

Angela O'Hagan, Professoressa su uguaglianza e politiche pubbliche presso il Dipartimento di Scienze Sociali della Glasgow Caledonian University, dove insegna uguaglianza, diritti umani e politiche pubbliche, coordina il Master of Sciences in Human Rights ed è vicedirettrice del Centro interdisciplinare WiSE centre for economic justice, è stata in queste settimane Visiting professor presso il Dipartimento di Economia Marco Biagi.

Le attività di ricerca e le pubblicazioni di Angela O'Hagan si concentrano su genere e politiche pubbliche, bilancio di genere, diritti umani e politiche pubbliche, bilancio partecipativo e governance. Presiede il gruppo consultivo del governo scozzese su uguaglianza e bilancio e co-coordina la Rete europea per il bilancio di genere.

Componente del comitato scientifico del progetto Horizon 2020 LeTSGEPs Leading Towards Sustainable Gender Equality Plans in research performing organizations, del Comitato Internazionale di Consulenza Scientifica del CRID, il Centro di Ricerca Interdipartimentale su Discriminazioni e vulnerabilità di Unimore e del progetto GE&PA (Gender Equality & Public Administration).

Angela O'Hagan ha tenuto un ciclo di seminari presso il Dipartimento di Economia Marco Biagi e la Fondazione Marco Biagi (FMB) nell'ambito del corso di dottorato Lavoro, Sviluppo e Innovazione (27, 30 Novembre, 5 e 12 Dicembre 2023), nell'ambito del ciclo di seminari DEMB (28 novembre) e nell'ambito del ciclo di seminari del progetto GE&PA (14 dicembre 2023).

Il ciclo di seminari ha messo a fuoco i bilanci di genere (approcci teorici, esperienze e resistenze nelle istituzioni), l'impatto di genere delle politiche pubbliche e la gender equality in Research Performing Organizations.

Qui di seguito una breve intervista, che è stata pubblicata in versione italiana sul magazine FocusUnimore: <https://www.focus.unimore.it/a-modena-il-convegno-annuale-della-conferenza-nazionale-degli-organismi-di-parita/>

What are the objectives of gender budgets?

Gender budgets are ultimately about change – changing established processes and systems towards a new approach to managing and raising public resources that aims to advance gender equality and reduce inequality.

To what extent does their implementation produce an improvement in terms of gender equality?

Through the process of analysis, bringing resource allocation decision making more closely into the policy decision-making processes, governments and public authorities – including universities – make 'better' decisions, clearer and more transparent. By surfacing existing inequalities in outcomes, and re-directing resources to progress more gender equal outcomes and not reproduce existing inequalities, gender budgeting approaches make for more gender equal policy decisions.

In your experience, what resistance does the implementation of gender budgets encounter in institutions?

The question of resistance is an interesting one, and one I think we need to explore a lot more across different institutional contexts. There are multiple dimensions at play here – confidence; knowledge of gendered impacts and their causes and consequences; asking public finance officials and others who have not usually worked within gender analysis to take that on; the organisational positioning on gender equality and the disposition or otherwise to make gender equality a central goal of the organisation, or to relegate it as a second order activity; the visibility and quality of leadership on gender equality and the 'permission' to act for gender equality that creates, or otherwise. Sometimes there is real resistance, as in outright opposition because of a lack of agreement that gender inequality persists and the pursuit of gender equality is an urgent political imperative for the common good.

Examples of public policies whose design could lead to an improvement in the status of women or conversely which have a negative gender impact?

One area where gender budgeting and public policy combine to make a difference in the status of women is in the area of funding for the prevention of violence against women, where public policy proposals for prevention and protection, refuge and reporting need to be fully resourced to secure the progressive realisation of women's right to life in safety and free from fear of violence. As we discussed in the PhD seminars, other areas of policy for immediate action include improved, more equal and better funded parental leave to break the cycle of gender relations that stereotype women and men in caring roles and have a huge impact on women's economic status, and similarly the need for well-researched, resourced and targeted skills development and labour market participation policies, that rely on funded childcare and social care provision to be effective. An area of economic or fiscal policy decision making that regularly impacts negatively on women is when governments choose to fund tax cuts by cutting spending on public services. Women are more reliant on public services for themselves or others than men, and so are disproportionately impacted by reductions in services and spending on public provision.

Gender equality plans have recently been introduced as a pre-requisite for access to European funding. To what extent has their implementation changed universities and research institutions?

I think having gender equality plans as a pre-requisite for access to public money whether it's EU research funding, or other public funding such as government departments negotiating with finance departments is a very robust lever. It makes for compliance because the institution, the ministry, the institution or department wants the money. But the use of GEPs must be closely monitored to ensure that they are not superficial, 'ticking boxes', and that their implementation and outcomes are closely monitored and evaluated. For universities and research institutions, I think gender equality plans are a really positive lever for change. They disrupt the status quo and the stasis or inaction there has been around accepting persistent inequalities in research time, access to financial and other resources, the imbalance in 'academic housekeeping' that tends to fall to women. GEPs mean universities and research organisations have to take action to change and take real steps towards more gender equal management of opportunities.

May I also ask you about actions to prevent and combat gender-based violence? You were talking about an evaluation report you have been working.

The Strategic Review of Funding and Commissioning of Services for Violence Against Women and Girls was a challenging process, taking on a wide range of issues around service design, commissioning, funding etc. We took a human rights based approach to encompassing rights for women and men across all groups in the population and to uphold the principle of non-discrimination, and we also called out the lack of clarity and visibility of how funds for services are allocated, spend, and evaluated. Our recommendations not only included specific actions on the provision of services and by whom – local authorities, specialist organisations, etc. – and the differences between provision in urban and remote and rural settings, but also a series of actions on improving the transparency and accountability of financing services – as well as meeting the commitments of the Istanbul Convention on ensuring levels of spend commensurate with the levels of violence, which with good public education, a commitment to gender equality, and well-resourced provision should come down over time.

You can read the full report here - <https://www.gov.scot/publications/violence-against-women-girls-independent-strategic-review-funding-commissioning-services-report/>