of the ability to understand and give meaning to its experiences and express them to others convincingly. In hermeneutical injustice, the ‘speakers’ knowledge claim falls into a blank gap in the available conceptual resources’ and blocks their capacity to understand and interpret their experiences (Fricker 2007: 3) largely owing to Eurocentric knowledge production patterns. As Xu (2021: 6) notes, ‘some concepts only exist in specific contexts, thus become unthinkable, unimaginable, incommensurable and incomprehensible to others even with an open mindset and humbleness to learn’. Recognition theorists

conceptualize epistemic injustices as a problem of recognition and oppression, such as cultural imperialism, as they lead to misrepresentation of marginalized groups and misunderstanding of those groups' social identities while dominant groups' social product is regarded as valuable and universally acceptable (Young, 1990; McConkey, 2004). However, epistemic justice requires going beyond recognition and actively involve those on the sides of society into the deliberation, knowledge-production, and policy-making processes by attending to their inherent values and knowledges.

Furthermore, an essential aspect to consider when addressing marginalized communities is the feminist standpoint theory, which serves as a perspective within feminist philosophy. This theory posits that the perspectives and experiences of marginalized groups, particularly women, should be placed at the center of knowledge acquisition and comprehension. Drawing influence from socialist feminism (Haraway, 1985), Black feminism (Collins, 2020), and radical feminism, feminist standpoint theory highlights the interlocking oppressions of gender, race, and class that perpetuate multiple forms of marginalization. Consequently, the standpoint of women, and other epistemically oppressed groups, offers a more impartial and comprehensive worldview compared to that of the ruling class. This standpoint holds immense potential to represent the collective experiences and perspectives of society as a whole (Brooks, 2007; Jaggar, 2004).

In this special issue, we aim to shed light on the epistemic marginalisation of women, from an intersectional perspective because marginalisation deprives them of the hermeneutical resources, makes the cultural and social issues affecting women, such as gender-based violence, reproductive health, access to education, and gender pay gap, invisible or they are being discussed in women-only settings, in the absence of the dominant groups such as white European men and giving women a diminished chance of contributing into policymaking. Thus, integration of feminist standpoint theory and epistemic injustice approaches to the EU studies will enable a comprehensive examination of power dynamics, knowledge production, and representation within EU studies, ultimately fostering more inclusive and equitable policy development processes.

Capturing feminist epistemic injustice in the EU, in its relations with candidate and potential candidates as well as its external relation with third countries is important for several reasons. First, the EU with more than 500 million population represents a significant diversity. Considering the EU's motto of "united in diversity", underlining its commitment to respect and embrace various cultural, social, and political backgrounds within the union, capturing epistemic injustices faced by women will reveal its actual commitment to inclusive policies that empower women from different ethnicities, religions, socio-economic backgrounds, and marginalised communities. Secondly, the EU's global influence, thanks to its enormous economic power, equips it with the capacity to "promote" feminist values and principles beyond its borders. This makes the EU a crucial case study to understand the extent to which women's standpoint can gain greater visibility in the policymaking process. Due to its self-declared role to be strong advocate of human dignity, freedom, equality, and non-discrimination, which are also fundamental principles of a just and inclusive society, the EU makes an important case study to explore the extent to which feminist standpoint is incorporated into various fields including science, technology, arts, and education, ultimately leading to better-informed decision-making and more effective policies that benefit society as a whole. Third, it is also important to remember that the EU's gender equality regime has evolved, with a series of directives and regulations on non-discrimination, in the 1970s, and the adoption of gender mainstreaming with the signing of the Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA) in 1995. Hence, the EU has self-proclaimed as the beacon of gender equality in the world.

This special issue and special issue seek to problematize the extent to which feminist epistemic justice is incorporated into the EU policymaking, by thinking deeper on the practices and structures of marginalisation, which will eventually pave the way for expanding the number of policy options, increase the likelihood of public policies covering their special needs and interests.

We cordially invite scholarly articles from diverse disciplines and global regions that focus on the EU, either directly within the EU or pertaining to policy outcomes resulting from the EU's external relations with candidate and third countries. In addition, we extend our invitation to papers that transcend conventional and male-dominated knowledge production patterns, placing significant emphasis on women's epistemic contributions to the study of the EU. We especially welcome submissions from scholars based in the Global South, as well as those exploring the intersection of the EU and gender-related issues from perspectives beyond the EU itself. Contributions that delve into the intricate dimensions of gender, race, class, age, ethnicity, and disability are strongly encouraged. Our aim is to foster critical discussions and rigorous analysis, providing a platform for multifaceted explorations of the complex topics, which include but are not limited to:

- Conceptualizing and advancing innovative methodologies to comprehend epistemic injustices and recognition challenges within the EU.
- Understanding and critically analyzing gender-related issues in EU policymaking and examining the outcomes of these policies within EU member states.
- Exploring the ethical and normative dimensions inherent in conducting research on the EU from a non-EU context.
- Investigating decolonial approaches to knowledge production and decolonial epistemology as tools for comprehending the EU politics.
- Examining the challenges, limitations, and possibilities of foregrounding women's epistemic contributions in knowledge production regarding the EU.
- Analyzing gendered and racialized institutional practices within EU politics and policymaking.
- Exploring anti-gender movements and the gender backlash phenomenon in EU policymaking.
- Investigating decolonial and participatory methodologies applicable to research and teaching on the EU.
- Examining androcentric masculine discourses, spaces, and discussions prevalent in EU politics.
- Addressing questions of epistemic diversity and resistance within the EU.
- Examining feminist and decolonial resistances within civil society both within the EU and beyond.

Abstracts of 300 words should be submitted to fejust@bau.edu.tr by 30 October 2023. We will conduct a series of workshops following the selection of abstracts to ensure coherence and consistency across all papers. Papers successfully completing the peer review process will be published as "online first" without waiting for other papers in the special issue.

Proposed process and timeline:

- Submission of abstracts: 30 October 2023 (300 words)
- Deadline for the submission of full drafts to the Journal of Gender Studies: 30 June 2024
- Estimated publication date: January/February 2025