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Recalibrating Management: Feminist Activism to Achieve Equality in an Evolving University

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In this paper we examine the process of incorporating gender equality into a higher education institution as it evolves into a managerial university. The case illustrates the ongoing processes between structure, activism and features of gender equality, and provides insights into how activists adapt to changes in governance and influence managerial responses to equality. Tracing the interaction of employee activism with new managerialism over nearly two decades, four phases of change are identified. These provide a basis for generating two concepts – managerial recalibration and individual activism – while challenging the social abeyance hypothesis of social movements.

Introduction

In this paper we examine how equality agendas are advanced through grassroots collective activism as institutional governance and authority structures shift with the ascendency of new managerialism. Focusing on a case of collective and individual feminist activism in one university, and the incorporation of equality measures within this institution, we show that activism, working both within and outside the formal organizational processes, can recalibrate managerial responses and organizational policies and practices, in alignment with external social and political shifts.

We take a social movements approach in this paper, with a view to both understanding the neglected aspects of organizational change and suggesting new elements for improving the understanding of employee activism. A social movements approach highlights the role of the external environment in shaping organizational activists' equality-based concerns, as well as the legitimacy of their concerns, the language used to express these concerns (Scully and Segal, 2002, p. 126) and the organizational changes towards managerialism. Our approach builds on the work of Snow and Benford (1988), Taylor (1989) and Benford and Snow (2000). We link closely to Scully and Segal's (2002) theoretical approach to employee activism, which explores the concepts of diversity and inequality in the workplace, in order to explain how activists pursue changes that question power relationships and how their involvement changes over time. In so doing we introduce the concept of 'managerial recalibration', to focus attention on how employee activism, in our case feminist activism, reshapes the agendas of managerialism. This leads us to address a fundamental but overlooked question: what happens when new managerialism is institutionalized while feminists[1] are working to incorporate gender equality meas-

[1]In this context we consider 'feminist activism' to be theory-driven political engagement aimed at gender equality, gender equity and self-determination of women. 'Feminism' refers to the heterogeneity of approaches that thematize the rights and interests of women from different perspectives (e.g. Harding, 1987; Tong, 1989).

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ures? We do this by tracking two intertwined developments related to equality in an Austrian university: changes in organizational structures, and processes and changes in the forms and functions of feminist activism. This Austrian case extends the understanding of gender and public sector management to a traditionally highly bureaucratic university structure, which employs few female academic staff, especially in full professorships. Currently Austria ranks twenty-third among 33 EU nations in terms of the proportion of women at the grade A (professor equivalent) level (European Commission, 2009), while Austrian family and childcare policies reinforce the expectations that women should shoulder domestic responsibilities (Esping-Andersen, 1998, 2003; Haas and Hartel, 2010; Haas, Steiber and Hartel, 2006). Issues of equality in higher education came later to Austria than to Australia, the UK and the USA. Austria first mandated gender equality measures as late as the 1990s, which coincided with a devolution of autonomy and the incorporation of managerialism.

Since our main interest lies in developing a theoretical account of how activists interacted both with and external to formal governance structures, we focus heavily on the interactions that take place between activist employees, managers and other academic staff. Through our case we illustrate the ongoing processes between managerial structures, activism and elements of gender equality, and provide insights into how activists adapt to changes in governance and influence managerial responses to equality. Moreover, by charting changes in the collective and individual strategies of employee activists, we provide evidence to challenge Taylor's (1989) social movement in abeyance hypothesis. We agree with much of Barry, Chandler and Berg's (2007, p. 352) argument that what appears to be an apparent quiescence for women's movements still has movement and change. However, we propose a substantial revision to their thesis by considering more than collective visible activism. Drawing upon evidence from our case study, we propose that activism can be collective within and beyond one's role, as well as individual and within one's role.

In the next sections we identify relevant literature on new managerialism and social movements, briefly outline our methodology and describe our case study site. We then describe activities and processes related to gender equality that took place at the Vienna University of Economics and Business (WU), focusing on women's activism, the changing roles of management and the influence of contextual factors. Based on this case study we offer a model of recalibration to describe the interaction between feminist activism and managerialism. We conclude by exploring the implications of collective and individual activism for understanding the relationships between feminist faculty members and their managerial universities.

Conceptual positioning: new managerialism and social movements

New managerialism

One of the defining features of universities in nearly all OECD countries in the latter part of the twentieth century has been fundamental reforms particularly in governance and steering (OECD, 2003). The increasing influence of management, or 'new managerialism' (Marginson and Considine, 2000), refers to the permeation of ideas from the private sector, including performance management schemes, budgetary decentralization and the restructuring of governance roles and academic units (see for example Anderson, 2008; Clarke and Newman, 1997; Deem, 2003). New managerialism's benefits include enhanced levels of economy, efficiency and effectiveness in tandem with accountability (Saunderson, 2002). The model for a managerial university aptly describes conditions in Austria, where a number of these reforms were implemented before the introduction of new managerialism. Some of them, such the reform of the multi-level system for example, have been permanent features in the Austrian polity (Hammerschmid and Meyer, 2005, p. 729) and fit well into the older tradition of Austria's bureaucratic hierarchy (p. 709). National politics, especially after 2000, mandated university administrative reform initiatives including the creation of the Fachhochlschule (technical university) sector to develop more a competitive state. Hammerschmid and Meyer's (2005) research shows that there has been a distribution of tasks within the multi-level system, such as structural reorganizations, and a redesign of processes and procedures in the Austrian public sector. Other

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characteristics associated with New Public Management, such as deregulation, market mechanisms and stronger integration of the private sector to downsize the public sector, have been of only minor consequence (p. 729).

There have been two fundamental changes in university governance associated with managerialism: shifts in the authority structure of the university, including the loci of control, and the nature of decision-making (OECD, 2003). Both of these changes have been shown to affect employees and their work (Anderson, 2008; Enders, 2001). The changes have been described as organizational responses to government mandates, which have not considered the internal organizational dynamics involved in the change process. In this paper we demonstrate how collective feminist activism changed over time to recalibrate managerial responses to equality issues. We use the term recalibrate to refer to an adjustment, alteration, correction, modification and reshaping. It is intended to emphasize a specific type of change associated with a revision, refashioning or reshaping or a second or subsequent calibration. Recalibration accurately describes how feminists created a readjustment of management's approach to gender equality and how feminist activism itself was reshaped from a collective to individual form.

Feminist and employee activism from a social movement perspective

Feminist activism at universities represents a form of workplace or employee activism. The sense of passion and possibility generated by feminist activism has to engage itself under the umbrella of management, which provides protection and constraint. We choose the term 'employee activism', as used by Scully and Segal (2002), to focus on the way that groups attempt to change agendas, increase diversity and reduce inequality in the workplace – a form of social change. A social movement organization is a 'complex or formal organization, which identifies its goals with the preferences of a social movement or a countermovement and attempts to implement those goals' (McCarthy and Zald, 1977, p. 1217). Such an approach goes beyond the current work on organizational change, especially in the field of higher education (Kezar, 2001), to focus on how a group of employee activists attempt to shape an organizational agenda by 'changing some elements of the social structure and/or reward system' (McCarthy and Zald, 1977, p. 1217).

Scully and Segal (2002, p. 135) posit that social movement approaches are an effective method of addressing workplace inequalities involving gender, race, class or sexual orientation:

> Power imbalances based on social identity are imported into the workplace from society. Men and women of color and white women [in the USA] are often clustered at the bottom levels of the (. . .) organizational hierarchy where pay is lower and opportunities for advancement and influence over corporate direction are not great (. . .). Conflict results because individuals who are not well represented in (. . .) the [leadership] group seek access to the power and benefits bestowed by these top level positions or even seek a leveling of differences. Additionally, the organizational environment or culture that is created by the dominance of a homogeneous group is often not supportive and accepting of individuals whose perspectives and styles may diverge from this dominant group, resulting in sheer hostility toward these individuals in the worst case scenario, or a general feeling for not belonging in the absence of overt animosity.

This form of employee activism does not specifically involve trade unions, although those involved in employee activism movements may be members of unions. As Barry, Chandler and Berg (2007, p. 353) explain, 'it is easier to say what social movements are not rather than what they are (. . .). They are concerned with social transformation and their viability lies in the vagueness of their objectives in order to garner a broad church of appeal.' These social movement organizations have neither clear boundaries nor membership cards.

The social movement literature has identified the cyclical nature of activism, which focuses on levels of collective activity characterized by high commitment and an overriding group solidarity. Taylor's (1989) research on the US women's movement shows that 'movements do not die, scale down and retrench to adapt to changes in the political climate . . . rather they contract and hibernate, sustaining the totally dedicated and devising strategies appropriate to the external environment' (p. 772). She calls this an '*abeyanc*e – depicting a holding process by which movements sustain themselves in non receptive political

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environments and provide continuity from one stage of mobilization to another' (Taylor, 1989, p. 761). Scully and Segal's (2002) research on employee activism among nine employee groups in a US high technology firm attributes the cyclical nature of activism partly to the demands of work and partly to the amount of personal energy required to maintain continued collective activism. We will elaborate on this further in our conclusion.

Methods

We used self-ethnography in order to study our own setting. According to Alvesson (2003), self-ethnography is especially relevant for understanding universities as 'a study and a text in which the researcher-author describes a cultural setting to which he or she has a "natural access", is an active participant (. . .). The research, however, is not a major preoccupation, apart from at a particular time when the empirical material is targeted for close scrutiny and writing' (p. 174). While Alvesson does not address the issue of the timing of the study and the timing of the phenomenon studied we did our research both retrospectively and concurrently. Two of us have been and continue to be engaged in activism for gender equality at the University for most of the period studied, while the third researcher is an outsider and worked closely with us as we went from data collection to the analysis and development of the text.

Data were collected from two main sources: (1) observations of members' everyday actions and accounts of how they described and interpreted both their own and others' actions (Van Maanen, 1982) and (2) internal memos, protocols and documents from the University, as well as official reports and documents from the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture to further contextualize and refine our observations. We analysed the data in an iterative fashion, working back and forth between data and concepts (cf. Eisenhardt, 1989). First we identified themes, and then we explored additional data for comparative purposes in order to determine the extent of agreement and disagreement of data, as well as plausible interpretations of the meanings of emerging themes (Golden-Biddle and Rao, 1997). We also compared observational and archival data to identify systematic biases present in the data sources. Second, we analysed structures and processes through conversations in order to link first-order themes, and used relevant literatures to refine the themes. First-order themes were considered as indicators of contextual factors, governance structure or feminist activism. Our outside researcher was able to reduce the risks associated with closeness and personal involvement *vis-à-vis* challenging self-evident forms of understanding (Alvesson, 2003, p. 185). She did this by questioning assumptions and inferences, extracting central ideas and triangulating sources to ensure that accounts and explanations were accurate and true and that knowledge claims were justified (Gibbs, 2010, p. 91). In order to navigate the evidence, we used loosely structured conversations to widen the latitude, nature and direction of our comments. This enabled us to recall, reconstruct and interpret the meaning of the structures, processes and behaviours that we ultimately considered to be important (Arnold, 2004) for our themes: changes in feminist activism and organizational structures and processes, external influences, and the influence of feminist activism on the University's gender equality measures.

Rigour in this kind of research typically refers to how data are generated, gathered, explored and evaluated and how events are questioned and interpreted through multiple research cycles (Coghlan and Brannick, 2010). We made concerted efforts to systematically interrogate our research processes; none the less we recognize that in the absence of external assessment this could be seen as a limitation of our study.

Next we present our findings over four phases of time, events and activities.

Phases of change and the case

The WU is the largest university of economics and business in Europe and the second largest university in Austria, with 24,243 students (Badelt, Eberhartinger and Sporn, 2009). Established in 1898 as the Imperial Export Academy, it enrolled its first female students in the year 1920/1921 and appointed its first female professor in 1981. The University educates approximately 50% of Austria's business managers and experts (Wuttke, 2010). Like many European and North American universities, the WU has widened access for students and increased its female student participa-

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tion rate. Between 1991 and 2009, the percentage of female graduates at the WU increased from 42% to 51% (Bendl, Buber and Grisold, 1991; Parnigoni, 2007; Wuttke, 2010), and a closer look at gender representation in this period shows that the proportion of women staff also increased, albeit more slowly and with fewer women at each higher academic rank within a steep pyramidal career structure. During the same timescale the number of females increased at the assistant and associate professor level, with an increase from 27.3% to 49% at the assistant professor tenure track level, from 0% to 22% at the associate professor with Habilitation[2] level, and from 3% to 13% at the full professor level (Bendl, Buber and Grisold, 1991; Parnigoni, 2007; Wuttke, 2010). These numerical data address one indicator of equality and show that there has been improvement in the presence of women at the University over a 20-year period. The following section focuses on the activities and processes carried out by some of this group to further equality, which have paralleled and complemented the numerical and status changes for women at the WU.

The four phases of this case study show the ascent of managerialism, changes in feminist activism, how feminist activism itself recalibrated and how it changed managerialism in the area of equality. As the Appendix shows, throughout the phases external factors contributed to substantial shifts in the nature of the University organization (e.g. loci and forms of decision-making, academics' contracts and roles) and feminist activism. Equality was an objective throughout the 20 years studied, as the interaction between activists and managers changed.

Phase 1: Democratic patriarchal university structures and the emergence of feminist collective activism (1990–1993)

Between 1990 and 1993, changes in the University's governance structure combined with factors external to the WU created a window of opportunity for feminists to organize collectively. The 1975 University Organization Act changed the university landscape and the loci of control. The new model, the 'Group University' (*Gruppenuniversität*) (Neave and Rhoades, 1987), replaced the Humboldtian model of organization with its traditional chair system (*Ordinarienuniversität*), within which academics' careers depended entirely upon the decision of full professors as there was no democratic decision-making body. The Group University increased intra-institutional power sharing by creating more representative governance structures and processes to include mid-level ranked academics (associate and assistant professors) and students.

External societal factors facilitated the introduction of gender equality in the University (see the Appendix) and created internal institutional conditions for establishing and staffing new structures for gender equality (Danowitz, Hanappi-Egger and Hofmann, 2009). The University Organization Act of 1990 called for each university to have a Working Group on Equal Opportunities, and the Federal Government's Equal Opportunities Act of 1993 required the Ministry[3] and thus each university rector to implement an equal opportunity plan for women. As we show, however, the University leadership was not proactive in bringing about these required changes. Instead, a feminist grassroots activist group influenced WU leaders to execute the legal requirements. This grassroot collective, the Working Group for Women in Research and Teaching at the WU (referred to here as the feminist collective (FC)), was instrumental in crafting the Equal Opportunities plan and pushing through its approval in 1992, one year before it was required by the federal government.

FC members initiated and actively participated in creating several other structures to support gender equality, including a women's lecture and a book series, which continue today. Individual FC members began offering courses on women's

[2]Earned several years after obtaining a research doctorate, a Habilitation requires the candidate to write a professorial thesis (often known as a *Habilitationsschrift* or Habilitation thesis) based on independent scholarship, reviewed by and defended before an academic committee in a process similar to that for the doctoral dissertation. However, the level of scholarship has to be considerably higher than that required for a research doctoral (PhD) thesis in terms of quality and quantity and must be accomplished independently, in contrast with a PhD dissertation typically directed or guided by a faculty supervisor.

[3]During the period of the study the name of the ministry dealing with universities was changed several times. To reduce confusion in reading the text we use the generic term 'Ministry'.

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and feminist issues with financial support from the Ministry. Through consultation with the FC, the Austrian National Bank's female chief executive and the University rector recognized the need to have more women in the professorship pipeline, and thus created the Dr Maria Schaumayer Scholarship for Habilitation to advance women's research and careers.

The few FC members serving on the University governance committees such as the Commission for Gender Equality and the Working Group on Equal Opportunities were able to cultivate relationships both within those committees and beyond with influential WU male faculty opinion makers. When FC activists met resistance while championing University compliance with new legal equality requirements, they initiated negotiations with the rector and succeeded in achieving several of their aims, including the scholarship mentioned above. The FC's activities prompted a re-think in the University's organizational structures, both through education and the establishment of organizational claims for gender equality. A window of opportunity created by the external environment allowed for such changes within a male dominated democratic organization structure such as a university.

Phase 2: Early organizational structural and process shifts and the formalization of feminist collective activism (1994–1997)

The University Act of 1993, intended to improve the efficiency of universities and foster creativity and innovation (Pellert and Gindl, 2007, p. 64), precipitated early governance structural changes towards new managerialism in Austrian universities. The legislation increased institutional autonomy and decentralized authority for personnel recruitment and internal resource allocation from the Ministry to the rector (Sporn, 1999, p. 224). Consequently, the power of the University Council (*Universitätskollegium*, the central body of decision-making of the Group University) was reduced, and the consolidating power was left in the hands of one person. Four years later a reform of the public service law made fixed-term contracts the predominant type of academic appointment, and permanent (tenured) positions the exception. These two major legal measures swiftly and profoundly changed university working conditions by eroding the democratic structures and opportunities for participatory decision-making and reducing the job security of university employees.

Along with these first signs of managerialism, external factors created political opportunities for the FC to implement measures towards gender equality. In Austria, as in Australia and Germany, gender equality was becoming a more prominent issue as a result of the creation of a women's unit within government (Bacchi and Eveline, 2003). The first Austrian Secretary for Female Affairs[4] advanced the gender equality agenda in government and society, while the Ministry bolstered the work of the FC with both micro-political and financial support. The FC changed its strategy to encompass direct negotiations with the rector, which led to the establishment of a Coordination Centre for Gender Equality and an agreement for a coordinating position (to streamline gender) from targeted funds from the Ministry.

The FC drew more women to its meetings and continued to push forward an equality agenda in official meetings, informal networks and public settings at the University. The FC's mode of operation was to use its members who served on official University committees to prompt equality issues, such as the question of adding gender courses to the curriculum. Each activist contributed by advocating and working towards equality in areas which interested her. Thus there was little need to foster agreement among the members; rather the emphasis was on action (Benford and Snow, 2000, p. 615). Paralleling this collective activism, individual activism indicators appeared as faculty members increased their feminist teaching and research. These activities were sometimes met with opposition; FC members, especially those perceived as 'equality flagships'[5] (Cockburn, 1991), experienced hostility and unfair treatment, as well has having their academic competence called into question.

[4]Johanna Dohnal was State Secretary for Female Affairs from 1979 to 1990 and the Austrian Secretary for Female Affairs from 1990 to 1994. During this time major progress for gender equality was achieved including the establishment of a committee to reduce sexism, reforms in sexual criminal law, the establishment of a General Equal Treatment Act for private companies, and reform of the pension system by adding up to four years for maternal leave.

[5]The term 'equality flagship' refers to a person who champions and is devoted to achieving gender equality.

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Phase 3: Ongoing structural and processual shifts towards managerialism and the introduction of gender mainstreaming (1998–2001)

In this phase, two major developments influenced feminist collective action and led to gender equality becoming an expectation for the University. First, governance and structural reforms made the rector head of the administration instead of university director and brought about the appointment of more managers. The number of institutes, full professors and new research groups (e.g. non-profit management and sustainable development) increased, and casualization created by limited-term contracts became the new pressing gender issue in Austria as it already was in England (Saunderson, 2002).

Second, with the Austrian Parliament's ratification of gender mainstreaming in 2002 to comply with EU policy, gender equality became a top-down strategy in public sector organizations, calling for the incorporation of 'a gender equality perspective in all policies at all levels and at all stages, by actors normally involved in policy making' (Council of Europe, 1998). This meant that universities were to apply gender mainstreaming to governance practices and managerial tasks and add gender mainstreaming to existing equality measures and non-discrimination regulations. The rector and the University Council became officially accountable for gender equality progress and outcomes, and could delegate responsibility for these activities themselves.

Although responsibility for gender equality officially became the task of the rector and the University Council, individual activists continued to pursue gender equality by further integrating the perspectives of women, gender and feminism into the curriculum, and the number of participating courses, disciplines and fields increased with University financial support. Students wrote diplomas, Master's degree theses and PhD dissertations on topics of women, gender and feminism, and the WU Women's Lecture continued with the support of the newly established Coordination Centre. Furthermore, with assistance from the Coordination Centre, the FC produced a plan for a new academic specialization, 'Women in Business – Gender Studies' (*Kompetenzfeld 'Frauen und Wirtschaft – gender studies'*). However, efforts to gain University approval were unsuccessful as the requirement for a full professor to be responsible for a specialization could not be met.

Many of the FC's functions were transferred to the Coordination Centre. On the one hand, the Centre, under the Personnel Department, became a networking hub and consolidated equal opportunity and gender and diversity issues (e.g. the Centre took over operational work like writing the yearly gender equality report and organizing and reporting on meetings). On the other hand, the FC continued advocating gender equality, with increased legitimacy from the EU gender mainstreaming policy. The activist collective supported the revision and re-introduction of the Plan for Equal Opportunity, and lobbied for a professorship for Gender and Diversity in Organizations. It successfully moved the proposal for the professorship through the various equality committees to the University Council and acquired the rector's support, contingent upon Ministry funding to establish the professorship. At this time, the Ministry was planning to launch professorships with five years of start-up funds for new and priority research areas, which the University would then have to finance after the first five-year period.

Phase 4: Institutionalization of new managerialism and equal opportunity measures and the morphing of feminist activism (2002 ongoing)

The higher education legislative reform process culminated in the University Act 2002, granting full institutional autonomy (Sporn, 2007), so that universities no longer functioned as Ministry subsidiaries. The rector assumed greater authority and responsibility for the University, and the Senate (with full professors having 51% of the votes) replaced the University Council (with more equitable representation across internal constituencies). These governance changes and the widespread use of fixed-term contracts, along with continued vertical gender stratification (with a disproportionately large percentage of male full professors), exacerbated the inequality within the structural power relationships between the majority of female and male academic staff. Taken together, these changes contributed to a morphing from visible collective feminist bottom-up activism to a less public form of activism. This individual activism towards equality intensified in the area of academic work, with more academic

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staff researching and teaching on topics related to women's and gender studies, equality and diversity.

Changes in internal University policies abolished some committees, such as the Commission for Equal Opportunities (which administered the Dr Maria Schaumayer Habilitation Scholarship) where activists had leadership roles. The Vice-Rector for Research and External Affairs assumed responsibility for the scholarship, which enabled 15 women to complete their Habilitation, along with another scholarship established by the rector to advance the careers of high potential young female researchers. While the current award process is less inclusive and transparent than the FC's process, more money is available to support more women.

In 2002, when the Austrian Board of Ministers integrated gender mainstreaming into its national policies, the University incorporated equal opportunity as a long-term strategy and added a provision for financial support. It established a professorship for Gender and Diversity in Organizations and an associated institute, realizing a goal that the FC had long strived to achieve. The Personnel Department provided a career programme for female employees, which female activists had previously offered. A couple of years later the Gender and Diversity Organizations Institute implemented an 11-course specialization within the business administration programme (see Danowitz, Hanappi-Egger and Hofmann, 2009).

However, as a result of governance changes and the institutionalization of gender equality policies, there have been unintended consequences for gender equality efforts. University autonomy has meant that academic staff have lost the right of Ministerial appeal for alleged discrimination or the University's failure to adequately implement gender equality measures. Instead, in cases of alleged discrimination the WU Working Group on Equal Opportunities and the Senate can intervene and an individual has the right to appeal to an internal Arbitration Board.

The FC gradually stopped meeting as it lost its influence in internal university decision-making. This coincided with the achievement of its goal to establish equality policies, as well as an increasing pressure on academic staff to publish in international journals and generate external funds. These phenomena reflect a shift characterized by Marginson and Considine (2000, p. 193) as a restructuring of academics from their political convictions towards those of the university's success strategies, in which women are considered as 'individual workers' with goals similar to those of men (Bacchi and Eveline, 2003, p. 110). Consequently, there is no longer a group to apply political pressure to advance or oversee an equality agenda.

In terms of gender equality achievements, the managerial implementation has been successful. Some women have become University decision-makers (e.g. the former head of the Senate and two of the four current vice rectors) and there has been a substantial increase in the number of female full professors and a change in the numerical representation of women in the faculty ranks (women now constitute 13% of the academics holding the title of full professor). Moreover, gender and diversity issues have been introduced in research and teaching, and from a marketing-driven or managerial perspective, top-down gender equality can be considered a success.

To sum up, our case findings provide empirical evidence to support Barry, Chandler and Berg's (2007, p. 352) thesis that women's movements are a potent force for change in higher education. The findings also show that visible collective political action has ceased to exist, but that individual employee engagement in feminist and equity scholarship represents the recalibrated form of equality activism with academic staff researching and teaching topics related to women's and gender studies and equality and diversity. Therefore, we contend that Taylor's (1989) activism abeyance, a contraction, hibernation or holding process whereby feminists maintain themselves in a non-receptive political environment readying themselves for the next stage of collective action, does not apply to changes in this case study. Instead, there has been a reshaping of feminist activism with objectives and strategies implemented at the individual level through formal job descriptions and academic practices sanctioned and funded by the institution. Thus, feminist activism has not gone underground awaiting a comeback in new windows of opportunity but is functioning in a less public and visible form within the domain of individual work.

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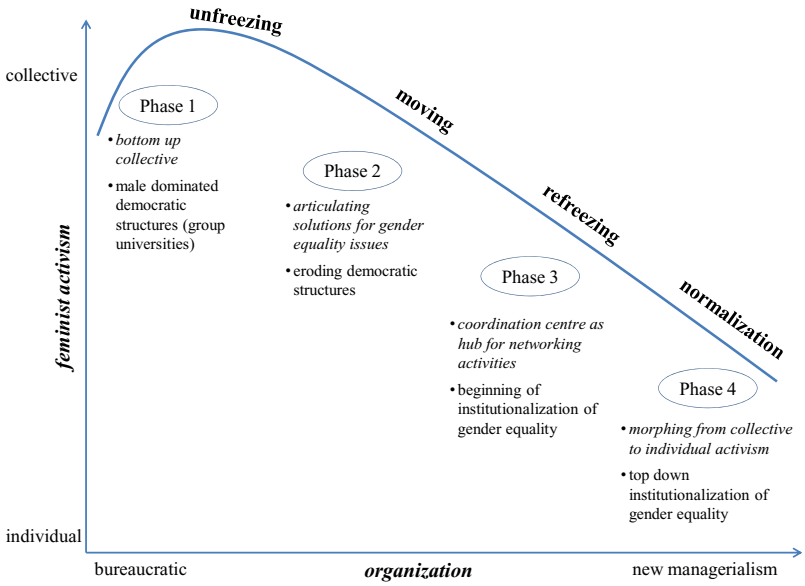

Figure 1. Model of recalibration

Discussion

This analysis reaffirms the importance of external factors including windows of opportunity (external policy and social influences), both for changes in the institutional structures of a public sector university and for internal organizational collectivist activism (Scully and Segal, 2002). The description of the four phases of change traces and offers an account of the interaction of external influences, new managerialism and feminist collective activism. The phases show how feminist collective activism changed and interacted within and outside of changing governance structures and influenced emerging managerialism to shape gender equality measures. We propose that this recalibration can be understood as a change process of unfreezing, moving, refreezing (Allen and Montgomery, 2001) and normalization.

In Figure 1 we propose a model of recalibration that focuses on how employee activism, in our case variations of feminist activism, reshapes agendas of managerialism based on Lewin's (1947) three-step model, which identifies and addresses forces within and between groups and shows how actors behave in response to these. These findings are not dissimilar to other accounts of organizational change that describe or employ a mix of cognitive and political strategies through successive phases of unfreezing, change and refreezing (Hendry, 1996, p. 624). In our work we extend this model with a fourth phase in order to recognize a generative mechanism of purposeful enactment and social construction. Our model of recalibration in Figure 1 describes how employee activism, in our case feminist activism, refashioned itself and reshaped agendas of managerialism.

In other words, this model shows how feminist collective action recalibrated (adjusted, altered, corrected, modified, reshaped) institutional responses or created a readjustment of management's approach to gender equality to correspond more closely with feminist agendas. The model also shows how feminist activism adapted or recalibrated its strategies and activities; we highlight changes that have taken place in the organization, and the implications of these changes for the feminist collective. The most important indicators are presented in the figure. The indicators of feminist activism are highlighted in italics.

During the initial phase the FC's advocacy for gender equality, bolstered by new gender equality laws, pressured the institution to respond to the point where it was *unfrozen* to accommodate the FC's aims. This activism and these changes took place in a democratic patriarchal bureaucratic organization (phase 1: unfreezing). Once the unfreezing had taken place, further initiatives sup-

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porting gender equality such as public lectures, a book series and a scholarship intertwined with collective feminist activism to be more visible and recognized within the organization. At the same time, University democratic structures began to erode with the reform of the public service law and the reduction of permanent (tenured) positions (phase 2: moving). In phase 3 a form of *refreezing* occurred. On the one hand, the progressive changes towards new managerialism, brought about by further amendments in the University's laws and the EU implementation of gender mainstreaming, made it possible to take first steps to institutionalize gender equality as a top-down activity. In such an environment the FC's efforts to set up new structures to support gender equality were successful. But as a result of this institutionalization of gender equality, those responsible for guiding the collective action reduced their public advocacy and individual feminist action started to emerge (phase 3: refreezing). All these processes finally led to a *normalization* or new status for gender equality within the University agenda incorporated through official policies and procedures. In new managerialism, gender equality is manifested in a top-down agenda, for which managers are responsible. In such a managerial environment, feminist activism has recalibrated from being a collective behaviour beyond one's formal role to an individual behaviour within one's employee role (phase 4: normalization).

In fact, this figure shows how collective and individual action is intertwined with patriarchal/democratic and managerial organizational actions and structures. It suggests that, in a managerial context, collective feminist activism as it was known during the 1980s and 1990s should be revisited (see also Bendl and Schmidt, 2012), as the reorganization to managerial structures and processes also led to changes in feminist action.

Figure 1 also shows how the strategies of activist groups must adapt to governance and organizational structural changes, and how institutional changes, including those which meet the activists' goals, affect the life cycle of employee activism, in our case feminist activism. Moreover, it suggests that the simultaneous dual change processes of new managerialism and gender equality require a far richer understanding of the nature of the complex interactions between governance structures, employment policies and practices, and feminist/employee activism.

This case corroborates Cunningham, Lord and Delaney's (1999) findings on the internal dynamics associated with managerialism and its restructuring of equal opportunities in the British Civil Service. While their focus was on changes in gender equality before and after the implementation of managerialism, they found that, with regard to managerialism, the execution of the government's commitment to gender equality shifts the locus of control to unit decision-makers. As decision-makers have limited accountability for effective implementation, and although gender equality is an organizational goal which is regularly monitored through annual reports, there are few incentives to encourage decision-makers or staff to change their behaviour or to be proactive towards gender equality.

Today at the WU, equality is on the agenda but it is peripheral, and its enactment is dependent on discretionary individual efforts. As Bacchi *et al.* (2006) observed, equality as an academic agenda, as advocated by the FC, has been narrowly incorporated into projects such as teaching and research among a small number of individuals within small teaching groups in two (Management and Economics) of the 11 University departments, as well as two scholarships awarded to female faculty.

Collective activism widened the parameters of what was acceptable to teach and research, and therewith influenced the nature of work. However, changes in internal opportunity structures and governance bodies, and the shifting locus of control upwards to individual managers, significantly reduced structures for public discussion and dismantled the organizational support structures for equality goals. The recalibrating of activism from a collective to an individual level in a managerial organization also means that political advocacy has been reduced to the level of an individual woman (Saunderson, 2002), whether it is a recommendation for an institutional innovation or a workplace grievance. This devolution of action in other research has been described as being in abeyance (Taylor, 1989) or in hibernation (Barry *et al.*, 2007). In fact, however, individuals still work against decline, failure and demobilization but without support from a group. They still problematize language, highlight dominant codes and thereby exercise power but their capacity to mobilize is limited in the absence of a supporting pressure. As Özbilgin and Tatli (2011) note, such an individual perspective reduces the visibility of

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the structural and group-based nature of inequality and difference and stresses the difference more than the sameness amongst individual women (p. 1246) within de-politicized universities.

Managerialism made gender equality policies part of an organizational strategy, set within a framework of a larger purpose-driven instrumental rationality, which was elaborated through long- and short-term goals. Consequently, after gender equality and mainstreaming policies were developed, an external reframing occurred, with gender equality disappearing from the main political agenda of the Ministry and the University, a phenomenon similar to that which Bacchi and Eveline (2003) observed from their analyses of mainstreaming and neoliberalism.

Furthermore, managerialism asserts that managers must be given the right to manage along with the freedom to make decisions about how organizational resources should be used to accomplish desired outcomes (Pollitt, 1993, p. 3). Although equality efforts were externally mandated to become part of the managerial agenda, our data show that in the first two phases feminists interacted directly with senior managers such as the rector and worked to shape equality policies and outcomes. We contend that these activities and outcomes produced a recalibration of managerialism. They took place during the institutionalization of managerialism and made important adjustments in the University's processes and procedures associated with equality when the odds were against them.

This paper is not without its limitations. The perspectives presented rely heavily upon those of activists. Furthermore, due to the length of time covered by the study it does not include all the voices of the women working in this feminist collective. Also, we did not include the perspectives of managers although we attempted to accurately describe events from institutional documents. Since our focus was on employee activism and all FC participants were women, we did not include voices of pro-feminist males, who at times contributed to the collective's accomplishment of its goals and who in other settings have significantly furthered equality accomplishments (Danowitz Sagaria, 2007). Nevertheless, when conceptualized as close up research (Alvesson, 2003), this study can provide insights into the interplay between feminist activism and changing governance structures, as it does not problematize our individual experiences nor take our individual engagement into account over the two decades of the project. While we are cautious about prompting generalizations, we hope that this paper will stimulate further research to support or challenge the findings here, in order to understand the evolving nature of activism particularly towards equality and within managerial organizations.

Concluding comments

An attempt has been made to move beyond an understanding of activism as a collective form from the political-social movement perspective. In so doing we challenge the view that feminist activism is in abeyance (Taylor, 1989). Instead we agree with Barry, Chandler and Berg (2007, p. 362) who posit that women's activism is currently more subtle and less visible, but still alive and far from dormant through networks, micro-politics and everyday practices in non-social movement organizations like universities. We propose, however, a substantial revision to their thesis. We suggest that the focus on collective activism in networks may have overlooked some of the important ways in which activism in universities is being recalibrated. As Norris's (2002) research on global political participation shows, the nature of agency has shifted from the collective to the individual, and the repertoires or actions of activism may be different (see also Özbilgin and Tatli, 2011). How activists in universities choose to express themselves politically through their research and teaching requires considerable initiative, time and effort that may or may not be highly valued or may even be discouraged. It may also mean that the targets have been widened from reducing inequities and changing their own organization to influencing the public, private and non-governmental sectors, which need little collaborative political cooperation. With regard to today's prevailing managerial structures, the following questions occur from a feminist perspective. Are there conditions in which collective activism supports individual feminist action in an organizational context where gender equality represents a top-down agenda but is not part of the organization's core? How can feminist action be organized in order to support gender equality in managerial contexts?

We have attempted to show that, when considering organizational change associated with

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equality, it is important to look beyond the formal institutional responses and outcomes to how feminist/employee activism shapes the formal response. In our study, this was manifested in how feminist collective action recalibrated managerial prerogatives. Like much of the social movement literature (see Benford and Snow, 2000) it also shows the critical importance of windows of political opportunity, such as in our case expectations for compliance with EU policies and structures. The internal university culture and the infusion of new managerialism, including changes towards limited employment contracts, created a brand of gender equality congruent with its basic tenets, yet it eliminated secure jobs and created a culture conducive to collective activism.

We hope our findings will be of help for other 'tempered radicals' (Meyerson, 2001; Meyerson and Scully, 1995) in making sense of the current developments at their universities and demonstrating how best to gain, gather and systematize their local knowledge to further recalibrate management and advance equality. Lastly, if it is the case that collective employee activism has recalibrated into individual activism then the platform of research and teaching should be used to its fullest to address problems of inequality. This also means that our task as scholars of management and organizations shifts from refining theories of employee and feminist activism (see Bendl and Schmidt, 2012) and organizational change to accounting for new forms of change that come from and are imaginable within the current scope and roles of researchers, teachers and managers as change agents.

Appendix

Appendix: Contextual, organizational and gender equality changes

Organizational Change Processes

1 Democratic patriarchal university structures and the emergence of feminist activism

Legal and political context	Organizational / managerial characteristics	Feminist activism	Gender equality features
• 1990 University Organization Act and Installation of the Working Group on Equal Opportunities • 1992 White Paper for the new organizational act • 1993 University Organization Act increases institutional autonomy • Ministry provides micro-political and financial support for Gender Equality initiatives • 1993 Federal Government Equal Opportunity Act	• Reforms of the late 1970s: widenes participation for assistants and students • Complex and formalized system of academic decision	• 1990 Bottom-up activism: from loose meetings of activists to informal structures • Overt opposition to gender equality in the university, support by a few professors	• 1992 First Equal Opportunity Plan for Women makes early advances in teaching and research

2 Early organizational structural and process shifts and the formalization of feminist collective activism

Legal and political context	Organizational / managerial characteristics	Feminist activism	Gender equality features
• 1997 reform of the public services law • 1996 Ministry requires University Equal Opportunities Reports	• First steps towards institutional autonomy • Organizational restructuring and revision of the WU constitution	• Continuing overt opposition to gender equality • Feminist Collective grows, expands activities, and organizes	

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Organizational Change Processes

3 Ongoing structural and processual shifts towards managerialism and the introduction of gender mainstreaming

Legal and political context	Organizational / managerial characteristics	Feminist acitivism	Gender equality features
• Ministry provides financing for a Coordination Centre for Gender Equality • 2000 Parliament ratifies Gender Mainstreaming	• Implemenation of new structures – flat hierarchies • Changes in public services: restructuring of the work-contracts and extensive use of fixed-term contracts • Rector is head of administration	• Opposition to gender equality decreases • Gender equality becomes an organizational strategy • Erosion of the feminist collective (FC) begins	• Coordination Centre for Women's Issues was established • Gender courses in regular study programme increase and WU finances classes. • Gender-oriented magister and doctoral theses increase

4 Institutionalization of new managerialism and equal opportunity measures and the morphing of feminist activism

Legal and political context	Organizational / managerial characteristics	Feminist acitivism	Gender equality features
• University Act 2002 introduces institutional autonomy and managerialism • Ministry ends micro-political and financial support • 2006 EQUIS Accreditation: gender equality becomes a strategic tool • 2009 EQUIS Reaccreditation: gender equality is one provision	• Managerial decision-making processes predominate. • Top down strategies • Rector becomes responsible for gender equality • New structures replace others (e.g. the Commission for Equal Opportunities)	• Existence of the Coordination Centre is still unresolved. • Programme for further education for women is strengthened • Feminist collective (FC) dissolves	• 2002 Professorship for Gender and Diversity in Organizations • 2002 academic unit for Gender and Diversity Management • Closure of Coordination Centre for Women's Issues • 2003 Establishment of Gender and Diversity specialization • 2006 Research Institute for Gender and Diversity in Organizations

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