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Gender Equality at European Universities within the Context of University Reform - Paradoxical Simultaneity of Regulation and Deregulation
a structural and discursive point of view¹

As I am ‘newcomer’ in Austria - my experience about the subject we will look at today is based on research I did in Germany before (I’ve been watching the process of gender equality within the context of university reform since 1994) – so that my interpretation of the situation in Austria has to be taken with caution or as a first provisional hypothesis, which I carefully try to add to my German point of view.

I. ‘Globalisation’ – a short glance at an emotive term

I would like to start with a short view on a ‘fundamental’ term, which seems to be important for our discussion – or: a view behind the subject we are going to talk about: the key-word ‘globalisation.’

In the mainstream discourse – it is also a very popular term today – ‘globalisation’ is taken to be the theoretical term which includes – or ‘labels’ - economic and political processes under one phenomenon: global changes of main structures within the relation of nation and ‘world’, national market and global economy.

In this discussion ‘globalisation’ as a theoretical term is taken as a neutral category. Just for its results it is already concerned that the process of globalisation

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makes the poor poorer - and in the same way we find the opinion that within this process women are – in general - on the side of the losers of globalisation. That ‚global‘ view is not correct: but it is a truth that people with the social markers white, male, young, well educated, middle or upper class member are the prospective winners of the process of globalisation and persons with the social markers: coloured, female, aged, less educated, member of a low section of the society – are the prospective losers within these processes.

If we take a look on the situation of women, we see that white, well educated middle or upper class women are prospective ‚winners‘ of globalisation, and there is a new social distance between them and the situation of women in a new growing market of less paid (private) services.

So what I hoped to show, are two serious theses:

Globalisation is not neutral in its results and consequences

Its processes have effects on the social categories of sex and gender

Globalisation is not neutral in its configuration as a theoretical term

This means for our subject:

The theoretical term globalisation includes and describes processes which are already and in the first place „gendered“, globalisation is not a category which we can bring in a linear relation to other theoretical (sociological) categories such as "sex" and "gender" – the relation between these theoretical terms are multiple and research has to be focused on them on their own.

Also in gender research projects this thesis is ‚young‘ but in Austria with the research done by Erna Appelt in *Geschlecht-Staatsbürgerschaft-Nation. Politische Konstruktionen des Geschlechterverhältnisses in Europa* or Eva Kreisky and Birgit Sauer in *Geschlechterverhältnisse im Kontext politischer Transformation* this thesis is already well established.

II. ‚Globalisation‘ and its Relation to the European University Reform

The processes of European university reforms differ very much in the context of the political and economical conditions of the respective nations, but there are internationally compatible tendencies:

- ◆ Deregulation of administration

- ◆ Strengthening of the autonomy of university structures
- ◆ Implementation of management elements or structures in university administration
- ◆ Opening of the universities for new economic partnerships and sponsoring
- ◆ Implementation of innovative research fields
- ◆ Translation of administration processes into management processes, which inherited their terminology from the realm of economy

Thus in the process of European university reform we have a kind of specific transformation/translation or adaptation of characteristics of the process of ‚globalisation‘. European university reforms can be described as a specific part of ‚globalisation‘ – meanwhile this reform processes are also marked by specific elements coming out of the specific of university ‚genesis‘ and structure.

III. Gender Equality at European Universities

Parallel to this process (ca. since 1990), the process of the implementation of democratic instruments for the advancement of women at European universities was started. In Germany, we have got full-time representatives for the advancement of women – who, together with secondary instructors and various committees, try to work on the implementation of structures as plans for women’s advancement (Frauenförderpläne) – democratic instruments, special programmes for special grants and for qualifying measures and project jobs.

All these instruments/measures are characterised by two significant features:

- They are instruments of democratic regulation – at some level in connection with restrictive measures (then we get the best results), often or even mostly without any serious consequences for them who try to ignore their implementation.
- And all these measures are taken out of special money resources – they did not and mostly do not come out of the regular budget but they are constituted apart from the regular structures and budgets.

Characteristics of the democratic implementation instruments are that they need at least two, but mostly three and sometimes as many as up to four years to get installed and they need at least the same amount of time to produce any remarkable results. Democracy needs a long time to become real – and at this point we could all tune into the lamentation about all the backlash-moments of the ‚turning down‘ of projects, of refusals of money and so on from the conservative

parts of the university committees trying to directly or indirectly block off these implementations so that they get less effective.

IV. Reduction of budgets

At the same time, a third process has to be recognised at European universities: the reduction of regular budgets.

While there are new financial resources on the scientific market to advance new technologies and sciences like molecular biology, the regular budgets for universities are frozen and there is pressure of competition on the question of how to cut the costs. These pressures can be found in universities all over Europe.

Within this impeding development there have also been jealous statements about the programmes for the advancement of women, implying that women would be the only group to get supported. But this position ignores that in spite of all the measures already implemented, female university teachers still take a more than marginal place in the general university system (10% female C4-professors).

V. Development of a new Transparency of Structures (Evaluation etc.)

To show the meaning of this statement a last process at European Universities has to be mentioned: with the process of university reforms a new transparency has been brought into university structures. Budgets, personnel, indexes, numbers of male and female university teachers have been evaluated.

It is the first time that we have it in black and white how many male and female university teachers there are, how interested students are in women's studies and gender research and so on.

VI. Gender Equality as a basic right in the European Union

As gender equality is a basic right in the European Union (and the innovative potential of women and gender research is now an open fact accepted), the support for women working in the research sector is one of the guidelines of the Fifth Framework Programme of the European Union.

So, if we add the topics of the six steps and try to put them together, we can make out some specific paradoxes.

VII. Paradox: Simultaneity of Deregulation and Regulation

Whereas the process of university reform includes a global deregulation and a change from ‚old‘ administrative to management structures, the instruments for the advancement of women are marked by a regulation mode.

While the deregulation in its methods is characterised by a move from bureaucratic structures to an economic ‚design‘ or at least to the terminology of management, the steering and controlling of measures for the advancement of women is a political measure.

So we have got two paradoxes on a different level.

1) Regulation/Deregulation is the paradoxical simultaneity of processes at European universities.

2) There is a significant difference of the steering modes of these different processes.

And while this paradoxical simultaneity is continued, the measures for the advancement of women shall be integrated in these new management structures within the context of university reform and shall explain themselves in the ‚new‘ language coming out of economic processes.

The women who are engaged in these processes at European Universities now try to translate their democratic instruments into the new management terminology. An example from the German terminology: ‚Frauenförderprogramme‘ (programmes for the advancement of women) have to be translated into structural ‚Anreizsysteme‘ (incentive systems).

In these characteristic trials of translations, which define the temporary process, the discursive paradox between political and economical steering modes is as lost as the fundamental opposition between regulation and deregulation modality.

So we have got a fundamental discursive problem, which has not yet been made out and remarked upon in the contemporary practice of university reform.

VIII. Research Resources and Special Programmes

While there are millions if not billions of dollars for new fields of research such as genetic engineering, molecular biology etc., the humanities are marginalized.

Within this process, the innovative potential of interdisciplinary research fields and new interdisciplinary theories in women's studies and gender research is a small field.

Women and gender research sometimes tries to show its attractiveness by changing its critical potentials to mainstream projects. (In my opinion, the gender-mainstreaming debate is such a project with backlash tendencies in its own structures.) And it tries to prove that it is attractive by claiming that their research resources that come out of special programmes are funds coming from third parties.

But this is an eyewash behind the fundamental reality that women's studies and gender research are a marginalized field within university research and that the critical potential of this research at least can not be ‚won‘ out of economic attraction but just out of the need for democratic freedom and humanity.

IX. Gender Equality at European Universities in Times of Budgetary Cuts

In times of lower budgets a new competition among the university institutes and the different sciences is coming up. Within this competition there are some specific dangers which can put women – and especially those who are involved in women's studies and gender research – into a new kind of marginalization:

First, it is a simple fact that in times of budget cuts also the programmes for the advancement of women get less money – and so there are often very few possibilities left to work on any real advancement. Often the programmes continue with a mostly symbolic function to show that universities are active to give themselves an innovative profile. But in reality, the little money of the special funds is either splinted into so many so little ‚gifts‘, as short time grants, contracts of manufacture and sponsoring of punctual events, that there are no real long time effects for the scientific biographies of the female academic staff of the future.

Or the money is taken for one, two or mostly three regular qualifying profile jobs – and finally this is called a very individual structure of the advancement of profiles.

The second danger - and it does not only exist in times of lower budgets – is the following: If there are special programmes for the advancement of women, university teachers who have got female and male graduates and want to get them into grants ask the females to apply for a grant in one of the special

programmes, and the worst effect can be that there are less women in regular grants, jobs, etc

Most of them are paid by special programmes apart from regular budgets and apart from the regular university structures. On the one hand these measures are helpful to push the careers of female academic staff but sometimes they have a backlash effect to drop out females again: out of the ‚real university structures‘.

As measures for the advancement of women are mostly accepted as democratic instrument but are also shown as public signs of innovative potentials of the university, also in reform acts, sometimes this innovative profile proves to be taken as a ‚design‘ which tries to gloss over the fact that there are no measures that really work to implement female researchers and establish women and gender research.

X. Strategies for the Implementation of Gender Equality at European Universities within the Context of University Reform

As I tried to show some steps before, there are specific paradoxes within the trials to translate democratic instruments of regulation into a new - economically designed - language of new management structures. In this process the contemporary debate is focussed on two general possibilities to implement and evaluate gender equality.

One strategy is to establish gender equality with cross section markers and evaluation fields. Behind this, we have got the thesis that gender equality has to get implemented as a mainstream project into all university structures.

The other strategy is - as it is a truth that there are many backlash implications and refusing acts and facts (methods?) against the measures to establish gender equality - they still have to work on special measures to have one section with visible processes and results in this sector.

A good argument for this way is - and now we come back to the key issue of my topic – that ‚globalisation‘ as a theoretical term includes or describes gendered phenomena. So we have got an equal experience within the process of university reform: It is not neutral – it is a structure which has over long historical periods already been “gendered” and we must not forget this while translating political measures into economic terms. Otherwise the paradox will continue to work - and there can not be a real, evolution (revolution?) of gender equality.

XI. Marginalizing of Universities within the Process of Cuts in Social Services / Reduction of Welfare State

But even if we have got the vision of gender equality at European universities, one can ask on a theoretical level: What does it mean?

„Powerful“ political and intellectual representatives believe when gender equality will become reality at European universities it will be a serious marker for the marginalisation of the scientific field in general – it is seen as a marker that „real power“ has already lost this field and is transferred to the economic sector in a direct way (end of Fordism) – and that may also be significant as a sign of the process of globalisation.

XII. Vision

On the other side, if we try to learn from the new transparency that processes of globalisation may include, we can try to build up an international network of feminist researchers and their involved students who are working together in internationally compatible, interdisciplinary modules of women's studies and gender research and studies, highly qualified and approved by the international context of the significant profile of their specific critical and innovative scientific community.

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