The Institutionalisation of Gender Studies and the New Academic Governance: Longstanding Patterns and Emerging Paradoxes

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Abstract

For several decades, feminist scholars have been producing detailed macro- and micro-level studies of processes of institutionalisation of women's, gender and feminist studies (WGFS). Through that research, they have generated valuable knowledge about the patterns and profiles of WGFS' institutionalisation, and the actors and factors that shape it. In this article, I review that literature and systematise some of its key findings. I then draw on an ethnography 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. I identify some of those transformations and highlight the paradoxes that they generate for the institutionalisation of WGFS. I conclude by arguing that an analysis of gender studies in times of new academic governance must consider both the 'new' aspects of that governance and the 'old' inequalities that it covertly reproduces.

1   Gender Studies in Contemporary Universities

The fact that you are currently holding this book in your hands, or maybe reading it on a screen, is telling. It says something very significant not just about your own (evidently excellent!) taste, but also about contemporary academia more broadly. The impetus to produce this book emerged from a large research project, supported by research council funding and undertaken by a team of gender experts. I received the call for submissions for this book through the mailing list of an international network of academics in women's, gender and feminist studies (WGFS),[1] where I represent my own institution's WGFS research centre and have met colleagues working in WGFS departments around the world. Some of the articles contained here were first presented at WGFS conferences, and the book is being published by an academic publisher with an established gender catalogue. It will no doubt be reviewed (hopefully favourably) in WGFS journals, and it will be shelved in many university libraries alongside other WGFS books, maybe in a section devoted exclusively to WGFS. At some point in the future, sections from the book might be set as recommended reading for undergraduate and postgraduate students taking WGFS courses in other disciplines or enrolled in WGFS degree programmes. You might be one of those students yourself.

Reflecting on the life of this particular book, and the concrete conditions of its production, highlights how institutionalised WGFS currently is as an academic field of teaching, learning and research. WGFS has grown immensely in recent decades; it now has space in buildings and on library shelves, and is represented by professorships and scholarships, specialist degrees and courses, dedicated conferences and publications, physical and online networks, and professional associations. Therefore, WGFS can be described as becoming in the past decades gradually, though not linearly, institutionalised in two distinct but related senses. Firstly, a more or less large and stable space for it has been, and is being, created or extended within many existing institutions, such as the traditional disciplines and the organisations – universities and research centres – where academic work is carried out. Secondly, WGFS has also become an academic institution in itself, one which is more or less (inter)disciplinary (Lykke 2004) and autonomous, and which has its own structures of creation and validation of knowledge and its canonical but

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1   Choices about the naming of the field are diverse, complex and contested; play out differently across national contexts; and are shaped by a range of (theoretical, institutional and political) considerations (Hemmings 2006a; Pereira 2017). While I want to acknowledge the importance of these debates, I cannot engage in depth with issues of naming here, and thus use this umbrella term to refer to the field.

contested narratives about what its objects, boundaries, aims and histories are, or should be (Hemmings 2006a, 2011; Pereira 2013b). In other words, we might say that WGFS has gradually become formalised (at many levels: epistemic, organisational, professional, etc.) *as part of* academic structures, and *as an* academic structure, of production, certification and circulation of knowledge.[2]

And yet, this institutionalisation is extremely uneven and context-specific (Braidotti 2000; Griffin 2005a). WGFS is most certainly not institutionalised everywhere; the spaces and resources I identify above are not available at present to WGFS scholars in many countries and contexts. Personally, I can only take advantage of some of those resources myself because I left my country of origin and moved abroad, much like hundreds of other 'educational migrants' who every year travel elsewhere in search of WGFS degrees or jobs (Juhász et al. 2005), though many are increasingly finding their opportunities curtailed by racist migration-control policies and institutional cultures (Gutiérrez-Rodríguez 2016). Processes of institutionalisation of WGFS are not just uneven; they are also complex, unpredictable, shifting and rarely linear. This means that to fully understand the state and status of gender research in times of new academic governance, we must consider the dynamics of the institutionalisation of the field and the ways in which these have changed over time.

But making sense of the dynamics of the institutionalisation of WGFS is not easy. WGFS' institutionalisation, with its diverse local configurations, paces and effects, has been described and debated extensively and in an overwhelming number of publications; it is a body of "literature [which] has […] expanded beyond one individual's capacity to encompass" (Boxer 1998, p. xvii). This is partly because of the sheer number of publications on the topic and the range of languages in which they are written; it is also because this is an especially complex and heterogeneous body of literature. The tone varies significantly: some texts are more conventionally scholarly research pieces published in peer-reviewed journals or books, many are written in a format more similar to a policy or briefing paper, and others are published outside or "between the lines" (Fernandes 2008, p. 89)[3] of habitual academic outlets, as polemics, interchanges or manifestos.

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2   The definition of *institutionalisation* that I use here – and which is inspired by Chen (2004, p. 5) – is not consensual within WGFS. Some authors prefer a narrower definition, where 'institutionalisation' refers specifically to the incorporation of WGFS in academic institutions and is distinguished from 'disciplinisation', understood as the constitution of WGFS as a discipline (Widerberg 2006).

3   All translations into English are made by the author.

This article uses that established and diverse literature about the origins and history of the institutionalisation of WGFS as a starting point to reflect on the situation of WGFS in contemporary times of a new academic governance. I hope to contribute to laying the groundwork for this book's discussion of the relationship between gender research and the new academic governance by discussing how that new governance has affected the longstanding patterns of institutionalisation of WGFS described in the literature. I begin the article by reviewing the literature on the institutionalisation of WGFS, and briefly systematising some of its key findings about the patterns of that institutionalisation. I will then use findings from an ethnographic study of academia in Portugal (Pereira 2012, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017) to show that recent changes in academic governance have in some instances transformed those patterns of institutionalisation. I will demonstrate that those transformations have, in several ways, been paradoxical and thus argue that, when thinking about WGFS, we must understand the transition to the new academic governance as a process characterised both by change and by continuity.

2   The Institutionalisation of Gender Studies: Macro- and Micro-Level Patterns

Since the emergence of WGFS, many authors have produced detailed, located accounts of processes of institutionalisation. Their aim is usually to identify how those processes have been shaped by different actors and factors. Many of these studies also have a second aim: they seek to compare and contrast the institutionalisation of WGFS in different contexts. Studies of institutionalisation are usually based on prolonged and in-depth empirical research, with collection of quantitative and qualitative data through surveys, interviews, archival research, and analysis of personal and organisational documents.

Some of this work is *macro-level* research which takes large regions or countries as its unit of analysis and focuses on broad political, economic, or educational structures and trends. It shows that the forms and pace of the institutionalisation of WGFS in a given location are shaped by a complex combination of several macro-level factors. This research has demonstrated, for example, that the structure of higher education in a given region has a significant impact on the possibilities for institutionalisation: creation of WGFS courses and degrees has generally been faster and more extensive in countries where there is a high degree of university autonomy in developing curricula, flexible and modular degree structures, and state support for the creation of lectureships or chairs in WGFS (Barazzetti and Leone

2003; Bird 2001; Braidotti et al. 1995, 1998; Griffin 2005a; Silius 2002; Zimmermann 2007). The configuration of academic communities also affects the opportunities of, and preferred strategies for, institutionalisation: in contexts where academia is more rigidly disciplinary, there is usually less support for WGFS and the field tends to be formalised as part of existing disciplines rather than as an autonomous field/department (Barazzetti and Leone 2003; Griffin 2002; Hirsch and Widerberg 2005; Magalhães 2001; Üşür 2006).

Another important factor is availability of funding. Access to financial support from governments, private funders, non-governmental organisations or intergovernmental bodies (such as the European Commission[4] or the United Nations) may facilitate the founding of WGFS degrees, centres, journals or international networks (Barazzetti and Leone 2003; Desai et al. 2002; Ferreira 2000; Góngora 2002; Jain and Rajput 2002; Pinto 2008; Silius 2002; Stratigaki 2001; Tavares da Silva 1999; Zimmermann 2007). Pavlidou (2006, p. 179) explains that after several years of ministerial rejections of applications to create new postgraduate degrees in WGFS, "the Greek state had to change its tune. This was neither accidental nor an act of enlightenment, but a direct consequence of the EU directive that 10 % of the education budget […] had to be spent on measures promoting 'Gender and Equality'".

An additional factor encouraging or hindering the institutionalisation of WGFS is student demand for courses and degrees in WGFS, which is in turn shaped by a range of factors, such as the relationship between universities and the job market, the degree to which students with different profiles (including mature, part-time students) have access to higher education, and popular representations about the extent to which gender equality has been achieved and is still a relevant issue (Bird 2001; Duchen and Zmroczek 2001; Griffin and Hanmer 2002; Silius 2005; Skeggs 1995).

Political context has also been described as playing a decisive role. Research shows that institutionalisation tends to be stronger and more supported where and when the state considers the promotion of gender equality a key area of intervention (Griffin 2002, 2005b; Holm 2001; Le Feuvre 2000). Conservative and authoritarian regimes are particularly unsupportive of, and sometimes hostile to, research and education in WGFS, and therefore the fall of such regimes can pave the way for the expansion of the field (Amâncio 2003; Borderias 2002; Braidotti et al. 1995; Chen 2004; Góngora 2002; Griffin 2005a; Joaquim 2001; Nikolchina 2006; Petö 2000; Santos 2009). Another element of the political context which has had a significant

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4   For discussions of the impacts of European Commission support on the establishment and strengthening of a specifically *European* WGFS community, see Braidotti (2000), Hanmer (2000), Hemmings (2008) and Lykke (2005).

impact on the institutionalisation of WGFS is the strength and structure of feminist movements and the degree to which they were/are supportive of the development of feminist education and research in academia (Amâncio 2003; Barazzetti and Leone 2003; Chen 2004; Gerhard 2002; Griffin 2005a; Lafuente 2002; Silius 2002; Šribar 2002; Tavares 2011; Zmroczek and Duchen 1991).

Other studies focus on the *micro-level* dimensions of the institutionalisation of WGFS. Rather than describe general trends in a country or region, they consider specific WGFS centres, degrees, journals or associations, charting their creation, expansion or closure. This research makes a crucial contribution by highlighting how processes of institutionalisation have demanded intense individual and organisational struggle. It also provides important insight into the ways in which the structural factors described above are negotiated at the micro levels of organisational change and daily practices of teaching and research. These studies demonstrate that institutionalisation initiatives are more effective when spearheaded by academics who have access to valued academic resources and spaces (i.e. hold tenured positions, are members of academic committees, are seen as authorities in their fields, or have powerful allies and supportive national/international networks) and can deploy those resources to bolster the credibility of their attempts to institutionalise WGFS (Armitage and Pedwell 2005; Duhaček 2004; Gumport 2002; Jain and Rajput 2002; Magalhães 2001; McMartin 1993; Pereira 2017; Westkott 2003). These texts also show that academics use a range of strategies to produce space for WGFS in unreceptive or hostile institutional contexts, such as teaching feminist content in courses with neutral or inconspicuous titles (Barazzetti et al. 2002; Chen 2004; Coate 1999, 2000; Vieira 2007).

Attempts have been made to use the findings of these macro- and micro-level studies to identify general patterns in the effects of different (f)actors in the institutionalisation of WGFS, and then draw on those trends to define typologies of institutionalisation profiles which might allow for institutional, geographical and historical comparison (Barazzetti and Michel 2000; Griffin 2002, 2005a; Michel 2001; Silius 2002). The ability to compare degrees and forms of institutionalisation has been described as instrumental, not just as an analytical tool to enrich understanding of these processes, but also as a political tool which can be used to justify and strengthen demands for increased national and supranational support to WGFS (Braidotti 2000; Gerhard 2002). Indeed, the explicit aim of several of the first and biggest studies of institutionalisation – especially the large-scale comparative European studies like *SIGMA* (Braidotti et al. 1995), *GRACE* (Zmroczek and Duchen 1991), the *Employment and Women's Studies* project (Griffin 2005b; Silius 2002) or the 'work-in-progress reports' published in the series *The Making of European Women's Studies*, edited by ATHENA (Braidotti and Vonk 2000) – was to demonstrate the

global disparities in the field's development and to assert the need for international support mechanisms that would counteract the particular obstacles found locally and nationally (Braidotti 2000; Hanmer 2000). This points to what I would argue is an important feature of the literature on institutionalisation: the aim of many of these texts is not just to describe or analyse processes of institutionalisation, but also to more or less directly intervene in and advance those processes. Many of these texts are agents of that institutionalisation, and in that sense this literature can be seen as partly *constitutive* of the phenomena it is examining.

Researchers have, however, reported facing many challenges when conducting comparative studies (Barazzetti and Michel 2000; Bird 1996; Griffin 2005a; Hanmer 2005, 2006; Lykke 2000; Lykke et al. 2001; Michel 2001). This has led Donatella Barazzetti and Mariagrazia Leone (2003) to describe comparison as one of the biggest theoretical and methodological problems in the study of the institutionalisation of WGFS. Comparing cases is difficult because processes of institutionalisation are influenced by many factors, which interact with each other in diverse, context-specific and often unpredictable ways: it has been noted that similar conditions and strategies of institutionalisation sometimes lead to different results in distinct contexts (Barazzetti and Leone 2003; Bird 1996; Griffin 2005a). Moreover, even within the same country, there is usually some unevenness across institutions, levels of education or disciplines. In the UK, for instance, demand for undergraduate WGFS degree programmes dropped during the 2000s (Griffin 2009; Marchbank and Letherby 2006; Oxford 2008). At the same time, however, many postgraduate degree programmes reported stable or increasing intakes (Griffin and Hanmer 2002; Hemmings 2006a, 2006b, 2008), namely due to the inflow of 'educational migrants'[5] mentioned earlier in this article.

Comparing levels and models of institutionalisation of WGFS is challenging also because there is no agreement in WGFS about what constitutes an ideal or successful institutionalisation. This means that a particular institutionalisation profile may be assessed very differently, "according to which threads one traces and who is speaking" (Hemmings 2010, p. 1). An exchange published in the *European Journal of Women's Studies* provides a compelling illustration of this. It was triggered by an article by Veronica Pravadelli (2010b) in which she discusses contemporary WGFS in Italy and describes the field as not yet institutionalised. In a scathing response, Chiara Saraceno (2010, p. 269) argues that Italian WGFS is not characterised by a "lack of institutionalization" but rather a "different kind of institutionalization"

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5   This provides a valuable illustration of the fact that national trends can often only be adequately understood if one considers how they are positioned vis-à-vis other national contexts and transnational flows of people and knowledge.

and accuses Pravadelli of having an (Anglo-American-inspired) conception of institutionalisation which does not allow her to "'see' and assess the different forms of institutionalization which have been developed" in Italy (2010, p. 270). Saraceno then lists examples of those "different forms" (including the existence of a PhD programme in WGFS). However, in her own response Pravadelli (2010a) disputes the claim that those examples constitute evidence of institutionalisation, and argues that they can be interpreted as indicating precisely the opposite: that WGFS is marginal. (For example, the WGFS PhD programme does exist, but none of its graduates have yet been able to secure an academic job.) Pravadelli ends by noting that her own and Saraceno's views on the institutionalisation of Italian WGFS are shaped by their different generational locations, academic trajectories and positions within professional hierarchies. Indeed, I would argue that because our perception of institutionalisation is, to some extent, necessarily situated and personal, accounts of institutionalisation are always disparate[6] and potentially contested.

As I demonstrate elsewhere in much more detail (Pereira 2017), a key dimension of the institutionalisation of WGFS is what I have called the field's *epistemic status*, i. e. the *degree to which, and terms in which, WGFS scholarship is recognised as fulfilling the requisite criteria to be considered credible and relevant knowledge, however those criteria are defined in specific spaces, communities and moments.* References to the epistemic status of WGFS appear very frequently in the literature on institutionalisation, although not in those terms. Be it under the labels of the "value of feminist knowledge" (Coate 1999, p. 142), its "prestige" (Lykke 2000, p. 79), "scientific status" (Varikas 2006, p. 160), "intellectual credibility" (Messer-Davidow 2002, p. 157), "academic significan[ce] or acceptab[ility]" (Evans 1997, p. 59), "scientific legitimacy" (Mayorga 2002, p. 28) or "academic respectability" (Brunt et al. 1983, p. 285), numerous texts written at very different points in time and about distinct contexts allude to whether WGFS' ability to produce proper academic knowledge is recognised in that particular context. These allusions show that in many sites WGFS is sometimes or often described and dismissed as scholarship that is inferior, less relevant and/or not entirely credible.[7] Claims about the epistemic inferiority or inadequacy of WGFS are made in many formal and informal settings, and in some contexts this dismissal has been so virulent (Suleri 1992), frequent and intense that it constitutes a form of intellectual harassment, as Kolodny (1996) designates it. As a result, the field is sometimes positioned "toward the bottom of the hierarchy of regard and status of academic disciplines" (Price and Owen

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6   I am using the term both in the sense of "different; dissimilar" and of difficult "or impossible to compare" (Oxford English Dictionary 2016, no pagination).

7   For a detailed review of this aspect of the literature, see Pereira (2017).

1998, p. 185), and WGFS scholars may be more or less openly dismissed as "not academically qualified" (Chen 2004, p. 245). This can have a detrimental impact on WGFS scholars' and students' self-confidence, grades or career progression, and their access to funding and publishing opportunities (Corrin 1997; Griffin 2005a; Griffin and Hanmer 2005; Marchbank and Letherby 2006; Morley 1998; Packer 1995; Seller 1997; Silius 2005; Worell 1994).

However, the epistemic status of the field is not static and may change as institutionalisation unfolds, with several academic and non-academic actors and institutions playing a more or less direct and decisive role (Chen 2004; Messer-Davidow 2002; Pereira 2017). Due to all of the above, considerations about epistemic status take centre stage when WGFS scholars make located decisions about strategies of institutionalisation or formulate more general arguments about which strategies may be best. WGFS scholars often do not agree on this and have ongoing debates about the extent to which profiles of institutionalisation of WGFS allow for the production of proper WGFS knowledge (Hemmings 2006a). Therefore, negotiations of epistemic status should be seen not only as struggles that WGFS scholars engage in as they try to create spaces for WGFS in sometimes inhospitable academic landscapes, but also as internal contestations that are a central and generative dimension of the constitution and institutionalisation of the field itself (Pereira 2017; Stanley 1997).

3 The New Academic Governance and the Changing Status of Gender Research

The literature which I have reviewed above provides important insight into the macro- and micro-level patterns of institutionalisation of WGFS, and how they are affected by a range of different actors and factors – academic, political, institutional and personal, among others. However, the established patterns described in that literature are, to some extent, being transformed by the broader changes that have occurred in academic governance in many Western countries in the past two decades.

In many contexts, new models of governance of science have changed assessments of what constitutes 'proper' and 'valuable' scholarship (Burrows 2012; Butterwick and Dawson 2005; Gibbons et al. 1994; Mirowski and Sent 2008; Morley 2003; Santos Pereira 2004). In these models of scientific governance, academic activity is reconceptualised as work which must aim to achieve the highest possible levels of productivity and profitability, and whose quality can be assessed on the basis of the number of products produced (whether these be articles, patents or successful

– or satisfied – students) and income generated (Burrows 2012; Leathwood and Read 2013; Lund 2012; Morley 2003; Shore 2010; Sifaki 2016; Strathern 2000). This orientation towards the maximisation, monetisation and internationalisation of outputs is buttressed by regular auditing and monitoring of individual and collective productivity, using complex technologies of metricisation and ranking. This auditing then serves as the basis for the allocation of (in many contexts, decreasing) public funding for research and higher education (Ball 2000; Buikema and van der Tuin 2013; Burrows 2012; Leathwood and Read 2013; Pereira 2016, 2017; Shore 2010; Sifaki 2016).

In this environment, specific factors – particularly the level of productivity and profitability of WGFS scholarship – are playing an increasingly central role in determining the space and status granted to WGFS (Buikema and van der Tuin 2013; Hark 2016; Sifaki 2016; Skeggs 2008). This means that new models of academic governance are reshaping the longstanding patterns of institutionalisation of WGFS which I described above.

In my own research, I have been studying precisely those changes and their effects. I have explored them in an ethnography which examines how the status of WGFS is negotiated in everyday work, decision-making and sociability in academia. In other words, it analyses how scholars demarcate the boundaries of what counts as 'proper' knowledge, how WGFS scholars and scholarship get positioned in relation to those boundaries, and how all this has been transformed as new models of academic governance become institutionalised. To conduct this study, I articulated feminist epistemology (particularly the work of Lorraine Code 1991, 1995), feminist analyses of academic work (such as Amâncio 2005; Bellacasa 2001; Butterwick and Dawson 2005; Evans 2004; Gill 2010; Messer-Davidow 2002; Morley 1995, 1998; Strathern 2000), research in science and technology studies (Amsler 2007; Gieryn 1999), and Michel Foucault's discussions of *epistemes* (2003). The ethnography focused on Portuguese academia as a case study, drawing on full-time fieldwork over one year in 2008–2009. This included 36 interviews with academics, students and representatives of funding bodies; visits to institutions and archival research; and participant observation in over 50 academic events, including conferences, undergraduate and postgraduate teaching, meetings of associations and conference organising committees, PhD vivas, and book/journal launches. That primary fieldwork was supported by a second round of interviews with 12 of the original interviewees in 2015–2016. This has been supplemented by

ad hoc observation of daily academic practice in UK (2006–2016), Sweden (2011) and Portugal (2006–2016).[8]

Through this ethnographic study, I found that the epistemic status of WGFS in Portugal is being significantly transformed by the institutionalisation of the new models of academic governance described above. Elsewhere, I analyse in detail how these changes play out in Portugal (Pereira 2012, 2015, 2016, 2017), so here I will provide only a brief summary of those findings and identify some of the questions that those specific findings raise for our broader debates about the relationship between gender research and the new academic governance.

According to the WGFS scholars I interviewed, until the early 2000s the dismissal and repudiation of gender studies and gender research in Portuguese academia was pervasive, public, intense, and sometimes verbally or institutionally violent. In the interviews, many senior WGFS scholars described their early work as leading to 'traumatic' PhD vivas, stalled careers and 'silent treatments' or denigration from colleagues. The situation changed in the 21st century. From 2000 onwards, successive centre-right and centre-left governments in Portugal reduced funding for higher education institutions and pressured universities to expand and diversify their sources of income, namely by creating new postgraduate degrees as part of the restructurings associated with the Bologna Process (Cabrito 2004; Graça 2009). The increased orientation within Portuguese universities towards profitability as a central criterion in the planning and assessment of scientific and higher education initiatives (Santos Pereira 2004) both animated and constrained the development of WGFS, as has also been observed in other countries and periods (Hemmings 2006a; Holm 2001; Skeggs 1995). It led to heightened competition between WGFS scholars and eroded their working conditions, placing them under increased pressure to maintain high productivity. At the same time, however, it brought more space, opportunities and recognition for WGFS in many institutions. Because many Portuguese WGFS staff are high-performing, internationally well-networked scholars with a good track record of securing funding, and WGFS courses and degrees attracted some student interest, university administrations that had long been hostile to WGFS became – gradually (or sometimes suddenly) – more accepting of WGFS work and more supportive of feminist scholars. This recognition that WGFS had *financial* and *institutional* value (i. e. that it could yield profit at a time when institutions sorely needed it) seemed to dissuade many scholars from publicly questioning WGFS' *epistemic* value. Thus, there is in contemporary Portuguese

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8   For more information about the fieldwork, and a discussion of the challenges of conducting ethnographies of academia, see Pereira (2013a, 2017).

academia an increasing public recognition of the epistemic status and relevance of research on gender.

This climate of public recognition coexists, nevertheless, with a regular unofficial dismissal of WGFS scholarship and scholars (Pereira 2012, 2015). Claims that research about gender cannot count as 'proper' knowledge are frequently made informally and in a humorous way, creating what one interviewee called a "culture of teasing" around WGFS. In other words, affirmations that WGFS is less, or not at all, scientific are rarely heard in official discourse, but are still very present as a form of corridor talk, in Downey et al.'s (1997, p. 245) sense: they are "the unsaid, but frequently said anyway (though not to everyone)". Moreover, although gender research is considered potentially valuable, it tends to be framed in mainstream academic talk as valuable only in part, or only in certain circumstances or for very specific ends. This means that its broader contributions to the development of academic knowledge are not acknowledged, its influence is circumscribed and domesticated, and the distinctive expertise of WGFS scholars is not recognised (Pereira 2012, 2017). This unofficial culture of teasing and limited recognition of WGFS has significant and problematic effects. It means that even when WGFS is formally institutionalised as an equal field, WGFS scholars and scholarship may be perceived to lack scientificity and credibility, and hence be treated as inferior 'others' vis-à-vis supposedly more 'serious' scholars and more 'scientific' scholarship.

This means that the transformation of the institutionalisation of WGFS triggered by international changes in academic governance have not been straightforward. As Morley (1995, p. 180) argues, "The academy, like any other organization, is full of contradictions – structures are both fixed and volatile, enabling and constraining". This has certainly also been the case in relation to the situation of gender studies and gender research within the new academic governance. That situation is *paradoxical*, in at least two senses:

a. it is possible to identify trends both of continuity and of change; and
b. within the new academic governance, WGFS has in many contexts become undoubtedly more recognised at the institutional level and in official discourse. However, this institutional recognition often co-exists with the dismissing of the field at the epistemic level and in everyday corridor talk and unofficial discourse.

These paradoxes place the WGFS scholars I interviewed in a challenging and conflicted position. Recognition of the relevance of their work may be growing but it is conditional, because it is dependent on (over-)compliance with a productivist model of organisation and evaluation of academic work which clashes with key principles of WGFS and demands levels of competitive productivity that are detri-

mental for WGFS. They are detrimental because they compromise scholars' health and well-being, undermine their knowledge production (because they are forced to produce work at a speed and in formats that are not always those they consider the most fruitful), and erode collegiality within the field (because scholars have less time to read others' work and attend events, and because they have to more fiercely compete with each other for the students and opportunities available) (Gill 2010; Pereira 2016, 2017). As Hark (2016, p. 84) writes in her discussion of the place of WGFS in what she calls the "entrepreneurial university", "the paradoxical precondition for [feminist] dissent is participation" in "the academic 'game'" of productivity and audit. If WGFS scholars are "ideal functionaries" (Evans 2004, p. 73) – i. e. highly productive scholars frequently bringing in funding and regularly generating outputs, preferably in highly ranked international journals – they have a chance to create and sustain space for their critical scholarship in contemporary universities. However, in doing so they reproduce a system of academic governance which damages working conditions and makes it extremely difficult for WGFS scholars to care for themselves and others (Gill 2010; Gill and Donaghue 2016; Lynch 2010; Wånggren et al. 2017) and to maintain the time-intensive intra- and extra-academic social and political engagement often seen as a hallmark of WGFS (Pereira 2016, 2017).

4   Conclusion: 'New' Governance, 'Old' Hierarchies?

Recent transformations in academia are changing the state and status of WGFS, and it is crucial that we analyse and debate these new, or emerging, effects of the new academic governance. And yet, I would argue that we must be very careful in how we conceptualise and write about these new forms of governance. Yes, they are undoubtedly new… but what makes these trends of change especially challenging for gender studies and gender research is the fact that they are partly buttressed by elements of continuity. To adapt Evans' (1995, p. 83) words, "many tattered remnants remain" of the 'old' "monolithic patriarchy" within the 'new' governance of universities. In many Western countries, academic governance is currently driven by relatively new principles and managed in relatively new ways, but longstanding sexist hierarchies (as well as racist hierarchies and other forms of inequality) still affect scholars' official and unofficial assessments of others' work (Ahmed 2012; Husu 2011; Mählck 2013; Moss-Racusin et al. 2012; van den Brink 2010), and are regularly invoked in 'corridor talk'. As Kašić (2016, p. 130) argues, "the neoliberal trend [is] impregnated with the old-fashioned order of academic design

that counts on (neo)conservatism". The spectral – but unmistakeable – presence of these supposedly 'old' attitudes creates a constant threat of potential epistemic disqualification for scholars from traditionally marginalised fields, or scholars who are not male, white, middle-class or cisgender, for example. This means that being an "ideal functionary" (Evans 2004, p. 73) and complying with 'new' modes of governance becomes especially important, or even a *sine qua non* condition for the institutional survival of WGFS and its scholars.

This coexistence of change and continuity, of recognition and marginalisation of WGFS, is more than just a sign that academic communities are heterogeneous, or that some dimensions of university life change faster than others. That coexistence is a key mechanism of contemporary academic governance. It allows academic institutions to access some of the benefits that WGFS may yield – namely funds or research ratings, or the fact that it can work as an 'alibi' symbolising an institution's modernity and commitment to equality (Ahmed 2012; *ex aequo* Editorial Board 1999; Pereira 2014, 2017) – without always fully recognising the epistemic status of WGFS. Therefore, important as it may be (and I believe it is crucial!) to highlight the many fruitful openings that new models of the academic governance have created for WGFS, we must also recognise the ongoing closures that those new models reproduce, sometimes more covertly, and thus more challengingly. Important as it may be to recognise the very distinctive *new* elements of contemporary academic governance, we must not focus so fully on that 'newness' that we neglect the *continuing* structural inequalities (namely of gender, race, class, [dis]ability, or geopolitics) which produce systematic inequalities in academia and which create obstacles to the recognition, institutionalisation and development of gender research.

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