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PARTICIPATION OF GEECCO AT THE STS CONFERENCE IN GRAZ AUSTRIA - IT'S TIME FOR STRUCTURAL CHANGE, SISTER!

Over 200 international scientists and practitioners were present at the 18th Annual STS Conference in Graz - Critical Issues in Science, Technology and Society Studies - from May 6th to May 7th, 2019 to present and discuss their projects and research with other minds in the broad field of science, technology and society. The Conference programme is available [here](#).

Within the two days, various and diverse sessions were offered, which were targeted to the following streams: Digitalization of Society, Sustainable and Innovative Public Procurement & Ecodesign, Towards Low-Carbon Energy and Mobility Systems, Gender-Technology-Environment, Teaching STS, Life Sciences – Biotechnology, Science and Society Relationships revisited.

The joined session on “It’s time for structural change, sister!” under the chair of GEECCO coordinator Brigitte Ratzer was held on May 7th, 2019, under the stream Gender-Technology-Environment. **GEECCO’s contribution to the session was on how to “Dance with Resistance”**. Other currently ongoing H2020 “sister projects” and projects under the H2020 SwafS scheme were represented ([TARGET](#), [CHANGE](#), [Sage](#), [GRANteD](#), [ACT](#)) as well as gender scholars and practitioners who discussed approaches and experiences on how to:

- *challenge the dominant excellence idea*
- *involve management in a serious and sustainable way in gender equality policies (going beyond lip service)*
- *deal with and overcome resistance against gender equality and diversity within the organisation and in society in general*
- *develop an intersectional understanding of gender equality*
- *include a broad range of stakeholders in the development and implementation of gender equality policies in research performing organisations (RPO) and research funding organisations (RFO)*

The main aim of all these H2020 funded structural change projects is to support research performing organisations to design and implement gender equality plans.

GEECCO’s contribution to the session “Dance with resistance” crowned the session, just before starting with an open fishbowl conversation. The presentation was about:

- the main resistances the GEECCO project is dealing with so far,
- and possible ways out (from literature, experiences and advisory board input).

The universities resistances are very diverse at the 4 RPOs involved – resistances vary with national and local differences. Therefore, the ways to deal with resistances must be weighed and tailored to the respective situation at each university.



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Though all the contributions, projects and approaches presented at this session beforehand were diverse, it was evident that they all had experiences with strong resistances towards structural changes in common.

Fishbowl Conversation, Reflection and Lessons Learned

Based on discussions within the session “It’s time for structural change, sister!”, a fishbowl conversation was. The main questions discussed and addressed to the different partners of the various projects were:

- *“If you could start over with your project with the lessons you’ve learned: What would you avoid? What would you do again?”*
- *“How is it possible to get people committed?”*

The reflection was very fruitful and brought up a lot of lessons learned within the different projects. Some important messages out of this discussion were:

- Adopt your measures and visions to the culture of each field.
- Involve more university staff from the beginning of the project.
- Work with people who want to change something, not with those who are resistant (at first).
- Enable people/organisations to change something and make immediate implementations possible. Awareness raising is not enough.
- H2020 recognition: make aware, that this is an internationally recognised field of research.
- Appeal to quality enhancement though considerations of gender within applied research.
- Find things people can connect with.
- The student level is important: students are much more open; the resistance comes later on. Through this approach, a lot of people could be reached. This stands for including gender issues in all curricula.
- Include RFOs.
- Institutionalise.
- Try to make equality the expectation!

This conference was a good opportunity also for GEECCO to exchange experiences between the sister projects as well as other related projects and to raise awareness for the issue among the research community.

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