

Call for Papers

**Why (still) promote and advance women\*?  
Reflections on the Status Quo and Visions for New, Successful Strategies**

Conference

Dates: 21 and 22 November 2019

Location: Institute for Advanced Studies, Vienna, Austria (IHS)

In the early 1990s, first talk of a backlash against the advancement of women and gender equality emerged and the strategies of the patriarchy to counteract the demands of women\* for equal participation were revealed (Faludi 1993). Some 25 years later, Sabine Hark talked of feminism having been outstripped by its own success (Hark 2014) and of the need for effective strategies to deal with resistance to feminist issues. There is currently talk again – not only in Austria – of a backlash that finds its expression, for instance, in a departure from the use of gender-neutral language, in the cutting of subventions for organisations that provide advice to women and girls, in the removal of institutions as well as in attacks on gender studies. These backlashes came about despite the fact that gender mainstreaming has been anchored in primary law at both EU and national level, and although in the meantime numerous gender equality institutions have been created and a broad commitment to the promotion of diversity has been shown at political and corporate level.

The aforementioned developments are happening at a time when positive developments are becoming visible in various areas. More women than men are now starting university, the employment rate of women has increased steadily in the last decades, and the share of women in management positions is gradually on the rise. Despite these successes, women continue to be disadvantaged in a number of areas<sup>1</sup>: more women than men still have no education qualifications beyond compulsory level schooling (in 2016, this was the case for 22 % of women between the ages of 25 and 65 but only 15 % of men in the same age group), in 2016, almost one in every two women but only 11 % of men worked on a part-time basis, and women still earn on average around 38 % less per annum than men.

The focus on the successes and the creation of measures (e.g. flexible childcare models) have strengthened the view that gender differences have been overcome in many areas and that women and men enjoy equal opportunities. However, the facts show that the opening up of opportunities cannot absolve us from continuing to question the terms for gender equality. This worsens the conditions for the politicisation of gender equality. There is therefore a need to renegotiate the issues relating to gender equality and the advancement of women and counteract the negative or depoliticising and anti-feminist trends. This requires a return to the traditions of feminist thinking and politics as well as the development of new visions for effective and sustainable gender equality policy (Knapp 2012).

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<sup>1</sup> See [www.statistik.gv.at](http://www.statistik.gv.at).

This raises the following – and other – questions:

- What role do structures to advance women and establish gender equality play in the current developments? What options for action are open to the actors in these structures? To what extent can critical potential be utilised in these structures?
- Which initiatives/measures have proved sustainable and only been affected by the backlash to a limited extent? Why is this the case? What sets these initiatives/measures apart?
- How can existing successes in gender equality policy be secured? What meaning is attached to old exclusion mechanisms? Which new exclusion mechanisms are emerging?
- What experiences do we have with innovative forms of actionism? How can the signs of fatigue be met by activists and practitioners? How can a performative force be created in the sense intended by Sara Ahmed (2017)?
- Which of the current discourses and discursive practices seek to redefine gender equality issues? What gaps exist in this context?
- What role do gender theories/gender studies play in relation to the current developments in the advancement of women or gender equality policy? Which role should they play? How has their role changed?
- How can the current developments be understood from a theoretical perspective? Where can blind spots be identified in the theoretical discussion?

These and similar questions will form the focus of a two-day conference to be held on 21 and 22 November 2019 at the Institute for Advanced Studies (IHS) in Vienna, Austria.

The 2019 event picks up the discussions that were started in 2017 at the conference hosted by Vienna University of Economics and Business under the title “Why (still) promote and advance women\*? From individualised to collective approaches to gender equality.”<sup>2</sup> Its goals thereby are to provide academics and practitioners with an appropriate discussion forum and thus to stimulate both the further development or redefinition of measures as well as the theoretical discourse.

This is a call for papers to support the exchange and discussions at this conference. We are looking especially for papers that address the aforementioned themes from a theoretical perspective or that describe good practices and experiences. Of particular interest thereby are papers that reflect on and relate practical experiences to theoretical concepts as well as theory-based papers that discuss concrete practices.

We kindly request that you initially submit an abstract of your proposed paper. All papers will be commented and reviewed by an expert. We also plan to publish an edited volume of the conference papers.

Please submit your abstract (500 words) by 31 March 2019 to [gender@ihs.ac.at](mailto:gender@ihs.ac.at).

Notification of acceptance of papers will be issued by 31 May 2019.

The deadline for submission of the written version of accepted papers is 30 September 2019.

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<sup>2</sup> “Warum (noch) Frauen\* fördern? Von der Individualisierung zur Kollektivierung gleichstellungspolitischer Ansätze.”

## **Organising Committee**

Angela Wroblewski, Magdalena Wicher (both from the Institute for Advanced Studies in Vienna), Johanna Hofbauer, Katharina Mader, Angelika Schmidt (all from Vienna University of Economics and Business).

## **References**

Ahmed, Sara (2017), *Living a feminist life*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Faludi, Susan (1993), *Die Männer schlagen zurück: wie die Siege des Feminismus sich in Niederlagen verwandeln und was Frauen dagegen tun können*, Rowohlt. [English original: *Backlash. The Undeclared War Against American Women*, New York: Crown Publishing Group, 1991]

Hark, Sabine (2014), *Vom Erfolg überholt? Feministische Ambivalenzen der Gegenwart*, in: Hänzli, Denis; Matthies, Hildegard; Simon, Dagmar (Hrsg.), *Erfolg. Konstellationen und Paradoxien einer gesellschaftlichen Leitorientierung*, Baden-Baden: Nomos Verlag: 76-91 [DOI: <https://doi.org/10.25595/332>]

Knapp, Gudrun-Axeli (2012), *Im Widerstreit. Feministische Theorie in Bewegung*, Heidelberg: VS Springer.

Wetterer, Angelika (2013), *Das erfolgreiche Scheitern feministischer Kritik. Rhetorische Modernisierung, symbolische Gewalt und die Reproduktion männlicher Herrschaft*. In: Appelt, Erna; Aulenbacher, Birgit; Wetterer, Angelika (Hrsg.), *Gesellschaft. Feministische Krisendiagnosen*. Münster: Westfälisches Dampfboot: 246-266.