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Der ideale Manager ist ein Mann!

Ein Gespräch mit Judy Wajcman

von Mirjam Bugmann und Monica Jeggli

Am 15. Mai 2000 fand das Symposium «Numbers are not enough» – «The Gender Gap in the Sciences», organisiert durch die Professur für Wissenschaftsforschung, an der ETH Zürich statt. Als Referentinnen eingeladen waren die Historikerinnen Londa Schiebinger und Rosalind H. Williams, die Ökonomin Margit Osterloh und die Soziologin Judy Wajcman.

Innerhalb des Wissenschaftsbetriebes finden Männer und Frauen immer noch unterschiedliche Ausgangslagen und Chancen vor. Je mehr Prestige und Lohn mit einer Position verbunden sind, desto geringer ist der Anteil der Frauen. Die Anzahl der Frauen, die in der Schweiz ein Hochschulstudium abschliessen, ist zwar zwischen 1988 und 1998 von 33% auf 41% gestiegen. Der Frauenanteil auf ProfessorInnenebene entwickelt sich dagegen im Schnecken tempo – inzwischen sind an den Schweizer Universitäten nur gerade sechs bis sieben Prozent der Professuren von Frauen besetzt.

Die Wissenschaftslaufbahn erweist sich für Frauen als undichte Pipeline, in der sie auf verschiedene löchrige Stellen treffen und herausfallen können. Strukturelle Hindernisse, die mit der Organisation der Institution Wissenschaft verknüpft sind, können der Grund sein, aber auch Hindernisse, die eher informeller Natur sind. Das sind beispielsweise erschwerte Zugänge zu Netzwerken oder fehlende Rollenvorbilder, welche die Wissenschaft als Männerdomäne erscheinen lassen. Inzwischen scheint guter Wille vorhanden zu sein, die Situation für Wissenschaftlerinnen zu verbessern und so der hierarchischen Segregation entgegenzuwirken. An der ETH wurde im letzten Frühling eine Gleichstellungskommission eingesetzt, und auch im neuen Universitätsförderungsgesetz wird festgeschrieben, dass der Professorinnenanteil bis ins Jahr 2006 verdoppelt werden soll. Gerade zu Begeisterungstürmen mag uns dies nicht verleiten – denn ein Anteil von 12 bis 14 Prozent ist immer noch sehr viel weniger als ausgeglichen, die krasse Untervertretung bleibt erhalten!

Die australische Soziologin Judy Wajcman hat am Symposium über ihre Forschung über Geschlechterverhältnisse in Managementpositionen in Technologiefirmen gesprochen und kein rosiges Bild der

Verhältnisse in der Privatwirtschaft gezeichnet. Es scheint Parallelen zum Wissenschaftsbetrieb zu geben – die Organisationskultur geht von einem männlichen Standard aus, der Managerinnen als deviant deklariert. Da wir alle einmal in den Arbeitsprozess einsteigen und mit derartigen Problemen konfrontiert sein werden, hat ROSA die Gelegenheit genutzt und sich mit Judy Wajcman über Managerinnen, Macht und Organisationskulturen unterhalten.

ROSA: Your research topics seem to have shifted from labour to technology studies, and for your newest book you have worked on women and men in corporate management. Where is the connection, or how have your interests changed?

Judy Wajcman: My interest in both cases is in gender power relations. With technology, it was the issue of whether it is men's monopoly of technology that is an important source of male power in the workplace or whether the issue was deeper – that is, the very design of technology is embedded in gender relations. I have researched issues to do with the sexual division of work, both paid employment and housework, for nearly 30 years and I see this theme running through all my work. The management research is also to do with the sexual division of work – this time management work and why there are so few senior women managers. I was particularly interested in how this is sustained given that equal opportunity policies in employment are now so widely accepted in both Europe and the USA/Australia. Theoretically, feminist analyses shifted from the earlier exclusive focus on how the family produces workplace inequalities to examining how gender relations are built into the fabric of the labour market itself. The new emphasis in my recent book is on the processes of masculine organisational culture that sexualise women and exclude them from senior management. So I look in much more detail at the culture of organisations and the way gender relations are embedded within them.

ROSA: What are your basic assumptions on gender relations?

J. W.: The study compares men and women doing the same jobs at the same managerial level. This is because masculinity and femininity are inherently relational concepts, with meaning only in relation to each other. I use the concept of gender regime to get across the idea that power relations between men and women are institutionalised so that gender needs to be understood as a property of institutions and historical process as well as

individuals. Gendering processes are involved in how jobs and careers are constituted, both in the symbolic order and in organisational practices (discursive and material), and these power relations are embedded in the subjective identity of managers. I am worried about the recent emphasis on gender as performance (see Butler) because it too easily underplays obdurate structural constraints.

ROSA: A considerable part of feminist theories have criticized the concept of difference for creating a homogeneous category of women. The opposite – the concept of sameness – is also controversial. In a political context, concepts of sameness and difference cannot be dismissed. How do you handle this ambivalence in your research?

J. W.: An entire chapter of the book is devoted to the sameness/difference debate so it is hard to sum up. But I basically argue that these feminist academic debates cannot be simply translated into a feminist practice on equal opportunities. Indeed, arguments based on sameness and difference have always been in play, and are apt to be invoked according to their strategic utility in particular circumstances.

Both approaches, however, position women as the problem and accept men's life experience as the norm. They fail to challenge the conceptualisation of work, and organisations, as gender neutral. Rather, we should reject the sameness/difference dichotomy and focus instead on policies that challenge the norms of male work patterns. Even the recent focus of equality initiatives, managing diversity, still holds men up as the standard against which women are measured and found wanting. This standard has to be radically challenged.

ROSA: Does globalization and the preoccupation with shareholder-value influence assessment and marking systems? Could an emphasis on performance make gender differences irrelevant?

J. W.: The new trend away from bureaucratic corporate structures and the current hyperbole about the communicative and enterprising 'leader' is causing gender equity issues to move down rather than up the policy agenda. For all the talk about portfolio careers and the importance of 'feminine qualities' in management, I argue that a reinvigorated cultural capital increasingly affects career opportunities for this post-bureaucratic generation of managers. The salience of the 'personality package' for managers fits well with a heavy reliance on the possession of compatible social backgrounds, reinforcing social and educational inequalities. Making a parallel argument about the gendered nature of cultural capital, I demonstrate

the implicit exclusion of women embedded in the recent discourse about the charismatic management style, despite claims of the 'feminisation' of management.

ROSA: Is success an unbiased variable? What about obstruction of women's career advancements?

J. W.: Success is supposed to be based on merit and results in these companies and there is much more transparency about promotion and recruitment procedures than there used to be. However, the women in my survey experienced many more barriers in their careers compared to men. The most significant barrier is still the men's 'club' or the old boys network. Although men also mentioned this, it is clearly much harder for women to be accepted in this network. Especially at the senior levels of the organisation, the most crucial factor for career success cited by the managers is visibility, followed by the related factors of networks and acceptability.



Judy Wajcman im Frühjahr 2000 am Symposium

I argue that all these processes are gendered and that women as a sex do not fit the stereotype of management that prevails in these companies. There was a lot of talk in the company about making 'the right impact' and I argue that it is hard for women to fit this model. If women are visible they are often seen as pushy and ambitious. The old stereotypes trap women into walking a tightrope between being feminine enough to be acceptable and being authoritative enough to be a serious manager.

ROSA: What should a manager ideally be like?

J. W.: The problem is that the ideal manager is a man. It is the male body that is inscribed in the managerial function and women's bodies that are excluded. This politics of the body has always functioned to make some jobs appropriate for women workers and others suitable for male workers. In this sense my research on managers has many parallels with other types of work. The higher up you go in any work organisation, the fewer women there are. Also, the pay gap between men and women is widest at the top. Elite careers in most fields, including science, involve taking on management functions so my research on managers directly relates, say, to scientific careers. Here too it is in managing people and large budgets that these assumptions about the maleness of the job come to the forefront. There is something about power and authority that are profoundly thought of as male attributes in our culture. And women themselves, when they gain some power, often find it an uncomfortable experience. Having power does not fit easily with being a woman, even, or especially, for feminists!

AUTORINNEN

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