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Women's Policy Agencies and Institutional Architecture in Comparison: Building Bricks for Equal Gender Relations

This dissertation analysed women's policy agencies (WPAs) and institutional architecture as particular structures within the state. All WPAs per state together form the institutional architecture, designated to women's empowerment and promotion of gender equality. Others called the institutional architectures women's policy machineries. I argue that those instances of specific state capability are building blocks for equal gender relations. Those new institutions are of interest for comparative research, diffusion literature and state feminism. The research questions focus on the variations of WPAs and institutional architecture and its explanation. The global comparison covers the current situation (2007–2010) in 151 states. I tested the characterisation of Berkovitch of WPAs as standard features of modern statehood.

The dissertation employed an integrated mixed-methods approach. Inductive, secondary analysis of cross-sectional text data delivered a new definition of WPA, a classification and two typologies. States perceptions of WPAs came from survey data of the UN Division for the Advancement of Women. Information on existing entities was processed qualitatively by iterating between coding entities, conceptualizing relevant dimensions and entities and developing graphical representations in a non-linear way of theorizing. Hypotheses testing with aggregated data explained variation of institutional architecture. One hypothesis was tested visually on a world map.

The newly developed classification of forms of WPAs distinguishes WPAs by location and scope of action (Chapter 1–2, and 5). States currently employ a wide range of forms of WPAs (Chapter 7) and types of institutional architectures worldwide (Chapter 6 and 8). Current specific state capability is limited. The variety of institutional architecture was partly explained by the tested hypotheses (Chapter 3 and 9). The recurrent feature of current specific state capability is heterogeneity in forms, types, levels, and countries. Depiction of all 151 states is made tangible in a 3D-model (solid) visualising institutional complexity.