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SOMEBEFORE OVER THE RAINBOW?”
From 1971 to 1979, the American sitcom “All in the Family” titil-
lated US television audiences with a microcosm of the culture wars of the
time. White, middle-aged, working class (and let’s face it, racist and sexist) Archie
Bunker lamented a fast-changing world in which the social norms he had been
raised with were falling by the wayside. The opening theme song included such
lines as, “And you knew who you were
then/Girls were girls and men were men,”
along with “Hair was short and skirts
were long.” At song’s end, Archie and his
tender, yet hapless wife, Edith, would
soulfully belt out: “Those were the days!”

But were they really “the good old
days”? When it comes to the matters of
gender and sexuality, I beg to differ, and
am deeply gratified to see change occurring in many quarters. Indeed, long-
standing rigid gender roles and uncom-
promising cultural frames of reference
for sexual identity have been giving way in recent decades to more nuanced and
inclusive understandings of these matters. Similarly, tacit acceptance of harassing
and violent sexual behaviour is reaching
a tipping point at the moment in places like the United States, where the recent
#MeToo movement is credited with
having opened the door on an unprece-
dented public conversation about sexual
harassment in politics, the entertainment
industry, the fine arts world, Olympic
sports, the media and beyond.

Our field of international education
operates in this same ‘gendered world’.

As many around the world endeavour to
make sense of evolving and more critical
understandings of gender and sexuality, so
too should we, as international educa-
tion professionals. This issue of Forum,
therefore, specifically tries to bring into
focus ways that gender and sexuality are
important considerations in our work.

Our contributing authors provide us
with insight and impetus to consider such
questions as: What do gender imbal-
ances in international academic mobil-
ity mean – for the individuals included
and excluded from these opportunities,
for the institutions involved, and for
broader societies? To what extent are
international education professionals
and programmes prepared to effectively
engage and serve individuals who identify
as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or
queer/questioning (LGBTQ)? What
can each of us do to advance awareness,
inclusiveness, fairness, and equity across
the gender and sexuality continuum, and
beyond?

As our interviewee, Dr Joanna
Regulska, aptly reminds us: “we have
nothing to lose” by asking these (admit-
tedly, often sensitive and difficult) ques-
tions, but so much to gain. Let “these be
the days” we look back on with fondness
for the courage, compassion and clarity
we applied to an honest consideration of
‘our gendered world’.

— LAURA RUMBLEY, EDITOR
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In 2013, the University of Basel’s Diversity department developed the antelope career programme with the aim of providing an annual cohort of highly qualified female early-career researchers with support on their career pathways. Now in its fifth year, see how the programme has allowed female researchers to make strides in their field.

The programme was created with the hopes of combatting the low proportion of female professors in the medium term. In contrast to previous mentoring programmes, antelope was therefore conceived less as an affirmative action programme and more as an excellence programme for women. Interestingly, each year of the programme has received an extremely international group of participants. It was precisely this internationalisation that has made a key contribution to the excellence profile to which antelope aspires, as well as increasing the intake considerably and ultimately boosting the quality of the programme.

The antelope programme has a slender, modular structure that is divided into the following four subprogrammes:

• antelope@university for female PhD students
• antelope@novartis for female PhD students
• antelope professorship for female postdocs
• antelope medical professorship for female postdocs
CUSTOMISED OPPORTUNITIES
The first three subprogrammes are aimed at all seven faculties of the University of Basel. antelope medical professorship is designed for early-career researchers working at the interface between research and clinical practice – that is, especially for the Faculties of Medicine and Psychology. For a period of 10 months, the chosen participants receive optimum support through coaching, career camp, expert exchange and career toolbox modules. In addition to coaching on the topics of fundraising, career planning, everyday research and the world of work or presentation skills, the programme also offers what are known as career camps. Here, depending on the subprogramme, the participants deal intensively with negotiation, presentation and publication strategies or with preparing for appointment procedures. In addition, this external camp features special group events aimed at supporting networking and the interdisciplinary exchange of ideas.

LANGUAGE OPENS DOORS
Over the last five years, some 650 female PhD students and postdocs have applied for antelope, of which 260 received a place in the programme. The participants came from a total of 42 different countries.

Such diversity of nationalities was by no means present in previous mentoring programmes. It was only thanks to the extremely small but important step of introducing English instead of German as the programme language that the number of applicants from non-German-speaking countries rose enormously. In a sort of snowball effect, this in turn led to an expansion in terms of subject areas. In the past, applications to our mentoring programme primarily came from the Faculties of Humanities and Social Sciences, Law and Theology, while the last five years have seen a great surge in applications from the Faculties of Science, Psychology and Medicine. Breaking down a language barrier therefore opened the doors to different disciplines, which in turn helped to boost the applicants’ cultural and ethnic diversity.

INTERNATIONALISATION AS A STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE
Following this language switch and the resulting shift in the origins and disciplines of applicants and participants, we witnessed an enormous increase in quality. Specifically, the level of applications increased considerably, which in turn raised the overall quality of the

Breaking down a language barrier opened the doors to different disciplines, helping to boost applicants’ cultural and ethnic diversity.
antelope programme following the selection procedure. At the same time, in the first two years of antelope, we noticed that the group's national and cultural heterogeneity helped to improve participants' intercultural skills and provided them with important insights into international educational pathways. Based on these experiences, we have selected participants both based on qualifications and motivation and with a view to consciously taking account of the group's heterogeneity in terms of origin since 2016. In other words, internationalisation has now been introduced as one of the criteria. By doing so, we have adopted a new approach within our female excellence programme: diversity of origin is now actively fostered and has been elevated from a side effect to a strategic objective.

INTERNATIONAL NETWORKING AS THE KEY TO SUCCESS
In addition to the acquisition of specialist skills, networking is one of antelope's primary objectives and is encouraged on various levels. Priority is thus given to professional networking within the context of expert exchange as part of antelope@university. Visiting a university abroad generates additional knowledge on both sides and sometimes has an impact at the level of institutes and research groups. Networking within the groups of participants is also an important element of the career camps, which each last three days and are deliberately held out of town. In addition to the training sessions, they provide an opportunity to hold professional and personal conversations and to forge lasting networks, as well as creating space to think about innovative collaborations and processes. On the other hand, the opening and the closing conference are an opportunity for networking on a broader scale.

With each year of antelope, we as project managers – and hence the university as an institution – also refine our intercultural skills and gain additional knowledge and understanding in this area through personal discussions and by confronting a range of issues. In the competition for the world’s best minds, it can only be beneficial for an institution to face intercultural challenges, to raise corresponding awareness at the organisational level and to work professionally to support the expansion of corresponding skills.

Diversity of origin is now actively fostered and has been elevated from a side effect to a strategic objective

GENDER AND NATIONALITY AS FACETS OF DIVERSITY
Intertwining the factors of gender and nationality has proven very useful in our case and has considerably optimised the quality of the programme. In turn, the group's heterogeneity in terms of origin and research orientation promotes diversity of knowledge, perspectives and experiences, which ultimately generates innovation, creativity and problem-solving skills. In summary, a programme aimed at outstanding female researchers with diverse origins has greater potential to promote excellence. The participants gain not only important intercultural communication skills but also a greater awareness of issues around diversity. In addition, they build up their own international network for knowledge transfer and the exchange of ideas, giving them a significant competitive advantage.

Incorporating this concept of the intertwining of diversity factors into a process of university development is both beneficial and sustainable.

— ANDREA FLORA BAUER & PATRICIA ZWEIFEL

1. www.unibas.ch/antelope
2. This subprogramme is not included in our considerations as the predecessor programme already had a very international orientation

Photo: University of Basel

Former antelope participant Dr Melpomeni Fani
See you at Europe’s leading international education event
Registration opens 23 May
www.eaie.org/geneva