
Women in Science, Engineering and Technology:
Strategies for a Global Workforce

Cultures of Knowledge – Gender – Excellence

Ottawa 2006

Facts around Science

Science is a **social activity**

- communication is not universal, but socially selective
- choice of theory is not autonomous, but socially framed
- results are not objective, but socially negotiated

(Sabine Hark: Dissidente Partizipation)

Science is **gendered** - Gender is a category of knowledge

- „male“ / „female“ disciplines, professions
- male objectivity, rationality / female-feminist-genderstudies
subjectivity, irrelevance
- cultures of knowledge

Cultures of Knowledge

Cultures of Knowledge have ...

... a **personal side**:

Who is present, who sets the tone, who decides, who counts?

... a **material side**:

Who has a permanent position, who gets resources?

... a **quality side**:

What is present, what counts, what is *excellent*?

Cultures of Knowledge: **the personal side**

Who is present, who counts?

- access of women to science and science policies
- role models
- beyond the exceptional woman
- change occurs with more than 20% presence

Cultures of Knowledge: **the material side**

Who has a job, who gets resources?

- access of women to distributive decisions
- gender-sensitive criteria of distribution
- Change occurs when discrimination starts to cost money

Put differently:

→ Change occurs when science profits from equality

E.g. *EU GAPs, university funding contracts*

→ *a different sense of quality*

Cultures of Knowledge: **the quality side**

What is *excellent*?

- things that „stick out“
- things relevant

→ change occurs when we check gender relevance

E.g. *Fraunhofer Discover Gender*,

E.g. *Working Tool „Gender Mainstreaming in Research“*

- things with **quality!**

→ change occurs when excellence is attributed beyond bias & blind spots

How could we make that happen?

Cultures of Knowledge: **the quality side**

Excellence is distributed

in and to

Academic tribes (*Becher/Trowler*)

on

Academic territories

Cultures of Knowledge: **the quality side**

Academic tribes

- live long traditions of exclusion
 - gender affinity in recruiting & support
 - networking & deals („Seilschaften“)
- use subtle strategies of inclusion – accommodation - marginalization
 - „boy´s clubs“ & „women´s corners“
 - gender studies as a women´s thing

suffer from slow innovation, little fresh talent, little responsiveness to outside demands, little interaction with others

Cultures of Knowledge: the quality side

Academic territories

- are scientific = imagined communities („science“, „technology“, „the scientist“ ...)
- form in strategic developments from idea to institutionalized discipline
- are based on „boundary work“ (*Gieryn*)
- gender studies & women in science as marginal and/or separate
- the mainstream untouched

**suffer from inadequate shape for current problems,
little innovation, competitive disadvantage**

Cultures of Knowledge ... **change**

Academic tribes & territories **affect**

- the personal, material and quality side of the sciences.

The quality of science suffers from such closures.

And: The *common good* „knowledge“ is not produced and distributed fair and just.

Any policy to **create**

- (gender) **equality** and
- (gender sensitive) **quality**

in science needs to address this.

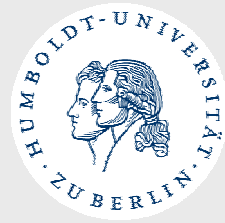
Cultures of Knowledge

Academic tribes need to

- ... accept the relevance of gender
- ... change rituals, the „myth of presence“ (and care back home ...), our images of „the scientist“
- ... value the presence of diverse biographies

Academic territories have to

- ... clarify their idea of „quality“: use, marketable goods, justice, knowledge ...
- ... apply transparent criteria to attribute quality
- ... interact and communicate (*be visibly excellent as the team you really are!*)



Cultures of Knowledge: Differences

Thank you for your attention!