



ACADEMIA ENGELBERG

14th Dialogue on Science – October 14 to 16, 2015
in Engelberg, Switzerland



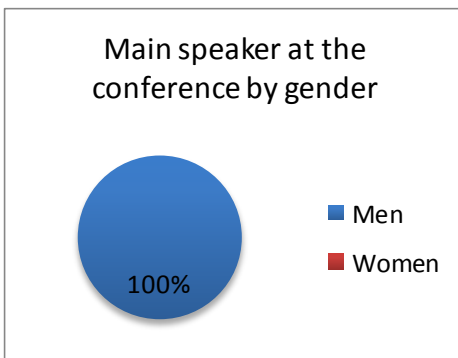
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Let's talk about sex

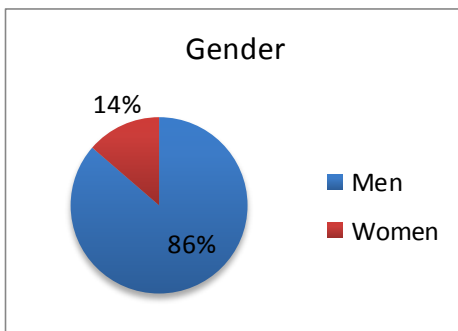
In their conclusion on the conference the young scientists showed us the following picture, asking us, what the blue point represented:



They claimed that this was the gender ratio of the conference's main speakers: white men between the ages of 40-76.

On that point we need to correct the graph; the young scientists did not take Thursday morning into account, when we, the participants of the Summer School of Academia Engelberg, were given a platform to present our ideas for future economic systems. Every presentation was given exactly the same amount of time than

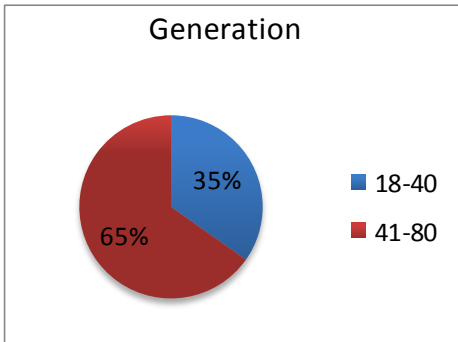
the other speakers. So I dare to say that we can count ourselves as main speakers as well. This changes the graph into the following (we had 23 main speakers):



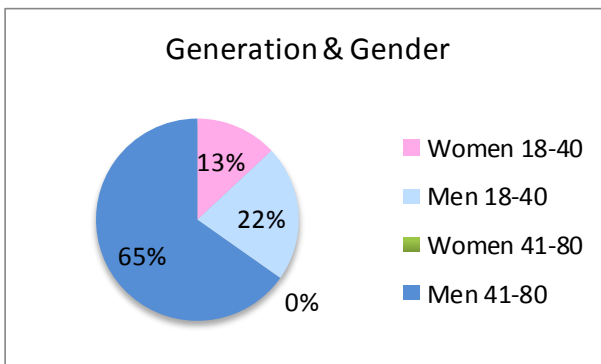
This graph doesn't look as bad anymore. We cannot talk about gender equality, but we don't have this many women in the global economy either, so the number is actually quite representative, if not even progressive. Maybe it's also because of the chosen topic of this year's conference, it could be a field that women are just not as much interested in. Or are we...? Would future economic systems not be a topic, women should be as much interested as men? It is our future too. So let's



have a look at another graph and look at the age of the participants. I make two generations and draw the line at the age of 40, since in an academic career you still belong to the young generation at least until the age of 35.



As we can see, the cleavage is not as drastic as in the first graph. But if we take into account that we were talking about future economic systems that will mostly affect our younger generation, the representation is not very homogenous. So to sum it up; let's have a look at the distribution of gender by generation:



And this is where it becomes worrying. While there is no striking difference between the young men and women at a younger age, all of the female speaker where actually between the ages of 18-30 and there were 3 men equally, it seems to be extremely difficult to find qualified female speakers at the age of 30 and above. Otherwise, I guess the organizers

would have taken gender diversity into account; but there was not one single women speaker over the age of 30. So what happened to them? Feminism and women's emancipation are not new issues; women and girls have been studying at universities for several years now, especially in Switzerland. But what is happening in Switzerland that we lack representative female speakers of not only one generation?

It seems true that economics do attract more male than female students when they choose a field of study. Only 33.1% of students starting their Bachelor's degree in economics in 2011 where girls while 53.3% of new students in all disciplines were female. But there were not only people with a background in economics at the conference. There were lots of other social scientists too. And students starting social sciences in 2011 had a women ratio of 73.7% or 65.1% in interdisciplinary studies on social sciences.¹

Furthermore, if we look at the speakers' background on the conference there were mostly professors and executive directors attending. So what's up with female executives or female professors? In Switzerland, we had a female ratio of university professors of 18.3% in 2013. And if we look at the per-

¹ Frauen und Männer an den Schweizer Hochschulen - Indikatoren zu geschlechtsspezifischen Unterschieden, Bundesamt für Statistik 2011.

² Schweizer Chef-Etagen: Wenn du Urs heisst, ist deine Chance grösser, CEO zu werden, als wenn du eine Frau bist: <http://www.watson.ch/!697229852>



centage of CEO's in Switzerland's 120 leading firms, the likelihood that a CEO is called Urs, Peter or Martin is bigger than the likelihood of the CEO being a woman.² So there seems to be a serious lack of qualified female leading personalities that could talk at such a conference.

But if we have more than enough women starting their studies in the right field, what happens to them after the age of 30? The reason is simple: they become mothers. And this is exactly where the problem lies: while gender equality theoretically is very well established in Switzerland, there is still a serious problem of lacking institutions: unequal payment for equal work, a lack of good and flexible childcare, a very short maternity leave and no parental leave at all block the possibility of women to go on with their career after having their children. And since it is almost impossible to get back into a career after a long time of work, women do not qualify to be professors or CEO's later and therefore will not talk on a venue such as the Academia Engelberg. And this is a big problem. Because, especially when it comes to our future, we need women to find solutions, too.

If women are neglected in tackling future problems, half of our potential player of a future economy is ignored, easy and practical solutions coming from women are not taken into account and 50% of our population is not asked about their wishes and needs. Our future economic system needs women. It needs their ideas and their views. Women need to have a say in how they want to shape their future, otherwise our future economic system is based on a major inequality from the start.

What would be the next step? If women have to choose between a professional career and children, there will either not be enough children, or, and this is much more likely and already the case, not enough mothers with an own career, and these are important too. Because, where is the legitimation to educate women in higher education, if they never work? Another important fact is, as studies show, a child with parents that have higher education themselves is much more likely to go on and study after school than a child with parents that didn't study themselves. So if we want future qualified scientists we need to give fathers a chance to take some of the responsibility for childcare too, so that mothers can also focus on their career. We need a parental leave, so that both parents can be involved in their children's live from the beginning. Every child should have a right to an affordable and flexible place for childcare and bigger firms should make sure to have a childcare attached to their firm in order to be able to recruit the best person, even if she is a mother.

And we need to make sure that women have the same salary than men for doing the same job, so it doesn't matter if the father or the mother goes to work. In my opinion, this would lead to an increasing number of female participants and to a much higher number of potential speakers at the Academia Engelberg in the future.

¹ Frauen und Männer an den Schweizer Hochschulen - Indikatoren zu geschlechtsspezifischen Unterschieden, Bundesamt für Statistik 2011.

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