

## zhb Higher Education Research Colloquium Series



### Guest Talk:

### Prof. Dr. Ruth Müller

(Munich Center for Technology in Society (MCTS),  
TU München)

### Career, Time and Knowledge The Temporal Politics of Being a Life Science Postdoc

In the wake of contemporary new public management, the temporalities of academic work have undergone significant transformations. One key feature of these changes is a perceived acceleration of working pace. While this phenomenon is widely acknowledged in scholarship about the transforming universities, to date there are only few studies investigating its empirical details. Building on qualitative interviews with postdoctoral researchers in the life sciences in Austria, this talk investigates how researchers experience the temporalities of their work and career practices. Postdocs are particularly susceptible to the changing demands of academic work life, as they mostly inhabit fragile institutional positions while they aspire to establish themselves in academia. The experience of being in a highly competitive race that requires a continuously accelerating working pace as well as a strong focus on individual achievement is central to their narratives about working for a career in academia. Drawing on recent scholarship on anticipation (Adams, Murphy & Clarke 2009), acceleration (Rosa, 2003) and the entrepreneurial self (Bröckling, 2007), I develop the concepts of anticipatory acceleration and latent individualization to analytically capture postdocs' experiences of the temporalities of their work and career practices. I will discuss how these particular temporal orientations affect the contents and formats of academic knowledge production on at least three levels: epistemic risk taking, collaboration behaviour and practices of supervision. I argue that by affecting such key dimensions of academic work, anticipatory acceleration and latent individualization as increasingly dominant temporal modes of being and relating in the academy significantly affect the epistemic core of academic knowledge production.

**Ruth Müller** is Assistant Professor for Science & Technology Policy at the Munich Center for Technology in Society (MCTS) at the TU München. She is a researcher in the interdisciplinary field of Science & Technology Studies (STS), with a background in molecular biology (MSc) and sociology (PhD). In her work, she explores the interactions between science & technology policy, institutional norms and values and academic knowledge production.

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Vogelpothsweg 78 (CDI-Building), Room 114

Professorship of Higher Education

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