Gendering in political journalism in the framework of other “ing-s”: Russian and Swedish political journalists about gender, ethnicity and sexual identity as politicians’ characteristics and political categories

Abstract:

This paper explores gendering in political journalism – the perceived imprint of gender on the media portrayal of politics and politicians, as well as the processes whereby gendered media representations materialize. Gendering here is understood as an ambiguous process, which can be either discriminatory or promoting, depending on its manifestations (e.g. gender stereotypes or counter-stereotypes, gender-spotlighting or gender-aware story). Moreover, this paper suggests to study this phenomena from intersectionality perspective (Davis 2008, McCall 2005) in order to understand gendering in the framework of other discriminatory and promoting mechanisms in political news.

The paper is based on forty semi-structured interviews with political journalists working for the quality press in Russia and Sweden. The choice of the countries is driven by the wish to explore the difficulties and similarities of the journalists’ conceptualizations of gendering in two very different political and cultural contexts. The paper shows that the journalists in both countries highlight the importance of not only gender mainstreaming, but diversity in the content in general as a democratic value, where gender stands in the same row with other difference-making categories (such as ethnicity, sexuality etc.). The paper highlights the difficulties and contradictions the Russian and Swedish political journalists face trying to achieve their diversity ideal. As such, the paper discusses the reasons for the “double othering” of foreign women politicians in the Russian press and the ridiculing of Russian male politicians in the Swedish press, the attempts of the Russian journalists to remain gender-neutral in the current homophobic context and their Swedish colleagues’ striving for keeping gender as an issue on the media agenda when it is being replaced from the political agenda by the discussions of race and ethnicity issues.
1. Introduction

Army marching towards the European capitals, missiles with sarcastic yellow smileys on their boards, arrows depicting the distance between Moscow and the potential targets of Russia’s “friendly” invasion – the TV news cast by the national Pyatyj channel of the Russian television (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SemPHeiamBo) raised a broad discussion both inside and outside of the Russian borders. Should this and similar messages be read as an outright threat to the West, a mockery, or as populist flirting with the Russian citizens (see Schreck 2015)? Represented by thousands of male soldiers, Russia appears as a white, Slavic, heterosexual man – ready to penetrate and explode, come and take, enter and appropriate.

At the same time, in Sweden, the media turn to the discussion of gender mainstreaming as a “weapon” that a “feminine” country like Sweden can use for handling the conflict situations with more “masculine” countries like Saudi Arabia (http://sverigesradio.se/sida/avsnitt/522139?programid=1300) and Russia (http://www.svt.se/nyheter/inrikes/har-skrams-homofobiska-ryska-ubatskaptener-bort-med-neonskylt-pa-havets-botten). In the latter case, the Swedish Peace and Arbitration Society (SPAS) made a suggestion to deal with the threat of Russian submarines in Swedish waters with a device nicknamed the “gay sailor” sending the message “This way if you are gay” to deter allegedly homophobic Russians (http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/may/13/swedish-peace-group-trolls-russian-submarines-with-gay-defence-system).

From the perspective of gender media studies, understanding political journalism as “gender-politics” in itself (Kitzinger 1998), such messages created in the times of external conflict or confrontation can be viewed as ultimate cases of gendering – the perceived imprint of gender on the media portrayal of politics and politicians, as well as the processes by which gendered representations materialize (Voronova 2014). Gender here, along with other categories, such as ethnicity, sexuality, physical ability etc., appears as a battlefield of mediated ideologies. These ideologies define what combination of gender, ethnicity, race, age, sexuality etc. allows for a group’s belonging to the region or state in general, or to the elite group of power holders in particular. These – intersectionally labelled - ideologies become an instrument for both nation building and nation branding.
Political news, thus, become today more and more a subject of process whereas all kinds of categories that are named as relevant by intersectionality theory can be used in various ways by journalists in order to discredit (foreign) and promote (domestic) politicians and policies. According to Gill (2007), news, and especially political news, reconstruct the dominant cultural assumptions, which are determined by race, gender, class, wealth, power and nationality (Gill 2007, p. 114). This paper aims to map some of these discriminatory and promoting mechanisms in political news related to intersectionality, by giving voice to the Russian and Swedish political journalists working for the so-called “quality” press. I wonder how the journalists understand the mechanisms of “gendering” and other related “-ings”, and what they see as the reasons for political news employing the categories of gender, nationality, ethnicity, and sexuality when othering or promoting foreign and domestic politicians and policies.

The paper is based on forty interviews with the Russian and Swedish political journalists working for quality press conducted in 2011-2012 for my doctoral dissertation Gendering in Political Journalism: A Comparative Study of Russia and Sweden (Voronova 2014). With the focus on intersection of such categories as gender, nationality, ethnicity and sexuality, this paper seeks to close the gap acknowledged by me when writing the dissertation focusing on the mechanisms of gendering alone. My focus on gender as a single analytical category put limitations on the understanding of the discriminatory and promoting mechanisms in political news, as the interviewed journalists themselves talked about diversity in journalism as a vital democratic value (cf. Jönsson 2004), understanding the categories of gender, ethnicity, race, physical capability etc. in their mutual interaction as it is suggested within intersectionality perspective (Davis 2008; McCall 2005).

Moreover, this paper suggests to view what I will further call intersectional labelling in a similar way to my vision of gendering: as not necessarily discriminatory practice, but as a more complex process that has a potential for three different results: discriminating certain groups of citizens or politicians, promoting certain groups of citizens or politicians, and promoting diversity through the critique of the existing intersectional hierarchies.

The paper proceeds as follows. I will first introduce the reader to the Russian and Swedish journalists’ views on gendering and intersectional labelling, discussing the contexts where the journalists produce political news and the methodology of the research. The second part of the paper is based on the main conclusions of my doctoral dissertation (Voronova 2014), and suggests
a discussion of applicability of the findings related to gendering to intersectional labelling as a broader, overarching process.

2. Russian and Swedish journalists about intersectionality

As I mentioned in the introduction, the study that this paper is based on was devoted to the analysis of the journalists’ conceptualizations of gendering alone, thus, the discussions with the journalists were not directly addressing the other axes of identities discussed in the framework of intersectionality theory. However, in the interviews with both the Russian and the Swedish journalists, other than gender vectors of oppression and privilege were often addressed by the journalists themselves. Below I will briefly describe the Russian and the Swedish contexts, the methodology of the data gathering and analysis, and suggest the particular examples of how the journalists understand and contextualize the “matrix of domination” (Collins 2000).

2.1. Russia and Sweden: the two contexts

2.1.1. Gender equality

Russia ranks 94th place (out of 135 countries) when it comes to the political empowerment of women (Hausmann et al. 2013). Political power remains one of the most impermeable “ceilings” for women (Zdravomyslova 2003). Firstly, this phenomenon is explained by the fact that power and financial and administrative resources are concentrated mainly in the hands of men (Gorshkov and Tikhonova 2002). Secondly, political appointments and recruitments are made from spheres that are exclusively or predominantly occupied by men (Kochkina 2004). Thirdly, according to politicians from both sexes, the partnership between women and men in politics is almost impossible due to the “naturally” built gender borders that exist along the same line as holding political power (Zdravomyslova 2003).

While today the state formally claims a commitment to equality in the Constitution and has signed the international agreements and declarations, the everyday practices of women and men are still defined by what is labelled by the researchers as the “patriarchal renaissance” (Kay 2007; Posadskaya 1993; Temkina 1996; Voronina 1994). The latter, according to the scholars, takes its roots in the Soviet approaches to gender equality, where “many women’s experiences of ‘emancipation’ were anything but liberating” (Kay 2007, p. 3; see also Goscilo and Lanoux 2006; Kay 2007; Temkina 1996; Voronina 1994). Moreover, the latest years saw the intensification of
the public debate around gender issues, with the scandal around the punk group *Pussy Riot*, and the enactment of the law forbidding “propaganda of homosexualism among youth and children,” feeding into “politicization of gender in the last decade of Putin’s Russia” (Temkina and Zdravomyslova 2014).

Being considered a “feminist state” (Bergqvist, Adman and Jungar 2008), Sweden officially promotes gender equality policies and is considered to be at the top of the list when it comes to gender equality achievements (Djerf-Pierre 2011). In addition, most of its political parties use the label “feminist” in their descriptions. According to the Global Gender Gap Report, Sweden is at 4th place (out of 135) when it comes to the political empowerment of women (Hausmann et al. 2013). However, while a “passion for equality” characterizes the Swedish society (Holli, Magnusson and Rönnblom 2005; Inglehart and Norris 2003), and the history of fighting for gender equality is considerably long (Bergqvist 1999; Freidenvall 2006; Karam 1998), the scholars see a problem with putting gender equality into practice (Holli, Magnusson and Rönnblom 2005; Osika 2008).

2.1.2 Media models

Both Russian and Swedish media systems are often viewed by scholars as systems in transition. The complex transformation process of the media system in Russia was not linear (Rosenholm, Nordenstreng and Trubina 2010; Vartanova 2009; Voltmer 2013) and was characterized by a gradual narrowing down of the media influences and freedoms (Koltsova 2001; Voinova, Resnyanskaya and Khvostunova 2007; Voltmer 2013; Zassoursky 2004). In the 1990s, the press was a highly required political instrument, “translating economic power into political and cultural power” (McNair 2000, p. 88), and turning the Russian media system into the “world’s first true media-ocracy” (McNair 2000, p. 88). The media-ocracy didn’t last long as already during the presidential elections in 1996, the political control in the media sphere started to increase (McNair 2000; Voinova, Resnyanskaya and Khvostunova 2007).

The today’s media system in Russia is defined by Vartanova (2013) as the government-commercial Eurasian model, synthesizing “European” and “Asian” characteristics of media worlds, Soviet traditions and current global trends (pp. 217-218, 222). Logic of commercialization here is combined with an authoritarian approach by the government (Pasti and Nordenstreng 2013). The regime of “managed democracy,” or “manipulative democracy,” implies tight control over the major media through financial and political control of its owners and administrative and
economic control of journalists (Voinova, Resnyanskaya and Khvostunova 2007, especially in the television sector – see Vartanova 2013). State influence is perceived as strong also by the journalists themselves: 46.8% of the Russian journalists believe that the level of press freedom in the country has decreased in the last 5-10 years (Anikina and Johansson 2013). As Elena Vartanova (2013) formulates it, the media in Russia “has a role of an ‘obedient child’” (p. 109, my translation).

While the Russian media system traces back to the traditions of the Soviet period, the Swedish media system is viewed as post-corporatist (Dahlgren 2000). Today the Swedish media system reportedly tends to turn from Democratic Corporatist Model (Hallin and Mancini 2004) to the Liberal Model (Allern and Blach-Orsten 2011; Wiik 2014) characterized by increasing commercialization and, thus, a dependency of journalism on the market rather than the state (Allern and Blach-Orsten 2011; Dahlgren 2000; Ekecrantz 2005). A near-zero political influence on media content is reported (at least according to the perception of the journalists themselves – Nygren and Appelberg 2013). The Swedish model of political communication is characterized by a high influence of the media logic (Strömbäck 2009, p. 248). News media compete with the political parties in their influence (Allern and Blach-Orsten 2011). The press has taken upon itself an active watchdog role (Dahlgren 2000; Wiik 2014), and media have gained a notch in power over political elite by suggesting its own formats and logic (Dahlgren 2000; Strömbäck 2009). However, although the press can harshly attack an individual politician in a situation of political scandal (Allern and Pollack 2012), it is reported to have a “cooperative relationship” with the power structures (Dahlgren 2000).

2.2. Methodology

The journalists’ perceptions of their roles and practices constitute an important object of studies, allowing to better understand the processes both inside and outside of the media (Hanitzsch et al. 2010). I conducted semi-structured interviews with political journalists involved in the production of articles in the so-called “quality” press in Russia (with 21 interviewees) and Sweden (with 19 interviewees). The interviews were conducted in 2011-2012.

The quality press represents a specific segment of the printed media. Media, positioning themselves as “quality brand” (Anderson, Ogola and Williams 2014), promise readers a certain quality of journalistic product: reliability of facts, pluralism of opinions, and non-biasness. This
makes the quality press a “preferable terrain for the public dialogue” (Voinova, Resnyanskaya and Khvostunova 2007, p. 83, my translation). Unlike the popular press, quality outlets target citizens rather than consumers (Hanitzsch 2011). The quality press still reaches to a high number of politically active potential voters, and it can be considered among the most influential actors of political communication, as influential intermediaries in the process of what voters learn about politicians (Ross 2010). The sample in both of the countries aimed to include different quality outlets – common interest, with incline on business and politics, and daily and weekly. The Russian outlets included: Kommersant, Kommersant.Vlast’, Novye izvestiya, The New Times, Forbes. The Swedish outlets included in the sample were Dagens Nyheter, Svenska Dagbladet, Fokus and Veckans Affärer.

As the major focus of the article is on how journalists themselves conceptualize gendering, I chose the ethnographic approach, meaning that it is the journalists’ ideas and views, experiences and conceptualizations that are central to the analysis (Löfgren Nilsson 2010; Lindlof & Taylor 2002). Theoretical construct sampling (Lindlof & Taylor 2002) was combined with snowball sampling (contacts of other potential informants were received from the interviewees). Reporters and editors were chosen as the key informants, as these are the most common professional roles occupied by journalists (e.g. among all Russian journalists 53.4% work as reporters, and 31% fulfill the roles of editors - Anikina & Johansson 2013). Additionally, I interviewed Russian and Swedish media experts – scholars, employees of the national unions of journalists, and editors of professional magazines for journalists.

By political journalists I understand professionals in the positions of reporters and department editors covering politics on local, regional, national, and international levels. Political journalism has its gender specifics: it not only covers predominantly men, but also is still dominated by male reporters and editors (van Zoonen 1998; Djerf-Pierre 2007; Gallagher 2005; Klaus 2009; Löfgren Nilsson 2010). Among the Russian interviewees there were 7 women, and 14 men. Among the Swedish interviewees there were 10 women and 9 men. The gender misbalance among the Russian interviewees can be explained by the representation of women and men in the political and international departments of the outlets chosen for this study at the moment of the field-work, as well as by visible homosociality at the work places (Bird 1996), which manifested in the way the interviewees were giving recommendations on whom of their colleagues to contact further. In the Swedish case the quantitative superiority of women interviewees does not correspond to the
existing data on the amount of women and men covering political issues (according to the Global Media Monitoring Report (2010), there are only 37% of news on political issues reported by women). Here the results of the sampling can be explained first and foremost by the way the professional networks function: unlike in the Russian case, both female and male interviewees tended to give me contacts of their female colleagues in the process of snowball sampling.

The interviews were transcribed and read as texts (van Zoonen 1994). The empirical data was the starting point in the analysis. The interview accounts can be read as both ”for what they tell us about the phenomena to which they refer”, and ”in terms of perspectives that they imply, the discursive strategies they employ, and even psychosocial dynamics they suggest” (Hammersley & Atkinson 2007). I focused both on what the journalists tell about gendering, and on how they were telling it. The data was sorted into categories, and labeled theoretically (Jensen 2002).

The interviewed journalists in this paper are anonymous, while the names of the media experts are provided. The interviewed journalists signed a consent form and were sent the transcriptions of the interviews. They could refuse participation in the study at any time. I do not identify the journalists’ place of work, as the interviewees many times pointed to the fact that there is a common culture of quality political journalism in their country, and that other quality outlets have similar approaches to theirs. However, the journalists’ positions are provided (the mentioned positions were valid for the time of the interview) in order to specify the kind of tasks the journalist undertakes in political communication, as this proved to be important for the analysis. The interviews in Russia were conducted in Russian language, and excerpts from them were translated by the author. The interviews in Sweden were conducted in English language, and the grammar and stylistic mistakes were edited in the excerpts.

2.3 Intersectional labelling: the journalists’ perspective

According to the journalists, the quality press is unique in terms of the ideology that the journalists belonging to this specific culture of political journalism should follow. As such, the journalists suggest the representation of the world in its diversity is one of their primary aims. In the words of one of the Swedish journalists,

"It’s important for the whole society [that the media content has gender equality]. I mean, equality – not only between sexes, but between people. And when you are in media, you have a certain responsibility to do this, because you are supposed to reflect society, and a lot of people – their image of the society is from media, so it is very important." (T, political reporter, male, Sweden).
This focus on the equality between people, rather than between sexes only, suggests an interpretation of gender balanced media coverage that goes along the same lines as what media experts suggest: gender balanced media coverage should be understood broader, as a diverse and unbiased media output, which reflects and informs public opinion and dialogue supported by editorial policies (Mission Possible 2008).

**Intersectionality and media ethics**

The editorial policies of the quality press in Russia and Sweden are very similar when it comes to diversity and gender balance in the content. In many ways, it is connected to the fact that the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) has for many years worked with the national unions of journalists on improving the practices of journalistic work when it comes to publishing unbiased and balanced materials. According to a survey conducted by the IFJ in 2001, most of the IFJ member unions in the world have adopted codes of conduct or practice defining ethics in journalism that include a clause with a call to professionals not to publish materials discriminating against persons on the basis of race, sex, religion or ethnicity (Peters 2001). Moreover, all of the IFJ member unions have signed the IFJ Principles on the Conduct of Journalists, which states in paragraph 7 that:

> The journalist shall be aware of the danger of discrimination being furthered by the media, and shall do the utmost to avoid facilitating such discrimination based on, among other things, race, sex, sexual orientation, language, religion, political or other opinion, and national or social origins (Peters 2001, p. 15).

In Russia, two statutes of the Code of Ethics for Russian journalists restrict the creation of gender-imbalanced content in journalism. One of them states that it is a professional responsibility of a journalist to *counteract* extremism and limitations of civil rights in relation to sex, race, language, religion, political and other views, as well as social and ethnic background. Another one calls for *abstaining* from any disregarding hints or comments in relation to race, nationality, religion, social background, or sex, as well as in relation to physical defects, or illnesses (Code of Ethics 1994).

The editorial policies concerning keeping to the ideal of gender- (and other intersectional categories) neutral journalism that complement the Code of Ethics are strict and leave no space for any frivolousness or jokes when it comes to the gender of politicians – be they women or men. Even when journalists wish to highlight the gender of politicians as a certain positive feature, they face such restrictive standards that spotlighting of gender even for noble purposes doesn’t meet
the quality journalism requirements. For example, one interviewee wrote about a session in the European Parliament, where one of the parliamentarians made what the journalist found to be a very clear and interesting statement. This parliamentarian happened to be the only transsexual person in the European Parliament. As the journalist commented,

Honestly, I so much wanted to capture the atmosphere, and I had a will to write that the brightest quotation in this discussion came from this whether a woman, or a man – well, at least specify it for the reader. But the editor set strict limits: no giggling, no hints to the transsexual story, we just represent her. I asked: “So, do we write ‘he’ or ‘she’?” And the editor said: “What is written on the European Parliament’s website?” I said: “She.” “That’s it, that’s what we write, no insinuations” (L, international reporter, female, Russia).

In Sweden, the first laws forbidding discrimination based on sex were adopted already in the 1970s, and in 1972 the National Council for Equality between Men and Women was formed, followed by the Ombudsman for Gender Equality and the Commission for Gender Equality (1980). Today the overall tendency in Northern Europe can be described as subordinating concerns for gender equality to concerns for diversity (where the intersection between gender, ethnicity, religious affiliation, age etc. stands at the core of the approach). This tendency is noticed by the journalists themselves. As one of the interviewees noted,

I think that the gender discussion comes more naturally now, it is more implemented already in how we think, so maybe we don’t need to discuss that, as much as, for example, class or ethnicity. I think, there is a bigger problem with these issues than with the gender issue, because we’ve had knowledge about that [gender] for a long time, ah, not knowledge, but we’ve been aware of this issue for a longer time. So, I think, that might come more more naturally now. But I think it’s [gender] still something that is discussed, may be you don’t need to discuss it that much (M, political journalist, female, Sweden).

Following this trend in 2009 goals of ombudsmen for different types of discrimination were consolidated under the roof of the Ombudsman against discrimination (Diskrimineringsombudsman), and a new law, The Law against Discrimination (2009), was introduced. The law is aimed to confront discrimination, e.g., in the workplace and in professional careers, in education, in health care, in organization membership and in social services. While it covers almost all spheres of social life, it cannot regulate gendering in the media content, as the media regulation acts – Tryckfrihetsförordningen/The Freedom of the Press Act (1949) and Yttrandefrihetsgrundlagen/The Fundamental Law on Freedom of Expression (1991) – defend the media against interference with the production of content. According to Swedish researcher Maria Edström, this conflict highlights the necessity of a well-developed system of self-regulation (interview with Edström from October 5th, 2009).

One of the most important guarantees for gender balance in the journalistic content is the Code of Conduct for Swedish journalists, which tells journalists not to focus on the ethnicity, gender,
religious affiliation, political view, sexual orientation of the person covered in the article if it is not relevant in the context and if it is disrespectful (Code of Conduct n.d.). However, according to some experts, the existing ethical rules are not sufficient for creating the gender balanced content. For example, the scholarly and activist group “Allt är möjligt”/Everything is Possible some years ago called for the media community to specify the rules, suggesting that the ethical code needs to emphasize that journalists should counteract discrimination based on the stereotypical representations of people in pictures and text, which concerns both groups and individuals in relation to sex, ethnicity, religious views, sexual orientation, physical capability and age (interview with Maria Edström from October 5th, 2009). However, the journalistic community was not enthusiastic about accepting the suggested changes. As the then head of the Swedish Union of Journalists Arne König formulated it,

When it comes to the content, we are reluctant and careful not to tell members what to write [...] We think that it’s a matter for the employers to deal with […] If you go to the UK, they have very detailed rules on how to write about this and that – minorities, women’s issues. We don’t believe that you can regulate everything. People need to think themselves, not going to the rules (interview with König from November 4th, 2009).

Many of the journalists suggest, however, that there is a need to go further and pay a special attention to the ways media cover gender issues in politics and women and men politicians. For example, one of the interviewees initiated an intense discussion of diversity in coverage at her previous place of work by creating a so-called “Diversity group” (Mångfaldsgruppen) within the newsroom. This example is important, insofar as it shows that the Swedish journalists are themselves initiating changes in the standards of coverage. This allows them to avoid unwanted top-down initiatives, when the standards would be changed by other actors. Moreover, this defends the journalists from criticism from the readers and subjects of news stories:

It was me, and the editor-in-chief, and 5 or 6 other reporters, so we discussed these things a lot and we analyzed the newspaper and said: “Well, ok, this is how we write about Muslims, this is how we write about women, this is a problem, this is what we need to learn” [...] We made a plan: this is the way we write about that, this is what you should think about... And everyone has that plan now – everyone who works in the newspaper... Just, yeah, quite normal things like what to do and what not to do [S, political reporter, female, Sweden].

Thus, intersectional labelling is addressed by the ethical codes and editorial policies in both countries, and the journalists are well aware of the existing limits and recommendations. Many of them are keen on producing diverse and unbiased content, and in Sweden, the journalists even take the initiative to improve the content based on the ideal of diversity.
Intersectionality as a problem

In Sweden, however, some of the media experts and the journalists themselves suggest that the achievements of diversity in the content are disputable. The journalists claim that when magazines and newspapers try to produce diverse output, they do get the voices of women, immigrants, and other underrepresented groups, but then these people often “only get to talk about what it feels to be an immigrant, what it feels to be a woman, and not the things that they do” (S, political reporter, female, Sweden). Another problem is formulated by Axel Andén, editor of the professional magazine *Medievärlden*:

Most companies have policies that they should work for equality or diversity, or that they should try to represent men and women equally, and also have people with other ethnic background. [...] But they don't go as deep as how the texts are representing equality. I think, they go... the first level is that they just count men and women. If they go deeper, they count like - if this is people in power, if this is people in the street - you know, what category they come from. But I don't think that they go as deep as to analyze the text and the context itself. And I don't know if that could be done also (Interview with Axel Andén from November 11th, 2011).

In Russia, the interviewees named other problems and challenges that the journalists face when trying to fulfill the ideal of diverse media content. First and foremost, it is the homogeneity of the political sphere represented mainly by middle-aged men. According to Vladimir Kasutin, Secretary of the Russian Union of Journalists and chief editor of magazine *Journalism and Mediamarket*, something should be done to the journalists’ passive expectation for changes, whereas they expect that something should first happen within the political sphere and in the society, and only then in the media:

In the recent years in Russia, in many areas there has happened a backlash [...] Despite the fact that journalism in Russia has become "female", because today more than 80% of the media employees are women, yet somehow [...] too many journalists go, and, if there are men in power, they write about them, so they do not reflex, they do not estimate the amount of characters, what should be monitored: that different groups of population are equally represented, both different ethnic groups, and women, men, and old and young people. It is mainly one and same people, who appear on the pages and screens: middle-aged men, working either in the government or business, and others are less represented. Why? Because they [these men] are either more active, or they have money, or they can either force, or pay, or convince. But there are no meaningful attempts of our journalists to attract somewhat different people to their pages (interview with Kasutin from December 28th, 2011).

Similar problem is, however, named also by the Swedish journalists. Despite the journalists’ willingness to create intersectionally diverse media content, the sphere that they are supposed to cover is not as diverse and heterogeneous as they wish it to be. Be it politicians, or ordinary citizens making “everyday” politics, the journalists are much more likely to find a man to step forward and make his voice heard through the newspaper or magazine:
I actually think that it is more difficult for a woman to be seen as a prime minister or a candidate – in Sweden as well! I mean, it is male, heterosexual, middle-aged people who are... Males, white males who are elected – presidents, prime ministers, and so on! (L, political observer, female, Sweden)

The strategy of [our] paper is to have a mixture of all ages and genders [in the content]. Then different departments have different difficulties. We have this difficulty, for instance, that I could say to someone of the correspondents in Kabul: you should interview a woman, and he can come back and say: "Today it was not possible. I could not get an ordinary woman to interview today. I have to work in another way, I have to make contacts, it takes days, they have to trust me. I have to go back with a woman. I first have to speak with the men". [...] And my way of working with it is to say to all correspondents that we would like to have both men and women, and since there are so many men, they will come automatically to the paper, so we have to find women (P, editor of international department, female, Sweden).

The Russian journalists name one more problem that they face when trying to create diverse content: surviving on the media market. They believe that all the media in Russia, including the quality newspapers and magazines, are challenged by the tendency of tabloidization, and the requirements that the market dictates. Though pointing to the fact that some categories (such as race) are not as problematic as other (such as gender), these critical voices state, that certain rules should be formulated in order to guarantee that quality journalism remains diverse and neutral in the current situation,

Where the main thing is to draw attention by, I don't know, a picture, or a special image, which always draws attention. There is a tendency to push this [the spotlighting of gender and emphasizing differences between women and men]. A lot of time should pass before in relation to women there will be the same law, well, not a law, but an unwritten rule, which now works in relation to ethnic minorities. For example, in the US in an article about Barack Obama most often it isn’t mentioned that he is black. So if you do not watch TV, if you don’t see his speeches, and if you didn’t see the first reaction concerning the election of the first black president of America, then today from the articles we read no one could guess this [that Barack Obama is black]! This topic has gone away [from the media agenda]. When it comes to women, I think that so far it will remain, and even will be pushed (N, head of international group, male, Russia).

Thus, both the Swedish and the Russian journalists see production of intersectionally diverse content as problematic, yet very important. They point to various problems, some of them being universal (such as domination of men in the political sphere), and other contextual (such as the rules of the media market), yet, the journalists working for the quality press are trying to find the ways to strive for what they see as one of the ideals – diverse and unbiased media output.

Intersectionality and critique of the political sphere

There is, however, one more reason why the journalists still stick to gendering and intersectional labelling – the need to criticize politicians, whether domestic or foreign. The Russian journalists admit that women politicians are more often subject to gendered critique in the media discourses than men (cf. Braden 1996; Falk 2008; Norris 1997; Ross 2002; Sreberny-Mohammadi and van...
Zoonen 2000). For example, one of the interviewees told me about a situation that she observed, where her colleague from another Russian outlet criticized a foreign politician “between the lines” by applying gender stereotyping, which the interviewee considered to be a dishonest method:

[M]y colleague from another big media – when [Hillary] Clinton was presenting in Vilnius about the OSCE, and she strictly said that our elections are unfair and unjust – wrote something like “Hillary Clinton with her thin pony tail.” Announcing the quotation this way he, clearly, disavows everything she said. ‘Cause it already doesn't matter what she said, does it? Even if she would say the very truth, this “thin pony tail” is an image, which crosses out all the rest (L, international reporter, female, Russia).

The interviewee emphasized that she would never describe any politician in such a way; neither the editorial board of her outlet, nor her personal ethical limits would allow her to apply such gender stereotypes. It should be noted, however, that international journalists in Russia seem to have more freedom in the critique of political actors, as their stories seldom reach the targets of the critique and, thus, their choice of critiquing tools is not limited to essentialist gendering.

The Russian journalists also find intersectional labelling to be a tool for establishing relations with the readers through what they find to be humoristic or ironic. Indeed, the codes of humor are efficient if they are shared by the one who makes a joke and the one who receives it, and conceiving humor as a discourse leads to recognition of it as depending greatly on its immediate social context (Crawford 2003). Only the male interviewees talked about gendered humor as a good means of establishing relations with the audience. This correlates with the observed tendency that in the Russian context male media producers hold the power to make jokes (Kalinina and Voronova 2011). Moreover, these jokes in the Russian media content tend to draw on and feed into traditional gender stereotypes, ridiculing those who are considered “other” in comparison to the heterosexual masculine norm: women (especially active), and homosexual and elderly men (Kalinina and Voronova 2011).

This holds true also for the production of political journalism. The male journalists, even though, or even especially, if they consider themselves to be gender-aware and “not too sexist,” still suggest that they have a “right to tell anecdotes about blonde women” (N, head of international group, male, Russia), as they believe that gendered humor will help them establish connection with the (male) readers. The objects of the political journalists’ humor are not only (blonde) women. Politicians of both sexes, or, rather, their alleged inability to fulfill the public expectations of femininity and masculinity, becomes a focus of the journalists’ irony. The humoristic approach to politicians is driven by the journalists’ wish to create an original content and look at politics from
a different angle. As one of the interviewees commented on the article he wrote himself (in co-authorship),

There had been a lot written about elections already, so we needed to write something else. We decided to access it from another side: [...] the role of sexual scandals in the forming of the public image, the role of sexual aspects in political image building and advertising [...] This is funny, I read here: "While men in politics run a risk of impotence and homosexuality, the few women lose their femininity..." [K, editor of news department, male, Russia].

Homosexuality of politicians, especially male, becomes, according to the Russian journalists, a convenient arena for the journalistic critique. According to the Russian journalists, politics in Russia can be considered conventionally masculine: not only because of the amount of women and men being inhabitants of the political culture, but mainly because of the traditions of this culture, specific mechanisms, which require that politicians follow culturally set patterns of self-presentation and their party's image, which are to a big extent based on existing in this culture gender codes. These codes, in their turn, define not only the way politics works, but also the way it is covered by the media:

I remember that I was writing one article about perception of men and masculinity, and one of the experts told me that, for example, in Scandinavia if a politician looks so that it is not possible to understand if he is gay or not, he is absolutely accepted. Here in Russia it would not work. One political scientist suggested an example: when Yavlinsky1 in 1999 was a candidate in the elections, his opponents organized in Moscow a demonstration of the sexual minorities in support of him. So, it was a "black PR" [campaign]. It was organized; there were gays and lesbians, with rainbow flags and placards "We support Yavlinsky". It was broadcast on TV, something like: "Look there! That's who support Yavlinsky!" And in Scandinavia, politicians often themselves hire agitators among representatives of the sexual minorities in order to show that "I am tolerant", "gays and lesbians support me as well" (A, editor of department, male, Russia).

The theme of the specificity of the space, where the Russian culture of political journalism is situated, was a common refrain in the journalists’ reflections upon the reasons and the roles of intersectional labelling in the content of the Russian political journalism. The “in-betweenness” of Russia, located, according to the journalists, between Europe and Asia, makes them constantly re-evaluate the standards and requirements of journalism. As one interviewee told, it becomes almost impossible to write any insinuations about sexuality of the power holders, as the critique will follow immediately:

There was one text, which one reader got offended with, a Putin's fan. We wrote that one gay magazine acknowledged Putin as a "queer icon", the most attractive man for homosexuals. So there was [some]one who called us, hard to tell who, and [he/she] was outraged. [...] They got offended only because it was some campaign they [a pro-Kremlin organization] hold, and we took a photo from exactly this campaign. When Putin was at the Baikal, I think, he was top-less there. And after this homosexuals made a rating. And we took the photo, which this pro-

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1 Grigory Yavlinsky was the leader of the liberal party “Yabloko” in 1993-2008. He is now active as one of the leaders of the oppositional movement in Russia.
Kremlin movement had on one of its posters, and placed it in the newspaper. That's why they were offended (G, editor of department, male, Russia).

When it comes to the Swedish media, here, on the contrary, it is the politicians’ strategic image-making resulting in conventional masculinity that becomes a focus of somewhat ironic attention. According to the journalists, essentialist gendering is applied by Swedish politicians in order to draw media attention only in exceptional situations. One of the interviewees talked about how surprised he was when Minister of Finance Anders Borg before the 2010 parliamentary elections made an emphasis on what is assumed to be typically masculine behavior. In the opinion of the journalist, it was very unusual for the Swedish context and for the way men politicians are usually expected to behave within it:

He [Anders Borg] found it very important to tell people that he was hunting and that he was really a man living in countryside. And, you know, [he was] taking the prime minister with him, shooting animals and stuff, so that was a bit of a macho thing in Sweden! [...] Maybe it was a tactic: he wanted to build a “man in the countryside” [image]. It was a very male signal, not a very modern signal! I was surprised! (M, political reporter, male, Sweden)

According to the Swedish journalists, such strategies of referring to traditional interpretations of masculinity and femininity in the Swedish context are not just no-win for politicians, they can even be ridiculed by journalists. At least foreign politicians who act in such a way are often perceived by the Swedish media as a target for critique and sarcasms:

I call [Vladimir Putin] a “macho man.” In my view, he likes to show himself as a strong man. He wants to be fishing in the river without a shirt; he wants to go diving... This you could do in Russia! But if Fredrik Reinfeldt did the same, we would be laughing! And that is what I say: there is a difference in the society. In Russia you can do it, because it might appeal to more people, in Sweden we would just be laughing! (J, international reporter, male, Sweden)

Thus, intersectionality becomes a double-edged sword. On the one hand, the journalists may use the “matrix of domination” in order to pay attention to the existing power hierarchies, and, thus, draw the public’s and the politicians’ attention to the subordinated groups of citizens. On the other hand, the categories of gender, sexuality, ethnicity etc. are used by journalists to anchor the critique of the politicians or policies in the public’s perceptions of what is accepted and what is not.

Intersectionality and the newsroom

The final theme that occurred in the interviews with the journalists when it comes to intersectionality, was diversity in the newsroom and its importance for the diversity in the content. That was something that mainly the Swedish journalists talked about. According to them, diversity in the newsroom influences both the journalists’ attitudes to gender issues and the level of gender-
awareness. It has been argued in previous research that journalists’ gender does not have a direct influence on the content they produce (Braden 1996; Djerf Pierre 2007; Edström 2011; Hanitzsch and Hanusch 2012; Ross 2002). This view is, moreover, supported by representatives of the journalistic community. Helena Giertta, the chief editor of the professional magazine Journalisten, believes that as political journalism is “a very developed part of journalism” with defined standards of professionalism, the journalists’ gender does not influence the way they cover politics in this genre (interview with Giertta from May 29th, 2012).

The Swedish political journalists themselves, however, are sure that diversity (not only in gender, but also ethnic, cultural, etc.) in the newsroom is the most direct way to overcome gender-blindness. The journalists believe that the mix in the newsroom becomes a basis for discussions, which in turn promote gender-awareness along with more sensitivity for other inequalities as well (age, disabilities, ethnicity, etc.):

I am working in the department with only male colleagues. And it's been the case for years. We have had a male boss for years [...] Don't you think, that they could add some value if it was a more gender mixed newsroom, and a better ethnic and gender mix? I would love to have a young woman with an oriental background, a young smart woman in the newsroom. It would be good for the discussion, and the sources of information, and angles! It's always negative for media to have a newsroom that is too homogeneous (Z, international reporter, female, Sweden).

Thus, the journalists understand the issue of intersectionality in very broad terms, suggesting to speak about the necessity for diversity not only in the media content, but also in the newsroom, allowing for all kinds of perspectives to find the place in the media agenda.

3. Suggestions for further discussion: gendering in the framework of other “-ings”

In my doctoral dissertation (Voronova 2014), I suggest a broad definition of gendering as the process that has an ambiguous character. On the one hand, gendering can be based on the journalists’ understanding of gender differences as essential, natural, which results in gender stereotyping and unnecessary spotlighting in the content (what I label essentialist gendering). On the other hand, it can be based on the journalists’ gender-awareness, on their critical evaluation of the gender hierarchies in politics and society, and then it results in gender-aware stories and counter-stereotypes (what I label reflexive gendering).

I suggest a similar approach to understanding intersectional matrix in the political journalism content. When other analytical categories, such as ethnicity, race, religion, sexuality etc. are
concerned along with gender, we can speak of the “matrix of domination” in similar terms – in terms of functions that the media content fulfills:

1) Intersectional labelling as othering: applied for critique of (usually foreign) politicians and groups of citizens
2) Intersectional labelling as promoting of certain groups of citizens or political actors
3) Intersectional labelling in the context of gender- (as well as ethnicity, sexuality etc.) aware critique of politicians and policies for not living up to the standards of equality and diversity.

Moreover, I suggest to discuss whether we can similarly to gendering speak about two types of intersectional labelling: essentialist, based on understanding differences between people as “natural”, and resulting in maintaining stereotypes and unnecessary spotlighting; and reflexive, based on understanding all categories of the “matrix of domination” as constructed and taking a critical perspective on the power hierarchies based on the intersectional categories, thus, resulting in counter-stereotypes and “intersectionally-aware” stories.

3.1. “Matrix of domination”: who is in charge?
According to the journalists themselves, the media should represent the world in its diversity, and remind about equality and acceptability of the multiplicity of possible combinations of different categories (such as age, gender, ethnicity etc) to the public by criticizing the existing hierarchies and mainstreaming the ideal of equality. However, in this task to promote the idea of equal access to political power, the media can either receive support of the state, or face multiple challenges. In the case of Sweden, “feminist state”, gender mainstreaming and recognition of the need to improve the possibilities for everyone to participate in political decisions (by direct involvement or through the public sphere) have become the tools for both nation building and nation branding. The contrary is happening in Russia, where the definition of who can represent the country has mostly shrunken to a white, Slavic, heterosexual, orthodox man.

The question that arises here is whether it is the media or the political sphere that has the power over the “matrix of domination”. I follow the perspective of Kitzinger (1998) who suggests to see political journalism not just as journalism about politics, but as “gender-politics” in itself.
In this sense, political journalism becomes either a discursive practice producing “gender mainstreaming as a particular sort of event” (Bacchi and Eveline 2010), or, on the contrary, reinforcing the old stereotypes and feeding into existing gender hierarchies and dominant discourses (Kay 2007). In my dissertation (Voronova 2014), I conclude that the application of gender-politics is very much dependent on whether political and media actors recognize the power of media.

The Russian journalists suggested that the political actors in the country do not recognize their power. Indeed, what is happening as far as the historical transition is concerned, is that while the journalists do not want to let go of the power they once held in the almost mythological media-ocracy of the 1990s (McNair 2000), they cannot really stop or influence the process of narrowing down what is permitted in political communication (Voinova, Resnyanskaya and Khvostunova 2007; Voltmer 2013; Zassoursky 2004). They in a way turn into an “ambivalent watchdog” (Brants and Van Kempen 2002) torn “between the normative ideals of adversarialism, on the one hand, and the constraints of news production, on the other” (Voltmer 2013, p. 33). This limits the choice of critical tools that journalists possess.

When it comes to the category of gender, the journalists’ disenchantment with the politicians and the political process manifests in the form of essentialist gendering of individual politicians, rather than in critique of the political sphere from a gender perspective. In the words of Russian president Vladimir Putin at a meeting with foreign experts in September 2004, “The power, like a man, should attempt, and the press, like a woman, should counteract” (cited in Zassoursky 2005, p. 319, my translation). This utterance is reflected in the Russian journalists’ discussions about gendering in political journalism. Accordingly, when they view political power as a pressure, gendering is a strategy used to counteract. At the same time, the form it takes – essentialist gendering – multiplies the gender inequality in society by perpetuating the traditional perceptions of the women’s and men’s places in the society (Kay 2007). Moreover, maintenance of the traditional stereotypes aggravates the media’s position in the power hierarchy, as the press is imagined as a woman – as subordinate. In a sense, it seems that the Russian quality press accepts the role not of an “obedient child” (Vartanova 2013), but of a “subordinate woman” of the state, and tries to apply the only power left to her in this patriarchal order – the manipulative power (Zdravomyslova and Temkina 2007), where essentialist gendering appears as an almost invisible but inevitable tool of critique.
When other categories, such as age, sexuality, ethnicity etc. enter the picture, however, it can be observed that it becomes difficult or almost impossible for the quality media to criticize the dominant powerful groups for the lack of diversity. The current tendency of nation building and nation branding is based on transmitting the idea of a national culture by referring to its “roots” and “origins”, leading to a strengthening of traditionalism and patriarchy (Voronova and Kalinina 2015). This tendency is almost fully controlled by the state and supported by the state-controlled media who eagerly discuss, for example, the soon to come collapse of “Gay-ropa” - “gay Europe” with its “alien to the Russian culture concepts of tolerance and multiculturalism” (http://radiovesti.ru/article/show/article_id/132931), or getting rid of the unwanted by the ruling power holders politicians by labeling them homosexual (as in the case with Yavlinsky). The quality media striving for objectivity and fulfilling the watchdog role want to criticize this perspective, but often do not find any other methods than to bite the political sphere in a similar manner: by criticizing it for being not enough masculine, not enough heterosexual, not enough white (e.g. discussing male politicians as risking to become impotent or homosexual, or blaming Russian politics for acquiring too many features of Asian and Caucasus styles of leadership).

In the Swedish case, acknowledgement of the media’s power by both political journalists and society (Asp 2012) enables the quality press to maintain gender balance in political journalism. What happens here is that the media increasingly force other actors to adapt to their specific norms and demands (Strömbäck 2009), and as gender mainstreaming is among the demands of the quality press, mediatization of politics does not appear to be harmful to the voters’ recognition of women and men politicians and their idea about the openness of the political sphere.

The Swedish political journalists not only increasingly take upon themselves the role of a watchdog of the state (Dahlgren 2000; Wiik 2014), but also appear as critical change agents (see Hanitzsch 2011), who are constantly involved in a politicized activity of meaning-making (Bacchi and Eveline 2010). The journalists demonstrate a clear and quite homogeneous vision of how equal society should be, and aim at promoting diversity. The problem that arises, however, is that the Swedish journalists seem to bring their cultural glasses with them when they judge any other context, and they might be reluctant to see other possible interpretations of gender equality (cf. Magnusson, Rönnblom and Silius 2008).

When it comes to other categories than gender, here too the state ideology of promoting Sweden on the international arena and of nation building is based on the diversity ideal, which is
supported by the media. Thus, the Swedish media do not face similar challenges to their Russian colleagues’ when it comes to fulfilling their role as a watchdog of the state. They eagerly criticize both the Swedish domestic politicians and political parties and the foreign politicians and even entire countries (e.g. Russia, Saudi Arabia) for not living up to the ideals of equality and diversity.

It appears that when the media power is suppressed by the political power, journalists working for the quality press do not attempt to build restrictions for themselves. Any tools, including essentialist intersectional labelling, become useful for critique of the authorities. When political and media actors, as well as society recognize the power of the quality press, journalists make more responsible choices, have more articulated standards, and pay more attention to the problem of mediation of the matrix of domination.

3.2. Intersectionality and freedom of press

I suggest that intersectionality in political journalism should also be addressed as an important issue as far as freedom of press is concerned. Freedom of press is strongly interrelated with gender equality and diversity (Hermes 2013; Recommendation Rec/CM 2013), and it is highlighted that “equality between men and women is nothing less than a litmus test for the realization of true and mature democracy” (Hermes 2013). Similarly, it can be claimed that the realization of a true and mature democracy is impossible without equality between all people, regardless of their gender, sexuality, age, ethnicity etc. The interviewed journalists in both countries demonstrated a high level of devotion to the democratic ideals. However, the Russian and the Swedish journalists’ vision of how the ideals of diversity and freedom of press can coexist differs.

In my dissertation, I claim that in the Russian case, there is a certain contradiction between the ideals of gender equality and freedom of press. In the view of the journalists, the choice of critical tools used to question the political decisions and efficiency of particular political personalities, according to this study’s respondents, should remain free and unrestricted. However, it appears that as long as journalists apply essentialist gendering as one of the tools for critiquing the political sphere, this sphere will not be promoted and shaped as a space open for women. This approach in turn contributes to “double gendering at work” (Sreberny-Mohammadi and Ross 1996), where both the representational politics and the media coverage have a gendered nature, contributing to the marginalization of women as the “outsiders” to the political system. It is possible to say that by applying or even just potentially legitimizing essentialist gendering, the
Russian journalists self-impose gender-based censorship (Callamard 2006) without reflecting upon the possible consequences of this for society and for themselves (see Putin’s quotation above). Thus, while censorship imposed on the media (by the political authorities) is what the Russian political journalists are afraid of most of all, by legitimizing essentialist gendering they readily exercise self-imposed gender-based censorship. Unwillingly, they accomplish the politicians’ aim to delimit the public sphere.

In a similar way, we can think of intersectionality-based censorship, which is currently used by the politicians in Russia to delimit the public sphere and create a uniform image of Russia as a conservative patriarchal state. The Russian journalists willing to counteract this censorship set from above, are very limited in the choice of critical tools, and are often trying to play the same card against the state (e.g. blaming the national leaders for allowing the Caucasian regions to start dictating the rules for both political and everyday life in the whole Russia).

At the same time, the Russian journalists see the Swedish strict self-regulatory rules as a potential delimitation of the freedom of press. Their Swedish colleagues, on the contrary, consider themselves to be far ahead of their Russian colleagues when it comes to “maturity” of democracy. Their perception of the current political situation as mature and progressive, however, can be considered to be problematic, as it limits the critical acknowledgement of the gaps, which seem to be noticed mainly by the female journalists and media experts. As Jenny Rönngren, journalist and activist in the “Allt är möjligt”/Everything is possible group notes,

Here in the Nordic countries, we like to think we’re world leading and that the mission has been accomplished. This is probably why the development has stagnated [...] There’s a notion that our journalism is pro-gender equality, while the truth is that it only serves to cement the existing norms. It is a problem that the media consider gender equality a special interest, or a political agenda. In contrast, many large organizations in the rest of the world think of gender equality as a fundamental aspect of their operations (Rönngren 2014).

Indeed, the Swedish journalists already today notice that gender as an issue is disappearing from the political agenda, and is also disappearing from the media agenda. In many ways, it is dictated by the need to pay more attention to other categories in the framework of the “matrix of domination” – especially ethnicity. However, it should be important that all the categories in the framework of intersectionality remain on the agenda of intersectionality-aware political journalism, and that the discussions of diversity do not turn to the issues of ethnicity only, but discuss all the hierarchies equally critically – in the end, this is the main idea of intersectionality.
3.3. Intersectionality and commercial logic

Post-Soviet Russian and post-corporatist Swedish media models have for a long time been described as models in transition. Today, Russian media have reportedly reached a certain stability in the government-commercial Eurasian model (Vartanova 2013), where the quality press has to search for strategies of survival between the brutal rules of the media market and the high level of political intervention from the government (Anikina and Johansson 2013; Pasti and Nordenstreng 2013). Swedish media have reportedly moved away from the Democratic Corporatist towards the Liberal Model (Allern and Blach-Orsten 2011; Wiik 2014), and, while there is zero political influence on the content (Nygren and Appelberg 2013), media have instead become dependent on the market (Allern and Blach-Orsten 2011; Dahlgren 2000).

This stability of the media models, however, can be questioned, if we take into account the processes of mediatization of politics (Hjarvard 2013; Strömbäck and Esser 2014), mediatization of journalism (Hjarvard 2013; Kammer 2013; Vartanova 2013), and commercialization of media (Kammer 2013; McManus 2009; McQuail 2005). These processes are reportedly challenging political journalism all around the world by questioning the traditional news values, journalists’ roles, ideals, orientations, and beliefs. It is, thus, important to think about the direction these processes are leading the cultures of political journalism in Russia and Sweden.

Commercial logic is not just becoming one of the main driving forces of journalism (Kammer 2013; McQuail 2005); it is also becoming normalized and legitimized by the political journalists themselves (especially by department editors and editors-in-chief). Paradoxically, the universal challenge of commercialization (Couldry and Hepp 2012; McManus 2009; McQuail 2005; Örnebring 2009) leads to a divergence of journalism cultures (van Dalen 2012), which we can observe in these two cultures of political journalism as well.

In Russia, today the economic interests of the media company are considered by journalists as the main obstacle for fulfillment of their practices (Anikina and Johansson 2013). The economic logic, however, does not imply that journalists achieve more influence in the political sphere (Voltmer 2013). As I could observe in my dissertation study, this leads to essentialist gendering often becoming a tool of both receiving economic benefits and of political critique. The commercial logic of the Swedish quality media, on the contrary, does not contradict the role of the promoter of gender equality, which Swedish political journalists working for the quality press keenly take on.
My conclusion in the dissertation, was that the situation can change, and there is no guarantee that if the Swedish media (and even the quality press) completely takes upon itself the “consumerist frames of reference” (Dahlgren 2000), the ideal of gender balanced journalism promoting gender equality cannot be replaced by other, strictly consumerist ideals. Already now, around 50% of all Swedish journalists believe that the level of quality of journalism has decreased during the last 5-10 years, and the owners’ demand for profits tends to threaten the journalists’ independence, putting the journalistic ideals under pressure (Nygren and Appelberg 2013). Moreover, Bromander (2012) suggests that one of the explanations for why scandals about female politicians occur more often in the Swedish media than scandals about men, is economic logic: “female” scandals sell better. Thus, it is not unlikely that if there is a shift in the economic situation in Sweden, the happy union of the Swedish journalists’ ideal of gender-balanced journalism and the vision of gender balanced content as more attractive for the audiences (and, thus, bringing more advertisements) can one day fall apart. Indeed, if the professional logic is already today reported to be replaced with the market one (Nygren and Appelberg 2013), there is a risk that Swedish political journalism might sacrifice the fulfillment of the gender equality ideal if it at some point becomes non-beneficial to produce gender balanced content. And if “journalists in Sweden are taking the same path as in […] Russia, but at a much slower speed,” as noted by Nygren, Dobek-Ostrowska and Anikina (2013, p. 166), it seems very questionable that the Swedish quality political journalism will have it easy to keep the orientation at gender mainstreaming.

Similarly, we can discuss whether intersectionality too is connected to commercial logic of the media. In one of the quotations above, one Russian journalist discusses tabloidization as a trend that can harm the ideal of diversity. At the same time, the Swedish journalist who created a “Diversity group” at her previous place of work discussed the economic advantages that her boss, editor-in-chief, saw as a potential outcome of producing more diversity in the content. Thus, commercial logic of the media when it comes to intersectional labelling, can also be a double-edged sword, in that it largely depends on the context whether it is the essentialist or reflexive intersectional labelling that will become economically beneficial, and, thus, prioritized by the media. Taking into account the media’s in general, and the political journalism in particular dependency on the market, we can along with Edström (2011) once again remember of the individual responsibility of journalists when it comes to the content they produce. Just like the political journalists’ recognition of the fact that their involvement in the practices of gender
mainstreaming enhances the democratic development of the society and the position of independent quality press in it is important, so should be the journalists’ involvement in the practices of intersectionally-aware reporting where the ethical codes serve as a ground, and editorial policies and individual responsibility as beacon lights for producing balanced and diverse content.

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