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# Gender Equality as a Boon and a Bane to Gender Studies in the Conditions of the New Academic Governance

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## Abstract

In this article the author argues that the strong link between gender studies and gender equality policies that is well-established in EU policies is both a boon and a bane in the conditions of the new academic governance in German academia. This argument is based on case studies on the significance and consideration of gender studies in university development processes that were conducted in Germany. First, the author examines 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 analysed in the case studies and how the partly implicit connection of gender studies with gender equality policies is made explicit. The result 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.

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## Keywords

Gender Equality, Gender Studies, New Academic Governance, Case Studies, Germany

## 1 Gender Equality Policies and Gender Studies in Global University Transformations

The research system and universities in particular are currently contested institutions. As the sites of the production of useful and usable knowledge for society as the institutions that hold the monopoly on the acquirement and allocation of academic qualifications, universities are of great importance for emerging late-modern knowledge societies and their outstanding position within the global context. Globalisation is accompanied by the politically intended, widespread transformations of universities and research, which are promoted in the academic system through the introduction of market principles and conditions in the form of 'new public management' (e. g. Ferlie et al. 2009). These transformations are linked with the 'new governance' (Schimank 2007) and lead to the creation of 'entrepreneurial universities' (Clark 1998). In doing so, not only are internationalisation, initiatives of excellence and the Bologna process promoted, but new management instruments are also introduced, such as target agreements, global budgets, performance-oriented funding, rankings, and evaluations of universities and research (cf. Binner et al. 2013; Nickel 2011; Lewis 2013; Paradeise et al. 2009). One strong tendency resulting from this is the 'marketisation' and 'metrification' of research, scientific organisations and scholars in all disciplines. The research content, moreover, only seems to be relevant if the knowledge it involves or produces is important for economic and sometimes also social development. Under these conditions, critical knowledge as such, for example, the knowledge that comes from gender studies, is often marginalised.

Universities are thus at the centre of these transformations stemming from the new academic governance. In this process their organisational scope has expanded through deregulation and a growing autonomy of universities which have become more or less disentangled from tight state regulation. At the same time, the demands that universities as organisations are confronted with are changing, for example, with respect to the efficient use of resources and the demand to overcome pressing societal challenges.

Besides the implementation of new public management, the question of gender equality is also on the agenda. Of course, this question is anything but new and has already been problematised since the 1980s in Western societies with regard to the democracy deficit, as it is a question that concerns the participation of women in all public spheres, including politics and academia. However, in light of the market rules, at least in the German context which is the focus of this article, gender equality has become an economic question, following the premise that all available so-called human potential should generally be used optimally, thus

including hitherto underrepresented so-called female potential. Gender equality policies in universities and research that are aimed at achieving this goal seem to have an enhanced status, at least in research systems where male dominance is especially striking. This is the case, for example, in the German system of higher education and research, where gender equality policies are widely institutionalised in universities and research, for example, in the form of laws, gender equality officers and affirmative action plans. The state puts considerable pressure on the academic system to increase the proportion of female researchers and especially professors and to put gender equality into action.

Yet the *gender equality policies* use a double strategy that comprises person-centred special activities that favour women and the organisation-centred practice of gender mainstreaming. Gender equality policies are aimed at the organisational level. Ideally, efforts to increase the participation of women in science and academia, in particular in top positions, and of gender-equal organisational development in universities and research should go hand in hand. However, at least in German academia, affirmative action and gender mainstreaming are de facto often practiced as alternatives. The promotion of gender studies can form a part of equality policies because it is a feminised field: at every status level of gender studies women make up the majority working in this field, while men are the minority. Therefore, the promotion of gender studies also contributes to the promotion of female scholars, though the so-called glass ceiling works in gender studies as well.

*Gender studies* aims at the transformation of content, epistemic practices and forms of production of academic knowledge itself and produces knowledge on gender-related questions that do not only concern inequality issues. Gender studies is situated on the epistemic level, which will be discussed below.

In what follows I will argue that, in the conditions of the new academic governance in the German system of higher education and research, gender studies is primarily promoted mainly because of its link to gender equality policies. This link is simultaneously a boon and a bane to gender studies: it serves not only to implement gender studies in universities as an instrument of gender equality policies but also to disqualify gender studies as non-academic.

In order to understand this argument, it is important to take into account that, in contrast to the EU gender equality strategy which considers gender studies to be a part of gender equality policies, in the German context gender equality policies and gender studies are somehow considered to be opposites (cf. Niedersächsisches Ministerium für Wissenschaft und Kultur 1994; Lüdke et al. 2005; Riegraf and Plöger 2009; Wissenschaftliche Kommission Niedersachsen 2013; Kahlert 2015). Gender equality activists often see the promotion of gender studies as part of their political work and as reflecting observations and findings from knowledge produc-

tion in the academic field of gender studies. In contrast, gender studies scholars are mostly sceptical about the strong links between their academic knowledge production and gender equality policies. They point to the variety of fields and topics of gender studies and opt for neutrality and distance of their knowledge production from political usability.<sup>1</sup>

With respect to the latest developments in gender equality policies in the conditions of the new academic governance, there exist a number of empirical studies that focus primarily on the organisation- and person-centred level of promoting women's equality with men (cf. e.g. Kahlert 2003; Kamphans 2014; Löther and Vollmer 2014; Schacherl et al. 2015; Weber 2017; Löther and Riegraf 2017). However, there are knowledge deficits with respect to the current significance, implementation and promotion of gender studies under these governance conditions. Questions that remain open are what significance is given to gender studies in light of the implementation of new public management in universities and research and how the new governance structures influence the situation and promotion of gender studies. In this article, I will discuss three connected questions which will help to fill in these gaps in knowledge: how and under what conditions is gender studies given consideration in university development processes? What constellations and actors can be identified as supporting or hindering the development of gender studies in universities and how do they do this? How significant are organisational gender equality policies for establishing and developing gender studies?

This article is based on empirical case studies that are part of a research project on these questions conducted under my leadership.<sup>2</sup> Firstly, I will present an outline of the epistemic field of gender studies and its specific institutionalisations in the German system of higher education and research. In the next section I will outline the new academic governance that shapes the frame of the empirical discussions, and will then introduce the methodology and data of the empirical case studies that were conducted at German universities and that looked at the significance and consideration of gender studies in university development processes. Drawing on these empirical data, I will first examine how and in what conditions gender studies

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- 1 Because of the limited space in this article, I cannot reflect on the question of why in the German context especially gender studies scholars regard their activities as the opposite of or remote from gender equality policies.
  - 2 The project *Gender Research and the New Academic Governance*, which this article is based on, was funded by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research with the promotional reference O1FP1306 and was conducted at the University of Hildesheim in Germany. The responsibility for the content of this publication lies with the author. More information can be found online at <http://www.genderforschung-governance.de/en/>.

is considered in university development processes, and I will secondly show what constellations and actors support or hinder the development of gender studies in universities and how these mechanisms function in practice. On the basis of this analysis, I will thirdly discuss how the relationship between gender studies and gender equality policies is shaped in the organisational practices of the studied universities. Finally, I will comprehensively discuss the results.

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## 2 The Academic Field in Focus: Gender Studies in the German System of Higher Education and Research

Gender studies is characterised by at least three features: having gender, gender relations or gender orders as its objective; having critical reflexivity; and being inter- or transdisciplinary (Kahlert 2014, p. 147–148). Gender studies distinguishes itself by a specific epistemic perspective reflecting the significance of the gendered embeddedness in social structures for the production of knowledge. Gender studies' "self-concept as critique of science"<sup>3</sup> (Kahlert 2014, p. 148) results from the impetus to challenge androcentric modes of knowledge production concerning omissions and normativities. This activity is accompanied by the "development of new knowledge" (Kahlert 2008, p. 57) by exploiting themes and perspectives that until now have been excluded from the disciplinary canon or were marginalised.

There is no consensus in the German academic system or even within the scientific community of gender studies itself about whether gender studies is a new discipline of its own or not. In this respect, it is possible to differentiate between three typical and simultaneously existing standpoints. Following these ideal types, gender studies can be considered an inter- or transdiscipline, a part of the traditional disciplines, or a discipline in its own right, each with specific political and organisational strategies of institutionalisation and promotion (cf. Kahlert 2005). As has been shown, there are competing discussions about the disciplinary status of gender studies from an epistemological point of view (cf. Hark 2005). At the same time, the model of institutionalisation that is put into action, such as professorships, study programmes and/or academic centres for gender studies at individual universities, often depends on pragmatic decisions concerning the question of which model seems to be the most successful or politically feasible.

In this article, I consider all the different epistemological, political and organisational pluralities of gender studies' conceptualisations and models of institu-

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3 All translations from German to English have been done by the author.

tionalisations in the academic system. This means that all academic perspectives, disciplinary orientations and specific models of institutionalisations of gender-related research are included. Thus, the term 'gender studies' is used here as an umbrella term for the different streams, directions and organisational models of research and teaching on questions of sex and/or gender, gender relations, and gender orders.

In the 1980s, the path of gender studies into the system of higher education and research in West Germany was mainly paved by the interplay between actors in women's social movements<sup>4</sup> and state support. Universities and research were challenged from the 'bottom up' and the 'top down' to epistemically and organisationally integrate gender studies. At the same time, in doing so, a powerful frame of legitimacy was shaped through gender equality with respect to the participation and representation of women in science and academia which was and is legally required and has since then to be put into action organisationally. In the German context, federal states' laws force scientific organisations to implement gender equality officers, affirmative action plans and gender equality measures. With this direction of impact, gender studies in the German system of higher education and research was, especially in its beginnings, politically promoted as a contribution to enforcing justice and equality between women and men (cf. e. g. Hagemann-White 1995), for example, through the additional resources (positions, money for research, teaching and administration) provided by the research ministries of the federal states. Thus, gender studies can in a certain way also be considered a part of state feminism. In the system of higher education and research in the former East Germany, there were no comparable developments. After reunification, however, gender studies programmes at former East German universities were also demanded by an emerging academic women's movement, but since the 1990s state policies globally has changed in the conditions of the new academic governance, and the institutionalisation of gender studies is now left to the universities.

In its self-description, gender studies appreciates the gender perspective as having strong transformative potential for science and the humanities and society into account. A frequently used argument in gender and research policy contexts is that gender studies contributes to the assertion of gender equality and therefore to

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4 As in many other Western countries, according to gender studies the academic women's movement in West Germany was influenced by Anglo-American developments. However, with respect to the institutionalisation of gender studies, the main strategy was to integrate gender issues into existing disciplines, programmes and units, such as doing gender mainstreaming, and not to found special programmes and centres. Since the 1990s this strategy has been complemented by struggles for special gender studies programmes and interdisciplinary academic centres for gender studies because the integration strategy did not prove to be very successful.

the development of the academic system and different societal institutions as such. In this argument, gender studies and gender equality policies are closely linked. At the same time, there are many theoretical reflections in the field of gender studies that question these links with respect to the stated closeness of gender studies to political and societal practices. These theoretical reflections also strongly support the epistemological ideal of science and the humanities which should be pure and free from considerations about usefulness and usability (cf. Holland-Cunz 2005).

Recent analyses of the significance of gender studies for university development focus on the questions of the institutionalisation and professionalisation of gender studies, for example, through professorships; study programmes on the bachelor's, master's and doctoral level; and interdisciplinary academic centres for gender studies (cf. e. g. Bock 1998; ZtG 2004). Additionally, there are some studies on the institutionalisation of gender studies at universities in the individual federal states of Germany (cf. e. g. on Saxony-Anhalt: Bomke and Heinzel 1997; on Hesse: Teubner and Herbert 1997; on Lower Saxony: Wissenschaftliche Kommission Niedersachsen 2013). What characterises many of these studies is their documentary style; in addition, there is a lack of empirical data that reflect the situation in the 2010s. Studies that analyse the significance of gender studies for current university development processes in the conditions of the new academic governance and take aspects of organisational cultures and structures into account are rare (however, for study programmes on the bachelor's, master's and doctoral level, cf. Malli et al. 2015; Oloff and Rozwandowicz 2015).

Quantifiable indicators of the institutionalisation of gender studies in German universities are full professorships, study programmes or study focal points on the bachelor's, master's and doctoral level, and interdisciplinary academic centres for gender studies. The professorships are especially important because these are the only academic positions in Germany that are permanent, whereas all other academic positions are limited to a maximum term of three to five years and thus do not guarantee continuity. The *Margherita von Brentano Centre* at the Free University of Berlin is collecting data on these indicators, but not all data are publicly available. In addition, with respect to the topic of this article, data limitations must be taken into account, as the *Margherita von Brentano Centre* only counts professorships, study programmes and academic centres that make the gender focus visible in their names. In the German system of higher education and research, however, there are also professors who are doing research on gender issues but do not have a specialised professorship in this area, and there are study programmes and academic centres that include gender studies issues in their work without reflecting this in their names. Therefore, it is not easy to describe the academic field of gender studies in numbers.

On 10 July 2016, there were a total of 150 professorships for gender studies in different disciplines at German universities, and 138 were occupied (Margherita-von-Brentano-Zentrum 2016a). As of 20 April 2016, this collection of data documented the existence of 6 bachelor's and 11 master's study programmes and comparable structured study focal points, as well as 12 certificate and similar study programmes, and one doctoral study programme for gender studies at German universities (Margherita-von-Brentano-Zentrum 2016b). Finally, the data show that as of 5 April 2016, 49 academic centres for research and teaching in the field of gender studies had existed at German universities since 1979, but 11 of these centres no longer existed at that date (Margherita-von-Brentano-Zentrum 2016c). This might sound like a very successful institutionalisation of gender studies in the German system of higher education and research. However, compared with the fact that the German academic landscape in 2016 was made up of around 400 universities and universities of applied science and 46,344 professorships,<sup>5</sup> the number of professorships and study programmes for gender studies is quite small.

The achieved status of the establishment of gender studies is valued differently by its protagonists, either as a success story of permeating universities step by step (Krais 2010, p. 25) or as a history of wearing out engaged actors in stable or even resisting structures (Bock 2002, p. 124). De facto, in this discussion one has to take into account not only experiences from perspectives of organisational cultures and developments within organisational structures at universities, but also political reforms like the Bologna process or the *German Universities Excellence Initiative*. Under these conditions, the significance of the gender perspective and especially the integration of gender studies as a special kind of academic knowledge in the current transformation processes going on in the system of higher education and research is mostly viewed with scepticism (cf. e.g. Baer 2005; Hark 2005; Holland-Cunz 2005; Kahlert 2005; Hark 2013). However, until now these partially contrasting appraisals have not yet been examined empirically. So far, the research results introduced here contribute to close this gap, namely empirical results on the current significance, implementation and promotion of gender studies under conditions of the new academic governance in Germany.

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5 The latest data are from 2015 (cf. Statistisches Bundesamt 2017).



### 3 Conceptual Frame: The New Academic Governance

The conceptual frame of this research lies within the orientation of universities and research to ideological ideas of a new managerialism and the organisational strategies of new public management that started to spread into the public sector in the 1980s. The main elements of this new academic governance are an orientation towards the market, efficiency, competition, a focus on clients and strengthening the management. These elements find their expression in organisational governance which shifts from an orientation towards input to an orientation towards output (cf. Nickel 2011; Paradesi et al. 2009; Lewis 2013). Universities are supposed to perform more, for example more research, documented by success rates in third-party funding and publications, and more teaching, documented by exams taken successfully by their students, *and* they are expected to present their performance results to the public. It seems obvious that this leads to a great deal of pressure to produce, which impacts the scientific organisations and the people working in academia. Individually, the German system of higher education and research, which does not include permanent academic positions beyond professorships, also forces the next generation of academics in particular into geographical and vertical career mobility in order to achieve one of the rare permanent professorships (cf. Becker and Tippel 2013; Leemann and Boes 2012; Wissenschaftsrat 2014).

In the course of the new academic governance, the reputation of universities and individual researchers becomes increasingly important for positioning and significance in a globalising academic landscape. Thereby, academic reputation and appreciation are mainly documented by research performance which is supposed to be produced by networks of research institutions or at least networks of researchers. Within this system the disciplines where research per se is done in teams profit most, for example, the natural, life and engineering sciences. One main consequence is a permanent performance metrification that is applied to research institutions as a whole (e. g. universities, research institutes), organisational areas (e. g. faculties, institutes), and individual researchers. This metrification impacts institutional strategies as well as individual working styles and career planning.

Thus, external grants and funding agencies like the German Research Foundation (DFG) or the European Research Council (ERC) are generally gaining more importance. What is specific to the German system of higher education and research is also that already-obtained third-party funding counts as a central performance indicator and has become a key unit in the measurement of research performance, whereas publications resulting from this research are often not considered so important (cf. e. g. Gerhards 2013; Jungbauer-Gans and Gross 2012). For example, the amount of third-party funding is used for target agreements between

the university management and individual professors and influences a professor's pay and pension. Internationally, publications are more important, especially those in international high-impact journals (cf. e.g. Jungbauer-Gans and Gross 2012; Leemann and Boes 2012).

Thus, the new academic governance has to be analysed on three interconnected levels in order to explore the dynamics of transforming universities and research in a comprehensive manner (cf. Lewis 2013):

- On the *structural* level, it is necessary to analyse the research funding system as a main force determining the development of research and academia.
- On the *intermediate* level, it is necessary to explore university development processes where structural and individual aspects merge.
- On the *individual* level, it is necessary to focus on the structural and organisational conditions of an individual scholar's research work.

This kind of widely conceived analysis of the situation and perspectives of gender studies in the conditions of the new governance in the German system of higher education and research is the focus of the research project<sup>6</sup> underlying this article. However, presenting all the results of that research would be beyond the scope of this article.<sup>7</sup> Therefore, the focus here is on the intermediate level, where governance phenomena are observed on the organisational level. In the following empirical analysis, I will reflect on the significance of gender studies in university development processes. The case studies that were conducted for this purpose at universities serve as an analysis of the social practice. They focus on the questions of how gender studies is established and developed further in the conditions of the new academic governance in the German system of higher education and research, and of what mechanisms of support and barriers or even resistance gender studies encounters on its paths in and through the university.

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6 Cf. footnote 2.

7 The research project this article is based on includes other parts that focus on both other levels of analysis (cf. footnote 2). On the structural level, the analysis focused on how public research funding takes gender studies into account. On the individual level, the project considers first how gatekeepers in research policy, research funding, gender research and the societal public appraise the significance of gender studies, and second how the new academic governance influences the career strategies of the next generation of academics on the pre- and postdoctoral levels.

## 4 Methodology and Data

The following empirical results are based on a case study design analysing five universities from five different federal states in Germany.<sup>8</sup> The cases (Table 1) were selected with the aim of making contrasting comparisons and the sample was constructed on the basis of six criteria:<sup>9</sup> the type of organisation and its disciplinary profile, geopolitical location, the size and age of the university, the institutionalisation of gender studies (in professorships, study programmes and academic centres), gender equality, and reputation. Most of the data on these criteria were obtained from existing relevant rankings, for example, that of the German Research Foundation, and from collections of data on the institutionalisations of gender studies (as mentioned above) or gender equality.

**Table 1** Overview of the universities used in the analyses

Case	Characteristics
A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Large university offering all disciplines</li> <li>• Founded between 1810 and 1967</li> <li>• Research-oriented</li> <li>• Strong in third-party funding for research</li> <li>• Many institutionalisations of gender studies</li> <li>• In the top group in gender equality</li> </ul>
B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Large university offering many disciplines</li> <li>• Founded after 1967</li> <li>• Research-oriented</li> <li>• Strong in third-party funding for research</li> <li>• Several institutionalisations of gender studies</li> <li>• In the upper-middle group in gender equality</li> </ul>

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- 8 To achieve this aim it was first necessary to identify the universities from an overview by the *German Rector's Conference*, which on 3 November 2013 (the date when we had to decide about the sample) consisted of 393 universities for all 16 federal states. Finally, the basis for the case selection consisted of 81 universities from all over Germany. The theoretically built sample represents around a third of all federal states and 6.17 per cent of all German universities. Agnes Raschauer supported the preparation and execution of the case studies and the analysis of data from the fieldwork.
- 9 After the universities to be analysed were selected according to these criteria, each rectorate was asked for a written agreement to participate in the study before starting the fieldwork. However, not all the universities selected wanted to participate in the study. Therefore, we had to modify the originally planned sample.

Case	Characteristics
C	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Medium-sized university (focusing on social sciences and humanities)</li> <li>• Founded after 1967</li> <li>• Research-oriented</li> <li>• Strong in third-party funding in one research area</li> <li>• Several institutionalisations of gender studies</li> <li>• In the upper-middle group in gender equality</li> </ul>
D	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Medium-sized university offering all disciplines</li> <li>• Founded in the Middle Ages/early modern era before 1810</li> <li>• Research-oriented</li> <li>• Strong in third-party funding in one research area</li> <li>• Several institutionalisations of gender studies</li> <li>• In the bottom group in gender equality</li> </ul>
E	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Large university offering all disciplines (focusing on natural and engineering sciences)</li> <li>• Founded between 1810 and 1967</li> <li>• Research-oriented</li> <li>• Strong in third-party funding for research</li> <li>• Few institutionalisations of gender studies</li> <li>• In the middle group in gender equality</li> </ul>

From a methodological point of view, the case studies consist of a mixture of document and website analyses and qualitative interviews.

The selection of documents to be analysed in the case studies was based on web analyses of the selected universities and the governance structures of each federal state and on information from actors. The analyses consist, among other things, of the current university laws of each federal state, the target agreements between the federal state and the university, the constitution of each university (*Grundordnung*), university development plans, the university reports for the *Research-Oriented Standards on Gender Equality* of the German Research Foundation,<sup>10</sup> gender equality reports, and affirmative action plans.

10 In December 2007 the Executive Committee of the German Research Foundation (DFG) established a committee of experts to draw up research-oriented standards on gender equality. The proposed standards were discussed at the DFG's General Assembly on 2 July 2008, where the majority of the member institutions spoke in favour of the draft, voluntarily committing themselves to implementing the standards. Between 2009 and 2013 a working group established by the DFG's General Assembly evaluated the gender equality concepts of their member institutions, supported their implementation, and monitored the progress of their implementation. Since 2014 the DFG has asked the member institutions annually, among others, about the proportion of women there are in each of all stages of an academic career (cf. DFG 2017).

Additionally, a total of 32 qualitative interviews were conducted, with at least six actors per case study, who were selected using theoretical sampling. The group of interviewees per university consists of two representatives from the management (rectorate and deans), two scholars from different fields of gender studies, a representative involved in organisational gender equality policies (e.g. gender equality officers or members of gender equality committees), and a representative of the research ministry of the given federal state. For the internal perspective, members of different faculties were included in order to obtain greater insight into the different organisations.

All the interviews took place between February and November 2014. The interviews were digitally recorded, transcribed and anonymised. For the purpose of data protection, no mention will be made here of any information from which it would be possible to identify the interviewees. The universities will only be named with letters (A – E) and the interviewees will additionally be characterised only by their function (management, research, gender equality and research ministry).

For the data analyses, a qualitative content analysis was conducted based on Mayring (e.g. 2000, 2010) and the technique of “structuration (deductive use of categories)” (Mayring 2010, p. 66) was used. Based on literature reviews concerning data content, a system of categories was developed with which to explore the empirical material from a theory-driven perspective.

The following sections of this article focus on the organisational activities, patterns of legitimation, and mechanisms of support and resistance that promote or hinder the consideration of gender studies in university development processes. The research questions are:

- How and under what conditions are gender studies considered in university development processes?
- What constellations and actors can be identified as supporting or hindering the development of gender studies in universities and how do they do this?
- How significant are organisational gender equality policies for establishing and developing gender studies?

## 5 Taking Gender Studies in University Development Processes into Account

In all five case studies the significance of gender studies in university development processes depends crucially on whether gender studies is recognised as an advantage for the organisation as such, for example, to strengthen the university's profile, and whether it appears to generate a significant amount of third-party funding. In all cases, the interviews with the gender studies scholars reveal that they are confronted with the demand to apply for bigger (network) research projects, to build an adequate research infrastructure and to make the university more visible. According to the interviews, however, this is not because gender studies is valued as an important academic field, but because the request to acquire a large amount of third-party funding is critical to all disciplines and academic fields. If gender studies, according to these aims, seems to offer little promise of achieving this objective, it is considered to be of little relevance for the given university's development, and this is so even in those cases where the analysed documents state this in a different way.

The case studies differ with respect to whether and to what extent the university actively supports the development of gender studies, for example, with resources such as positions and money. This can be seen from the documents and from the interviews.

The document analyses reveal that in all the case studies the extension of gender studies is considered an objective in the university's development. Thereby, the organisations explain their intention to promote the integration of gender perspectives in study programmes and teaching duties, and primarily their plan to promote gender research. From an organisational point of view, gender studies primarily attains importance if it is considered an element with which to build the university's profile, which works by receiving extra money. However, according to the documents, in only three cases (A, C and D) did the universities declare that they would spend extra money on this. In these three cases, gender studies is either presented in the documents as a unique selling proposition of the university (case D) or as an element in its organisational profile (cases A and C). And while in cases C and D the extra money allotted for this objective is described in the documents as gender equality resources, university A indicates it would spend substantial financial resources to support teaching and research and to extend the organisational structures for gender studies.

For universities A and C, different interviewees state that not only is gender studies made visible but also plays a role in policies for hiring professors and structural planning. Only in case A is the university's profile-building in relation to gender studies de facto coupled with the provision of resources and presented

as a central element in the university's development. Here gender studies is mentioned in the analysed documents in direct reference to its significant reputation across locations and its quality. In this case gender studies is also integrated into organisational decision-making, as the interviews show, for example, by giving responsibility for gender studies to one member of the rectorate or to an in-house academic committee or with the promotion of the gender equality officer and of actors who defend gender studies in the academic self-administration. University C indeed acknowledges that it takes a positive view of gender studies as a focus on its university profile, but it does not de facto match this support for gender studies with the provision of adequate resources, although funding is promised in its documents. In light of a general lack of resources, the stated significance of this academic area could be weakened. In this case, doing gender studies is also an additional focus of its activists. In the conditions of the new governance, all gender studies scholars, like other professionals in academia, have a heavy workload. If gender studies has to be performed in addition to other academic work, there may be no work capacity left over to perform gender studies.

In university D the situation looks ambivalent. There gender studies is anchored in documents on the central university's development and according to the documents is supposed to be expanded. Although gender studies has been institutionalised at this university in the form of a professorship and/or an academic centre, which is unique for the federal state this university is in, according to the scholars interviewed it is not assigned any importance by the rectorate in the university's development. Gender studies does not seem to be one of the strategic focal points of this university, and it is not taken into account in the practice of hiring professors. On the one hand, the declaration of support for gender studies in the university's development documents is not reflected in organisational practices, but gender researchers and the gender equality officer interpret even this statement of support for gender studies as a positive development. On the other hand, the interviewee from the research ministry describes gender studies as consistent with the research interests of this federal state (case D) but makes clear that the ministry will only spend money on the institutionalisation of gender studies in the case that the given university is ready for accepting gender studies as necessary for its development:

"If they themselves managed to say that the university directly profits from gender studies, surely the willingness within the university would be greater to spend more on this, another position and so on. This is how the game works." (Research ministry/case D).

Case studies B and E are different from these three examples. At university B, gender studies is not a focal point of the organisational profile and because of this

it is also not relevant for staff development; in addition, gender studies is not given substantial financial support. However, this university follows a model of institutionalisation where different areas and units of the university are responsible for the development of gender studies. The development of gender studies is oriented towards organisational targets and thus connected with the university's strategy. Therefore, gender studies is presented as an important topic for this university but it does not count as a main field of research in the organisational research strategy. And for university E, where almost no forms of institutionalised gender studies exist and gender equality policies are also not very well-established, the interviewees doubt that gender studies could be important for the university's development. While the extension of gender studies is mentioned in the university development documents as an aim and while the documents name concrete projects in order to put this into practice, organisational practices simultaneously reflect a lack of priority given to gender studies.

To sum up, all the case studies impressively show that the integration of gender studies in the speech of the documents, for example, in target agreements, university development plans, affirmative action plans and gender equality concepts, does not necessarily indicate the de facto significance of gender studies as an important academic area in the university's development. In the universities analysed, according to the interviews with gender studies scholars, the declarations of support for gender studies in the organisational documents are not necessarily translated into organisational practice. Action must and does not follow talk.

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## **6 Enhancing and Hindering Constellations for the Consideration of Gender Studies in Universities**

With respect to the promotion of gender studies, all the case studies show the important role played by individuals who are responsible for integrating gender studies into university development documents and into daily organisational practices. For example, the creation of organisational structures such as academic centres and the integration of gender studies into curricula or organisational strategy documents depend mainly on an individual person. However, at least for universities D and E, where gender studies is not a focal point of the university's organisational profile, and as a result of this is also not relevant for staff development and is not given substantial financial support, it is obvious that the ongoing activities of single individuals are alone not enough to advance the organisational significance of gender studies and encourage adequate measures.



The case studies show, however, some conditions and actors that are conducive to the progress of gender studies at universities. These conditions consist of the relationships between co-operation, influential actors and external resources.

Institutionalised and informal *relationships of co-operation* are crucial to the organisational promotion of gender studies. Professors with a good reputation and good networks who represent the interests of gender studies in committees and informally prepare decisions also belong to this enhancing group that promotes the advance of gender studies, as do gender studies activists at the universities who participate in strategy discussions, support gender studies, and clarify the relevance of this academic area for the university's development (case A). Additionally, the interviewees describe co-operation with administrative units in the universities that are responsible both for the integration of gender in research applications (cases B and D) or for checking study programmes to ensure the gender dimension is taken into consideration (case A). Finally, two gender studies scholars from different universities emphasise how important co-operation across different research contexts is within their universities (cases A and C).

In the case studies, three groups of actors appear particularly important in supporting the development of gender studies, and these are gender equality activists, rectorates and deans' offices, and federal state ministries.

In all the case studies *gender equality activists* play an exceptionally important role in supporting gender studies.

"I participate in different working groups, including those relating to the organisation's constitution (*Grundordnung*). [...] This then impacts other parts of the organisation's constitution, from general regulations to changes within the study system to bachelor's and master's degrees, to specific rules and examination rules, right through to evaluations. I participate in all of these committees and see to the integration of a gender-specific perspective." (Gender equality/case C)

Besides the promotion of gender studies being taken into account as part of professional responsibilities (cases A, C and D), the institutionalisation of co-operative relationships also seems to be important (cases A and B). In the best-case scenario, the support is mutual: it is not only gender equality actors who can promote gender studies but also gender equality policies that can profit from the knowledge produced about social issues oriented towards gender studies.

Furthermore, in the case studies *rectorates and deans* are also identified as contributing to the promotion of gender studies (cases A, B and C). In all the cases, the goodwill, interest, and engagement of university and faculty leaders are identified as helping promote gender studies. Faculties and their leaders can also function as co-operation partners.

Finally, some interviewees highlight the role of support for gender studies in universities through responsible *federal state ministries*. In two universities their influence was important for the creation and continuation of organisational structures for gender studies (cases B and D).

In two universities, interviewees furthermore emphasised that *external (federal) funds* for gender studies had been instrumental in the support for gender studies (cases A and B). Hence gender studies is locally reevaluated through third-party funding. This points to the general significance of external research funding in the conditions of the new academic governance.

Conversely, the case studies also reveal the conditions and actors that to some extent delay and hinder the development of gender studies at universities, and the conflicting interests and competition that affect this academic area as well as the degradation it suffers from.

Almost all the case studies illustrate that gender studies is involved in *in-house conflicting interests* and in a *competition* for professorships or other identified resources (cases A and C), both between gender studies scholars (cases D and E) and between gender studies scholars and scholars from other disciplines. When this occurs, resistance to the development of gender studies emerges and develops centrally over the distribution of resources (cases A and D), or the insufficient provision of resources to develop this academic field is identified as the overriding problem (cases C and D). Furthermore, the interviews show that conflicts occur between the leaders which have the effect of hindering the development of gender studies (case D).

“And I think the reason lies in the fact that it was not only the proportion of women, or that we eventually needed a professorship for gender studies in the (social scientific) discipline, but what is eventually at stake is the question of disciplinary identities. [...] That is something where I recognise clearly where the borders are.”  
(Gender equality/case A)

Resistance to gender studies is mainly exercised through the *degradation of this academic research field*. On the one hand, the legitimacy of gender studies is called into question. In these cases, gender studies is, among other things, deemed ideological, non-academic or old-fashioned (cases D and E). On the other hand, in certain disciplinary contexts the academic relevance of gender studies is denied (cases A and B).

“I would say that it is still a research field which is situated in politically contentious terrain, where in certain academic fields it still has to struggle for academic legitimacy

and to produce a legitimate and socially necessary research orientation and research focus. It is not self-evident. Not at all.” (Research/case A)

“We were very alone. This means that we were confronted with the wind blowing into our faces from different directions. They found us ridiculous and useless, and a lot of people were against funding us.” (Research and gender equality/case D)

It is evident from the interviews that the main actors in this resistance are not only professors from fields other than gender studies (cases A, C, D and E) but also the rectorates and deans’ offices (cases D and E). That means that resistance mainly comes from academic peers.

These results make clear how and to what extent the promotion of gender studies in the universities depends on personal support from academic leaders, not only the rectorate and the deans but also peers. If they are in favour of gender studies the development of the field is supported; if they are not in favour of gender studies the field suffers from problems in its development.

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## **7 Gender Equality (Policies) as a Frame for Promoting Gender Studies**

A closer look at the case studies shows that in all five universities analysed, gender studies is not mentioned as a field of knowledge that needs to be supported as such but is primarily rhetorically positioned within the context of gender equality policies. In all the documents having to do with university development that were analysed, the expansion of gender studies is seen as one way of putting gender equality into action, meaning as part of political – not academic – activities demanded by the state. To give some examples: gender studies are presented as proof of the university’s orientation towards gender equality (case D) or as an option to analyse gender equality measures (cases A, C and D). With the expansion of gender studies, the universities want to promote the next generation of female academics (cases B, D and E) and strengthen the proportion of female professors (cases B and E). The documents present a form of organisational governance concerning gender studies that is not primarily aimed at implementing a new discipline (in all its breadth and depth), but rather at fulfilling the legal requirement to implement a gender equality mission. Gender equality (politics) therefore is a must-have in academia, even if it is not recognised by the universities, and gender studies seems to be a possible instrument with which to reach this aim. However, there are no

hints in the documents that gender studies is necessary in the academic production of knowledge as such.

The interviews draw a similar picture in which gender studies and the extension of gender equality policies are also strongly linked. At one university, the interviewees argue that their strong orientation towards gender equality promotes the organisational extension of gender studies and that both areas co-operate in a productive manner in order to push for organisational change (case A). At another university, problems with the implementation of gender equality were deemed to be linked to an atmosphere that is characterised as hindering the development of gender studies (case E). And at a third university, the existence of gender studies is mentioned as being proof of the university's orientation towards gender equality, which is otherwise comparatively weak (case D).

In every group of interviewees at the universities a strong association was made between gender equality policies and gender studies:

“I believe that also the structures of discriminating women and gender studies are quite similar. [...] And I also believe [...] that gender equality policies very strongly need gender studies.” (Gender equality/case A)

Gender equality policies and gender studies are not equated with each other within the organisations analysed. Both seem to need each other. However, in some universities there is a competition between gender studies and gender equality policies over resources which are generally given to gender-related measures, regardless of whether they are aimed at gender equality in the sense of promoting women, or whether they are designed to promote gender-related research (and/or teaching).

In all case studies, a strong link between gender studies and gender equality policies is prevalent: a strong anchoring of gender equality in the documents and the social practice of university development goes hand in hand with adequate consideration of gender studies (cases A and B and partially also C). Gender equality policies and gender studies are strongest at those universities where co-operative relations between both areas have been institutionalised (cases A and B). On the contrary, if the university is not as well-positioned with respect to gender equality, the same also applies to gender studies, despite any existing institutionalisation measures (case D). However, moderately developed gender equality is not inevitably mirrored adequately by gender studies (case E). It is apparent from the case studies that gender studies is stronger in those universities with strong gender equality policies. If there are no strong gender equality policies, gender studies is also weak.

In all the cases analysed, actors in the field of gender equality play a fundamental role in the support of gender studies in university development processes. In some

universities, these actors emphasise that they see the promotion of gender studies as part of their professional responsibilities (cases A, C and D), meaning as an element of gender equality policies. And, vice versa, the development and implementation of gender equality policies can also profit from gender studies, because gender studies fulfils important academic functions for gender equality policies and work. Gender studies provides academic knowledge for gender equality programmes and measures and develops the methodological equipment for planning and implementing gender equality projects. Gender studies also documents and evaluates the results of gender equality measures. Gender studies' methods and results make the professionalisation of gender equality efforts possible, which is one reason why the interviewees evaluate gender studies as indispensable to the development of gender equality work.

At the same time, the significance of gender studies for gender equality policies and work does not advance the academic acceptance of gender studies in universities. On the contrary, it prompts its marginalisation and degradation as not being an academic (enough) field. The interviewees working in the field of gender studies in particular are often confronted with the degradation of their research, a general suspicion about their being ideological, and antifeminist objections. It is as though being female, which is still not as much a matter of course as being male (in academia), and also working in the field of gender studies is (still?) too much for the German university and research landscape. Additionally, the gender studies scholars interviewed reject the one-sided reduction of their research to the production of knowledge for gender equality policies and work and point to the variety of their research topics, which are not always linked to (in)equality issues. Only in a few cases, especially within the social science field of gender studies, does gender studies directly serve gender-equality-related knowledge.

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## 8 Discussion and Conclusions

The case studies demonstrate that gender studies plays a part in university development processes even though not necessarily in the organisational units or with the organisational significance that its protagonists envision. How successful gender studies is in these games depends essentially on its involvement in the necessary power networks, including the connected support of powerful actors, for example from the rectorates, the deans' offices and/or from professorial colleagues from other fields, who provide – or refuse to provide – material resources (positions, money, rooms) and non-material resources (academic appreciation) for the development

of gender studies. Linking the promotion of gender studies with gender equality targets appears to be a strategic instrument with which to add authority to the demand of considering gender studies in university development processes and the associated in-house allocation struggles. In this way, legal specifications for gender equality can be used as an influential and externally justified instrument of power. Thus, it is not surprising that in all the universities analysed gender studies is, according to the university development documents, taken into account, mostly in connection with the (voluntary) commitment of research institutions to gender equality and the legal duty to do so.

However, the integration of gender studies, for example in target agreements, university development plans and gender equality concepts, is no guarantee for its *de facto* significance for university development processes. Therefore, remarkable discrepancies exist between the intentions declared in the documents to promote gender studies and the actual realisation of these intentions on different organisational levels, especially within faculties. Generally, it is not necessarily possible to conclude from targets and measures of university development anything about the practice within an organisation (cf. Krücken 2008; Ridder 2009). With regard to the integration of gender studies in university development, the analyses show that for the successful translation into organisational practice the consideration of gender studies must be called for continuously. In promising cases, the highlighting of this need is institutionalised and executed by organisational units. The discrepancy between the results of the document analyses and the statements of the interviewees also proves that the anchoring of gender studies in the documents of university development must be coupled with equivalent practices in the organisational management, for example, through their integration into governance instruments and combination with systems of incentives and sanctions.

In all the universities analysed, gender studies' paths into and through the university and the strengthening of gender studies within the organisation is channelled and supported by gender equality (work). Gender equality actors or co-operation between activists from gender equality (work) and the field of gender studies and to some extent also co-operation with the research ministries of the federal states prove to be conducive to the development of local gender studies. The case studies show that, with regard to institutionalising efforts, this is advantageous because gender studies can profit from the legal duty of universities and federal ministries to produce and enforce gender equality and justice (cf. Kahlert 2008). However, this link is rather counterproductive for the recognition of gender studies as a respected academic field: the societal relevance that is ascribed to gender studies because of its contribution to gender equality (cf. Kraus 2010) and its politically necessary

strategic closeness either hinders the academic recognition of gender studies or contributes to disqualifying it as non-academic.

Furthermore, the academic degradation of gender studies is a consequence of increasing competition for resources and reputation between academic areas in the conditions of the new governance (cf. Ferlie et al. 2009). In the conditions of increasing competition between disciplinary areas, gender studies is forced to participate in allocation struggles (cf. Hark 2013). The case studies prove that within the framework of the new academic governance, gender studies activists directly negotiate with rectorates and faculty leaders and thereby (are forced to) use an economic logic and economic arguments. In doing so, gender studies can be strategically successful if it contributes to the profile of the university and is advantageous to it within the context of competition with other universities (cf. Kahlert 2007). In the conditions of the new academic governance, this requires large-scale and publicly visible research activities, for which gender studies is not well prepared owing to its disciplinary status and disciplinary orientation. Gender studies' isolated forms of institutionalisation, its unclear disciplinary status and the small size of the field prove to be rather counterproductive insofar as it is unable to build alliances with other disciplines, institutions, and/or actors.

Finally, the results of the case studies show that the frequently posed question in existing research literature about whether new possibilities for a stronger anchoring of gender studies can be opened up through organisational transformations in universities (cf. Becker et al. 2006; Pache 2004) cannot unequivocally be answered. The analyses rather suggest that this depends on the conditions that shape the implementation of local university reforms. The processes of transformation that are occurring with the new academic governance are reflected differently in universities. On the one hand, context-related spaces can open up, but on the other hand, exclusions can also take place. These developments also, but not exclusively, concern the field of gender studies.

However, in all the cases analysed external financial support has been and is supportive for gender studies. If gender studies scholars succeed in receiving third-party funding, primarily for larger research projects and/or networks, and thereby are promoting the profile of their university and its visibility in the public, gender studies is strategically accepted and institutionally welcomed. However, that does not generally mean that the support for gender studies continues when the third-party funding is over. In this regard, gender studies shares the same fate as other disciplines, primarily in the social sciences and the humanities which are also pressured by the conditions of the new academic governance to legitimise their direct usability and utilisation. However, gender studies is different from these disciplines because of its partly implicit and partly unwelcome connection

with gender equality policies. With regard to the political pressure that, at least in the German academic system, impacts universities and research and calls for the enforcement of gender equality, it can be stated that the interconnection with gender equality described herein proves to be a strategic advantage that protects gender studies in the conditions of the new academic governance and not only enables it to survive, but also to develop.

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