

How to Resist Austerity: the Case of the Gender Budgeting Strategy in Andalusia

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While most countries have imposed austerity policies that risk jeopardizing the progress towards gender equality, there are examples of European regions that have maintained or strengthened gender-equality policies in a climate of economic downturn. Following a realist approach and adopting Kingdon's agenda-setting model as our framework, this explanatory case study examines how, why and under which circumstances the gender budgeting strategy has resisted austerity measures. This strategy represents a key tool for gender mainstreaming in Andalusia, a southern region of Spain. Results have shown that the existence of a strong left-wing government is a necessary context for the maintenance of gender equality policies. The feasibility given by the previous context of institutionalization of this strategy and its low cost, together with political commitment — with a decisive contribution from female leadership — have been the major factors allowing the maintenance of the gender budgeting strategy in Andalusia.

Keywords: gender mainstreaming, public policies assessment, gender budgeting, austerity measures, Andalusia

Introduction

The current crisis, as well as its policy responses, has been gendered both in causes and in consequences (Walby, 2009). Austerity measures risk jeopardizing the progress towards gender equality by undermining important employment and social protection programmes and putting gender equality policy onto the back burner (Gálvez Muñoz and Rodríguez Modroño, 2011; Karamessini and Rubery, 2014). Moreover, the governmental privileging of a neoliberal rather than a social democratic alternative to respond to the crisis does not contribute to promote an effective mainstreaming of gender in policy making (Lombardo, 2013). Finally, ideological backlash favours a return to traditional gender roles and backward-looking gender contracts (Karamessini and Rubery, 2014).

While most countries have imposed austerity policies, there are examples of European regions that have maintained or strengthened pro-equity policies in a climate of economic downturn. In the context of a collaborative study to understand how, why and under which circumstances some policies have resisted austerity,¹ we focus on the gender budgeting strategy (GBA) in Andalusia, a Southern region of Spain. GBA is a policy strategy for gender mainstreaming that is surviving austerity in a certain region of a country that has regressed in terms of gender equality since 2010.

During a time of austerity, gender experts recommend implementing gender mainstreaming strategies such as gender budgeting programmes in European Union and member states' economic

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and financial decisions, gender impact assessments of policy initiatives taken in response to the crisis, and the monitoring of fiscal consolidation measures to observe the threat they pose for welfare provisions and public services (Lombardo, 2013). The aim of the GBA strategy is mainly to allocate funds to those programmes that can soften the gender inequality impact of the crisis. GBA is more necessary than ever to meet budgetary stability obligations without damaging the achievement of gender equality.

The processes through which governments decide to adopt either austerity measures or pro-equity and social protection policies are invariably influenced by a myriad of contextual and mechanistic factors. Given this complexity, we conducted a theory-driven explanatory case study through semi-structured interviews following a realist approach (Shankardass *et al.*, 2014). The main objective of this case study is to understand how and why the GBA has been maintained during a period of austerity; that is, to identify the social mechanisms and to establish under which circumstances or contexts these mechanisms 'come into being' or 'fail to operate' (Merton, 1968). To reach our objective, we start by reviewing the austerity measures in Spain and the GBA. Afterwards, we present our set of theoretical propositions that could explain the maintenance of the GBA in the context of austerity. These theoretical propositions have been organized following Kingdon's multiple-streams framework in the agenda-setting theory (Kingdon, 1984). Thereafter, we explain the methodology and the results of the study. Finally, we discuss our results.

The austerity measures in Spain and their gender impacts

Similarly to other European countries, in 2008 Spain fell into economic downturn due to the collapse of its housing market, aggravated by the lack of regulation of its banks. The initial policy response of the socialist government was counter-cyclical. The government launched Keynesian stimulus packages known as 'Plan E' (Ministry of Economy and Finance, Spain, 2008), which provided business and employment support programmes, infrastructure spending and financial and credit guarantees mainly focused on the male-dominated construction, financial and automotive sectors (Lombardo, 2013). The initial funding programme was designed to preserve and create jobs in these industries — primarily benefiting men, due to the traditional gender composition of these sectors. Although a huge amount of funds were mobilized they were not used to promote gender equality, wasting a unique opportunity (Alfama *et al.*, 2015).

When Spain's sovereign debt yield increased in the context of adverse public debt development in the eurozone and the failure of the banking system, the Spanish government faced pressure from the European Union institutions, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and financial markets to implement fiscal consolidation packages and structural reforms (Gonzalez Gago and Segales Kirzner, 2014). Although the socialist government introduced a first wave of austerity reforms (May 2010–November 2011), the most important austerity measures were adopted by the conservative government in office since 2011, with important budgets cuts mainly focused on social services (Legido-Quigley *et al.*, 2013; López and Rodríguez, 2011).

The first wave of austerity measures that were implemented aimed at showing foreign investors and the EU that the effects of the crisis were being addressed and controlled (Gonzalez Gago and Segales Kirzner, 2014). In this context, gender equality suffered severe policy setbacks²:

1. The Ministry of Equality was suppressed in October 2010 as part of the anti-crisis budgetary cuts, and was transformed into a State Secretariat for Equality within the Ministry of Health, Social Policy and Equality. The reason put forward for this change was savings in administrative costs within the context of the fiscal austerity demanded by the current economic crisis (Lombardo, 2013).
2. The role of the welfare state in promoting equality was also seriously damaged. The iconic example was the suspension of the so-called 'Dependence Act', passed in 2006. This law guaranteed a set of care services and monetary benefits for elderly and disabled people. After 2010 the economic responsibilities of public authorities for delayed diagnosis and the resolution of applications were reduced, adversely affecting the intensity of the protection of dependents. However, the worst budget cut in the deployment of this act came with Royal Decree 20/2012 on measures to ensure budgetary stability and promoting competitiveness, under the

conservative government. This decree abolished social-security contributions for informal caregivers (Gonzalez Ortega, 2014). Consequently, the assigned budget cut was achieved in practice at the expense of informal carers — mostly women — within dependents' families (Gonzalez Gago and Segales Kirzner, 2014; Lombardo, 2013). Moreover, there was an implementation delay of paternity leave's extension from 13 days to 28 days.³ This measure should have been adopted in January 2011 but it was first postponed by the socialist government, and has been postponed indefinitely by the conservative government on grounds of cost savings. The discriminatory situation between maternity and paternity leaves and the lack of action in this regard are examples that do not contribute to achieving an equality model and do not foster co-responsibility, thereby reinforcing gender stereotypes (Gonzalez Gago and Segales Kirzner, 2014; Lombardo, 2013).

3. Other important policy decisions with negative consequences on gender equality were the reduction of the purchasing power of the minimum wage, which affects women more than men since women tend to have lower-paid jobs and also because women depend heavily on benefits related to non-contributory schemes that are calculated based on minimum wage level (Gonzalez Gago and Segales Kirzner, 2014; Lombardo, 2013). Moreover, in May 2010 public servants' wages were cut by 5 per cent on average, which also affected women in a higher proportion due to their higher participation in public employment. Public pensions were also frozen from 2011 onwards, with the exception of minimum and non-contributory pensions. This affects men more than women since women tend to receive minimum and non-contributory pensions more than men.
4. Important structural reforms were legislated. First the pensions system was reformed, gradually increasing the retirement age from 65 years to 67 and the paying contribution from 35 years to 38.5 for the entitlement to receive a full pension. Given that women are overrepresented in the informal economy and more frequently interrupt their professional career than men to look after children or relatives, women often meet with difficulties in reaching the minimum requirements for a decent pension (Ezquerro Samper, 2011).

The second wave of austerity measures implemented by the conservative government (Popular Party), in office since December 2011, consisted of the same key elements as in the previous period, but reinforced: brutal fiscal consolidation and/or new versions of the former structural reforms (e.g. labour market reform, pension system reform, employment in public administration) (Gonzalez Gago and Segales Kirzner, 2014; Lombardo, 2013).

After the new conservative government was elected in November 2011, ministries were restructured in the name of 'rationalization' and 'simplification' in response to the economic crisis. This restructuring had important effects on the institutionalization of gender equality: the historic Women's Institute was relegated to become part of the new Ministry of Health, Social Services and Equality; the State Secretariat for Equality was eliminated and a new State Secretariat for Social Services and Equality created. The Women's Institute was downgraded from a higher-rank State Secretariat to being dependent on a Directorate General for Equal Opportunities (located within the Secretariat for Social Services and Equality) (Lombardo, 2013). Such downgrading generally means having less power and resources and less capacity for implementing gender mainstreaming in all policies.

The most important labour-market reform (RD3/2012) was undertaken during the conservative government, having extremely negative consequences on gender equality. It increased opportunities for employers to introduce more flexible employment conditions without having to respect collective agreements, and made dismissal procedures easier. It further increased the precariousness of part-time contracts, limited workers' right to ask for a shorter working day to care for children or dependent relatives, limited breastfeeding rights and eliminated financial incentives to reincorporate women in their former employment after a period of childcare leave (Benach *et al.*, 2014; Lombardo, 2013; Ruiz-Garcia, 2014). Besides, public employment recruitment came to a stop at the end of 2011 (Gonzalez Gago and Segales Kirzner, 2014; Lombardo, 2013), making female employment prospects more difficult. Moreover, women benefit from public services in order to enter the labour market, particularly in terms of preprimary education and long-term care. The cancellation of preprimary school at national level ('Educa3 Plan') and cuts to elderly care will hamper their incorporation into the labour market (Gonzalez Gago and Segales Kirzner, 2014; Lombardo, 2013).

Moreover, during this second wave of austerity measures gender-equality policies have directly suffered a budget cut at national level. The gender-based violence budget was reduced by 28 per cent from 2011 to 2014. During this period women's shelters have closed down and the local safety net for assistance and protection is being dismantled (Ruiz-Garcia, 2014).

Most of the reforms and budget cuts in the second wave of austerity can be understood not only via an economic rationale, but also as a conservative reaction and a return to traditional gender roles. A symptom of this is the decline in the amount of women in decision-making positions with the shift from the socialist to the conservative government (Ruiz-Garcia, 2014). Thus, most academic feminists agree that political ideology matters when it comes to implementing women's rights and gender equality — even if the EU-framed austerity measures have blurred the differences between socialists and conservatives (Lombardo, 2013; Paleo and Alonso, 2015; Ruiz-Garcia, 2014).

At a regional level, the 17 regional governments were required by a new Organic Law (2/2012) on budget stability and financial sustainability to balance their budgets. This law had a major impact on the financial autonomy of the regions. In this scenario, the national-level initiatives aimed at reducing public spending were complemented by further budgetary cutbacks in regional and local government, which is responsible for the biggest spending areas relating to public education, health and social services. In Spain, gender policies are an integral part of regional competences (i.e. legislative power, regulatory power and the executive function). Thus, the various regions bear responsibility for promoting equality between men and women, planning and implementing equality policy plans, establishing positive actions to eradicate discrimination, and the promotion of women's associations. In that regard, the different regions have legislated and implemented gender-equality laws and policies at a different pace and using different approaches. Each region has responded to austerity differently: for example, Galicia (2009), Catalonia (2010) and Cantabria (2011) have suspended projects for regional equality laws (Paleo and Alonso, 2015).

The GBA of the regional government of Andalusia

Andalusia is a region of the south of Spain with a population of 8 million people. It is the most populated and the second largest in area of the autonomous communities in Spain. Traditionally Andalusia has been an agricultural region compared to the rest of Spain and the rest of Europe. Today the food industry accounts for 27.3 per cent of employment. Mining, metallurgical, energy and chemical activities complete the basics of Andalusian industry, which in recent years has also moved toward more technological segments (machinery, renewable energy and electrical and electronic equipment).⁴

The regional government of Andalusia has been ruled by the Socialist Party since 1978 (the first preautonomous regional elections after Franco's dictatorship), with the exception of the government formed in 2012,⁵ which was led by a left-left coalition between the Socialist Party (Partido Socialista, PSOE) and the United Left (Izquierda Unida, IU). The Socialist Party has been the political party in Spain that has promoted the most women in terms of political power, at both executive and legislative levels. The consecutive socialist governments in Andalusia could, to some extent, contribute to developing a gender-equality agenda.

As Ortbals (2010) states, in the late 1970s the daily reality of women in Andalusia was rife with illiteracy, unemployment and was centred on their marriages; today, although a high percentage of unemployment still exists, the number of women without literacy has reduced greatly (Ortbals, 2010). A similar image is projected by the Andalusian Index of Gender Inequality (INDESGEN), which shows a decrease of gender inequalities from 2005 to 2012, and a 2012 score above the Spanish average (Dirección General de Fondos Europeos, 2013). However, the situation of women and men in the labour market still highlights differences and imbalances in terms of their integration and access. The percentage of economically active women in 2015 was 52.3 per cent and female unemployment rate was 34.5 per cent compared to 29 per cent for the male population. The female unemployment rate in 2015 was 34.5 per cent compared to 29 per cent for the male population (INE, 2016).

Gender-equality policies — both positive actions and mainstreaming strategies — have for several years been of key importance in the regional government of Andalusia. In 1989 the Andalusian Women's Institute was created, becoming one of the first regional women's agencies in Spain, together with the Basque country (Lombardo, 2013). In 2001 the first gender unit was created, promoted and coordinated by the Andalusian Women's Institute and the Regional Ministry of

Economy and Public Finances. The aim of this organization was to provide training, information and tools to the entire administration in Andalusia to ensure gender mainstreaming.⁶ In 2004 Andalusia founded a standalone Ministry of Equality and Wellbeing, which fostered a gender mainstreaming and intersectional approach (Forest and Platero, 2008). Today, as stated by the First Strategic Plan for Equality between Women and Men (2010–13), gender-equality policies form part of the core agenda of the regional government, tackling structural gender inequalities and the negative gender impacts of the crisis; meanwhile, Spanish central government continues to impose austerity measures (Instituto Andaluz de la Mujer, 2010).

The GBA is one of the main tools for effectively mainstreaming gender into all regional policies. It started in 2003 with Act 18/2003 (29 December), which remains in force. Gender budgeting or gender-responsive budgeting strategies refer to the systematic examination of budget programmes and policies, regarding both expenditure and revenue, for their impact on gender inequalities (Elson, 2003; Stotsky, 2006). Without a robust gender analysis, budgets tend to reproduce gender inequalities and unequal distribution of power between men and women and to mirror their differential positions and experiences due to the dynamics of gender relations (O'Hagan, 2010; Sharp and Broomhill, 2002). Across Europe a number of gender budget initiatives are underway at different levels of government building on different analytical approaches (O'Hagan, 2010); others are specifically undertaken by independent feminist academics and activists, for example in the UK (the Women's Budget Group [WBG]).

In Andalusia, the GB is undertaken by the Regional Ministry of Finance through the Gender Impact Commission of the Budget. The main budgeting criterion is to prioritize the allocation of resources to those programmes that promote gender equality (Martinez-Aguayo, 2007). The Commission is responsible for publishing the Annual Gender Impact Assessment Report (Comisión Impacto de Género en los Presupuestos, 2014), which consists of a functional analysis of the expenditure of those budget programmes and policies related directly to people. It is presented with the draft bill, i.e. prior to receiving approval from the council of government, in order that the budget may be amended.

One of the most innovative aspects of the GBA is the development of a specific framework and methodology for policy appraisal: the G+ Project, where the G stands for gender. First implemented in 2007, the G+ Project is an overarching, whole-government approach, intended to be applied across a large and complex organizational structure with wide-ranging competences (O'Hagan, 2010). All programme proposals, across all budget lines, are subject to a rigorous analysis of their contribution to gender equality. Programme managers are required to assess their programmes and to rank them according to the G+ scale. As the programmes progress through the ranking scale managers are required to provide increasing levels of data, evidence of analysis of gender impact and tools to improve programme design (O'Hagan, 2010). The consolidated budget of the Autonomous Community of Andalusia for 2015 is 29.62 billion euros, and the G+ programmes represent around 73 per cent of this (Comisión Impacto de Género en los Presupuestos, 2014).⁷

Today, and despite the context of austerity, gender-equality policies in Andalusia are still one of the main priorities on the political agenda. This is in contrast to the downgrading of gender institutions and budget cuts in gender-equality policies by central government and most other regional governments. According to the regional government of Andalusia, the budget for the Ministry of Equity, Wellbeing and Health increased by 1.5 per cent in 2014 compared to 2013 (EuropaPress, 2013).⁸ Thus, the GBA in Andalusia is resisting the austerity climate; however, no evaluation has been published to account for its maintenance, and for how and why it has survived.

Theoretical propositions on the maintenance of the GBA in the context of austerity

This study involved theory development prior to carrying out data collection. Our theoretical propositions represent 'a hypothetical story about why acts, events, structure and thoughts occur' (Yin, 2014, p. 38). Thus, we first generated six relevant propositions presented in this section that could explain the maintenance of the GBA in the context of austerity (2010–14). These theoretical

propositions were thought about and organized according to Kingdon's multiple-streams framework on the theory of agenda setting (Kingdon, 1984), briefly explained below. Information obtained from semi-structured interviews and a literature review were used to determine whether these propositions were correct, or whether some alternative set of explanations might be more relevant. The set of propositions enabled the complete research design to provide strong guidance in determining the data to collect, the relevant field contacts and the strategies to analyse data (Shankardass *et al.*, 2014).

According to Kingdon's theory on agenda setting (Kingdon, 1984), the policy agenda is the list of issues or problems to which government officials or those who make policy decisions (including the voting public) pay special attention. Moving an idea onto the agenda, or in this case maintaining it there, involves three streams: problem stream, political stream and policy stream. These three streams operate largely independently, although the actors in each can overlap. Successful agenda setting requires that at least two elements come together at a critical time — that is, when a 'policy window' opens (Coffman, 2007). In this specific case, we use Kingdon's multiple-streams framework to explain the maintenance of the GBA in the policy agenda during austerity.

'Problem stream' refers to the process of persuading policy decision-makers to pay attention to one particular problem instead of others (Coffman, 2007). 'Political stream' refers to major political advocates, processes and institutions that either support or do not support specific policy proposals. Among political factors that matter are electoral results, pressures from interest groups and the perceived state of public opinion. The election of a new government or the emergence of a powerful interest group can reshape the policy agenda and help push new policy ideas to the centre of the political debate (Kingdon, 1984). 'Policy stream' or 'proposals' represent the process by which policy proposals are generated, debated, revised and adopted for serious consideration. Policy stream gathers together policy experts working for academic institutions, governmental agencies and interest groups (Kingdon, 1984).

No propositions were derived from the problem stream. Crises are a special consideration in problem recognition, as they often trump other problems. The remarks in the introduction and subsequent sections justify the perception of gender equity as an important problem among members of the regional government of Andalusia. The economic crisis seems to reaffirm the problem and the need for this tool to manage the budget crisis without worsening gender equality.

Theoretical propositions derived from the political stream

Several political factors appear to have facilitated the maintenance of GBA. The two most important, according to the information available, are the maintenance of a left-wing government and the political power of feminist women in the regional government of Andalusia; these factors are interrelated.

Both feminist and welfare scholars agree on the important role of the political left in promoting equality policies. Social democracy has been linked with feminist politics across time and space and the Spanish case has not been an exception (Huber and Stephens, 2000; Linos, 2003). Historically, left-wing parties have been crucial in two ways. First, they have induced a process of economic and social mobilization of women with the implementation of welfare policies allowing women to combine paid and unpaid work and with the creation of public employment. Second, left-wing parties are more likely to recruit women and to adopt strategies to ensure more female candidates, thus increasing the number of women in party leadership positions (Huber and Stephens, 2000). However, the colour of political party in office is still questioned and some authors state that it does not represent in any case a sufficient condition for the progress of gender equality (McBride and Mazur, 2010).

The presence of women in office is associated with the adoption of more strategies to empower women within the party and the election process. Studies of women in office indicate consistently that women's ideological and policy preferences differ from those of their male counterparts. This is frequently translated into different policy choices: women are more likely to introduce and support

bills dealing with issues affecting women and families, health care and education (Linos, 2003; Lovenduski and Norris, 2003; Wängnerud, 2012). This is in line with Dahlerup's argument that any significant change in the male-dominated political culture that reigns in parliament requires a critical mass of women — that is, about 30 per cent representation (Dahlerup, 1988).

According to this knowledge, the maintenance of a left-wing government may be a necessary factor in resisting the dictates of austerity, although not a sufficient condition. The maintenance of gender policies might depend on the historical commitment to gender equality of the left-wing government and the presence and maintenance of 'femocrats' in government during austerity. From this approach, three propositions were derived.

Proposition 1: ideology, historically strong left-wing government

The maintenance of gender-equality policies occurs when the left parties have historically been strong and do not change ideology. By ideology we mean a system of factual statements and value judgments that inspire social policies (Muntaner and Chung, 2005). The maintenance of the GBA is successful due to the re-election of a leftist government in Andalusia. The leftist ideology motivates the inclusion and maintenance of social and redistributive policies in the agenda. In this context, a high degree of commitment on gender equality encourages the conservation of the GBA among the main actions of government or policy agenda.

Proposition 2: ideology, formation of a left-left coalition

The maintenance of the GBA (and in general pro-equity policies) has increased probability of success due to the left-left coalition in government. In a context of representative democracy, the formation of this coalition, allows the maintenance of gender-equality policies because there is a transformation of particular dynamics of each of the parties, which allows for agreements that benefit government stability.

Proposition 3: Presence of feminist women in political power

Left-wing parties with a gender-equity ideology are more likely to recruit and promote women to leadership positions. A high representation of women in parliament and government is found in Andalusia. Female representation has changed from being a small to a large minority. In this context, when these women have a strong feminist trajectory involving a high degree of gender inequality knowledge and awareness, the support of other women will encourage them to exert their influence to seek political alliances in order to mobilize government resources and achieve the implementation and maintenance of gender-equality policies such as the GBA in the policy agenda.

Proposition 4: the role of women as voters

Moreover, the role of women as voters could exert some influence in left-wing parties. Changing gender roles, particularly the increasing participation of women in the labour force, should have implications for the political behaviour of women, specifically policies regarding the allocation of caregiving activities. According to this, women would not accept backward steps on gender equality, especially in terms of the sexual division of labour (Huber and Stephens, 2000).

In the context of policy recession, policies that intensify the exploitation of women in the labour market and shift welfare-state services to women's unpaid labour (e.g. caring for their families), the role of women as voters of left-wing parties becomes more strategically important in order to stay in power. They might use a protest vote, leading left-wing (i.e. egalitarian ideology) parties to prioritize support for gender-equity policies, explaining the maintenance of the GBA.

Proposition 5: the role of collective actors and coalition building

There is evidence that coalition building and joint action by trade unions, interest groups and community organizations (e.g. activists and community associations with mobilized resources and political influence/power) are key determinants of successful opposition to austerity-related cuts (Anduiza *et al.*, 2014; Rüdiger and Karyotis, 2013). In this case, the coalition of the feminist social

movement, a strong organized women's movement within the institutions and the presence of feminist academics could be a favourable constellation for the maintenance of GBA.

Theoretical propositions derived from the policy stream

Policy proposals are likely to be more successful if they are perceived as technically feasible, compatible with decision-maker values, reasonable in cost, and appealing to the public (Coffman, 2007). Gender-mainstreaming strategies are relatively low in cost, especially if they are already implemented.

Proposition 6: policy feasibility

The maintenance of the GBA has increased chances of success compared to other policies because of its own characteristics: type of policy (a mainstreaming public management policy), the stage of the public-policy process (already implemented and well established) and involving few costs. These characteristics decrease the reluctance in the administration towards its continuation and change the organizational culture of the administration, creating favourable attitudes to gender mainstreaming.

Methodology

We conducted a theory-driven explanatory case study following a realist approach (Shankardass *et al.*, 2014) to uncover the macropolitical processes that explain the maintenance of the GBA and aim to generate causal explanations and mechanisms driving outcomes to understand 'how, why and under what circumstances' a programme or a policy works (Pawson and Tilley, 1997; Wong *et al.*, 2010) — i.e. how setting-specific conditions or contexts (C) can facilitate or hinder the effect of mechanisms (M) that trigger the outcome (O). In this case, we seek to uncover the macropolitical processes that explain GBA resilience by critically analysing the interaction between context, mechanism and outcome configurations (CMOc) using evidence gathered from stakeholders through semi-structured interviews (Pawson and Tilley, 1997).

Data collection

Data for corroborating our set of theoretical propositions were obtained through semi-structured interviews. A theoretical (or criterion) sample was designed according to different key informants and stakeholders' profiles and their knowledge on the issue. The set of theoretical propositions provide strong guidance in determining the relevant field contacts and stakeholders' profiles (see Table 1 for a description of interviewees). The second criterion to select the interviewees was their knowledge on the issue and capacity to inform at least one of our theoretical propositions. The identification and recruitment of potential participants according to our criteria was guided by a researcher in the field who lives in Andalusia (MGC) and also a snowballing process. During the fieldwork stage (June 2014), 17 interviews were carried out with several profiles.⁹ The interview guide aimed to investigate: (1) the specific role of the interviewee regarding the resilience of gender-equity policies and more specifically the GBA strategy; (2) the threats and barriers to the continuation of GBA; and (3) the strategies used for maintenance and whether, why and how these strategies have succeeded.

To ensure the quality of the data, interviews were performed by the two first authors. All interviews were recorded and transcribed. The length of each interview was about 1 hour, and interviews were mostly performed at the interviewee's workplace. Prior to the fieldwork stage, participants were informed of the objective of the study. All of them provided informed consent to participate and agreed with the specific terms of data handling, including anonymity. No financial or material compensation was offered to informants. This study obtained ethical approval from the Committee of Ethics and Clinical Research Parc de Salut Mar, Barcelona (Spain) (2014/5692/1).

Table 1: Profiles of interviewees

Participant code	Sex	Professional category	Organization
1	Woman	Deputy, former regional minister for finances	Regional Parliament (PSOE)
2	Woman	Former policy advisor	Andalusian Regional Government (Department of Finances)
3	Woman	Policymaker	Andalusian Regional Government (Andalusian Women's Institute)
4	Man	Senior officer	Andalusian Regional Government (Department of Finances)
5	Woman	Senior officer	Andalusian Regional Government (Department of Finances)
6	Woman	Member of trade union	Comisiones Obreras
7	Woman	Member of trade union	Comisiones Obreras
8	Woman	Gender social movement	Asociación Mujeres Politólogas
9	Woman	Gender social movement	Forum de Política Feminista
10	Man	Gender expert	Andalusian School of Public Health
11	Woman	Gender expert	Gender consultancy
12	Woman	Gender expert	University
13	Woman	Gender expert	University
14	Woman	Technician	Andalusian Regional Government (Department of Equity, Health and Social Policies)
15	Woman	Policymaker	Andalusian Regional Government (Department of Equity, Health and Social Policies)
16	Woman	Gender social movement	Plataforma Mujeres en Plural
17	Woman	Technician	Gender Equality Unit, Andalusian Regional Government

PSOE, Partido Socialista.

Although our data came mainly from interviews, we also included documents provided by informants and other key documents selected from different literature searches.

Data analysis

Interview data were coded to flag and organize passages that could be used to articulate context, mechanisms and outcomes (CMOs). For each case, interview transcripts were carefully and systematically coded independently by two of the following three research team members: VP, MR and ES. Once initial coding was completed for a case, we worked in pairs on the interview data to discuss all coded mechanisms and reach consensus about how and why the mechanisms trigger related outcomes. Unique CMO texts, based on diverse key participants, were then grouped by patterns of similar mechanisms and within themes (according to our initial propositions) into higher-level summaries of findings for each case. Again, this process was undertaken by one of the main researchers and results were discussed in team meetings (VP, MR, ES, CB, DM, LC and IC). As a final step, two research team members (MGC and LA) reviewed all the documents for consensus.

Findings

Political stream

'Ideology' (propositions 1 and 2). Evidence from the interviews and literature review showed that the continuation of a left-wing Andalusian government was a necessary context for the prioritization

of gender-equality policies on the Andalusian political agenda (interviews 2, 4, 5, 12, 13 and 17). Interviewees compared the maintenance of gender-equality policies in the Andalusian context — i.e. maintained in times of austerity by a left-wing government — with the overall Spanish context, where a conservative right-wing government came into power in 2011. In the Andalusian context, in the midst of a process of fiscal consolidation, ideology or ways of thinking determine priorities on the political agenda:

There are different ways of understanding gender policies between one government and another [...] In Spain there has been a dramatic change, not only motivated by the need for a process of fiscal consolidation, coming from Europe [...] [The changes in regulations] have to do with a different ideology [...] In Andalusia the way of thinking has not changed, in the sense that equality is still a priority [...] We are bearing the costs of dependency [around 1200 million euros per year]. [The region of Andalusia covers] 74 per cent [of this cost] and the other 26 per cent is covered by central government. But the usual thing would be [for each administration to pay] 50 per cent [...] This means having to make internal readjustments of everything else ... it forces you to remove extra wage payments to staff, lay off temporary workers. (Interview 4; senior officer, Department of Finances).

They put their bets on it, you might say, first the PSOE government and now the present coalition government. Currently [2014] the Andalusian parliament is once again analysing the implementation of the Equality Act in Andalusia and of the Gender Violence Act. (Interview 9; gender social movement).

At state level, the Sombra CEDAW report¹⁰ (Plataforma CEDAW Sombra España, 2014) denounced numerous regressions, particularly accentuated by the change of government in 2011, such as weakening of mechanisms for the promotion of equal opportunities included in Act 3/2007 for the Effective Equality of Women and Men, and cuts in the budget for gender violence. The report also shows that the only autonomous communities where progress has been made and budgeting for visible gender policies maintained are Andalusia and the Basque country (governed by the PSOE from 2009 to 2012). A recent study comparing regional budgeting for gender policies (Paleo and Alonso, 2015) showed that during the precrisis period (2002–08) all autonomous communities increased their budget; however, during the period of economic recession (2009–14) gender-policies budgets were reduced in all of them with the exception of Andalusia, which increased its budget by 16 per cent. Additionally, notable differences regarding the percentage of budgeting decrease were found according to governments' ideological position: centre-right governments reduced their budgets by the highest percentage, centre-left governments the lowest.

Given the specific context of a left-wing government in Andalusia that continues to prioritize gender policies in times of austerity, the maintenance of political will stands out as a leading mechanism for the continuation of the GBA strategy (interviews 1, 2, 4, 5, 8, 9, 11, 12, 14, 16). Political will, understood as the determination of one or several political actors to take actions that will produce a particular outcome, has been mentioned using different names such as 'government betting' (interview 9), 'political leadership' (interviews 4, 5), 'political impulse' (interview 16), 'political commitment' (interview 16) and 'political choice' (interview 11). Political will is a mechanism not only for continuity, but also for maintaining a strategy yielding political outcomes:

The instrument only produces results of gender equality with political will. (Interview 1; deputy, former Regional Ministry of Finances).

For the strategy to have a real impact depends on the political will of the councillor, because although it is true as I was saying that the president has a strong commitment, it is also true that all this when filtered down through the hierarchy depends to some extent on who is there, doesn't it? (Interview 14; technician, Department of Equity, Health and Social Policies).

Without making specific reference to a context of austerity, the authors of the Euro Social report (López *et al.*, 2014) stress how the GBA strategy 'has the singularity of arising directly from the

administration itself [context], and is the political will [mechanism] which drives the development of a diversity of activities from the highest level [outcome]' (p. 8).

Since 2012, the left-wing government has managed to survive with the creation of a coalition between PSOE and IU. The coalition has been described as a strategy to permit maintaining a degree of sensitivity towards social policies that other governments with right-wing ideologies do not maintain (interviews 6, 7). In fact, what the coalition makes possible is the maintenance of policies of gender equality. Within the government, IU also treats gender equality as a priority, coinciding with PSOE political objectives (interviews 1, 4, 5, 9 and 15). Despite this, in the interviews IU was on several occasions held up as having their gender-related political agenda historically less developed than PSOE (interviews 13, 15):

IU is a party which, in my view, falls behind the socialist party in topics of equality [...] There is a demand let's say from a part of the electorate to the left of PSOE, from women, many women who for other reasons would vote IU but who do not vote IU because they have never felt represented [...] Even in the second-to-last legislature here in Andalusia all the IU representatives in the Andalusian parliament were men, but that doesn't happen now. (Interview 13; gender expert, university).

However, no proof has been found that the left-wing coalition, in itself, gives rise to any specific mechanism that facilitates either the maintenance of the GBA or its advancement.

'Presence of feminist women in political power' (proposition 3). Femocrats have a key role in each of the different phases of the political strategy. The first phase may be identified as one of conceptualization of the principle of gender mainstreaming¹¹ ('policy frame') to reduce gender inequality; that is, the effective introduction of the principle of equality at the heart of public action. This principle was mainly discussed for the first time during the 1995 World Conference on Women in Beijing, and it underlines the need to impact on the mechanisms of (re)production of gender inequality, under the premise that public policies are generally androcentric (Alfama *et al.*, 2015). From this principle, a variety of policy tools can be devoted to reorganizing the policy process from a gender perspective, such as gender budgeting. Andalusian feminist women, most of them related to the Socialist Party, realized the political potential of these tools. Convinced of the mainstreaming approach and the utility of the instrument of gender budgeting, these femocrats pressed to obtain a parliamentary majority and to pass Act 18/2003 for fiscal and administrative measures needed to achieve budgets with a gender focus. As pointed out by one of the political advisors interviewed (interview 02), this was possible thanks to two key mechanisms: (1) the knowledge of new instruments for gender mainstreaming, such as the GBA and (2) the pressure exerted by the femocrats for the incorporation of equality issues into government policies.

The second phase may be identified as the development of legislation. The outcome of this phase was the design and implementation of the G+ methodology permitting the GBA to produce changes to improve gender equality (Lozano Peña *et al.*, 2008; Martínez-Aguayo, 2007).¹² This phase started when recognized political feminist leaders began to assume roles in the Regional Ministry of Finances. Early in their administration they decided to develop the GBA strategy, on finding that the legislation contemplated it:

Couldn't a man have done this from the start? Has any man done it? No, and many men had read it [the legislation]. (Interview 02; former policy advisor, Department of Finances).

In a context where institutions are traditionally occupied by men, these groups of women take actions to find political alliances among the regional ministry and in the government (interviews 1, 8, 12, and 13). To convince the regional minister for finances they present a specific and detailed project, highlighting the objectives of gender equity as something to contribute to economic growth and linking the strategy to policies of social improvement in general, not just of the situation of women (interviews 1, 8, 12, 13). The minister, who is recognized by the interviewees as a person sensitive to gender inequalities, sought alliances in government and within the party in order to achieve the political capacity and power to develop the GBA (interviews 1, 8, 12, 13, 16). Receiving

support from the minister was key to advancing the strategy. In a context where the minister was not ideologically committed to gender-equality goals, femocrats would probably not have been in a position to assume leadership roles in the regional ministry.¹³

In this phase two different contexts exist with respect to the mechanism of support for the critical mass of women. The first case involves the Andalusian government. In this scenario, disputes for leadership between the public entities (traditionally responsible for equity policies) and the Ministry of Finances (responsible for developing the strategy) was a barrier to obtaining the support of feminist women forming part of the government at that time:

Interviewer: Was it helpful that there was a critical mass of women in the government, to go ahead with it? I mean, the number of women in the government?

Interviewee: [...] No, I don't think so. In fact, one of the problems that had to be resolved was the resistance, or reticence, from the more feminist groups in the government that the finance ministry be involved in this [...] because the subject of leadership is vital. (Interview 1; deputy, former Ministry of Finances).

The second case refers to the context of PSOE at a national level, where there was support from militant female members of the party:

[The Ministry of Finances] took me to Madrid several times to talk with women in the party, very influential women but who didn't know me, to explain all this. That other part needing political support got it from the responsible politician. (Interview 1; deputy, former Ministry of Finances)

In Andalusia there was that critical mass, very powerful women in this area, people who had not been directly in government but who had had considerable power of influence in the government. [This critical mass generates] the backing of women in positions to lead initiatives, which increase their capacity for transforming reality. (Interview 13; gender expert, university)

The third phase may be identified as the maintenance and continued development of the GBA. In this phase sectorial disputes are overcome and there is a notable presence of femocrats in all areas of decision making (context), whose gender sensitivity (mechanism) leads them to defend the continuation of gender-equity policies (outcome) (interviews 9, 14 and 15). The possible threats to the continuation of these policies are lack of economic resources, and above all changes of political priorities by hegemonic male groups (interview 15).

'The role of women as voters' (proposition 4). The process of iterative revision of our theoretical propositions revealed that there are two possibly more specific mechanisms relating to the exercising of a protest vote: (1) the threat of using the protest vote as an active mechanism by women in order to alter the behaviour of the government; and (2) fear on the part of governments of a possible protest vote as a reaction mechanism, which would lead them to take actions to maintain the GBA.

Some of the interviewees also pointed to the existence of a more progressive vote in Andalusia and that women are not prepared to give up rights that have been won (interviews 6, 7, 13). For their part, from the parties there would also be a concern to capture the votes of women (interviews 9, 10, 15). However, the interviews provided only weak evidence: no specific mechanisms were detailed that validate the role of women's vote as a key element for the maintenance of the GBA in times of austerity. To put in motion the mechanism of a women's protest vote, it would be necessary for them to be aware of the GBA strategies, and of the existence of a threat to dismantle them (context). However, the general public knows little of the GBA strategy as it is a management tool internal to the government (interviews 1, 8).

'The role of collective actors and coalition building' (proposition 5). With the goal of advancing aspects of gender equity, Andalusia has a coalition of actors consisting of a 'triumvirate of female academics, politicians and social activists' (interview 13) (women's associations and the feminist movement), where 'the first think, the second act and the third constitute a counteracting force' (interview 13).

One of the key characteristics of this context is the existence of diffuse boundaries between the three areas:

There are lots of connections between social entities and the grassroots feminist and associative movements and the politicians, the women who have managed to occupy positions of responsibility and who have come out and are in political parties. (Interview 8, gender social movement).

A second key characteristic is the promotion of some women's associations by the Andalusian government (Ortbals, 2010). We should note at this point the difference between women's associations and the feminist movement. The women's associations are not necessarily seeking any change in the *status quo* of gender relations, although they exist to improve their conditions as women. In contrast, the feminist movements exert pressure to bring changes in the patriarchal structure onto the political agenda (Ortbals, 2010). For the regional government, women's associations exercise a role of key informants:

[Women's associations] are necessary allies in any political trajectory we [the administration] want to follow, and in any design of public policy [...] because women in the associative movements have strong ties with the territory, they themselves suffer the difficulties and problems [...] they are our link [...] cementing together all this know-how. (Interview 15; policymaker, Department of Equity, Health and Social Policies).

The communication between all these components is maintained not only through formal mechanisms promoted by the administration — such as participative organisms, gatherings of feminist formations and prizes for equity — but also through a network of informal contacts (interviews 1, 8, 13, 15). In order to attend these gatherings it is necessary to consciously realize that individual action alone is not sufficient to reverse gender inequities in society (context). These gatherings, in turn, lead to the generation of collective consciousness (mechanism 1), which makes it possible to work together (mechanism 2), and which have resulted in the inclusion on party-political agendas of gender-equity topics (outcome) (interview 17):

It is these gatherings, these points in common where the strategy is forged or reinforced, then each person returns to their setting, whether academic, political [...] we are all connected and we show our faces, I know who the key people are in each one of these settings. I believe this is important when it comes to generating the awareness of not being alone, and above all because we ourselves are evolving [...] at first the women who go are conscious that they have this limitation, that alone they won't make it, and then you discover heaps of women conscious of the situation in different settings, who hold meetings, reflect together and become informed [...] You find you are not just working for your own patch, you are working for a joint strategy and conscious of a common issue, so that it has often been possible to redirect an identity or interests which maybe the parties themselves put first [...] It has been possible to break those separating barriers and to form a large nucleus. (Interview 17; technician, gender equality unit).

These channels for active participation from the administration generate a context of considerable proximity between actors, making less necessary the activation of any opposing force in order to exert pressure on the administration (interview 10). That is, femocrats create a situation of proximity placing the women's movement and feminist academics in a position of dialogue and cooperation with institutions (Alfama *et al.*, 2015; Ortvals, 2010).

Moving from the general context of gender policies to the specificity of the GBA strategy, the results show that, to some extent, this coalition of actors has played a role in all phases of the GBA. It is necessary to emphasize again that this coalition is taking place primarily among people with high knowledge of the instrument, and is not within the general scope of the feminist movement, feminist academics and femocrats. It is also noteworthy to remark that the role played by the different actors has changed through the phases. First, the coalition role played by femocrats and feminists was mainly promoting the introduction of gender mainstreaming as a new policy framework. Second, the leading

role played by the femocrats who invited feminist academics to implement the strategy and gathered expertise from them. During this second phase, the annual congresses on GBA are particularly noteworthy; they are thought of as an opportunity to permit articulation between different social actors, gather expertise from academics and the feminist movement, and transfer knowledge and experience from government to them (interviews 1, 13, 17). These congresses were key to reinforcing political will. One of the main issues that was stated in these congresses is that Andalusia is at the forefront of gender-budgeting strategy at national and international levels. This recognition acts as a mechanism motivating people to continue with the work and generating political capacity: it manages to reinforce political will because those political actors who were previously unconvinced are able to appreciate the potential of this tool.

Third, the main role played by femocrats and feminists during austerity is that of guardians of the strategy, although the lack of a more intense role for the entire feminist movement or civil society from the administration was observed:

In Andalusia what I miss is a more intense role of society and I believe initiatives of this type are being created. [Academics] are leading an initiative which could serve to oppose the initiative being carried out by the administration [...] [Furthermore] there is the [Feminist] Forum, and the Council of Women's Participation, which analyses the equity policies. Civil society acts to oppose the initiative [...] it is an alter ego, someone with whom to discuss and who argues with you [...] structuring opinions and alternatives [...] When the social movement is sensitive to certain policies it makes it much more difficult for the incoming politician who wants to revert [...] and not just the politician who wants to dismantle it, but also for a government wanting to keep progressing, which at any given moment may have more or less tensions, but that there is someone who is continually pulling, sending letters, making requests, taking a hard line in forums. (Interview 4; senior officer, Ministry of Finance).

Awareness of the GBA is still low among the feminist movement and women's associations as a whole:

The feminist movement has not taken on board as one of its demands the strategy of budgets with a gender perspective due to lack of awareness of the strategy, because it is not divulged. (Interview 8; gender social movement).

Together with the low awareness of the GBA, two other contexts were mentioned that make it difficult to activate any opposing force among those who know the strategy: first the well-functioning status of the GBA strategy, and second the limited perception of any threat to its being dismantled. Thus, the feminist movement played a role of merely monitoring:

At budget level, I believe that we have it so well assimilated that in Andalusia we have the regional ministry for finances, such and such a report, and there we have it since 2008. If the time comes when we don't see the report, we feminist associations will be there with our hands up saying, 'hey, what's happening?' (Interview 9; gender social movement).

The role at a national level of feminist people with a high knowledge of the GBA tool is proof that they would act in the event of its dismantling. In the context of hostility from central government, feminist women have actively organized themselves, through the 'Gender Impact Now' platform,¹⁴ to demand a quality analysis of the impact of gender in all Spanish government regulation, particularly in the national budget (Quinn, 2009).

Policy stream

'Policy feasibility' (proposition 6). The evidence gathered on the GBA strategy shows that on one hand, when the economic crisis started it was already in an advanced stage of the public policy process: the problem had been defined and included in the agenda setting; the strategy had been formulated, adopted and implemented. On the other hand, the GBA involved low costs given that firstly the

initial costs of formulation and implementation had already been paid. It is necessary to emphasize that the nature of this mainstreaming tool involves the redistribution of regional resources from a gender equality perspective, not a budgetary increase (interviews 1, 2). Thus, the viability of the GBA results from an important advance in the institutionalization of the mainstreaming strategy and its related low cost: after ten years of implementation, the strategy was legally anchored; the principles of the GBA have been accepted throughout the regional government and administration,¹⁵ and key obstacles (such as those deriving from sectorial functioning) had been overcome.

The systematization of processes and the incorporated work dynamics, and finally the acceptance of the principles of the GBA to some extent, facilitated the appearance of a new procedural inertia (mechanism 2) (interviews 1, 8 and 15). This is highlighted in several interviews as a mechanism that facilitates the maintenance of the GBA (interviews 1, 2, 4, 5, 8, 9, 13 and 15). The acceptance of the principles of the GBA among high- and intermediate-ranking positions in the administration favoured the appearance of new technical leadership, who encouraged the promotion of a gender perspective in the budgets of each regional ministry while at the same time putting pressure on political leaders (mechanism 3) (interviews 4, 5):

The [new] teams [politicians] can come with different perspectives but the technicians who are working there have to push these procedures and get them on the agenda. (Interview 4; senior officer, Department of Finances).

The low cost of the GBA strategy hinders the appearance of contrary political will, reticence or susceptibilities (mechanism 4), which could put the strategy at risk of being dismantled in times of austerity.

On the other hand, there was also mention of barriers to the maintenance of the GBA with regard to institutionalization. At the intermediate decision-making levels (such as department heads) a certain lack of capacity with regard to gender equity was detected, as well as a high degree of rotation and a lack of awareness of gender inequalities among civil servants:

What may have happened in the regional ministry is that when it came to implementing, to the people who were doing the implementing, there were times when they were neither trained in nor were sensitive to the issue, and that could have been an element that in certain cases acted as a brake. (Interview 17; technician, gender equality unit).

For the purposes of overcoming these barriers, the administration has put various strategies in motion. Training courses have been set up with the aim of raising gender awareness, a mechanism that is necessary in order to take actions and continue implementing GBA appropriately (interviews 4, 5, 13, 14, 15 and 17). Also, gender units are slowly being developed in each ministry with the aim of providing support to groups of technicians to transfer knowledge.¹⁶ Finally, auditing of the G+ programme was set up in 2014:

The issue of auditing has a large sensitization component, because you are saying 'listen, I am going to inspect you'. When you go to do an inspection the people are already predisposed and the way we do the audit is constructive, creative; I mean, people are prepared to contribute [...] and it generates debate on the issue, which is positive for both final and intermediate outcomes. (Interview 4; senior officer, Department of Finances).

These actions demonstrate that the GBA strategy, rather than being dismantled, continues to be implemented and evaluated as planned (outcome).

Discussion and conclusions

This study has confirmed that in a time of austerity, the existence of a strong left-wing government is a necessary context for the maintenance of gender-equality policies, although this alone is not

sufficient. Political commitment, mainly from femocrats in leadership positions in the regional government, and the feasibility of the strategy have been major factors allowing the maintenance of GBA. Thus, both the political and policy streams have played a role in the maintenance of the strategy.

First, the maintenance of GBA was feasible due to the previous context of institutionalization of the gender-mainstreaming strategy and its low cost. This context has triggered the obligation to apply the strategy and the emergence of new technical leaderships that exert some pressure on decision-makers. Furthermore, procedural inertia and the low cost of this strategy have prevented the emergence of opposition to it.

Second, the initiation and maintenance of the GBA has required strong political commitment, which has come mainly from femocrats. Both political commitment and agreements between legislators and policymakers have been highlighted as key elements to introducing a gender perspective into the budgetary process (Ruiz-García, 2014; Villagómez, 2007). A female leadership role has been relevant in several phases of the GBA policy cycle: legislation, design, implementation and maintenance, and creating political alliances and support. As stated by Linos (2003), the party effect on gender-equality policies in Spain seems to be not the direct result of left-wing ideology, but an indirect effect of the socialists' commitment to placing women in power. Several authors have shown the importance of the presence of women in political power (Dahlerup 1988). Regarding our initial theoretical proposition about critical mass of women, the results have highlighted two different scenarios. Due to the sectorial disputes between the governmental bodies responsible for finances and gender equality, support from a critical mass of women did not come initially from the regional parliament and government but from other women in the Socialist Party at a national level. This result is explained by the nature of the GBA, as it is known that sectorial disputes are one of the major barriers to the implementation of gender-mainstreaming policies (Guzmán and Janotti, 2014). However, sectorial disputes were overcome before the economic crisis; moreover, during the austerity period both governmental bodies responsible for finances and gender equality, including the Women's Institute, acted in coalition to defend the mainstreaming strategy.

The results of this study have also shown a very singular context of connections between the main social actors (i.e. policymakers, the feminist social movement and women's associations, and experts in the gender-equality field) involved in the development and maintenance of the GBA. This context is mainly characterized by two aspects: first, the participation of some of the individuals in the three areas (sometimes simultaneously, sometimes in different periods); and second, the situation created by femocrats of placing the women's movement and feminist academics in a position of dialogue and cooperation with institutions (Alfama *et al.*, 2015; Ortbals, 2010). In this specific context, different coalition-building strategies have been highlighted regarding the development of the GBA. However, maintenance is undertaken mainly by the policymakers while academics and social movements perform a monitoring function, advising against the dismantling of the strategy if necessary.

Regarding the situation created by femocrats placing the women's movement and feminist academics in a position of dialogue, a new hypothesis on the mechanisms has emerged. Some of the strategies promoted by the administration, such as the establishment of a working group of experts with the aim of improving the G+ project (López *et al.*, 2014), could be triggering a mechanism of cooptation rather than a mechanism of coalition building. Although the interviews did not provide any empirical evidence on the cooptation mechanisms, it is reasonable to perceive the administration as willing to absorb experts into the leadership or GBA process, as a means of averting threats to its stability and existence (Selznick, 1984). The proximity of institutional feminism to feminist academics and the women's movement may have been one of the pros to maintain this tool in times of austerity; however, it may also have marginalized the most critical voices (who also declined our invitation to be part of the study). One of the possible consequences of marginalizing critical voices among the feminist movement is that they are lost in the practical implementation and maintenance of gender mainstreaming, which is instead viewed to a greater extent from a technical perspective. From this point of view, gender mainstreaming can turn into a technical process that is 'beyond politics', disconnected from feminist normative desires and of a fundamentally consensual nature (Alfama *et al.*,

2015). In any case alliances between the three actors are fundamental, although not free of conflicts. And whether a more intense role of society is needed to maintain and advance these strategies, these alliances should not be led by the institutions (Alfama *et al.*, 2015).

The connection of institutional feminism to the social movement, with its particularities in Andalusia as well as its importance for the creation and maintenance of the GBA, highlights some of the critiques that have arisen from the feminist approach to Kingdon's theory on agenda setting (Kingdon, 1984). According to Kenney (2003), Kingdon's approach to policy community is dominated by insiders; that is, the policy community is composed of elites, forgetting grassroots politics and social movements and their interactions with feminist men and women insiders (what we have called 'femocrats'). The nature of our investigation made it compulsory to take into account the feminist social movement, as without incorporating the voice of feminist social movement and their interactions with femocrats it was not possible to understand the emergence and maintenance of the gender budgeting tool in Andalusia.¹⁷

We can conclude that the interviews have confirmed three of the initial propositions, although slightly modified and enriched in terms of contexts and mechanisms. Conversely, although the left-left coalition was a necessary condition to maintaining a left-wing government, the participants considered that the coalition did not trigger any specific mechanism for the maintenance of the GBA. Little specific role was attributed to women as voters, mainly because of the lack of knowledge about the GBA among the general population.

Final remarks

The innovation of this study consists of highlighting those elements that allow the development of gender-equality policies and their continuation in times of austerity. Most existing studies focus on the consequences produced by the weakness of the welfare state, the privatization of public services and structural counter-reforms. That is, they focus on the impact of the neoliberal option as a response to the economic downturn from different approaches (e.g. population health, gender equality and social inequalities) (Karamessini and Rubery, 2014; Stuckler and Basu, 2013). Instead, our study focuses on finding the factors that allow the creation of a window of opportunity to maintain key policies to promote population-wide wellbeing. This study makes the effort to understand the strategies undertaken by different social actors to maintain GBA and the underlying social mechanisms triggered in specific contexts to ensure the success of these strategies. This analytical exercise is essential to develop a set of good practices and facilitate advocacy at different levels.

In this study, to understand the maintenance of the GBA in times of austerity it was necessary to delve into the previous contexts and mechanisms that allowed the design and implementation of the strategy. The underlying reason is that the principal mechanisms involved in the implementation of this mainstreaming policy and its success are closely related to the mechanisms that allow its continuation in a time of austerity. Thus, it was impossible to understand how and why this policy has been maintained without taking into account the previous policy stages.

When discussing the maintenance of the GBA in times of austerity, we are broadly discussing the political solutions adopted in an economic downturn and their impact on population-wide wellbeing. Some of the most 'conventional' austerity measures — those related to fiscal consolidation — are imposed on those countries that received a loan from international organizations (the IMF, European Central Bank and European Commission). Austerity measures have been mainly understood as a suite of political guidelines related to budget cuts, the dismantling of the welfare state and state deregulations following a neoliberal ideology. Nevertheless, there is a third group of less visible measures under the guise of austerity cuts; these measures are strongly related to a conservative and sexist ideology, promoting a backlash in traditional gender roles (Ruiz-Garcia, 2014). This study provides an example of how a regional government can maintain gender-equality policies despite the reduced decision-making latitude imposed by the fiscal consolidation process. As explained in the findings and discussion sections, in this context the maintenance of GBA during austerity relies on three main factors: the maintenance of a left-wing government as a necessary context (although this

is not sufficient in and of itself); the political commitment by femocrats as the key mechanism for its maintenance; and the policy's feasibility, conferred by its previous institutionalization.

Notwithstanding these results, we should not lose sight of the constantly changing political context. At the time of this study, one of the most important threats to maintaining the GBA that emerged was the substitution of the main political leaders of the strategy at the end of 2013. Initial enquiries at the regional government indicated that the political commitment was maintained. The second most important threat was the regional elections of March 2015. The election results allowed the Socialist Party to take over the government thanks to an investiture agreement with the Liberal Party (Ciudadanos) (engaged in the ALDE Party at European level). Besides, key political leaders related to the GBA — the Ministry of Finance and Regional President — were re-elected. Moreover, the current Gender Impact Report for the 2016 budget shows GBA technical advances regarding its legislation and evaluation (Comisión Impacto de Género en los Presupuestos, 2016). Gender-mainstreaming strategies need constant political support in order to be successful (Ruiz-Garcia, 2014).

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Notes

1. See www.sophie-project.eu/index.htm.
2. There are other examples of the negative gender impact of austerity measures; however, it is not the aim of the article to present a comprehensive review of these. The purpose here is to contextualize the political period and its changes.
3. Act 9/2009 (6 October) on the extension of paternity leave to four weeks.
4. See www.juntadeandalucia.es/andalucia/economia/industria.html.
5. At the moment of conducting this study.
6. See www.juntadeandalucia.es/institutodelamujer/ugen.
7. Excluding debt, the local share of national revenue, the Andalusian Agricultural Guarantee Fund and the local share of Andalusian tax revenue.
8. The new government formed in 2015 has two separate ministries: one for equity and wellbeing, and the other for health.
9. Although we aimed to interview a diverse pool of informants related to the GBA, we could not always recruit participants from all the sectors that we wanted to involve: members of Izquierda Unida, the opposition parties and detractors of the strategy (policymakers, civil servants and other technicians). One of the main reasons, apart from not answering our call, was that to elucidate strategies and barriers for the maintenance of the GBA and the underlying mechanisms requires a good knowledge of the strategy. The GBA is a very specific and complex strategy implemented by the regional ministry for finances. Thus, some people not directly involved in the GBA lacked sufficient knowledge of the strategy and refused to participate. Second, discussing explanations for mechanisms triggering action to avoid GBA cessation is time-intensive, although interviews were limited to one hour to minimize the burden on participants.

- Moreover, participants are not normally accustomed to elucidating mechanisms, as these are part of the underlying sphere. A great effort was made to probe for alternative explanations for phenomena of interest during the interviews. However, some important mechanisms may not be revealed by relying on the recollections of the 17 interviewees.
10. Since 2013, 50 NGOs on gender equality, international cooperation and human rights have elaborated an alternative report to monitor the Spanish implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).
 11. According to the authors, 'this implied, in fact, changing the policy making process — in its design, implementation and evaluation stages — to place gender perspective as a requirement and avoid biases, to involve new actors and to reconsider the policy agendas with more inclusive priorities. Therefore, a strategy entailing a deep transformation of values, organizational cultures and routines of the public administrations that more or less explicitly challenges hegemonic values and priorities' (Alfama *et al.*, 2015).
 12. Regarding the involvement of feminist women, there is a gap between these two phases: developing the policy framework for gender mainstreaming and the technical development of gender budgeting. The technical development of the strategy was undertaken by the finance ministry and related administration, with the timely cooperation of gender experts. It is also noteworthy to state that knowledge transfer of the strategy has been performed among gender equality and economy experts, probably excluding the vast women's movement.
 13. This is only a hypothesis derived from the interviews, which was not empirically tested.
 14. The platform 'Gender Impact Now!' (<http://impactodegeneroya.blogia.com>) was started by feminist academics and is composed of many women's associations.
 15. The interviewees reported a different degree of acceptance of the GBA principles in the regional government and inside the administration. Ministries with a clear feminist leadership, such as the Ministry of Equity, Health and Social Policies, had a clear commitment to the principles of GBA and technical routines. However, others that were more male-dominated, such as the Employment Ministry, had a lower degree of acceptance (interviews 13, 14, 17). In this case, they were compelled by law to follow the technical routines necessary for the accomplishment of GBA. Regarding administration, while high-ranking civil servants related to the strategy had a high degree of acceptance of the principles and technical routines, lower-ranking civil servants were less committed to the principles. In this case, they implemented the technical procedures enforced by law (interview 17).
 16. The creation of gender units is enforced by law. However, due to budgetary restrictions its implementation has been slower than expected.
 17. As explained in the introduction, this study is part of a broader multiple case study on redistributive policies that have resisted the period of austerity. A consensus was adopted to think and organize theoretical propositions according to Kingdon's agenda-setting model (Kingdon, 1984).

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