

## Round Table

**Global future perspectives in gender studies emerging from  
international debate.  
Foreword to the special supplement to the Journal About Gender**

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Current perspectives on gender studies in thirteen countries are debated in the four Round Tables re-printed in this special supplement of the Journal About Gender (AG).

The AG Round Table is a chaired forum – organised virtually, through email and/or spoken conversation over the Internet - about themes that relate to the central topics of the monographic issues or to relevant current questions. Its purpose is to gather different points of view in order to engage in dialogue, comparing a variety of disciplinary perspectives.

The first Round Table was chaired in 2013 by Raffaella Ferrero Camoletto, University of Turin, Italy, the other three were chaired – in 2014 and 2015 - by me.

The countries represented in the four Round Tables were, in alphabetical order:

- Austria, Belgium, Canada (Quebec), Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, Norway, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland (French and German speaking cantons), United Kingdom.

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The participants were asked to answer three questions:

1. What is the state of gender studies in your Country/Region - strengths and weaknesses?
2. In your opinion, what are the emergent challenges in your Country/Region?
3. Looking ahead, can you try to identify some trends and perspectives for gender studies in Europe (Canada)?

Each Round Table was preceded by a short introduction, and the three last ended with closing remarks.

This supplement contains the English version of all four round tables, while on the AG Journal the second Round Table, grouping French speaking countries, was published exceptionally in French and Italian. The reasons for this choice are explained in the Introduction to the Round Table.

I decided on this occasion to read once again the texts in order to find inspiration from the knowledge and insights of the distinguished researchers who contributed to them, and to draw a list of topics they raised, to be considered as useful starting points to analyse more specific current questions related to gender studies in the Round Tables that will follow or in monographic issues of AG. This choice was made so as not to duplicate the comments that introduce each of the round tables.

## **Different characteristics, common goals**

In choosing the participants in the round tables there was no attempt to carry out a comparative analysis of the situation of gender studies in the various countries.

A posteriori, however, it is interesting to reflect on some characteristics underlined in international reports. According to the Gender Challenge in Research Funding Report<sup>2</sup>, when analysing the complex relations between the overall gender gap in the society and the share of women among Higher Education (HE) researchers, in 2009 four country

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<sup>2</sup> European Commission. 2009. The Gender Challenge in Research Funding – Assessing the European national scenes. Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities. Pp. 132 [http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/h2020/grants\\_manual/hi/gender/h2020-hi-guide-gender\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/h2020/grants_manual/hi/gender/h2020-hi-guide-gender_en.pdf) (retrieved on 11/08/2015)

groupings emerged which do not follow clear political or geographical lines: “... smaller than the EU median gender gap countries include those with more than average women in HE research (Nordic countries except Denmark, UK, Ireland, the Baltic states except Estonia, Spain, and Belgium), but also countries with less than average women in HE research, such as the old member states Austria, Denmark, Germany, France, Netherlands, as well as Switzerland. Correspondingly, countries with larger than median gender gap in society include both those with more than average proportions of women in HE research, such as several new member states from Central Eastern Europe (Bulgaria, Estonia, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Slovak Republic), but also Portugal, Greece and Turkey. Countries with both high gender gap and less than average proportions of women in HE research include the Czech Republic, Cyprus, Israel, Italy, Malta, and Slovenia”<sup>3</sup>.

A part from the exception of Canada, not included in the EU analysis, the other countries represented in the four Round Tables belong to three of the above mentioned four groups. The first two groups, that share smaller than EU median gender gaps, with differences in the presence of women in HE research, are represented by Belgium, Norway, Spain, Sweden and the UK for the group with more than average women in HE research, and Austria, Denmark, France, Germany and Switzerland, for the group with less than average women in HE research. The third group, including countries with larger than the median gender gap in society and with more than average proportions of women in HE research is not represented by any country in the Round Tables. The fourth group is represented by Italy, a country with both higher than the EU median gender gap and less than average proportions of women in HE.

Reading the responses to the Round tables, some of the differences described in the EU report appear evident. For example, to name only the two extremes, the awareness of the Swedish and Norwegian researchers of the privileged situation of their countries contrasts with the comments made by the Italian researcher on the path followed in Italy by the feminist movement in relation to academia, which is now considered one of the main causes of the current situation. In Italy, much is needed to fill in the gap in

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<sup>3</sup> Op. Cit., p. 16

gendered perspectives in academia, although the situation is considered by Ruspini (Round Table 1) less critical than it may seem from outside.

On the other side, when we look at the topics raised by the interviewed researchers, and the future perspectives they deem more relevant, the above mentioned differences become blurred, and a number of common goals emerge, showing a fundamental homogeneity.

Let's see which are the main concerns raised by the interviewees:

- "How can we have a dialogue when voices within this transnational debate are not always equal, either between, for example, the UK/US and Europe, or also internally in Europe? Is it still true that the UK does not look outwards enough to countries where gender and women's studies are not as established or have different traditions? How do we compare experiences when we are at different stages of institutionalisation or integration, and what measures do we adopt in doing so?" And further in the same Round Table: "How do we ensure cross-European initiatives that include the diversity of European countries engaged in gender and women's studies, and recognize the (sometimes different) pressing issues we face as well as acknowledging differing theoretical frameworks?" (Victoria Robinson, Round Table 1)

- Elisabetta Ruspini reminds us that "the field of women's studies—formed in the wake of the feminist movement—is finding itself in a precarious position in what is now called a 'post-modern', 'post-feminist' society." And, quoting Lapovsky Kennedy, Beins (2005) she asks: "are the aims and goals of feminism still relevant in the 21st century? How must the field adjust its goals and methods to continue to affect change in the future?". (Round Table 1)

- Adelina Sanchez Espinosa wonders if the Bologna process has kept its promise or is it giving transnational comparability of degrees a bad name. (Round Table 1)

- The thematic specialisation tends to be more pronounced in many research teams in Switzerland and elsewhere in Europe. Is this phenomenon in contrast with the gender mainstreaming perspective promoted by the European Commission with the aim of integrating gender as a concern in all disciplines? And if so how to manage this contrast? (Magali Delaloye, Marta Roca i Escoda, Patricia Roux. Round Table 2)

- “The ‘slow science’ approaches, which advocate - like the ‘slow food’ for sustainable food - to build knowledge over time and favours quality over quantity may counteract the current tendency of the neoliberal influence on universities and the current commodification of knowledge? Which other approaches could be suitable?” (Catherine Wallemacq, Nadine Plateau, Round Table 2)

- The concept of “gender perspective” could not be more polysemic, and in Round Table 2 Diane Lamoureux identifies at least three possible meanings of the "gender perspective" notion. Does this vagueness hinder the progress in this research field?

- How to match the importance to preserve national languages with the need to translate French (and other languages) research into English? What is the efficacy of translation support policies? (Florence Rochefort, Round Table 2)

- In Round Table 3, Sigrid Schmitz analyses in detail "lights and shadows" of the EU programme Horizon2020, stating, among other comments, that “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”. Do we risk to conceptualise gender in its local specificity, and not also within its global dimension, as well as in its intersectionality with other structures of inequality?

- Paula-Irene Villa underlines the importance “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)”. She suggests that truly European, not only national positions on this should be elaborated. (Round Table 3)

- Andrea Maihofer and Katrin Meyer answers reinforce Schmitz’s worries, as they add that “[u]sing the innovative potential of a gender perspective for science does not necessarily imply that a heterosexual and binary gender model needs to be presupposed.” The risk to reactivate a traditional understanding of sex and gender (Geschlecht), especially in the natural sciences, is high. (Round Table 3)

- Many contemporary and relevant issues, such as those concerning gendered aspects of the nationalist movements, welfare state transformations and the global financial crisis “affect European societies in different manners, due to diverse historical and other trajectories”, claims Pauline Stoltz, suggesting that “it does indeed become important to revisit these contentions and to look for opportunities to consider the meaning of a transnational gender studies approach in Europe today”. (Round Table 4)

- According to Christine M. Jacobsen “gender studies should aim not only at taking part in interdisciplinary efforts to produce knowledge about what is defined by funding bodies as ‘societal challenges’, but also to contribute to defining what gets defined as such, how the ‘challenge’ is framed, and the epistemologies underpinning the knowledge produced.” She continues suggesting that “[o]ne way of doing this is to continue the work in feminist and gender studies to provincialize Europe and to develop transnational, transversal, post-colonial and global perspectives as vantage points from where to engage critically with politics of exclusion, precarisation, and racialization”. (Round Table 4)

- Finally, Lena Gemzöe and Margaretha Fahlgren, from the Swedish privileged position, are positive that “[t]he broadening of the field will continue and gender researchers will cooperate across disciplinary boundaries.” However, they underline the equally important need to develop new theories, focusing on the core of the discipline. To facilitate this, “[t]he link between researchers who are more theoretically oriented and those who work more empirically needs to be strengthened so that new theories are used in gender practice.” (Round Table 4)

It appears that the three questions put forward at the outset of the round tables offered the opportunity to raise many more questions that will certainly offer new opportunities for analysis in the future.

In conclusion, leaving the readers to explore the full texts of the Round Tables, I am confident that the contributions in this supplement to the *About Gender Journal* will serve as a valuable overview on this important subject area.

# Perspectives on Gender Studies in Europe: a round table

*Edited by Raffaella Ferrero Camoletto<sup>4</sup>*

**Partecipants:** Adelina Sánchez Espinosa, Victoria Robinson, Elisabetta Ruspini<sup>5</sup>.

## Introduction

Gender studies have a quite recent life-history in the academic field<sup>6</sup>, following different patterns of recognition and institutionalisation in the European scenario<sup>7</sup>. Despite political, economic, social and intellectual changes and challenges, however, they seem to continue “to be a vibrant, dynamic, innovative and influential area of study” (Richardson and Robinson 2008, xvii), bringing to the fore innovative theoretical ideas, research approaches and pedagogical practices.

The aim of this round table is to explore the state of Gender Studies in some European countries and to try to foresee possible perspectives for their forthcoming transformations.

We have chosen to focus on a generation of scholars grown up after the second wave of feminism, in a changed cultural scenario, often experiencing, in their training as well as in their personal life, the tensions between an increasing commodification of feminist culture and the challenge provided by the new instances and concerns (postcolonialism, globalization, fluidity of identities, to name some) of the third wave of feminism.

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<sup>5</sup> **Victoria Robinson**, Reader in Sociology at the University of Sheffield, UK, is the Co-Founder and Director of the cross-faculty Centre for Gender Research and Co-Editor of the Gender and Sexuality in the Social Sciences Series, Palgrave Macmillan.

**Elisabetta Ruspini**, Associate Professor in Sociology at the University of Milan Bicocca, Italy, is the Coordinator of the Italian Sociological Association – Section: Gender Studies.

**Adelina Sánchez Espinosa**, Professor of English and German Philology at the University of Granada, Spain, is the Director of the Gender Research Institute.

<sup>6</sup> As Richardson and Robinson (2008) pointed out, since the 1990s in the naming of research centres and degree courses, there has been a shift from the term “women’s studies” to the use of the label “gender studies”, witnessing their establishment in the canon of the social sciences, arts and humanities disciplines.

<sup>7</sup> The peculiarity of gender studies in Italy has been recently under debate (see Pravadelli 2010, Magaraggia and Leone 2010).

The participants provide reflexive accounts from their training, research and teaching experience, bringing together historical, institutional and biographical dimensions.

- Victoria Robinson, Reader in Sociology at the University of Sheffield, UK, is the Co-Founder and Director of the cross-faculty Centre for Gender Research and Co-Editor of the Gender and Sexuality in the Social Sciences Series, Palgrave Macmillan.
- Elisabetta Ruspini, Associate Professor in Sociology at the University of Milan Bicocca, Italy, is the Coordinator of the Italian Sociological Association – Section: Gender Studies.
- Adelina Sánchez Espinosa, Professor of English and German Philology at the University of Granada, Spain, is the Director of the Gender Research Institute.

### **1) To contextualize our debate, we want to ask you: What is the state of gender studies - strengths and weaknesses- in your country?**

**Elisabetta Ruspini** (Italy) - In Italy the institutionalization of gender studies arrived late, has been slow and is still going on. One of the elements that may explain this delay is the familistic (Italian) culture. By familism we mean a set of normative beliefs that describes a strong attachment and loyalty to one's family, emphasizes the centrality of the family unit, and stresses the obligations and support that family members owe to both nuclear and extended kin. If family is seen as the crucial foundation of society, public trust in government and political institutions and people's sense of the state are—specularly—not strong (Ginsborg 1989 and 1994). Family members, perceived as dependable sources of material and emotional help, should be united and have close relationships. The familistic culture also tends to assume that all family members experience family life in the same basically positive ways. This assumption persists despite considerable evidence that women and men often experience the rhythms of a family's life together from quite different perspectives (see for example Rubin 1976; Code 1987; Badinter 1981; Balbo 1991). If, on the one hand, familism has contributed to reinforce family solidarity between generations, as well as to create broad family networks, on the other hand, the negative compensation of this family economy model

has affected the female collective: familism implies a prioritization of the needs of the family over those of women (Saraceno 1994). Familism has thus influenced the visibility of women in history: women were rendered invisible and marginalized by the lack of acknowledgement of their overall contribution to society, both in the private sphere and in the public, political and professional areas. Following Valentini (2012), familism is one of the key elements explaining why in Italy the question of women's rights and roles is probably the "last thing" to be dealt with.

The debate on the possible causes of such a weak institutionalisation is still open. On the one hand, this may be linked to some features of the Italian feminist movement. Following Pravadelli (2010), both its non-institutional basis and separatist orientation may explain the lack of institutionalisation of women's and gender studies (see also Bono and Kemp 1991; Cavarero 1993). On the other hand, in Chiara Saraceno's opinion (Saraceno 2010), the weak institutionalisation of gender studies was the consequence both of the Italian institutional framework and of the weak position women academics occupied within it. It is also true that the gender perspective is increasingly present, also in Italy, in sociology, economics, linguistics, psychology, literature and within the "hard sciences", as well.

The consequences of such a weak institutionalisation seem evident. Education on gender change is still lacking in Italy, both in the process of primary socialisation and in educational programmes. The questions of gender and sexuality continue to be a taboo subject in Italian families. Modesty and the need to maintain their privacy force boys and girls to seek the answers to their doubts and curiosities outside the family. People outside the family (often friends) in fact seem to be the main vehicles of information on these issues, which information is, however, often inexact, distorted or in any case insufficient. Moreover, in Italy there is no national legislation regulating gender and sex education in schools, and the prevalent forms of learning in school educational and professional training systems are still essentially constructed in order to highlight values and behaviours linked to traditional masculine and feminine roles (Boffo *et al.* 2003). Together with the many prejudices and stereotypes on gender and sexuality, this lack of information offers fertile ground for a definite increase of phenomena such as bullying, femicide and violence against women, sexual harassment, homophobia and transphobia,

testified by recent, multiple, dramatic events. The joint research report by EURES and ANSA<sup>8</sup> found that between 2000 and 2012 more than 2,200 women were murdered in Italy, an average of 171 per year. 70.8 percent of the women were killed by family members and 79.7 percent of the femicides were committed at home.

The need to understand gender change, to contribute to the advancement of gender studies and to open a formal dialogue with the institutions prompted us to found, in 2012, a “Gender Studies” Section<sup>9</sup>, part of the AIS-Italian Sociological Association. The Section, open to women, men, and Lgbttiq (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transsexual, Transgender, Intersex, and Queer) people, has different aims. On the one hand, the promotion of research and curriculum development on the patterns of gender, gendered social relations, and sexualities. On the other hand, to serve as a meeting place for scholars, young researchers and students who want to start working in these directions. These goals require a broad range of activities including continuing commitment to support the multiplication of specific educational, research, and training programs; the establishment of new ways to meet and cooperate with the other AIS-Italian Sociological Association Sections and with the national and international scientific community (ESA-European Sociological Association and ISA-International Sociological Association). In addition to these activities, another key task will be to strengthen communication with universities, departments, research centres and individual scholars who are interested in issues concerning gender theory and research.

**Victoria Robinson** (UK) - I would like to use a biographical account, in part, and in the context of institutional and publishing changes to reflect on the state of women’s and gender studies in the UK and Europe more widely.

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, along with other part time tutors, I established one of the first undergraduate BA Women’s Studies in England, at the University of

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<sup>8</sup> Il femminicidio in Italia nell’ultimo decennio. Dimensioni, caratteristiche e profili di rischio, Indagine istituzionale, Eures, Ansa, Dicembre 2012.

<sup>9</sup> Section officers (2012-2015) are: Chair: Elisabetta Ruspini; Secretary: Emanuela Abbatecola; Council: Francesco Antonelli; Ignazia Bartholini; Fabio Corbisiero; Isabella Crespi; Alessandra Decataldo; Sara Garbagnoli; Claudia Santoni; Sabrina Perra; Luca Toschi. Web site: <http://www.ais-sociologia.it/sezioni/studi-genere/>

Sheffield in an Adult Continuing Education department outside the mainstream university. This was a time when such courses proliferated in the UK, and on this specific course many women as mature students were able to gain a degree, engage with feminism and feminist theory, including those from working class backgrounds, and often without formal qualifications. Over time, gender studies came, at least to some extent, to replace women's studies courses, and a focus on men and masculinity was also placed on the intellectual agenda.

Moving to the contemporary UK, the landscape looks somewhat different for women's and gender studies, at least in some ways. The Feminist and Women's Studies Association (UK and Ireland) (FWSA), which is the main organizing body in the field, currently lists mainly post-graduate courses in both areas<sup>10</sup>. Though there are some general MA women's and gender studies listed, many are now more specialised, for example, in the areas of sexuality and queer theory, health, history, media and culture, international relations, gender identity in the Middle East, development, management and European gender studies. Notably, only two institutions are listed as providing dedicated undergraduate courses, Edge Hill, BA Women's Health and University of Lancaster, BA Women's Studies, whilst Warwick has a BA Sociology with a gender specialization. Such a list reveals a continued focus both on women and gender but also movement from undergraduate to post graduate, the latter which, in some institutions at least, could be seen to be thriving and often reflects particular specialisms which have both national and international student appeal, but also reflects theoretical shifts in the field. However, some courses may struggle in attracting enough students.

While aspects such as a decline in named undergraduate courses, separate women-only space in the academy and lack of access to such courses for those on low incomes, often from working class backgrounds, given that adult, part-time provision has borne the brunt of educational cuts are to be lamented, it is important to note more positive shifts. Even though, as Claire Hemmings (2006) argues, women's and gender studies

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<sup>10</sup> For instances, at Aberdeen, Bangor, Birkbeck, University of London, Lancaster, Kingston, Institute of Education, London Metropolitan University, LSE, London South Bank, Northumbria, Plymouth, Queens University Belfast, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, Goldsmiths, Swansea, Trinity College Dublin, Birmingham, Bradford, Cambridge, Exeter, Dundee, Glasgow, Hull, Leeds, Limerick, Manchester, Oxford, Sheffield, Sussex, Warwick and York.

still have to struggle for both national resources and recognition, many disciplines now have gender courses integrated in undergraduate programmes, including education, sociology, cultural and media studies, history, literature and philosophy, even if not yet in the sciences, for example. This ensures that a younger generation of scholars, of both sexes, can engage with feminism (even if definitions of feminism are contested between students and tutors). For example, older feminists such as myself, sometimes feel frustrated due to some younger students' refusal to define themselves as feminists, or at their adopting a neo-liberalist stance on inequality and gender relations, where agency and choice are prioritised at the expense of stressing power relations and structural constraints such as sexuality, race/ethnicity or class are downplayed. However, if tutors and students engage in honest and reflexive dialogue, both preparing to have their ideas challenged, then new theories emerge which progress the discourses in the field. The large number of PhD students researching into women and gender, and the continued popularity of modules on gender for undergraduates in the UK attests to the continuing significance of both the theoretical issues and the wider political relevance to lives, that such courses have. Furthermore, the existence of either a focus on masculinity in diverse disciplines, or separate modules on men and masculinities can, arguably, also be seen as a strength, widening out further the audience for feminist ideas and debate.

**Adelina Sanchez Espinosa** (Spain) - Women and Gender Studies have become consolidated in Spain within the last 30 years. The Spanish 80s followed not only the momentum of Second Wave feminist movements all over the world but also the new waves of liberation from the Francoist dictatorial oppression<sup>11</sup>, recovering the feminist fights for gender equality in the previous Republican period (1931-36) leading to the inclusion in the new 1931 constitution of the right to divorce and to women's vote. In 1983 the Socialist government created the "Instituto de la Mujer", which became instrumental in its financial support of the initiatives (postgraduate studies and research activities) taken by universities to implement Gender Studies. In 2007 the "Ley

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<sup>11</sup> Franco created a counter feminist unit called "La sección femenina", the fascist women's section, which became an extremely active sector in the imposition of patriarchal policies of control over women and the destruction of women's rights and feminist thinking. See Augustin Puerta (2003).

Orgánica para la igualdad efectiva de hombres y mujeres" (Organic Law for Effective Equality between Men and Women) was approved, including the mandate to "promote teaching and research on gender equality and on anti-discrimination policies", "implementing policies leading to the eradication of sexism in language", supporting the "promotion of non-sexist communication within all social spheres", the "elaboration of equality plans at any company where there are more than 250 women employees", "equal participation of women and men within the university", the "creation of specific university programmes for gender equality". Following the law, "the university must play a fundamental role in the transmission of essential values and the challenge of reaching an equalitarian society respectful of the fundamental rights of women and men" "enhancing specific research on gender issues which can help the university achieve the abovementioned goals" with the "creation of equality units at universities". In 2008 the Ministry of Equality (lasting until 2010) was created, promoting Gender mainstreaming. All this has fomented the creation of groups and lines of research (around 60) on gender from multivarious perspectives and from many different departments within universities, gathered in some cases in a University Research Institute (like Granada, pioneer in having the first PhD in Gender Studies in Spain in 1991) or Center, in other cases in "seminars". Although nowadays there are no Gender graduate degrees in Spain, most universities have gender postgraduate studies (master or PhDs).

This said, perhaps the worst threat is the one represented by the present neoliberal right wing government. Its promotion of "commonsensical language" (ie. sexist language), the rephrasing of "gender violence" as "domestic violence" (a return to discussions which were solved over 30 years ago) and very specially the new law for the regulation of abortion (which gets rid of all advances since the death of Franco) does not sketch a very favourable picture for the near future.

Hence, now it is the moment for feminist cooperative action which can use the transnational potential of Women's Studies and Gender and take the discipline further into the construction of transnational knowledges. These knowledges are essential before the present situation of neoliberal destruction of the humanities and the blatant attack on critical thinking that is now taking place at national level all over the world

but particularly in Spain. We are now before national spaces where even the masquerade of political correctness is wearing out in spite of national protest, where the demands of the markets and the austerity of the "crisis" are killing individual liberties and this is obviously affecting women's rights. We are confronted with new places, like Spain, which is becoming an alien setting where dearly achieved rights such as the rights to abortion, to free education or health for all, to nonconfessional training, to pensions, and so on and so forth, are about to become items in the old curiosity shop of the good years in the past. And this attack on freedom is first attained by a meticulous destruction of critical resistance, the resistance of knowledge, and particularly the resistance of knowledge generated by collective critical thinking, that type of thinking that empowers the individuals when in collective action. So, European cooperation is essential at this stage.

## **2) Let's talk about teaching gender studies nowadays: What are the emergent challenges in your opinion?**

**Elisabetta Ruspini** (Italy) - The present historical moment demands a far-seeing approach on our part. There is a need to understand individual and family change and to gain new insights about changing generational and gender dynamics in the workforce, workplaces and families.

Social change has favoured a convergence of male and female life courses both from the structural point of view (an increase in women's employment and schooling, delayed entry into adult life, a shared, lesser inclination towards marriage and procreation, the assumption by women of responsibilities which previously belonged exclusively to men, etc.), and in the way in which life courses are desired, planned, constructed, and changed by individuals themselves.

Today young women place work and financial independence at the head of their priorities and perceive it at the core of their identity. Research conducted among women in their late twenties and early thirties in Italy present quite a different picture from the past (Piazza 2003). These women feel no sense of inferiority with regard to their male contemporaries and expect equal treatment. They tend to see family, work and

education primarily in terms of self fulfilment. Also the choice to remain childfree—that is, women and men who have made a personal decision not to have children—is growing (Tanturri and Mencarini 2008). Changes in female identities have increasing implications for male partners, workers and fathers. Younger men are beginning to claim a greater share in bringing up their children although, in the father-child relationship, playing dominates the other dimensions. The number of men willing to question the hegemonic, stereotyped model of traditional masculinity (Connell 1995) is also growing (see for example Ruspini, Hearn, Pease, Pringle 2011; Perra and Ruspini 2013). This convergence challenges the polarization of gender roles.

Moreover, the Millennial generation is growing up. Currently including young people up to 30 years of age, the Millennials have surpassed the Baby Boomers as the larger and more influential generation worldwide. These young women and young men are politically and socially independent, and they are thus spearheading a period of sweeping change around the world (Greenberg and Weber, 2008). The Millennials are more tolerant than adults in other generations of a wide range of “nontraditional” behaviors related to sexuality, marriage and parenting. There is thus a strong need to understand and manage the generation turnover, also within the field of gender studies.

It therefore is becoming necessary to prepare the new generations for their encounter with gender change (“new” women and “new” models of masculinity). The re-composition, through dialogue and mutual knowledge, of the historical rupture between male and female, may be accompanied by equally positive effects. Concerning women, this means deconstructing the processes of financial dependence on male income; increasing their share in the labour market; re-balancing time schedules to facilitate the conciliation between life and work demands and, at the same time, improving their health and wellbeing. Regarding men, the positive effects include the possibility of re-appropriating a part of their gender identity, historically denied (i.e. the functions of nursing, care and socialisation), opening up a wide range of actions which enable children, young boys and men to broaden the scope of their emotional and communicative skills.

**Victoria Robinson** (UK) - In 2010, Diane Richardson and I were interviewed for the FWSA, where we reflected on our long term feminist collaboration over a period of

more than two decades. Together we edited the textbook *Introducing Women's Studies*, first published by Macmillan in 1993, with the revised second edition in 1997, followed by a third edition in 2008, and the 4<sup>th</sup> edition currently in preparation for publication in 2014.

The various editions in some way mirror the changes that have taken place over time in the development and teaching of gender and women's studies in UK academia. The 3<sup>rd</sup> edition was re-titled *Introducing Gender and Women's Studies*, reflecting not only the shift from women's to gender studies that has taken place, but also commercial interests, as publishers are keen to ensure such texts sell to as wide an audience as possible. It also incorporated new scholars and themes that have emerged over the ten years that had elapsed between the second and third editions. The study of gender has developed dramatically in recent years, with a changing theoretical landscape, seeing innovative work on identity, the body and embodiment, queer theory, technology, space, and the concept of gender itself. There has been an increasing focus on sexuality and new theorizing on masculinities. The 3<sup>rd</sup> edition also reflected these developments and was informed by new student demand for such topics, and by the trend for more men to be interested in taking gender and masculinity courses.

The new 4<sup>th</sup> edition reflects even further changes, in that incorporated in this will be more extensive coverage of international/transnational feminism and contemporary global perspectives throughout, using international case examples and referencing as well as comparative data and coverage of the global South/developing worlds.

There will also be greater emphasis placed on recent debates on masculinities as we expect the potential of this aspect of gender studies to develop even further in future years. As well, there will be new chapters on violence (re-instated from the first two editions) and on the environment/nature, further, the concept of intersectionality and an understanding of intersecting inequalities will inform the book as a whole, incorporating work of feminist gerontologists on age as an intersecting aspect of inequality, as well as on class and work on disability.

To be able to produce four editions of this textbook, to reach a wider audience, of different ages and levels of study, we have had to make some compromises, over, for example, as I note above, the title, or the exclusion of some chapters in favour of others,

depending on what publishers' priorities are. All the editions of the book have been informed by student feedback on what issues they wanted to see included, and what the text should look like in terms of how 'user friendly' it was. However, in reality, it is we as editors who make the decision of, for example, whom to ask to contribute, balancing this with publishers' demands, which change as the global market place shifts. As Gail Lewis (2010) remarks, regarding books that do not make it to even a 2<sup>nd</sup> edition due to censorship, this reminds her '...that the need for feminist research praxis that simultaneously pushes at and exposes the workings of power while remaining open to internal critique and development is as urgent now as it ever was' (2010, 103).

**Adelina Sanchez Espinosa** (Spain) - For a very comprehensive analysis both of the situation of Gender Studies in Europe and of teaching Gender at present we can refer to Waaldijk and Wagenaar's analysis of the reference points for programmes in Gender conducted by under the umbrella of the tuning education structures in Europe project (*Tuning Educational Structures in Europe. Reference Points for the Design and Delivery of Degree Programmes in Gender Studies*<sup>12</sup>). The interest of this report resides in how it collects the deliveries of the ATHENA Socrates Thematic Network (a European project which collected over 100 European institutions teaching and researching on Gender). One of this deliveries was the series of publications *Teaching with Gender*<sup>13</sup>: running for over 10 years and financed by the project, it had published the analyses conducted by the network on the teaching of gender in Europe. It thus collects ideas on teaching methodologies and challenges and attempts at an analysis of the difference between teaching gender and any other subjects.

We can read, for instance, that "Gender Studies is known as a creative, critical, research oriented and pedagogically innovative area in academic study programmes" ("Tuning" report, p. 88). Among its innovations the report points out the importance of "team-teaching" since it has an intergenerational aspect that makes the learning more "valuable for [students'] lives" and of principles such as "positive group reliance, open

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<sup>12</sup> The report can be downloaded at the link <http://www.kuleuven.be/samenwerking/vapl/VenU/tuning-report>.

<sup>13</sup> All the series publications can be downloaded at the link <http://www.atgender.eu/index.php/initiativesmenu/teachingwgen>.

and diverse communication, and conscious development of cooperation". ("Tuning" report, pp 88 & 90). It also emphasizes that "the activity of learning is not limited to the conventional academic settings but also covers creative and experimental approaches to scientific texts and the collection of empirical data" and that "Students' creative activities and engagement are also reinforced by introducing elements of artistic production such as creative writing or various forms of performances" ("Tuning" report, p. 90). As forms of evaluation and assessment the report highlights "peer-evaluation and peer-feedback" since it empowers students and levels up the relationship between teacher and student: "Students' self-evaluations appear to be realistic which also implies that the teacher trusts them and gives them an active role and responsibility in the learning process" ("Tuning" report, p. 91). The report focuses also on the main challenges of the field. One of them is the measuring of the "know-how", given the multidisciplinary and critical nature of Gender Studies: "The assessment should address not only the knowledge acquired in the course, but also the learning process itself. It should also include students' progress during their learning process. The assessment must address commentary, argumentative, oral and writing skills together with the ability to work in groups" ("Tuning" report, p. 92). The other is the taking into account of the high political nature of the field which makes both teachers and students be involved in a more special way than with any other field.

Other texts suggesting different specific methodologies for the teaching of Gender can be the articles by Esperanza Bosch and Victoria Ferrer, suggesting that text commentaries are fundamental as a feminist methodology (2003) and Jasmina Lukic and Adelina Sánchez's vindication to "close reading" as a feminist strategy for reading texts differently (2011).

But perhaps the best way is to talk about a "good practice" example, the joint Erasmus Mundus master programme in Women's Studies and Gender, GEMMA<sup>14</sup>,

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<sup>14</sup> Gemma is the first Erasmus Mundus Joint European Master Degree in Women's and Gender Studies supported by the European Commission. Eight universities participate in Gemma: Granada University (Spain, coordinator); Bologna University (Italy); Central European University (Hungary); Hull University (United Kingdom); Institutum Studiorum Humanitatis (Slovenia); Lodz University (Poland); Oviedo University (Spain) and Utrecht University (Netherlands). Gemma is an interdisciplinary programme that provides high quality academic education and professional competences. See (<http://www.ugr.es/~gemma/>).

within which I am the scientific coordinator and the coordinator of the consortium of universities which runs it.

GEMMA came out of the networking we had started within ATHENA. We had been discussing how to put together a joint master degree for quite a few years but we simply did not have the funds to do so. When the Erasmus Mundus call started in 2004 it became the golden opportunity to finance our long cherished project. And so we had three meetings (in Barcelona, Granada and Budapest) in the course of 2 years, we communicated daily via email and eventually submitted the project to the European Commission which selected it after a very tough competition (23 projects were selected out of almost 300 applications). Thanks to the European Commission we can run the programme until 2018. The prestige of having been selected twice (in 2006 and in 2011) and that we were ranked as the best Erasmus Mundus master in 2011 has granted us support from many other national and institutional institutions.<sup>15</sup> Most of these grants are no longer there, however and we are making ends meet almost exclusively on the Commission funds. At this new stage, after its re-selection by the EC in 2011, the Consortium is advancing towards the creation of a GEMMA synergic online programme run by the transatlantic institutions: "GEMMA IberoAmerican feminisms".

As a good feminist programme, GEMMA focuses very much on the connection between teaching and research, and on Students' activities and the incorporation of these into the training. Examples of this can be the seminars organised by students on the 8th of March, the collaboration in the running of feminist film festivals in Granada, the collaboration in the organisation of the European Conferences for Gender Research or the participation in the "Voices of GEMMA" forum that takes place biannually on the occasion of GEMMA graduations.

Among the weaknesses of the GEMMA consortium there is the large number of institutions that participate fully or are associated with it. This makes it more difficult to coordinate, particularly when one has to bear in mind the various degrees of red tape at

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<sup>15</sup> Such as the Andalusian Government Women's Institute, the former Ministry of Equality (unfortunately extinct now giving way to the Ministry of Health, Social Services and Equality), the Ministry of Education, the Ford Foundation, the Euroarabic Foundation, the National Plan for the Alliance of Civilisations (which financed the first GEMMA graduation)

the different universities and the challenge of increasing university fees in countries such as the UK or the Netherlands. Since the EC demands a unified fee policy for the degree, this has been one of the most difficult issues to cope with. On the positive side, the programme is very attractive since it collects the gender teaching experience of many institutions, it is multidisciplinary, it brings together cultures from all cardinal points in Europe and beyond and, last but not least, allows students to choose and combine from any of the three official languages in GEMMA: Spanish, English and Italian. As the European Commission experts stated in their report, the programme is truly "a la carte".

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

**Elisabetta Ruspini** (Italy) - Gender studies today face many challenges emerging from acute tension between the local and the global, the past and the future.

First, the field of women's studies—formed in the wake of the feminist movement—is finding itself in a precarious position in what is now called a “post-modern”, “post-feminist” society. Are the aims and goals of feminism still relevant in the 21st century,? How must the field adjust its goals and methods to continue to affect change in the future? (Lapovsky Kennedy, Beins 2005). This raises challenging issues for universities, students, and administrators.

More specifically, women's and gender studies should face both generational and men's change. As has been said, there is a move towards more individualised and flexible decision-making processes, distant from the formal frameworks that used to shape women's and men's decisions in matters of relationships and family life. While, these trends seem to lead towards a flattening of the gender differences and to a convergence of life courses, socialisation agencies are still unable to guarantee adequate training for the needs arising from recent changes in female and male identities.

Another challenge has to do with the role of men in gender equality. Men's role and problems have traditionally been overlooked, not least by men themselves. Nevertheless, in recent decades men and masculinities have increasingly become

subjects of studies and gender policies in the EU and, in the past decade, the role of men has emerged as a relevant topic for international policy on gender equality. Indeed, sustainable change occurs when both men and women support equality.

Notwithstanding these key challenges, the future of gender studies seems uncertain. Universities are undergoing serious funding cuts in order to facilitate many Governments' proposed reforms. This is also because most people think that gender studies lead to no tangible educational and employment benefits. However, the role of gender education in fighting bullying, femicide, gender violence, sexual harassment, homophobia and transphobia is crucial: gender equality is a crucial element for social justice. Gender education is also a prerequisite for sustainable development, conflict prevention and peace building.

Gender education is also a prerequisite for sustainable development, conflict prevention and peace building. There is thus a general and growing awareness of the need to budget the problem of a gender-inclusive curriculum. More and more authors maintain that, for gender mainstreaming to be successful, adequate financial support from institutions is required, to design and offer courses, to train specialists, to organize conferences and to support research work.

**Victoria Robinson** (UK) - Griffin and Braidotti (2002) argue that the production and circulation of knowledge in women's studies in Europe has been dominated, in the main, by British and American feminisms, and though other countries, for example, Nordic ones, have well-established programmes and research centres, they do not receive the international recognition that they deserve. In addition, they posit that the UK, US and Northern Europe have most influence on curricula and teaching materials and that English language feminism has hegemony over women's and gender studies in Europe. Amongst other things, this can partly be explained by the early institutionalisation of these fields in the academy in the US/UK and the publishing opportunities which followed. However, since their book was published, what has happened to allow us to make European dialogues both more frequent and more meaningful, with no hierarchies acknowledged?

Is this now an opportune time to revisit these contentions? To take just one country as an example, (and there are many others I could have chosen who raise both similar and different issues), in an Italian context, Pravadelli (2010) argues that historically, sexual difference has been of crucial importance to feminist subjectivity and thought. However, she states that now a different approach is needed and women of a certain generation, many in their 40s, have new ideas on how gender studies and feminist theory should be conceptualised. This is due to possessing what she defines as a transnational gender studies approach, shaped more by sources outside the Italian feminist tradition. She calls for a convergence of gender, cultural and historical perspectives to carry this agenda forward so that gender can be rescued 'from the marginal position it has always had in Italian academia' (2010, 66). One issue that arises for me from this argument is: How can we have a dialogue when voices within this transnational debate are not always equal, either between, for example, the UK/US and Europe, or also internally in Europe? Is it still true that the UK does not look outwards enough to countries where gender and women's studies are not as established or have different traditions? How do we compare experiences when we are at different stages of institutionalisation or integration, and what measures do we adopt in doing so?

Further, Sveva Magaraggia and Mariagrazia Leone (2010) argue that since the 1970s women's studies research and theory have become prevalent inside and outside Italian universities, yet there was a lack of institutional visibility till the late 1990s, with women's studies residing in the disciplines existing prior to this. However, if, as they argue, there is currently a growth in women's studies in Italy at all levels, then their stressing of the need for links/alliances inside and outside academia, as well as calling for more established feminist academics who wield power to be central to these changes, whilst arguing also for international ties and working in European networks, could be seen to be timely. In such times of change, with a global recession and so competition for institutional and research resources, I would ask: How do we ensure cross-European initiatives that include the diversity of European countries engaged in gender and women's studies, and recognize the (sometimes different) pressing issues we face as well as acknowledging differing theoretical frameworks? On a more personal level, for example, as an established UK feminist, how can I foster such diverse

alliances when it may not be an institutional or research funder's priority for me to do so? These are all thorny questions indeed, some new, some old, but in increasingly shifting and diverse contexts.

**Adelina Sanchez Espinosa** (Spain) - The items above already approach this issue partly. To all that I would like to add the following considerations.

The field of Women's Studies has by nature a multidisciplinary composition as it collects a wide array of knowledges deriving from the exercise of many disciplines that come together by their finding in gender the transversal element to them all. It is, thus, a multiple field, where the generation of new knowledges is produced precisely because of the coming together, intersecting and eventually summing up of all the knowledges produced by the formerly individually isolated disciplines which now become invigorated by their coexistence, by their sharing of this new interdisciplinary space. Together with transdisciplinarity, transnationality is equally inherent in Women's Studies.

The Bologna process has given transnational comparability of degrees a bad name. But this is simply because of the degeneration of what started as a brilliant idea. Many of us subscribed faithfully to Bologna in the late 90s since we believed that it was about time we validated transnationally what us and our students had learnt at national level. We took it, then, perhaps rather naively, I must confess, as the utopic universalisation of knowleges, as the first step for a European Space for mobility, a passport for the exchange of learned experiences beyond our own local settings. The process, as we know, has become something else. It has been manipulated into the tool to kill diversity of knowledge and to mutilate the least marketeable knowledges, those associated to creative practices, to critical thinking which the multinational firms find so inconvenient nowadays. Gender Studies are obviously at risk.

There is no space here to go into detail on the most important actions on Gender Studies are European level. Let me just mention the ones which, in my opinion, have been fundamental in order to advance in the European cooperation I have commented above:

- SOCRATES Thematic Networks: TN ATHENA (coordinated by Utrecht University over 100 institutions specialised in Gender Studies in Europe), TN ACUME (coordinated by Bologna University, over 60 institutions working on European memory and the interface between the sciences and the humanities)

- Publications: all deliveries from the ATHENA network. In particular the series on *The Making of European Gender Studies* (10 volumes)

- European Research Projects within 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> FP (Marie Curie, Gendergraduates, Research Methods in the Social Sciences and Humanities, Employment and Women's Studies)

- European Associations (AOIFE, ATHENA, ATGENDER)

- Biannual European Gender Research Conference (latest taking place at CEU Budapest, 2012) and annual ATGENDER conference.

- GEMMA

- NOISE summer school (IP)

- ESF Gender Studies panel (for the selection of publication rankings within ERIH)

- Tuning Educational Structures project: gender analysis brochure EDGES (European PhD in Gender studies. Just granted to the GEMMA consortium to be run during the next two years).

By funding transnational degrees, and in particular the Erasmus Mundus call for masters taught by several universities in different countries, it has been made possible for lots of us to get to know other feminists from other countries who felt like us and shared with us many of their/our concerns. Thanks to it we became working partners first and friends, later on. That was the first new feminist knowledge we generated: the knowledge of good cooperation which, in many cases, developed into the knowledge of real friendship. And these are essential cooperative knowledges, the most instrumental knowledges nowadays to counteract the blind servitude imposed by the Europe of "governance" and "excellence", a Europe that prefers competition to cooperation, that forces its citizens to prove their "excellence" by accepting longer working hours and stepping over competitors while those who protest will simply be the excedent surplus.

The "excellent" versus the "excedent".<sup>16</sup> Transnational cooperation versus isolated competition. Solidary cooperation: partnership, friendship, solidarity, sharing. These are things that you learn when you sit at a table with your working partner but also when you walk to a meeting with her/him chit-chatting about silly anecdotes, when you share breakfast with them in the hotel where you are bound to stay for those few days, at the coffee break, during the celebratory drinks afterwards. This is what I, myself, learnt by participating in European actions such as ATHENA, AOIFE, ATGENDER, ACUME and now GEMMA. You learn to lead the way and to be led in turn. You learn to listen. To respect the other. Other points of view, sometimes very different from the way we had thought things to be before we were exposed to them, when we were in the isolated ivory towers of our respective institutions and we had only read and learnt they were the good practices, the good knowledges of good feminisms (which is, by the way, a tautology). Rosi Braidotti's ATHENA was the best exemplification of her inspiring nomadism. A network of curious nomads eagerly inquiring into each others' knowledges.

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<sup>16</sup> And here two footnotes: 1. the new employment Act in Spain (which legalises precarious jobs and flashbacks to the times before basic rights for the workers were re-instaurated after Franco's death, in negotiations with the Trade Unions) 2. the 14/2012 Royal Decree on education, the infamous so-called "urgent measures for the rationalisation of public expenditure on education" which "rationalises" the funding of education by increasing student fees and forcing university professors to take on a 50% extra teaching load, thus automatically generating an increase on the unemployment rate among the least senior staff at universities.

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## Perspectives on Gender Studies in the francophone context

*Edited by Rita Bencivenga<sup>17</sup>*

**Participants:** Catherine Wallemacq, Nadine Plateau, Diane Lamoureux, Florence Rochefort, Magali Delaloye, Marta Roca i Escoda, Patricia Roux<sup>18</sup>.

### Introduction

In this second round table, seven researchers answer questions to assess the state of the art of gender studies in four Francophone contexts: Wallonia, the French-speaking region of Belgium, Quebec, the Canadian province where French is the only official language, France and French-speaking Switzerland.

The main criterion for the selection of these four regions was linguistic, since the rich French-language production still remains less known compared to production in English.

This limitation affects the understanding of how gender studies have developed, and causes a flattening in the use of the term "gender", which is now used as a catchall to signify concepts that, in French, do not always correspond exactly to the English term "gender". We have sought in translating the term into English to pay attention to preserving the wealth of nuances.

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Axe: Genre, savoir, éducation

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**Magali Delaloye, Marta Roca i Escoda, Patricia Roux:** Centre en Etudes Genre – LIEGE, Université de Lausanne.

It is worthy of noting that the emphasis put on French materialist feminism during the roundtable is of considerable interest, since - for historical reasons - the Italian public is better acquainted with the differentialist tendency in French feminism.

In the following pages, different perspectives emerge that may attract the interest of readers according to their field of interest, their status as student or teacher and their preferred theoretical perspective.

The overview reflects how historical background, educational offer and local research fields, are part of a broader context, which is not always in French. It shows how the linguistic factor is one of the bigger challenges gender studies need to face in order not to lose the interest of the academic world.

In addition to the linguistic dimension, other understandings surface in responses. Practical difficulties arise in sharing a research interest at a time when several historical figures of feminism are close to retirement and when challenges arise from a teaching that is highly ideological. The importance of 'contamination' between the academic world and civil society movements remains essential for maintaining a link between theory and practice too.

## **1) The state of gender studies in the national context: what are the strengths and weaknesses?**

**Catherine Wallemacq, Nadine Plateau** (Belgium) - In Belgium, feminist knowledge emerged in the 70s with the women's movement outside universities and then it found a place in academia, more at the research level than within graduate courses. "Research for policy making", or studies commissioned as part of equal opportunities policies since the mid-80s, have certainly stimulated the development of gender research in both the French Community and in Flanders.

Nevertheless, groups and academic centres which currently bring researchers together on gender issues and offer them support, are still rare and do not get the desired recognition.

From the educational point of view, the introduction of courses on gender was delayed and uneven across the two linguistic communities.<sup>19</sup>

In Flanders, additional training on gender issues, VAO (Voortgezette Academische Opleiding) vrouwenstudies, took place from 1994 to 2007 and introductory courses on feminist theories and methodologies have been taught in some faculties.

In FWB<sup>20</sup>, only one university organizes a minor in gender, although courses on this subject, or integrating this dimension are increasing in number, especially in the faculties of arts, humanities and political science.

Academics who choose to integrate a gender perspective in their courses do so on a voluntary, unpaid basis, therefore these teachings are always at risk when these professors leave academia.

At present, it is clear that despite some visibility and some development of these teachings and research, gender studies are still not structurally integrated in universities.

They are allocated specific resources. No degree in Gender Studies officially certifies a training path. The lack of institutionalization causes insecurity.

Compared to these inadequacies, the feminist associative movement has been extremely active, although only partially effective.

Thus the Sophia association was created in 1989 to promote feminist studies and women's studies in both academic and activist perspectives. Over the past twenty years Sophia has conducted a number of actions ranging from pilot experiences of feminist Chairs in Francophone universities, to mainstreaming gender equality policies in universities in Belgium, to the realization of a database identifying research and teachings in the Belgian academic world.

Recently, Sophia conducted a feasibility study on a bi-communal and inter-university gender master. The latter choice reflects the will of Sophia to focus on the transmission of feminist knowledge and on the training of students who could then disseminate this

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<sup>19</sup> In the Belgian federal state, education is a matter falling within the competence of the communities, which explains the differences in gender studies whether in terms of subsidies and of academic tradition (more globally Anglo-Saxon oriented in Flanders and francophone in the French Community).

<sup>20</sup> FWB, (Fédération Wallonie Bruxelles) is the new official name of the French Community of Belgium.

knowledge in society and/ or who could become, in the future, researchers having a better theoretical background.

The study undertaken by Sophia sought to determine the feasibility of this project around the analysis of four types of parameters: legal, contents related, institutional (which resulted in the realization of a market study) and good practices.

Besides the description of a master project based on the establishment of a common core of courses next to optional courses, the research has revealed the existence of a demand from students, who complain of a severe lack of training and are often constrained to seek education or adequate supervision abroad.

All actions conducted by Sophia aim to expand and strengthen the network of coordination and promotion of gender studies.

In the case of the Master the work was fuelled and driven by working groups and by a steering committee gathering people involved in Belgian universities, representatives from politics and inter-university boards of both linguistic communities.

The latter are regularly questioned by Sophia but while the Project Master from Sophia has received significant support from the ministries concerned, and if parliamentary initiatives have taken place such as for example in FWB<sup>21</sup>, academic authorities remain reluctant or even, as it is the case in FWB, completely indifferent.

They open the way to initiatives so far as they are done on a voluntary basis, while avoiding any disturbance to the university. Now, the university is suffering and the efforts it requires increasingly from the academic staff make militant commitment and/or volunteer activities difficult. Without a strong signal for the institutionalization of gender studies, an impasse is opening before those who wish to work in this direction.

**Diane Lamoureux**\_(Canada) – Gender studies have developed in Quebec since the 1970s, under the label feminist studies or women's studies. In the early years, the courses were more akin to militant activities (not being recognized in the professors' task, being as much frequented by students as by activists, not being integrated into

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<sup>21</sup> The drafted legislative proposal by Zakia Khattabi (Ecolo) on equality in universities includes the opening as soon as possible of the master's degree in gender studies in the form of co-organization or joint degree

university curriculum). Starting from the second half of the 1970s, we began to see the beginning of institutionalization: formal courses are started, and networks of feminist professors are formed. Concordia University, following a dynamic that prevailed in Canada outside Quebec and in the USA, sets up a centre of women's studies, the Simone de Beauvoir Institute, which recently celebrated its 35th anniversary. The other English-speaking university, McGill University does the same in 1995.

In the French-speaking environment, the tendency has rather been to develop disciplinary courses and to group professors and female students at Masters and PhD levels in a more or less formal network. Thus, at the University of Quebec in Montreal, the Interdisciplinary Group for Study and Feminist Research (GIERF, Groupe interdisciplinaire pour l'enseignement et la recherche féministe) was formed in 1976 and has evolved into an institute recognized by the university, under the name of Institut de recherche féministe (Institute for Feminist Research) in 1990, but contrary to what happens in the Anglophone universities, the Institute is a research institute and has no hiring authority. This transformation has also corresponded with the structuring of educational profiles (named concentrations) both for the first and second cycle. The same phenomenon is active at Laval University, while the GIERF was started in 1982.

It was not until the establishment of the graduate degree in women's studies in the early 1990s that interdisciplinary courses were set up. The particularity of Laval University is, however, having obtained the Chair on study on the condition of women in 1988.

It should be noted that in terms of education, at least at the undergraduate level, the courses have remained departmental, without specific and transdisciplinary activities. There are also feminist networks at the University of Sherbrooke and at the Université du Québec in Outaouais. For a little over a decade, Laval University has also offered a feminist Summer School annually.

Also worth noting is that, in terms of research, public funding agencies have partially supported feminist research. In the late 1980s, the CRSH Conseil de Recherches en Sciences Humaines du Canada (Social Sciences Humanities Research Council of Canada), set aside funds for research on women and the FQRSC Fonds Québécois de la Recherche sur la Société et la Culture (Quebec Fund for Research, Society and Culture)

has regularly funded research projects explicitly situated in a feminist perspective. The journal *Recherches féministes*, which opened at Laval University in 1988, is an academic journal recognized and subsidized.

In 2011 the Réseau québécois en études féministes REQEF (Quebec Network of feminists' studies) was established; this makes it possible to link both those who are in institutions that have a structured network of feminist studies and those in institutions that have none. It allows the development of inter-university and international research collaborations. It also organizes study days, conferences, seminars and "master classes". It also adds value to knowledge transfer between universities and women's groups.

If we now examine the strengths and weaknesses of the field, since the formation of REQEF one can note better integration in the field of research at the national level: students' feminist conferences, summer schools, master classes, annual conferences organized under the ACFAS, collaborations on sponsored research, the existence of a journal, *Recherches féministes*, can all support each other and produce both greater synergies and greater visibility.

In the education area, the situation is more fragmented. In the Anglophone model, it is possible to have an integrated education both because there are transdisciplinary courses and because it is possible to calibrate the difficulty of the courses and to introduce logical learning sequences (propaedeutic courses). This is much more difficult to achieve with courses that remain disciplinary, which is the case in most Francophone universities, the synthesis work being almost entirely the student's responsibility. Moreover, as the existing networks are essentially research networks, the actual courses offering and the hiring possibilities are under the responsibility of various university departments, which affects the consistency and regularity of lessons.

Another problem is represented by pensions. Those who fought to establish the various existing networks began to retire or will do it soon. In some universities, or in some departments, the succession is assured, while others take advantage of these retirements to remove or put feminist teachings on hold.

**Florence Rochefort** (France) - Since the 2000s, gender studies have truly taken off in France, renewing and bringing new energy to women's studies and the study of social

relationships between the sexes that had been established in the late 1980s, but without much institutional support<sup>22</sup>. Paris, Lyon and Toulouse are still the main centers for both research and teaching, but gender networks are being created in other places, such as Bordeaux.

We have observed tremendous demand for it from students, particularly for gender/sexuality issues, as well as the extension of gender themes into other disciplines, particularly geography, communication sciences, art and visual-culture history, sociology of sports and the social sciences of religion and secularism. In addition, non-specialist academics have become much more open to the integration of research results or descriptive approaches of gendered dimensions of their subjects (without going as far as joining the field of gender studies – this does create the risk of a certain trivialization and impoverishment of the notion, to the detriment of more serious research issues, including power relationships and domination, which are still stigmatized as “activist”).

Sociology and history are still the pioneering subjects and the matrix for the main academic journals (*Genre Travail Sociétés* ; *Cahiers du Genre* ; *Clio Femmes, Genre, Histoire* ; *Genre et Histoire* ; *Genre, sexualité & société* ; *Cahiers du CEDREF* ; *Nouvelles Questions Féministes*), which are produced in a spirit of multi-disciplinary opening (particularly towards anthropology and political science).

Since the turning point of the 2000s, and thanks to institutional support, a not-insignificant number of theses have been devoted fully to gender and –what’s most striking – the number of subjects involved has grown considerably. This is due in part to the elements mentioned above, but also to more pro-active policies on the part, for instance, of the Emilie du Châtelet Institute for the Development of Women, Sex and Gender Studies, which was founded by the Paris Regional Council. Since 2004, the Institute has been able to award 41 doctoral and 30 post-doctoral grants in over 20

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<sup>22</sup> See in particular the Ministry of Higher Education’s report *Egalité entre les femmes et les hommes. Orientations stratégiques pour les recherches sur le genre*, November 2012. <http://www.ladocumentationfrancaise.fr/rapports-publics/134000070/>. *Livre blanc Le genre dans l’enseignement supérieur et la recherche* (by the ANEF Association nationale d’Etudes féministes), Paris, La Dispute, 2014.

different disciplines<sup>23</sup>. New generations of academics – often with international backgrounds, are bringing these issues into their disciplines, such as Law, where a REGINE group has just published *Ce que le genre fait au Droit*<sup>24</sup>. A dialogue between human and social sciences on the one hand and “hard” sciences on the other is taking place within the CNRS (National Scientific Research Center) and the IEC<sup>25</sup>.

**Magali Delaloye, Marta Roca i Escoda, Patricia Roux** (Switzerland) - Gender studies in Switzerland have followed a path towards institutionalisation since the end of the nineties, beginning a national network approach that is quite exceptional in the European context. By conquering institutional spaces in Switzerland, such as education with the “Gender” label on bachelor’s degree courses in various disciplines; specific Master’s degrees in gender; doctoral schools, and also “Gender” and interdisciplinary research units, gender studies have a good presence in the Swiss university field. Information is increasingly circulating and contacts and scientific exchanges are multiplying.

The current inclusion of gender studies in Swiss universities is explained by the commitment of individuals and groups that have worked for their recognition and, by the spread of a general discourse on equality of the sexes which, after more than twenty years, has won a big place in the public debate and, more modestly, in academic policy<sup>26</sup>. At university level, the establishment of a *National research programme* (PNR

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<sup>23</sup> In addition to awarding grants and funding academic events, the Emilie du Châtelet Institute, which is now part of a larger organization called Gender Inequalities Discriminations, organizes seminars and a monthly lecture series, annual conferences and research seminars, and an annual symposium allowing feminist academics and activist associations to get together and share ideas; French translations of major works. See the website: <http://www.institutemilieduchatelet.org>

<sup>24</sup> REGINE: Research into Gender and Inequalities in European Norms; see their site as well as their book *Ce que le genre fait au Droit* (“*What Gender Is Doing to Law*”), Paris, Dalloz, 2013. <http://regine.u-paris10.fr>

<sup>25</sup> A Pluri-Disciplinary Themed Network has been established at the CNRS, which, among other activities, produces calls for research projects; for the IEC, see most notably, the on-line conference “*Mon corps a-t-il un sexe ?*” (“*Does My Body Have a Sex?*”), a conference on Health and Gender is being prepared for 2015.

<sup>26</sup> In a more developed way on this points and on the beginning of the institutionalisation of gender studies in Switzerland, see Gaël Pannatier and Patricia Roux, “*Institutionnalisation des études féministes en Suisse*”, *Les cahiers du CEDREF* [online], 13 | 2005, put online 02 March 2012, consulted on 11 December 2013. URL: <http://cedref.revues.org/629>.

35) on women in law and society (“Social and Legal Status of Women - Ways to Equality”) can be considered as a fundamental step. This programme provided research in gender studies with initial financial support, maintaining 24 projects in different disciplines between 1993 and 1997. At a political level, in 1998, a first report from the Swiss Scientific Council on the state of research and teaching in gender studies in Switzerland revealed the weakness of their institutionalisation and their coordination in Swiss universities but also the dynamism of the researchers and teachers making up this perspective<sup>27</sup>. In 2000, Swiss policy in relation to equality and gender studies reached a turning point, with considerable finance from the Swiss University Conference (CUS, using the French abbreviation), a mixed institution including politicians and university representatives. A departure came first with a *Federal equality of opportunity programme*, whose main aim was to strengthen the next generation of female scientists, notably by developing mentoring networks and trying to double the number of women on university teaching staffs, a growth that has not yet been achieved<sup>28</sup> (at the current level of 17%, Switzerland is still lagging behind in international terms)<sup>29</sup>. So, since 2005, the CUS has been involved in developing teaching in gender studies. The CUS project “Network Gender Studies Switzerland” finances academic posts flagged as “Gender”, as well as doctoral schools in gender studies and institutes of gender studies in order to continue teaching and research in this area. It will end in December 2016 and, from then on, it will be the universities’ responsibility to keep the posts opened up thanks to this federal finance, if they have not already done so. Finally, the political interest in gender research is also visible in the current financing by the Swiss National

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Christine Michel, The process of institutionalisation of women’s and gender studies in Switzerland, paper written for ATHENA (Advanced thematic network in activities in women’s studies in Europe), June 2001.

<sup>27</sup> Regula Burri, Irène Fleischmann and Elisabetta Pagnossin-Aligissakis (eds.), *Etudes femmes/ Etudes genre en Suisse*, Bern, Swiss Scientific Council, 1998.

<sup>28</sup> For the University of Lausanne, see particularly the report directed by Fassa Farinaz, Sabine Kradolfer and Sophie Paroz (2008), *Enquête au royaume de Matilda. La relève académique à l’Université de Lausanne*. Lausanne, Geneva: PAVIE Working Papers, n° 1 (<http://www.unil.ch/liege/page66558.html>).

<sup>29</sup> Federal Office of Statistics (2011), “Femmes et hommes dans les hautes écoles suisses. Indicateurs sur les différences entre les sexes”, in *Education et sciences 15*, Neuchâtel. [www.bfs.admin.ch/bfs/portal/fr/index/.../publ.Document.149852.pdf](http://www.bfs.admin.ch/bfs/portal/fr/index/.../publ.Document.149852.pdf) (last visit: 9 January 2014).

Fund (FNS, using the French abbreviation) of the second National Research Programme (PNR 60 “Gender Equality”), which has 21 projects all over Switzerland<sup>30</sup>.

In ten years, new structures have already considerably transformed the gender studies landscape in Switzerland and they are now undeniably highly visible to students (a more developed, better publicised and more accessible range; researchers (competence centres; research symposiums, networks, etc.); the academic world, and society. Generally, then, Swiss universities are quite clearly showing their commitment to an academic policy in favour of gender studies and the promotion of women in universities.

However, this national cooperation dynamic cannot be taken for granted. Among the structural difficulties gender studies researchers have to face, the multiplicity of languages remains a central barrier – a real problem that does not make it easy to create projects, hold national discussions or academic exchanges, which are moreover based on different traditions and theoretical orientations. The very independent and variable operation of each university, linked to the particular context of the Swiss political system (decentralised federalism) also does not encourage supra-university cooperation. Under these conditions, gender studies researchers who believe in establishing cooperation and coordination at national level must draw up projects that transcend regional, linguistic and disciplinary boundaries.

In terms of networking, we would mention three very dynamic national projects in the field of gender studies in Switzerland: the information platform Gender Campus (2004)<sup>31</sup>, the researcher network LIEGE (*Laboratoire interuniversitaire en Etudes Genre*, 2001)<sup>32</sup> and the University of Lausanne’s Interfaculty Platform in Gender Studies (2013)<sup>33</sup>. The three networks aim at supporting people interested in gender studies and equality issues in higher education colleges<sup>34</sup>. The first is attached to the University of Bern and is more orientated towards the German-speaking and national area and the second and third are attached to the University of Lausanne and orientated

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<sup>30</sup> For a precise description, cf. the programme site: <http://www.nfp60.ch/F/Pages/home.aspx>.

<sup>31</sup> <http://www.gendercampus.ch>.

<sup>32</sup> <http://www.unil.ch/liege>.

<sup>33</sup> <http://www.unil.ch/plage>.

<sup>34</sup> The landscape of Swiss tertiary education consists, on one hand, of universities and, on the other, of specialised higher education colleges, more orientated towards practical courses.

towards the French-speaking area. In a few years, Gender Campus has proved its potential. However, since it started, this project has been financed by different short-term funds and its situation is still precarious.

The LIEGE is also the cradle of the reconfiguration of *Nouvelles Questions Féministes*<sup>35</sup>. In fact, the journal could be relaunched in 2002 thanks to the new forces released by LIEGE<sup>36</sup>, which promoted exchanges within and around the review and the collection of the funds needed to publish it. The University of Lausanne Gender Platform (PlaGe, using the French abbreviation), launched in 2013, was set up to continue the LIEGE network with a view to developing a centre for interdisciplinary exchange and research within the university, notably by strengthening the presence of gender studies in faculties other than social sciences.

This tour of the horizon of the institutionalisation of feminist studies in Switzerland and of the innovative projects established in the last few years states reports welcome dynamism and development. It must, however, be stressed that projects are succeeding at the cost of the constant struggle of feminist researchers and teachers, and still in an often precarious form. We are not yet safe, then, from possible discouragement among the people involved in the process, or from budget cuts or changes in Swiss academic priorities and policies which would make the stabilisation of gender studies projects and posts even more difficult.

## **2) Teaching a gender perspective: the current challenges?**

**Catherine Wallemacq, Nadine Plateau** (Belgium) - "Teaching a gender perspective" refers to the classic debate about the issue of autonomy or integration of women's studies, started in the 70s at the very heart of these studies in the USA.

This debate opposed (it always opposes) two groups. On the one hand, supporters of the autonomy of a gender curriculum certified by a degree and designed in an

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<sup>35</sup> The history of this event can be traced in the following article: Patricia Roux, "Questions féministes: des nouvelles de Suisse", in *Nouvelles Questions Féministes*, vol. 21, no. 1, pp. 4-17, 2002.

<sup>36</sup> The number of members of LIEGE developed quickly and has continued to grow. Today it includes more than 1,000 people.

interdisciplinary perspective, to meet the need to deepen research in this area and to consolidate the theoretical foundation of these studies.

On the other hand, supporters of the integration of a gender perspective into existing disciplines, to improve the scientific and social relevance of knowledge.

For Sophia, these two approaches are not mutually exclusive, as far as gender studies retain their potential for critical analysis, and their tradition of collective reflection.

The association works as well for the recognition by the universities of gender studies as an autonomous field of research and teaching, which must be structurally anchored to gender mainstreaming at all levels in the courses.

What led Sophia to choose one or the other option has more to do with pragmatism and strategy.

Thus, depending on the Flemish or French context, different opportunities are emerging. In Flanders, the efforts focused on a project for an Interuniversity master, bringing together the five Flemish universities, were greatly inspired by the Sophia research.

The project, led by professors and researchers, has been accepted at the political level and before succeeding is awaiting approval of an accreditation committee of official agencies.

In FWB, without abandoning the attempts to convince the authorities of the interest in a gender master, the mobilization is currently around “gender contact” persons, recently appointed to the initiative by the Minister of Public Service, eager to promote equality of women and men in universities.

One of the points of the specification defining their mission is in fact to support the development of specific educational programmes on gender.

In this second case, the passage through equal employment policies could be effective in relation to the goal of institutionalising gender studies.

Thus, various strategies can be deployed while pursuing common goals and keeping this requirement of critical analysis defended by Sophia since its inception.

The *Grabuges*<sup>37</sup> experience demonstrates this approach, both pragmatic and radical, particularly original in the context of the francophone Belgian context, with its lack of institutionalization of gender studies.

With the support of Sophia and of the Université des femmes<sup>38</sup>, the Grabuges group involves young researchers and teachers of universities and disciplines, every year organizes several days and a methodological workshop to advance the debate on methods of feminist and gender research and thus helps young researchers and final year undergraduates in their work.

Grabuges provides PhD students a place of reflection and discussion with more experienced researchers of Belgian Francophone universities, wishing to integrate a feminist or gender perspective in their work.

Grabuges, which started as an informal group, benefited from the creation of the new Interuniversity tool titled "contact group" proposed by the FNRS (National Fund for Scientific Research), to create in June 2010 a FNRS Contact Group, named "Gender: from theories to research strategies" in order to register the group and its activities in a more formal setting.

It constitutes an important contribution to sustaining and deepening the network's exchanges and reflections, particularly for a targeted audience of doctoral candidates requesting clarification and methodological tools for integrating gender in their research.

Globally, Grabuges, operating both inside and outside the universities, manages to offer a new theoretical way to construct the problematic of autonomy/integration

Grabuges seems to say that the Nina Lykke<sup>39</sup> proposal, to consider women's studies as "the oxymoron of a post-Disciplinary discipline" is not as provocative as it may seem at first glance.

Grabuges members, gathered initially to overcome the lack of scientific framework in the gender field, remain anchored in specific disciplines. The members develop

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<sup>37</sup> Grabuges is the Belgian associative and Interuniversity Group on feminists, gender and sexualities studies, see [www.grabuges.com](http://www.grabuges.com).

<sup>38</sup> L'Université des femmes ([www.universitedesfemmes.be](http://www.universitedesfemmes.be)) is a feminist organization for lifelong learning.

<sup>39</sup> Nina Lykke, *Women's, Gender, Feminist Studies - a Post-disciplinary Discipline?*, in Braidotti et al., *The Making of Women's Studies*, volume V, Athena, Socrates Programme, 2004.

through their network and by mastering the most relevant methodologies - whatever the subject or the discipline - working hypotheses and insights that go far beyond the established boundaries between disciplines and levels of study.

The Grabuges scientific approach is rooted in collective thinking and in the critical analysis of established knowledge, which requires breaking down disciplinary boundaries. It is inseparable from a careful functioning that opens a free space where evaluation and competition give way to constructive dialogue.

Grabuges also works on women's empowerment in the academy. In two ways: firstly by strengthening the feminist network in universities, an essential network to shape attitudes of the entire university community, secondly by gaining academic recognition (FNRS Group) which may serve the cause of institutionalization.

**Diane Lamoureux** (Canada) - The first challenge, that has always existed, is the "ideological" nature of our education. In the contemporary neoliberal university, the notions of utility and positivity prevail. It is certainly possible to take advantage of some "utility" to the extent that governments have implemented some networks concerning equality between men and women. However, these networks are limited and above all fragile especially the current prevailing discourse that equality is already here and the problem of gender inequality lies with the "others", not with "us", both categories being vague enough to lend themselves to all sorts of political and ideological manipulations. In Quebec, there are also groups of women that employ a number of former students of women's studies courses, but, again, this is a limited opportunity.

As for the ideological nature of these studies, it appears clear, as they are called "feminist studies". It is not just a matter of studying the social situation of women or gender relations, but to do so in a specific perspective, the transformation of this situation. In the field of social sciences, understanding and action for change are of immediate complementarity. Feminist studies are therefore tolerated (and many of the female teachers or students in feminist studies are in this field of knowledge), but not necessarily taken seriously and certainly not highly valued academically.

The situation is different in other areas of knowledge. In the field of science and technology, the focus has been mainly on opening these disciplines to women and less

on the sexist dimensions that this field of knowledge. In the field of education, since the emphasis on gender mainstreaming in the 1990s, the gender-based textbooks or poor working conditions of a world largely feminized teachers at pre-university level are less prevalent, than the better academic performances of girls and the dropout rate for boys. As the latter phenomenon is often imputed to the excessive presence of female teachers suspected, moreover, of feminism, this does not provide a good environment for feminist studies.

Arts and humanities is an area where women's studies are booming. Given the prevalence of deconstruction and postmodern thinking in this field, some feminist approaches (including postmodern and queer theories) are particularly compatible with the dominant currents of these disciplines. This probably explains the large number of female students in academic feminist networks in this area. It is still difficult to justify their object of study, but at least their methods are not rejected straightaway.

The second challenge is the vagueness of the "gender perspective". The concept could not be more polysemic. Taking into account the academic organization charts at Concordia, the women's studies programme is separate from the one on gender and sexuality, though some teach in both fields. At UQAM, there is a research chair on homophobia attached to REQEF, but this attachment is largely due to the intellectual and activist background of the chairholder.

One can identify at least three possible meanings of the "gender perspective" notion. The first is related to all those phenomena connected to the socially constructed nature of gender. This can encompass broadly all that relates to sexuation and to the social relations resulting from it. Intellectually, it brings together as much the LGTBIA as the "queer" issues. The second may refer to gender relations, which implies a focus on gender inequalities faced by women. At an intellectual level, this includes most standpoint theories, including black feminism and postcolonial feminism. A third meaning may be similar to the policies of gender mainstreaming: gender is then perceived as a social marker among many that brings some added value to research programmes.

The third challenge is that of discontinuity. This can be felt both in the education as well as in the research area. In the area of education, most people working in the field of

feminist studies are employed in disciplinary departments; in some cases it may be a "joint appointment", which means that the person is hired jointly in a discipline and in an institute with gender perspective; in extremely rare cases, people are only related to women's studies.

As a result, feminist professors are primarily teaching disciplinary courses and not necessarily in a feminist perspective, a consistent curriculum of courses is difficult to build and, where concentrations exist, the possibility of scheduling the courses depends largely on the disciplinary departments and the institutional bargaining in each programme. In the field of research, the gender perspective is not a handicap as such, since many projects and research teams have been funded. Where the shoe pinches is in terms of promotion of research in curriculum terms.

Where to publish? The only academic journal, *Recherches féministes* publishes primarily special issues and appears only twice a year. The more a disciplinary journal has a high impact factor, the more resistant it is to the gender perspective. In addition, for francophone researchers, there is the problem of the language of publication, the highest rated journals being Anglophone.

Gender teaching, despite its continuing fragility, has been enlarged and strengthened by the creation of several masters about gender: in Paris (EHESS; University Paris 8; University Paris 7); Lyon (European EGALE master, Equality and Gender Studies); Toulouse (GEPS (Gender, Equality and Social Policy) and EGALES masters); Rennes (DIU Interuniversity Degree). Several history, sociology and political-science textbooks have been published that take this new level of transmission into account. Nevertheless, this teaching has been weakened by current Ministry restructuring aimed at reducing the number of master specialties, particularly for research masters.

In addition, teaching at the undergraduate level is rare, random and usually elective. It depends on the good will of specific professors, many of whom are retiring without having been able to consolidate their teaching. Therefore, it was recommended to the Ministry to make this teaching mandatory, but in the context of reforms intended to promote autonomy for state universities, it seems difficult to impose this "from the top down."

So a disturbing deficit in teaching at a university level can be observed, which makes transmission to secondary schools (high schools and middle schools) tricky, even though the demand is there<sup>40</sup>, particularly since “textbook war” was declared and a right-wing lobby has been systematically attacking “gender theory” within the context of the controversy surrounding same-sex marriage.

**Florence Rochefort** (France) - The 2012 creation of a Gender Institute GIS (Scientific Interest Group) by the CNRS (National Center for Scientific Research) was a powerful institutional signal. It is organized nationally, proposes themed calls for research projects, and is organizing a major French gender-studies convention in Lyon in 2014. It is being organized around 9 key priorities, which were selected as emerging themes to support<sup>41</sup>.

This growth is also being encouraged by the gender research federation RING (National Interuniversity and Interdisciplinary Gender Research Network) in addition to the efforts of activist organizations like the ANEF, the National Association for Feminist Studies, and Mnémosyne, for developing women’s and gender history, as well as gender research. Nevertheless, gender research is still insufficiently developed, and its situation remains extremely precarious. There are a number of weak points to underscore: the fragility of what has been achieved and the significant share of volunteer investment to support this research; institutional centers’ fragility due to their dependence on political choices in a time of budgetary restrictions, and on the determination of specific individuals who don’t always stay in office; the tremendous prejudice against gender studies (which is perceived as an activist field), which is tenacious and which still hampers young academics’ careers; the difficulty of publishing and distributing research – which has worsened with the crisis in publishing, despite recourse to digital distribution; the lack of connection to international research. One can also notice that the pluri-disciplinary and trans-disciplinary dynamic is not sufficiently

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<sup>40</sup> It’s worth noting the successful publication of the counter-textbook *La place des femmes dans l’histoire une histoire mixte* (“Women’s Place in History, A Mixed Story”, Paris, Belin, 2010), by academics from the organization Mnémosyne, for the Development of Women’s and Gender History.

<sup>41</sup> <http://www.mshparisnord.fr/gis-institut-genre/>

supported, since evaluations and career strategies still remain within a single discipline. The articulation between research, teaching and training is another weak point.

**Magali Delaloye, Marta Roca i Escoda, Patricia Roux** (Switzerland) – Generally in Switzerland it can be considered that the integration of a gender perspective into education has been achieved, although its implications have not always been taken on board. Teachers or researchers still sometimes limit taking gender into account to a comparison between men and women, reducing genre to a simple variable – sex – without rethinking their discipline using the tools of the theories developed in gender studies. The challenge therefore has to be strengthening the academic credibility of gender research while at the same time publicising feminist theories better.

The success of this integration of gender studies into university education is shown in students interests, translated into the choice of topics for dissertations or theses, into increasing their capital of increasingly well publicised knowledge which is also increasingly accepted, and also into education courses. In Bachelors' degree courses, the range of gender education on offer has continued to grow over the last few years. However, its presence varies considerably depending on faculties and universities, while its integration into existing structures is coherent with its cross-disciplinary nature. The challenge in this field is therefore to extend the political will to integrate gender studies into all disciplines and to implement a teacher recruitment policy lasting several years focused on hiring specialists in the subject<sup>42</sup>.

At Master's degree level, current developments in gender studies in French-speaking Switzerland are operating in two directions. Initially, the Universities of Geneva and Lausanne ran a common Master's degree course (then known as a DEA) in Gender Studies from 1995 to 2006. The two universities then set up two different Master's degrees: Geneva preserved the form of an interdisciplinary "Gender" Master's degree, while Lausanne established a "Gender" specialisation in its social sciences Master's degrees. These two directions provide a perfect example of the debates and discussions begun at a good number of universities concerning the ways of institutionalising gender

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<sup>42</sup> Lorena Parini, "Quel avenir institutionnel pour les études genre?", in *Carnets de bord. Revue des jeunes chercheurs en sciences humaines*, Geneva, no. 1, June 2001.

studies, leading to alternative approaches each with their own advantages, which are, deep down, complementary. One advocates the establishment of autonomous research units while the other calls for the insertion of the approach into existing disciplines. The latter route has also been chosen by the Universities of Fribourg and Neuchâtel, which offer “Gender” education in some of their departments (largely history and sociology at Fribourg and migration studies at Neuchâtel).

In the postgraduate field, Swiss doctoral schools and PhD programmes in Gender Studies are linked in a university network which has existed since 2002 and brings together the following universities: Basel (Graduiertenkolleg Geschlechterforschung IV: Geschlechterverhältnisse – Normalisierung und Transformation), Bern/Fribourg (Doktoratsprogramm Gender Studies), IHEID/Fribourg/Geneva/Lausanne/Neuchâtel (Programme doctoral CUSO en Etudes Genre), Zurich (Doktoratsprogramm Gender Studies: Verkörperung– Geschlecht – Konstruktion. Ästhetische und soziale Praktiken). They are interdisciplinary education programmes<sup>43</sup> intended for PhD students and researchers in all disciplines. Anyone with gender as a central category of analysis in their research can join them. The network organises local as well as national and international events. The Swiss International Summer School in Gender Studies, organised every year as part of the CUS Project “Network Gender Studies Switzerland”, is one example. At French-speaking level, the institutionalisation of PhD education is making good progress. Following a school financed jointly by the FNS and the CUS (2008-2011), the CUSO doctoral programme in Gender Studies<sup>44</sup> has taken up the baton and has become an entirely separate programme in the West Switzerland University Conference (CUSO, using the French abbreviation), the central institution for French-speaking universities.

Obtaining posts, particularly as professors and project heads, is certainly essential for the development of gender studies in order to educate and raise the awareness of as many people as possible and also to have access to decision-making bodies and obtain research funds. The network approach and collective operation as practised by LIEGE

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<sup>43</sup> Lorena Parini, “L’expérience interdisciplinaire à l’Ecole doctorale lémanique en Etudes Genre”, in *Nouvelles Questions Féministes*, vol. 23, no. 1, 2004.

<sup>44</sup> The West Switzerland University Conference is, in turn, the common institution for university establishments in French-speaking Switzerland (cf. [gender.cuso.ch](http://gender.cuso.ch)).

and the journal *Nouvelles Questions Féministes* seem to us to be an innovative example in the attempt to reconcile the objective of institutional integration, the transmission of feminist knowledge and a critical dimension. But reflection must be continued and other collective approaches developed to accentuate the political scope of gender studies, notably with a view to transforming deeply patriarchal academic structures.

We believe there are several important aspects in the establishment of gender study education. After teaching (since the eighties) and research developed as individual, non-institutionalised initiatives, the first two lecturer posts to which the “Gender Studies” label was specifically attached were set up by the University of Lausanne in the autumn of 2000 and the University of Basel in the spring of 2001. Supported by the favourable international and national context of the previous few years, they were the result of a combination of mobilisations of undergraduate and postgraduate students and teachers from these universities and support from above, possibly from the vice-chancellor’s office at these universities. During the first decade of the 2000s, other lecturer posts in gender studies were set up in several French-speaking Swiss universities and in various faculties. Moreover, the posts given over to gender studies at middle levels (assistant lecturers, etc.) have also multiplied at different universities. The opening of these posts has been an important signal. On one hand, it has allowed these studies to be anchored in the institution, even if the means remain modest, and dynamics to be developed within several universities. In the actions based around the creation of these new posts, two main positions now coexist: a more militant one which continues to use feminist knowledge as a tool for changing the world, and another based on the idea that gender is an accepted, institutionalised and credible academic perspective which no longer needs to fight for its significance to be recognised. While these two positions coexist, they can each, in their own way, contribute to the institutionalisation of gender studies. But if one disappears in favour of the other, it is highly possible that this institutional process could fall apart and that gender studies will lose their current strength.

### **3) Gender studies in Europe: prospects?**

**Catherine Wallemacq, Nadine Plateau** (Belgium) - Perspectives vary considerably from one country to another, depending on the degree of institutionalization of these studies.

Setbacks are known in countries that have developed this area for a long time (Scandinavian countries, for example) and advanced in countries that have institutionalized these studies recently (Baltic states, for example).

What remains common is the difficult recognition or lack of support by the academic authorities, and the institutional fragility of these studies, which in the academic reorganization plans are likely to be sacrificed each time.

In this geographically variable context, perhaps the best perspective would be to achieve that the knowledge issue (a subject unknown to the public and rarely discussed in the media), but an eminently political issue, forms part of the public debate.

It would be necessary to take it out of the "academic fortress ", which is all the more necessary as the problems faced by the academy go well beyond the strictly academic and national framework.

These problems result from societal choices made at least at the European level.

Many voices have been raised to denounce the trend towards commercialization of universities.

Far from their original purpose, service to society, they have become places in search of profit, selling off the content of training to attract more students, and therefore more money.

The sectors that become recognized are the ones that can be sold, those offering practical and profitable opportunities. The university now favours the knowledge that will be useful to the market and not that which (re) thinks society and proposes to improve it.

For researchers, this translates into the need for a sustained production of publications in peer-reviewed journals. The time is long past when one could give time to a subject to mature, leaving a problem to rest before re-interviewing it.

Now it is the short term that is winning, dictated by these rankings that classify universities, whose sole obsession is to be included and possibly well placed in them, at the expense of all interest in the content.

The research that matters is the one that refers to this system, which is also supported by industry.

The humanities are therefore neglected in many countries<sup>45</sup>, as universities choose to "focus on utilitarian and 'marketable' knowledge at the expense of the basic sciences and humanistic, critical and reflexive knowledge."<sup>46</sup>

In this regard, two strategies could be effective. The first, could be to consolidate European networks of feminist studies, as Europe is indeed concerned with knowledge and trends moving towards their commodification.

These networks exist, such ATGENDER, a continuation of ATHENA, the European network funded by the Socrates programme, whose publications demonstrate a critical and innovative thinking about gender studies at European level.

The second strategy would be to defend a radical view of gender studies (critical and transdisciplinary, while maintaining a pragmatic approach) among researchers and their associations that resist the neoliberal influence on universities and the current commodification of knowledge.

This applies to the "slow science" movements which advocate - like the "slow food" for sustainable food - a knowledge that takes time to be trained and favours quality over quantity<sup>47</sup>.

In Belgium, the dismissal of Barbara Van Dyck, a researcher from the University of Leuven<sup>48</sup> who had to leave her post after having publicly defended the destruction of a GMO crop, made a strong impression while highlighting collusion between academia and the business sector, threatening academic freedom<sup>49</sup>.

The event was followed a few months later, in January 2012, by the resignation of a philosopher of the University of Liege who justified her choice to the university and

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<sup>45</sup> The example of the Netherlands is striking. See for example the militant reaction PopUpUniversity: <http://popupuniversity.nl>.

<sup>46</sup> Manifesto for universities to live up to their mission: <http://www.univendebat.eu/manifeste/manifesto-for-universities-to-stand-up-for-their-missions/>

<sup>47</sup> See <http://slowscience.fr/> or <http://threerottenpotatoes.wordpress.com/independent-science-2/>

<sup>48</sup> Flemish University of Louvain

<sup>49</sup> See <http://threerottenpotatoes.wordpress.com/2011/09/15/aktie-tegen-het-ontslag-van-barbara-van-dyck-bij-de-opening-van-het-academiejaar-in-leuven/>

beyond by "denouncing the degradation of European universities and in particular the productivism and ambient careerism, become unsustainable"<sup>50</sup>.

Soon after, researchers and teachers of the Free University of Brussels published an open letter in a major French-language daily newspaper asking to "de-excellencise the academy"<sup>51</sup>. And this year, in Flanders, an ongoing debate has been initiated by a group of young researchers and professors, about the turn taken by universities that seek quantity rather than quality<sup>52</sup>.

The feminists of gender studies have their place in this fight because they are fundamentally critical and claim a long tradition of epistemological critique of knowledge. More importantly, they suggest ways to rethink knowledge, they question the link between research and activism and they shift the focus, uncover blind spots of thought, opening the possibility of practical solutions. In a world in a crisis, to which the university is not immune, gender studies can therefore bring new energy and pave the way for alternatives. They bring a breath of fresh air to a university out of breath.

**Diane Lamoureux**\_(Canada) - It is possible to envision the future, either with optimism or pessimism, depending on the point of view where one stands. Let's start with the optimistic vision. The formation of REQEF gave visibility to women's studies in Quebec and brought together members from almost all institutions of the Quebec university network. However, the possibility of maintaining the network depends on funding programmes. The first grant instalment ends at the end of this school year. There has been a renewal application but the network is competing with other inter-university research networks for funding. Moreover, such funding is granted for limited periods (3-5 years), which allows at best to have a medium-term vision.

The fact remains that the REQEF has developed five strategic projects that will be able to sustain the research field. The first concerns the organization of the International Congress of feminists' research in the Francophonie, an initiative that was in any case started in Quebec in 1997. The second is the establishment of interuniversity and

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<sup>50</sup> [www.univendebat.eu/](http://www.univendebat.eu/)

<sup>51</sup> [www.lalibre.be/debats/opinions/article/728010/pour-une-desexcellence-des-universites.html](http://www.lalibre.be/debats/opinions/article/728010/pour-une-desexcellence-des-universites.html)

<sup>52</sup> <http://actiegroep Hoger Onderwijs.wordpress.com/>

interdisciplinary areas of research; this will strengthen existing structures and promote new research initiatives. The third project concerns the Memory Project, which aims to fix the traces of women's movements in Quebec since the late 19th century and will likely result in a web platform.

The fourth is to maintain annual study days among the researchers involved and the fifth concerns the annual conferences driven by REQEF, as well as students' symposia and seminars with feminist content offered by members of REQEF. However, to sustain itself, both the network subsidies and other grants and subsidies are needed and, in this area, the least we can say is that they are uncertain at best.

On a more pessimistic note, the problem arises of continuity, both as regards the female students and as regards female teacher researchers. Regarding the teachings the programmes are not threatened in Concordia and McGill but they are based on a very limited number of faculty members. At UQAM, the current management seems quite favourable to the development of feminist studies and concentrations are therefore not threatened as a whole, even though they do not always have a sufficient number of tenured teacher researchers, mainly to offer trans-disciplinary courses.

In Laval, the graduate programme has been in jeopardy for several years and is based largely on the voluntary work of those who keep it alive; nonetheless, the success of feminist summer school continues. In the regional components of the University of Quebec, as well as of the University of Sherbrooke and the University of Montreal, there are no established programmes and teaching therefore rests on the shoulders of a few individuals, a little less isolated since thanks to the existence of REQEF, but some of them are approaching the age of retirement and will not necessarily be replaced.

With regard to research, they are increasingly subject to the neoliberal efficiency, to the performance that involves publishing in prestigious journals, to the concentration and to the decrease of funding for research. As feminist studies do not really coincide with this perspective, we can predict that they will be minoritised or marginalised.

However, when we compare ourselves to others, some consolation can at least be partially found because, institutionally, the present and future of feminist studies in Quebec seem a bit stronger than what prevails in other Francophone northern areas, except perhaps in the French speaking part of Switzerland.

**Florence Rochefort** (France) - International, North American and European research is still essential to irrigating the terrain here in France and stimulating gender-studies researchers, who are generally in touch with international research networks on an individual level. Journals, in particular, are one of the most effective means available for disseminating international research, with over-representation of translations from English into French, and a certain deficiency in terms of intra-European connections. This connection should be reinforced by improved international structuration and greater investment in French gender research in existing networks. The MAGE network is one of the only French networks that has gone international.

Translating French research into English would seem to be a vital step. The CNRS has in fact adopted a policy of supporting translation, which has benefited the journal *CLIO Femmes, Genre, Histoire* for an English-language version that will be available on international portals in 2014. This does, however, raise the issue of preserving national languages.

Better international synergy is one of the major challenges to take up, and the national network's weakness doesn't facilitate that.

**Magali Delaloye, Marta Roca i Escoda, Patricia Roux** (Switzerland) – Because of its position, Switzerland is at the crossroads of German and French influences and could be a case study for the pooling of common knowledge from various traditions. It also shows up the difficulties of multilingual exchange. In fact, despite the many national projects, it can be seen that gender studies in German Switzerland are closer to Germany and those in French-speaking Switzerland to France both for obvious linguistic reasons and also because of career opportunities and recognition in the academic world. This difference has become particularly clear in the establishment of gender studies centres. Germany's influence on German Switzerland is translated into the creation of interdisciplinary research centres in gender studies in the three main German universities: the Kompetenzzentrums Gender Studies (KGS, 1998) in Zurich, the Interdisziplinäres Zentrum für Frauen - und Geschlechterforschung (IZFG, 2001) in Bern and the Zentrum Gender Studies (ZGS, 2001) in Basel. These centres have made it

possible to coordinate and increase the visibility of gender studies at these universities. They were founded by teachers attached to different faculties, integrating the gender perspective into their research and their courses. This German dynamic certainly owes a great deal to the institutional development of feminist studies in Germany, which are about ten years ahead of those in Switzerland. In French-speaking Switzerland, the creation of centres was less interdisciplinary: they have been attached to faculties associated with the social sciences. Geneva set up the Gender Studies Institute in 1995 as part of the Faculty of Economic and Social Sciences and Lausanne established the LIEGE in 2001 as part of the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences. The latter changed its name in 2008, when management at the University of Lausanne stabilised the structure: it is now the LIEGE Centre for Gender Studies, a structure to be distinguished from the recent PlaGe, which is constructed in a more cross-cutting and explicitly interdisciplinary way.

At research level, briefly, it must be noted that, under German influence, the Queer perspective is more developed in German Switzerland (particularly in Basel) than in French-speaking Switzerland. By contrast, the dominant perspective in French-speaking Switzerland is that of materialist feminism. This is undoubtedly due to all the activity carried out around the journal *Nouvelles Questions Féministes*, which, after it was attached to the University of Lausanne and to LIEGE, has made a big contribution to making French-speaking Switzerland an internationally-recognised centre of competences in gender studies. It must be said that a generation of female lecturers who had been active in MLF and had been inspired by the journal had already implemented this feminist perspective in their areas when gender studies did not yet exist – in the sociology of work, for example.

The linguistic partition of Switzerland also reveals the variety of core topics springing up in gender studies across Europe. Several can be highlighted, without being exhaustive and focusing largely on French-speaking Switzerland. First, intersectionality is a cross-disciplinary problem at all Swiss universities, which was particularly visible at the time of the 6th International Congress of French-speaking Feminist Research, organised at the University of Lausanne in 2012. The question of sexuality (and particularly homosexuality) represents an important field of study, with much research

going on, notably at the Universities of Lausanne, Basel and St. Gallen. But the traditional themes of gender studies are not to be forgotten and they benefit from fresh historical and sociological approaches: work (Lausanne), the family (Fribourg), violence (Geneva and Lausanne) and the history of feminist movements (Lausanne and Bern). Finally, many other innovative areas of research bear the mark of gender: migrations (Neuchâtel, Fribourg and IHEID<sup>53</sup>), development issues (IHEID), international law (Bern), the body (Geneva and Lausanne), the media (Lausanne) and even religion (Lausanne and Zurich), to mention only the main ones. The vitality of the gender perspective in these areas opens up welcome prospects for the inclusion of gender in already established disciplines including sociology, anthropology, history and literature. However, it is necessary to continue to feed the interdisciplinary approach that represents the richness of gender studies, as it will become an important challenge in years to come.

The development of gender studies in French-speaking Switzerland, and also at European level, has produced a considerable theoretical framework, with increasing numbers of publications in most countries. However, in Switzerland and elsewhere there is a notable thematic specialisation, which tends to be more pronounced in many research teams in Europe. This phenomenon is in contrast with the gender mainstreaming perspective promoted by the European Commission with the aim of integrating gender as a concern in all disciplines<sup>54</sup>.

*For a detailed account of the available education courses at all levels of university education, see the Gender Campus website which, since September 2005, offers online consultation of all gender-focused education courses at all Swiss universities: [www.gendercampus.ch](http://www.gendercampus.ch).*

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<sup>53</sup> Higher Education Institute of International and Development Studies.

<sup>54</sup> Cf. Fassa and Kradolfer, awaiting publication.

## Final remarks

In conclusion to this second round table, it is important to highlight the positive aspects that emerge through the reports.

First, it is clear that when individual commitment is backed by institutions and policies, it is easier to achieve stronger and lasting results. Alliances may lead to needed structural change in institutions, including in academia, which have been successfully undertaken by gender studies over the past several years.

In addition, offering courses in gender is essential. Such an offer may either include specialisation routes in different fields or provide specific programmes, with ‘gender’ chairs; though this second choice may be more complex.

The previously mentioned problem of alternating between generations also makes for a positive side effect: younger generations compose a variety of subjects that provide new impetus to gender studies, which may sometimes appear dated and linked to a past that can be seen - wrongly - as outdated. Themes such as intersectionality, sexualities, Queer studies, post-colonial perspectives, the study of new media, to name only a few, allow to explore plural diversities. All this serves to update a journey that enabled – we should not forget – the emergence of an important awareness, namely the possibility to break away from a single mindset, in a journey that started in duality and has arrived at multiplicity.

Finally, the interviewees included direct references to research centres, academic departments, associations that support a gender perspective, international and national networks. This is valuable information that will make it easier for readers who wish to integrate a gender perspective in their studies, research or teaching career, or help those who wish to find contact persons to pursue specialisation abroad in a specific line of studies.

## Perspectives of gender studies in German speaking contexts

*Edited by Rita Bencivenga<sup>55</sup>*

**Participants:** Sigrid Schmitz, Paula-Irene Villa, Andrea Maihofer, Katrin Meyer<sup>56</sup>.

### 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 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.

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Axe: Genre, savoir, éducation

<sup>56</sup> **Sigrid Schmitz:** Chair Gender Studies & Head of the Gender Research Office at the University of Vienna, Austria.

**Paula-Irene Villa:** Chair and Professor of Sociology & Gender Studies at LMU Munich, Germany.

**Andrea Maihofer, Katrin Meyer:** Universität Basel, Zentrum Gender Studies, Basel, Switzerland.

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 -disciplines<sup>57</sup>, 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*<sup>58</sup> was founded, following similar initiatives in Germany and Switzerland. This association supports inter- and transdisciplinary exchange between gender researchers (in the above-mentioned broad 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

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<sup>57</sup> STEM is the abbreviation for Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics.

<sup>58</sup> See <http://www.oeggf.at>

to make this field of research more visible and knowledgeable 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 Linz<sup>59</sup> 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 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

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<sup>59</sup> See <http://www.jku.at/ifg/content>

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 Graz<sup>60</sup>, the Gender Studies Unit at the University of Innsbruck<sup>61</sup>, 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 Vienna<sup>62</sup>, or the Gender Mainstreaming Unit at the Medical University of Vienna<sup>63</sup> (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. 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.

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<sup>60</sup> <http://koordination-gender.uni-graz.at>

<sup>61</sup> <http://www.uibk.ac.at/leopoldine/gender-studies/>

<sup>62</sup> See <http://gender.univie.ac.at/>

<sup>63</sup> See <http://www.meduniwien.ac.at/homepage/content/organisation/dienstleistungseinrichtungen-und-stabstellen/gender-mainstreaming/>

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](http://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 topics<sup>64</sup>. 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 being taught from an intersectional, multidimensional perspective<sup>65</sup>. Today's emphasis

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<sup>64</sup> 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.

<sup>65</sup> 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>

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).

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](http://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”<sup>66</sup>, Sandra Harding’s “strong objectivity”<sup>67</sup>, or Donna Haraway’s “situated knowledge”<sup>68</sup>, and latest the debates around Karan Barad’s framework of ethico-onto-epistemology<sup>69</sup>. 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 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

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<sup>66</sup> Longino, Helen, *Science as Social Knowledge*, Princeton, Princeton Univ. Press, 1990.

<sup>67</sup> Harding, Sandra, *Whose Science? Whose Knowledge?: Thinking from Women's Lives*. Cornell, Cornell University Press, 1991.

<sup>68</sup> Haraway, Donna. “Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective.” *Feminist Studies* 14.3 (1988): 575-599.

<sup>69</sup> Barad, Karen, *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, London, Duke University Press, 2007.

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 humanities<sup>70</sup>, on the one hand, may offer possibilities to add a profound gender perspective to the analysis of “Europe in a changing world”.

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<sup>70</sup> See <http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/horizon2020/en/area/social-sciences-humanities>

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.”<sup>71</sup>

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 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”<sup>72</sup>, which

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<sup>71</sup> See <http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/portal/desktop/en/opportunities/h2020/topics/2413-geri-4-2014.html>

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 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”<sup>73</sup>. 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

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<sup>72</sup> Website of the Project: <http://genderedinnovations.eu> [14.08.2013].

<sup>73</sup> 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](http://www.stanford.edu/dept/HPS/2012.4808_Gendered%20Innovations_web2.pdf) [11.08.2014].

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-binary<sup>74</sup> 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 agenda<sup>75</sup>.

**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.

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

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<sup>74</sup> Idem, pp. 43-47

<sup>75</sup> 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/>.

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.

## Perspectives on gender studies in Denmark, Norway and Sweden

*Edited by Rita Bencivenga<sup>76</sup>*

**Participants:** Pauline Stoltz, Christine M. Jacobsen, Lena Gemzöe and Margaretha Fahlgren<sup>77</sup>.

### Introduction

In this fourth round table, four researchers answer questions to assess the state of the art and future perspectives in gender studies related to three countries: Denmark, Norway and Sweden.

The researchers have chosen to debate different perspectives that will raise readers' interest, no matter their status be it teacher or learner.

The distinctive feature of this round table is the interest the state has in gender studies and its support, as seen through the approaches in the three countries regarding institutionalisation. For those who live in countries that do not yet support gender studies, or in countries that have only recently begun a similar process, the answers given by the Danish, Norwegian and Swedish colleagues provide interesting insight. This may seem as a jump into a parallel universe, a universe in which areas such as childcare, education and politics have already been influenced for some time by a palpable presence of ideas put forward through gender studies.

In gender research, it is crucial to have access to a variety of role models; to be able to identify new and innovative research fields; to challenge societal norms and the distribution of power. The Nordic colleagues speak openly about their awareness of representing various role models for gender equality, through bottom-up approaches

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<sup>76</sup> LEGS - (Laboratoire d'études de genre et de sexualité) (CNRS/Université Paris 8 Vincennes Saint-Denis et Université Paris Ouest

<sup>77</sup> **Pauline Stoltz:** *FREIA, Center for Gender Research, Aalborg University, Denmark*  
**Christine M. Jacobsen:** Centre for Women's and Gender Research (SKOK), Norway  
**Lena Gemzöe,** Gender Studies, Stockholm University, Sweden  
**Margaretha Fahlgren,** Centre for Gender Research, Uppsala University, Sweden

such as in Denmark, or a top-down support of the institutionalization of gender equality such as in Norway and in Sweden.

When one reads that the equality debate in Denmark “is more or less dead”; that Norway is implementing a strategy of gender mainstreaming that follows from academically established gender research; and, that in Sweden “the current government and five of the major political parties call themselves feminist”, we are confronted with experiences that are far from the state of things in many other countries.

The numerous references to previous round tables help in widening thought beyond the Scandinavian countries for anyone interested in widening their horizons on the topic.

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

**Pauline Stoltz** (Denmark) - Denmark has produced internationally recognized gender researchers such as Birte Siim and Dorte Staunæs, Nina Lykke and Drude Dahlerup (the latter two presently based in Sweden), and Danish gender research has a clear voice in Nordic gender research. This despite the observation that, in comparison to those of its Nordic neighbors Sweden and Norway, Danish gender studies are less institutionalized. Danish gender research enjoys a strong tradition and a high standard of working within and across universities, in disciplinary and interdisciplinary research groups and networks. As in other countries, this research is mainly based within the social sciences and the humanities.

There are few universities in Denmark, notably the University of Copenhagen, Roskilde University, the University of Southern Denmark (main campus in Odense), Aarhus University and Aalborg University. As a result of the activism of gender scholars in the 1970s, since the 1980s Denmark has been in charge of the national *Coordination for Gender Research*, based at the University of Copenhagen. The Coordination for Gender Research hosts the editorial office of the scientific journal *Women, Gender & Research* (<http://koensforskning.soc.ku.dk/english/>). Other networks are affiliated with *The association for gender research in Denmark*

<http://koensforskning.dk/> (in Danish only). Mention can also be made of the Copenhagen based *KVINFO - the Danish Centre for Gender, Equality and Diversity*, which has existed since 1987. KVINFO is a self-governing institution under the Danish Ministry of Culture; it has its own management board and hosts an online expert database and a library (<http://kvinfo.org/frontpage>).

Apart from these national initiatives, two centres for gender research located in Denmark can be pointed out as particularly advanced. The oldest is *FREIA*, Centre for Gender Research, which was founded in 1990 as an interdisciplinary research centre at Aalborg University. This centre is based on 15 years of work in the field of gender studies at Aalborg University (for more details, see for example *FREIA's* Text series No. 2 / 1992 *Feminist Research* and <http://www.freia.cgs.aau.dk> ). Related to *FREIA* since 2011 is *EDGE*, which is an interdisciplinary research and information centre at Aalborg University, whose purpose is to support and stimulate research within the areas of equality, diversity and gender. *EDGE* is in many ways 'the shop' of *FREIA* (<http://www.en.cgs.aau.dk/research/research-groups/edge>). A second research centre is *CKMM*, the Centre for Gender, Power and Diversity at Roskilde University (<http://www.ruc.dk/en/research/search-research-centers/ckmm/>), which is organized as a highly active university-based network and has many collaborative research activities.

As a consequence of the general lack of institutionalization of gender studies, Denmark has *no full gender studies program* in the social sciences or in the humanities or, for that matter, within any other faculty at any academic level, neither in Danish nor in English. However, *elective* courses on gender issues can be found at most Danish universities. These are offered in both Danish and English. Since 2014 there has been *one master's program with a specialization course in gender*. This is Global Gender Studies, which is a two-year specialization of the master's program in Development and International Relations at Aalborg University. It is taught and coordinated by researchers from the *FREIA* gender research centre (<http://www.en.aau.dk/education/master/development-international-relations/specialisations/global-gender-studies>).

The good news is that there is a growing interest among Danish and international students in working with gender issues in their MA- projects, especially at the

universities of Aalborg and Roskilde. The bad news is that Danish students with an interest in gender issues tend to move abroad after their BA exams for their MA and PhD in gender studies. Such programs are found, for instance, at Lund University in Sweden, which offers a Master of Science program in Social Studies of Gender, or at Linköping University in the same country, which, in addition to a BA and an MA, also offers a PhD program in Interdisciplinary Gender Studies.

**Christine M. Jacobsen** (Norway) - In Norway as elsewhere in Europe the establishment of women's studies in the academia via the Social Sciences and the Humanities occurred in conjunction with the women's liberation movement of the 1970's (Griffin 2005b, Wærness 2013). During the 1970's and 80's, centres for women's research were established at the 4 Universities of Bergen (UiB), Oslo (UiO), Trondheim (NTNU) and Tromsø (UiT). In the 1990s there was a shift towards using the wording 'gender' rather than 'women', and the research centres changed their names into 'gender research', or, alternatively, 'women's and gender research'. This change occurred parallel to women's and gender studies being increasingly institutionalized within the universities as a field for research and teaching in its own right, and its meaning and consequences are still debated. In later years, other research and teaching institutions also developed infrastructures for gender research, including the Network for Gender Research at the University of Stavanger in 2009 and networks at several university colleges.

At the universities, the centres for women's and gender research developed as multidisciplinary sites of knowledge production, based mainly in the Social Sciences and the Humanities. Gender research also developed as an integrated part of these disciplines within the traditional departments. Legal studies also gave an important contribution through the so-called Kvinneretten in Oslo (Wærness 2013). The natural sciences have so far been less present in women's and gender studies, but interesting attempts at including biology have been made among others in feminist reconceptualisations of the body and problematisation of the nature – nurture divide. Variation is great in terms of theoretical approaches and empirical focus in Norwegian gender research. A notable shift has been made from focusing on women and gender –

which were in themselves heterogeneous and varied fields of study - towards including men and masculinities and the intersection of gender with other social categories, notably sexuality, class and ethnicity.

Gender studies are now taught at all levels at Norwegian Universities and University Colleges, but most institutions provide degrees only at some levels. The centres have tended to follow a double approach, attempting both to advance gender perspectives within the disciplines and establishing separate structures for interdisciplinary gender studies at the universities and at the national level. Initially, women's and gender studies courses were offered only within the frame of the disciplines, but gradually the centres for women's and gender studies have developed their own teaching programs. Questions as to the legitimacy of teaching interdisciplinary gender studies still arise occasionally, and the structure of the universities as well as the criteria for evaluation are challenging for interdisciplinary programs in general. The legitimacy of gender studies was strengthened when The Norwegian Association of Higher Education Institutions (UHR) established a National Council for Gender Research in 2002. In 1997 the centres at UiO, UiB, NTNU and UiT started to cooperate on organising Ph.D. courses, a cooperation that is being further developed in the current National Research School for Gender Research. In 2002 Norwegian gender researchers also established their own Association for Women's and Gender Research (FOKK, which recently changed its name to Association for Gender Research). The Association runs a biannual conference. There is also an institutionalized collaboration at the Nordic level. Since 1995 Oslo has hosted the NIKK (Nordic Institute for Women's Studies and Gender Research, later the Nordic Gender Institute). The National Research School for Gender Research is affiliate with Swedish *InterGender*, and the *Nordic Journal of Feminist and Gender Research (Nora)* provides an important platform for circulating gender research in the Nordic countries and beyond.

In her comparison of the institutionalization of women's studies in 11 European countries, Griffin (2005 a: 4) concludes that the degree of institutionalization is related to the equal opportunities policies in that country. In Norway, state feminism has been an important dimension of the national political context for the development of gender studies. The concept of state feminism was introduced by Hernes (1987) to refer to how

the Scandinavian welfare states have furthered feminism "from above" through women-friendly welfare and gender equality policies in conjunction with "feminization from below" and feminization of the welfare state professions (Holst 2005). State feminism has created a structure of possibilities for women's and gender studies to develop and be institutionalized in the academia, while gender research has importantly influenced state politics in areas such as childcare, education and politics.

In conjunction with state efforts to develop knowledge-based gender equality policies, The Research Council of Norway (RCN), which channels funding from state departments, was crucial to establishing gender as a research field, notably through funding a program in gender research. In 1998, a national information centre for gender research (KILDEN) was established with funding from the RCN. KILDEN owns the Journal of Gender Research, which also receives funding from the RCN. The Program for Gender Research was discontinued in 2012 and in its wake the RCN launched a program called "Gender Balance in Senior Positions and Research Management ". This new program is an "applied" program that has as its explicit goal to promote gender balance at the senior level in Norwegian research through new knowledge, learning and innovation.

The close imbrication of Norwegian gender research with state feminism and policy making has spurred criticism and controversy within the field. Empirical debates about whether and to what extent the welfare state *is* women friendly attest to these internal tensions, as do the controversies spurred by the influence of post-structuralism and its critical appreciation of state power as disciplining and normalising (see Jegerstedt 2010). One criticism that has been reinforced with the discontinuation of the gender research program in the RCN and the launch of BALANSE is that "likestilling"<sup>78</sup> has come to occupy a dominant and naturalized position. As Danielsen et al. (2013) have shown, the image of Norway as a pioneer of "likestilling" has become crucial to the country's self-representation both domestically and internationally. When coupled to the "methodological nationalism" that still characterises much of the humanities and social

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<sup>78</sup> Meaning "equality".

sciences, the focus on – and institutional support for research on – gender equality risks marginalizing other central questions in gender studies.

**Lena Gemzöe and Margaretha Fahlgren** (Sweden) - In Sweden gender research is conducted at all universities and university colleges. The state of gender studies in Sweden is probably unique in at least two aspects: the high level of organization of gender research, and the establishment and growth of gender studies as a discipline in its own right.

The history of gender studies in Sweden goes back to the end of the 1970's, when gender research associations, (Fora for women researchers and women's studies) , were formed at the largest universities. The Fora received state support and in 1980 Centres for women's studies, which later changed their name into Centres for Gender Research, were established. The Centres were important in stimulating cross-disciplinary research in the field, and often assumed the broader tasks to serve the whole university, offering courses to students from almost all disciplines. Besides the cross- disciplinary centres, strong disciplinary gender research developed in most universities within traditional departments, as integral part of the relevant fields.

By the end of the 1990s, the discipline *Genusvetenskap* (e.g. "Gender science") was established, and today undergraduate, master and PhD programs in *Genusvetenskap* are offered at almost all universities and colleges in the country. This means that the field of gender studies can develop without being dependent on research policies and resources within other disciplines.

The interest in, and support for, gender studies on the part of the state, has continued partly because it is seen as valuable in fostering gender equality in higher education as well as in society in general. In 1998, a *National Council for Gender Research*, (*Nationella Sekretariatet för Genusforskning*), was established at the University of Gothenburg, also hosting an important national archive (Kvinnsam). The task of the Council is to promote and inform about Swedish gender research, and recently it has also been assigned the task to support state authorities working for gender equality. Finally, it has taken over the tasks of its Norwegian equivalent, NIKK.

Besides the Council, gender scholars today have an association of their own, the National Association of Gender Researchers, with individual membership. This association is important for strengthening cooperation between gender researchers and undertaking joint actions when needed.

The existence of gender studies both as a discipline in its own and as a multidisciplinary field is often referred to as the “two legs” of gender research. Since the end of the 90’s, different universities have taken different paths in organizing gender research with respect to the “two legs”. At some universities, the Centres hosting multidisciplinary research have continued to be important and developed into strong research environments (see below), whereas, for instance, Gothenburg University dissolved the Centre at an early stage, and at Stockholm University the dissolution of the Centre was required to permit the launching of PhD programs in *Genusvetenskap*. Lund University, which has the oldest gender research environment in Sweden, has also transformed the centre into a department of *Genusvetenskap*, which however collaborates with other departments in the area of master programs.

In recent years, the universities of Gothenburg and Stockholm have created new organizational frames for the coexistence of the “two legs”. GiG, Gender Research in Gothenburg, promotes collaboration in gender research between disciplines across the whole university. The Gender Academy at Stockholm University headed by *Genusvetenskap* is a collaborative network connecting twelve departments with strong gender research and a network of more than fifty PhD students. One of the aims of the Gender Academy has been to establish gender research as one of Stockholm University’s leading research areas, which was achieved in 2014.

It is of strategic importance to assert the quality of gender research and make it visible within universities. One reason is that the universities’ own research funding is gradually becoming more based on evaluations, a development that has come rather late in Sweden compared to other countries. However, external funding continues to be vital to the development of gender research. The Swedish Research Council has played a crucial role in this respect, in particular through its expert group on gender research, dedicated to issues such as how to create fair evaluations and forms of funding that could benefit the field. An important initiative in this respect was the funding of gender

research centres, called “Centres of Gender Excellence”, at the universities of Uppsala, Linköping and Umeå in 2006. The funding was given to centres with the potential to become international leaders in their field of research and the three internationally competitive research environments were awarded SEK 27 million each over a 5-year period starting in 2007. Research at the centres was evaluated twice during this period. The second evaluation, carried out in 2011, came to very positive conclusions. The grants had been crucial for developing the centres to a level of excellence. They had become both nationally and internationally renowned environments for gender research. The funds had enabled researchers to pursue work that was both of higher quality and of greater international impact than work that would have been carried out in a more individualized context.

The internationalization of Swedish Gender Research has also been promoted by funding networks for international research exchange (e.g. programs on gender and religion at Stockholm University and gender and medicine at Umeå University).

A very important collaborative project, financed by the Swedish Research Council, has been the research school *InterGender*, hosted by Linköping’s University. *InterGender* is a research school for interdisciplinary gender studies that establishes interconnections between Swedish PhD programs as well as four major European research schools. It involves all gender departments and centres in Sweden and serves to gather the country’s PhD students on a regular basis.

Furthermore, it should be mentioned that the gender studies departments have also been successful in receiving funding in general calls. A recent example is a large collaborative project at the gender studies department of Lund University taking a comparative and international perspective on women’s organizations and feminist activism.

It can be concluded that it is of the utmost importance that research councils and state authorities in Sweden have long term strategies for the development of gender research. However, in the latest research plan from the government, gender research is scarcely mentioned. This needs to be changed, especially since research policies from the EU demand that gender perspectives should be included in all research. Sweden, which in many ways is a role model for gender equality, should also be in the lead

promoting gender research. As mentioned earlier, gender research has influenced and developed new knowledge in many research fields. To give some examples: the literary canon has changed since it has been scrutinized from a gender perspective. Gender research has also changed the way historical research is conducted and research in medicine and biology has benefitted from gender perspectives which have revealed gender bias in the understanding of research results. It is important that the inclusion of gender perspectives is developed in all disciplines, i.e. that gender research keeps its “two legs”. This means that the discipline itself needs to be strengthened, making cutting edge research, while, at the same time, disciplinary gender perspectives are developed.

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

**Pauline Stoltz** (Denmark) - One of the most serious challenges to gender studies in Denmark concerns the observation that universities in general are experiencing serious funding cuts. These cuts affect both national and European funding. Achieving full financing for PhD students is particularly difficult.

Most Danish universities are financially dependent on the Ministry of Education. This Ministry governs in great detail, which was recently demonstrated when the current government chose to examine the size of all educational programs and enforced set student numbers for each program. As a consequence, an initiative by Aalborg University and Roskilde University to start a full joint MA gender program, or possibly a program organized only by Aalborg University, proved impossible because there were already too many master programs in other disciplines. This resulted in the strategy of starting a *specialization course* in Global Gender Studies at Aalborg University, as mentioned above.

The funding of PhD students is traditionally acquired from research councils and faculties/departments. Due to general financial cuts at universities, the latter is increasingly rare, compared to previous periods in history, and the nation research councils are increasingly inclined to either remove the possibility to apply for PhDs or

focus solely on public-private partnerships. In this context, the focus on STEM disciplines (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) is markedly increasing, both in the councils and at the universities, to the detriment of Social Sciences and Humanities (SSH).

Generally speaking, the traditional focus on SSH in gender studies makes it increasingly difficult to acquire external funding for a PhD in gender studies. The same applies to broader gender research projects. The dearth of council members with competence in and knowledge of gender issues in the national research councils is also a sensitive issue in this context, and a recurring point of criticism from the Danish gender studies community.

Having said this, I must admit that I personally took up a position in Denmark a few years ago after having worked in Sweden for twenty years. One of the reasons for my decision was that reliance upon external funding for research is not as prevalent in Denmark as it is in Sweden. As an associate professor I have up to 40-50 percent of research time, which I could compare to 20 percent in Sweden. Thus, the possibility to conduct research without financial constraints on the content is comparatively higher in Denmark. This also explains why Danish gender researchers in general are able to produce as much interesting and, above all, critical research as is the case; this seems increasingly important in these days and age.

Another challenge is related to the content of gender research. The ties between activism and academia were strong in the 1970s and 1980s, which was due, in part, to the comparatively strong feminist movements in Denmark, seen in a Scandinavian perspective. In a former comparative study of the relationship between gender, politics and democracy in the Nordic countries (Bergqvist et al. 1999), scholars found important national variations concerning models of feminist mobilization, and it was concluded that there is one Nordic gender model with different gender profiles, the Danish being the most bottom-up, whereas the Swedish and Norwegian profiles are based upon a high degree of institutionalization of gender equality (Bergqvist et.al. 1999, 286-89).

Since the 1990s, these ties have become increasingly weaker as a result of the general weakening of feminist movements. Ten years ago, Hilde Rømer Christensen, longtime coordinator at the Coordination for Gender Research, claimed that Danish

research was more theoretical (and interestingly also more apt to adopt queer research, for instance) and less focused on the immediate political use of gender research than was the case in Norway and Sweden, where the institutionalization of gender research was linked more closely to state feminism (Rømer Christensen 2003: 92).

Drude Dahlerup recently pointed out, in a comparative study of the Danish and Swedish equality debates, how the equality debate in Denmark is more or less dead, whereas great progress is being made in Sweden, where the current government and five of the major political parties call themselves feminist. According to Dahlerup, this stands in stark contrast to the situation in Denmark, where ‘feminism’ is a taboo word. Today, feminist engagement in Denmark is more likely to be found within the labour movement than in the women’s movement (Dahlerup 2015).

However, this rather outspoken opinion about Danish feminism could be nuanced by considering more carefully the arena in focus (parliament, the labor movement, civil society, social media or everyday life and the actor in focus (age, migration, ethnicity/’race’, class). The theme of discussion may also play a role (women as board members; embodiment); it might be claimed, for instance, that young activists typically use social media to discuss body matters. A debate about the future of feminism, which was organized in Copenhagen in March 2015<sup>79</sup>, gathered a large number of activists of all ages (Arbetaren, 25<sup>th</sup> March 2015).

**Christine M. Jacobsen** (Norway) - One of the main areas of contention in Norwegian gender research in the last few years has been the question of mainstreaming. As mentioned, the RCN program in gender research was discontinued in 2012, at a time when academics came under increased pressure to apply for external research funding. The RCN, instead, moved towards mainstreaming gender in all research programs where it is considered relevant, making it a compulsory criterion in the evaluation of funding applications. All programs and prioritized research areas are now expected to consider how the gender dimension matters to their area of knowledge. The mainstreaming strategy is based on the assumption that gender research has now been

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<sup>79</sup> Arbetaren 25 March 2015 ‘Feminister samler og styrker sig’. <http://www.arbejder.dk/indland/feminister-samler-og-styrker-sig> (Accessed: 26 March 2015).

successfully established as an academic field in Norway. Although this is true, this premise does not take into account that the centres for women's and gender research are still small and vulnerable to ongoing neo-liberal restructurings of Norwegian universities. Furthermore, the mainstreaming strategy seems to underestimate the amount of work needed to develop the level of awareness and competence among researchers and within the research council for the strategy to succeed across the research areas.

The move towards gender mainstreaming has been controversial, and gender researchers have stressed several potential adverse consequences. One concern is that mainstreaming will bring about a move from gender research towards gender perspectives in research, and that a more superficial focus on gender as a "dimension" of various fields of knowledge will supplant foundational questions in gender studies. A related concern is that mainstreaming will reduce gender to a question of similarities and differences between women and men, a reductionism that, besides reproducing a binary and heteronormative gender model, loses out on the creative and critical potential of gender as an analytical category, which is after all what has been exciting about gender studies and made it a crucial contribution in various disciplines.

Within teaching institutions, a closely related controversy regards what Clare Hemmings (2006) names the autonomy/integration debate, that is: whether feminist enquiry should seek to influence the academia from within particular disciplines or establish itself as a separate discipline. Both autonomy and integration perspectives have been rigorously criticized (Hemmings 2006). In Norway, what Hemmings calls a combination approach has dominated and been seen as the most desirable. Current developments in the university system work both to enable and to disable the combination approach. On the one hand, there is a growing demand for interdisciplinarity – which might be an advantage to interdisciplinary academic fields like gender studies. On the other hand, the use of so-called result-based indicators in the financing model puts gender studies centres in potential competition with the discipline-based departments they seek to contribute to.

A further challenge relates to the status of gender research within both academia and society more broadly. Gender research has been a target for criticism, partly by other

disciplines and partly in public discussions where it has been claimed that it is strongly politicised, and that it is (therefore) less scientific than other disciplines. A critical event in the public criticism of gender research was the TV-series Hjernevask (Brainwashing) in 2010, which gave rise to a heated debate. The allegation put forth was that gender researchers deny biological underpinnings of gender difference for ideological reasons and that they promote ideological views that are poorly based on "facts" and "scientific methodologies" (cf. Lie 2011). An additional dimension to consider is how criticism towards state feminism may also have consequences for the political support for gender studies. While state feminist policy and ideology has enjoyed remarkable support among leading segments of the population (Gulbrandsen, Engelstad, Klausen, Skjeie and Teigen 2002, Holst 2005), some also claim that it has "gone too far" and that Norway has become a "vaginal state" (Langeland 2003) that polices a politically correct view of gender and privileges women over men. With the instauration of a new conservative and right wing government in 2013, there is reason to fear that political support for gender studies, especially in its more critical version, will weaken in the years to come.

**Lena Gemzöe and Margaretha Fahlgren** (Sweden) - The challenge for the development of gender research in Sweden is to continue enhancing the presence of Swedish gender research at an international level – important steps in this direction have been taken as shown above – while at the same time continuing the project of building gender as a discipline in its own right, with a strong presence in Swedish society. For this aim to be fulfilled, long term strategies and adequate funding are needed. It is often difficult for research Councils to evaluate new collaborations in gender studies between researchers from diverse fields, since they are organized according to disciplines. This has to change in order for new and groundbreaking research initiatives to have better chances to receive funding.

Gender studies in Sweden have an important role to play in research which takes on societal challenges, such as health, ageing, violence and discrimination, to mention a few. The cross-disciplinary approach in gender studies creates new forms of research

cooperation and research renewal. This should be acknowledged more by universities, which should give priority to gender research.

In the academia today gender research is an established field. However, one cannot ignore that gender perspectives still evoke resistance. This is, of course, due to the fact that gender research challenges societal norms and the distribution of power. Looking back, women's studies could be tolerated as long as it seemed to only concern women, but gender research claims to be part of all disciplinary research, and so it is far more threatening. In Sweden the official discourse promotes gender equality and gender research but there still exists a more or less hidden resistance against the field as such. This can be seen when gender research is described as an ideological rather than a scholarly field. It is important to take this resistance into account when developing new gender research, since the results will imply the need for societal changes.

In Sweden gender equality is promoted by the government, and gender research has received state support in varying degrees in the last decades. However, gender research has not been prioritized in the latest governmental research proposition. The development of gender equality in Sweden has benefitted greatly from gender research in the social sciences. If less research is carried out this will affect the progress of work on gender equality; it is therefore necessary to continue emphasizing the link between gender equality and research.

Gender research has broadened its scope and today includes research in medicine, technology and natural sciences. An emergent challenge is to develop research in these fields and develop new knowledge which could have great impact on future research.

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

**Pauline Stoltz** (Denmark)- Given the above comments about external funding, there is a strong tradition of receiving funding from the European Union, especially for large and often comparative gender research projects. As at the national Danish level, the ambition of H2020 is that gender should be integrated in the application and research processes. The previously mentioned Danish policy on how this should be understood can be claimed to follow the European trend closely.

As was indicated earlier, in this series of roundtables there are challenges concerning the implementation of a gender perspective in H2020 in order to move beyond the present level of ambition. This is not least due to the lack of support of the SSH. Recently, the European Sociological Association wrote a petition addressed to the European Commission in which they pointed out that H2020:

*“...has very little to propose in terms of “Fairness” and “Democratic Change”, or of a new approach to “Jobs and Growth” in these times of crisis. The research programme for Social Sciences and the Humanities (SSH) has disappeared and its budget been dramatically reduced compared to the previous European Framework Programme. There is no longer even a specific Directorate in charge of SSH research at the European Commission.”*

In the EU, and Denmark is following suit in this regard, the trend is to see the role of SSH, and consequently of much gender research, as a perspective upon research in science and technology, focused upon innovation and growth.

This trend is obviously fortunate for gender researchers in science and technology, but problematic due to the need of gender research in areas that are typically SSH. Danish gender research has followed the general European move from women’s to gender studies, and today research focuses broadly on the meanings of gender in relation to key areas of society, including migration, masculinity, postcolonial and queer research and intersectionality understood as an analytical approach. Transnational and global perspectives have been added as a methodological starting point and research field to the earlier focus on historical and comparative studies. These perspectives are especially important in relation to contemporary issues concerning gendered aspects of the nationalist movements, welfare state transformations and the global financial crisis.

Earlier in these roundtables it was mentioned that, due to different reasons, the production and circulation of knowledge in gender studies in Europe have mainly been dominated by British and American feminisms, and that English language feminism is hegemonic in gender studies in Europe. Given the way in which the above mentioned contemporary issues affect European societies in different manners, due to diverse historical and other trajectories, it does indeed become important to revisit these

contentions and to look for opportunities to consider the meaning of a transnational gender studies approach in Europe today.

One successful source of knowledge production and circulation is *Nora – Nordic Journal of Feminist and Gender Research*, which recently celebrated its twentieth anniversary. The journal is published by Taylor & Francis and reaches an audience far beyond the Nordic countries. The current editorial team is based in Denmark. At the time of writing, it seems that in future the system of rotating the editorial teams amongst countries will be replaced by one editorial team consisting of editors from all Nordic countries.

Another measure to advance transnational cooperation is the recent initiative to create *RINGS - The International Research Association of Institutions of Advanced Gender Studies*, located at the Institute of Thematic Gender Studies, Karlstad, Linköping and Örebro Universities. During the initiating meeting in 2014, a discussion took place about the implications of using notions of either excellence or advanced gender studies to promote transnational cooperation. This is especially important and interesting, due to the different stages of institutionalization or integration of gender studies found in the Nordic countries, in Europe and globally. The final choice made at the meeting was for the notion of ‘advanced’.

**Christine M. Jacobsen** (Norway) A critical task for gender studies in the years to come is how to position itself with regard to challenge-based approaches adopted by the EU in Horizon 2020. The mainstreaming of gender in Horizon 2020 raises some of the same challenges that I addressed in regard to the mainstreaming of gender in the Research Council of Norway. It risks reducing gender to a pre-defined dimension, rather than stimulating analytical gender and queer perspectives, and demands a high level of gender competence among researchers and evaluators across the fields. Furthermore, gender studies should aim not only at taking part in interdisciplinary efforts to produce knowledge about what is defined by funding bodies as "societal challenges", but also to contribute to defining what gets defined as such, how the "challenge" is framed, and the epistemologies underpinning the knowledge produced. One way of doing this is to continue the work in feminist and gender studies to provincialize Europe and to develop

transnational, transversal, post-colonial and global perspectives as vantage points from where to engage critically with politics of exclusion, precarisation, and racialization.

I further believe that a number of crucial issues are coming up in regard to how Europe is currently investing in legislating and governing sexuality and gender, as a number of European countries are revising their laws, for instance, on prostitution, abortion, surrogacy, same-sex marriage, rape, and adoption. We need to ask how knowledge produced by gender studies is sometimes co-opted by (neoliberal and other) projects of state governments that are potentially harmful to precarised and racialised populations. We also need to engage the affects that surround the legislation and governing of sexuality and gender. In Norway, abortion was back on the public agenda last year and stirred up a lot of sentiment, as did the question of "marriage pour tous" in France. Investments in legislating and governing sexuality and gender, and the affective engagements they spur, need to be thought alongside the growth of populist criticism against feminism and "gender theory" that we now see emerging across Europe. Issues of sexuality and gender also energise concerns over threats against "European values" in various ways, and are used to draw boundaries and patrol borders between Europe and its "alien others" (Gressgård and Jacobsen 2008; 2014). These anxieties seem to be importantly precipitated by the reconfiguring of national sovereignty and political economies, largely driven by neo-liberal capitalism.

Gender studies should aim to develop critical perspectives on these processes in both teaching and research, and to address how neo-liberalism is currently also reshaping the conditions of possibility for gender studies. This of course depends partly on specific local histories and state regimes. While Norway has long been viewed as a slow and cautious reformer, the imposition of a neo-liberal agenda is also making an imprint in the Nordic countries. What impact do current shifts in funding for universities and research organizations and in research and teaching assessment have on, for instance, curricula and research questions in gender studies? What are the consequences for gender studies of the move towards assessing teaching in terms of study points and student (now increasingly perceived as customer) satisfaction? How can we keep proposing and further developing the critical perspectives of gender studies, as we compete for research funding that is increasingly geared towards innovation, impact and

solutions to pre-defined social problems? Another set of questions that needs to be dealt with relates to the gendered forms that precariousness and casualization take in an increasingly neo-liberal political economy of higher education. These questions will be in focus during an upcoming conference on Gender in/and the neoliberal university organized by RINGS (a new global association of leading centres of advanced gender studies connecting leading research institutes and centres from Africa, Australia, Europe, and North and Central America). Marina Warner (2015), this year's winner of the Norwegian Holberg Prize, recently warned against the "cruel optimism" (Berlant 2011) that binds academics more tightly into a neoliberal regime. Despite warnings against cruel optimism, however, gender studies should follow Warner in "hold[ing] fast to the life of the mind – its beauty, its necessity" – and continue struggling to remember that we could have been otherwise, and might yet be (Haraway/Goodeve 2000:171).

**Lena Gemzöe and Margaretha Fahlgren** (Sweden) – Horizon 2020 focuses on the need for research which will solve the challenges facing contemporary society. In order to meet these challenges researchers from different fields must cooperate and this includes researchers in gender studies. It is of the utmost importance that gender researchers engage in these broad research programs thus putting gender research even more at the centre of European research policies. There is a general recognition of the need to include gender research to solve societal problems and this means new possibilities and new cooperation for gender researchers.

There is excellent gender research carried out in Sweden and the field has become more internationally oriented. This international approach needs to be strengthened through closer cooperation between researchers in Europe. Sweden, which for long has been seen as a role model for gender equality, is an important contributor in an extended research cooperation.

The broadening of the field will continue and gender researchers will cooperate across disciplinary boundaries. However, it is equally important to develop new theories, focusing on the core of the discipline. The link between researchers who are

more theoretically oriented and those who work more empirically needs to be strengthened so that new theories are used in gender practice.

The discipline *Genusvetenskap* is growing rapidly in Sweden – for instance, at the beginning of 2015, Stockholm University received one thousand applicants to the undergraduate level. That funding of PhD-programs in *genusvetenskap* should continue is vital to secure a new generation of gender scholars, who can form a stable future core group in the field.

The presence of gender research in public debate and political life in Sweden is unique in a European context. This makes Sweden an interesting case to learn from. Besides, the experiences of enhancing the quality and strengthening the organizational frames of gender research in Sweden could be valuable to the ongoing work of our European colleagues –as we could learn from them. Therefore, we hope this Round Table will be followed by other initiatives to share experiences across national borders.

## **Final remarks**

In closing remarks, it is as always important to emphasise positive facets.

First of all it is evident that the willingness of the Danish, Norwegian and Swedish participants to interact, not only among themselves but to also reflect on contributions made in previous round tables, is promising. This confirms that awareness of the importance of joining forces and energy in order to strengthen gender studies is whole. This is a historic moment of utmost importance, recognised as a particularly critical turning point in all round tables.

Moreover, the Scandinavian colleagues reaffirm their wish to follow up with other transnational initiatives. Their wish “to consider the meaning of a transnational gender studies approach in Europe today” is challenging and purposeful. It will not remain vain.

Finally, the presence of gender research in public debate and political life, a marked feature of this round table, provides for thought about the positive, and perhaps sometimes less positive, consequences that may help predict risks and problems that could easily arise in other countries. This might be useful for a comparison between the

experiences expressed by the Scandinavian colleagues with those cited by Diane Lamoureux (see round table n.2) in her description of the situation in Quebec and through her reflections on the political responsibility of intellectuals in the public sphere.

This issue concludes a first cycle of a series of round tables in which we attempted to deepen our understanding of the status of gender studies in several European countries and some other ones too. Starting with the next issue of *About Gender*, we will tackle new topics with other social scientists, with a continuing aspiration to stimulate a debate and to learn about new approaches to keep gender studies vivacious, always evolving and connected to the societies in which we live.

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