

Perspectives of gender studies in German speaking contexts

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Introduction

In this third round table, four researchers answer questions to assess the state of the art and future perspectives of gender studies in three German speaking contexts: Austria, Germany and German speaking Switzerland.

As for the previous round table (which involved French speaking contexts) the main criterion for the selection of these three regions was a linguistic one, since the rich German-language production, like the French-language one, still remains less known compared to production in English.

Amongst the different perspectives that the researchers have chosen to debate, some are similar to those that had emerged in previous round tables, namely the difficulties in keeping alive a research interest at a time when several historical figures of feminism are close to retirement. Other difficulties include consolidating teaching programmes

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which currently are often assigned to temporary teachers, challenges to collaboration with NGOs, non academic institutions and activists.

Other perspectives emerge with more strength than in previous round tables, in particular references to queer and post-colonial studies. They testify to difficulties and challenges gender studies face if they do not open up to new conceptualisations.

Finally, anti-gender criticism coming from conservative and catholic groups as well as from those with neoliberal ideological tendencies, which were mentioned by all the researchers, are signs of rapidly spreading attacks in several European countries. This points to the extent of these phenomena and the need for a coordinated response from researchers.

A topic that was not mentioned in previous round tables is the relation with STEM disciplines (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics). Two types of challenges emerge: those related to involving STEM disciplines in gender studies, and a more conceptual challenge that has recently emerged due to the new HORIZON 2020 EU programme, insisting on gender as a dimension to be taken into account in all new research projects financed at EU level. In Horizon 2020 gender is a cross-cutting issue and is mainstreamed in each part of the Work Programme, ensuring a more integrated approach to research and innovation[1]. In many texts present in the work programme, it is explicitly requested that applicants take into account women's as well as men's needs and behaviours. The Commission has chosen to suggest to future consortia the US-EU project Gendered Innovations (<http://genderedinnovations.eu>), to be considered as a reference for guidance to include gender issues. Concerns are raised in the round table about the lack of intersectional perspectives and the lack of challenges to the prevailing heteronormative gender model of the Gendered Innovations project. A risk of contradictory approaches to gender issues is foreseen.

Thanks to my experience in assessing, but also coordinating, EU-funded projects addressing gender issues, personally I fully share these concerns and I believe that, HORIZON 2020 being in its first year (the programme will run from 2014 to 2020), both challenges will surely develop further in the next few years providing for a lively debate.

1. What is the state of gender studies in your Country/Region - strengths and weaknesses?

Sigrid Schmitz (Austria) - The gender studies and gender research scene in Austria – in the academia as well as in non-academic fields – covers a broad spectrum of disciplinary and transdisciplinary scholars, research groups, and networks. Their strongest roots can be found in the social and historical sciences, and they also connect to cultural studies, arts and humanities. During the last decade, queer-feminist and postcolonial issues have gained more prominence, primarily coming from non-academic and activist networks, but with some growing connections to the academic institutionalized gender studies. However, there is still a gap when it comes to the interdisciplinary integration of gender studies within the STEM -disciplines³, although there are some groups of feminist scholars, associated with Science and Technology Studies, who work particularly on topics concerning processes of knowledge production and technical developments in the life and technological sciences and their bio-technopolitical impacts (whom I am part of). There is also a strong group working on gender medicine, situated at the Medical University of Vienna.

I listed these fields of gender studies/gender research (being aware that this list covers only a subjective sample) to highlight one point that is, in my view, important for the question of strengths and weaknesses of Austrian gender studies. There is not one definition or perspective of gender studies! Its diversity in theoretical positions, approaches, and research fields; its ranging from disciplinary anchorage to inter- and transdisciplinary debates is broad and I assess this inhomogeneity as the main strength of this field. Albeit, the accompanying “weakness” (I would prefer to name it the “challenge” of gender studies) is to connect these scholars and to come into dialogue without smoothing out their multiple standpoints.

In 2012 the *Gender Studies Association Austria*⁴ was founded, following similar initiatives in Germany and Switzerland. This association supports inter- and transdisciplinary exchange between gender researchers (in the above-mentioned broad

³ STEM is the abbreviation for Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics.

⁴ See <http://www.oeggf.at>

sense) across all interested disciplines and research areas. The further aim of the association is to foster the development and institutionalization of gender studies and to support junior scholars in these fields. The institutionalization of a formal association was an important step to strengthen gender studies in Austria, not only to promote sustainability (see point 2) of gender research and gender studies, but maybe even more to make this field of research more visible and acknowledgeable in current governmental policy on higher education (concerning funding and political decisions).

The gender studies association also seeks co-operation with non-academic institutions, NGOs and gender activists. It has to be stated, however, that the latter networking is only in an initial phase and only some groups practise research initiatives outreaching from academia to activism. Concerning gender studies and teaching, the curricular structures at universities also limit new forms of co-operation.

To date there are two main strategies aimed at institutionalizing *curricula of gender studies* at universities in Austria. First, the implementation of compulsory introductory course modules of gender studies across the whole scope of disciplines at some universities, aims to spread at least basic gender competencies. This strategy is applied, for example, at the University of Linz⁵ and has the strength to address all students (and the colleagues in Linz report that there is not as much refusal as had been suspected). However, this strategy can only offer a first approach to gender issues. Other universities, as for example the University of Vienna and the University of Innsbruck, have implemented BA and/or MA curricula of Gender Studies. In Vienna, the MA in Gender Studies is associated to the Faculty of Social Sciences, and it also offers a course spectrum including perspectives of cultural studies, legal gender studies, the humanities, and of feminist science technology studies. This second strategy can support students with a more profound knowledge of transdisciplinary gender issues, but it does only reach a particular set of students – mostly from social and cultural studies. Again there is a gap in addressing students from STEM disciplines. A variety or combinations of these strategies exist at different university sites in Austria. Both strategies have its pros and cons; a broad spectrum of curricular concepts can adapt to particular organisational structures of universities on the one side, but it also inducts

⁵ See <http://www.jku.at/ifg/content>

some problems when it comes to legitimize the institutionalization of “gender studies”. Austria’s university structure is still at a conservative stage, sticking to disciplinary concepts and to the association of studies to particular faculties. Trying to insist on the multiple perspectives and transdisciplinary principles of gender studies still often hinders its sustainable implementation within academic structures.

There is another main network initiative in Austria that encompasses mostly all academic sites. The „Plattform der Einrichtungen für Gleichstellung“ connects all academic institutions and units, e.g. the Coordination Centre for Women’s Studies, Gender Research and Equal Opportunities for Women at the University of Graz⁶, the Gender Studies Unit at the University of Innsbruck⁷, the Department of Womens’ and Gender Research [Institut für Frauen- und Geschlechterforschung] at the University of Linz, Gender Research Office [Referat Genderforschung] at the University of Vienna⁸, or the Gender Mainstreaming Unit at the Medical University of Vienna⁹ (amongst others). Most of these units are engaged in promoting gender equity at the universities and are also responsible for organizing the teaching curricula in gender studies at their sites. With bi-annual meetings and intensive debates the members of this platform constantly discuss the above mentioned strategies, their outcomes and challenges.

Paula-Irene Villa (Germany) - Gender Studies in Germany are in an ambiguous and ambivalent position. On the one hand, feminist perspectives, women’s and gender studies have been institutionalized rather successfully in certain contexts. The Social Sciences, especially sociology, history, and educational sciences are disciplines in which gender perspectives are by now mainstreamed and widely normalized. This, of course, is the result of decades of intense and enduring struggles for visibility and institutional presence by many courageous (feminist) colleagues. On the other hand, there are many disciplines and academic contexts in which gender – or feminist – perspectives are marginalized, ridiculed or simply excluded. Such is the case in e.g.

⁶ <http://koordination-gender.uni-graz.at>

⁷ <http://www.uibk.ac.at/leopoldine/gender-studies/>

⁸ See <http://gender.univie.ac.at/>

⁹ See <http://www.meduniwien.ac.at/homepage/content/organisation/dienstleistungseinrichtungen-und-stabstellen/gender-mainstreaming/>

philosophy, but also in many STEM areas. In such contexts, ‘gender studies’ are not considered a legitimate field of study, research, and knowledge, but rather as a means of policy or as politics itself.

Gender Studies in Germany are consolidated as a multi-disciplinary – some say, even trans- or post-disciplinary – context of research and debate. There are many centers for women’s and/or gender studies throughout the country (data overview here: <http://www.zefg.fuberlin.de/Datenbanken/index.html>), but most of them are rather poorly funded and in precarious institutional/organizational situations. In 2010, the German Gender Studies Association was founded (www.fg-gender.de) and has approx. 350 members from many fields and institutional contexts. Albeit the consensual acknowledgement regarding gender studies being at least multi-disciplinary, sociology and history have actually been the dominating disciplinary perspectives within the German context. This has historical reasons that are entangled with (pre- and post-War) German politics and academia, and resulted in a strong presence of (post-)Marxist, Critical Social Theory, structural perspectives in feminist / women’s studies. Alternative approaches within social science (such as constructivism or post-structuralism) and other disciplinary horizons, especially those from cultural studies, had to struggle rather strongly for visibility in ‘German’ gender studies. Thus, gender studies in literature, cultural studies, etc. have partly evolved at a slightly skeptical distance towards the field of gender studies. Many colleagues often choose not to label themselves ‘gender studies’ scholars, preferring the more prestigious labels of their disciplines.

Gender Studies in Germany have a long and ongoing troublesome, often heatedly debated relation with (feminist) activism. While, as in the entire world, gender studies developed from women’s studies, which were more or less closely linked to second wave feminism, the ties between activism and academia became increasingly weaker and controversial.

Currently, there are many different degrees of (non- or even anti-)activism in the German field of academic gender studies and this issue is repeatedly discussed in many formats. Reaching back to the 1970’s and since then, the German context is marked by intensive and very productive (feminist) research outside academia. In the 1970’s and 1980’s much research was carried out in women’s, feminist etc. centers, often including

strong criticism of academia as a hierarchically structured, sexist institution of dominance. Thus, gender studies in the German context still are impregnated with a slight skepticism towards the (in fact strongly hierarchical) academic system. This is even more so for East Germany, former GDR, where the relation between social movements / feminism, the State and academia was highly problematic.

This situation has specific strengths: Gender Studies in Germany have a strong sociological dimension, i.e. give much attention to the (intersectional) dynamics of equality and exclusion, poverty, labor, precarisation. The equally strong presence of historical perspectives keeps research open to the dimension of social change and to historical specificities. The ongoing controversies regarding political activism and regarding the status of academic institutionalization reveal much (self-)reflexivity and acknowledgement of actual ambivalences in the field. The weaknesses of the German situation are surely its lack of international visibility and its rather reluctant approach towards emerging 'new' postdisciplinary fields such as queer-, STS- or postcolonial studies. In a sense, gender studies in Germany tend to be somehow 'conservative' in an institutional and disciplinary sense.

Andrea Maihofer, Katrin Meyer (Switzerland) - In Switzerland, gender studies emerged as a separate research area only in the mid 1990s. Prior to this, in the 1980s and early 1990s, feminists inside and outside academia focused primarily on women's studies. In the meantime gender studies were established as a broad based research approach, especially at universities. This implies that gender studies now encompasses women's and men's studies as well as sex and gender (Geschlecht) and the (heterosexual) gender binary as research topics¹⁴. Today, programs in gender studies exist at almost all Swiss universities, with queer studies and post-colonial and/or transnational studies integrated into the program. Thus, we cannot diagnose any tensions between queer, postcolonial and feminist critical approaches in gender studies in Switzerland as it might be the case in Germany. Furthermore, gender studies are

¹⁴ Maihofer, Andrea (2004), Von der Frauen- zur Geschlechterforschung. Modischer Trend oder bedeutsamer Perspektivenwechsel? (überarbeitete und erweiterte Fassung). In: P. Döge/K. Kassner/G. Schambach (Hg.), Schaustelle Gender – Aktuelle Beiträge sozialwissenschaftlicher Geschlechterforschung, Bielefeld, S. 11-28.

being taught from an intersectional, multidimensional perspective¹⁵. Today's emphasis still remains on inter- and transdisciplinary approaches within the humanities and the social sciences, while the integration of perspectives from the natural sciences is coming about rather slowly and tentatively, despite the fact that it is an explicit aim of gender studies at some universities to integrate them.

The institutional recognition of gender studies (respectively woman's studies) in Switzerland began in the 1990s. This development was greatly assisted by the establishment of the feminist science association (Femwiss) and the Swiss Association of Gender Studies (SGGF), as well as by the active engagement of many individual academics and politicians. Beginning in the mid 1990s the first professorships and research cooperations were established, financed by the federal government. Indicators that serve to measure the state of gender studies in Switzerland are therefore the degree of institutional integration and stability of gender studies at universities and applied universities as well as the scientific promotion by the federal research funding organization, the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF).

At the moment (i.e. 2014) gender studies in Switzerland are being taught and researched in independent institutions and centers within the universities and also exist as an integral part of disciplinary study programs. The process of institutionalization has not proceeded in a linear fashion. From 2005, gender studies have been funded substantially by the federal government, which allowed the creation and expansion of gender studies institutions at the different universities. Especially in the French speaking part of Switzerland (Geneva, Lausanne) but also in Bern, Zurich, Basel and of late in St. Gallen permanent professorships for gender studies have been set up, centers established and study programs developed at all levels of study (BA, MA and/or PhD). In addition, gender studies have been sponsored by the federal government to be a formal part of specific research collaborations (national research projects from the SNSF).

¹⁵ For an assessment of gender studies in the early phase of its development in Switzerland see: Liebig, Brigitte; Dupuis, Monique; Ballmer-Cao, Than-Huyen; Maihofer, Andrea (Hg.): *Gender Studies in Ausbildung und Arbeitswelt. Das Beispiel Schweiz*, Zürich. Links: <https://www.gendercampus.ch/en>

This support and federal government funding helped create three core **strengths** within gender studies at Swiss universities:

The first strength is the high level of networking and cooperation between universities. Almost all universities are linked within the “Network Gender Studies Switzerland”. This network was created in 2002 by researchers and professors on their own initiative and funded by the state through collaborative projects of the Swiss university conference (SUC). All universities cooperating within the network coordinate their teaching and research profiles, set their main research emphases so that they complement and support one another and foster the exchange between the German speaking and the French speaking scientific cultures. To help in this effort an infrastructure has been set up that contains not only a central office for the coordination of gender studies but also, among other things, the electronic platform “Gender Campus” (www.gendercampus.ch/en) through which all courses taught in gender studies in Switzerland are linked within a common academic calendar. This cooperation is especially interesting in that it has not led to a standardization across universities; quite to the contrary, it has led to a diversification of research topics.

The second strength of gender studies in Switzerland is its PhD programs (Graduiertenkollegien). Gender studies were among the first fields of study in Switzerland to establish PhD programs and to promote completing a PhD within an interdisciplinary network. These programs offer peer mentoring, tracking, interdisciplinary supervision as well as soft skill workshops. Complementing these efforts, regular summer schools take place and an inter-university visiting professorship in gender studies has been created. Gender studies have established themselves as a pioneering example for this kind of interdisciplinary work and have remained in this role for years.

The third strength of Switzerland’s gender studies is its close relation to applied research and to research directed toward specific political questions. Alongside basic research, questions concerning sociology of work, family policy and gender mainstreaming have been and remain important research areas. This also manifests itself within the activities of the Swiss Association of Gender Studies. Ever since it was reactivated in 2012, the association has been committed to promoting a broad variety of

approaches within the field of gender studies, to fostering exchange between gender researchers within and outside university and to bringing together people from academic and activist backgrounds. Thus, unlike what Paula-Irene Villa observed in Germany, we cannot say that academic gender studies could be opposed to feminist activism in Switzerland.

Despite these successful results and core strengths, some of the weaknesses of Swiss gender studies have not been eliminated. These concern four areas:

The first weakness lies in the degree of institutionalization of gender studies at universities and applied universities, which is still low. The course selection on offer has so far been quite high within most universities, but the area covered is not very broad. Because the courses are taught by very few academic positions, they are accordingly fragile. Additionally, much of what has been achieved so far can only persist thanks to federal governmental aid. Individual universities have not yet integrated the costs into their main operating budgets.

Secondly, gender studies have shown themselves to be insufficiently embedded in curricula across disciplines. Unlike Germany, in Switzerland there has not yet been any initiative to integrate gender studies into the curricula of all disciplines and to make gender studies a key feature of what is considered a quality education. On the one hand, there is a lack of financial resources to create positions in charge of preparing such curricular developments. On the other hand, there is a lack of political will within the universities and within federal government institutions to affect these changes. Existing centers and professorships attempt to counter this deficit by intensively promoting a wide variety of interdisciplinary offers within their education and research. Thus, while interdisciplinary cooperation is a strength of Swiss gender studies, it remains, as said, institutionally fragile.

Thirdly, there has not been any success so far in establishing gender studies as a prominent and widely reputed research area in Swiss science. This is primarily due to a lack of adequate resources. Proper research centers do not exist yet, because the formation of teaching curricula and programs had to be prioritized in the first phase of the establishment of gender studies.

Fourthly, financial resources have not been sufficient to promote crucial aspects of Swiss gender studies in a satisfactory manner. For example, funding for cross-cultural exchange in gender studies between the German speaking and French speaking social scientists, who espouse different perspectives in gender studies, has been especially anemic. This lack of financial support has in turn prevented the scientific-cultural diversity of gender studies in Switzerland from being fully appreciated.

2. In your opinion, what are the emergent challenges in your Country/Region?

Sigrid Schmitz (Austria) - One main challenge for the teaching of gender studies in Austria is the great amount of external teachers. This is due to the Austrian university structure, which offers the possibility to integrate a broad range of gender studies approaches, and fosters inter- and transdisciplinary co-operations. However, these lecturers usually get no sustainable positions but are recruited formally only for one term, and their contracts have to be extended (or not) each semester. The number of chairs in gender studies is still low and a study program – and even more the integration of research programs - often depends on the person who holds the chair. Gender studies and gender research are still in danger to be disposed of, when a scholar leaves a position or retires. In my view, this *dependence of the state if institutionalization of gender studies on particular scholars* – with often precarious working conditions – is one major challenge that we do not only face in Austria, but which is also relevant to many academic sites across Europe. A sustainable institutionalization of gender scholars and gender research is not achieved yet, and representatives of university policies focus mostly (and sometimes only) on the issue of gender equity in numbers of staff. Supporting “excellent” female scholars thus remains the main initiative of universities; supporting gender studies and gender research has much less of priority.

Another challenge, connected to the above considerations, is the lack of *postgraduate education*. At this time, there is no PhD program for gender studies at Austrian universities and the only postgraduate program at the University of Vienna (2010-2013)

was not continued. Not only do junior scholars face the problem of associating their often inter- and transdisciplinary work to one major discipline (see above), they also lack institutionalized structures for networking and exchange (besides those that they organize by themselves).

I address here a third challenge that has been gaining power in the last years, in Austria as well as in other European countries. *Gender bashing*, as I call it, encompasses verbal attacks against gender studies and gender research, and against gender scholars, via popular press and internet media. There is a prominent right wing and catholic spectrum feeding these attacks, particularly in France, but we currently witness a growing number of bashing attacks also in Austria from all levels of society – academic and non-academic. Moreover, behind those sometimes ridiculous campaigns (e.g., in Austria the debate about gender adequate language in the national anthem) one major message is conveyed: Gender equity would have been reached sufficiently, and gender/feminist research is accused of being only a political movement (against men and against society as a whole) that would have no scientific grounding. I highlight this point to lead to my comments to the last question below. Feminist discourse, feminist studies, and more recently queer and postcolonial approaches have always identified themselves as being scientifico-political. With respect to the deconstruction of the seemingly “objective” epistemology and methodology of the life science, there has been a tremendous effort to search, discuss and straiten new forms of knowledge production and negotiations within the feminist debate, for example Helen Longino’s concept of “empirical adequacy”¹⁶, Sandra Harding’s “strong objectivity”¹⁷, or Donna Haraway’s “situated knowledge”¹⁸, and latest the debates around Karan Barad’s framework of ethico-onto-epistemology¹⁹. Instead of trying to avoid the accusation of “being political”, in my view, one main task of gender studies is still to uncover the socio-political entanglements of every scientific research (in all disciplines). It is not the case

¹⁶ Longino, Helen, *Science as Social Knowledge*, Princeton, Princeton Univ. Press, 1990.

¹⁷ Harding, Sandra, *Whose Science? Whose Knowledge?: Thinking from Women's Lives*. Cornell, Cornell University Press, 1991.

¹⁸ Haraway, Donna. “Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective.” *Feminist Studies* 14.3 (1988): 575-599.

¹⁹ Barad, Karen, *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, London, Duke University Press, 2007.

that gender studies have to become more scientific, but that the “other” studies have to be exposed again and again as to be as scientifico-political as gender studies aim to be. [?]

Paula-Irene Villa (Germany) - Gender studies in Germany are faced with several important new research dynamics which cross-cut traditional (and well implemented) disciplines. Such fields – e.g. affect studies, postcolonial studies, (dis)ability studies, STS, etc., even queer studies – are still rather marginalized by the mainstream of gender studies due to the strong disciplinary affiliation, but should be engaged with much more intensively. The same applies to what is currently being discussed under the umbrella term ‘intersectionality’. Although much debate (and research) has been done and published on this issue in Germany, the real inclusion of diversity in its broad and, thus, radical – or at least anti-hegemonic – sense into the core of gender studies is still due. To put it differently: Gender studies in Germany still implicitly assume a white, heterosexual, ‘German’, middle-class ‘normality’. But, of course, German reality is much more complex and diverse, especially regarding migration, religion, sexuality, and also regarding the (structurally unequal) globalizing dynamics of contemporary societies. This is yet to be fully acknowledged in (German) gender studies.

A very different challenge emerges from the current policies in academia: Academic Capitalism and internationalization dynamics have given gender equality issues a much higher visibility than they’d had before. Gender equality (and diversity) issues are currently a strategic, structural aspect of new academic managerialism. Thus, gender studies scholars are increasingly addressed by university managers as some kind of ‘high-end’ equality officers. Researchers are often expected to quickly offer added value to their universities, especially when it comes to intensified competition among individual universities and / or research programs. Such managerial logics clashes with the more critical and basic research carried out in the field of gender studies. But, at the same time, these political and organizational dynamics do open windows for both new and important research and for political activism regarding diversity and gender equality.

Finally, recent populist tendencies have emerged or become more visible in both digital and traditional media: ‘Anti-Genderism’ seems to be at the core of partly anti-democratic, anti-European, maybe overall antimodernist discourses and networks. As such, ‘gender’ as a concept and the field of gender studies has come under harsh – at times hateful and violent – attack.

Andrea Maihofer, Katrin Meyer (Switzerland) - A large proportion of federal government funding for gender studies that has contributed to the establishment of gender studies in the academy since 2005, will expire in 2017. At the moment (September 2014) it is uncertain whether all universities will be willing to sustain the existing structures that were developed through federal government funding. We do not know whether gender studies will be sufficiently institutionalized in the Swiss universities to survive this loss of external governmental funding. We therefore find ourselves in a delicate situation in which the institutional gains achieved thus far might be lost.

To make things worse, many universities restructure their program offers constantly, promoting new scientific trends and removing existing established programs. Gender studies programs and departments are often hit first by this kind of restructuring, because they are neither considered very new nor are they part of an established tradition. After years of working towards establishing gender studies as a study and research area in Swiss universities, we are now confronted with the field potentially being called into question again through the introduction of new requirements for study programs, PhD programs, department restructurings, etc.

A third noteworthy challenge is the increasing resistance against gender studies arising within parts of Swiss society. This resistance can be summed up under the term “anti-genderism”, a label the critics themselves have chosen. Polarized debates on gender topics can be observed among conservative right-wing and catholic groups on the one hand and feminists and liberals on the other hand. One result of this polarization is that gender studies, gender competences, questions of gender equality and debates about sexuality, which previously appeared to be unquestioned contents of social education offerings, are now called into question. These gender-related forms of

knowledge are mainly accused of being 'ideological', and not scientific. In contrast to the situation in Austria, as analyzed by Sigrid Schmitz, there is a broad consensus in Switzerland that science should have political impact and relevance. Accordingly, gender studies in Switzerland are not criticized, because they are seen as 'political' as such, but because they are considered as not based on scientific knowledge. This critique precisely serves to prevent the results from a broad variety of gender studies research and projects from being applied and made useful in social politics (for example the results that had been generated within the national research program "Gender Equality" of the Swiss National Science Foundation between 2010 and 2013).

Universities cannot turn a blind eye to this tendency. Indeed, they are coming increasingly under pressure to justify their support for gender studies. In addition, some gender studies researchers and teachers are being called out by name and personally attacked in the media. Also, the integration of gender competences into the new curricula for Swiss primary and secondary education scheduled for 2014 has been undone due to resistance from conservative groups. However, these attacks against gender-just and gender-sensitive social policy have led politicians, mostly female, and progressive parts of the Swiss population to actively protect and support gender studies. Responsible for this 'anti-genderist' development are not only conservative and catholic groups, but also a general neoliberal tendency within wider Swiss society. Accordingly, questions concerning gender equality or the research of gender equality policies are being criticized as unwarranted state intervention. The neoliberal view holds that decision-making processes should remain with individuals, the family or the economy. From this position, the idea that we have a responsibility as a society to address questions concerning gender equality is increasingly rejected as a totalitarian act on the part of the state.

Finally, another new challenge that needs to be met is the political tendency to isolate and cut off Switzerland from Europe. This leads to the impediment and possible questioning of research and teaching cooperation between Swiss gender studies and European as well as extra-European gender studies institutions.

3. Looking ahead, can you try to identify some trends and perspectives for gender studies in Europe?

Sigrid Schmitz (Austria) - We currently face different trends at the European level that can support but also contradict efforts to implement gender issues. The European Union's new framework program "Horizon 2020" and its call for a stronger integration of the social sciences and the humanities²⁰, on the one hand, may offer possibilities to add a profound gender perspective to the analysis of "Europe in a changing world".

For example, within the stream of "Science with and for Society" the calls under the topic of "Promoting Gender Equality in Research and Innovation" invite "Higher Education Institutions, as well as research funding organizations (RFOs) to take action to promote gender equality in R&I with the following objectives:

- Removing barriers to the recruitment, retention and career progression of female researchers;
- Addressing gender imbalances in decision making processes;
- Strengthening the gender dimension in research programmes."²¹

From a feminist perspective these three bullet points could encompass three main levels of strengthening the gender perspectives at the EU level: (a) the level of integration of women into research, (b) the level of integrating gender aspects in academic decision and negotiation processes, and (c) – maybe most important – accounting for gender aspects in research. However, a change in gender relations, politics, representations and cultures in Europe can only be understood and achieved if the interdependencies of inequalities and discriminatory dimensions as sexism, racism, classism, ageism, dis/ablism, amongst others, are considered, all of them interwoven with global neoliberal transformations in Europe and the world. As a consequence, a global perspective would have to emphasize an intersectional approach that points out

²⁰ See <http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/horizon2020/en/area/social-sciences-humanities>

²¹ See <http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/portal/desktop/en/opportunities/h2020/topics/2413-geri-4-2014.html>

that gender always needs to be conceptualized in its local specificity, as well as within its global dimension, and in its intersectionality with other structures of inequality.

I elaborated these two facets of “gendering” at the EU level, as they point to at least two ambivalent aspects of “integrating gender” (there are other issues as well, but due to the limited space, I will only reflect on this particular ambivalence). The perspective of EU-research programming on the term of “innovation”, i.e. on the terms of economic growth and scientific development under the myth of an enlightenment paradigm – always combined with a discourse on national and pan-national competition in a neoliberal world – frames efforts of including gender studies in a particular direction.

Londa Schiebinger from Stanford University initiated the project “Gendered Innovations in Science, Health & Medicine, Engineering, and Environment”²², which was expanded to a US-European co-operation. This project aims at offering case studies in various fields of research and development to guide to a reflective handling of *Sex* and *Gender* categories in these fields. One main strategy of the project is the reference to the term of “innovation”, arguing that the inclusion of gender aspects (at the already mentioned three levels) supports “excellent research” and a better “scientific” grounding of research and development. Gender research, as it is argued, accounts for multiple intervening facets and social outcomes. In arguing as such, *the Gendered Innovations* initiative refers to the above outlined strategy to highlight the scientific values of gender studies. The combination of arguments of “excellence” and “innovation”, in my opinion, has laid the ground for the power of the *Gendered Innovations* initiative on the EU level.

I definitively do not speak against an addressing of the scientific value of reflective gender studies, but a closer look on the theoretical concepts of this initiative uncovers that *Gendered Innovations* strongly conveys the concept of a binary sex model, and gender is taken as a derived category of social impacts on sex. Additionally – or better to say, as a consequence of this paradigm – most case studies only focus on personalized sexed or gendered assumptions (i.e. the assignment of female or male skills, behaviours or preferences) to support the integration of women’s or men’s need: “The case studies presented in this report demonstrate that differences between the

²² Website des Projekts: <http://genderedinnovations.eu> [14.08.2013].

needs, behaviours and attitudes of women compared to men really matter, and accounting for them in research makes it relevant to the whole of society”²³. By addressing mostly only individual practices of “doing gender” there is a strong neglect for the enactments, constructions and impacts of the institutional, societal, political and economic levels on gender relations; there is no addressing of cultural norms that construct heteronormative gender models; there is – in contrast to the announcements – merely no accounting for intersectional perspectives of gender research. In consequence, the Gendered Innovation site does not offer an approach for critically reflecting the neoliberal and global impacts and societal challenges, neither does it reflect on the processes of knowledge production in science and its social impacts. With a manifestation of a two-sex-model and a promoting the notion of a sex-gender-binary²⁴ this prominent program covers the important issues of intersectional approaches.

One could argue that Gendered Innovations offers only one standpoint of gender studies at the European level. However as mostly only this program is referenced, when it comes to discuss the state of gender studies and gender research at a political level, the gender community has to strengthen its efforts to integrate its much more elaborated approaches, its variety of perspectives coming from gender, queer-feminist, capitalism-critical, and postcolonial perspectives, and has always to highlight its scientifico-political agenda²⁵.

Paula-Irene Villa (Germany) - Taking up from the last answer, I’d think it important to network and exchange analysis regarding current conservative-populist (partly fundamentalist catholic) tendencies in Europe. Gender and sexual politics are at the core of these discourses and political movements, partly intersecting with more or less racist views (e.g. on Islam or migration). This is a truly European phenomenon and it would be important – and interesting – to find truly European, not only national positions on this.

²³ European Commission (2013): *Gendered Innovations. How Gender Analysis Contributes to Research*, p. 5, Luxembourg. Online: http://www.stanford.edu/dept/HPS/2012.4808_Gendered%20Innovations_web2.pdf [11.08.2014].

²⁴ Idem, pp. 43-47

²⁵ ATGENDER, The European Association for Gender Research, for example, is one important initiative to discuss and stress the multiple approaches to research and study gender issues, see <http://www.atgender.eu/>.

Gender Studies in Europe should also continue addressing issues of European politics, such as migration, precarisation, cultural negotiations, etc.

Andrea Maihofer, Katrin Meyer (Switzerland) - Given the challenges that gender studies in Switzerland faces, we recommend gender studies in all of Europe to continue thoroughly addressing the socio-political transformations of growing nationalism, the re-traditionalization of family models, and the widespread growth of precarious forms of employment. In addition we would encourage gender studies to critically analyze the development of gender relations within these wider social transformations. In our opinion, this does not exclude also emphasizing the innovative approach of gender studies in science. Using the innovative potential of a gender perspective for science does not necessarily imply that a heterosexual and binary gender model needs to be presupposed. However, we agree with Sigrid Schmitz in that we should not allow the implementation of gender perspectives, especially in the natural sciences, to reactivate a traditional understanding of sex and gender (*Geschlecht*). Furthermore, and like Paula-Irene Villa, we see it as important that gender studies are recognized as a separate scientific discipline at universities and that they should not be equaled with academic gender equality policy and diversity management.

Concerning institutions we encourage furthering the development and growth of gender studies on a curricular level in a wide range of disciplines, as we have seen in Germany. We see curricular integration as a reasonable avenue to sustainability for gender studies, given the fact that disciplinary institutionalization of gender studies in separate centers and study programs has also paradoxically made them vulnerable, because eliminating positions can quickly and efficiently demolish what seems firmly established. Therefore it is advisable for gender studies in universities to keep following the path of “as well as”, meaning the promotion of both the integration of gender aspects in different disciplines as well as the development of gender studies as an institutionally independent, inter-, trans- and postdisciplinary 'discipline'.

Referring to the organization of gender studies across university and national boundaries we especially value that scientific associations for women's and gender studies were set up in different countries and that they cooperate internationally.

Final remarks

Several positive aspects emerge through the reports.

Important challenges need to be faced, first of all growing nationalism, the focus on traditional family models and their criticism of gender studies.

Common grounds for the future development of gender studies appear to be the need to (further) develop gender studies at a curricular level, seen as a tool to promote persistence of gender studies; the importance of developing international, scientific associations for women and gender studies as well as the need of contrasting the current conservative-populist tendencies in Europe through a European strategy that would coordinate national strategies.

Globally, the perspectives that emerge through the series of round tables confirm the extent to which gender studies will benefit from supranational alliances and increased interdisciplinary exchanges.