

Resistance to gender equality projects

By Francesca Molfino

Preliminary remarks

Gender inequality has persisted as a distinct, recognized form of inequality in Western societies for a long time; it must have done so through some combination of embeddedness in economic and political positional inequalities and its **own autonomous productions of inequality** that are not fully reducible to economic and political power.

This means that we must look at the gender inequality as producing different organizations and not only vice versa. Evidence indicates that actors in a relational context first sexcategorize one another and do so almost instantly. **We can think abstractly about an ungendered leader**, researcher or employee, **but we can never actually relate**, even in imagination, to any specific person **without gendering him or her first**.

Since we cannot comprehend a person sufficiently to relate to the other without sexcategorizing him or her first (and making salient our own sex category by implication), as a consequence, sex and gender are pulled in some degree into every sphere of social life that is enacted through social relations. By this analysis, sex and gender's status as a primary framing device for social relations is what causes gender to be a force in all social institutions, including those who are interested in Genislab labor market.

Research shows that sex categorization automatically activates **gender stereotypes** that provide **implicit, usually unconscious** cognitive lenses through which self and other are perceived and evaluated.

There is increasing consensus among several researchers, however, that the cognitive biases that typically result from the automatic activation of gender stereotypes in work related contexts are the fundamental, underlying cause of gender inequality in the labor market. The extent to which such gendered lenses bias a person's behavior and evaluations can vary from negligible to substantial, depending on the context.

The framing assumptions toward work and workers embodied in these gender biases can become embedded in the organizational structures, authority lines, job classifications, institutional rules and administrative procedures. As this occurs, the implicit biases of gender stereotypes acquire a solidity and institutional force that shapes the work process and acts as an agent of inequality.

But on the other hand, change in organizational structures and administrative procedures could also reduce the biasing effects of gender stereotypes on the behavior and judgments of actors in firms.

Bureaucratic accountability for equity, formalized and transparent personnel procedures, and open information about recruitment, evaluations, wages, have all been shown to reduce the extent to which actors' behavior and judgments in the work process are biased by gender or racial stereotypes.

Many scholars of organizations agree (J.N. Baron, W.T. Bielby, *Organizational Barriers to Gender Equality: Sex segregation of jobs and Opportunities*, in(ed.) A. S. Rossi (1985) *Gender and the Life course*, A. De Gruyter, Hawthorne, N. Y., p.239) that in bureaucratically well-ordered work contexts, the degree of gender inequality that results is largely a function of the organizational structures and administrative procedures that enact or suppress it.

However, in less well-ordered work contexts, such as those at the interstices of organizations (for example, an interdepartmental group), **in some types of work**, in start-ups, in newly developing forms of work, or in newly forming occupations, **social-relational processes among individuals come to the fore**. That means that interpersonal relationships are the most important vehicles of gender stereotypes. **The impact of gender stereotypes activated by sex categorization in these social relations, are sufficient in themselves to create**

gender inequality in workers' outcomes without the intervention of biased bureaucratic practices.

Cecilia L. Ridgeway (in *Gender as an Organizing Force in Social Relations: Implications for the Future of Inequality*), found that, for example, the gender gap in wages and the gender typing of job assignments in television screenwriting, an organizationally chaotic, interpersonally brokered occupation, is comparable to that found in bureaucratically well-structured jobs.

In the Genislab project the scientific organizations, quite different from the bureaucratically well-structured organizations, instead of bureaucracy, we find a system of expectations of researchers and management mainly based on the myth of scientific work and technical knowledge. These expectations organize time, work, resources, recruitment and evaluation. Accordingly organized work, recruitment, wages, careers and personal relationships are only based on individual (that of course is not neutral) capacity. We think that this traditional way of looking at science hides gender stereotypes, continuing resistance to the authority of women.

Yet, driven by its own logic as a framing device, gender brings its own dynamics to social relations so that it is never fully encapsulated by any given structure of positional inequalities. In an achievement-oriented society such as our own, status evaluations are expressed and legitimated by corresponding assumptions about differences in general competence and instrumental expertise.

If gender is a system of social difference for framing social relations among individuals and facilitating the coordination of their joint behavior, then competing views of who is "better" are an impediment to mutual relations that may be difficult to sustain over the long run. Under conditions of long-term mutual dependence between groups, competing in-group preferences tend to be transformed by one means or another into shared status beliefs about differences between men and women.

Since people are never just men or women but are also a myriad of other social identities, actors' gender interests always coexist with multiple other, often competing interests. Of course men's and women's behavior and judgments in social relational contexts are almost never determined by gender processes alone, but as they are shared by a large number of populations they often sustain the judgment with the idea that sex differences have a biological base, which is what it is called "objectivity".

Back to the Genis lab:

In the Genis Lab we have noticed a very small number of people involved in the organizations specifically regarding the data offered on the web site lab and the practical tools and feedbacks who show an interest or a motivation to deepen the understanding of gender equality are still very generic.

In the organization we have a lack of participants therefore we have to state that: premises of intervening is primary to ensure that the management is completely committed to the change. Second, clear communication to all employees-staff-researchers so that everybody understands what to expect is paramount to change vision. At the same time, it is important to motivate the different actors in research organizations to make a contribution, be it big or small, towards change.

It is also believed that the secret of transforming the successes and progress made by research institutions towards gender equality into lasting changes lies in the activation of an overall capacity to exploit the internal changes in the institutions concerned to trigger forms of social innovation.

Resistances to change¹

Part of why people resist change is the fear of the unknown, mostly now with the spreading of the economic crisis. Change of status quo makes people alarmed and frightened of possible job loss, loss of earnings, humiliations, negative assessments, non recognition of one's work. This means facing very strong resistances because the entire organization is put under the microscope and the places where barriers or resistances to change exist should come to light. I purposefully use the word "resistances" because we are speaking about impediments that prevent or delay the social or organizational changes that have been come into being since gender inequality was acknowledged.

To combat discrimination against women in scientific institutions it is essential to develop and share the capacity to interpret its origin and the hidden dynamics. Exercising this capacity means developing a "keen sight" on gender stereotypes as they are addressed within individual research organizations.

Hence, one of the first essential steps is to **identify and report** possible **resistances** to change, **despite the declared willingness towards the project**, in order to be able to find tools and practices.

1. Denial² of the gender inequality issue

There seems to be a particular resistance to tackling gender equality in scientific organizations. And this may be because science is viewed as something that guarantees neutrality and objectivity. Furthermore, its same nature means that scientific work calls for continual presence and a particular "passion" that requires dedicated men and women (see **Breaking the vicious circle of gender stereotypes and science** by Francesca Molino and Flavia Zucco, on the Genislab website). The "culture of being always present" is also found in many other areas. Recent investigations on stereotypes in the British banking sector show that it is the very "culture of being always present" at work that restrains women from aspiring to managerial positions in important areas.

The PGA results revealed that all of our partners' organizations had implemented many of the policies on gender equality. Nevertheless, the very limited number of women in top management and employed as research group leaders, even where women were nearly 50% of the staff, indicated that these policies had been shelved or were inefficient.

The interviews of the **Blekinge Institute of Technology Sweden BTH** exposed that projects on "gender had evaporated". Still the percentage of female professors at Swedish universities was 21 % in 2010, a mere one percent increase. Technical universities and mathematical sciences have the lowest number of women professors, **only ten percent**.

"Why should we do projects on gender equality, when gender equality is already here" was the question asked by several organizations. All the institutions denied the stereotype of

¹ I utilized and re-elaborated the findings regarding the barriers to change reported in the "Guidelines on Gender Diversity in S&T Organizations" of the WHIST (Women's careers hitting the target: gender management in scientific and technological research – October 2011)

² The term "denial" means the refusal to acknowledge the existence or severity of unpleasant external realities or internal thoughts and feelings, even if the exterior shows abundant evidence of the same problem. This can result from difficulties in integrating new aspects of reality that emerge in one's environment and oneself.

gender difference and power linked to lower mental capacities. Actions to make the environment woman friendly were considered well established and policies to allow women to juggle their work and family were well underway. Then, especially in interviews with women, it emerged that, with few exceptions, women did not hold top managerial or executive positions.

This characterizes all male-dominated work environments, science and technology research institutes being no exception. In such environments, as was observed directly, even the women themselves are inclined to deny the existence or the significance of gender issues. This leads many to deny, even in good faith, the very existence of a gender gap. At the same time there is a risk that inequality is perceived as a marginal or specialist problem, rather than a matter which concerns the meaning, existence and the very future of a research organization, and, above all, those who work there, regardless of gender, position or status. It should not be taken for granted, therefore, that an organization decides to initiate or strengthen actions in support of gender equality. This is certainly true of research organizations, where there is a very widespread opinion – largely disproved by the facts – that the rules governing scientific activity (meritocracy, result-orientation, etc.) in themselves prevent the emergence of forms of discrimination. Whereas, the characteristics of scientific, research and institutional disciplines highlight strictly gender elements, such as the abstraction of scientific thought and the need to occupy space.

This feature is strictly connected with considering science and everything connected (organization, publications research) as a neutral, highly idealized knowledge.

The first scope is then the awareness that rationality and stereotypes are following the same street. That means, for example,

- working on the dissociation between intellectual and emotional thinking.
- keeping in mind that achievements in the field of gender equality can never be taken for granted.

- gaining a shared and consensual vision of the gender inequality, mostly through the participation of more men in the research.

- achieving interpretative and motivational capacity is to find ways for continuous monitoring of the situation in the target organization as regards the phenomena of discrimination. For example, keeping in mind that Finland, Norway and Sweden are considered to have been particularly active in promoting gender equality in research and research funding since the late 1970s - early 1980s, we think that there are policies for the equality in civil rights or even for the conciliation of family duty with working hours.

Nevertheless, the Blekinge Institute of Technology Sweden BTH report revealed some contradictions that indicate resistances in the application of gender equality projects.³

³Here are some of the sentences taken from the Report In Sweden, one of the main conclusions made upon the basis of the on-line survey ahead of the audit shows that a majority of the respondents believe that existing criteria favour men.

...A majority of employees at the Institute as a whole and the department audited seem to take gender equality for granted, at least to a certain extent.

The awareness of an existing Action Plan against discrimination and harassment was low.

However, most of the respondents seemed assured that national and international legislation in this area is followed and should anything happen, there are procedures in place to be followed.

"There are no real conscious efforts made for the time being, some steps have been taken, though.

Awareness of gender issues are more rarely seen at BTH. There is a low awareness of diversity issues in general."

"There are no formal problems. It is mainly in the heads of people.

Equality has made it to every part of society in Sweden."

"Young women take it all for granted. It all seems very equal, but it isn't."

2. Shift onto external realities. Other institutions or historical, social or educational causes.

The stereotype that women have minor intellectual and working capacity in science than men seems to have been definitely demolished. However, the stereotype surfaces once again when it can be ascribed to someone else, an outsider: "...in the industry, where you earn more but suppose there is a discrimination on the women capacity in science". When major investments are underway in organizations, the project managers are nearly always men and, consequently, universities adapt to industries' requirements.

Where there is a pay gap between genders, the organization also presents stereotypes on gender roles (men are breadwinners and women's work does not represent their main aim in life).

Shifting barriers onto external, culture or social or education issues certainly means identifying some causes, but it also complicates what can be done, unless through long term and sustained interventions. According to the Swedes⁴, "Everything has been done right from the first few years of life".

The **appropriate field of intervention**, or the connections with other players, **should be delineated**, and alliances should be created rather than shifting arguments onto external impediments.

Also time in its variables becomes a difficult obstacle to overcome, because it seems objectively connected to research. The example of Spain is striking because all the difficulties related to gender equality seem to boil down to on the problematic relationship of maternity, the female role at work and at home. This shall be discussed in more detail later. The time factor is connected with job peculiarities.

Other obstacles to change involve blaming the laws, the economic crisis and consequent unemployment, etc. lack of funding or male mindset, as in the case of the INFN. The latter claims that the culture of the Istituto di Ricerca di Trieste is not in favor of gender equality because it is a chauvinist culture. Thus, nothing seems sufficient, not relocation of resources,

A Diversity/ Equality Group (Jämlikhetsgruppen) used to exist at BTH, but its mandate has not been extended.

*"We had a mandate, but we got no new assignments, so **we evaporated**.*

They didn't respond to the questionnaire, the Swedish students don't care. We left the report with the Dean. It was published. The group /committee would be needed if something happens. Even the Vice Chancellor, who is a woman, was invited, but she was too busy."

The awareness of an existing Action Plan against discrimination and harassment was low.

Women prefer to focus on research. This is according to half of the respondents the main reason why there are more men in top managerial positions.

That existing criteria favour men is a statement that nearly 40 per cent of the respondents totally agree to and another almost 40 per cent find partially true.

A majority of the teaching staff answering the survey questions express as their opinion that equality is not a prioritized area and that gender, ethnicity and HByT are dealt with mainly on a rhetorical level.

"...A sexual harassment policy? I am not aware of any. We are obliged to have a gender equality plan, I'm sure, although the committee ceased to exist. No one is working on it now or has been implementing it."

⁴*"The main reason for the scarcity of women in the technological field is related to cultural biases in society at large. There is also a prevailing belief, especially among male staff, that it is too late to change if not anything, then at least removing major obstacles, at the university stage, but that the changes should take place much earlier in the lives of girls and women, in their childhood families and at school."*

cut backs, redefinition of productivity and competitiveness, greater awareness, aimed at fostering gender equality.

3. Minimizing the gender inequality issue

Even in cases where there is an awareness of the gender issue, it is often understood and formalized in an overgeneralized way: this makes it difficult to deal with in focused and concrete ways. Sometimes, moreover, the identification of all signs of discrimination, both large and small, is carried out sporadically, making it difficult to implement systematic and lasting change. Added to this is the fact that not all those who deal with these issues, despite their commitment and dedication, understand the importance of an updated and analytical understanding of the phenomena of discrimination. It is sometimes also difficult to reach an adequate degree of consensus about this type of initiative. Sometimes, in fact, there is not sufficient determination to develop a vision and a message that can mobilize and direct the energies and passions of the many people who potentially might be interested in these issues.

4. Non awareness of stereotypes

The hidden nature of gender discrimination. Resistance stemming from the non conscious nature of gender stereotypes.

Studies of social cognition have shown that **individuals have powerful tendencies to perceive and interpret people and events in terms that confirm their prior expectations and concerns.** Such confirmation biases, as they are called, cause people to selectively focus events and experiences that confirm what they want or expect to see, and to fail to notice, to ignore, or to discount events and information that disconfirm their expectations. The deeper people's emotional and cognitive commitments to their prior expectations, the more they unconsciously distort what they see to fit those expectations. The more gender equality is a threatening measure to male and female identity, as they were defined in the past, the more it is useless to tackle stereotypes in a prescriptive way.

Non-conscious judgment, means that there are reactions in interrelationship that can be reinforced by the structure of the organizations that are built on the purpose of maintaining the gender systems status quo. The gender is a system of cultural "schemas" that define who men and women are, in these schemas science was described as rational, abstract, over and outside the social relations. For that reason this form of knowledge did not fit at all with women's peculiarities.

Obviously to suppress stereotype bias, actors must be alert to its possible presence in their behavior at a given moment, must be motivated to suppress it, and must have the time and energy to do so. Of course, women's own interests in bettering themselves suggest that they will more often be sufficiently motivated to resist the biasing effects of stereotypes in their own behavior than will men. **But as was observed directly, even women themselves are inclined to deny the existence or the significance of gender issues.**

5. Difficulties also women have in seeing discrimination

Women have difficulties in seeing discrimination, in admitting limits and discrimination adopted by organizations and leaders. There is an awareness of the gender issue, it is often understood and formalized in a way that is too general: this makes it difficult to deal with in a focused and concrete fashion. This makes it extremely difficult to organize activities that target the entire research staff. Also the female staff does not consider gender issues being

related with the core business of their workplace. Instead it is important that women assume that others will treat them according to hegemonic gender beliefs and that this is a reality they must accommodate in their own behavior.

In scientific organizations women find it difficult to deal, publicly and personally, with issues related negatively and positively to gender. This difficulty can turn into fear when delicate issues at stake, such as mobbing or bullying. There is therefore a certain reticence among women to talk about the difficulties encountered in their careers due, for example, to their work related to family care or episodes of discrimination experienced in the workplace, or cases of serious misconduct that have been witnessed. However, this reticence also extends to their professional achievements in the broader context of the relationship between women and science. Difficulties can be found in the design and implementation of initiatives to support women scientists in high positions. They often find themselves isolated when it comes to solving problems that become more complex as the level of responsibility increases; many give up and resign from their positions. In addition, if not properly involved, women in high positions can turn into authoritative opponents of the programs themselves. In the young generations the conflict between family and work can change the opposition of family and work, due to job insecurity. So women prefer to have babies and stay home because they feel more safe in that environment, forgetting that they will be captured by old stereotypes and later find it difficult to find other jobs.

6. Insufficient motivation and conflict among staff

In addition to the general indifference of the male staff to gender issues, in some cases the various departments involved and the beneficiaries themselves had divergent views. In a scientific organization, especially large ones, it does not always follow that a decision made by management to accept a project is shared by those who must then implement it, or that its objectives and its content are interpreted in the same way by all the actors involved.

In the introduction we reported the importance of promoting greater participation. The previously mentioned individuals' difficulties to change are coupled with the organization's difficulties.

The difficulties in motivating and mobilizing people seemed in many cases to be closely interrelated **to organizational and work dynamics**, which greatly affect their actual involvement, such as excessive workloads, difficulties in developing monitoring mechanisms, dependence on areas and departments of the institution which have different priorities and work schedules to those of the promoters.

Divergent visions and motivations in the different departments/faculties involved in programs. Due to the relative autonomy in which different departments/sectors of the same organization operate, actors involved in measures supporting gender equality may attach different aims to the same action, revealing the existence of divergent views and motivations on the same issue and, in fact, promoting activities that are implemented in different ways and have different final goals. This can create confusion among beneficiaries, including the broader public and the promoters themselves. For example, as regards the choice of beneficiaries, some will seek to benefit female researchers in general while others, especially in programs aimed at the promotion of "excellence", will focus only on the best female researchers, i.e. those most likely to have a successful career in the organization.

An obstacle that may arise when action is being taken to foster gender equality is also a lack of cooperation from the beneficiaries in achieving the objectives (for example, in formulating new proposals or activities addressed to same target or other). This difficulty may arise because of deficiencies in the design of the actions or in communicating them to potential beneficiaries. However, it may also be due to the existence of latent conflicts between men and women, senior staff and newcomers, long term and short term employees, etc., which affect the performance of activities.

7. Various forms of individual experiences of dissent

Stereotypes are not only hidden, but at a conscious level various forms of dissent which usually remain more or less latent, exist and inevitably emerge when initiatives are taken, becoming visible and raising issues that are usually not talked about. As for example a negative personal experience with a woman leader. Sometimes gender discrimination is denied by highlighting individual experiences of women leaders who do not seem to have been discriminated, and the experience of a single woman immediately is turned into a general rule.

This happens even more frequently when the measures taken are to the advantage of a particular group (such as women), apparently at the expense of other groups, who may feel discriminated against (such as young male researchers).

8. Lack of data, information, communication

Lack of gendered statistics in research institutes. This means that the gender difference is only understood as a subjective matter and in this case everyone can have different opinion on it. The importance of statistics classified by gender recommends providing continuous updates and studies on the matter.

The difficulty of disposing of statistic gender data may be due to specificities in the employment contract, collaboration with researchers from bodies with different legal set-ups, lack of communication between scientific staff and administrative staff. Sometimes this problem is also related to methods of recording data on institute staff, or the existence of external and internal regulations which often produce codified procedures slowing down decision-making and implementation of activities. This is the case with the privacy law, which makes it structurally difficult to access biographical, economical information (or add to it, where, as often happens, there is little information) about staff benefiting from initiatives, so that it is necessary to request permission from internal and external authorities before being allowed to contact (even electronically) the beneficiaries themselves.

Lack of information on previous experience in gender equality policies (as observed for Sweden and all the organizations where what the previous gender policies had achieved was not mentioned). One difficulty, at least in the initial phase, for gender equality projects in research institutions, is the absence of pre-existing institutional communication channels with other enterprises or entities that have promoted similar gender equality of measures. This can make it difficult to acquire information about similar past initiatives. Large and highly bureaucratized organizations may find it very difficult to get sufficient participation from beneficiaries potentially interested in raising awareness and setting up training initiatives on gender equality, despite considerable efforts to convene meetings and

disseminate information about the program. This situation probably results from the very long time required to organize in-house events and the need to communicate the events in official institutional channels.

Lack of communication between scientific staff and administrative staff. This clearly emerged in the report on Germany where an all female administrative staff had difficulties in communicating with external parties and research units.

9. Isolation of persons dealing with gender issues

Those who deal with these issues live in a sort of niche environment, without being able to communicate their experiences or exchange opinions within the organization itself, thereby preventing initiatives that could have a very real impact.

Ordinary in-house communication methods in research institutions can be hinder the implementation of initiatives aimed at promoting gender equality in science. This can occur in meetings, workshops, on-line consultations, etc., in terms of method, timing, message content or communication mode, creating discontent or negative reactions among heads of the departments (personnel management, internal communication, etc.) concerned with the equality-oriented initiatives. The result is poorly publicized policies in research institutions. The consequences can range from a lack of cooperation to explicit opposition. Communication difficulties may be exacerbated in cases where there is a high turnover of staff, or where is an internal culture receptive to new types of communication (e.g. use of wikis).

In addition to difficult internal dynamics of communication, external communication may be slow and inadequate. For example, we observed that there have not been many reactions to GenisLab. And this is due to scant participation. In these cases poor communication is strictly linked to scant participation in the project.

Lack of relations between science organizations, government offices and other promoters of gender equality issues. The isolation of scientific research institutions engaged in gender equality policies. Often the promoters of gender equality interventions in scientific organizations, especially in the case of pioneering initiatives, experience **a strong feeling of isolation** not only within their own organization but also in the relations between their own organization and other similar institutes.

One of the difficulties identified by the promoters of gender equality programs in involving research institute staff is the extremely tight schedule of work and research commitments. This makes it complex to include any other kind of activity other than those already planned, and this obviously has a very negative impact in terms of motivation.

Rather than perceiving gender as a 'women's issue', we need to think in terms of relations of power and powerlessness, in which both women and men may experience vulnerability, rather than treating 'maleness' as powerful and problematic in itself.

10. Stereotyping the gender inequality issue

"Stereotyping stereotypes, "seems that any communication regarding gender issues is to be necessarily confined to limited areas (e.g. the celebration of International Women's Day) , this makes it difficult to broaden the discussion on gender equality in science to include the problems that women face in everyday work.

Another element that can lead towards a stereotyped way of thinking and that creates strong refusal is the *repetition of themes regarding gender discrimination* which are crucial in this field to obtain attention and awareness. For this reason it is important that each research group overcomes this sort of "dejà vecu" feeling of having already experienced and solved

these problems on gender discrimination.

11. Stereotyping in relationships to discriminate

Gender discrimination is not only present in hierarchy and bureaucracy, but also in peer relationships. Interactions between men and women reinforce sex categorization in everyday life. To interact successfully, people need at least some shared cultural system for categorizing and defining self and other in the situation, so they can anticipate each other in the situation and act accordingly. Interactional level is very important for one sex discrimination and can enact and reproduce the gender system defining beliefs or create pressure for those beliefs to change. What must be done to undermine interactional forces that feed gender inequality? You cannot reduce gender differences to eliminate inequality. Gender is one of the recent shared categories, unlike other categories such as nationality, race, class, family, and it seems widespread in the western world. Thus, the gender beliefs acknowledged by all, e.g. care, empathy, greater social expertise can be negatively transformed into excessive feelings experienced by women or female hysteria in the workplace. On the other hand, a positive male stereotype, i.e. knowhow, can be turned into dominance. Instead of focusing firstly on gender, it would be more useful to change the way functions are characterized (e.g. leadership, competitiveness) and to understand just how irrational knowhow is and how rational emotionality is. The women, few exceptions, who have managed to reach positions of leadership are often considered bad mothers because they neglect their children. Either that or a woman is not a real woman if she does not have children.

It is not marginal that 50% of top managers have no children. In the top positions in research universities, a third of women who had no children when they started working had children later. There are twice as many single female full professors than men (motherhood wage penalty).

Changing gender beliefs is like moving a sand bar: a single wave seems ineffectual, but a repeating pattern of waves transforms it. (Ridgeway, Symposium). Strategy is to seek social interventions that will create multiple, repeating instances of situations where women participate more equally.

Women's diffidence towards men: some women hesitate to welcome men into the struggle for gender equality. For example, there are concerns that men will manipulate the gender discourse for their own agendas, or that resources earmarked for the advancement of women will now be diverted to a focus on men and boys. More tacit resistance may have to do with the nature of these new partnerships required by greater male involvement. The realm of gender was once a sanctuary for women in a world dominated by men – and more involvement of men necessitates power sharing and compromise within this one area where women were once sole proprietors.

12. Stigmatization of women involved in positive action

In different working environments and contexts (in both scientific and non scientific organizations), women involved in various capacities in the results of positive action are stigmatized. This involves a series of effects on beneficiaries and their working environment, such as, for example: women deciding not to participate in programs specifically targeted for them; negative evaluations by institute managers, colleagues and peers; uneasiness in those deciding to take advantage of any benefits introduced, or fear of marginalization in the workplace and other potential negative effects.

They are often the butt of ironic comments and their attempts to propose tools to analyze gender differences are frequently derided, as happened at the Leibniz Institute of Polymer Research Dresden (IPF).

13. Disadvantages and male hostility

Where are the incentives for men to work towards gender equality? After almost two decades of programming for gender equality, there is still an understanding among most development practitioners that, in practice, 'gender means women'. For some men, resistance to greater men's involvement is rooted in the fact that it entails a greater focus on their gender and how their own privileges are maintained. **One privilege of gender inequality for men is the relative invisibility of their gender.**

There is also resistance from some men to attempts to challenge the power they hold, especially from men in dominant social groups. These men perceive gender equality as a threat to their privileges and an attack on their lifestyle.

Reduced categorizations and stereotypes can be a menace to men and male characteristics. For example, doing housework means less time dedicated to work, reduced continuity and thus the loss of a main characteristic in professional tasks. A US beer commercial stated that men would rather mow a field the size of Texas than wash up a glass.

This begs the question: if men and boys are privileged by existing gender equality. **Making men more aware of the costs of conventional forms of masculinity, both for themselves and for women and children, is an important step towards challenging gender inequalities, hierarchies.** Dominant masculinities are not achievable for all men at all times. For many men there is a significant gap between the dominant model of masculinity in society, and the reality of what they themselves can achieve. This is particularly true in the case of young or low income men, or homosexual men. In fact, no man can fully live up to all these ideals throughout his entire lifetime. Like a woman, a man's experience of power fluctuates across his lifecycle, and also depends on his class or caste, his sexual orientation, his ethnicity and race. Still, the social pressure to conform to dominant versions of masculinity is often intense and the consequences of not conforming can be severe.

Male hostility towards affirmative actions addressed to women in research institutions is a recurring phenomenon that occurs when solely women oriented programs are implemented: this is when we deal with arousal of explicitly or implicitly hostile behavior from men or young adults who feel discriminated against for not having access to the benefits included in the measures to support women or who simply believe that the women do not need them. Silly and ironic jokes, sexual ambivalence or benevolent sexism are used against gender inequality issues. These reactions are significant of a resistance to change and must be viewed and analyzed. Programs should help men both understand the oppressive effects of gender inequality on women and men, while also discussing the responsibilities they have because of their privileges to take actions in ways that women usually cannot.

Clarifying the disadvantages of the privileges that alienate the sexes and create conflict that one thinks can be avoided by not taking part in gender projects and initiatives.

Dominant ideas about masculinity in many societies are often in direct opposition to the behaviors, ideas, and beliefs that are more gender equitable and beneficial for women and men. Studies have shown that fathers who are positively engaged in their children's lives are less likely to be depressed, to commit suicide, or to be violent towards their wives (see the positive example of the **Faculty of Technology and Metallurgy, University of Belgrade, Serbia** where a male researcher, recognizing himself as a father, stated that he would have considered the future development of science differently). Male managers as positive, gender

self-aware role models are crucial to changing the attitudes of those who may be unsure or ambivalent about new gender policies.

14. Overwhelming of the gender issues for women scientists

In these years the burden of gender inequality has been borne by some women who felt thwarted from dedicating themselves to their research, and consequently not able to share good practices with the other women working in the same organization.

15. Conflicts among women

In research institutes, as well as in other male dominated working environment, gender bias can lead to what are called "gender wars", i.e. conflicts between women or women's hostility towards actions geared at gender equality. When women are required to fit into tightly defined feminine roles in order to be accepted, in fact, those who are willing to act as expected often end up in opposition to those who are not. Likewise, professional women who have had success playing with the rules of men may have a lot invested in demonstrating that "this is what it takes to be a serious professional." Women who seek to change the old rules may feel shocked and betrayed when the most successful professional women do not support them. The "mommy wars", which are particularly acute in academia, due to the high percentage of childless women, are a kind of gender war between women, concerning, among other things, the right to obtain special conditions for working mothers.

This hostility obviously hampers smooth running programs, which, to be successful, need widespread consensus in the working environment.

16. Individual diversity hides gender

Use of the argument of meritocracy or primary relevance of the individual to justify a lack of commitment on gender issues.

The argument is present especially when criteria of excellence are discussed. Even if in Slovenia it was attempted to extend the time interval (years) during which scientific production is examined. Excellence is considered objective, neutral, like science, and it is not taken into account that this is certainly true in some cases, but not in the majority of evaluations. EMBO researched publications and reported that the quality of research by males and females is similar, while the quantity produced by females is much lower.

In the **Blekinge Institute of Technology Sweden BTH** there seem to be no gender related problems, and diversities seem to be due to the individual peculiarities. An individual interviewed by the **Faculty of Technology and Metallurgy, University of Belgrade** said that being a good scientist depends only on one's individual capacity.

17. Ineffective monitoring systems

Among the most commonly reported problems, both by the promoters of initiatives and by the experts, is the difficulty to create and operate systems to monitor the effects of gender equality measures implemented in research institutions. These difficulties are due to several factors, ranging from the cost of conducting the operations in the different target areas to the culture of the individuals involved who may have very different sensitivities and motivations.

Among the mentoring programs activated in support of female researchers, especially in the

early stages of their careers, difficulties were reported in establishing **effective mentorship relations**. This obstacle may be due to various causes: organizational (very often, for example, there is the material difficulty of finding the time to meet); or cultural and motivation (the lack of a strong commitment makes it hard to deal with the inevitable everyday difficulties of this type of activities).

18. Tendency to delegate decisions to managers

Another obstacle to the promotion of gender equality activities lies in the tendency to delegate matters to top managers. Sometimes, mid-level managers, or those who have some decision-making powers but who are not ultimately responsible, tend not to go on with the activities in the absence of the department head, in the belief that little impact can be made without the involvement of top management.