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Resistance to implementing gender mainstreaming in EU research policy[*]

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Abstract: In this article, we analyze the implementation of gender mainstreaming in the European Union (EU) through the study of 'resistance' to gender equality initiatives in EU research policy. Contributing to feminist institutionalist theories, we identify resistance to gender initiatives within the Directorate General Research and Innovation, showing that there have been obstacles to an effective implementation of gender mainstreaming in the European Commission's 6th Framework Programme (FP6). We argue that the encountered resistances reveal tensions between the European Commission's official mandate of mainstreaming gender equality into all policies and its actual implementation, which results in the 'filtering out' of transformative gender equality goals.

Keywords: European Commission; gender policy; implementation; neo-institutionalism; political science.

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Introduction

The European Union (EU) officially committed to gender mainstreaming in the 1990s, fixing the principle in treaty articles, action programmes and communications, and setting up institutional bodies and mechanisms to promote the incorporation of a gender perspective into policymaking.[1] However, the implementation has not reflected these official commitments, with gaps showing in the mainstreaming of gender into the EU's public policies (Bruno, Jacquot and Mandin 2006; Mazey 2002; Rees 1998, 2005; Rubery 2002; Serrano Pascual and Behning 2001; Verloo 2001) and processes, such as the EU's enlargement to Central Eastern Europe (Bretherton 2001) or its constitution-making (Lombardo 2005; Millns 2007).

In this article, we analyze the resistance that occurred during the implementation of gender mainstreaming in the European Commission's (EC) research policy during Framework Programme 6 (FP6) (2002-2006).[2] Although initially promising in its adoption of gender mainstreaming (Abels 2012; Pollack and Hafner-Burton 2000), the Gender Monitoring Studies undertaken for FP6 revealed that the European Commission's Directorate-General (DG) for Research and Innovation, which is in charge of managing the framework programmes, did not produce significant progress in gender equality (European Commission 2009).

We argue that, although bureaucratic principles enshrined in law prescribe the mainstreaming of gender into EU policies, individual and institutional *resistances* contribute to an ineffective implementation of the strategy. This flags the need to analyse manifestations of resistance to

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[1] The legal basis for gender mainstreaming is Article 8 TFEU (ex Article 3(2) TEC), which states that: 'In all its activities, the Union shall aim to eliminate inequalities and to promote equality, between men and women'. Another key document is the European Commission 1996 'Communication on Incorporating Equal Opportunities for Women and Men into All Community Policies and Activities' (COM(1996) 67 final).

[2] Framework Programmes for Research and Technological Development (RTD), launched in 1984, are the Union's main instrument for funding research in Europe.

gender initiatives within institutions, as resistances to change are factors that help to understand the failure of gender policies (Bergqvist, Bjarnegård and Zetterberg 2013). Resistance generally means the refusal to accept or comply with something, and in this article, it specifically means opposition to the change that gender mainstreaming promotes (Benschop and Verloo 2011; Lombardo and Mergaert 2013). Resistance is thus meant here as a phenomenon aiming to preserve the status quo rather than question a particular dominant social order (see NORA: Nordic Journal of Feminist and Gender Research 2013 Special Issue on 'Feminist Resistance-Resistance to Feminism').

Feminist institutionalism (FI) has raised awareness on the genderedness of institutions and has suggested that '[d]ynamics of institutional power relations, resistance, reproduction, continuity and change, need to be filtered through a gendered lens' (Kenny 2011; Mackay 2011: 188). Mackay (2011) along with others (Mackay, Kenny and Chappell 2010), however, also call for more theoretical and empirical work, as well as new analytical concepts, to explain how and why the articulation of gender within institutions can promote or prevent change. Studying manifestations of resistance within institutions can answer this call by identifying both the blockages in the implementation of gender mainstreaming and the reasons for limited gender change (Cavaghan forthcoming 2015; Lombardo and Mergaert 2013; Mergaert 2012).[3]

In this article, we first develop a theoretical framework on resistances within institutions implementing gender mainstreaming. This framework builds on feminist institutionalism. Next, we discuss the different types of resistance, distinguishing between individual and institutional resistance, and the different reasons behind them. We then sketch the context of the 'resistant' institution under study by analysing the institutionalisation of gender mainstreaming in EU research policy. We subsequently identify manifestations of resistance encountered in the implementation of gender mainstreaming in the European Commission's DG Research and categorise them according to the proposed types. Our conclusions then link the theoretical and empirical analysis to discuss the role of resistance in hindering the implementation of gender mainstreaming in the EU.

The methods we have employed include the content analysis of official policy documents of DG Research, semi-structured interviews with seven EC officials and three consultants working for the EC between 2004 until 2012, and participant observation during the implementation of projects in the aforementioned period for the DG Research.[4]

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[3] In this article, when we write 'gender change/s', we mean change/s that promote or are aimed at promoting greater gender equality.
[4] The participant observation and ethnographic interviews by Lut Mergaert took place in the frame of the following projects: Monitoring Progress towards Gender Equality in FP6-Lot 3 (2004-2008) and Gender in EU-Funded Research: Toolkit and Training Activities (2009-2010 and 2011-2012). This also included the attendance of two meetings of the Helsinki Group (21 June 2005 and 27-28 June 2006).

1. Theorizing resistance in gender mainstreaming:
   A feminist institutionalist approach

In the 1990s, the EU officially committed to mainstream a gender perspective into policymaking in order to counter the existing gender bias and produce gender-equal policies (Council of Europe 1998; European Commission 1996; Eyben 2010). However, the actual implementation of gender mainstreaming has so far been problematic or ineffective (Weiner and MacRae 2014, *this special issue*) and within the European Commission it has been uneven across the different DGs (Hafner-Burton and Pollack 2008; Pollack and Hafner-Burton 2000; Stratigaki 2005), showing that these commitments have not yielded the intended incorporation of a gender perspective into all EU policies (Braithwaite 2000; Bretherton 2001; Pfister 2008).

Feminist institutionalism (FI) offers insights to understand the problematic implementation of gender mainstreaming in the EC that can be analysed by looking at the resistance to gender initiatives (Kenny and Mackay 2009; Mackay, Monro and Waylen 2009). FI theorizes that institutions are formal and informal gendered structures and norms that can reproduce or counteract gender inequalities (Chappell 2006; Mackay, Monro and Waylen 2009). The power and norms of hegemonic groups within an institution then not only facilitate particular (male) behaviours, but they also block or oppose change that gender initiatives such as gender mainstreaming promote (Kenny 2011; Mackay 2011). In this respect, institutions can enable actors to effectively implement gender mainstreaming by providing them with the necessary hierarchical backing, resources, time, personnel decision-making power and adequate knowledge and training to perform the task. Yet they can also constrain actors' possibilities to effectively implement the strategy through the everyday norms and practices they enact (Cavaghan forthcoming 2015; Mackay 2011). Thus, the concept of resistance to change, present but understudied in FI, can enrich FI's conceptual framework with a focus on how institutional resistance can hinder gender equality initiatives.

For FI, institutions are battlegrounds of norms (Kenny and Mackay 2009). They are not monolithically resistant to gender, but are rather the site of power relations that produce and contest gender inequalities (Kantola and Dahl 2005). As Mazey states, institutions 'constitute important "filters" which may either support or resist policy change' (Mazey 2000: 339). This is why Kantola (2006: 34) suggests exploring the 'resistance' and opportunities that institutions provide for feminist struggles in specific contexts and times. A focus on resistance to policy change, building on FI, can help identify who the resisting actors are and through what mechanisms they operate, ultimately making this opposition to change visible, diagnosing the problem and devising solutions.

Through their daily practices of 'doing gender', institutions construct particular gender norms and behaviours that are deemed appropriate in a given institutional context (Cavaghan forthcoming 2015; Connell 1997). Gender mainstreaming has the ambition to transform these institutional gender norms and behaviours that create inequalities (Council of Europe 1998). And this institutional change can trigger resistance on the part of the actors involved, that are

commonly inclined to preserve the status quo (Pauly, Mergaert and OPERA team 2009). Processes of mainstreaming gender into institutions are likely to face particular resistance, argues Díaz González (2001), because the changes that gender mainstreaming requires challenge the order of norms and practices concerning relations between women and men within a given institution. As Benschop and Verloo (2011: 286) write: '(r)esistance to change is typically strong when an organization's cultural norms, beliefs, attitudes, and values are the target of change efforts. This is certainly the case with projects that target the gender bias in organizational routines'. Thus, resistance is likely to occur among the main actors involved in the implementation of mainstreaming.

In principle, less resistance to gender change should be encountered in institutions where power relations are more equal, and vice-versa. This is why Longwe (1995, 1997) argues that gender policies tend to evaporate or 'filter-out' (Weiner and MacRae 2014, *this special issue*) within bureaucracies that show patriarchal features and unequal gender relations. In her view, bureaucracies should not be treated as politically neutral institutions in Weberian terms. Rather, institutions are battlegrounds in which opposing principles, interests, values, norms and objectives are overtly or covertly articulated. When it comes to the implementation of gender mainstreaming, this institutional conflict creates a paradoxical clash; while bureaucratic principles demand policy implementation, patriarchal principles demand evaporation. Since such evaporation of gender equality policy does not happen 'on occasion' but occurs as a pattern, Longwe concludes that there must be norms that are operating which protect male privileges and power and resist gender changes.

Braithwaite (2000) applies similar arguments on the genderedness of institutional culture to pinpoint a cause of resistance to change in the EC, concluding that 'there is resistance to discussing gender, in part due to fear of feminism, in part due to the institutional culture, which rewards "male" behaviour (for example, in working late into the evening)'. Braithwaite identifies 'a strong male bias in the culture of the [EC] institution' which is noticeable in 'gender balance in staffing, particularly at middle and top management levels; working practices [that] are rarely based on consultation and collaboration; and workloads [that] are incompatible with family responsibilities' (2000: 11). Stratigaki (2005) provides further evidence of institutional resistance to gender change in the EC, arguing that the potential of more transformative gender mainstreaming generated strong resistance. Male-dominated decision-making bodies reacted by adopting the rhetoric of gender mainstreaming, but using it to erode positive actions, *de facto* weakening the gender equality project.

The literature on gender mainstreaming identifies civil servants at different hierarchical levels as key opposing actors. In a study of gender mainstreaming in the Ministry of the Flemish Community in Belgium, Benschop and Verloo (2006) report that their attempts as gender experts to expose and address the genderedness of the institution were met with resistance on the part of high-ranking civil servants. These had the power to control the agenda and resisted the gender experts' attempts to frame mainstreaming in transformative terms, preferring a gender-neutral framing of the issue that seemed less threatening to the gendered status quo. In another study of the uneven results of the implementation of gender impact assessments in the Netherlands, Roggeband and Verloo (2006: 625) conclude that conflicting policy frames between 'feminist policy entrepreneurs and gender experts, and the gender-blind policy

paradigms of state officials proved to be a crucial obstacle for implementation'. They recommend considering civil servants as active players in a power game. This would help to understand certain attitudes on their part as forms of resistance and consequently as an integral part of the problematic implementation of gender mainstreaming.

Aforementioned studies shed light on the relationship between individuals and institutions as mutually constitutive (Díaz González 2001; Kantola 2006; Peters 2012; Powell and DiMaggio 1991). For Kantola (2006), this means that individuals are bound by (gendered) institutions where they learn the norms that define appropriate behaviour, but also that they can actually change the norms and the institutional structures in which they operate. Learning the informal rules of appropriate behaviour in patriarchal institutions can mean interiorizing norms about unequal gender roles, which can lead an institution to pay only lip-service to gender equality because egalitarian norms contradict the 'deep structure' of the organisation (Rao and Kelleher 2005). Such ambiguous support to gender equality can trigger resistance to gender mainstreaming when individuals within an institution internalise the existing informal unequal gender norms and might act to preserve the status quo. Therefore, considering that institutions are a collective and their constituents are the individuals working within them, these individuals cannot be considered in isolation, but should be understood in relation to the institution of which they form a part (Díaz González 2001: 4).

Institutions are capable of adaptation, of learning, but also of resistance to change. Individuals within them will perceive the extent to which the institution's commitment to gender equality and gender mainstreaming is window-dressing and consequently react by supporting or resisting the gender initiative (Díaz González 2001; Rao and Kelleher 2005). However, because institutions are 'full of contradictions' and conflicting interests, they not only cause resistance to gender change but they also create opportunities for individual feminist agency to promote gender mainstreaming (Eyben 2010: 60). Pollack and Hafner-Burton (2000) have shown how gender advocates introduced the strategy within DGs less familiar with gender issues and avoided potential resistance from more market-oriented EC policymakers by framing gender mainstreaming as a strategy that would result in efficiency gains.

The resistance-centred feminist institutionalist approach we adopt in this article employs concepts from different neo-institutionalist strands. The role of resistance in maintaining the institutional status quo draws on historical institutionalism's ideas about the legacy of (gender) norms embedded in institutions that influence the way in which new (gender) initiatives are received (Pierson 2000; Thelen 1999). Attention to the interplay between the micro and macro perspectives emerges from the sociological institutionalist idea of the mutually constitutive relationship between individuals and institutions (Peters 2012; Powell and DiMaggio 1991). Individuals' learning of appropriate institutional behaviour and their expressions of resistance to gender mainstreaming are markers for the institution's commitment to gender equality policies. The clash between the rhetorical commitments to gender mainstreaming and the actual gender norms embedded within an institution that promote gender-unequal practices resonates with discursive institutionalism (Schmidt 2011). Finally, the agency of both individuals deliberately and consciously opposing (gender) change in institutions and of feminist advocates using existing gender mainstreaming norms to

actively promote gender equality resonates with rational choice institutionalism (Weingast 2002).

In sum, a resistance-centred approach, through identifying barriers to gender change within institutions and explicitly naming them as 'resistances', contributes to FI because it makes opposition to gender change more visible and helps to shed light on the 'invisibility of gender' in institutional cultures and processes.

2. Resistance: Types and reasons

The concept of resistance we employ includes two main types: individual and institutional resistance, each of which can be expressed implicitly or explicitly (see Table 1). This distinction is not meant to reproduce an agency-versus-structure dichotomy, especially as they, as we discussed above, mutually constitute each other. It is rather to differentiate, for analytic purposes, the resistance exercised by an individual through his or her action or inaction from the resistance that is revealed by a pattern of aggregated action or inaction that is systematically repeated and that suggests a collective orchestration against gender change.

The distinction is important because institutional resistance can be an expression of the *informal* norms and values that reign in an institution. Due to its systemic character, institutional resistance can greatly influence the formal and informal norms and practices through which an institution works, shaping patterns of (non-)implementation of gender mainstreaming. Institutional resistance to the implementation of mainstreaming in the European Commission can be detected when decisions taken in the higher ranks of the institution take the form of under-staffing, under-budgeting or the insufficient gender training of personnel (Braithwaite 2000). Cavaghan's (forthcoming 2015) study of the 'non-implementation of gender mainstreaming' in DG Research also points at institutional resistance when it demonstrates how, prior to FP6, the institution showed a 'systematic non-engagement with women's interests' and an active exclusion of 'gender inequality as a policy problem'. This systematic pattern of non-engagement with, and active exclusion of, gender is what institutional resistance is about.

'Resistance to feminism', write Bergqvist, Bjarnega and Zetterberg (2013: 281), 'is often seemingly invisible and implicit, and it seldom manifests itself explicitly as such'. This suggests that such resistance is not necessarily a conscious, deliberate action, but rather an expression of the unequal gender norms that individuals have learnt and therefore tend to preserve. Organizational scholars Barley and Tolbert (1997: 102) explain it well when they argue that the everyday behaviour within an institution resembles actors enacting 'scripts that encode institutional principles'. Yet, '[e]nacting a script may or may not entail conscious choice', because actors may simply be guided by the script in their interpretation of how things are and thus find themselves reproducing particular institutional patterns. By contrast, an 'intention to alter scripts' in order to modify an institution, 'is more likely to require conscious choice than does its reproduction' (Barley and Tolbert 1997: 102). This would be the case for individuals actively promoting gender mainstreaming in gender-unequal

institutions, because their action requires swimming against the tide of the institutional inertia that maintains unequal gender norms.

We agree with Bergqvist, Bjarnega and Zetterberg (2013: 286) that precisely because '[t]he resistance is not always made explicit (…) it is important to study it empirically'. To do this, we further need to distinguish between explicit and implicit resistance (Mergaert 2012). Explicit resistance to gender change occurs when actors overtly oppose gender equality initiatives through their actions or discourses, or do not do what they ought to do in order to advance gender equality even when they are made aware of their institution's gender equality commitments. Implicit resistance does not manifest overtly but it can be verified by observing the extent to which actors, in their discourses and (in)actions, distance themselves from the goal of gender equality itself. In reality, this distinction is not always clear-cut, as our discussions of its manifestations shows. Both implicit and explicit resistances can be found in individual and in institutional types of resistance. Implicit individual resistance, for example, manifests itself through an individual's inadequate action or inaction, while explicit individual resistance manifests itself through an individual's overt actions or statements. Individual explicit or implicit resistance could be occasional or could be repeated, but it is not necessarily part of a collective pattern; it rather is an action or a lack thereof on the part of an individual. Implicit or explicit institutional resistance takes place when resistance can be detected at a collective level and is connected to policy decisions on resources and priorities that are taken in an institution's higher ranks. This type of resistance can be recognised in the form of aggregated action or inaction by individual actors within an institution (a pattern of action or inaction that is systematically and collectively repeated) or in the form of a collective orchestration of an action or inaction that opposes a particular gender initiative.

The reasons for these types of resistance to gender change vary and are often combined (Lombardo and Mergaert 2013). Individual resistance can originate from a feeling of 'incapacity' that is caused by a lack of resources such as gender knowledge and skills, time, financial resources and power (Mergaert 2012: 63-64). In this case, the resistance is more directed to the process, the 'burdens' that come with gender mainstreaming. This individual resistance is connected to the institutional resistance, that is, an institution's resistance to providing actors with knowledge and capacity for performing the gender mainstreaming task. Resistance can also be rooted in opposition to the goal of gender equality, itself motivated by the aim of retaining particular privileges, as Flood and Pease (2006) argue when discussing formal and informal strategies that men employ to resist women's entry in public institutions. One more reason for resistance comes from the fact that gender mainstreaming challenges people's personal identity and beliefs. Gender mainstreaming provokes reflections about people's own gender role and stereotypes, sometimes making subjects feel exposed to criticism or suggesting a need for changes in the personal identity that they have constructed. This questioning of the personal sphere can trigger reactions of fear and self-protection that can move people to develop attitudes of resistance (Pauly, Mergaert and OPERA team 2009). Another reason for resisting can be that the goal of transforming gender relations is considered to be 'feminist' and thus excessively based on ideological and emotional rather than rational, scientific or legal arguments. Finally, one reason for resistance that is not connected to gender change but rather to persuasion strategies is 'reactance'. In psychology

studies, reactance is an attitude of resistance to the change advocated by a particular speaker if one feels that the speaker is trying to change the attitude of individuals listening to him or her, or manipulate them in some way (Brehm and Brehm 1981). The reaction to a perceived attempt to steer the actor in a certain direction can be to try to safeguard the limits of one's own freedom through a negative attitude towards the change advocated by the speaker.

Types of resistance	Features
Individual	Resistance expressed through the action or inaction of an individual to oppose gender change.
Institutional	Resistance revealed by a pattern of aggregated action or inaction that is systematically repeated and that suggests a collective orchestration to oppose gender change.
Explicit	Resistance expressed overtly when actors oppose gender equality initiatives through their action and discourses, or do not do what they ought to do to advance gender equality even when they are made aware of gender equality commitments.
Implicit	Resistance not overtly manifested that can be verified by observing the extent to which actors, in their discourses and inactions or inadequate actions, distance themselves from the goal of gender equality itself.

Table 1: Types of resistance

3. The institutionalization of gender mainstreaming in EU research policy

The organisation we analyse here is the European Commission DG for Research and Innovation (known as RTD, i.e., research, technology and development) that holds the main responsibility for the EU research policy. The Council and the European Parliament also participate in decisions about EU research policy since the Framework Programmes for funding research that are proposed by the European Commission are adopted following a co-decision procedure. As such, the Framework Programmes can be seen as cycles in the longer-term EU policy delivery process.

The EU explicitly committed to mainstream gender into research policy through the 1999 Communication of the Commission on Women and Science (European Commission 1999). This key policy document provided a threefold interpretation of how to mainstream gender in EU research, as it encourages research 'by women', 'for women', and 'on women', thereby tackling the problem of women's underrepresentation in science and promoting research that

addresses both women's needs and gender issues. The 1999 Communication triggered changes in institutions, in the tools to mainstream a gender perspective in research, and in the content of policy measures.

As part of the EU's institutionalization of gender mainstreaming in the research sector, two structures were established both within and outside DG Research. One is the Helsinki Group on Women and Science that has since 1998 acted as a watchdog for the European Commission's activity on gender equality in research by bringing together national civil servants and gender experts. The Group meets twice a year to promote the participation and equality of women in science on a Europe-wide basis, and to help the Commission collect and compile data and indicators. The other institutional structure is a working group on Women and Science that was established within DG Research in 2000 to pool those civil servants who have a gender mainstreaming responsibility within DG Research and other EC departments involved with the RTD framework programme. The task of this network of gender actors is to promote a gender perspective in the environment and scientific fields on which they work.

A Gender Watch System was also introduced to improve the integration of the gender dimension within FP5 (1998-2002) and research policy in general. It aimed to achieve a 40% representation of women in panels and advisory groups, collecting sex-disaggregated data, encouraging gender research within the framework programmes and conducting Gender Impact Assessment studies of the Fifth Framework Programmes, which in FP6 became 'Gender Monitoring Studies' (European Commission 2001). The monitoring system based on gender impact assessments was planned so that the results of these studies could feed into the next framework programme.

Content-wise, the EU Decisions establishing both FP6 and FP7 formally incorporated gender mainstreaming in their plans for funding research. FP6 does so by stating that, 'The principle of (…) gender equality, will be duly taken into account, where relevant for the activity concerned' (European Parliament and Council of the European Union 2002: 6), and by referring to the three goals of the 1999 Communication on Women and Science of doing research 'by', 'for' and 'on' women. FP7 also includes the aims of increasing women's representation in science and promoting gender research by affirming that, 'The integration of the gender dimension and gender equality will be addressed in all areas of research' (European Parliament and Council of the European Union 2006: 8), and by promising funding for 'Gender research, including the integration of the gender dimension in all areas of research and the promotion of the role of women in research and in scientific decision-making bodies' (European Parliament and Council of the European Union 2006: 35).

Gender mainstreaming measures were also included in the Sixth Framework Programme that we analyse in this article. They targeted three groups of actors: project proposers, project evaluators and Commission officers in charge of projects. The guides for proposers of the largest-scale projects[5] required them to draw up a gender action plan (GAP) stating how they intended to take gender issues into account in their research. The guides for expert evaluators of proposals asked them to assess the extent to which gender was addressed in the proposal. The Commission's scientific project officers working in DG Research received a so-called

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[5] For the Integrated Projects and Networks of Excellence only.

Vademecum on gender mainstreaming succinctly explaining that gender had to be incorporated in the content of the research and that women's participation had to be promoted. However, the Commission did not set aside resources or schedule awareness-raising or capacity-building actions to ensure that the civil servants in charge of the projects could acquire the necessary knowledge to incorporate gender into their work as scientific officers; it simply asked civil servants to take up the new task of integrating a gender dimension into their work without capacitating them for the challenge.

Overall, the analysis of gender mainstreaming in the EU research policy shows that from the end of the 1990s important steps were taken in the institutionalisation of gender mainstreaming in terms of tools, institution-building and the content of policy documents. Yet there were gaps at the implementation stage of the strategy that were especially evident in the lack of resources set aside by the Commission to prepare its own personnel for how to effectively apply the new mainstreaming task.

4. Manifestations of resistance to mainstreaming gender in EU research policy

The theoretical framework on resistance to the implementation of gender mainstreaming developed in previous sections underpins our analysis of the manifestations of resistance within DG Research encountered by Mergaert (2012). The first three cases we will outline below are examples of individual resistance, while the last three provide evidence of institutional resistance.

The first example of individual resistance describes how a policy officer in DG Research refused to let an international panel of expert evaluators – who met in 2005 in Brussels to review FP6 research proposals[6] – conclude their work on Friday evening and return home before one sentence was removed from one of the proposal assessment forms. The phrase in question was a critical comment stating that the proposal did not address the relevant gender issues in the research. The resisting actor was basically asking evaluators of research proposals to ignore the principle of integrating gender into research policies endorsed in the EU Decisions establishing FP6, the 1999 EC Communication on Women and Science, and in the guidelines for evaluators that asked them to check whether proposals duly considered the gender dimension. This is an example of explicit resistance on the part of an individual, overtly expressed by her action.

The second example of individual resistance sketches the experience of a high-level panel of experts, the Marimon panel, who in 2004 evaluated the effectiveness of two new 'instruments' introduced in FP6, the 'Network of Excellence' and 'Integrated Project' models. The rapporteur of this panel reported experiencing clear pressure from the responsible EC Head of Unit to mention in the report that the horizontal, cross-cutting concerns and the Gender Action Plan (GAP) were 'too burdensome' for the research community.[7] Facing this pressure, the rapporteur again consulted the raw data and evaluation results to verify whether

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[6] The evaluation was for an FP6 call on Innovation in which Lut Mergaert was one of the evaluators.
[7] Face-to-face interview, Brussels, 21.04.2008.

the finding that gender was a 'burden' to the research community resulted from the evaluation of the panel of experts. He confirmed that this finding could not be derived from the work of the expert panel, and that the Head of Unit's observation could therefore not be put in the panel's report. Nevertheless, in the run up to FP7, when rumours were around about a possible elimination of the GAPs, officials in DG Research still claimed that the Marimon report had identified the GAP as burdensome and stressed the need for simplification, and that this was one of the reasons why the GAPs might be dropped. This second example also shows explicit resistance on the part of an individual, expressed through action. The resistant officer tried to get rid of an instrument, the gender action plans, that had been adopted in FP6 with the specific purpose that large research projects did not perpetuate unequal gender relations both in the process and the content of research. In FP7, there were no longer mandatory GAPs.

In a third example, one EC official[8] – a gender scholar who worked as the seconded national agent in DG Research in the unit in charge of Social Sciences and Humanities – in 2006 read (at her own initiative) the draft new work programme for the Social Sciences and Humanities. Applying her gender competence to the analysis of the document and following the indications of EU legislation on incorporating a gender perspective into the research policy, she pointed out the gender relevance in relation to the new work programme topics. The Head of Unit rejected her work with the argument that there would be 'too much gender' in the work programme: an example of explicit resistance by an individual to oppose feminist agency. In this case, the resistance encountered by the gender expert had consequences both for the woman's career and for the DG where she worked. Disappointed by the institution's culture and its lack of interest in her gender competence, the official decided to leave the Commission, although she had passed a 'concours' to become *fonctionnaire*. Her departure, which the resistance she encountered helped provoke, meant a significant diminishing of the gender expertise in the directorate.

The reasons for these three examples of individual resistance to gender equality initiatives can vary. In the first example of individual resistance, where a Commission officer required a panel of expert evaluators to withdraw a comment on a proposal's lack of gender perspective, the participant observation led us to consider that the individual's reasons to openly express resistance towards gender did not spring from hostility to the goal of gender equality, but rather from the feeling she would be incapable of taking up gender issues during the negotiation phase. A lack of gender competence might have triggered the official's resistance to the gender initiative. In the second example, the individual that expressed resistance had a middle-management rank and as such was in a position of power. This could be a case of resistance to the goal of gender equality. According to the interviewed rapporteur of the Marimon panel, the resistance of this person can be attributed to his belief that the research community (his 'clientele') did not want to deal with gender issues, which would be perceived as distracting from the 'real research'. Believing that the policymakers had imposed these gender issues on the research community, the civil servant took up its 'defence', thus somehow representing the interests of a community that was supposedly resistant to gender initiatives. The third example seems to suggest a 'reactance' effect, as described in the former

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[8] Longitudinal ethnographic interview, Brussels, 2006-2008.

section, may have been at play, whereby the resisting Head of Unit experienced pressure exercised on him by the official who conducted a gender assessment of the new work programmes at her own initiative.

A fourth example reveals possible implicit institutional resistance. All the contracts of each of the Gender Monitoring Studies[9] for the different fields of FP6 had a gender mainstreaming provision to support the EC project officers in charge of contract negotiations with applicants by helping them to improve the Gender Action Plans. During the contract preparation stage, officers had the possibility to call on gender experts hired by the EC. This provision, however, was never used, thus wasting opportunities and resources to integrate gender in financed projects.[10] A plausible explanation for this is that, although the officers received guidelines on how to run contract negotiations, they had not been informed about (and hence ignored) the existence of this possibility to mobilise gender expertise in order to enhance the quality of the GAPs. This non-use of the opportunity to mobilise gender experts that could have enhanced gender equality provisions in the to-be-funded projects is a striking example of how the implementation of gender mainstreaming has been (negatively) affected by the institutional functioning of the EC. The communication gap points at inefficiency in the internal work of the Commission. This can be an indicator of implicit institutional resistance (inefficient communication) that caused a lack of capacity – in this case, access to gender expertise – of Commission personnel. We interpret this example as resistance rather than mere institutional inefficiency because we see a pattern of aggregated inaction by individuals that was systematically repeated.

A fifth example also reveals institutional resistance, this time explicit. When the Gender Monitoring Studies were announced to the Helsinki Group on Women and Science on the occasion of their meeting on 21 June 2005, the responsible Head of Unit presented the Commission's proposals for FP7. The Group members expressed serious concerns about the way in which gender issues would be dealt with in FP7 (European Commission 2005). The experts regretted that horizontal issues (including gender) would be removed from the evaluation phase for reasons of 'simplification' and urged the Commission to keep gender issues in the evaluation phase so that people preparing proposals were made aware of the gender requirements. They stressed that gender issues should be taken into account at the proposal stage when teams are being put together and emphasised the need to consider women's participation in consortia as a management issue. The Helsinki Group also underlined the importance of regarding Gender Action Plans as an issue of quality and the need for a consistent Commission approach to gender issues that would consider both women's participation and the gender dimension of research content. Finally, the experts believed that there was a need to maintain the gender achievements of FP6 (European Commission 2005).

Despite these criticisms and warnings from the Helsinki Group, also echoed by the contractors of the Gender Monitoring Studies, the European Commission persisted with its plans for a 'shrunk-down' approach to gender in FP7. As FP7 took form, it became known that the Gender Action Plan was abandoned as a mandatory instrument and gender

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[9] Different studies covered different parts and scientific fields of the Framework Programme.
[10] Participant observation, Brussels, 2004-2007.

mainstreaming efforts were largely demoted and weakened without clear justification. The reason claimed was 'simplification' and (oral) reference was made to some complaints received from important research institutions saying that the so-called 'horizontal concerns' in the framework programme were 'burdensome'. This fifth example, as well as the sixth described below, is recognisable as explicit institutional resistance on the part of the Commission, expressed through its action of shrinking the gender dimension in the 7th Framework Programme as compared to the 6th.

At a subsequent meeting of the Helsinki Group, on 27-28 June 2006, a general overview of the status and purpose of the Gender Monitoring Studies (GMS) was briefly outlined by DG Research officials to the Group members, although no results or preliminary findings were presented. After this meeting, neither results of the next monitoring rounds, nor the final findings of the Gender Monitoring Studies were ever presented to the Helsinki Group or to any other stakeholder group. Though the terms of reference for the monitoring studies stipulated that the EC would organise a 'gender conference' with presentations of the results of the various GMS lots, with a view to providing input for the preparation of FP7, this conference never took place. Just as in the example above, this can be labelled as explicit institutional resistance on the part of the Commission expressed through inaction in relation to the commitments on gender mainstreaming in science that the Commission had formerly taken.

The last three examples can be seen as forms of institutional resistance. One is an example of how aggregate inaction of different individuals within the EC weakened the implementation of gender mainstreaming, all due to ignorance about the possibility of calling upon gender expertise. In this case, the lack of information about the possibility to rely on gender expertise, which can already be interpreted as a sign of implicit institutional resistance, caused further institutional resistance that was manifested in the aggregate inaction of individuals. The last two examples are cases of explicit institutional resistance, showing that the Helsinki Group members' clear protests against the Commission's plans to shrink gender mainstreaming in FP7 were ignored. The Helsinki Group was not kept informed about the results of the gender monitoring work, and a planned event to make these results public and to discuss them in view of the FP7 preparations – which the EC had previously committed to – never took place. Such manifestations of resistance are labelled as institutional rather than individual resistance, as they suggest some collective orchestration behind the decisions (i.e., not to take into account the position of the Helsinki Group, not to inform the Helsinki Group, not to organise the planned event), which are not likely to have been taken by one individual. Moreover, while the EC might have given the impression that the decisions about FP7 were taken as a result of a democratic process in which stakeholders could provide input, it appears that such input did not find its way into the final decisions.

The above accounts show that both individual and institutional forms of resistance to gender equality initiatives, whether explicit or implicit, could be detected within the European Commission DG Research. They also provide evidence of how the overall attitudes towards mainstreaming gender equality within DG Research changed over the course of the framework programme cycle (from the start of FP6 to the end of FP6 and the start of FP7) from an attitude open to gender issues to a more closed position. However, in the six cases of

resistance discussed above, we can also find evidence of both individual (EC official in example 3) and collective actors' (Helsinki group) contestation of gender inequalities and their actions to mainstream gender into EU research policies.

Conclusion

This study of resistances to gender initiatives in EU research policy shows that individual and institutional resistances have hindered the implementation of gender mainstreaming as endorsed in EU official policy documents. The analysis of resistances – understudied in the literature – is therefore relevant to shed light on the invisibility of gender in the EU and to understand why the implementation of gender mainstreaming has been problematic and ineffective.

Feminist institutionalist theory helps us to understand how the culture of an institution – more open or more closed to gender equality – has implications for the degree of resistance encountered in the implementation of gender mainstreaming. Where institutions have cultures that tend to protect male privileges and power, initiatives to implement gender mainstreaming are likely to face opposition. Through its focus on resistance to gender change, this article contributes to advancing FI by answering the call launched by Mackay and others (Mackay, Kenny and Chappell 2010; Mackay 2011) to identify causal mechanisms of gendered institutional power, continuity, and change. Resistance to change is a concept that helps explain why gender policies succeed or fail within gendered institutions. It can show that if the institution's informal gender norms are unequal, actors are likely to manifest resistance to gender mainstreaming, even if the institution officially endorses it, because they have 'learnt the script' of informal unequal gender rules of behavior within a given institution. A resistance-centred FI approach can make opposition to change visible by identifying resisting actors (such as civil servants) and mechanisms, and can thus contribute to better diagnosing the problem of ineffective gender mainstreaming in the EU.

The typology of individual and institutional resistance to gender equality, both implicit and explicit, devised for analytic purposes, has helped to scrutinise resistances within the European Commission DG Research. Future studies can refine and adapt it to different institutional contexts. Our empirical study showed that individual and institutional resistances are interconnected and that actors have multiple reasons for resisting gender initiatives. The main reasons for expressing resistance to mainstreaming initiatives in DG Research appear to be opposition to the goal of gender equality and a lack of – or insufficient – capacity. A lack of expertise, time and adequate tools on the part of individuals in charge of implementation tasks can move individual or collective actors within the EC to resist gender initiatives through aggregated inaction or non-implementation of EU gender mainstreaming commitments. The lack of adequate capacity-building for gender mainstreaming has to do with the resistance of an institution, which, by not prioritizing gender mainstreaming, proves resistant to the goal of gender equality. In DG Research, institutional resistance points to actors at the highest levels of the institution, where decisions about structural provisions for planning and implementation are taken, where resources are attributed, and where divergences

from original plans are decided. Our findings about institutional resistance raise doubts about the actual institutional commitment to mainstreaming gender in research, especially considering that barriers to gender mainstreaming (such as the absence of gender considerations in the assessment of proposals for funding and the lack of gender awareness among EC staff) were not removed.

A distance between the EC's official endorsement of gender mainstreaming in research and its actual implementation could also be detected from the fact that gender-expert voices were not allowed to influence the policy process: criticism from the Helsinki Group of Women and Science against the EC's plans to shrink gender relevance in FP7 was ignored, as were recommendations made by the Gender Monitoring Studies not to abandon the Gender Action Plans. Our findings about resistances in DG Research show that in the institutional battleground between formal norms demanding the implementation of gender mainstreaming and informal patriarchal norms socializing individuals to preserve the gender-unequal status quo, gender mainstreaming gets 'filtered out'.

Yet, the mutual constitution of individuals and institutions implies that individuals not only enact gender-unequal scripts but they can also act to promote gender change within institutions that have provided evidence of gender-resistance. The cases of individual duty-conscious civil servants, as well as collective actors such as the Helsinki Group on Women and Science, that strive to implement gender mainstreaming against the opposition from civil servants at higher hierarchical levels are signs that change, though difficult, is still possible.

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