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Knowledge transfer about sex and gender: The case of women's studies in the Netherlands **

(1) Introduction

This paper addresses the question of how Women's Studies¹ knowledge is transferred from the academy to society. In the title, you can see that I use the phrase knowledge about sex and gender. However, because this knowledge is produced in Women's Studies departments that are mainly located in the Humanities and Social Sciences, I will use the term Women's Studies knowledge.

According to a recent definition, the interdisciplinary field of Women's Studies studies "... power mechanisms that impact on the positions of men and women in society".² The key concept in Women's Studies is gender. This concept "refers to the many and complex ways in which social differences between the sexes acquire a meaning and become structural factors in the organisation of social life".³

I find the case of Women's Studies an interesting one to study knowledge transfer, because when you look at the history of Women's Studies, one thing that stands out is that Women's Studies is a scholarly field that has close and multiple relations with society. In the Netherlands, the country that I study, Women's Studies has links to for instance the women's movement, politics, media, and governmental policy.⁴ It thus is a socialised or 'contextualised' field of study.⁵

Moreover, Women's Studies is a relatively young field of study. It started in the 1970s and has since then developed into a well-established field of education and research in the academy.⁶ This means that by now a whole generation of Women's Studies students exists that after their graduation end up in a wide variety of jobs. Apart from pursuing academic careers, many graduates find employment

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¹ I adopt an open definition of Women's Studies, using it to include Women's Studies, Gender Studies, and Feminist Studies, as the distinctions have no bearing on the subject of this paper.

² Braidotti, Rosi, "The uses and abuses of the sex / gender distinction in European feminist practices", in: Gabriele Griffin and Rosi Braidotti (eds.), *Thinking differently: A reader in European women's studies* (London: Zed Books: 2002), p. 285–307.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Brouns, Margo, and Hans Harbers, *Kwaliteit in meervoud: Reflectie op kwaliteiten van vrouwenstudies in Nederland* (Den Haag: VUGA, 1994).

⁵ Gibbons, Michael, Camille Limoges, Helga Nowotny, Simon Schwartzman, Peter Scott, and Martin Trow, *The new production of knowledge: The dynamics of science and research in contemporary societies* (London: Sage, 1994).

⁶ Jansen, Willy, "Women's Studies in the Netherlands", *Women's Studies Quarterly* 24, no. 1&2 (1996), p. 327–342.

Sanden, Jeannette van der, and Berteke Waaldijk, "The Netherlands", in: Gabriele Griffin (ed.), *Women's employment, Women's Studies, and equal opportunities 1945–2001: Reports from nine European countries* (Hull: University of Hull, 2002), p. 122–176.

Griffin, Gabriele. "Employment and women's studies: The impact of women's studies training on women's employment in Europe. Final report" (November 2003). <http://www.hull.ac.uk/ewsi/Final%20report.htm>.

outside the academy, where they use their knowledge in for instance governmental and women's organisations.

What I am interested in is to find out what the processes are through which Women's Studies knowledge is being transferred to society and the conditions that are relevant for the integration of that knowledge in societal domains.

In my research project I therefore analyse and compare three cases or processes in which Women's Studies knowledge is transferred to the educational curriculum, civil society, business organisations, and policymaking. Two cases specifically deal with knowledge about sex and gender produced in the Social Sciences, respectively the Humanities, and the third case deals with Women's Studies graduates as transporters of knowledge to society.

I thus define knowledge in a broad way. It does not only refer to specific research outcomes, but also to people, namely Women's Studies graduates, and the knowledge they have. By using this broad definition, I follow Nowotny *et al.*,⁷ who interpret knowledge as both research results and as academically trained people.

The focus of this paper is on the transfer of knowledge to society via Women's Studies graduates. I have analysed the experiences of these graduates in transmitting and using Women's Studies knowledge in their work. In that analysis, I have especially focussed on the conditions that are either hindering or enhancing the use of their knowledge. I will come back to the outcomes of that analysis later on, but before that, I want to outline what I see as the practical and theoretical relevance of my research and the theoretical framework that I use.

(2) Relevance and theoretical framework

The relevance of my research is related to the fact that Women's Studies highly estimates the connection it has to various social actors. Even stronger, Women's Studies has since its beginning been about changing society. It did not only focus on theoretical development, but also aimed to contribute to improving women's position in society. Women's Studies is "about a transformative analysis, about the need for change".⁸ However, the situation is that Women's Studies knowledge is not fully integrated in domains where Women's Studies scholars think their knowledge is useful or were they think their knowledge can improve the societal situation of women.

For instance at policy level, insights and theories on gender are not always incorporated in the emancipation policy of the government,⁹ although Women's Studies knowledge finds its way to policy makers.¹⁰

Similarly at the level of education, special projects have been set up in Dutch universities that deliberately aim at integrating knowledge about gender and diversity in the curriculum. For instance the department of Women's Studies Medicine of the Radboud University Nijmegen has led projects aiming at the incorporation of sex and gender issues in Dutch medical curricula¹¹ and at Utrecht

⁷ Nowotny, Helga, Peter Scott, and Michael Gibbons, *Re-thinking science: Knowledge and the public in an age of uncertainty* (Cambridge: Polity, 2001).

⁸ Griffin, Gabriele, "Introduction to 'The State of Gender Studies'", in: Luisa Passerini, Dawn Lyon, Liana Borghi (eds.), *Gender Studies in Europe*, Florence (European University Institute, 2002), p.17–30.

⁹ Keuzenkamp, Saskia, "Van vrouwenstudies naar emancipatiebeleid. Integratie van theorievorming over gender en macht in het emancipatiebeleid", *Tijdschrift voor Genderstudies* 2, no. 3 (1999), p. 43–53.

¹⁰ Verloo, Mieke, and Conny Roggeband, *Emancipatie Effect Rapportage: Theoretisch kader, methodiek en voorbeeldrapportages* (Den Haag: Ministerie SZW, 1994).

Lenning, Alkeline van, Margo Brouns, and Jeanne de Bruijn. *Inzichten uit vrouwenstudies: Uitdagingen voor beleidsmakers* (Ministerie SZW. Den Haag: VUGA, 1995).

Matti, Zjan (ed.), *Inzichten uit vrouwenstudies voor politiek en beleid* (Utrecht: NGV, 1998).

¹¹ Sanden, Jeannette van der, and Toine Lagro-Janssen, "Aandacht voor sekseverschillen ontbreekt in artsenopleiding: Innovatieproject brengt lacunes in kaart", *Medisch Contact* 54, no. 36 (1999), p. 1195–1198.

Verdonk, Petra, Linda J. Mans, and Toine Lagro-Janssen, "Integrating gender into a basic medical curriculum", *Medical Education* 39, no. 11 (2005), p. 1118–1125.

University a project has been carried out to promote diversity in the curricula in the Faculty of Arts.¹²

Integration of Women's Studies knowledge is thus not optimal. And given the fact that special projects are necessary to accomplish this integration, it is clear that knowledge is not self-evidently transferred. Moreover, it is not clear what the reasons are for non-integration or what factors are enhancing in this regard. An important question to be asked then is how knowledge transfer takes place and under what conditions it leads to integration of knowledge in education and domains in society. My research project thus aims at getting a clear view of how knowledge transfer processes take place and the factors that are impacting on the integration of knowledge about sex and gender. This insight will give Women's Studies scholars guidelines and tools for how their knowledge can become integrated in domains where they think their knowledge is useful.

At the same time my research aims to contribute to theories in the social studies of knowledge that are engaged with knowledge transfer, in particular to the scholarly field of knowledge utilisation. Studies in this field have shown that multiple factors should be included in understanding why knowledge comes to be used or not. For instance factors related to the context of the researchers as well as the context of the users.¹³ Moreover, it has become clear that the causal linkages between the factors need to be considered.¹⁴ However, despite the fact that theoretical models that take into account these findings do indicate concrete factors that may determine knowledge utilisation, the literature on knowledge utilisation lacks a general theoretical framework to integrate different perspectives on knowledge utilisation and to understand the complex interrelations between factors.¹⁵

In my research project, I want to bring the studies of knowledge utilisation further, by combining the insights from knowledge utilisation studies with scholarship that provides an account of the complex interrelations between producers and users of knowledge, that is Mode 2. The concept of Mode 2 is developed by a group of authors including Michael Gibbons and Helga Nowotny. In their 1994 book *The new production of knowledge*, Gibbons *et al.*¹⁶ introduce this concept to comprehend the current interrelations between science and society, and they further developed it in the book *Re-thinking Science*, which was published in 2001.¹⁷ Mode 2, to put it briefly, refers on the one hand to the involvement of social actors in the production of knowledge, and on the other hand to the growing integration of science in all societal domains. More to the point, I use Mode 2, not to test the claim of Mode 2 as the current historical mode of knowledge production, but as an analytic concept to look at the diverse relations between science and society.

My theoretical framework thus consists of knowledge utilisation, because it points to concrete factors that may affect the use of knowledge, and of Mode 2, because this concept offers a wide-ranging view that enables me to study knowledge transfer from the academy to several social domains.

The specific model of knowledge utilisation that I use is the 'interaction model', because it is in accordance with the characteristics of Mode 2. It is based on the supposition that the more intense the interaction between researchers and users is, the more likely it is that knowledge will be used.¹⁸ The interaction model thus includes factors related to the context of production as well as to the context of application, and especially the linkages between the various factors.

Moreover, by including Mode 2 in my approach I explicitly focus on macro-sociological aspects, in particular to be found in the context of the application of knowledge, which are deemed essential in

¹² Dicke, Elsje, and Gloria Wekker, *Tijd voor diversiteit. Een onderzoek naar diversiteit in de curricula van de Faculteit Letteren, Universiteit Utrecht* (Utrecht: Zuidam, 2004).

¹³ Oh, Cheol H., and Robert F. Rich, "Explaining Use of Information in Public Policy-Making", *Knowledge and Policy* 9, no. 1 (1996), p. 3–35.

Oh, Cheol H., "Issues for the New Thinking of Knowledge Utilization: Introductory Remarks", *Knowledge and Policy: The International Journal of Knowledge Transfer and Utilization* 10, no. 3 (1997), p. 3–10.

¹⁴ Oh, Rich, "Explaining Use of Information in Public Policy-Making", *op. cit.* and *idem*, "Issues for the New Thinking of Knowledge Utilization", *op. cit.*

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ Gibbons, Limoges, Nowotny, Schwartzman, Scott, Trow. *The new production of knowledge, cit.op.*

¹⁷ Nowotny, Scott, Gibbons. *Re-thinking science, op. cit.*

¹⁸ Huberman, Michael, and Monica Gather-Thurler, *De la recherche à la pratique* (Bern: Peter Lang, 1991).

social studies of knowledge. As Nico Stehr¹⁹ has argued, one needs to address the interrelations between the context of production and the context of application of knowledge in order to understand why knowledge comes to be used or not.

Thus, I think it is important to take a close look at what happens with knowledge after it has been produced. With the most engagement of Science Studies in knowledge production at a micro level, the study of the application of knowledge — without losing sight of how knowledge claims are produced — could lead to a better understanding of knowledge transfer processes. Also, because I focus on a body of knowledge from the Humanities and Social Sciences, I think my research may contribute to developing views on knowledge transfer that go beyond the technological and natural sciences, which are the main focus of Science Studies.

(3) Integration of Women's Studies knowledge in society

In my research project, I have looked at graduates of Women's Studies who are working as professionals in society and via their work transport their knowledge to societal domains. I have analysed their experiences to understand knowledge transfer in a broad sense and I have specifically looked for barriers and stimulating factors in using the knowledge they acquired during their Women's Studies training in their work.

The material I have used for this are interviews that I held with a diverse group of Dutch Women's Studies graduates²⁰ working in various professions in settings of public policy, educational and research practice, civil society, and business organisations. It is these settings that I refer to as 'society' to which knowledge is transferred.

The interviews were held as part of the research project 'Employment and Women's Studies: The impact of Women's Studies training on women's employment in Europe' (EWSI), funded by the European Commission under the Fifth Framework Programme.²¹ The main aim of the project was to analyse how training in Women's Studies influences women's opportunities in the labour market. The project results concerning the experiences of Dutch students with Women's Studies training and the impact of it on their employment were described by Van der Sanden.²²

For addressing the issue of knowledge transfer, I have re-examined the corpus of interviews from a social studies of knowledge perspective, concentrating on the experiences of Women's Studies graduates with using their knowledge in practice, the opportunities and obstacles they encounter, and the strategies they make use of to try to integrate their Women's Studies knowledge.

First, I will briefly discuss how the graduates define Women's Studies knowledge. They see Women's Studies knowledge as knowledge about gender relations, women's issues, and the position of women in society. The interviewees furthermore describe their expertise as understanding the complexity of gender, the relation between gender and ethnicity, having a sound grasp of social relations and power relations, gaining insight in mechanisms of in- and exclusion, and the ability to make social inequality visible. Also, students mark out critical thinking and self-confidence as competences that they gained through Women's Studies.

¹⁹ Stehr, Nico, *Practical knowledge. Applying the Social Sciences* (London: Sage, 1992).

²⁰ Thirty face-to-face interviews with Women's Studies students and graduates from the Netherlands were undertaken by the author of this paper in 2002. The interviewees varied in age from 24 to 64, and had taken Women's Studies courses between 1980 and 2001 in diverse disciplines: Economy, Law, General Arts, English, Dutch, International Relations, General Social Sciences, Anthropology, Sociology, Political Sciences, History, Philosophy, and Theology. They studied Women's Studies in various ways: from arranging their own lectures (in the beginning period of Women's Studies), taking one or more (optional or obligatory) modules within their own study programme, to following complete Women's Studies specialisation programmes (in the Arts, Political and Socio-cultural Sciences, or Social Sciences). A diverse group of Women's Studies students was therefore interviewed, representing the different ways in which Women's Studies is institutionalised in Dutch universities.

²¹ EWSI project 2001–2003. Contract number HPSE-CT2001-00082. Partners from nine countries were involved in the project: Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, The Netherlands, Slovenia, Spain, and the UK.

²² Sanden, Jeannette van der, "The impact of Women's Studies training on women's employment in the Netherlands", in: Gabriele Griffin (ed.), *Employment, Equal Opportunities and Women's Studies: Women's Experiences in Seven European Countries* (Frankfurt / Main: Ulrike Helmer Verlag, 2004), p. 139–162.

The general academic training that students get in Women's Studies and their diverse disciplinary backgrounds results in Women's Studies graduates occupying a wide range of jobs. The jobs vary from research jobs in- and outside the university (for example junior policy researcher or senior lecturer), professions on the edge of research (for example teacher, advisor, policy maker), and jobs such as project coordinator, trainer, office manager, radio reporter, civil servant, and educational worker. Some of these jobs can be called 'specific Women's Studies jobs', jobs that graduates could not have done if they had not studied Women's Studies, but the majority of jobs that graduates end up in are content-wise not directly related to Women's Studies.

Almost all Women's Studies graduates can apply the knowledge and insights in jobs. Their knowledge often finds an application in a general sense, for instance regarding critical assessment of certain debates, fathoming complex issues, and being on the alert for issues that are relevant to women. But also more specific applications are reported. For instance by an interviewee who organises a cultural programme in a neighbourhood project who makes use of the analysis of target groups to involve the different groups of residents in the neighbourhood in the cultural activities. A policy worker in an organisation specialised in gender and ethnicity that advises the government on emancipation translates the theories from her Women's Studies in the Arts training in the practice of policy making. In a research project about the representation of gender in ethnicity in governmental policy documents, she explains to civil servants how power works and how that is related to gender and ethnicity.

For graduates ending up in research, the critical view and interdisciplinarity resulting from Women's Studies are very important. A 29-year old interviewee explains how she uses her Women's Studies knowledge in her job as a junior-researcher:

In my work I detect [the impact of Women's Studies] in my way of thinking, in my way of setting up research, and in the way of interpreting research results. ... I propose research designs and explanations that are different from those of most researchers. ... I mean this broader outlook, being able to put things in perspective, I just think that by doing Women's Studies you become a better researcher, maybe this is a bold thing to say, but I really think that that is the case. Especially for researchers I think Women's Studies is very beneficial, you acquire better competencies, better qualities as a researcher, because of that broad perspective, the crossing of boundaries and not thinking in stereotypes

Many women say that, independent from where they end up in the labour market or what they do, they cannot let go of their Women's Studies expertise. In relation to this, many graduates talked about a 'Women's Studies perspective' or 'gender glasses' with which they look at reality. With this, they often meant having a critical view, a certain way of analysing, and looking at something from different angles. A twenty-eight year old policy worker:

That perspective, no one can ever take that away from you. The perspective, the analytical model, the attitude you have regarding power relations, is something that you have been given, and that is a big gift. Of course you did develop it yourself too, but it is also given to you.

Moreover, the interviewed graduates consider their Women's Studies expertise to be useful or necessary 'everywhere' in the labour market, also when a job does not specifically focus on gender. Areas that they mention most in this regard are policy making and politics, education and research, and businesses (the last one is often mentioned in combination with the 'glass ceiling').

(4) Opportunities and obstacles for knowledge transfer

The applicability and relevance of Women's Studies knowledge as described by the graduates in itself are positive factors for the integration of this knowledge in practice. However, integrating Women's Studies in work is not as self-evident as the accounts above may suggest. In this paragraph, I will describe the conditions that come out of the interviews as enhancing or hindering a successful application of Women's Studies knowledge in professional settings in society.

Given that Women's Studies is a relative young discipline, a lack of understanding about Women's Studies is not uncommon. This makes it more difficult to use Women's Studies knowledge. Many

people are not familiar with the field and graduates often have to explain what it is and justify why they choose to study it. On the other hand, when employers or colleagues are familiar with Women's Studies (for instance in women's organisations), this is beneficial for the transmission of knowledge.

Graduates also observe a low status assigned to the field of Women's Studies outside and inside the academy. The general observation that they make as regards the acceptance of Women's Studies is that Women's Studies often has a negative image, because employers or colleagues do not take it serious or connect it to stereotypical ideas about feminism. Applying Women's Studies knowledge is therefore not a straightforward process. The low status of Women's Studies is related to the misconception that Women's Studies is only about women and the undervaluation of women as a topic of study. It is not difficult to see that this low status of Women's Studies has negative consequences for the estimation and eventual use of its knowledge. Some interviewees even mentioned that if they would work too long on topics related to women it might diminish their chances of getting a job outside that sector. Women's organisations are the exception; these organisations are mentioned as the ones that recognise and value the importance of gender expertise. A 32-year old PhD student says about the image of Women's Studies:

I think Women's Studies is in any case beneficial for your own baggage. It can be hampering, but that is more related to the image of Women's Studies, that people think of you as a radical feminist or so [...]. It surprises me that people still think that. ...If people read in your CV that you graduated in Women's Studies, they will not all acclaim.

In relation to this, it is also important to notice that Women's Studies graduates are predominantly female. The accounts of the interviewees — who were all women — made clear that it is not self-evident that women are seen as owners of knowledge, which hinders the dissemination of knowledge. This is also related to the institutional location of most Women's Studies departments within Social Sciences and Humanities, disciplines which are devalued because of the over-representation of female students.²³

Next, the close link that Women's Studies had to the women's movement in its early years still impinges on the way Women's Studies is received nowadays, despite the fact that it has become a full-fledged field of study in Dutch universities. The association of Women's Studies with feminism leads some people to suspect that Women's Studies has less to do with scholarship than with politics.

On the other hand, the more thorough involvement of Women's Studies in theoretical debates since the 1990s²⁴ also may cause social organisations to question the relevance of Women's Studies for their cause, as colleague PhD students in Women's Studies pointed out.²⁵

Another factor impacting on the integration of Women's Studies knowledge is the critical character this knowledge has: it challenges established meanings and norms. The interviews provided examples of positive as well as negative effects of this. Graduates for instance referred to ample occasions in which they were asked to bring a Women's Studies perspective into courses, were invited to give lectures in civil society, or successfully functioned as supervisors for students. While other accounts showed that the results of the interviewees' research were discredited or that colleague teachers did not act in a supportive manner. The impact thus depends on the context where Women's Studies knowledge is applied. A feminist magazine may welcome Women's Studies knowledge, whereas a local radio making station may contest the value of that same knowledge.

Another hindrance for the integration of Women's Studies knowledge in the Netherlands is that throughout society there is a growing myth that feminism and Women's Studies are no longer necessary.²⁶ Moreover, the governmental emancipation policy has become more focussed on black, migrant, and refugee women, implying that the position of autochthonous women in the Netherlands is

²³ Braidotti, Rosi, "ATHENA and Gender Studies", in: Luisa Passerini, Dawn Lyon, Liana Borghi (ed.), *Gender Studies in Europe* (Florence: European University Institute, 2002), p. 31–55.

²⁴ Griffin, Gabriele. 'Introduction to 'The State of Gender Studies'', *op. cit.*

²⁵ PhD Reading/Writing Seminar, Utrecht, 22 February 2006.

²⁶ Verloof, Mieke, "The Netherlands", in: *European Women's Studies Guide II* (Utrecht: WISE, 1997).

not an issue anymore.²⁷ Graduates thus have to fight the general opinion of women's emancipation as a completed process.

Although my findings show that there are several obstacles that hinder the transfer of Women's Studies knowledge to society, this does not mean that this is the end of the knowledge transfer process. The Women's Studies graduates that I have interviewed have shown to make use of several strategies with which they try to overcome these barriers in order to get their knowledge accepted and integrated.

One of the obvious ways is to explain the relevance of Women's Studies knowledge and to found arguments with facts and figures. Another strategy is to use Women's Studies knowledge, but not reveal the origin of that knowledge. For instance, they hide a gender perspective under a different theme, for instance under multiculturalism. Broadening a topic or generalising the advantages of a certain plan are other successful strategies that Women's Studies graduates make use of. An example of an advisor working at the university can illustrate this:

I am currently working on a project to improve the recruitment and selection procedures at the university. For me that starts with the question of how to achieve that women are assessed in a fair way in these procedures and that they become more inclined to apply for jobs. In the project I have broadened this to the general recruitment and selection procedures, ... but it is in fact about men and women.

(5) Towards a conclusion

My findings show that in order to understand why knowledge comes to be used or not, it is indeed necessary to include a combination of factors to explain the use of knowledge. For instance, the relevance of Women's Studies knowledge for a certain problem cannot solely explain the use of knowledge, since this is intermediated by the familiarity of users with Women's Studies. Also, factors impacting on the integration of knowledge are located in the context of production as well as to the context of application. And the interaction between actors from these contexts is important. I interpret the strategies that Women's Studies graduates apply as a form of interaction between academics and social actors. In this interaction, the graduates try to generate a bearing surface for their knowledge by accommodating the concerns of the social actors they encounter. They adjust their knowledge to the context of the users, and by doing so create the conditions to put their knowledge to practice. This interactivity is one of the important linkage mechanisms between researchers and users that in the interaction model of Huberman and Gather-Thurler²⁸ is a determining factor for knowledge utilisation. Also, broader social aspects such as the public opinion on Women's Studies and the societal problems it relates to intervene in the knowledge transfer process.

Because the findings about the transportation of knowledge via Women's Studies graduates form only one part of my research, it is not possible yet to draw solid conclusions. For more insight in the conditions relevant for the integration of knowledge in societal domains, the findings need to be compared to the case studies that specifically deal with knowledge about sex and gender produced in Social Sciences and the Humanities, and the processes whereby this knowledge is transferred to the educational curriculum, civil society, business organisations, and policymaking.

My first findings however point to one important aspect that seems relevant. And that is that in knowledge transfer process power relations are at stake. When taking into account lessons from feminist science studies,²⁹ it becomes clear that for instance the low status that is assigned to Women's Studies results from gendered norms about what is regarded as proper knowledge and who is valued as an owner or producer of knowledge. The feminist insight that knowledge is shaped by gendered norms

²⁷ Ferrier, Joan, "Het Nederlandse emancipatiebeleid in een notendop: Witte mannen en analfabete moslima's", *Lover* 33, no. 1 (2006), p. 20–21.

²⁸ Huberman, Gather-Thurler. *De la recherche à la pratique, op. cit.*

²⁹ Hartsock, Nancy C.M., "The feminist standpoint: Developing the ground for a specifically feminist historical materialism", in: Sandra Harding and Merrill B. Hintikka (ed.), *Discovering reality: Feminist perspectives on epistemology, metaphysics, methodology, and philosophy of science* (Dordrecht: Reidel, 1983), p. 283–310; Haraway, Donna, "Situated knowledges: The science question in feminism and the privilege of partial perspective", *Feminist Studies* 14, no. 3 (1988), p. 575–599; Harding, Sandra. *The science question in feminism* (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1986).

and is produced from a specific social location thus seems of crucial relevance for social studies of knowledge. Furthermore, with gender being the key concept in Women's Studies and at the same time a way of signifying power relations,³⁰ it follows that Women's Studies not only produces knowledge, but is also always political. As Mohanty³¹ wrote:

Feminist scholarship [...] is not the mere production of knowledge about a certain subject. It is a directly political and discursive practice in that it is purposeful and ideological. It is best seen as a mode of intervention into particular hegemonic discourses [...].

My concluding remark is that the relation that Women's Studies has to civil society and to politics is interpreted in the framework of Mode 2 as a positive point. Women's Studies knowledge — in Mode 2 terms — is “socially robust”, it engages the social world.³² Unfortunately, as my findings indicate, this social robustness is not a guarantee for its acceptability and integration in society.³³ On the one hand, this is related to the evaluation of knowledge with norms that stem from a Mode 1 perspective, in which knowledge is expected to be free from social or political interests. On the other hand, it is related to the limits that the situatedness of knowledge³⁴ puts on the use of knowledge and the generalisability of research findings.³⁵ As feminist science studies scholars have made clear: knowledge means different things to people in different social locations.³⁶

³⁰ Scott, Joan W., “Gender: A useful category of historical analysis”, *American Historical Review* 91 (1986), p. 1053–1075.

³¹ Mohanty, Chandra Talpade, “Under western eyes: Feminist scholarship and colonial discourses”, in: Chandra Talpade Mohanty, Ann Russo, and Lourdes Torres (eds.), *Third world women and the politics of feminism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), p. 51–80.

³² Nowotny, Scott, Gibbons. *Re-thinking science, cit .op.*

³³ Cf. Nowotny, Scott, Gibbons, *Re-thinking science, op. cit.*

³⁴ Haraway. *Situated knowledges, cit .op.*

³⁵ Cf. Huberman, Michael, “Research utilization: The state of the art”, *Knowledge and Policy* 7, no. 4 (1994), p. 13–33.

³⁶ Harding, Sandra. *The science question in feminism, cit .op.*