

Managing gender equality: The Swiss case

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Research Design

National level		Organizational level	
Switzerland	Germany	Switzerland	Germany
Document analysis		3 Case Studies	3 Case Studies
12 interviews	8 interviews	18 interviews, 6 group discussions, document analysis	18 interviews, 6 group discussions, document analysis

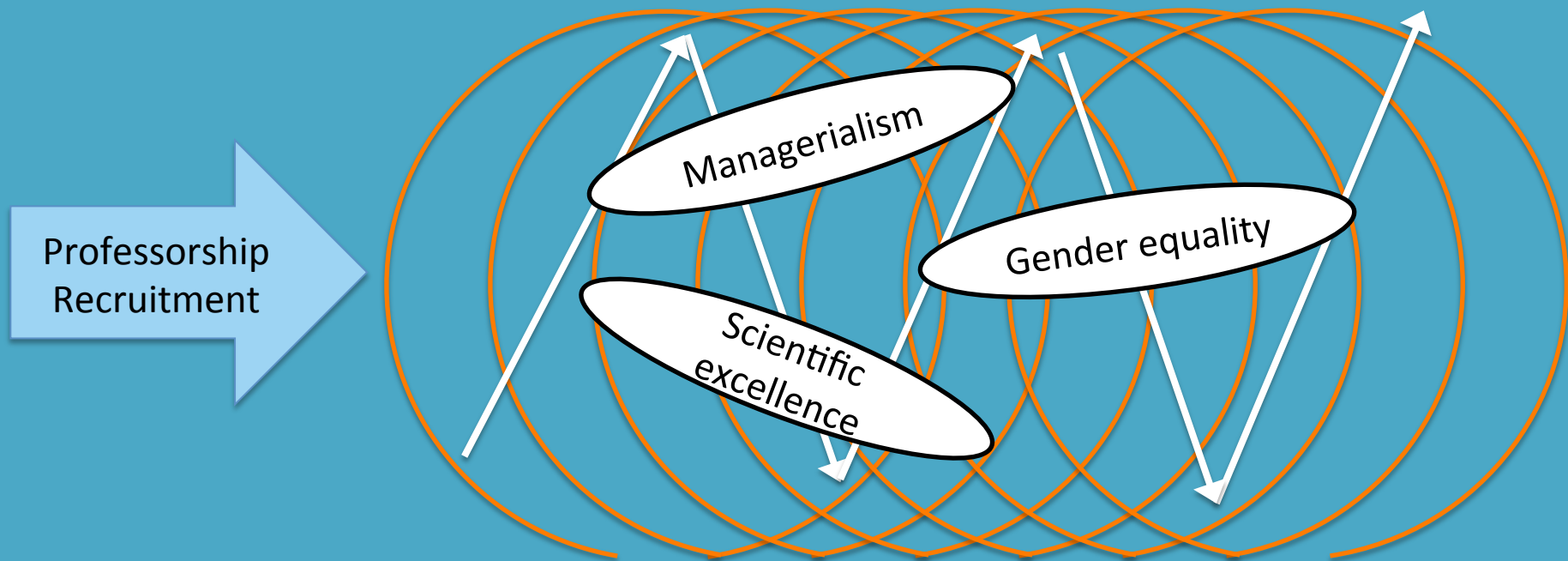
Research project
„Excellence and/or Equal Opportunities of Gender
National Objectives and discursive Practices at Universities
(Germany and Switzerland)“

www.genderchange-academia.eu

Translating organizational change

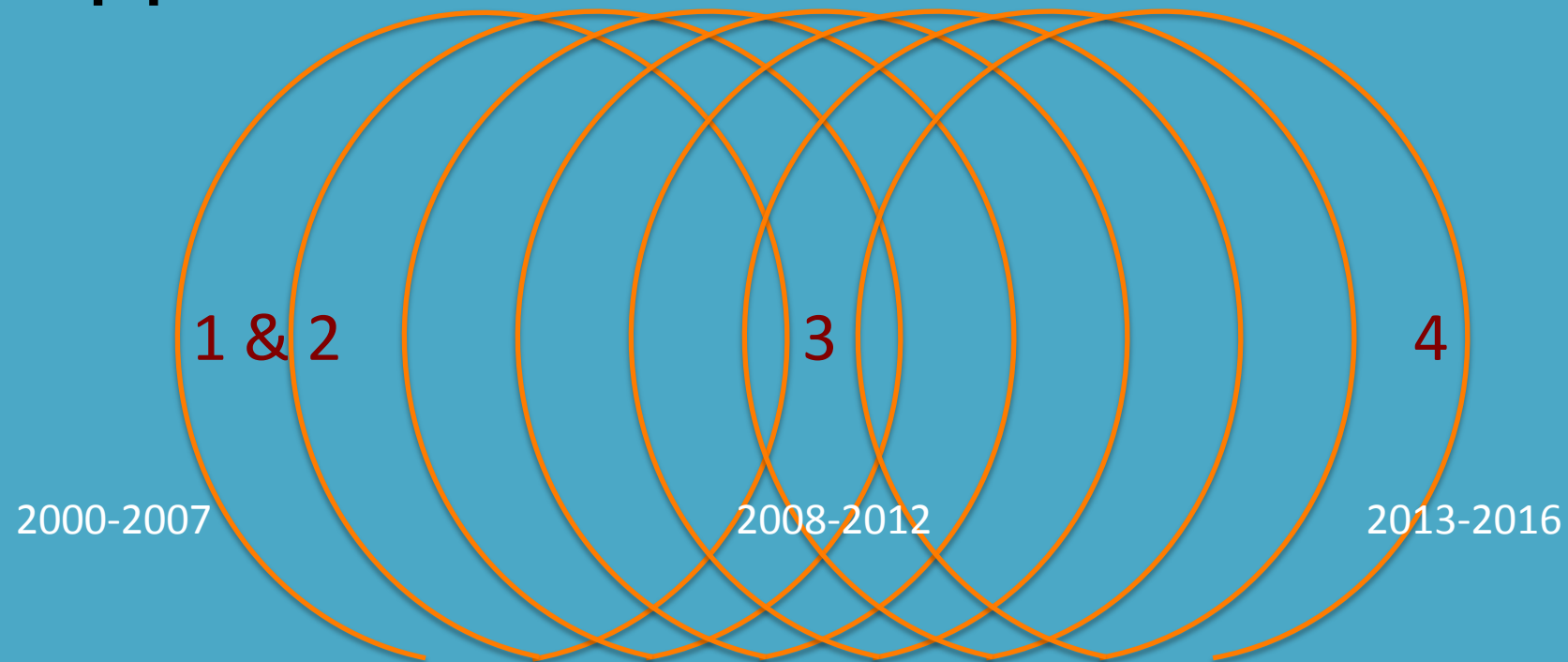
Czarniawska and Sevón 1996

Reforms are never complete: 'fading out'
Sense-making and enrolment of allies, 'editing'



Sense-making processes as discursively facilitated:
'interpretative repertoires' (Potter/Wetherell 1987)
Their enrolment as allies stabilizes **and** transforms meanings

The Federal Programme for Equal Opportunities



Module 1: Female Professors
Module 2: Mentoring
Module 3: Childcare facilities

Action Plans

→ equal opportunities as an issue of fairness and justice & numbers.

„Head money debate“

“the incentive module shows to be a module that nobody actually wants to take responsibility for. Universities’ decision making bodies are rather sceptical. There is no university that develops let alone publicizes strategies on how to increase opportunities for women to succeed in recruitment processes could be increased.”

(Bachmann et al. 2004, p. 10, translated by authors)

Excellence becoming a powerful ally

- Looking for **the ‘best’ researchers**. Excellence as defining an elite and as opposed to a standard performance.
- **Excellence as a strategic instrument** referring to outside communication and university rankings and heavily connected to issues of global competition.

→ Equal opportunities as „an issue of bias in selection procedures”

Women as human capital & neglected potential

“best heads that are no longer willing to move to a different university (abroad) without receiving support for their partners finding a job as well.” (CRUS, 2007, p.3)

- Equal opportunities as “fighting the lost human capital”
- Excellence as “finding the best researchers”

Unconscious bias: 'Selecting the best' and 'fighting bias'

- *„The data speaks for itself. We know the leaky pipeline exists, so what can we do in the hiring process to counteract it?“*
- *“We want to explore with openness the possibility that subconscious gender bias hinders equally suitable female candidates from having equal chances of being selected for professorships, despite the fact that direct and open discrimination rarely if ever occurs.”*
- *“If we can access the entire intellectual capital of humanity and benefit from increased gender diversity in our faculty we will very likely also increase our scientific competitiveness.”*

The 'leaky pipeline' revisited: Junior career development

*“It is self-evident that there is an absolute consensus among colleagues that we only recruit somebody due to his or her scientific achievements. I have never experienced somebody questioning that. (...) Apart from that it seems to me that the **recruitment process is actually already too late when it comes to realizing gender equality.**”*

Discussion and Conclusion

- The Federal Programme of Equal Opportunities has successfully tackled the iron cage of meritocracy and faculty autonomy by enrolling scientific excellence and managerialism as discursive allies.
- Individualizing excellence and equality („finding the best researcher“) limits the scope of both equal opportunities policies and excellence.
- Alternative repertoires of equality and excellence are set aside as an effect of power.
- Gender equality interventions as „ants constantly nagging“ at the university's bars.

Repertoires of Scientific Excellence

1. Looking for **the ‘best’ researchers**. Excellence as defining an elite and as opposed to a standard performance. It is the “best” researchers that are looked for in hiring processes.
2. **Excellence as a strategic instrument** referring to outside communication and university rankings and heavily connected to issues of global competition.
3. **Pestalozzi, not Goethe**: scientific excellence as an important objective for universities as institutions. Excellence needs to be fostered by the institution and does not reside within the individual researcher.
4. Excellence as **measuring output**. This is evaluated as rather critical or even counter-productive and too limited.

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- Alternative repertoires of equality and excellence are set aside as an effect of power.
- **Gender equality interventions as „ants constantly nagging“ at the university’s bars.**

Questions?

- Nentwich, Julia & Offenberger, Ursula (2017) *Organizing 'good science': The discursive interplays of scientific excellence, new public management and equal opportunities*. In: 33rd EGOS Colloquium, 6-8 July 2017, Copenhagen, Denmark.
- Nentwich, Julia C. & Offenberger, Ursula (2017) [Meritokratie – Fakt oder Fiktion? Spannungsverhältnisse zwischen Exzellenz und Chancengleichheit](#). In: Löther, A. & Samjeske, K. (Hrsg.). Dialogtagung des Centre for Excellence Women in Science (CEWS) „Neue Governance und Gleichstellung der Geschlechter in der Wissenschaft“: Tagungsdokumentation. Köln, CEWS. .
- Offenberger, Ursula & Nentwich, Julia C. (2017) [Chancengleichheit, Translation und Interpretative Repertoires – die Übersetzung des Bundesprogramms Chancengleichheit an einer Schweizer Universität oder: ein Tanzkurs für Elefanten im Raum](#). In: Funder, M. (Hrsg.). Neo-Institutionalismus - Revisited. Bilanz und Weiterentwicklungen aus Sicht der Geschlechterforschung (S. 307-337). Baden-Baden: Nomos.