

Call for Papers

Doing Science – Doing Excellence – Doing Inequalities? Interrogating the Paradigm of Excellence in Academia

**International Workshop
of the Chair of Sociology/Social Inequality and Gender
with the Marie Jahoda Visiting Professor Program in International Gender Studies**

Ruhr University Bochum (Germany), 08–10 November 2017

New Public Management and new forms of governance have dominated the agendas for higher education reform in many countries for several years. Neoliberalism and the idea of the 'entrepreneurial university' have produced a shift in the way scientific knowledge, universities and 'ideal researchers' are defined. One important strategy of the latest state-run programs focussed the stimulation of competition between individuals and organisations through funding of the so-called 'excellence'. From this it followed that 'excellence' became an idealised goal for scientific subjects as well as for research-processes and organisation development. It seems like everyone in scientific organisation(s) wants to be or become excellent, and therefore scientific organisations engage in improving their organisational excellence with different strategies and measures. Along with that, contemporary universities and researchers need now an authentic profile, foresighted planning and measurable outputs to emerge as excellent. Entangled with that, ongoing requests to be visible, enterprising and creative can also be observed on all levels and functions in academia. Though the associated discourses of 'excellence' seem to get out of hand, as evidenced by mission statements even in provincial universities and new competitive funding models.

At first sight an excellence explosion seems to be taking place: noisy, colourful and promoting the renaissance of meritocratic ideas. However, ideas of excellence have governed science for a long time and thus are not really new in scientific organisation(s). In the light of New Public Management and the new academic governance they seem to be reformulated and produce a paradox situation. On the one hand, embedded in the discourse on scientific excellence and the entrepreneurial university, a strengthening of multiple inequalities between individuals and organisations seems to take place. On the other hand, the discourse on scientific excellence and the entrepreneurial university is accompanied by ongoing reforms to promote gender equality and diversity in scientific organisation(s).

Even though all these developments are allegedly gendered and have implications for gender relations in academia, little explicit attention in science and/or gender studies is paid to a critical analysis of the concept(s) of excellence in scientific knowledge production and scientific organisation(s). What is ongoing in academia with respect to scientific knowledge production, excellence and inequalities? What are the implications and effects of these new formations of power/knowledge in the higher education system, locally and globally? Are there signs for a gendered excellence? Which theories and methodologies are helpful for analysing this paradoxical situation? The international and interdisciplinary research workshop aims at focusing on these questions from a critical perspective which is informed by gender and intersectionality. Special attention will also be paid to disciplinary comparisons and different geopolitical contexts.

We welcome offers of both theoretical and empirical academic papers, in particular those concerning the following themes and related questions:

- Scientific knowledge production: How do research funding policies contribute to the construction of excellent scientific knowledge and to the meritocratic ideal of scientific knowledge production? How are idea(l)s of 'excellence' linked to specific academic work regimes, a specific (and transformed) organisation-culture as well as to different scientific disciplines? How is 'excellence' constructed? Which criteria are taken into account in order to measure excellent scientific knowledge? What makes it possible to recognise excellent scientific achievements? Which role do e.g. internationality and inter- or transdisciplinary play? How and by whom is excellent scientific knowledge production done? Does excellent scientific knowledge production require special methodologies and organisational forms and if so which and why? What counts as excellent scientific knowledge? Are some scientific disciplines more excellent than others, and why? What is the meaning of gender, also in combination with other inequalities, in excellent knowledge production and delivering process? Are thereby new differentiations between 'normal' research and 'excellent' research emerging?
- Scientific organisation(s): What role do politics of gender equality and diversity play in the construction of excellent scientific organisation(s)? To what extent do excellence and equality policies go hand in hand in scientific organisation(s) and to what extent do they differ, and why? Which organisational practices are considered to contribute to excellent and/or gender equal scientific organisation(s)? Are there special criteria that characterise excellent scientific organisation(s)? How is the excellence of scientific organisation(s) measured? How far are these measurements informed by gender and diversity? Which equity issues evolve along with ideas and practices of shaping an 'excellent' university?
- Recruitment practices of scientific personnel: How is scientific excellence constructed in recruitment procedures, e.g. of doctoral students, postdoctoral researchers and/or professors? Which ideas of an excellent 'ideal researcher' do emerge in scientific personnel recruitment? Which criteria are taken into account to measure scientific performance, and how do these criteria contribute to reproduce inequalities? How do excellence assessments in personnel recruitment procedures contribute to renew or change meritocratic ideas of scientific knowledge production? How can individual scientific excellence be developed? What role do criteria like gender and other inequalities such as age, class and race play in the recruitment of scientific personnel?

Both junior and senior scientists are invited to submit an abstract (between 500 and 800 words on the topic, objectives and research questions plus, if applicable, the empirical background of the paper) in form of a word- or pdf-document. Abstracts should also include FULL contact details, including your name, institutional affiliation, mailing address, and e-mail address. **Abstracts should be sent until March 31st, 2017 to Heike Kahlert (conference-sozsug@rub.de), see for more information about the organising chair <http://www.sowi.rub.de/sozsug/index.html.en>).** Deadline for notice of acceptance/ rejection of the paper is May 15th, 2017.

The workshop is an opportunity to discuss 'work in progress' and research results as well as to form networks for further international collaborations. Therefore, admitted papers will be discussed in small working groups which will work together throughout the whole workshop. The papers (with a maximum length of 7.000 words) will be due on September 01st, 2017, and will be delivered to all participants of the workshop. All participants are expected to read the papers in advance. During the workshop the authors will introduce their papers briefly, and each participant will comment on one paper. Selected papers will be published.

!Note: We apologise for the fact that no funding, fee waiver, travel or other bursaries can be offered for attending the workshop! The workshop fee (appr. 100 €) will cover conference material and catering during coffee and lunch breaks.