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Networking under the Radar

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www.genderopen.de

nander solidarisch zu stützen. Aus dieser Motivation heraus ist 1991 der Arbeitskreis Politik und Geschlecht in der Deutschen Vereinigung für Politische Wissenschaft (DVPW) von feministischen Politikwissenschaftler_innen gegründet worden (siehe den Beitrag von Gabriele Abels, Anm. d. Red.). Die Stärkung der Frauen- und Geschlechterforschung sowie der feministischen Wissenschaft und das Sichtbarmachen von Frauen und deren Forschungsarbeiten sind Ziele des AK Politik und Geschlecht. Unter den gegenwärtigen neoliberalen Entwicklungen in der Hochschullandschaft, die auf individuelle Lösungen für die strukturelle Marginalisierung von feministischen Wissenschaftler_innen setzt, sieht sich der AK vor neue Herausforderungen gestellt. Um emanzipativ wirken zu können, sollten feministische Netzwerke sich deshalb wieder stärker auf ihre machtkritischen Ursprünge beziehen und sich nicht von der Logik der ‚Verbetriebswirtschaftlichung‘ leiten lassen. In diesem Sinne ist es an der Zeit, uns die Netzwerke zurückzuerobern, als Räume, die Alternativen zum Bestehenden bieten und gegenhegemoniale Institutionenbildungsprozesse anstoßen.

Networking under the Radar

LEA SGIER

Working Group Gender & Politics of the Swiss Political Science Association, since the early 1990s; Chair

The working group Gender & Politics of the Swiss Political Science Association was founded in the early 1990s by Prof. Thanh-Huyen Ballmer-Cao, one of the pioneers of research on women in politics and gender equality policies in Switzerland. Its main activity consists in holding a workshop at the annual Swiss political science conference. The group also occasionally cooperates with its sister groups of neighbouring political science associations (Germany, Austria, France, Belgium, Luxembourg, and Canada).

Ever since it came into being, the group has faced the same challenges: a small and rather volatile pool of members, and a general difficulty earning visibility and legitimacy.

The first challenge stems from various factors:

- ▶ the quasi-absence of Gender chairs in Swiss political science departments – only the University of Lausanne currently has a (newly established) professorship held by a Gender & Politics specialist; the other Gender chairs are attached to Sociology, History, Gender Studies or International Relations (HEID) departments – and of gender-related courses from political science MA curricula, con-

sequently a very limited number of doctoral students engaging in gender related political science research;

- ▶ the small size and strong fragmentation of the Swiss higher education system (between linguistic regions, and between universities, university institutes and professional universities);
- ▶ the structure of academic careers in Switzerland that forces the vast majority of post-docs either into an often long period of precariousness (time-limited and/or part-time jobs, etc.) and mobility (often abroad), into jobs unrelated to their field of specialisation, or out of the system altogether (often into the public administration).

This configuration results in very small numbers of researchers constituting a ‘natural’ and stable pool for the Gender & Politics group.

The second challenge – the problem of visibility and legitimacy of gender research in Swiss political science – is to my understanding partly due to a lack of awareness of many ‘mainstream’ colleagues of the salience and vitality of gender research at the European level. Many still see gender issues as a ‘niche’ topic, and this impression is difficult to correct by our small community of researchers that is pretty much operating ‘under the radar’ of the Swiss mainstream.

Our group plans to increase the scope of the network by linking it better with other gender/feminist/gender & politics networks in- and outside Switzerland, and to enhance visibility via common publications. However, these plans are slow to materialise, partly because the few more senior members of the network are all currently abroad (myself including) and/or engaged in a variety of other activities and networks too, not all of them gender related.