FEMINA POLITICA

ZEITSCHRIFT FÜR FEMINISTISCHE POLITIKWISSENSCHAFT

Call for Papers

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Gender equality and diversity in science between institutional change and symbolic politics (working title)

Universities and other research institutions contribute to the reproduction and transformation of power relations and structures in society through the production of knowledge about and for society. These places of knowledge production, therefore, play a key role in the context of gender equality and diversity: the way in which gender and diversity are approached and implemented in academia not only influences the structure and culture of academic institutions themselves but also makes a significant contribution to developments in society.

This is why demands for gender equality and diversity in academia - both concerning researchers and research content - are still timely, even several decades after the introduction of the first gender equality measures and the institutionalisation of gender studies. Despite the legal and institutional anchoring of gender equality and numerous programmes to promote gender equality and diversity, these issues are still highly contested - now more than ever. For instance, the representation of women and marginalised groups among professors and diversity in research content (e.g., Gender-, Trans- and Diversity Studies) only increases very slowly. Discrimination and power structures persist, and successes in both areas are very fragile – a phenomenon that is also referred to as the 'gender equality paradox' (Hark and Hofbauer 2023).

A striking development in recent years is the increasing (and often strategic) linking of equality and diversity with the promise of excellence and innovation, as well as with improved international competitiveness. It seems that framing equality and diversity policies with neoliberal arguments of the economic usability of diversity (e.g., diverse perspectives increasing the quality and social relevance of research, closing gender data gaps – in cases where they impact the economy –, or finding solutions for social challenges) increases their acceptance and popularity.

The expansion of gender equality policy to include other forms of difference beyond gender is a relatively recent development. Under the presidency of Ursula von der Leyen, the EU Commission first introduced the term „intersectionality " into EU

policies on gender equality and diversity in science. The German Research Foundation (DFG) also renamed its standards „Equality and Diversity Standards“ in 2022.

However, diversity and categories beyond gender are often integrated in only very limited form in existing gender equality policies or addressed separately. For example, in many cases, efforts to increase diversity are reduced to recruiting international (elite) researchers. This approach ignores other dimensions such as class, ethnicity/race, disability, sexual orientation or gender identity and even reinforces existing inequalities and global power relations. Reflections on the role of the colonial legacy and racist structures in knowledge production are also generally not part of current equality and diversity measures. International mobility is primarily considered ‘valuable’ if researchers move from or to English-speaking or Western European contexts. At the same time, gender equality measures - such as quotas, funding programmes or women's or diversity officers - are often instrumentalised or reduced to purely bureaucratic measures intended to improve statistical representation without dismantling the underlying patriarchal and heteronormative structures. For example, this becomes apparent when non-binary people are excluded from these measures.

This special issue aims to critically analyse the power relations, discourses, and narratives that underlie current equality and diversity policies in research and science, as well as struggles for institutional and financial resources. We call for contributions that analyse the limits, gaps, challenges, and potentials of existing measures and current discourses and reflect on perspectives for transformative approaches that work towards a sustainable anchoring of equality and diversity in science. More specifically, contributions could focus on the following topics and questions:

- **Intersectionality**: Do intersectional perspectives gain momentum, and if so, how? Which dimensions of inequality receive more and less attention, and how is their relationship to each other and to gender constructed? How are intersectional perspectives implemented and what potential for development is there here?
- **Postcolonial global power relations and academic knowledge production**: To what extent do postcolonial and racist structures and power relations shape academic knowledge production? How is the knowledge produced by researchers from the Global South positioned? What are the approaches for intervention in this context?
- **Postcolonial Global Power Relations and Academic Mobility**: How do postcolonial and global power relations influence academic careers? What forms of mobility are considered "valuable" in academia?
- **Sexual Harassment, Discrimination Against LGBTIQ+ Individuals, and Abuse of Power in Higher Education**: How are these issues addressed in higher education? What form of resistance against anti-discrimination and anti-harassment measures emerge? How can the experience of violence and discrimination be de-individualised and addressed as a matter of power structures and dependencies in academia?
- **Gender Equality and Diversity Measures Between Social Justice Concerns and Utilitarian Instrumentalization**: In universities, national research funding institutions, and EU funding programs, gender equality and diversity measures are increasingly linked to discourses on excellence, inclusive innovation, and

efforts toward internationalisation. How do these discourses impact the European academic landscape? Under what conditions does the goal of social justice persist? To what extent are gender equality and diversity measures primarily instrumentalised as tools of a neoliberal strategy of excellence aimed at increasing global competitiveness and improving the reputation of research institutions?

- **Institutionalisation of Feminist Movements in Academia**: Which feminist demands and concepts are integrated into academic gender equality policies, and which are not? How do feminist debates, demands, and concepts change when they become part of academic institutions? What challenges and resistance do they encounter, what compromises are made, and to what extent can their transformative potential be preserved? What is the role of local, national, and transnational networks of feminist actors in ensuring that planned measures are effectively implemented and do not end up as non-performative, bureaucratised regulations?
- **Gender Equality and Diversity in the Context of Contemporary Anti-Gender and Anti-Science Movements**: How are attacks on gender studies, gender equality policies, and science intertwined with anti-democratic movements? How can measures to promote gender equality and diversity be sustained in the face of ongoing attacks from right-wing actors?
- **International Perspectives in Comparison**: How do gender equality and diversity policies in Germany differ from other European and non-European countries, and what potential exists for mutual learning? How do EU-level policies — such as those within the framework of Horizon Europe or the ERC — impact German-language policies and debates?

Abstracts and Contact

The editors of the special issue are Laura Eigenmann, Patricia Graf and Kathrin Zippel. We invite submissions of one- to two-page abstracts by **May 31, 2025,** to be sent to laura.eigenmann@fu-berlin.de, patricia.graf@businessschool-berlin.de, gender-soz@polsoz.fu-berlin.de or the editorial office redaktion@femina-politica.de.

Femina Politica is a feminist academic journal that promotes scholarly work by women and people with marginalised gender identities(such as trans*, inter*, non-binary, or gender-nonconforming persons) both within and outside academia. We invite the submission of high-quality abstracts and particularly welcome contributions that go beyond white, Eurocentric, cis-heteronormative feminism.

Submission Deadlines

The guest editors will invite selected authors to submit full manuscripts based on the submitted abstracts by **June 15, 2025**. The deadline for the full article submission is **September 15, 2025.** Submissions must be fully anonymised and between 35,000 and 40,000 characters (including spaces, footnotes, and references) in length. Author information should appear on the title page only. All submissions will receive one external (double-blind) and one internal review by a member of the editorial board. If necessary, a third review may be requested. Authors will receive feedback from the reviews by **November 15, 2025.** The editorial team will make the final decision on

publication based on the reviews. The deadline for final revisions is **January 15, 2026.**

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Kontakt: redaktion@femina-politica.de