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The New Materialism: Re-claiming a Debate from a Feminist Perspective

Introduction

As researchers with an interest in the gendered impacts of the 2007/8 financial crisis and intensifying austerity measures in the United Kingdom (UK), we welcome calls made in recent years for a turn to a New Materialism in International Relations (IR) and International Political Economy (IPE). However, disappointingly- at a time when there is a clear need for feminist material analyses of crisis and austerity across varied national and regional contexts- interventions have shown a marked tendency to sideline the long and rich tradition of feminist (historical) materialist thought. In the light of this, we aim to make an intervention into current theoretical discussions on New Materialism in order to reclaim and re-cast the terms of these debates.

There have been two distinctive calls for a New Materialism from scholars working in different theoretical and intellectual traditions, namely Marxism and poststructuralism. In his agenda setting speech at the Millennium conference (2012), William E. Connolly cast New Materialism in a poststructuralist guise (2013). Not long afterwards (2014) a roundtable discussion at the University in Sussex similarly identified New Materialism with poststructuralist thinking. We will not engage with this variant of New Materialism at length in this article, since in our view it is unlikely to much elucidate the dimensions of (financial) crisis and austerity that most concern us. We do not refute the importance of the ideational and the discursive dimensions of gender, but we believe that there has been an over-emphasis on ‘words’, language, representation, and subjectivity in poststructuralist feminist analysis to the detriment of material ‘things’, such as women’s productive and reproductive work and violence

(still largely, though not exclusively, violence against women) (see Delphy, 1996; Jackson 2001). Moreover, as Fraser (2000, 2014) observes, globalization generates greater culturally diversity within and across bounded communities, but global restructuring also produces new forms of social relations of inequality and entrenches others. Gender issues- as they might be further engaged in the context of the poststructuralist debate on New Materialism- are likely to be understood in a way that continues to sideline the material inequalities. This is indeed the case in Queer feminist interventions of a New Materialism (Barad 2012) where the existence of matter is almost denied an ontological status per se.

As such, we will not engage with New Materialism a la Connolly at length because we do not believe that new materialism in this guise is especially helpful. We have chosen to focus instead on what we see as a potentially more productive space to interrogate our interests; the New Materialism debate as it played out some years before Connolly speech (2006 to 2008) in the pages of the journal *Historical Materialism*. Here Paul Cammack, Creig Charnock and Marcus Tayler cast New Materialism in the historical materialist tradition of thought from Marx onwards. In our reading of Cammack's work and subsequent contributions to the debate that he initiated, this New Materialism aims to develop an analytical and critical framework to critique developments on a global scale. In particular, New Materialism aims to elucidate the consequences for the poor and dispossessed; those left behind or adversely impacted by developments in the 21st century - which is why we choose to make this debate the site for our intervention.

However, whatever the potential to incorporate feminist analysis within Cammack's variant of New Materialism, we detect here too a sidelining of gender and feminism. Within the terms of Cammack's own understanding of 'new developments'

he must encompass and elucidate current post-financial crisis politics, the impacts with respect to inequality, poverty and suffering or the political responses to the same. As Adorno held; '(t)he need to lend a voice to suffering is the condition for all truth' (1973: 17-8). Should not an analysis of the politics of suffering¹ and poverty be at the centre of critical scholarship in historical materialist analyses? Suffering here entails the systematic insecurity of women as an immanent dimension of modern states with 'gender specific structures of dependency forming the foundations of state norms and laws' (Sauer, 2008: 92), which expresses itself in the form of structural and physical violence including poverty, insecurity and sexual violence.

Class relations are evidently central to any understanding of material inequalities. However, New Materialism does not provide a complete picture of what neoliberalism and austerity looks like. Indeed, in many respects, the 'New' Materialism, looks very like 'old' variants of Marxism, which at once acknowledge that marginalisation, poverty and suffering has a female face and also an ethnic or racial dimension, yet continue to insist that the reasons for this are not to be found in capitalism and the economic realm per se, but must be sought elsewhere, thus alleviating the need to engage with gender, ethnicity or race in any serious way. There are political choices and consequences attendant upon the marginalisation of gender, ethnicity and race, which are pertinent for understanding and responding to current developments. With respect to gender specifically, the New Materialism debate needs to generate an adequate theory of social relations, production, social reproduction and oppression, in order for its revival to be successful.

In making this intervention, we feel the need to revisit and traverse 'old terrain' in that in highlighting the absence of gender from New Materialism, there are echoes of previous discussions on the marginalisation of gender in Marxism of old.

We note at this juncture that the story we are telling about the curious absence of gender and feminist insights could be re-told with race and ethnicity in mind. However, while acknowledging the dynamics of intersectionality, in this article our ambition is limited to flagging and interrogating the inter-relationship between neoliberal capitalism, the gendered nature of labour markets, the ‘patriarchal’ state and social reproduction and unpaid care work.

In the first section of the article, we engage with the New Materialism a la Cammack and the debate it has created. We argue that our critique of this debate is representative of a critique of Marxist approaches more widely and elaborate on why we think this somewhat ‘old’ debate is worth reviving. In section two, we revisit some of the core debates between feminism and Marxism, including discussions of the Marxist ‘reserve army of labour’ thesis, because Cammack draws upon this thesis to account for the feminised face of peripheral and insecure forms of labour in the contemporary global economy. We make the case that there is a need for an expanded understanding of Materialism which casts light on the structuring principles of capitalist socialisation and which affords the social reproductive sphere equal analytical status as necessary to capture capitalist society. We turn to look at feminist work on social reproduction, which offers fruitful ways to analyse current austerity politics and the impact on the poor and dispossessed.

Third, we develop a study of the current austerity politics in the UK to illustrate what we believe to be a form of governance of global capitalism (Blyth 2013: ix). We ask: Does the New Materialism help us to understand austerity politics? Particularly, can it shed light on the gendered nature of financial crisis and subsequent austerity politics? Furthermore, does the New Materialism elucidate social inequalities, poverty and suffering? We acknowledge that all contributions to the New

Materialism debate were written before the onset of the financial crisis of 2008. Yet, we believe that a revived New Materialism has to enlighten on world politics after the financial crisis, in effect the focus on austerity in many (in this case OECD) economies.

The ‘new materialism’ in Marxist IR and IPE

Cammack made the call for a New Materialism in an analysis of World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) policies (Cammack 2003). This work builds on articles published in 2001 and 2002. It has subsequently been expanded upon in a 2006 paper discussing the Politics of Global Competitiveness. The term was picked up in a developing debate in Historical Materialism, which involved interventions by Marcus Taylor and Greig Charnock in 2005 and 2008.

Cammack’s New Materialism aims to (re)introduce a historical materialist framework to analyse ‘the governance of global capitalism.’ An endeavour we find especially important in the light of current attempts to set the meaning of Materialism by poststructuralist accounts. Cammack argues capitalism has advanced to the degree ‘where the idea of the ‘completion of the world market’ provides an appropriate focus of analysis’ (Cammack 2003: 39) thereby requiring this intervention. An argument we believe to be even more valid in 2015. In line with Marx (1976), Cammack understands capitalist accumulation to require a multiplication of the proletariat and the constant reproduction of a ‘reserve-army of labour’ alongside. As such, while he argues that primitive accumulation is ongoing, capitalist accumulation is expanded via global neoliberalism to a global market.

Cammack analyses political practices of the IMF and particularly the World Bank. He argues that the logic of World Bank politics is a completion of a neoliberal project which has at heart the reproduction of a world market, entangling all peoples in its net and ‘with this, the growth of the international character of the capitalist regime.’(Marx 1976: 929). This is an argument that has lost nothing of its actuality. An efficient global labour market is created via absolute poverty reduction in which the existing proletariat ‘floats’ easily in and out of work, and the ‘latent’ proletariat, whether small peasant producers or young women as yet insufficiently accessible to capital’s reach, will be ‘freed’ and fully proletarianised (Cammack 2003: 45).

Responses

While appreciative of Cammack’s attempt to re-introduce Marxist analysis to global governance, Marcus Taylor criticises Cammack for remaining within a functionalist-structuralist logic, reifying the technical logics of capitalist accumulation, by attributing to the ‘World Bank the capacity to exercise ‘relative autonomy’ from class and national interests that it simply does not have’ (cited in Charnock 2008: 118). He argues that in his representation of international organisations, Cammack ignores the contradictory logics of capitalism and struggle. Instead, Taylor (2005: 154) proposes to view the World Bank:

[A]s an historically developed moment of capitalist social relations’ thereby making it possible to understand how the World Bank embodies the inherent contradiction of the latter. As such, the World Bank does not resolve the contradictions of global capitalism but reproduces them in new and developed forms....Contrary to understanding the Bank in a closed manner of structural

functionalism, opening the World Bank in this way aids our understanding of the possibilities and limits to struggles that target international financial institutions.

Taylor is particularly concerned with the notion of relative autonomy in Cammack's work and the presumption that the relatively autonomous character of international institutions is a function of capitalism, which thereby treats these institutions as predetermined. Taylor suggests a return to an 'old materialism', by which he means Open Marxism wedded to a negative critique of the political economy, which 'allows us to comprehend how the social and material reproduction of global capitalist society is mediated through an abstract yet dominating social force (the movement of value) that imposes itself in seemingly objective fashion upon all social actors.' (Taylor 2005: 161). This can account for the openness of institutional and political struggles within a profoundly contradictory process of capitalist socialisation. Crucially, this turn towards Open Marxism is not solely an analytical move, but a political one as well. As Charnock (2008: 121) holds; 'the implications of this logic are not simply analytical, but also political since they tend towards advocating reformism through the recapturing of political institutions, rather than the emancipation of the revolutionary subject.'

Beyond identifying the political project of Open Marxism, Charnock's intervention supports the development of a new materialist research agenda, as suggested by Cammack, yet takes Taylor's critique of a structural functionalist logic within Cammack's work seriously. Charnock (2008: 138) proposes 'a critical theory which views globalisation as a major capitalist offensive; which acknowledges the mediating influence of neoliberal discourses, doctrines and orthodoxies in the course

of capital's unfolding crisis; and which takes as its main focus of critique the activities of key international regulative agencies.'

Charnock's starting point is a critique of Open Marxism as expressed in Taylor's intervention. He points out how this strand of Marxism remains at a very high level of abstraction and so fails to move towards analysis of actually existing forms of neoliberal ideology and class struggles. Therefore, this restricts its proponents ability to undertake critical research, 'which can account for the quotidian 'messiness' of myriad social processes as they unfold simultaneously and concretely.' (Charnock 2008: 122). Furthermore, Charnock refers to the critique of Open Marxism, which centres on the reduction of social antagonisms to unmediated effects of class struggle and so cannot account for the role of particular discourses in reproducing class struggles and legitimising capitalism. Ultimately, in his synthesis of Open Marxism and the new materialism of Cammack, Charnock aims to uncover the ways in which bourgeois thought mystifies the class character of neoliberal globalisation. Charnock (2008: 131) highlights in particular the role of neoliberal ideology in this endeavour. In the context of his research, and in his words:

The task of the NMRP (New Materialist Research Project) is, therefore, firstly to engage in immanent critique, to expose the true character of key discourses and initiatives like the CDF (Comprehensive Development Framework) as class practice; and then to trace concretely how the moment of unity in the unity-in-separation of 'capital' and 'state' reasserts itself through the failure of such class practice to subordinate class struggle expressed through forms of crisis.

What is new about the New Materialism debate?

Charnock (2008: 118) recognises that Taylor's intervention echoes debates 'which developed within the Conference of Socialist Economists from the 1970s onwards, and which involved criticisms of, inter alia, Louis Althusser, Nicos Poulantzas, the 'regulation school' and Bob Jessop by the proponents of Open Marxism.' Yet, his project, which envisages an integration of Cammack's aim with Taylor's critique, remains firmly stuck with the parameters of Marxist analysis of the 1970s. Therefore, while we appreciate this attempt at 'renewal' of materialist analysis in IR, it is unclear to us what is actually new about the New Materialism. This might not necessarily be a problem as a renewal of materialism could in principle mean a return to an Old Materialism, yet it is particularly striking that those engaging in the debate do not acknowledge or make any references to feminist materialism at all. This neglect of feminist interventions is representative of a wide array of broadly understood materialist approaches in IR and International Political Economy (IPE) as well as present in Cammack's more recent work (see for example, Cammack 2012a, 2012b; Bieler 2012, 2013; Callinicos 2012).

As the laws that govern female suppression 'are not directly explicable by the laws of capital' (Haug 1997: 130), the New Materialism proves unable to grasp the suffering of some groups of women (in particular non-white and poor women) as it stands. This suffering as we highlight should be at the heart of any materialist analysis of current global politics – since these women are among the most adversely affected by the dynamics of global capitalism. As critical theorists, we need to identify who it is that is actually suffering from current capitalism and then consider how their suffering can be understood theoretically, rather than sticking to theoretical coherence

for the purpose of remaining within a particular framework. As such, from our perspective, the acid test of any New Materialism - and its' variants - is whether it has a purchase on the central features 21st century capitalism.

Some not so new ideas about women, sex and gender

With this in mind, it is appropriate to probe the 'blind spots' in the framework; effectively, this means revisiting discussions on the blind spots in 'old' Marxist analysis, being reproduced here. We focus on the sphere of social reproduction, which is largely neglected in Marxist accounts of primitive accumulation. We also briefly touch on gendered labour markets and working practices, a point developed in the third section of this article on contemporary austerity. Our objective is to show how the social position of women and women's inequality and their suffering tends to be viewed in terms of a pre-existing disadvantage that has its roots elsewhere and that is merely 'exploited' in the process of capitalist expansion. We highlight the 'complicit' role of the state in this exploitation, allowing for a critical view on dominance and power in the 'governing' of exploitation (Sauer and Wöhl, 2011). Yet, in doing so, it seems odd to us that we still need to rehearse this critique, since these point have been raised convincingly and numerous times by various Marxist-feminist authors and should, surely, be at the forefront of Marxist scholarship in the 21st century.

For example, in his 2003 article, Cammack (45) makes only one reference to women- 'young women'- and only one reference to gender, in the context of the reproduction of (part of) a statement by The IMF and the World Bank Group (54). Thus, even as Cammack's critique of World Bank and IMF interventions ranges across anti-poverty and poverty reduction programmes and initiatives in the areas of

primary education, basic health care, nutrition and family planning, at no point does he feel it necessary to engage explicitly with gender. This is despite the wealth of empirical data that elucidates the gendered and racialised dimensions of poverty (in effect, those who are suffering!) and the evident relevance of gender to all of the policy areas he alludes to. Nor does Cammack reference any text from the extensive literature undertaking a gender sensitive and/or feminist analysis of neoliberalism, global restructuring and the major institutions of global governance. It is reasonable to conclude, that Cammack regards class as not only the central category of analysis, but also the only significant social relation directly linked to capitalist expansion. Yet, Cammack (2003: 44) does acknowledge-indirectly and inconsequentially- that gender inequality cannot be regarded as wholly outside of the economy or separate from capitalism. He states:

In sum, the self-expansion of capital is a dynamic but uneven process, which needs to carry workers-in-waiting along with it. Capitalism *'requires'* that the great majority of the population should have no other means of survival than to offer themselves for work at the market wage.....in an efficiently operating capitalist system there is always a fluctuating proportion of the proletariat out of work; and there is always a further layer of the utterly impoverished ('absolutely poor') at the edge of or beyond the reserve army of labour itself. At the same time, this 'reserve army of labour' is held effectively in place and available only where all social institutions are oriented towards the enforcement of market dependence (our emphasis).

Therefore, there is an implicit recognition that the conditions under which women (typically) reproduce the ‘proletarianised’ workforce, which might include the relegation of women to the ‘private sphere’ and thus a socially enforced position of economic dependency (of women on men) are highly pertinent. This should take his discussion into the realm of unpaid social reproduction and care work specifically, as well as subsistence labour, yet social reproduction is treated as though it was not ‘labour’ in the ‘proper’ (Marxist) understanding of the term, by ignoring it.

Feminist state theory has long developed understandings of how the state as being complicit in reproducing such relations of domination through institutions such as tax systems, maternity regulations or care provisions (or the lack thereof) (for a discussion on feminist theorising of the state and the realm of welfare and social policies specifically see Haney, 2000). Similarly, the gendered governance mechanisms of the intersections between state and international institutions (Sauer and Wöhl, 2011) have been pointed out. Yet, while the interconnectedness between state or international level regulation and economic development is clearly pointed at in Cammack’s work, he does not take account of the actual unequal experience of the workforce that has been at the forefront of these feminist engagements with the state.

Moreover, Cammack states that recent World Bank and IMF activity aimed at the ‘completion of the world market’ involves ‘the global imposition of the social relations and disciplines central to capitalist reproduction.’ (2003: 38) Yet, again interventions into the familial realm are not considered, even as the World Bank has been highly active in this domain during the past two decades (see Bradford 2007, Griffin 2009, Rückert 2010). Neither of the critical interventions in the debate (Taylor and Charnock) have addressed these concerns.

The absence of gender analysis in the New Materialism, save for these undeveloped nods, is explained by the ‘range of concepts developed by Marx and Engels and their successors in order to understand the dynamics and contradictions of capitalism.’ (Cammack 2003: 41), Cammack (2003: 44) cites Marx thus:

In the history of primitive accumulation, all revolutions are epoch-making that act as levers for the capitalist class in the course of its formation; but this is true above all for those moments when great masses of men are suddenly and forcibly torn from their means of subsistence, and hurled onto the labour-market as free, unprotected and rightless proletarians.

That Marx seemingly only thought in terms of ‘masses of men’ when writing in an age and context (19th century England) characterised by large numbers of female labourers -notably factory workers- as well as mass child labour is noteworthy, but explainable to the extent that Marx’s work pre-dates sustained feminist analyses of the working conditions of women in the home, in the informal economy and in paid economy. On the face of it, the contrasting conditions of life for working class and bourgeois women also shores up the contention that women per se did (and do) not have any distinctive relation to the means of production. We contend that class reductionism was and remains a problem in Marxism and that the deep bias buried in what at first sight appears to be a merely unreflective assumption that men are the ‘natural actors’ in the great drama of capitalist expansion, must be made visible and unpacked.

As Federici (2004: 8) argues, Marxist categories are inadequate in fully understanding processes of primitive accumulation. She argues that; ‘the Marxian

identification of capitalism with the advent of wage labour and the free labourer, contributes to hide and naturalise the sphere of reproduction' and further that; 'in order to understand the history of women's transition from feudalism to capitalism, we must analyse the changes that capitalism has introduced in the process of social reproduction and, especially, the reproduction of labour power.' Thus; 'the organisation of housework, family life, child raising, sexuality, male-female relations and the relation between production and reproduction' (9) are not, in some sense, related to, but separate from the capitalist mode of organisation, but rather central to it.

In Federici's historical analysis of primitive accumulation and the logic of capitalist expansion, both race and gender assume a prominent position. For her, the situation of 'enslaved women ... most explicitly reveals the truth of the logic of capitalist accumulation' (89) and despite the differences in both cases, 'the female body was turned into an instrument for the reproduction of labour and the expansion of the workforce, treated as a natural breeding machine, functioning according to rhythms outside of women's control.' (91).

She points out that apart from brief allusions on the position of women in the bourgeois family in *The Communist Manifesto* and some discussion of population and procreation in *Grundrisse* and *Capital*, Marx did not consider that 'procreation could be a terrain of exploitation and by the same token of resistance', rather he treated procreation as a fact of nature and as 'a gender neutral, undifferentiated process.' (91) It would be remiss not to acknowledge here the importance of Engels' seminal work on *The Origins of the Family, Private Property and the States* (2004 (1884)) in which he identified the inferior position of women as arising from the institution of private property, which resulted in the assertion of male supremacy in the family (the

patriarchal family) and so in ‘the world historic defeat of the female sex.’ (67) Engels’ work is a significant materialist analysis with evident feminist sympathies. Yet, Engels naturalises the sexual division of labour and familial relations, not only in his romanticised representation of proletarian male-female relationships, but also in his failure to fully elucidate the relationship between patriarchy and capitalism. This has led to a paradox pointed out by Haug (1997: 130):

Women’s oppression is clearly related to the spheres of activity to which women are tied and which are by definition antagonistic to the laws of capital (not governed by the logic of wage labour and profit-making). That means not only that Marxism and the theory of the emancipation of the workers fail to explain her oppression, but that those aspects of a woman’s life that constitute her oppression are represented by Marxism as features of liberation.

As noted above, Cammack holds true to concepts originally developed by (Engels and) Marx, notably the ‘reserve army of labour’ thesis. (2003: 44). Here ‘the ‘latent’ proletariat, whether small peasant producers or young women as yet insufficiently accessible to capital’s reach, will be ‘freed’ and fully proletarianised’(45).

This notion of a reserve army of labour has been utilised by some feminist scholars to explain how and why women enter into the paid labour force at times of need (in wartime economies, for example), or at times of capitalist expansion, only to be pushed back into the home at a later date. There is evidence to suggest that women have actually entered the paid global labour force in increasing numbers since the 1990s with no ‘push back’ thus far, our observations on austerity below notwithstanding, although this period of sustained ‘feminisation’ of the global (paid)

labour force has also seen the ‘re-masculisation’ of specific sectors (Marchand and Runyan 2000). However, the concept has been criticised by others. This is because it is acknowledged that capitalism needs a pool of precariously situated, poor and exploitable labour in reserve, but with respect to women’s labour, it is assumed that their precarious position, including economic dependency, can be better explained by cultural norms, biological destiny, or some other factor. Cammack does not engage with these criticisms in his work.

We conclude this section of the article by returning to our original question: Does the New Materialism provide tools to capture what neoliberal globalisation looks like? We must conclude that, as currently articulated, the New Materialism does not. The New Materialism continues to interrogate the major structural features of the global economy, the configuration of social relations of production and the role of the state and international institutions (governance) in ‘managing’ and/or reproducing the contradictions inherent in capitalism, without explicit reference to gender (or race or ethnicity). It is underpinned by an ‘economism’ that writes gender out of the field (Griffin 2007). Therefore, the New Materialism does not theorise those who are actually suffering.

What does neoliberal globalisation look like?

Much of the feminist literature on political economy elaborates a fruitful critique of the radical feminist take of patriarchy and capitalism as distinct spheres first articulated in the 1970s. Delphy and Leonard have argued that the ‘family is every bit a social structure as, say industrial capitalism and that choices in and around the family life are every bit as constructed and constrained as they are in, for example, the labour

market' (1996: 2). The family household was (and is) not only a unit of consumption, but also a unit of production, which is structured on the basis of hierarchical relationships, which enable one person to appropriate the products or services of another persons' labour (82). In so far as 'women's continuing subordination in western society is due in large part to men's exploitation of women's domestic labour', this requires 'a materialist explanation' (29). Moreover, when dependents sell their labour, they do so under different conditions. Therefore, job segregation by sex and gender is a primary mechanism in capitalist society that maintains the superiority of men over women because it enforces lower wages for women in the labour market (Hartmann 1976). In arguing for a feminist historical materialism, Young (1997: 105)) hypothesises; 'class domination arises from and/or is intimately connected to patriarchal domination.' We appreciate such analysis, which allows for the theorisation of women's specific relation to capitalism and specific oppression.

Moreover, it is necessary to interrogate the state as embedding and reproducing patriarchal social relations. Generally, feminist analyses in this vein attempt to capture and map the complexities of global social relations and interrogate the interconnected material and ideological dimensions of global restructuring (Marchand and Runyan 2000). Conceptualising patriarchy, the state and capitalism as interacting forces, allows capitalism to be viewed as benefitting from patriarchal social relations and state practices. For our purposes we elaborate below regarding the 'fall out' that has attended the 2008 financial crisis specifically, social reproduction is, in our view, most pertinent (see also, for example, Elson 2002, 2010, Bezanson and Luxton 2006, Hoskyns and Rai 2007, Bakker and Silvey 2008).

While there is no one feminist theory of the state, there is agreement among feminist analysts that the state draws, re-draws and polices the boundaries between

what is considered to be the domain of the private and the public. Dominant interpretations of communal practices or the ideological construction of individual choices with respect to love and/or familial relationships hold sway in societies, but historically states have always intervened in the sphere of the body, sexuality and reproductive function and in the domains of marriage and family life. These areas of human life remain contested within national polities and international forums.

We are not suggesting that in theorising the ‘patriarchal state’, we can and might identify a one size fits all model; the role of the state in drawing, re-drawing and policing the boundaries between the public and the private – and we might add here, in producing and reproducing heteronormativity – varies between places and overtime. Nevertheless, similarities exist. For example, with respect to OECD states during the period of post-Second World War reconstruction, citizenship was ideologically constructed along the lines of ‘breadwinners’ (wage labourers, mainly men) and their ‘dependents’ (unpaid carers, mainly women).

In what MacLeavy calls the *trente glorieuses* - the thirty years following the establishment of the British welfare state, citizenship was constructed upon a bread winner/home maker model, reinforcing the economic dependency of women on a male partner. MacLeavy (2012: 363) argues that during this period, ‘[M]uch child and eldercare was provided within the family and the issue of whether the established gender roles promoted a fair distribution of opportunities was low on the political agenda.’ Thus, women’s position in the paid labour force was shaped by gender determined lifestyles; lifestyles that were, in turn, shored up by the state.

Undoubtedly, within the confines of such gender determined lifestyles, women benefitted to some degree from state provision in the form of, for example, ‘family allowances’, subsidised child care or elder care and, also importantly, the expansion

of public sector jobs. For this reason, some feminists argue that the state cannot be viewed as crudely patriarchal, but rather as a 'site' in which patriarchal relations are constructed and contested. This allows scope for agency and a degree of autonomy, as the state implements measures in response to social change and political struggles around gender.

Nevertheless, these reforms can also be said to meet the 'requirements' of capital in specific historical periods. Without being able to fully develop this thought, we believe it makes even more sense to understand the state relationally - following the way Poulantzas (1975) has captured the capitalist state and thus linking up with the 'New Materialism' debate. From a feminist perspective, the capitalist and patriarchal state then becomes a material condensation of relations of domination (not restricted to class relations). Without wanting to ignore Poulantzas evident class reductionism, he himself realises that relations of domination are not only anchored within the state but also in formally non-state areas of life – indeed, relations of domination that are not only class-relations (Poulantzas 2002: 72). We contend that such an understanding of the state can point the way to capture the interdependencies between class and gender-relations.

Thus, while the state has facilitated the entry of women into the labour force, particularly at times of economic growth and expansion, the dominant ideological construction of women - as 'naturally' suited to care work and the fulfilment of physical and emotional needs and 'naturally' dependent on men by dint of their reproductive function - has been continually reproduced. Indeed, the state invests ideological effort into producing and reproducing such constructions. Examples include discourses surrounding the construction of norms around marriage, family and

parenthood with particularly assigned roles of mothers and fathers (Tepe-Belfrage 2015).

Historically women have generally entered into the paid labour force on less favourable terms than men; as a cheap and precarious placed labour that is more easily exploited. For many women in the Western world, this situation has not much changed in the twenty-first century. Outside of the Western world, from the early 1980s to the mid-1990s, global labour underwent a period of feminisation (Marchand and Runyan 2000), with women frequently entering the paid labour force at lower rates of pay and less favourable conditions than men. Ideologically loaded, yet powerful constructions about women's 'secondary' status as workers belie the actual contribution made by women's paid and unpaid labour to individual, family and communal well-being and the significant numbers of female headed families across the world.

Moreover, during the period characterised as the Washington Consensus, the feminisation of the global workforce was facilitated by international institutions, notably the World Bank and IMF, in the interests of promoting neoliberal development, capitalist production and, in Cammack's terms, the eventual completion of the world market. Neoliberal development initiatives, such as micro-finance and poverty reduction strategies promoted by the IMF and World Bank particularly, have been subjected to sustained feminist critique (Harcourt 2012).

Yet, here we point to the domain of unpaid social reproduction and care work to further evidence the intersection of patriarchy and capitalism. The double burden carried by women engaged in both paid and unpaid labour, exacerbated by structural adjustment and state rollback, is highly pertinent to understanding and explaining why across the global South world, women, and especially women with care

responsibilities, enter(ed) the labour market on unfavourable terms; in export production zones, in world market factories and in a burgeoning informal economy. Feminised jobs are frequently low paid, flexible and insecure.

Following the global financial crisis and ensuing fiscal crisis, the policies of states in many parts of the world have aimed at (further) cut backs and related austerity measures, often entailing the privatisation of care and other functions that fell within the remit of state provision (see Seguíno 2010). All such measures are implicated in and serve to exacerbate a pre-existing crisis in social reproduction (see Special Issue 'The Economic Crisis', *Gender and Development* 18, 2 (2010)).

While the circumstances of poor people in the West cannot be compared like for like with those of extremely poor people in the global South, the financial crisis and subsequent austerity measures in many OECD countries have seen the re-emergence of basic problems of food security for hundreds of thousands of people in wealthy countries. Moreover, many thousands of working class and ethnic minority women face a daily struggle to combine formal and/or informal paid work with child care.

To conclude this section of our article, we reiterate that social reproduction is an integral part of the dynamic of capitalist accumulation, which is facilitated by states and international institutions, albeit this process is not uniform overtime or across contexts. As such, it must be made central to any theoretical analyses of neoliberal capitalism (Ehrenreich and Hochschild 2002). Approaches which aspire to comprehend the totality of capitalist social relations, while marginalising social reproduction and unpaid labour devoted to care and/or which assume that the double burden is a consequence of 'natural' disadvantage or a 'private problem', actually support, rather than challenge, neoliberal ideology in this regard.

The New Materialists have paid close attention to how states facilitate global restructuring through neoliberal economic policies that aim to realise de-regulated markets, through the privatisation of state industries and flexible labour markets and through the enactment of anti-trade union legislation. However, policies on taxation, working credits, social security provision, welfare and pensions, inheritance rights, maternity benefits and support for childcare are all central to the construction and reproduction of the boundaries between the ‘public’ and ‘private’; boundaries that are drawn and re-drawn change during periods of restructuring and indeed, during period of crisis.

At such times, typically efforts are made to depoliticise equality or social justice as issues in public discourse. It is particularly important, therefore, that such issues are not rendered invisible. And yet, it seems to us, the debate on the New Materialism does just that. With regard to the politics of austerity, critical analysis requires more than the New Materialism can offer – in order to make visible those who suffer and to explain the structural and ideological causes of their suffering. It requires a feminist materialist analysis, inspired by insights from ‘old’ feminist critique of Marxism as well as recent research on social reproduction.

Austerity politics in the UK

We now turn to what must be, given constraints of space, a brief review of UK austerity. This might be understood as a further wave of ‘restructuring’ following periods of global economic crisis and, moreover, one which bears close resemblance to previous waves of global restructuring. As noted above, global restructuring in the aftermath of crisis have entailed state roll-back, cuts in public expenditure and related

reforms which have progressively shifted responsibility for social security and social welfare from the state to ‘responsible’ private citizens and private households.

In the UK, austerity consists of a series of measures aimed at reducing public expenditure and, in the words of Prime Minister David Cameron, ending ‘decades’ of ‘wasteful’ and ‘excessive’ government spending (2009). Since 2010, the rhetoric of the UK government has constructed measures to promote social equality or social justice as ‘unaffordable’ and/or a ‘burden’ on business in what is further constructed as a ‘tough’ economic climate. Austerity constitutes an attack on social equality and social justice per se. The ideological construction of a nation that is ostensibly ‘all in this together’ obfuscates class, ethnic and social divisions while simultaneously depoliticising social equality/inequality as an issue. It is highly illuminating and also deeply depressing, that reforms which have weighty implications and concrete consequences for gender in/equality are presented as the curtailment of ‘wasteful’ expenditure. Public discourse on equality or social justice has been progressively displaced by appeals to ‘fairness.’ The concept of fairness acknowledges no barriers to social mobility other than lack of education qualifications, belying the reality of systematically different lived experiences and possibilities across social groups and, moreover, that actuality of the uneven and, importantly, unequal impacts of austerity measures (Karamessini and Rubery 2013: 4). For example, withdrawal of state welfare provision and welfare reforms generally, are impacting particularly harshly on the poorest groups in British society.

Discourse on ‘welfare dependency’ and other alleged failings of specific groups, who are targeted and pathologised in such narratives, allows government to displace responsibility for welfare and social security from the state to society or ‘responsible’ individuals who should, and if necessary be compelled to, take care of

their private, familial obligations. As we show, the capacity and wherewithal of some groups, most especially low income and poor women, do so is being simultaneously undermined. In looking to fill the gap left by the withdrawal of the state, the government appeals both to frugality, self-sufficiency and fiscal prudence (Rubery and Rafferty 2013) and to civil society or a notional ‘community’ (originally and briefly framed as the *Big Society*) (Tepe-Belfrage, 2015).

The British welfare state has been the target of sustained attack by right-wing constituencies in the UK from the late 1970s onwards. The priorities of the current UK government, and the specific package of public expenditure cuts and welfare reforms undertaken have been coloured by the ideological beliefs and long term political objectives of the political right. However, the resurgence of ‘New Right’ ideology is a global phenomenon; a means of legitimating measures that facilitate neoliberal globalisation. The ideological construction of ‘austerity’ attests that austerity is not the only possible response available to states in the face of ‘real’ exogenous, all-constraining forces. Rather, the rhetoric of ‘no alternative’ legitimates austerity measure while simultaneously limiting the parameters of public debate on policy and shutting down discussions of actual alternatives.

At the heart of the debate on global financial crisis and political responses are a set of questions concerning the autonomy or relative autonomy of the state vis-à-vis exogenous global forces. Not all of this literature is Marxist of course, but, as our initial discussion (above) bears out, the wider debate includes Marxist voices and encompasses key Marxist concerns with the ‘relative autonomy’ of the state from class and national interests.

Our interest here is to further develop our argument regarding how the privileging of class over gender, or indeed race and ethnicity, in the new materialist

analyses of global financial crisis, debt and austerity obscures lived realities of suffering. This Marxist analysis of neoliberal globalisation and responses to crisis (as set out above) foreground class interests and processes of capital accumulation. The privileging of class necessarily colours large parts of Marxist thinking about resistance (to austerity) which challenges the power of capital. While the gendered and racialised dimensions of suffering under austerity are acknowledged, these dimensions are, at best, marginalised. We argue that analyses of austerity must first make visible how specific social groups are concretely impacted and second explicate complex intersectionalities.

We are interested to bring the ‘neglected’ gender dimension to the forefront of the debate on austerity by interrogating the ways in which austerity is impacting women disproportionately to men in key areas of economic and social life and exploring the wider implications for gender equality/inequality. Inequality is not reducible to singular aspects of socio-economic identity, and it is only through intersectional analysis that we understand how different forms of inequality intersect, who it is that is actually affected and ultimately how poverty is created. This is a clear challenge to political economy approaches that reduce inequality to single dynamics. Such explanations necessarily fall short of addressing the causes and consequences of inequality. Intersectional analysis suggests different solutions to addressing inequality, poverty and wealth, taking as a starting point the lived experience of domination, power, discrimination and oppression, aiming at its overcoming.

Building on such theoretical insights shows how women, differentiated by class, race, ethnicity and other factors, are differently positioned in the labour market. Furthermore, it shows how women are rendered vulnerable to the adverse impacts of austerity not on account of inherent ‘weakness’ rooted in essential, biological

difference, or on account of a patriarchy that somehow resides next to class power, but on account of capitalist social and institutional arrangements, that serve to place the burden of social reproduction and care largely on women; indeed arrangements in which the capitalist state is deeply and intrinsically implicated. It helps to demonstrate how the 'double burden' carried by women has been addressed in discourse and policy initiatives on citizenship, it how it has not been resolved. Furthermore, it illustrate how current austerity measures further shift the burden of care onto women, exacerbating the problem. At the same time, gender equality is being depoliticised as an issue and policy goal. This is happening after a period during of some gains, but historically these gains have not accrued to all social groups or all groups of women; again, class and ethnicity are highly pertinent here. Finally, such an analysis highlights the adverse impacts of austerity by showing how economic dependency and a withdrawal of state provision and support to core services exposes some women to a greater risk of violence.

Gendered states, gendered labour markets

Prior to the financial crisis and its aftermath, states across the OECD had facilitated the feminisation of the workforce by providing direct employment opportunities for women on relatively favourable terms (Rubery and Rafferty 2013, Annesley and Scheele, 2011) and at better rates of pay (Ginn 2013). States have also provided various forms of support for childcare and elder care, enabling women to better manage the dual burden of paid labour, social reproduction and care responsibilities. Maternity leave benefits female workers as a whole, but particularly women on low incomes and single parents (Annesley 2012).

However, these developments notwithstanding, the state has facilitated female participation in the paid labour force without resolving many significant barriers to women's employment. Nor has the state delivered on full equality with respect to terms and conditions of work and rewards from paid work. Thus, the state cannot be viewed as a genuine vehicle for a progressive gender politics. Rather, the state is better understood as a condensation of relations of dominance working to constantly secure capitalism by balancing and rebalancing interests, yet in the interest of the reproduction of capitalist patriarchy.

New visions of citizenship have emerged in response to social and economic change, but these have only partially been realised in practice. This supports an argument resembling Cammack's': changes in conceptions of gender relations and concomitant changes in citizenship models must be seen as a response to the growing need to increase the numbers of women in the workforce. The partial realisation of the same demonstrates the historically specific way in which women are integrated and/or excluded from the paid work force.

For example, in actuality, the dual citizenship model promoted by many European Union (EU) member states has neither 'failed to fully resolve the horizontal and vertical segregation of the labour market' nor bring about 'a rebalancing of labour performed within the home' (MacLeavy 2011: 363). As such, it is complementary to other measures such as the European Employment Strategy.¹ MacLeavy goes so far as to argue that measures taken have had little impact on pervasive gender discrimination within the labour market, in relation to, for example, equal opportunities and equal pay. Women with childcare responsibilities particularly

¹ As part of the Treaty of Lisbon (2009) the European Employment Strategy set out a ten year timeframe to increase the participation of women, across member states, in the formal/paid work economy.

continue to function as a 'flexible labour reserve' and, as such, are more likely to be hired in “buffer jobs” (Rubery and Rafferty, 2013: 2).

The extent to which social reproduction, the burden care and myriad other unpaid tasks continue to profoundly shape women’s integration into the paid labour force has been documented in empirical studies which show that the marital status of women and motherhood correlate with (relatively) low paid, flexible forms of employment (Birdsall and Graham, 1999). Certainly, there is a class dimension in the empirical picture of female employment that emerges in such studies. Middle class, highly educated, highly skilled women have benefitted from expanding ‘opportunities’, while working class women, poor women, women from ethnic minority groups and those with lower levels of education, and fewer skills count among the ‘losers’ (Birdsall and Graham, 1999; Sandhu, Stephenson and Harrison, 2013). Thus, it seems that class privilege ameliorates the double burden to some degree, although married women across social classes and ethnic groups are often employed on less favourable terms in the private sector. Women who head single parent households struggle most to find well paid, secure work and combine paid and unpaid work. In the UK, single-mothers have higher rates of employment combined with children at home and are more likely to be paid less and face more discrimination in the job market than married women and men (Crompton 1998).

Gendered austerity

Reforms in areas like taxation and benefits have concrete and differential impacts on women and men (for more detailed analyses, see, for example, Oxfam 2010, OECD 2012, Fawcett Society 2013, Women’s Budget Group 2010, 2013). Welfare reform is thus a central gender issue:

More stringent conditionality in welfare entitlements poses a particular challenge for the sections of the population that are most frequently subject to the ‘new social risks’ emergent from the socio-economic transformations that have brought post-industrial societies into existence ... This includes younger people with low or obsolete skill sets, families with small children and/or elderly dependents trying to reconcile work and caring responsibilities and working women occupying the labour market very differently from the standard male workers, since Second World War.

In the UK, discourse on welfare reform assumes a highly moralistic tone. Cameron preaches that ‘helping people from state benefits to paid work reduces the financial stress that precipitates family breakdown’ (MacLeavy 2011: 362). His sermon belies the reality- austerity measures are putting additional pressures on families and on poor families in particular. The rise of single-parent families is a complex social phenomenon that cannot be reduced to simplistic causal explanations in which welfare is a key, if not the key ‘variable.’ That single parent female-headed families are more likely to live in poverty than dual parent or male-headed families, is the most pertinent fact in discussions on austerity. It is this group who are feeling -and suffering- the impact of cuts and attendant changes in welfare and benefits most keenly (together with people with disabilities). It has been estimated that single mothers will lose a month’s income each year, when all tax and benefit changes are rolled out. (Women’s Budget Group 2010: 2-3).

Social reproduction per se is now deemed to impose costly ‘burdens’ on both the state and private sector. Statistic compiled by the British Trades Union Congress (2012), confirmed in research by the Women’s Budget Group (2010), suggests that

pregnant women have been adversely affected by the austerity measures. The 2010 budget threatened cuts to statutory maternity rights, maternity pay and leave, (Steans and Jenkins 2011) along with the axing of a long list pregnancy and family related benefits (Annesley and Scheele 2011). Research by Save the Children, Daycare Trust, Resolution Foundation and Netmums shows that women considering returning to work after maternity leave are finding they can no longer afford to work because the childcare costs outstrip their potential earnings.(cited in Steans and Jenkins 2011).

In summary, the differential impacts austerity measures have on different classes, genders and ethnic groups are rooted in the way the capitalist and patriarchal welfare state is located and structured by the intersectionalities of race, class and gender. Austerity is only secured through the way in which, largely, women take on the further care burdens to cope with losses in care functions of the state.

Gendered violence

At this juncture, it is appropriate to reiterate our earlier claim: when focusing on the ‘material’, it is necessary to ask the question who is suffering? We have addressed this question in relation to the ‘structural violence’ inherent in relations of economic dependency which can leave women ‘vulnerable’ to violence not by dint of ‘natural’ sex differences, but because they lack financial or other resources and so are locked into potentially or actually harmful situations. We also address this question in regard to inequality and poverty. We now turn to material suffering with respect to actual bodily integrity; violence and even risk to life. Austerity measures increase vulnerability to the risk of domestic violence by circumscribing the possibilities to escape from situations that pose risks to the physical and psychological well-being of women and children particularly. This builds on and links up with the work of

feminist state theory that captures the gender specific form of violence of the modern state. Sauer (2008: 104) points to several tendencies in the context of the neoliberalisation of the state, all are exacerbated in the political response to the financial crisis and austerity: ‘The current tendencies of the reprivatisation of the state to protect from risks and dangers of the capitalist labour market lead to a re-issuing’ of gendered relations of violence that are inscribed into the state.

Specific measures like changes in tax allowances, access to legal aid and cutting benefits (Steans and Jenkins 2011, Ruberty and Rafferty 2013) which previously went directly to women, reduces the bargaining power of women within the family (Women’s Budget Group 2010: 4). Taken together, the cumulative impact of austerity measures generates myriad pressures with the potential to push some groups of women into a position of economic dependence on a partner. Indeed, there are already signs of an ideological backlash and push to return to traditional gender roles (Karamessini and Rubery 2013: 14). Economic dependency is a form of violence. Whilst economic dependency does not cause physical violence it increases the vulnerability of people already at risk of domestic violence, the majority of whom are women.

Government agencies and non-governmental organisations, which provide social support to women at risk of domestic violence, have suffered deep funding cuts. One of the most direct impacts of the austerity measures has come in the reduction of the Supporting People budget and the removal of the ‘ring-fencing’ which previously protected such spending. For example, in 2011, Birmingham and Solihull Women’s Aid (BSWA) reported that Local Authority funds allocated to domestic violence and sexual abuse services in Birmingham were to be reduced from 7.8 million pounds to 5.4 million pounds between 2010/11 and 2011/12. This figure is

massively disproportionate compared to other cuts outlined in the 2010 Budget. BSWA expressed concerns that domestic and sexual violence services would struggle to keep going. Elsewhere in the public sector, cuts mean less support for people at risk. Less support ranges from less availability in refuge accommodation to changes in access to legal aid, which make it much harder for victims of domestic violence to access legal assistance. Holly Taylor (Birmingham and Solihul Women's Aid) stated: 'The impact of cuts on an already stretched children's services department has had a significant impact on capacity.When faced with women who have no recourse to public funds who cannot access refuge or any other accommodation but have children, we are being advised children's services will accommodate the children but not the mother, or they will pay for them to return to their country of origin...women are being penalized for ...trying to make themselves and their children safe' (cited in: Steans and Jenkins, 2011: 7)

Conclusion: a 'new' New Materialism?

In summary, our initial point of departure in this article was current debates on New Materialism in IR and IPE that aimed to set and push disciplinary agendas. We welcome calls for a New Materialism in so far as such initiatives were driven by the desire to better understand and address perceived and urgent issues and problems in the contemporary world, but have also sought to expand the parameters of current discussions. In regard to Connolly's intervention in IR we initially sought to reclaim the term 'New Materialism' from exclusively poststructuralist interpretations and usages. Our overall aim in this article has rather been reinvigorate the debate on New Materialism, as it has played out in Marxism specifically. However, we have further insisted that the merits of feminist material analysis be recognised and feminist voices

be heard in theoretical debates, not marginalized-yet again. We believe this debate to be exemplary for a critique of Marxist works more widely.

We have demonstrated how the New Materialism as articulated by Cammack et al. sidesteps feminist analysis. Therefore, as it stands it does not offer an adequate analysis of contemporary neoliberal capitalism. We could not put this any better than Young (1997: 102) writing some 17 years ago:

Our nascent historical research coupled with our feminist intuition tells us that the labour of women occupies a central place in any system of production, that the gender division is a basic axis of social structuration in all hitherto existing social formations and that gender hierarchy serves as a pivotal element in most systems of social domination. If traditional Marxism has no theoretical place for such hypothesis, it is not merely an inadequate theory of women's oppression, but also an inadequate theory of social relations, relations of production, and domination.

Looking at the gendered consequences of austerity politics we can identify structural causes for female suffering born in the very logic capitalist exploitation in the 21st century is organised. Women are among the groups most harshly impacted by austerity measures. We have argued that if critical materialist theory's aim is to change conditions for those suffering, it first needs to ask who is suffering and identify the structural causes of such suffering. We have highlighted some of the consequences of austerity politics for women and have shown how these are the result of the roles women perform, particularly their responsibility for functioning social reproduction. Materialist theory cannot ignore such or make it a result of women's

role being located outside of the capitalist economy. Rather, social reproduction as mainly women perform it has a detrimental role in reproducing and organising capitalism and capitalist exploitation. Finally, while we have been unable to elaborate resistance strategies to austerity in our article, we would note here that austerity politics is a site of significant political organising among women's and feminist groups in the UK. The potential of such groups to contribute to a politics of resistance on the Left will not be realised, if the problems and issues faced by women are marginalised or ignored.

A new materialism that is worth supporting will have to address these shortcomings and be anti-capitalist and feminist. Or to quote Young (1997: 102) again:

‘We need not merely a synthesis of feminism with Marxism (a la dual systems), but also a thoroughly feminist historical materialism, which regards the social relations of a particular historical formation as one system in which gender differentiation is a core attributes’.

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