

BACHELOR THESIS

Deviation in gender equality policy: A German municipal case

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Abstract

This thesis investigates the policy deviation of a municipal gender equality office in Germany, North Rhine-Westphalia, currently undergoing reform to expand their areas of activity. Relying on qualitative document analysis of municipal policy papers, legal code on the national, state, and municipal level, the office's website, and interviews with the previous and acting head of the agency, it asks which institutional characteristics enable or constrain the implementation of gender equality. A principal-agent model of implementation is combined with general literature on policy implementation and existing studies on gender equality policies to inform an approach without preference for individual approaches. Both goal conflict and belief system misfit between the agency as well as existing policies have no significant impact on deviation, while resource scarcity is perceived as the key constraint. This result is surprising, as conflicting goals, diverging perceptions of gender, and diverging problem perceptions were identified. In expectations of low policy deviation under given conditions, the thesis proposes an explanation, as the original model is applicable, but policy deviation could be avoided by two institutions of state law: "Weisungsfreiheit" grants significant discretion to the municipal offices, and the mandatory multilevel involvement of such offices in legislative and planning processes.

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1. Introduction

Gender equality and the underrepresentation of women continue to be subject of public debate and political action on the European level, and within Germany on the national, regional, and local levels alike. There is both theoretical and political debate on the “right” strategy and many goals are seen as contradicting, such as positive action and equal treatment (Stratigaki, 2005, p.170), positive action and gender mainstreaming (Bacchi & Eveline, 2010, p.21,22), or the focus on women vs. the inclusion of men. Accordingly, there is also debate on what exactly constitutes gender equality and its priority vis a vis other socioeconomic dimensions of inequality. The administrative structures to tackle the issue have developed alongside that history of debate, following shifts in and expansion of their goals and responsibilities, and continue to adjust to changing political environment. It constitutes a branch of state administration subjected to regular if not constant reform.

1.1 Historical Background

The treaty of Rome demanded equal treatment and pay for men and women (Stratigaki, 2005, p.170). Until the 1990s the EU then focussed mainly on equal treatment and some positive action policies (Stratigaki, 2005, p.169), with the focus on “equal opportunities” since 1988 (Stratigaki 2005: 170). Following the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995 (McGauran, 2009, p.216) “Gender Mainstreaming” was adopted into EU documents. This new approach gave rise to a gender equality strategy that explicitly included men as beneficiaries alongside women. It concerned mainly labor market and vocational training policies although ‘all relevant policies’ like educational and social policies were also mentioned (Stratigaki, 2005, p.170, 171).

In Germany, gender equality politics gained relevance through pressure from women’s rights groups and civil society, which at the same time provided input and expertise for departments in political parties and the administration, unions, and churches. In 1979 equal opportunity officers got introduced to federal and state ministries, municipalities and larger state agencies (Lenz, 2009, p.233) and during the mid-80s, the CDU, as the last large party, developed explicit women’s politics as part of a top-down modernization strategy (Lenz, 2009, p. 234, 235). Also in 1986 the federal ministry of family affairs, youth, and health adds the area of “women” to its name and introduces the department of “women’s politics” (Icken, 2012, p.336), tasked with the correction of discriminatory rules and laws. The 1989/90 reunification of Germany provided additional input from civil society to western women’s rights networks

and -politics- (Lenz, 2009, p.236). German adoption of Gender Mainstreaming was motivated a change from women's rights to gender equality politics with greater inclusion of men (Lenz, 2009; p.237), with the department of "Frauenpolitik" (women's politics) renamed the department of equality. A 2006 study shows growing confidence in young women and confusion about their societal roles in young men (Icken, 2012, p.337). In 2009, the governing parties' coalition agreement states the goal of developing a separate equality policy for boys and men. A separate department of equality for boys and men follows. A first 2011 report on gender equality suggests the introduction of gender-equality policies targeted on men (Icken, 2012, p.339, 338).

1.2 Scientific Relevance

So far, many studies on gender equality policy (some of which inform this thesis) discuss the process of policymaking or the implementation problems intrinsic to a specific gender equality policy's formulation. Another branch more akin to gender studies focusses on definition and perceptions of key concepts and compares it to those prevalent in the political domain, many of which take a normative stance towards a certain policy strategy, definition, or political goal. Nonetheless, across the EU and especially on the sub-national level, where bureaucratic institutions interact directly with the citizenry, many different contexts, institutional frameworks, and societal conditions merit case-specific inquiries.

This thesis focusses on local, municipal structures. It is based on the argument that even though supra- and national level politics are often the focus of attention and main arena for political debate, it is these regional and local structures that are crucial in delivering services related to, measuring the success of and developing applicable small-scale strategies for the realization of gender equality. This is especially true for the German case: As a decentralized, subsidiarity-principled federal state, it offers a multitude of different (local level) settings ripe for study.

Instead of the general frame of gender-studies or the approach of a policy-analysis, a perspective from administrative studies is chosen to investigate the implementation-process of gender equality policies without preference for any one policy approach. In doing so, it avoids partisanship in contemporary debate and tests the applicability of well-established policy implementation-theory to a relatively new policy field, as well as the practical capability of established gender equality infrastructures in the municipal context.

1.3 Research question

Against this background and based on a model of policy deviation analysis for the case of gender equality implementation this thesis discusses *To what extent do institutional characteristics of gender equality offices at the municipal level enable or constrain the implementation of gender policies in Germany, 2020?* The results will inform its subquestion: What extent of policy deviation in gender equality on the municipal level can be expected for the case at hand?

The answers to these questions could mark a starting point for developing a clearer picture of the institutional framework associated with gender equality. For practitioners, the thesis can provide valuable insights and advice both on how to build and restructure institutions and legal regulations to achieve gender equality more effectively.

2. A model of municipal policy deviation

This chapter develops a model of policy implementation on the municipal level. Its first section will discuss the theoretical frame for the model. Then, factors and mechanisms that could lead to policy deviation need to be identified. The second section reviews policy implementation literature to answer the question of why policies deviate. Finally, these factors are combined with literature on gender equality policies and their implementation, to select those factors that can be expected to be more relevant in this case and formulate hypotheses to guide the analysis, or: why gender equality policies deviate.

2.1 Principal-Agent theory and policy deviation

In comparing different models, Torenvlied and Thompson (2003) show that a principal-agent model of policy implementation produces more accurate results in predicting policy deviation than those understanding it as another step of political decision making. A separation of policymaking and policy implementation allows focusing on one of the two, producing a more focussed and deep analysis. It is thus adopted as the model of policy implementation for this thesis, focussing on the implementation of policies rather than the process through which these policies were developed.

Brehm & Gates understand the principal-agent relationship as control of (political) supervisors over (bureaucratic) subordinates, which can influence the implementation of a policy. Bureaucrats do so by “shirking” (working slow) or “sabotaging” a policy, while supervisors use monitoring, sanctioning and can portray political consensus to avoid it (Torenvlied, 1996, p.26, 51). Policy deviation occurs, “whenever the policy performance

differs from the political decision” (Torenvlied, 2000, p.5). Torenvlied argues, that this is determined by the characteristics of implementation agencies, and the characteristics of political decision-makers, as well as how the policy implementation is organized (Torenvlied, 2000, p.6).

2.2 Why policies deviate

Brehm & Gates show that bureaucrats’ work is influenced by their own aspirations and ideals (cf. Brehm & Gates, 1997; Nordin, 2000, p.281-283; Torenvlied & Thomson, 2003, p.66).

Torenvlied elaborates that “each individual belongs to a particular culture (Wildavsky, 1987), or ‘policy belief system (Sabatier, 1989), with their ideological principles, shared values and norms” (Torenvlied, 2000, p.26), that produce different “problem perceptions and policy preference” (Torenvlied, 1996, p.26) as a cause for policy deviation. Similarly, individual perceptions of implementability, effectiveness, and legitimacy of policy measures can produce non-compliance or alterations (Torenvlied, 2000, p.25). Rainey adds employees’ identification with an organization’s values, missions, and organizational culture, and their match with the values of a policy and its goals (Rainey, 2014, p.259, 298). Sabatier (1989) argues for these factors of value systems, problem perceptions, policy preferences, (Sabatier & Hunter, 1989, p.231) to be causally related and explicitly valid for specialized bureaucrats (Sabatier & Hunter, 1989, p.253), and motivate their actions especially in specialized policy areas (Sabatier & Hunter, 1989, p.253, 254).

These findings show the relevance of individual employees belief systems, motivations and preferences, and those of the organizations: If they adhere with those of a policy, they can promote successful implementation: If there is a misfit between the two or the problem addressed by a policy is not shared by those implementing it, employees might “shirk and sabotage”, leading to policy deviation.

Both Rainey and Torenvlied argue that these mechanisms of policy deviation are dependent on high salience that is attached to a given issue (Rainey, 2014, p.111, 112). It describes the “extent to which the organization expects that the decision on the issue will have an effect on the attainment of its goals” (Torenvlied, p.2000, p.25). That is, low salience will motivate little action to deviate from a policy, even if values, beliefs, problem perceptions, and motivations of employees and policies differ. “In that case, [...] no policy deviation, or only a slight policy deviation” will occur and vice versa (Torenvlied, 2000, p.26)

Adding to the influence of individual public sector employees, Winter discusses their ability to “make priorities between their tasks [...] and modify the policy objectives that are the basis

of their work.” (Lipsky, 1980, as cited by Winter 2006, p.4). This results from the combination of pressure from ambiguous agency goals, and inadequate resources combined with considerable discretion. (cf. Lipsky, 1980) Arguably, the employees of a municipality’s gender equality office are not necessarily front-line workers in Lipsky’s sense, nonetheless, they do represent the last instance of bureaucracy before service delivery.

Rainey agrees and identifies another effect of goal definition in public policies: They are “particularly vague and intangible [...] and [...] often have multiple, conflicting goals” (Rainey, 2014, p.151). “Balancing conflicting, idealized goals” (Rainey, 2014, p.152) in turn obstructs effective implementation where the pursuit of one goal marginalizes or prevents another. Winter agrees and expands on Hull and Hjern (1987), that conflicts between policies and laws and from the formulation process can continue into their implementation (p. 4-6). Conflicts among policy goals thus have twofold effects on their implementation: They allow and perhaps motivate employees to modify objectives of said policies and implement them in a way more suited for their position or personal preferences, and they require the employee to balance between different policies, either equally or, according to personal preferences. Both can impede successful implementation and increase policy deviation. Additionally, resource scarcity is identified as a common impediment to policy implementation.

2.3 Why gender equality policies deviate

For understanding these factors and mechanisms in the context of gender equality policy, literature discusses both the policies and ongoing conflicts in the political debate as well as underlying normative concepts. This serves to develop an understanding of the policy field as well as showing how – and if – goal conflict, ideological differences, and availability of resources manifest.

McGauran (2009, p.229) and Bacchi & Eveline argue that deliberately ignoring processual and organizational misfits to impede the “implementation of GM [gender mainstreaming] can be convenient for those who are not interested in implementing it” (Bacchi & Eveline, 2010, p.21, 22). Following the argument, Stratigaki discusses an “underlying conflict between GM and positive action” approaches (Stratigaki, 2005, p.180), in which GM policies are used to undermine or replace the latter (Stratigaki, 2005, p.165-168).

This is done by combining it with vague and insincere goals and concepts and rechannelling of funds away from women-specific programs and local women’s organizations (Stratigaki, 2005, p.175 - 177). Another contradiction between gender equality strategies is found between positive action and equal treatment (Stratigaki, 2005, p.170). These exemplify how

goal conflicts are present and even dominant among gender equality policies and suggests that a scarcity of resources (McGauran, 2009, p.217; Bacchi & Eveline, 2010, p.21) further necessitates balancing among goals, and possibly neglect of some policies or specific goals.

1. *Goal conflict hypothesis*: Goal conflicts among different gender equality policies and those of an organization increase policy deviation.

McGauran also argues that a policy's misfit with the main ideological frame of the adopting organization hinders GM and gender equality policies' implementation: Bacchi and Eveline take a conceptual approach in showing how different gender equality approaches differ: Gender equality as "structurally unequal power relations" (Bacchi & Eveline 2010, p.102) is distinguished from the concept of gender as fixed attributes of individuals. The first is favored, while the latter is rejected as leading to "proposals that women's different needs have to be met to allow them to participate in a 'man's' world" (Bacchi & Eveline, 2010, p.99, 126), indirectly supporting unequal structures and the assumption of pre-dispositioned difference in women and men (Bacchi & Eveline, 2010, p.133, 134). Connell (2006) finds the categorical view of gender employed in public policy to be politically effective but oversimplified and inadequate to tackle gender inequality issues (p. 845). They supposedly promote gender equity and "equal opportunity" over "affirmative action" in what she calls a "degendering trend" (Connell, 2006, p. 847).

These authors show how different concepts underlying gender equality approaches can define problems and additionally the relevance of conflicting policy goals for gender equality implementation. Accordingly, different concepts of gender equality, and indeed of the nature of gender itself, relate to opposing ideals, problem perceptions, goals, and approaches.

Whether these need to align with public employees to prevent deviation is left undiscussed. Still, Connell observes "local constituencies" for the issue of gender inequality within the implementing organizations which so far consist mostly of women and argues for greater engagement of men for successful implementation of policies that target men and women alike (Connell, 2006, p.847), suggesting such a relation.

Either way, ideological and value misfit among policy (maker) and public employee exist. They thus line up with the factor of values, culture (Rainey), problem perception (Torenvlied) and belief systems (Sabatier) (in)coherence and inform the second hypothesis

2. *Belief system and problem perception misfit hypothesis*: Misfit between public employees' belief systems and problem perceptions on gender inequality and those offered by a policy increase policy deviation.

The comparison of general theory on policy implementation against existing literature on gender equality (policies) showed the two main factors to be policy goal conflicts, and misfit between policy preferences and underlying belief systems of public sector employees and gender equality policies. These factors seem to combine with preferences for either equal opportunity, affirmative action, Gender Mainstreaming, or combinations thereof, suggesting that indeed these broader strategies represent certain normative understandings of gender. Several authors also expect resource scarcity both for public policy implementation in general and in gender equality policies to impede their implementation. This is captured in the third hypothesis:

3. *Resource scarcity hypothesis: Resource scarcity for goals increases policy deviation.*

Concluding this section, *Diagram 1* summarizes the theoretical model:

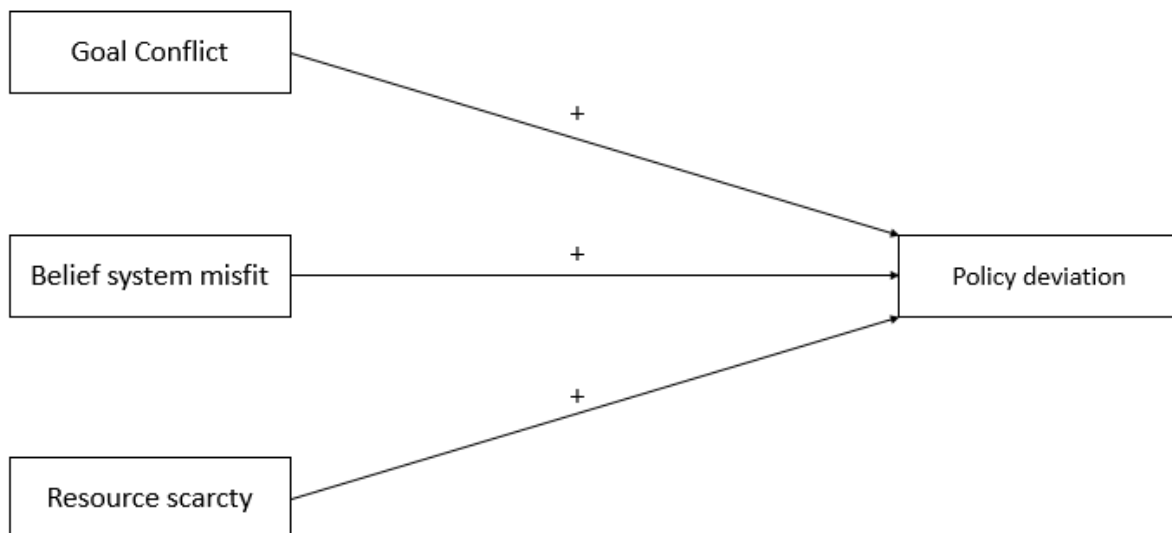


Diagram 1: Theoretical model

3. Data assessment and research design

Having developed the hypotheses to drive this thesis, this chapter introduces the research design. Then, relevant concepts are defined and operationalized. Initial indicators for each concept are developed from theory that will later be applied to and expanded during a document analysis. That way and especially during the first stages of data assessment, the analysis and collection of data will overlap (Ruona, 2007, p.237, 239).

3.1 Research design

Studying a single German gender equality agency in North-Rhine Westphalia, believed to be a typical/ representative case for that state (Seawright & Gerring, 2008, p.299, 300), this thesis is designed as a case study using qualitative methods (Van Thiel, 2007, p.86, 87). The approach was chosen due to the high depth of information offered by qualitative methods, especially if a rich case is selected (Van Thiel, 2007, p.87). It is deemed most suited to make up for a lack of detailed data on this type of agency in the specific context of German. Also, the small size of the organization under study allows for a comprehensive overview of a large part of its structure and employees. Still, diversity among municipal gender equality agencies may pose a major problem: Case studies' data is very rich, but oftentimes strictly contextual on the case selected, with little external validity. Similarly, qualitative analysis poses an inherent problem of inference: Findings well supported by data may be hard to generalize and therefore hard to test (Seawright & Gerring, 2008, p. 295, 306). To mitigate these challenges, the analytical frame is theory-driven, and a pre-existing theory of implementation in a principal-agent relationship was chosen, in which the findings can be abstracted and framed for analysis (Van Thiel, 2007, p. 92). These drawbacks are partly accepted as inherent to research into a strongly fragmented institutional environment and will be considered during the discussion of results.

Although explanatory, this study holds a certain exploratory character, as it combines findings and assumptions from different, and a pre-existing theory to shed light into a so-far understudied area (Van Thiel, 2007, p. 92). That is, it combines well-tested general policy implementation theory to understand policy implementation processes with the specific context of gender equality policies (Maxwell, 2013, p.10, 22).

3.2 Operationalization

The dependent variable of policy deviation was previously defined as “whenever the policy performance differs from the political decision, a policy deviation occurs.” (Torenvlied, 2000, p. 5) For this analysis, both the anticipation of deviation and its expressed desire are added to the concept to allow proper measuring, especially for the interview data. *Policy deviation* in this thesis is considered as “measured difference”-, “expected/ anticipated difference”- and “desired difference of policy performance and political decision”.

The area of activity of the agency under study is that of *gender equality policies*.

The European Institute for Gender Equality defines gender equality as follows: “women’s and men’s rights, responsibilities and opportunities will not depend on whether they are born

female or male” (European Institute for Gender Equality a) and considered related to gender equity, considered as “fairness and justice in the distribution of benefits and responsibilities between women and men” and that it “recognizes that women and men have different needs and power and that these differences should be identified and addressed in a manner that rectifies the imbalances between the sexes.” (European Institute for Gender Equality b) They warn, however, that the term can be used to solidify gender inequality when fairness is related to an unequal position or role of genders. Though different terms, both address the relation of genders in society and motivate different policy approaches.

This thesis thus considers all those policies as gender equality-related, that explicitly aim to generate or enforce rights, responsibilities, opportunities, needs, power, or benefits of either or all genders according to some notion of justice or fairness. These are limited to the laws relevant to the organization under study. Additionally, individual paragraphs of other laws may concern some notion of gender equality but are not included in the analysis as they may be too specific and are most often not executed by the gender equality office.

Belief systems as imagined by Sabatier are constituted of “ideological principles, shared values and norms” (Torenvlied, 2000, p.26) or “normative/partisan orientations” (Sabatier & Hunter, 1989, p.231). These result in problem perceptions (Torenvlied, 1996, p.26) and specific policy positions related to them (Sabatier & Hunter, p.231) or “policy preferences” (Torenvlied, 1996, p.26). These normative components are linked to preferred policies through “causal perceptions” (Sabatier & Hunter 1989, p.253) of implementability, effectiveness, and legitimacy of policy measures (Torenvlied, 2000, p.25).

In this case, belief systems held by public employees’ and those offered by a policy or policy goal are believed to revolve around concepts of gender (cf. Bacchi & Eveline, 2010; Connell, 2006), aspirations and ideals for working in the area (cf. Brehm & Gates, 1997; Nordin, 2000; Torenvlied & Thomson, 2003), idealized goals regarding gender equality, and assumptions to the legitimacy and effectiveness of a given policy to reach such goals (cf. Brehm & Gates, 1997). Policy strategies identified so-far are “affirmative action”, “equal opportunity measures” and “Gender Mainstreaming” or combinations thereof.

To understand what constitutes a Goal Conflict, goals must be defined. A policy objective is the explicit purpose or (measurable) desired outcome of a policy or law (Winter, 2006, p.4). This thesis considers goals of organizations stated in strategy or project papers and goals of individuals to express their ideal outcome. Goals are different from policy preferences, as they are more idealized and do not need to be available as a possible choice and are not (yet)

balanced with non-idealist factors. Policy preferences are chosen from a limited amount of available policy options. That is, while goals are substantial, preferences are relational.

Goal conflict occurs, where goals are mutually exclusive, vague (Stratigaki, 2005, p.175-177) and intangible or where parts of the goals are opposed to one another (Rainey, 2014, p.152). They can occur among policy if they are understood as mutually exclusive and cannot be realized simultaneously. Between policies' and employees' goals, the incoherence of goal definitions of policies and those held by implementing public employees need not be exclusive. Multiple goals can be stated simultaneously by a policy, organization, or individual.

So far, the conflicting goals considered are “*targeted* women’s inclusion in a context perceived as ‘neutral’”, “changing structurally unequal power relations” or “providing a gender-neutral environment” (cf. Connell, 2006, p.847; Bacchi & Eveline, 2010, p.99, 126; Stratigaki, 2005).

Resource scarcity refers to the means the agency is equipped with and the extent to which they are believed to sufficiently facilitate a given goal, policy, or measure. Based on Rainey’s discussions on important strategies for successful agency management, they include human resources, financial resources (Rainey, 2014, p.409 ff.), support by other institutions and networks (Rainey, 2014, p.137 ff.), and access to information and other institutions (Rainey, 2014, p.208 ff.).

A summary of the operationalizations in table format can be found in Appendix 1.

3.3 Coding

Ruona (2005) describes the coding of data as “organizing data into meaningful categories” (Ruona, 2005, p.241). She draws from Boyatzis (1998) in naming five elements necessary for a good code: A Label, a definition of the concept measured by that code, a description of how to know when a theme occurs, additional qualifications and exclusions from the theme, and both positive and negative examples of qualifying data. (Ruona, 2005, p.241). She adds guidelines for the developments of proper categories to make up a code, namely that they should reflect the research purpose, be “exhaustive” (Ruona, 2005, p.242), mutually exclusive, have a label describing the assigned data and “be conceptually congruent” (Ruona, 2005, p.243). These conditions and her procedural advice guide the formation of the following code, starting from “theory-driven” (Ruona, 2005, p.242) coding and shifting to “data-driven” (Ruona, 2005, p.242) coding as more data is collected. With the categories closely related to the above operationalization, Appendix 2 shows the codes corresponding to

each variable of the analysis as per the beginning of the analysis. During analysis, these codes are combined with findings not yet covered by theory-driven categories to develop values for each variable, adding an inductive step to the process of analysis (Ruona, 2007, p.237, 239).

3.4 Data sources

The analysis relies on two methods of data collection: Documents, including policy documents, sections of the agency's official website and legal texts, and interviews with the former and current heads of the agency and their current deputy. For reasons of anonymity, the documents, legal code, and website of the organization are attached to this thesis in a redacted appendix, available for request at the supervising professor.

3.4.1 Documents and legal frame

The "Gleichstellungsplan" (gender equality plan) aims to forward change towards a culture of equal chances in the administration (Personal- und Organisationsamt, 2017, p.3). The most recent, third versions were published by the office for municipal staff and inner organizational matters, supported by the municipal gender quality office. It is updated after three years and is legally required by state law (LGG: § 5).

The "Aktionsplan Europäische Charta Gleichstellung" (Action plan of the European Charta for equality of women and men in local life) is published based on the ratification of the European Charta for Equality of Women and Men in Local Life every three years. The third version aims to continue forwarding gender equity as a cross-cutting issue in the municipality (Amt für Gleichstellung a, p.4).

The official website sections were included in their versions as of 12. June 2020. The domain is maintained by the gender equality office with support from the municipal office of publications. The subsections included in this analysis are "job and occupation", "Tasks/mission", „On the ‚Europäische Charta für die Gleichstellung von Frauen und Männern auf lokaler Ebene““ (European Charta for Equality of Women and Men in Local Life), „Gender budgeting“ and "Guidelines for financial support/ promotion". More program-specific sections have been excluded from analysis, as they are mentioned in the action and equality plans and due to time constraints.

The legal code that effects or mandates the gender equality offices work includes the "Grundgesetz" (German Constitution) and the „Gesetz für die Gleichstellung von Frauen und Männern in der Bundesverwaltung und in den Unternehmen und Gerichten des Bundes (Bundesgleichstellungsgesetz/ BgleiG)“ (Law for gender equality of women and men in the national administration and the companies and courts) on the national level, the „Gesetz zur

Gleichstellung von Frauen und Männern für das Land Nordrhein-Westfalen – LGG NRW” (law for the equality of women and men for the state of North Rhine-Westphalia) on the state level, and the “Hauptsatzung” of the municipality (municipal constitution).

Due to time constraints, available documents had to be filtered to identify those most valuable for analysis. The criteria used to select the above sources are discussed alongside their benefits and drawbacks in Table 1 below.

Criteria	Choice	Benefits	Drawbacks
officiality	Only official documents from the city council, mayor’s office, or equality agency will be included.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reliability and stability of data - Independence of data collection 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Possible bias in evaluation of the offices work, as all sources share an administrative perspective
Public access	Only documents accessible by the public either by request or download are included.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reduced time investment for data collection - Controllability of data 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reduced access to unofficial documents and drafts - reduced depth of information
Recency	More recently published and currently applied documents are preferred over outdated plans and documents.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Higher relevance to the case - Reduced dispersion of data across time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Less information on long-term developments/ trends - Loss of inductive potential for the analysis
Specificity/ general reference	Documents relating to the agency and their general work are preferred over documents related to specific	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increases generalizability across the case - Avoiding overrepresentation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - reduced sensitivity to case-internal conflicts among programs

	projects and manual documents on specific issues.	of select case dimensions (e.g. specific programs) - unison level of analysis across documents	- less in-depth information
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Table 1: document selection criteria

3.4.2 Interviews

A key data source of this study consists of interviews with employees of the agency itself. After approval by the Ethics Committee of the Faculty BMS (Request-Nr.: 200472, 01.04.2020), the interview was conducted as a semi-structured interview (Patton, 1990, p.94f.). An interview manual with prepared questions was used to provide a frame for the interview but allow for deviation in case of new, unaccounted insights. The guidelines were based on the theoretical model and previous analysis of available documents and can be found in German and English language in Appendices 5 and 6. The interview request letter can be found in Appendix 10.

In compliance with the university's regulations on privacy and informed consent the participants were informed of their rights to withdraw participation, the data was anonymized on the level of the municipality and individual names were redacted from all source material. Due to the small number of employees of the municipal agency and the availability of other sources, a smaller number of three to five interviews was sought out. A combination of elite and stratified selection criteria was applied (Patton, 1990, p.96), as the head of the gender equality agency, simultaneously holding the office of gender equality representative of the municipality was deemed a considerable valuable source and regular employees were expected to add a more practical perspective. Throughout the initial contact, a regular employee of the agency offered to contact the former head of the agency through personal channels.

Two Interviews were conducted: The first interview of about 40 minutes was conducted with the previous head of the gender equality office via phone call. She has experience of over 30 years in that position and has recently retired. The second of ca. 110 minutes was conducted with two respondents, namely the current head of the gender equality agency, who recently entered office, and longstanding deputy head, who is responsible for topics of equality in occupation, violence against women, health, promotion of civil organizations and migration. The interviews were transcribed and analyzed in text format using coding tables like those

applied to the documents. The transcripts anonymized of all individual information and institutional names below state level can be found in Appendix 3 and 4.

4. Analysis

This thesis asks *to what extent institutional characteristics of gender equality offices at the municipal level enable or constrain the implementation of gender policies*. Three hypotheses have been developed from theory, each corresponding to a factor believed to produce policy deviation. The below section presents the findings of the analysis and discusses trends across different data sources used in this case study.

After presenting the results vis-à-vis the hypotheses, the next chapter will discuss these findings to answer the main research question.

4.1 Goal conflict

The first hypothesis concerns the occurrence of goal conflicts within public policy:

Goal conflicts among different gender equality policies and those of an organization increase policy deviation.

Across the source material, seven types of goal definition have been identified. Table 2 shows each of these categories and their corresponding interim interpretations that connect them to explicit sections in the source material. A full list of quotes corresponding interim interpretations that motivated this analysis can be found in table format in Appendix 7.

Equal treatment	Positive action/ affirmative action for men	Positive action/ affirmative action for women	Addressing special context	Changing gender roles	Non-normative tasks	ambiguous
Equal rights	Promoting civil society organizations for men	Representation of women in decision making	Intersectionality: gender & culture	Challenge stereotypes/ gender roles	Informing the public	Gleichstellung

Equal chances	Promoting men/ fathers	Promoting women in administration	Intersectionality: women & refugees	Accounting for diversity in genders & sexualities	Connecting citizen to specialized services	Gender justice
Gender parity		Promoting civil society organizations for women	Accommodating different needs of different genders	Youth work: sexualities	Promoting general participation	
Equal status		Promoting women	Accounting for difference among genders			
Supporting civil society organizations for women & men			Context specificity			
Fairness among two genders						
Promoting men & women						

Table 2: gender equality goal conceptions and interim interpretations

4.1.1 Interpreting “Gleichstellung”

The Term “Gleichstellung” is commonly used in German official and legal language. Despite or maybe because of its broad application it is hard to connect to any single concept or goal definition of gender equality. It refers both to the legal, and the factual realization of equality of men and women (Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung). There is no consensus to what the concrete term refers to, as both homogenization (associated with equal treatment) as well as accommodating differences and different needs (associated with positive action) are included in the term (Leicht-scholten, 2000, p.25f., 42f.; cf. Baer, 2004)

4.1.2 The Legal frame

The German constitution emphasizes equal rights for women and men and the obligation of the state to actively reduce disadvantages to that goal (GG, Art. 3, section 2). This is considered an instance of equal treatment goal definition, as no gender is explicitly mentioned, and the aim is to reduce the difference between them.

Also on the national level, The “Bundesgleichstellungsgesetz“ adds special attention to women’s disadvantages in attaining equal rights (BGleiG, § 1, section 1, 2) and mandates a change of public employment models to allow for better compatibility with family and private matters (BGleiG, §1, section 1, 3). These are considered instances of positive action measures for women and aimed at a change of gender roles. The law also introduces the term “Gleichstellung” (BGleiG, §1, section 1, 1).

On the state level, the „Landesgleichstellungsgesetz NRW“ also sets equal rights for men and women as its main goal and mandates positive action measures for women to reach „Gleichstellung” (LGG, §1, section 1). Again, the harmonization of public employment models with family life is the most explicit measure (LGG, §1, section 3). Another goal is the use of gendered language in all internal and external communications of public institutions (LGG, §4). These higher-level laws frame the gender equality policies on the municipal level and already mention both equal treatment of men and women (and implicitly other genders), positive action to reduce women’s specific disadvantages and a shift in public employment models, aiming at a shift in gender roles and the integration of new family models. The communal constitution of the municipality under study states that a female “Gleichstellungsbeauftragte” (gender equality representative) is appointed to realize equal rights for women and men (Hauptsatzung, § 17).

Overall, the legal goals are set as equal rights, here considered as a form of equal treatment, flanked by mandatory attention to women’s specific disadvantages, an encouragement for positive action measures, and the reorganizations of public employment models to enable and allow for changing gender roles and family models.

4.1.3 The European Charta action plan and municipal equality plan

As the two main municipal-level policy documents, the gender equality plan and the action plan for the European Charta specify these goals and add entirely new ones:

In the action plan for the European Charta for Equality of Women and Men in Local Life, equal treatment goals remain frequent, e.g. where equal rights and equal chances (Amt für Gleichstellung a, p.3, 26) are set as general abstract goals, as well as instances where a measure is aimed at men and women equally (Amt für Gleichstellung a, p.21) or at no particular, explicitly named gender (Amt für Gleichstellung a, p.20, 26, 30). Positive action goals are another dominant category, set to support and promote women on various issues, e.g. in reducing domestic violence (Amt für Gleichstellung a, p.26, 27), attaining key positions in regional sports associations (Amt für Gleichstellung a, p.25), communal planning efforts (Amt für Gleichstellung a, p.30) and most frequently in employment-related measures such as the 50%-quota for city council seats and official honorary awards (Amt für Gleichstellung a, p.6).

Less often, instances of positive action measures are aimed at men. They concern men in their role as fathers (Amt für Gleichstellung a, p.24), issues of health, and male gender stereotypes (Amt für Gleichstellung a, p.10), and crisis- and violence-counseling (Amt für Gleichstellung a, p.26). This is part of the expansion of the office's clientele and domain of activity from a women's office to a gender equality and diversity agency (Amt für Gleichstellung a, p.9, 10).

The active engagement of changing gender stereotypes and roles cannot only be found in public employment model reforms but is also present in informational public events for boys and girls regarding topics of gendered identities, life planning, role models, and sexuality (Amt für Gleichstellung a, p.16, 21). Additionally, as part of the expansion, sexual diversity in the context of LGBTIQI-identities (Amt für Gleichstellung a, p.10).

One less frequent, yet new theme concerns measures and goals that are defined not by clientele, but by the specific context in which they are assigned to specialized goals. These concern the intersection of women-/motherhood and refugee-experiences (Amt für Gleichstellung a, p.19, 22, 24, 27), the mapping of income and entrepreneur-data for (binary) gender differences (Amt für Gleichstellung a, p.15, gender sensible planning of communal housing planning (Amt für Gleichstellung a, p.) and the intersection of cultural- and gender issues (Amt für Gleichstellung a, p.28). Finally, a small set of goals cannot be linked to a normative category but describe more technical tasks like general information of the public on gender-related issues (Amt für Gleichstellung a, p.19, 26).

Different from the action plan, which is aimed at the municipal community as a whole, including its private and civil society actors, the "Gleichstellungsplan" (gender equality plan) aims primarily at the municipal administration and gender equality office (Interview 2: 14, 15). In comparison, the gender equality plan's goals are more specific than those of the action plan. Equal treatment goals are present both in emphasizing equal chances (Personal- und Organisationsamt, p.3, 40) and in setting goals applicable equally to both genders, like better access to leading positions in the administration (Personal- und Organisationsamt, 47) or development of a more holistic approach in "Gleichstellungsarbeit" (Personal- und Organisationsamt, 36). Interestingly, in the preamble of the third plan, a change of focus of gender equality policies is explicitly narrated: "Anfangs ging es allein

um Frauen. Später dann um Gleichstellung. Heute steht eine nachhaltige Chancengerechtigkeit für Frauen und Männer im Fokus“ (In the beginning it was about women alone. Later it was „Gleichstellung“, now the focus is an equal opportunity for men and women (Personal- und Organisationsamt, 3). It describes the shift from support and positive action for women towards the broader “equal chances” goal definition found in the analysis so far. For women, affirmative action in their promotion for leading positions in the administration and council seats (Personal- und Organisationsamt, 7, 8, 23, 35) emphasized, while men are primarily supported their role as fathers (Personal- und Organisationsamt, 30, 36). The change of employment models to accommodate or allow for changing gender roles is present in several concrete measures and accompanied by an attempt to change workplace culture, also an instance of changing gender roles (Personal- und Organisationsamt, p.3, 35, 36, 47).

So far, the legal and policy framework on the national, state and municipal level has shown three main, and some less dominant goal definitions: equal treatment, specifically equal chances, positive action to reduce women’s disadvantages and increase their proportion in public institutions, and the accommodation of new gender roles and consequential life models mainly within the administrative staff. Less dominant goal definitions are the support of men through positive action measures – especially in their role as fathers – and on the issue of domestic violence, the incorporation of information and awareness campaigns for diversity in gender roles and sexualities and more nuanced, context-specific measures like the intersection of refugee- with women’s experiences.

4.1.4 The agencies’ website

The interviews and website of the gender equality office describe the goals from the perspective of the agency itself.

On the agencies website, the goal definitions differ across subsections: In the section describing general tasks of the agency, the abstract general goals are to ensure “Gleichstellung”, equal rights and equal chances, all considered part of equal treatment approaches, as they don’t entail the promotion of either gender selectively and do not pronounce difference, but rather similarity between them.

A differentiation between tasks within the administration and tasks for the citizenry is made: Within the administration, the office needs to take part in all decisions that can impact equal chances and equal status, develop plans for better compatibility of employment models and family/ private life and take part in personnel decisions, employee counseling to promote the position of women in the administration. These tasks represent equal treatment, changing gender roles and positive action approaches, respectively. For the citizenry support for civil society organizations aimed at women and men alike is listed, though more emphasis is put on the promotion of women, as only programs and projects for issues relevant to women are

explicitly named. Financial support to women's and men's organizations, projects and initiatives are listed separately from the other forms of support, motivating the assumption of a separate goal, that follows the logic of equal treatment by supporting both men and women equally rather than an instance of promoting one more than the other.

The section of "Gender budgeting" aims to reduce inequality in budget distribution between genders (Frauenbüro, 2017, p.3) and to enable the context-specific accommodation of different needs of different genders (Frauenbüro, 2017, p.14). This is repeated on the corresponding section of the website itself, the goals concern both the equal allocation, considered an instance of equal treatment goals, and more context-specific need-based redistribution.

The website's section on work and occupation both within and outside of the administration expresses the goal to increase women's career and employment chances through directed positive action.

At the description of financial support guidelines, the main goals of equal chances and equality are listed. The organizations deemed equitable for financial support are all those, that offer "corresponding activities", namely activities or services to one or more target groups, target group-specific information- and networking, or that offer crisis counseling of any sort. Additionally, the section is meant to support participation in general, without specification by whom. There is no clear statement, whether any group is targeted over the other. This indicates the equal treatment of all (or both) genders as the guiding principle. However, the funds available to individual organizations for women are more than three times as high as for those concerning issues of LGBTIQI- or men-focus, suggesting a priority for promoting women, a theme of positive action.

On the website's subsection on the European Charter, the basis of the action plan discussed above, the goals are summarized as creating permanent standards specifically for women, men, and other genders, add new concepts of gender equality and increase awareness and responsibility in all areas of municipal life. This summary represents positive action, emphasizes the context-dependency of measures and – again – includes the opaque term of "Gleichstellung"

In describing their general tasks, the agency is in line with the aforementioned main goal of equal treatment (or chances/ status) for women and men. Their more distinguished domains of activity concern the change of gender roles in the administration, promoting women in administration and civil society and men in civil society. Several non-normative tasks are mentioned as well.

The website features other sections on their different services. They were not included in the analysis as to not bias the trends in goal definitions by double-regarding them both in general sections and their client-oriented website sections. They do include mainly services aimed at women, e.g. the “night-taxi”, “violence against women”, “girl’s day”, “girls” and “sexist ads”. No gender is specified in the section for single parents.

4.1.5 Interviews

The first interview was held with the former head of the agency until roughly a year ago. The current gender equality and European Charta action plans were enacted during her holding the office.

An explanation of the goals of the agency, at that time labeled women’s office, the promotion of women through positive action measures are dominant. This includes the creation and support of women-focused municipal infrastructure both financially and professionally (Interview 1, 2020, p.1), access to equal chances and rights for women (Interview 1, 2020, p.6), and promotion of women within the administration (Interview 1, 2020, p.1). Although described as subliminal to the focus on women, men’s perspectives were included from early on, especially in the area of domestic violence, where they were initially included as the offender (Interview 1, 2020, p.4), and as clients for individual counseling on various gender-relevant issues (Interview 1, 2020, p.1). Though not a goal itself, challenging established gender roles is expressed as a necessary part of creating equality (Interview 1, 2020, p.7). She does, however, emphasize that the women’s office supported the men’s network in the municipality and continues to cooperate with it as an example of supporting men’s specific political interest as well (Interview 1, 2020, p.4, 5).

The positive action-approach of supporting women is still put forward during the second interview. The participants explicitly express some issues to be more or exclusively relevant for women (Interview 2, 2020, p.3) and that an expansion of goals and clientele will not lead to redistribution of resources away from measures that support and promote women’s interests (Interview 2, 2020, p.4). However, compared to the first interview, other goals are added, more in line with those mentioned by the two policy papers discussed above: The facilitation and accommodation of changing gender roles are mentioned concerning men at workplaces (Interview 2, 2020, p.3). Statistical data is collected to facilitate men's inclusion in existing measures and account for diversity in sexualities and genders to accommodate the LGBTQI-community (Interview 2, 2020, p.1). Some measures are understood to support men and women alike. Where the introduction of men-focused goals is discussed, they are less

often seen as adding entirely new goals, but more as the expansion of goals and programs that were formerly aimed at women, such as administrative leadership in part-time employment, representing a shift from the periphery of attention to a new focus point. Men's perspectives were supposedly included less prominently even before the reform (Interview 2, 2020, p.2) and gender equality is seen as an issue of cooperation of men and women to produce equal chances for both (Interview 2, 2020, p.2). Another prominent theme throughout the second interview is the realization, that men and women face different, though connected problems and inequalities in different contexts (Interview 2, 2020, p.2, 3, 4, 8, 9, 13). This context-dependency of goal definitions combined with the overarching goal of equal chances (Interview 2, 2020, p.10) is the most striking difference between the second interview and other sources.

In summary, it becomes apparent that several abstract concepts of goals coexist across all sources. The legal frame emphasizes equal chances between two genders and the need for promotion of women within the administration, thus combining positive action and equal treatment as goals for gender equality politics. On the communal level, the promotion of men and women both simultaneously as well as separately in different contexts is dominant, and the change of gender role conceptions becomes more frequent, as well as multiple context-specific goals. While differences between the two policy papers can be explained by their different audiences, it is striking that the website and the interview with the former head of the agency emphasize the promotion of women far more than the action plan, gender equality plan, and second interview.

It was hypothesized that *Goal conflicts among different gender equality policies and those of an organization increase policy deviation*. While the number of different goals and approaches discussed above suggests goal conflicts to occur, especially when the amount of different vague concepts like equal chances, "Gleichstellung", equality, justice between genders, fairness, etc. is considered. However, when asked directly, except for the prioritization of inner-administrative tasks through the direct mandate of the "Landesgleichstellungsgesetz", neither a clear priority among goals and clientele nor a strong conflict between the two is observed (Interview 2, 2020, p.7, 8). Consequently, the hypothesis is partly rejected. Instead, solidarity within the active community is emphasized and the importance of each of the goals in different contexts is pronounced.

4.2 Belief systems

Gender and gender equality are concepts that can be understood in very different ways. During the analysis of goal definitions throughout the case, different concepts of gender already occurred. The second hypothesis expects that a *misfit between public employees' belief systems and problem perceptions on gender inequality and those offered by a policy increase policy deviation.*

Belief system refers to ideological principles – here the dominant concept of gender – as well as the perception of implementability, legitimacy, and effectiveness of a policy or policy set. A third part constituting belief systems is the subjective definition of problems that deserves attention and needs resolving. This section will discuss the concepts of gender and problem perceptions and causal perceptions presented in policy papers, laws, and during the interviews to assess whether a misfit among or between them is observable. A full list of quotes corresponding interim interpretations that motivated this analysis can be found in table format in Appendix 8.

4.2.1 Interpreting “Geschlecht”

A factor that complicates this analysis is, that the German term “Geschlecht” refers to both a person’s biological sex and their social gender, there is no distinct German term that differentiates the two. This was partly dealt with by considering the context in which the term was used but could not be resolved entirely.

4.2.2 Normative concepts of gender

Another immediate insight concerns the scarcity of explicit discussions on matters of ideology and implementability, effectiveness and legitimacy of a policy. The list of quotes is therefore less extensive than that used for the previous section.

Four main concepts of gender became apparent throughout the analysis, all spread across the sources: Gender as a dichotomous concept of women and men with different needs, an overlapping plurality of multiple genders, sexualities, and life models, and gender as a category with different consequences in different contexts and gender as a dynamic social role. Table 3 depicts the interim interpretations connecting the themes with the source material.

Fixed dichotomy with different needs	Plurality of gender and life models	Contextual consequences of gender	Dynamic social role
Dichotomy: women and men	Plurality of genders	Contextual experience	Changeable gender
Different needs	Plurality of life models independent from gender		Changeable roles

Table 3: Concepts of gender & interim interpretations

These themes of gender definitions are unequally distributed among the sources: The legal framework refers to gender as a fixed dichotomy of women and men (GG, Art. 3 section 2; BgleiG, § 1, section 2; LGG, §1, section 1) and the municipal law defines “women’s issues” (Hauptsatzung, § 17, section 2) as all those issues that affect women and girls differently from men. This category is not further explained and suggests an exclusive idea of some issues as male and some as female.

The action plan for the European Charta for gender equality in Local Life follows that definition of fixed needs of each gender, often combined with the emphasis on women’s needs (Amt für Gleichstellung a, p. 6). The third gender equality plan, while reporting on past goals by differentiating statistical data only by men/women (Personal- und Organisationsamt, p.23-34) also includes changing consequences of gender under different contexts, e.g. where men are portrayed in a less advantaged or even disadvantaged position in their role as fathers (Personal- und Organisationsamt, p.30). Additionally, genders are explicitly differentiated from sexes as social role capable of change and redefinition (Personal- und Organisationsamt, p.35, 36).

On the website of the gender equality agency, multiple gender definitions are present: The segment on gender budgeting portrays a dichotomy of women and men, among which funds must be equally distributed. In a downloadable brochure on gender equality, “gender” is defined as a social, negotiated role that manifests differently under different contexts, even within the groups of men and women (Frauenbüro, 2017, p.3). The section on general tasks differentiates between measures targeting either men or women, or both, with the latter phrased as equal targeting of both women and men suggesting a continued dichotomous understanding. The section on financial support guidelines abandons this depiction, favoring

neutral formulations such as “all genders”. This hints at an understanding of gender as a set of diverse categories.

During the interview with the former head of the agency, while “men” and “women” were explicitly mentioned, it is made clear that they are not understood as fixed categories with fixed needs, but as gendered social roles with context-dependent consequences. Men can e.g. assume disadvantaged roles similar to women in the context of single parenting or when having experienced sexual harassment (Interview 1, 2020, p.4). Additionally, statements regarding gender roles and contextual needs are explicitly expanded on “the whole issue of LGBTQI” (Interview 1, 2020, p.6) showing a pluralist understanding of gender roles. During the interview, the argument is not pursued further.

In the second interview, the dichotomous understanding persists, with men being generally understood as more privileged (Interview 2, 2020, p.3). This fixed view of power relations is applied to the LGBTQI-community as well, where male advantaged behavior patterns continue (Interview 2, 2020, p.5). On a different note, gender is understood as socially learned with consequences depending on individual and context (Interview 2, 2020, p.4).

Overall, a dichotomous understanding of gender, where women and men are each fixed power positions and needs is dominant, especially in the legal framework. On the municipal level, this dichotomy is contrasted by the addition of gender as both contextual and social, dynamic roles, with its term being explicitly discussed in the gender equality plan and on the agency's website. Apart from these two instances, the opaque term of “Geschlecht” hinders a clearer separation of definitions. A pluralist understanding of gender as not limited to/ exceeding two categories is the rarest definition, absent from the legal framework and only present in the first interview and the website's section on financial support guidelines.

Despite these different concepts of gender appearing alongside one another, a trend can be seen, as legal definitions – gender as a dichotomy – become increasingly more diverse and contextualized in policy documents, interviews, and the agency's website.

4.2.3 Problem perceptions

Different from positive goal definitions, problem perceptions are much less often explicitly expressed. Out of the different statements, three types of problem statements could be identified: *Active discrimination based on either gender*, that is women, men, or of LGBTQI-related gender roles; *structural disadvantages and underrepresentation of women* and *constricting gender roles, especially for men*. Outside of these categories and limited to statistical data, a decreasing trend of de-gendering and overgeneralization of male norms are

mentioned (Interview 2, 2020, p.11).

Out of these, laws focus on discrimination based on gender (GG, Art. 3, section 3; LGG, § 1, section 4) and the disadvantages and underrepresentation of women (LGG: § 1, section 1, section 2; BGleiG, § 1, section 1, § 7, section 1; Hauptsatzung, § 17, section 2), the policy papers include all, with special attention to the underrepresentation of women (Personal- und Organisationsamt, p.12, 14) and constricting gender roles for men in their roles as fathers and public employees (Personal- und Organisationsamt, p.36, 38, 41). During the interviews, most attention is paid to different forms of discrimination against women (Interview 1, 2020, p. 1, 3, 4; Interview 2, 2020, p.3, 4), against LGBTQIA (Interview 2, 2020 p.4, 5) and constricting gender goals, mainly for men (Interview 2, 2020, p.3).

These different problem perceptions do not appear to be mutually exclusive. Instead of conflicting, they are context-specific nuances of disadvantages and discriminations. In some instances, relations between measures that address different problem perceptions are regulated, e.g. in §2 of the LGG, where positive action measures to reduce disadvantages of women are exempted from the ban of unequal treatment of either gender in § 1 of that same law.

4.2.4 Causal perceptions

The third dimension of belief systems is the causal perceptions. Legitimacy, beliefs of effectiveness, and on implementability link abstract ideological, normative constructs to the concrete policies and measures implemented by the agency.

The first major trend shows that these concepts are seldomly discussed, especially on the agency's website, municipal policy papers, and legal code.

Three sources of legitimacy were identified: Laws and legislative decisions, public demand, and professional influence of the agency.

The first was most prominent within state and municipal laws (Hauptsatzung, §17, section 4-7). In policy papers (Amt für Gleichstellung a, p.10, 11), city council decisions and laws are referenced to as foundations for specific measures and reforms. Public demand seems to be referred to across all sources, either by indicating a change in societal structure that necessitates and thus legitimizes a measure or goal (Personal- und Organisationsamt, p.39), or citizen's demands for services towards the agency (Interview 1, 2020, p.1). The third source for legitimacy was indicated: The agency exerts considerable professional influence on legislative action and decision making both on the municipal level, through drafting of proposals and lobbying in agency networks (Interview 1, 2020, p.2, 9; Interview 2, 2020, p.6) and enjoys large discretion on its field of activity (Interview 2, 2020, p.6). References to legitimacy of policies, the agency's work, or specific measures are largely positive or factual, suggesting that there are no strong doubts on their legitimacy. One noteworthy exception

concerns an anecdote offered by the current head of the agency: She criticizes politicians, here referring to the municipal government, of claiming credit for a reform that was initiated by the gender equality agency (Interview 2, 2020, p.6).

Implementability of specific measures is not discussed in official material or the agency website and not regarded as a problem for most areas of activity. Indeed, except for insufficient data to (Interview 2, 2020, p.1), a problem that is currently addressed, most if not all activities and programs are developed incrementally and cooperatively between the agency, other parts of municipal administration and the city council (Interview 2, 2020, p.9). This adds to their perceived implementability.

The agency's activities are overall judged to be effective (Interview 2, 2020, p.12). The former head of the agency gives additional credit to the impact she had as gender equality representative on employment and application processes within the administration, explaining that “mit guten Argumenten so ein Verfahren [...] ganz schön durcheinander bringen” (with good arguments such a process can be well disturbed) (Interview 1, 2020, p.4).

While different, coexisting, ideologically contradicting concepts of gender does make a conflict likely – similarly to the expectation on goal conflict – no such comment is made during the interviews. Instead, when directly asked on gender and – equality conceptions, the former head of the agency dismisses these theoretical differentiations as unfitting and even cumbersome for practical work, and explains that everybody works with their view (Interview 1, 2020, p.6). With problem perceptions not identified as conflicting or their conflicts resolved, and legitimacy, implementability and effectiveness generally referred to in a positive tone, the second hypothesis is rejected.

4.3 Resource scarcity

A third factor impacting policy drift is resource scarcity. It is hypothesized that *Resource scarcity for accommodating additional policy goals increases policy deviation.*

It is important to note that sources rarely differentiate between personnel and budget, referring to resources in general.

Across both types of resources, three themes could be identified: the emphasis of cost-efficient gender equality, resources as a cause for conflict and inefficiencies that hinder effective work. A full list of quotes and corresponding interim interpretations that motivated the analysis can be found in table format in Appendix 9.

Second, resource scarcity produces conflicts among goals or clientele groups, although they are not mutually exclusive by design (interview 1, 2020, p.6, 7; Interview 2, 2020, p.4). An instance of favoring can be found on the agency's website, where the upper limits of funds for

civil society organizations and projects are discussed. Here, women's organizations and projects are eligible for more than three times the financial support of those considered "for men" or "for LGBTQIA and nonbinary people". Independent of the reasons, this is an example of unequal distribution of funds. Another anecdote showing the relevance of sufficient staff is provided by the current head of the organization: When asked for the main enabler for gender equality work and her motivation, a skilled and sizable team is pronounced the main source of motivation and effectiveness (Interview 2, 2020, p.12).

The dimension of access to information and institutional support shows a contrast between legally mandated access and the agency's relations with other parts of the administration: The legal frame on the state and municipal level grants access to both information, council meetings and institutions and processes of the administration on all issues related to the gender equality representatives tasks (Hauptsatzung, § 17, section 3, 4; LGG: § 17, section 1). Throughout the interviews, institutional support, especially within the administration, is often described as hesitant and limited, with many portraying unwillingness to, or subtle resistance against the office's involvement (Interview 1, 2020, p.3; Interview 2, 2020, p.11, 12). Although a more voluntary and cooperative basis is preferred (Interview 2, 2020, p.11, 15) and understood to be more effective, access rights are considered very important, as they provide bargaining weight for voluntary cooperation (Interview 1, 2020, p.2; Interview 2, 2020, p.11) and guarantee a minimum of institutional support. These are regarded as more important than institutional support based on goodwill and personal relations (Interview 2, 2020, p.15, 16).

Resource insufficiencies are stated throughout the interviews, referring both to staff (Interview 2, 2020, p.4, 6, 12), budget (Interview 1, 2020, p.7), and resources in general (Interview 2, 2020, p.12). They are experienced as limiting factors to either the number of different measures or different target groups that can be approached by the agency. Resources are also seen as cause for two types of conflict: Conflicts with the political leadership, here the mayor and city council (parties), when more tasks are demanded to be included in the agencies work without an equivalent increase in resources, especially budget (Interview 1, 2020, p.5, Interview 2, 2020, p.2, 4, 6), or when budget cuts are threatening existing projects (Interview 1, 2020, p.7, 8). The current reform includes the addition of two employees for new areas of activity, namely men's politics and LGBTQI, which is the result of such a conflict. Resources are considered the largest impact factor for limiting gender equality work of the agency. Though existing legal access seems sufficient, the gender equalities work is expressed to be significantly impacted and diverted through resource scarcity: Lack of funding and

personnel induces conflicts among different measures and clientele groups, as well as subtle resistance both from political and administrative actors. Therefore, the third hypothesis is accepted.

During this chapter, neither goal conflict nor belief system misfit was found to increase policy deviation in this case, although the expected conditions of conflicting goals, mutually exclusive normative definitions of gender, and diverging problem perceptions were present. With both the first and second hypotheses rejected, only resource scarcity is found a reason for conflict and impediment to the agency's work, potentially causing policy deviation.

5. Conclusion and discussion

This thesis asked *to what extent institutional characteristics of gender equality offices at the municipal level do enable or constrain the implementation of gender policies in Germany, 2020?*

It found resource scarcity and resource distribution conflicts between clientele and different concrete measures to have a restricting influence on the implementation of gender equality policies, as does subtle resistance within the (municipal) administration.

Different than expected it appears that neither conflicts among policy goals, nor ideological differences in belief systems produce policy deviation in gender equality policies in the studied municipality, even though the conditions described by general policy implementation theory, namely vague and conflicting goals, and a misfit in belief systems between and among public employees, policy papers and legal framework, exist.

It is possible, that the mechanisms through which these conditions produce policy deviation do not apply to gender equality policies, at least within this municipality. However, this analysis offers an alternative explanation: During the analysis, two factors not accounted for in the applied model were discovered: The First concerns “Weisungsfreiheit”, and second the involvement of municipal gender equality offices and their networks in state and communal legislative processes.

The two factors are believed to be compensating for, or circumventing the conflicts of both different goals and different ideological views on gender and gender equality. Additionally, they increase legitimacy of said policies in the eyes of public employees, further reducing the individual desire to deviate.

5.1 “Weisungsfreiheit”

“Weisungsfreiheit” sets the gender equality representative and consequently their gender equality offices outside of the administrative hierarchy: While their direct superior in organizational matters is the mayor’s office, in their professional area of activity – gender equality – the offices are not subject to directives from within the administration. That explicitly includes the prioritization of their tasks. (LGG, §16, 1) A similar regulation can be found in the municipal constitutional code (Hauptsatzung, § 17, Nr. 2). This ability is strongly emphasized throughout the interviews (cf. Interview 2, 7), as it allows to discuss priorities and resource allocation among the staff of the agency (Interview 2, 9), giving them great discretion to resolve normative conflicts. This makes shirking and sabotage unnecessary, as the measures and goals are already approved by its executors. This effect is believed to be intensified by the size of the team and by broad legal definitions of goals and – apart from the promotion of women within public service – no mandatory procedures to reach them, allowing multiple normative orientations to coexist. The limit of this professional freedom is set by the legal framework, as the agency can not overrule municipal or state laws (Interview 2, 2020, p.7, 8, 9).

5.2 Lobbying and legislative involvement

Additionally, the gender equality representatives and their agencies are involved in the formulation of and discussion on political gender equality laws and issues. This is both mandated legally (LGG, § 17), as well as actively thought out by the individual offices on the municipal level and their state (Landesarbeitsgemeinschaft kommunaler Frauenbüros, 2020) and national (Verein zur Förderung der Frauenpolitik in Deutschland, 2020) network organizations. This allows them to ingest a more practical, hands-on perspective, avoiding higher-level political conflicts affecting the municipal gender equality work.

This allowed for the creation of structural mandates for integration of gender equality as an intersectional issue and for prevented its marginalization. e.g. by setting up an interval for regularly updated gender equality plans in the municipalities (LGG, §5, §5a). Such structural necessities are also mentioned to be necessary for gender equality work (Interview 2, 2020, p.15). These general legal institutions combined are believed to allow the municipal office to avoid the need for policy deviation through shirking and sabotage, and enable them to incorporate different normative views and ideological opposite conceptions, as long as resources are sufficient to accommodate them. In this case, this enabling framework combined with case-specific conditions: The importance of a qualified team was already

discussed. Also, the recent reform to include both men's politics and the area of LGBTQI-rights was motivated from within the organization and indeed it was indicated that these issues were always included in the agencies perspective (Interview 1, 2020, p.5, 6; Interview 2, 2020, p.1, 2), but was not prioritized as now resource were available until recently (Interview 1, 2020, p.5). Finally, the position of the gender equality office, in large part shaped by its former head, who indicated multiple times that she was confronted with threats of both budget cuts (Interview 1, 2020, p.7) and attempts to discredit the existing women-focused work of the agency (Interview 1, 2020, p.5). She argues that she had to risk confrontation with the mayor, that she considers double-crossing him (Interview 1, 2020, p.8), to prevent marginalization of the issue and later secured the necessary increase in budget and staff to expand fields of activity of the agency without resource induced conflicts. Whether this applies only to the case under study remains unclear and will need further investigation. It is not unlikely that this analysis' conclusion can be applied to other municipalities, as the legal framework enabling the agency in this municipality is largely based on the state level.

In addition to the question discussed above, this thesis asks *What extent of policy deviation in gender equality on the municipal level can be expected?*

In the case at hand, two out of three main causes for policy deviation do not appear to apply, as both the expected impacts of goal conflict and belief system misfit have been rejected. This could be either because the model used to assess policy deviation does not apply in the case of municipal gender equality policy in a decentralized and incremental system, or as discussed above, because the agency itself is equipped with the professional capability, means and discretion to avoid these conflicts. Either way, given that sufficient resources accompany reforms and thus reduce the potential for resource-induced conflicts, the policy deviation, in this case, is expected to be low. It is uncertain, whether the future development of the newly added clientele and the continued conflict around resource distribution, both within the agency and between it and the municipal government and council will continue to support that expectation. The current head of the agency herself argues that it is too early to assess the consequences of these changes, with the new infrastructure currently developing and the corresponding gender equality plan currently being written (Interview 2, 2020, p.1, 6).

Whether these findings, both the model to assess policy deviation and the conditions that are believed to avoid it can be applied to gender equality agencies in a different context require further research, as some of the conditions, such as size, level of discretion and normative perceptions within the organization are expected to differ significantly across municipalities

or even along cultural lines. Because of this, it is recommended for further research to compare these condition's impacts on other municipalities in North-Rhine Westphalia and test the applicability of factors to other nations with less decentralized approaches to gender equality.

Furthermore, the focus on official public sources throughout the thesis poses the threat of bias in favor of the gender equality office under study. This is especially true, as the results can be interpreted as supportive of its current employees and leadership. It is therefore recommended for further research to include sources from civil society and political actors, especially where administrative results are evaluated.

For practitioners, especially municipal governments, two main implications arise: It appears that the combination of legally guaranteed discretion and structural access points to the administration enabled this gender equality agency to avoid policy deviation. Creating similar legal conditions for other gender equality institutions in other municipalities may seem problematic through the loss of hierarchical control but could lead to development of functional and praxis-oriented gender equality work. This is additionally aided by sufficient resources, especially staff, to allow for the distribution of different tasks and areas of activity among them.

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