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# Introduction: Gender Studies and the New Academic Governance

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## 1 The Advent of Neo-liberalism in Higher Education and Research

Neo-liberalism is an economic theory and a social reform movement at the same time; its interconnected position as a knowledge technology and a political practice precisely contributes to its all-pervasive significance. Neo-liberalism positions itself in the tradition of Enlightenment through the actions stemming from its scientific and social configurations. It refers to the dominance of scientific rationality, or to be more exact, economic rationality. Thus, neo-liberalism can be considered as an escalation of the Protestant ethic, a nearly total and globalising regime of economic rationality. It aims at transforming capitalist societies in the direction of an all-encompassing market. In the 1980s, the strengthening of neo-liberalism in the era of Reaganomics and Thatcherism was initially called a ‘neo-conservative revolution’. This term led to a clearer awareness of the tradition of the appropriate theory and politics than the (actually) misleading term ‘neo-liberalism’.

Nowadays, ‘neo-liberalism’ is used as an umbrella term for principles such as the expansion of the market regime, the re-valuation of ‘output’ orientation, and the promotion of competition and individual freedom. Neo-liberalism has become the hegemonic narrative of the present age. However, its reach from governmental techniques all the way to daily modes of life is hardly perceived. The neo-liberal hegemony extends from the growing importance of the finance sector for all societal subdomains into the indicator-supported allocation of resources in the public sector into the strengthening of consulting, accountings and counselling up to the formation of a ‘neo-liberal self’ which optimises a technology of governing the self, according to market rules such as efficiency, performance and hard work. Thus, the neo-liberal hegemony is subtle, and this contributes to its power as both an economic theory and social reform movement.

The advent of ‘new public management’ in the 1980s as an approach of running governments, public service institutions and agencies, at both subnational and national levels, is part of the strengthening of neo-liberalism. This contributes towards making public service more ‘business-like’ and towards improving its efficiency by using private sector management models and performance criteria (e. g. Ferlie et al. 2009). This is also the case in academia. The neo-liberal transformations create a new ‘academic governance’ (Lewis 2013) and lead to the formation of ‘entrepreneurial universities’ (Clark 1998). Since the introduction of this new, market- and performance-oriented governance into academia, higher education and research are challenged by new regulation techniques, which go hand in hand with the implementation of managerialist tools, such as target agreements, rankings and evaluations; the demand for scientific excellence and its measurements; and the marketisation of knowledge production and transfer (e. g. Paradeise et al. 2009). Thereby, the relationship between science and society is changing: scientific knowledge is not only expected to be usable and useful for social demands, but it also has to prove its usability and usefulness to society. This is also the case for gender studies and gender research,<sup>1</sup> the focus of this book.

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## **2 Gender Studies and Gender Research within Current Transformations**

Since the beginning of gender studies and gender research in so-called modern Western societies, a high potential for innovation in science and society has been attributed to gender studies and gender research by gender scholars themselves and also in the rhetoric of science policy. This potential includes epistemic and organisational impulses for the system of higher education and research as well as for societal and political developments: gender studies and gender research have very often been introduced and valued as ‘better (scientific) knowledge’ with respect to the inclusion of the marginalised or excluded perspectives of women and gender relations in the academy.

With respect to the history of science, gender studies and gender research are new- and latecomers in academia. This reflects the history of science and academia which is built on a long tradition of the dominance of men and the exclusion or marginalisation of women as subjects and objects of scientific knowledge. This might

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1 In this introduction, both terms are used as umbrella terms for studies and research dealing with gender, gender relations and gender orders.

explain why the field of gender studies and gender research has been feminised since its beginning; at all levels, it is mainly women who engage in this field, for example as students, research associates and professors. Men are in the minority. Accordingly, the development and promotion of gender studies and gender research has had, since the beginning, a twofold aim and meaning: supporting the implementation of gender equality for women in higher education and research, and promoting the development of scientific knowledge from a gender perspective with respect to contents, theories, methodologies, and corresponding organisational and cultural structures in academia.

However, the institutionalisations of gender studies in scientific organisations are often precarious and marginalised. Additionally, gender studies' disciplinary status is still evolving and at stake: it varies among being a subdiscipline in traditional disciplines, an inter- or transdiscipline, or a discipline of its own. Both the unclear disciplinary status of gender studies and its uncompleted institutionalisation are interconnected and still contested. Whether the history of the institutionalisations of gender studies in higher education and research can be seen as a story of success or of failure depends on the perspective.

What is happening to gender studies and gender research as an emerging but contested field of scientific knowledge in the conditions of the new academic governance, and which role gender studies and gender research play in the current transformations in academia, for example in research funding, university development and careers of the next generation of scholars, has interestingly not yet been well investigated. Of course, there are some publications dealing with these questions, for example special issues of international journals (cf. Davies and O'Callaghan 2014; Nash and Owens 2015; Camus et al. 2016; Liinasson and Grenz 2016). However, these publications consist mainly of theoretical reflections and field reports. That might be characteristic for this field of knowledge and the precarious status of gender studies in the academy, but it also makes clear that empirical and comparative research on these issues is still lacking. On the one hand this is astonishing, because the introduction of the new academic governance naturally has impacts on gender studies and gender research which should be analysed. On the other hand, this observation might reflect the problematic material conditions of gender studies and gender research in higher education and research in the 2010s.

### 3 About This Book

The idea for this book was generated during the final stage of my project *Gender Research and the New Academic Governance*, which analysed the organisational structures and organisational cultures in German higher education and research in order to foster the potential for innovation in gender studies in current conditions of transformations.<sup>2</sup> The project focused on analysing how much importance is ascribed to gender studies and gender research in the conditions of the new academic governance in contemporary transformation processes of the academic system, considering scientific, organisational (cultural and structural) and politically administrative perspectives. The project also investigated what kind of promotion gender studies and gender research receive in this process by different stakeholders and gatekeepers in higher education, science and research policy. In addition, the project also asked what the starting points are to deepen and broaden the field of gender studies and gender research in the conditions of the new academic governance (cf. Kahlert 2016). These research questions and engaged discussions with the participants in the final international conference of the project, which took place in September 2015, formed the starting point for this book. The contributions for this collection were recruited by invited articles from conference participants and additionally by an international call for articles.

All articles focus on gender studies and gender research in times of the new academic governance and consider current developments in higher education and research from different geopolitical perspectives. The articles make clear that the impacts of the new academic governance have global, glocal<sup>3</sup> and local dimensions which have to be taken into account in analysing the state of gender studies and gender research at the end of the 2010s. The authors are located in different regions of the world, including various parts of Europe, covering Northern, Eastern, Southern and Western perspectives, and also Brazil and South Africa, and thus they represent diverse geopolitical and sociocultural views on the abovementioned questions. They simultaneously draw a multifaceted picture of the current situation with respect to the global challenges, glocal dynamics and local impacts; criticise

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- 2 This project was funded by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research with the promotional reference 01FP1306 and was conducted at the University of Hildesheim in Germany. More information can be found online at <http://www.genderforschung-governance.de/en/>.
  - 3 With this term I refer to ideas first introduced by Roland Robertson (1995) who states that the multidimensional process of globalisation has global and local or regional impacts simultaneously. Thus, 'glocalisation' focuses on the level of local or regional effects of worldwide globalisation.

the widespread tendencies of the marketisation of scientific knowledge, capturing not only the natural sciences and engineering but also the social sciences and humanities, including gender studies; suggest strategies for resistance against the neo-liberalisation of higher education and research; and identify starting points for further and optionally comparative studies on these issues. These contributions emphasise not only the need for more theoretical reflection and empirical research and for critical exchange on the current transformations, but also the need for political action to challenge, resist and change them.

### **3.1 Interventions: Gender, Gender Studies and Academic Feminism**

The first three articles analyse the neo-liberal dynamics taking place in many different systems of higher education and research all over the world with respect to gender, gender studies and academic feminism, revealing how the discursive, material and emotional technologies of neo-liberalism influence research in general and feminist studies and gender research in particular on the macro-, meso- and micro-level. The articles make clear that on the one hand the global, glocal and local impacts of the neo-liberalisation of academia seem to be quite similar all over the world and on the other hand are particular in their manifestations, depending on the specific historical, geopolitical and sociocultural contexts and developments in different areas. Drawing on these analyses, the authors emphasise the need for critical interventions in the neo-liberal transformations and elaborate on possible strategies to challenge them.

In her article entitled *Gender in the Neo-liberal Research Economy: An Enervating and Exclusionary Entanglement?*, Louise Morley discusses the gendered implications of the global neo-liberal research economy. She explores the complexities and contradictions of neo-liberal discourse and how it has become entangled with higher education in general, and with the research economy in particular. Her argument is that neo-liberalism has been installed via material, discursive and affective means and thus influences, for example, not only funding and employment regimes, but also the daily work, including the emotional reverberations, in academia. Research, Morley shows, is now a major vehicle for performance management and a product or service valued for its commercial, market and financial benefits. Of course, these developments are inclusive: they affect both women and men. However, because of the ongoing misrecognition and under-representation of women as research leaders, the neo-liberalisation of research tends to be highly gendered and exclusionary. As Morley concludes, neo-liberalism is not essentially male, but it has reinforced the

male dominance of the research economy by valuing and rewarding the areas and activities in which certain men have traditionally succeeded.

*Kadri Aavik* and *Raili Marling* focus on the impact of the neo-liberalisation of higher education on gender studies and feminist research in post-socialist settings in their article entitled *Gender Studies at the Time of Neo-liberal Transformation in Estonian Academia*. By using the example of Estonia, Aavik and Marling explain the status and developments of gender studies and feminist research and consider how feminist scholars in these conditions both accommodate and challenge the corporatisation of universities. Because of the discursive and material dimensions of neo-liberalism identified by the authors, it becomes obvious that feminist scholars in Estonia (and probably also elsewhere) are largely complicit in the neo-liberalisation of academia, playing by its rules rather than offering resistance. Neo-liberalism thus not only affects the scientific discourses and interventions but also has an impact on the precarious working conditions of feminist (and other) scholars. Therefore, the authors emphasise the need for revitalising academic trade unions and organising resistance to neo-liberalisation collectively. They conclude that advancing intersectional perspectives in feminist scholarship and forming intersectional coalitions might be a way forward.

In her article entitled *Neo-liberalism and Feminism in the South African Academy*, *Desiree Lewis* affirms that neo-liberalism's effects on academic feminism are more or less similar in the global North and the South. According to her, neo-liberalism also augments and redeploys core-periphery relations, creating market-based and developmentalist knowledge-producing networks that pose distinctive challenges for feminists in different geopolitical spaces. By analysing the location of current feminist work in South African universities, the author is concerned with two related aims. She unpacks specific challenges for feminists that both constitute and are constituted by global streams of capital and knowledge, and reflects on the possibilities for radical feminist responses to the neo-liberalisation of the academy. Thereby, Lewis considers how an analysis of globalisation's effects in specific contexts can help deepen transnational feminist critiques of the neo-liberal academy. In her view, transnational feminism can challenge the entrenched power relations that global neo-liberal research and knowledge production reproduces by self-reflexivity, regaining radical perspectives, networking, and rebuilding research and activist communities between the global North and the South.

## 3.2 Interactions: Gender Research, Academic Feminism and Society

The articles in the second part deal with a central expectation of the new academic governance, namely active and engaged interactions between research and society and the involvement in transdisciplinary problem-solving in those collaborations with various social actors. With respect to gender research and academic feminism, the authors elaborate on this expectation by analysing different types of relationships between gender research and society and identifying various social actors participating in these interactive relationships. The case studies from different contexts and regions of the world reveal that gender research and academic feminism are not only scientific endeavours but also at all times interconnected with social influences and movements with the aim to change or improve science and society. However, this improvement might originate from the call for putting social justice into action and/or the call for innovation.

In her article entitled *The Relationship between Gender Research and Society in the Norwegian Brainwash Controversy of 2010–2011*, Pia Vuolanto analyses a recent public controversy in Norway that unveiled different social actors' definitions and expectations of gender research. The object of the empirical study is the popular science series *Brainwash* which was produced by the Norwegian broadcasting company and comprised seven programmes on topics from gender research, such as gender equality, gender identity issues and violence, and raised a lively public debate. Through a close reading of newspaper articles, articles in scholarly journals and blog posts, the author focuses on the different views and perceptions that different actors had of the relationship between gender research and society during this unusually large public controversy. In order to analyse diverse understandings of the relationship between gender research and society, she describes the idea of 'research markets' in different social worlds and their connected reference groups and distinguishes five of them, namely the markets of gender research itself, social sciences and humanities, natural sciences, policymaking, and anti-feminism. The analysis concludes that in the conditions of the new academic governance, the mission of universities and also gender research as change makers and allies of society has to be taken into account as more interactive.

*Amélia Augusto, Catarina Sales Oliveira, Emília Araújo and Carla Cerqueira* analyse the relationship between gender studies and gender equality policymaking in the conditions of the neo-liberalisation of academia in Portugal. In their article entitled *The Place for Gender Research in Contemporary Portuguese Science and Higher Education Policies within the Context of Neo-liberalism* they argue that gender studies is central to the objectives, direction and social purpose of both education

and science, as both a driver for the future and for the transformation of societies. Using the European policy context as a guideline, as well as some Portuguese specificities, the authors discuss the impacts of neo-liberal policies of science and higher education on the prioritisation of scientific fields and scientific outputs, on the privilege of some modes of production of science, on the depoliticisation of gender issues in the university, and ultimately on the possibilities and constraints for the affirmation and consolidation of gender studies. They reveal that although gender studies has a considerable history within science and academia with a growth of work and publications, gender studies' contributions in several fields are either kept invisible or just voided. In this context, the emergence of gender mainstreaming policies is identified as both part of the solution and part of the problem, because of the danger inherent to gender mainstreaming of losing the critical and transformative standpoint on gender as a historical and sociocultural construction and not as a given reality represented by gender studies.

*Sigrid Schmitz* focuses on another aspect of science and technology policies, namely the international top-down initiatives of demanding and promoting the integration of 'sex' and 'gender' into the governance of all fields of science and technology, from funding to research and development to publication policies, and to the assessment of the impact of scientific knowledge and technical products in society. In her article entitled *On the Use of Innovation Arguments for Getting Gender Research into STEM*, she examines the project *Gendered Innovations in Science, Health and Medicine, Engineering, and Environment*, which was initiated in 2009 by Londa Schiebinger from Stanford University, based on her collaboration with scholars Ineke Klinge and Martina Schraudner. This project is a main source of information and guidance for various governmental activities in international science and technology policies on how to integrate 'sex' and 'gender'; for example, it was co-opted by the European Union in 2012. Schmitz elaborates on contents and concepts of this project in relation to the findings and scope of knowledge available from feminist science and technology studies and questions the strategic invocation of 'innovation'. In order to strengthen the original perspective of gender for scientific knowledge production, she finally offers approaches to include feminist epistemologies and postcolonial perspectives in science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

In their article entitled *Academic Feminism and Exclusion in Brazil: Bringing Back Some of the Missing Voices*, *Cristiano Rodrigues* and *Mariana Prandini Assis* point to the fact that feminist knowledge production itself may undermine its contribution to social usefulness. By investigating the constitution of gender and feminist studies in Brazil, they claim that throughout its development and particularly in its struggle with so-called mainstream academia and science governance



to contest its scientific marginalisation, this portion of the feminist field ended up producing some other exclusions of its own. Thus, and unintentionally, according to the authors, it contributed to perpetuating part of the marginalisation that is characteristic of hegemonic modes of thinking and knowledge production. More specifically, besides attaching itself to rather reductive notions of what its political subject is, it also did not create the conditions and the space within which voices articulated from the far margins, such as those of Black women, could flourish. Along these lines, the authors claim that in the Brazilian context, one of the ways for gender studies and gender research to continue to be asserted as scientifically and socially useful and relevant is to continuously confront the exclusions that it itself produces and to commit to radical inclusion, for example of Black feminist knowledge production.

### **3.3 Institutionalisation: Gender Studies' Epistemic and Organisational Statuses in the Academy**

Finally, the last four articles focus on how conditions, patterns and strategies of how gender studies is institutionalised in the neo-liberalised academy. In doing so, the authors deal with different epistemic statuses of gender studies between being a particular perspective of knowledge and a discipline among others, and belonging to the fields of social sciences and the humanities. Additionally, the authors reflect on different organisational statuses of gender studies, depending on the epistemic value given to this perspective of knowledge or discipline. Undoubtedly, it is not a coincidence that all authors state the misrecognition and disqualification of gender studies as proper scientific knowledge, a knowledge which must be taken seriously within the many-voiced academic concert of disciplines. Also, all articles reveal that the new academic governance has ambivalent impacts on gender studies: on the one hand, it profits from a tailwind that appreciates interactions between gender studies and research and societal demands such as putting gender equality into action, but on the other hand gender studies has to succeed within the market conditions of neo-liberalism and is subjected to performance measurements and evaluations in spite of its precarious material conditions.

In her article entitled *The Institutionalisation of Gender Studies and the New Academic Governance: Longstanding Patterns and Emerging Paradoxes*, Maria do Mar Pereira first reviews the literature feminist scholars have been producing on processes of institutionalisation of women's, gender and feminist studies (WGFS) for several decades. With regard to the new academic governance, she systematises some of its key findings by differentiating macro- and micro-level patterns of in-

stitutionalisations. She then draws on an ethnographic study of academia to argue that, in some contexts, established patterns in the institutionalisation of WGFS are being transformed by the emergence of new models of academic governance. Pereira identifies the situation as paradoxical because of simultaneous trends of continuity and change and discrepancies between more recognition at the institutional level and in official discourse and the dismissing of the field at the epistemic level and in everyday 'corridor talk' and unofficial discourse. She concludes that this coexistence of continuity and change, of recognition and marginalisation of WGFS, is a key mechanism of the contemporary governance of science. Thus, an analysis of gender studies in times of the new academic governance must consider both the 'new' aspects of the scientific governance and the 'old' inequalities that it covertly reproduces.

*Farinaz Fassa* and *Sabine Kradolfer* investigate the institutionalisation process of gender studies in a Swiss French-speaking university, with a particular focus on its articulation with local social demands. In their article entitled *Gender Studies: A 'Cheeky Knowledge' Renormalised?*, they focus on questions of the inter-, trans- and postdisciplinarity of gender studies that were initially seen as an undeniable advantage for this field of knowledge. The authors argue that in the conditions of the new academic governance which introduces managerialist tools into scientific organisations and the demand for scientific excellence mainly rooted in a quite traditional disciplinary approach, gender studies is now faced with three dimensions of accountability, which are in tension with one another, namely the professional, the political, and the institutional/managerial dimensions. According to Fassa and Kradolfer, a comparison with the changes that have occurred over the past 25 years in other interdisciplinary fields of knowledge, such as area studies and cultural studies, suggests that the social resistances and new scientific objects offered by gender studies, area studies or cultural studies tend to be diluted under the joint influence of new social demands, fragmentation and globalisation, paving the way for new academic disciplinary definitions that bring back to normal the 'cheeky knowledge' built by these studies.

With respect to German academia, *Heike Kahlert* focuses on the link between gender studies and gender equality policies which form another social demand on gender studies. In her article entitled *Gender Equality as a Boon and a Bane to Gender Studies in the Conditions of the New Academic Governance*, she discusses the strong but ambivalent link between gender studies and gender equality policies. Based on case studies on the significance and consideration of gender studies in university development processes, the author examines first how and in what conditions gender studies are taken into consideration in university development processes, especially when universities can profit from gender studies in order to fulfil the legal requirement to put gender equality into practice. Second, she shows

what constellations of factors and actors support or hinder the development of gender studies in universities and how these mechanisms function in practice. Thirdly, she discusses how the relationship between gender studies and gender equality policies is shaped in the organisational practices of the universities and how the partly implicit connection of gender studies with gender equality policies is made explicit. The conclusion is that gender studies profits from the legal pressure to put gender equality into action but suffers from the disqualification as non-academic because of its link with gender equality.

Finally, *Blanka Nyklová* focuses on some of the intersections of geopolitical location and the position of gender studies as a discipline in the Czech Republic. In her article entitled *Gender Studies in the Czech Republic: Institutionalisation Meets Neo-liberalism Contingent on Geopolitics*, she first describes the establishment of gender studies and its institutionalisation in this particular context which started after 1989. She then analyses the intersection of geopolitics and neo-liberalism and how it affects local gender studies. Based on semi-structured interviews with scholars and activists, and observations and practice as a gender studies researcher in Czech academia, the author explores how the specific geopolitical setting impacts the field of gender studies and scholars navigating it. She argues that gender studies as a discipline has profited from the massification of higher education, which she considers as part of neo-liberal higher education reforms, and from the incorporation of gender, e.g. in the European Research Area and in other EU policies. However, this positioning of gender studies is identified as at least partly problematic: it both strengthens the local focus on institutionalised (rather than grassroots) activities and may undermine the perceived local relevance of the discipline that resonates with early post-1989 anti-feminist discourse that has not been effectively challenged so far.

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