Gender, public administration and new institutionalism; new combinations towards a feminist institutionalism?

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1. Introduction

Since my former research has been in the field of gender and public administration, and I still think that there is a need to develop theories including a gender perspective in order to study public administration, I find it challenging to use theories on gendered (public) organizations in a combination with new institutionalism in order to contribute to the overall discussion addressed in the workshop. Focusing on gender, public administration and new institutionalism emphasise aspects such as power and change. Since public administration right now undergo an enormous amount of changes due to reforms initiated at local, national, regional and global levels, I would like to contribute to analysis and understanding of reforms and changes in public organizations in a gender perspective including new institutionalism.

I'm particular interested in three subjects: new institutionalism, changes in public administration and gender. My theoretical interest concern the possibilities of combining elements from new institutionalism (especially historical and sociological new institutionalism) and theories of gendered organisations (especially Joan Acker, Raewyn Connell and my own work).

I think that one can combine new institutionalism and selected theories of gender and organization, since they are based on an understanding of interplay between structure and actor. In new institutionalism this is mostly labelled as a relation between institution and behaviour where as in studies of gender and organizations it's labelled as a relation between structure and practice. I.e. all approaches acknowledges that we are born into a world of existence where for example structures, institutions and gender already have ascribed meanings, but through action (behaviour) these can be changed.

I’m keen on elaborating on the theoretical perspectives of making gender visible in relation to new institutionalism concerning changes in public organizations, since “we know so little about the gendered processes that organize and constitute the public itself.” (McGinn & Patterson, 2005, p. 941). This is due to the fact that public administration researchers hardly ever address gender according to McGinn & Patterson (2005).

My point of departure is how we can understand and analyse political and public institutions (organizations) undergoing changes (reforms) in a gendered perspective including new institutionalism. Empirically, I’m curious to understand why the number and percentage of female city managers declined dras-

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1 Mackay & Meier, thank you for the paper (received by mail, March 10). It was interesting to read and I noted that institutions, change and gender were the read thread in the paper and former ECPR workshop (Mackay & Meier, 2003). These are the same aspects which I deal with.
tically, when the Danish government composed of the Liberal and Conservative Parties decided to restructure the public sector as such. Among other initiatives 273 municipalities were amalgamated into 98, (however one third of these were not affected by the amalgamations). When the reform was implemented January 2007, seven out of 98 managers were women. It's 7.1 per cent. Before the reform the per cent of female city managers were 18. To day approximately one and a half year later the number of female managers has declined to four, i.e. 4.1 per cent! How come that the numbers of female managers were reduced drastically even when Denmark has a policy of equality? More precisely, I want to develop an analytical model in order to understand and explain those mechanisms and processes which led to a remarkable reduction in the percentage of female city managers, and thereby understand what kind of political perspectives, changes in public organizations and so on, this development reflects.

In order to come up with a research design useful in an empirical study, I find it relevant and necessary to combine concepts and analytical models from studies of political institutions/organisations, gender and change. Therefore, I've chosen to discuss a number of contributions which in different ways combines gender, new institutionalism, political or public institutions. I want to stress the necessity of making ones point of departure clear in relation to understand gender, political/public institutions and new institutionalism as well as the interplay between these elements. I find two aspects of importance; one is to develop our analytical tools and understandings of the field, and the other is to grasp tendencies and consequences of different points of departure.

In paragraph two I review six contributions dealing with new institutionalism, political or public institutions and gender in different combinations which I place at a continuum. Subsequently, I discuss the overall findings in relation to new institutionalism and gender analysis followed by reflections on the importance of ones point of departure and possible ways of developing an analytical model, which I can use studying gender and changes in Danish municipalities.

2. Contributions dealing with new institutionalism, political or public institutions and gender
I've chosen to go through some of the articles where gender and new institutionalism is combined or discussed in one way or another since the main aim is to figure out how these aspects could or should be brought together. I've done an information retrieval in different data bases using different keywords such as new institutionalism, gender and public or political institutions and researchers, for example participants in former ECPR workshops dealing with similar topics. The number of articles dealing with both new institutionalism, gender and public or political institutions are few. I've included articles
in my paper which in my opinion are those everybody else refer to or dealing with at least two of the key words, such as new institutionalism and gender or political/ public institutions and gender. My sample is in no way representing the state of art in the field covering all the keywords mentioned.

The contributions I’ve read can be grouped on a continuum according to how they deal with new institutionalism, gender, political institutions/ public organizations and gender analysis. Starting with a contribution which illustrates how one can use concepts from new institutionalism analysing a gendered subject and hopefully ending with a contribution dealing with feminist institutionalism! All contributors include gender. Two of the authors don’t address new institutionalism and one author doesn’t refer to a specific political institution or organisation. The authors emphasises different kinds of interplay between new institutionalism, political/ public institutions and gender illustrated by arrows which are left out, one-way or two-way (a two-way arrow indicates a mutual influence) in figure one.

Figure one ---- approximately here ---- (see page 24)

I go through the selected articles one after another addressing the following three aspects:
1) What are the main conclusions and possible shortcomings?
2) How does the article fit into my continuum and
3) What are the contributions in relation to feminist new institutionalism?

I have chosen not to make a separate paragraph about Joan Ackers work for two reasons. Firstly, five out of six of the articles, I review, refer to and is based on Joan Ackers work². Secondly, Acker addresses gender and organization whereas the articles I include have gone a step further since they relate the concepts and understandings to either gender and political institutions or gender and public organizations, which I’m interested in.

2.1 Discussing six contributions
The British senior researcher Surya Monro focuses on how one can use sociological new institutionalism analyzing inter agency and partnership concerning lesbian, gay and bisexual equalities initiatives in local communities. The point of departure is a definition of “institutions as the cognitive, normative and regulative structures and activities that give meaning and stability to social behaviour” especially focusing “on the way in which institutions are systems of meaning and their behaviour and the behaviour of individuals within them depend on the

² Surya Monro doesn’t refer to Joan Acker (Monro, 2007).
The concepts from new institutionalism she introduces are norms, sanctions, institutional fields and mimetic isomorphism. She adds ‘institutional hybridization’ due to the fact that partnerships and inter agencies often cross ordinary organizational boundaries and new fields or networks emerge. In this case new institutional fields may develop in relation to shared norms concerning support for the sexual groups studied. In total she both finds examples of how norms support existing ways of doing things as well as change ways of dealing with equality initiatives concerning lesbian and gay.

Monro concludes that new institutionalism is useful in relation to networks and partnerships, i.e. organizations which often are without boundaries. Her analysis contribute to an understanding of why “certain organizations collaborate effectively and others conflict” (Monro, 2007, p. 15). For example may norms and sanctions support lesbian, gay and bisexual equalities issue in some communities where as norms and sanctions have the opposite effect in other local communities.

I find it inspiring to learn how one can use new institutionalism in an analysis of a gender subject. Especially it is informative to read about the combination of central concepts and the empirical findings. Monro her self states that the approach used lack of addressing power and dynamics in relation to her empirical topic. I couldn’t agree more. Further more, she doesn’t discuss what gender related aspects which are left out or whether gender as such should imply changes of sociological new institutionalism (Monro, 2007, p. 2). Her contribution to the final discussion in my paper would be the concepts from sociological new institutionalism she uses.

The American professor Sally J. Kenney is dealing with how political institutions are gendered. She sees political institutions as formal organizations (as Lovenduski does, see below) and her understanding of ‘gendered institutions’ is based on Joan Ackers definition: "The term 'gendered institutions' means that gender is present in the processes, practices, images and ideologies, and distributions of power in the various sectors of social life.” (Kenney, 1996, p. 446). Kenney states that gendering of political institutions means that: (1) “all people within the institution have a gender.” (2) “The experience of participants within an institution will vary according to gender.” And (3) “political institutions produce, reproduce and subvert gender…gender .. is socially constructed, variable, and subject to negotiation.” (Kenney, 1996, pp. 455-456). These three aspects are recovered in Lovenduski’s article (see below).

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Kenney reviews four texts in order to characterise the state of art of research on gendered political institutions. The institutions studied are the judiciary, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, politicians (legislators) and the press (which in some cases is considered as the fourth estate). She pleads for the use of more than one discipline studying gender and political institutions and that one should place each study in a historical setting. Kenney demonstrates how useful it is to combine different methods. The examples range from individual narratives, interviews, surveys and a test of hypothesis. Further more she elaborates on how to define and understand gender in political institutions and gendering of political institutions. She includes theoretical insights from different disciplines, such as Moss Kanter who finds that number makes a difference in organizations; Joan Scott who states that “gender has no universal content – it is produced and reproduced in daily interactions.” (Kenney, 1996, p. 457); ‘the process of ‘othering’” from Beauvoir; that “masculinity is constructed and fiercely defended” (Kenney, 1996, p. 459); that political institutions can be seen as organizations and the fact that changes of political institutions in favour of women often cause resistance and attempt to reinforce former types of male supremacy in new ways (Kenney, 1996).

The main contribution in the article is that Kenney emphasise that gender should be reconceptualised as a category of analysis and that focus should be on institutions and process (due to Acker, 1992), instead of studying women as a group (Kenney, 1996, p. 446f). Further more Kenney stresses the importance of both an interdisciplinary approach and use of different methods. Finally, the aim is not to develop a general or universal theory of gender, but to contribute to further research in the field if gendered political institutions.

The article is interesting, since it emphasises the importance of building bridges between disciplines, uses a variation of methods as well as indicates the importance of focusing on processes and institutions. Eventually, when discussing the possibilities of a feminist new institutionalism, one should consider (inspired by Kenney) whether the final destination is a general theory or not. I, personally, don’t think a general theory is useful, but a number of theoretical concepts, which may grasp gender, gendering processes and so on, are important steps forward. However, it’s not obvious how one can combine all the insights Kenney put forward in an empirical study or with elements of new institutionalism.

The British professor Joni Lovenduski’s article share a number of similarities with Kenney’s. Both review different studies, state that political institutions are gendered and can be studied as organizations as well as one should develop concepts and theories which may be used in analysis of the gendering processes of political institutions. Lovenduski writes about the shift in feminist studies from sex to gender. Some
feminists wants to include both sex and gender in their studies, whereas others prefers either or. Political scientist might include sex, but in general feminist studies in political science is marginalised according to Lovenduski. She finds that gender as a category offers challenges for studies of political institutions for both feminists and political scientists.

Lovenduski’s point of departure is that political institutions are gendered and political institutions can be studied as organizations, which is similar to Kenney. Lovenduski emphasises the interplay between masculinities and femininities and ask “whether it is necessary to perform masculinity in order to act in public?” (Lovenduski, 1998, p. 340). She wants us to identify a continuum of masculinities and femininities in relation to positions and processes in organizations (Lovenduski, 1998, p. 347). Furthermore she refers to among others March & Olsen when she writes about institutionalization of arrangements, practices and rules that are learned by actors and very difficult to change.

The main challenge is to highlight how political institutions and processes are gendered in empirical analysis as Lovenduski underlines. She emphasises four aspects concerning gender that should be taken into consideration when studying institutions: (1) everybody in an institution both has a ‘sex’ and does ‘gender’. (2) Each person experience varies according to sex and gender. (3) Sex and gender interact with other aspects such as ethnicity and class concerning ones identity and (4) “institutions have distinctively gendered cultures and are involved in processes of producing and reproducing gender.” (Lovenduski, 1998, p. 348).

Lovenduski stresses the importance of a number of things in order to secure a successful application of gender when investigating political institutions: One “must acknowledge not only the complexity of gender but also the nature of the particular institution and the kinds of masculinities and femininities that are performed.” (Lovenduski, 1998, p. 350). It would be interesting to discuss whether or not Lovenduski and Kenney’s understanding of gendered institutions is sufficient in order to analyse gender at play in political and public organizations. On the one hand they stress the importance of grasping gender as a social construction and studying processes, exemplified by Lovenduski’s introduction of a continuum of masculinities and femininities, while they at the same time seem to return to ‘women’ and ‘men’ as categories. If we keep returning to those categories we may fail to notice differences between groups of women.

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5 Lovenduski refers to (March & Olsen, 1984), i.e. she includes a new institutionalistic understanding in her article, but I’ve not indicated a point of departure in new institutionalism in figure one, since she doesn’t bases the article on new institutionalism as such.

6 Three of the points are similar to aspects which Kenney (1996: 455f) states when arguing that political institutions are gendered.
and differences between groups of men. I think it’s worth discussing whether or not Connell’s writing about gender relations may overcome those challenges (see below).

It’s important to be able to conduct empirical analysis using not only gender analysis/theories, but also elements from new institutionalism. Lovenduski offers some important points of departure concerning gender analysis in relation to political institutions. I agree with Lovenduski when she writes that new institutionalism may be included in further research, but the contributions from new institutionalism need to be expanded far more than Lovenduski does in her article.

Australian professor Raewyn Connell has contributed with a model which can be used to "understand the gender arrangements of public sector organizations." (R. Connell, 2006b, p. 837). The model is based on Connell’s theoretical contribution understanding gender in relational terms and exemplified by a larger study of ten units in the public sector of New South Wales, Australia7.

In short one should not think of gender as something based on biological differences. Gender is relational, to be more precise: “gender is, above all, a matter of the social relations within which individuals and groups act.” (R. W. Connell, 2004, p. 9). And further on “Gender is the structure of social relations that centres on the reproductive arena, and the set of practices (governed by this structure) that bring reproductive distinctions between bodies into social processes. … gender concerns the way human society deals with human bodies, and the many consequences of that ‘dealing’ in our personal lives and our collective fate.” (R. W. Connell, 2004, p. 10). Gender is something we do. Gender is created (produced) and recreated (reproduced) in daily life. Gender relations do not determine how one should behave, but gender relations have different consequences and possibilities depending on time and space (R. W. Connell, 2004, p. 54f).

Patterns of gender relations form ‘gender orders’ at the societal level and various patterns of gender relations form ‘gender regimes’ at organizational levels, i.e. a gender regime is "the overall pattern of gender relations within an organization" and "A local gender regime may reproduce, but in specific ways may also depart from, the wider gender order (i.e. the whole societal pattern of gender relations).” (R. Connell, 2006b, p. 839). Here, Connell does as Joan Acker states, she “treats organizations themselves as the bearers of gender relations” (R. Connell, 2006a, p. 436).

7 One can read more about Connell’s theoretical work in for example: (R. Connell, 2006b, p. 839; R. W. Connell, 2004, pp. 58-68).
When one wants to study and analyze a gender regime one should distinguish between four dimensions: (1) **Gender division of labour** (or production relations), for example ‘men’s or women’s work’; an overall gender division of work is the one between productive and reproductive work; (2) **gender relations of power**, which is how for example control, authority and force are linked to gender. Power could be both institutionalised and visible as well as diffuse and discursive, such as Foucault deals with power; (3) **emotional and human relations** can be “feelings of solidarity, prejudice and disdain, and sexual attraction and repulsion.” (R. Connell, 2006b, p. 839). Finally (4) **gender culture and symbolism** is explained as “The way in which gender identities are defined in culture, the language and symbols of gender difference...” (R. Connell, 2006b, p. 839), i.e. the point is that gender is interwoven in communication and the creation of meaning.

On the basis of the empirical study of public organizations in New South Wales combined with the analytical understanding of gender as a multidimensional structure, i.e. divided into four dimensions, Connell concludes among other things that each organization has its own ‘gender regime’. In some cases divisions among gender lines seem to vanish according to the people interviewed, however, the researchers often find new kinds of gender divisions which might be invisible to employees due to the fact that neo-liberalism in different ways support the idea that public organizations are gender neutral, “everyone is free to choose, not as men and women, but as individuals.” (R. Connell, 2006a, p. 449). One example is that one should distinguish between men and women in relation to career possibilities, but between employees (both men and women) with and without child responsibilities (R. Connell, 2006a, p. 442).

Connell’s contribution is useful since she offers an analytical model which combines the interplay between gender relations at a societal level as well as an organizational level. Where as Joan Acker for example primarily focus on gender at play in organizations, a view which then may not explain all aspects of gender relations in organizations. Further more, Connell has demonstrated the use of the model in concrete empirical studies of public organizations. However, I don’t think that Connell grasps the public organization aspects in the model itself. She stresses the fact that the state plays a double role in relation to gender change. One as legislator and another as bearer of gender through its own organizations (R. Connell, 2006a). Further more Connell doesn’t address new institutionalism explicitly and it could be interesting to elaborate on the possibilities of combining Connell’s four dimensions of gender relations with concepts from new institutionalism.

Louise Chappell is an associate professor at the University of Sydney. She wants to use the normative and dynamic aspects of new institutionalism to analyse and understand the interplay between gender and
political institutions doing comparative studies. One of her aim is to list in what kind of political institutions femocrats may be most efficient concerning gender equality demands (Chappell, 2006, p. 224).

She states that comparative studies is a way to highlight differences in a gendered logic of appropriateness, i.e. there is not one kind of gendered appropriate behaviour in any kind of political institution. Chappell focus on formal political institutions and norms. She builds on the work of Lovenduski, and sees gender as a process, shaping institutions and actors as well as the opposite (Chappell, 2006, p. 224).

Chappell uses the definition of political institutions from March & Olsen. Political institutions are

"collections of interrelated rules and routines that define appropriate actions in terms of relations between roles and situations .. When individuals enter an institution, they try to discover, and are taught, the rules. When they encounter a new situation, they try to associate it with a situation for which rules already exist. Through rules and a logic of appropriateness, political institutions realise both order, stability and predictability, on the one hand, and flexibility and adaptiveness, on the other." (March & Olsen, 1989, p. 160)8.

This should be combined with the four dimensions which Kenney and Lovenduski writes about (see above), when studying concrete political institutions.

She emphasises both normative and dynamic aspects in new institutionalism and criticises new institutionalism for being gender blind. She uses the norm of bureaucratic neutrality as an example of how an institution isn’t gender neutral, since bureaucratic neutrality emphasises masculine aspects of behaviour and politics. Further more she aims at directing femocrats at work in political institutions. Therefore, I think she is more interested in formal, political institutions than informal institutions. She seems to associate the presence of women in a political institution with gender and gendered process, which other wise is one of our challenges to grasp in analysis.

The focus on ‘gendered logic of appropriateness’ is interesting as a concept, and I agree with Chappell when she states that institutional dynamism indicates the possibilities of changes even in gendered political institutions and of what is appropriate (Chappell, 2006, p. 230). However, I find that it is necessary to elaborate on the definitions of the concepts ‘gendered logic of appropriateness’, norms and institutional dynamism in order to use them in analysis. Further more, it’s important to understand differences in conditions femocrats experiences in different political institutions and countries. Chappell doesn’t addresses power and she writes that her point of departure is historical new institutionalism

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8 Chappell quote March & Olsen on page 225. Her reference states that the text quoted is from page 161, where as in my copy of March & Olsen, the text is on page 160.
while at the same time she’s using definitions from March & Olsen, whom I would characterise as a branch of sociological new institutionalism rather than historical. Does that mean that we should consider new institutionalism as homogenous and (just) select those concepts and understandings which are suitable for further analysis of institutions and gender? I see this as a possibility, but at the same time we ought to consider what kind of implications an eclectic approach may have.

Meryl Kenny is a doctoral student at the University of Edinburgh and a member of FIIN, Feminism and Institutionalism International Network. She wants to show the potential of combining new institutionalism and feminist gender analysis and so far she is the only author I’ve found which explicitly does that.9

Kenny advocates for working for a ‘feminist institutionalism’. She doesn’t explicitly define ‘institutions’, but emphasises that a point of departure in gender may contribute to a shift in focus onto institutions, practices and processes as such in stead of individuals and furthermore shows how “political institutions reflect, structure and reinforce gendered patterns of power.” (Kenny, 2007, p. 91). Meryl Kenny emphasises two aspects: one is that “institutional processes and practices are” (Kenny, 2007, p. 91) gendered and the other one is that gender is not something we have, but something we do.10 I.e. practices and processes become important. The interaction between actors and institutions should be included in order to understand (political) institutions and organizations. Power and change should be included as well.

Meryl Kenny emphasises a number of common features between feminism and new institutionalism, which I see as an indication of the possibilities for further development of both. Kenny states that both feminism and new institutionalism

(1) highlights that neutrality hides that some groups become privileged at the expense of others;
(2) “are centrally concerned with explanations of institutional creation, continuity, resistance and change.” And that
(3) “Both emphasise the historicity of power relations, opening up the possibility of institutional resistance and power reversals.” (Kenny, 2007, p. 95).

New institutionalism contributes according to Kenny with concepts such as, ‘path dependency’ and ‘standard operation procedures’ which may help us to understand continuity, change, resistance and

9 Kenny has what seem to be relevant papers on the subject from former ECPR conferences among her references. Unfortunately, the papers have not been uploaded or published to my knowledge except from Mackay & Meier’s paper which we just got (Mackay & Meier, 2003).
10 Kenny refers to (Hall & Taylor, 1996, p. 941).
appropriate behaviour. ‘Institutional layering’ may indicate that for example some norms may be negotiated while others don’t.

The contributions from feminism are power and power relations. Meryl Kenny states that historical new institutionalism, as feminism, acknowledges the existence of asymmetrical power relations. However, Meryl Kenny find that historical new institutionalism misses the point that power divide gender, class or race, while going into the fact that some groups do have more power than others (Kenny, 2007, p. 96). I.e. institutions, gender and power can be concepts contributing to the development of a feminist institutionalism according to Kenny.

Meryl Kenny’ article is a fruitful contribution to a discussion about feminist institutionalism, since she indicates which central concepts one should take into account. The article is (praiseworthy) brief, and therefore it’s not fair to make a long list of things I would like to hear more about. However, I do see some challenges if we should continue along these lines. Firstly, the concept of institutions should be specified further and the level of analysis should be addressed, since generally speaking sociological new institutionalism focuses on an organizational level, i.e. a meso analytical level and historical new institutionalism focuses on a macro analytical level studying national political economies (Campbell, 1994).

Secondly, I find it important to be more precise in the understanding of gender and power, and figure out what kind of power discussion we should go on with. Among other things, differences in power balance between different groups should be included. Maybe it’s more useful to think of continuums of for example masculinities and femininities or gender relations rather than think of women as one group and men as another. In an organization there might be huge differences of power hold by women with a university degree compared to women cleaning the offices. And among men the director powerbase is different from those of the functionaries. I also think, it should be clarified, what the differences and similarities of the concept of power is, since for example historical new institutionalism do addresses power, the uneven distribution of power between social groups and battles for power (Gjelstrup & Sørensen, 2007, p. 26; Hall & Taylor, 1996, p. 941)11. I.e. is it a matter of level of analysis when Meryl Kenny states that historical new institutionalism doesn’t grasp power related to class, race and gender?

Thirdly, it’s a huge challenge to apply the concepts on empirical phenomena in concrete analysis.

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11 Hall & Taylor writes: “But historical institutionalists have been especially attentive to the way in which institutions distribute power unevenly across social groups.” (Kenny, 2007, p. 95)
3. Another point of departure?

All of the contributions discussed above address gender either as a subject (Monro, 2007) or an understanding of gender as a process or a relation, offering analytical tools in order to deal with gender in political or public organizations (Chappell, 2006; R. Connell, 2006a; Kenney, 1996; Kenny, 2007; Lovenduski, 1998). All of those referring to gender depart from Acker writing about gendered organizations and how to analyze it (Acker, 1992). The authors refer to specific political or public institutions in their articles except from Kenny, who discusses theoretical contributions from new institutionalism and feminism. New institutionalism is handled differently. Connell and S.J. Kenney don’t include new institutionalism at all. Lovenduski uses a definition from sociological new institutionalism defining political institutions. Monro’s analytical toolbox is sociological new institutionalism. Chappell is heading for a gendering of concepts from (sociological and historical) new institutionalism, especially a ‘gendered logic of appropriateness’. Finally, Kenny elaborates on a number of useful concepts from new institutionalism such as path dependency, standard operation procedures and institutional layering. I’ll shortly outline in more details what I see as major contributions discussing feminist institutionalism.

3.1 New institutionalism

Some authors explain the emergence of new institutionalism with among other things governing problems in western bureaucracies and states. The bureaucracies faced problems with the top down steering model. In order to understand the crisis an interest in institutions and behaviour developed. “Neo-institutionalism argues that what impacts human action is not so much the formal organizational set up of the political-administrative system but the rules, norms and patterns of action, which constitute it as institution.” (Gjelstrup & Sørensen, 2007, p. 25). According to Hall & Taylor (1996) new institutionalism emphasises two major things. 1) How can one understand the relation between institutions and action (behaviour) and 2) how can creation and change of institutions be explained? (Hall & Taylor, 1996, p. 937). One could combine the two: in order to understand “institutional creation, continuity, resistance and change” we have to analyse the relation between institutions and action.

It’s common to distinguish between three schools; rational choice, historical and sociological new institutionalism (Hall & Taylor, 1996). Recent contributors would add poststructuralist institutionalism based on Foucault (Gjelstrup & Sørensen, 2007, p. 27). I concentrate on historical and sociological new institutionalism due to the fact that the articles I review build on those schools. In the following I

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12 Quoted from (Monro, 2007)
summarise the concepts and definitions from new institutionalism which my selection of authors deals with adding some aspects from new institutionalism.

Sociological new institutionalism deals with institutions and the relation between institutions and behaviour as well as change. Sociological new institutionalism goes into how institutions affect actor’s behaviour and construct their identity. However, sociological new institutionalism may overlook power aspects, therefore historical new institutionalism should be included since historical new institutionalism work with an understanding of asymmetries of power for example in relation to development of institutions (Gjelstrup & Sørensen, 2007 and; Hall & Taylor, 1996).

Lovenduski refers to March & Olsen emphasizing that institutionalization of arrangements, practices and rules that are learned by actors and very difficult to change (see page 7). Hall & Taylor define institutions within historical institutionalism as: “the formal or informal procedures, routines, norms and conventions embedded in the organizational structure of the polity or political economy” (Hall & Taylor, 1996, p. 938). Since sociological new institutionalism more directly addresses individual actors than historical institutionalism does, that may explain why this definition of institutions is used in relation to gender aspects.

Chappell elaborate on the understanding of ‘logic of appropriateness’, which refer to “that institutions constrain certain types of behaviour while encouraging others.” (Chappell, 2006, p. 225). She adds ‘gender’ in order to grasp how political institutions are gendered. Furthermore, Chappell emphasises the normative and dynamic aspects of new institutionalism referring to the definitions of norms cited above, since norms affect the nature of institutions (Chappell, 2006, p. 225). Institutional dynamism is important since institutional change is possible. Neither norms nor what is appropriate is uninfluenced by individuals or external factors, i.e. even the ways political institutions are gendered are changeable.

Institution is according to Monro (2007, p. 2) defined as "the cognitive, normative and regulative structures and activities that give meaning and stability to social behaviour." Especially focusing “on the way in which ‘institutions are systems of meaning and their behaviour and the behaviour of individuals within them depend on the meanings incorporated and the symbols manipulated’.” (Peters, 1999: p. 103)(p. 2).

Monro refers to formal norms as rules and statutes (2007, p. 4) according to economic and political new institutionalism. Furthermore she introduces social norms or informal norms using sociological new institutionalism. “Social norms are defined as ‘implicit or explicit rules of expected behaviour that embody the
interests and preferences of members of a close-knit group or community". They are maintained by ‘informal mechanisms of monitoring, such as social approval or disapproval’, so that over time, they become self-sustaining." (Monro, 2007, p. 4). Sanctions become relevant when norms aren’t followed. Institutional fields are sets of norms (Monro, 2007, p. 6). Finally, Monro includes mimetic isomorphism which addresses symbolic dimensions of organizations, i.e. more specific the possibility that “organizations copy other organizations in order to win legitimacy” (Monro, 2007, p. 9).

Kenny emphasises especially three concepts which she finds are useful in order to develop both new institutionalism and gender analysis at the same time. Firstly, path dependency indicates “that choices made early on in an institution’s ‘life’ frequently determine or restrict subsequent choices.” (Kenny, 2007, p. 92). In the literature it is discussed whether this view emphasises stability or change. I find it more fruitful to underline the importance of studying both changes and stability in a historical context. Secondly, ‘institutional layering’ indicates that an institution undergoing changes will leave some of the existing elements unchanged while others may be partially renegotiated (Kenny, 2007, p. 93). Thirdly, the concept of standard operation procedure is introduced. Defined as “the institutionalised repertoire of routine responses that suggest what is ‘appropriate’ for a specific individual in a particular setting” (Kenny, 2007, p. 95).

One might say that each contributor has chosen her own selection of concepts and its striking that there’s no overlap except from Lovenduski and Chappell who both define ‘political institutions’ using March & Olsen.

Two aspects should be considered: (1) what are the possibilities and constraints in an eclectic approach to new institutionalism from a gendered point of view due to the fact that some contributors combine historical and sociological new institutionalism? (2) How do we move on from definitions of ‘theoretical’ concepts to empirical analysis?

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15 See page 7 and 10 in this paper.
3.2 Gender analysis

The challenge of understanding and analysing gendering of political and public organizations is essential in the contributions, I’ve included in my paper\textsuperscript{16}. Further more the possibilities of changing these organizations are at play.

It’s not an easy task to summarise gender research as such in three lines or three schools. However, one might draw a quick overview differentiating between the understandings of gender. Some use biological differences between men and women as a point of departure. Others refer to psychological variations. Historical materialistic explanations are widespread, i.e. in short one might say that social conditions influence men and women differently. Finally, post modern approaches emphasise that gender is a construction and meaning becomes important. The contributors, I deal with predominantly, combine historical materialistic aspects with post modern elements.

In the following I summarise the definitions concerning gender and gendered process in political or public organizations which my selection of authors deals with.

The concept of gender is in short understood not as something we have, but rather something we do and should be grasped as a process according to the contributors I’ve included. All acknowledge the interplay between gender and institutions/organizations, i.e. that change may occur. The authors differ when it comes to how one can analyse and understand gendering processes of institutions.

Kenney and Lovenduski both sketch a number of similar aspects which should be taken into account studying gendered institutions. They find that a person’s sex and gender influences the possibilities or the opposite for action. Next Kenney stresses the use of an interdisciplinary approach demonstrated among other things by introducing insights from a number of female researchers such as Moss Kanter, Joan Scott and Simone de Beauvoir to mention a few. Lovenduski thinks that we should identify a continuum of masculinities and femininities when conducting empirical analysis.

To some extent Chappell writes along some of the same lines as Kenney and Lovenduski. Chappell sees gender as a process shaping institutions and actors as well as the opposite. She adds that one should conduct comparative studies as well as include concepts from new institutionalism; ‘logic of

\textsuperscript{16} Monro is an exception since she wants to understand why local communities handle questions of homo- and bisexual initiatives differently not how each organization is gendered.
appropriateness’ to which she adds ‘gender’, normative and dynamic aspects. As written at page 10-11, I find Chappell’s contribution interesting. However, it’s necessary to elaborate on the concepts mentioned in order to conduct empirical analysis.

Kenny as well acknowledges gender as something we do and as a process and stresses the importance of understanding the interplay between institution and actor. She emphasises power, power relations and change as two important aspects to which both new institutionalism and feminism may contribute. However, it’s not simple to move on from those concepts to empirical analysis.

Connell demonstrates how gender relations can be analysed in public organizations. She distinguishes between gender divisions of labour, gender relations of power, emotional and human relations and gender culture and symbolism (for more details see page 9). A public organization has its own gender regime, which is a specific combination of the four elements mentioned. Connell doesn’t include new institutionalism in her analysis.

Returning to one of my concerns; what point of departure do the contributors take? One may analytically distinguish between normative, empirical and constructive approaches (Lundquist, 1993, pp. 60-65)17. Chappell is the only one who explicitly states a normative point of departure due to the fact that she wants to indicate the most efficient public institutions when we deal with gender equality. Everybody else deals with the empirical puzzle: how is political institutions gendered and how can we explain/understand it? Each author emphasis different elements (see figure two). I wonder whether all contributors depart from a political or emotional impression of inequality between men and women. And next, how does this point of departure affect their theoretical and analytical considerations?

Figure two. Normative, empirical or constructive point of departure in analysis.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Normative, should/ought to be and justify</th>
<th>Empirical, is and explain / understand</th>
<th>Constructive, can be and how to realize</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monro</td>
<td>Norms and sanctions may support or oppose sexual groups</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kenney</td>
<td>How political institutions are gendered</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lovenduski</td>
<td>How political institutions and processes are gendered</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connell</td>
<td>Analytical model: understand gender regimes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chappell</td>
<td>Most efficient public institutions concerning gender equality</td>
<td>How gendered logic of appropriateness differ from one institution to another</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kenny</td>
<td>Institutional processes and practices are gendered and important to understand</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

17 Further details, see page 20.
3.3 How to continue…

My discussion of the selected contributions and figure two illustrates the necessity of making one's point of departure clear in relation to gender, political/public institution and new institutionalism as well as the interplay between the elements.

My main aim is to understand and analyse political and public institutions (organizations) undergoing changes (reforms) in a gendered perspective.

Of course, this presupposes development of adequate concepts and analytical models. The contributors discussed offer many concepts, but few come up with a strategy for empirical analysis, i.e. analytical models. This goes for both new institutionalism and concepts concerning gender and political/public institutions.

In order to meet some of the challenges in combining gender and new institutionalism, one should go into empirical areas, such as the study of public administration as one form of political institutions, in order to investigate what kind of knowledge we lack in order to develop a feminist institutionalism. Of course it could be questioned whether it’s useful to think of a general and universal ‘feminist institutionalism’. As S.J. Kenney writes she thinks we are pass the time “to build a general or universal theory of women or gender in political institutions” (Kenney, 1996, p. 447). Instead we should work out “how institutions are gendered.” (Kenney, 1996, p. 447).

To make it simple: one may say that new institutionalism deals with the understanding of the relation between institutions and action and uses concepts as: institutions, norms (formal/informal), sanctions, institutional fields, logic of appropriateness and normative aspects. Whereas addressing changes or resistance the following concepts are used: path dependency, standard operation procedures, institutional layering, mimetic isomorphism and dynamic aspects (see figure three). Further more one might assume that researchers using new institutionalism in empirical analysis often concentrate on policy.

The contributions dealing with gender often concentrate on the organizational settings, how the institutions work and how men and women experience their employment. The concepts brought into play are gendering of institutions, gender as a process, continuum of masculinities and femininities, gender relations and gender regimes. Except from gender relations then it’s unfolded in relation to empirical analysis. Connell distinguishes between four aspects operationalizing gender relations: gender division of
labour, relations of power, emotional and human relations and cultural and symbolic relations. I would claim that leaving gender out of the first element illustrates that this division can be used and related to other kinds of differences such as ethnicity, social class or sexual grouping. I.e. this could be relevant as a point of departure in empirical analysis of public organizations. Not in order to leave gender out, but to show the possibilities of this. A challenge is to include useful elements and understandings from new institutionalism. To be more precise to include norms, sanctions and so on with the aspects from gender relation (column one and two). This presupposes some contributions developing concepts from new institutionalism in order to analyse empirical phenomena.

In order to understand changes in organizations or institutions as well as resistance towards changes, then I find new institutionalism useful (column three). However, the challenges are both the need of developing concepts in order to use them in empirical analysis as well as the need of making gender and gender relations visible. The concept the structure of gender relations might be of use. I define it as the way “how gender already is encapsulated in a given structure or processes, for example, in an organizational structure or a organizational processes.” (Jensen, 1998, p. 165f). An important point is that one should develop a dynamic approach in order to be able to understand and explain changes (Flugt & Gjelstrup, 2007, p. 151ff).

3.4 Empirical example

Returning to my case introduced at page 2: I want to develop an analytical model in order to understand and explain those mechanisms and processes which led to a remarkable reduction in the percentage of female city managers in Denmark January 2007. My idea is to conduct a number of interviews with both men and women who were appointed and some who were passed over as city managers in the new municipalities. Further more, I would go through statistics and articles in news papers and magazines.

As introduced in paragraph 3.2, one may distinguish analytically between a normative, an empirical and a constructive approach and my research question can thus be expressed as followed:
1. How should (or ought) the amalgamation of Danish municipalities influence gender relations and how can that be justified?
2. How does the amalgamation of Danish municipalities influence gender relations and how can that be explained or understood?
3. How can the amalgamation of Danish municipalities influence gender relations and how can that be obtained?

I’m particularly interested in studying the second sentence. Overall, I image that the main elements from figure three can be used posing relevant questions. I.e. I would have to pose questions concerning relations between institutions and actions, questions concerning gender relations and concerning changes or resistance.

Of course I need to elaborate on the most relevant conceptualisation in relation to each of the mentioned aspects, as well as I have to think of how a dynamic element can be incorporated in order to understand and explain changes or resistance (Flugt & Gjelstrup, 2007, p. 151ff).

So far I’ve come across a few explanations of the empirical phenomenon. One is that the number of former managers which ought to be reemployed where numerous, i.e. there were many men to be considered to different occupations at high scale of pay since you can’t downgrade people employed. To this possible explanation one should add the following: "we did choose the most qualified for the position!" I.e. men with experience as city managers in larger municipalities were preferred. One might fear that this backlash in percentage of female city managers will be hard to recover since several municipalities now have started to reduce the size of the board of directors^{18}.

It’s plausible to assume that choosing men with a special kind of work experience support one way of thinking public organizations and possibilities of changes; those hiring have chosen ‘more of the same’ or ‘the well known’ in stead of using the amalgamation as an occasion for (re)designing the institution (Mackay & Meier, 2003, p. 11). Concepts from new institutionalism as well as gender analysis might be of help in order to analyse this case and reach a deeper understanding of it and eventually an adequate explanation of what is happening.

^{18} The information is based on Danish new paper articles and articles in magazines: (Boglund, 2006; Friis, 2006; Olesen & Pihl-Andersen, 2008).
I would like to understand the gendered institutional mechanisms and processes which have led to a remarkable reduction of female city managers after the amalgamation of municipalities and in this way throw light on the process of institutionalizing.

4. Conclusion

My point of departure was how we can understand and analyse political and public institutions (organizations) undergoing changes (reforms) in a gendered perspective in order develop an analytical model. My discussion of selected articles illustrates the necessity of making ones point of departure clear in order to understand gender, political/ public institutions and new institutionalism as well as the interplay between these elements.

It stroke me, that researchers dealing with analysis using new institutionalism often concentrate on policy issues and how one can understand and explain changes in policies. They include actors as well, but the turning point is the policy. Where as the contributions I’ve reviewed seem to be more interested in the situation of women and the possibilities for improvements. This difference should be considered in future research when working with both new institutionalism and gender analysis.

In the contributions reviewed, the concept of gender is in short understood not as something we have, but rather something we do and should be grasped as a process. All acknowledge interplay between gender and institutions/ organizations, i.e. that change may occur. The authors differ when it comes to how one can analyse and understand gendering processes of institutions. This was among other things illustrated in figure two. I find it important to be sure that we make our point of departure clear according to what kind of questions we ask. This is an indication of what kind of theories we should include and a distinction between normative, empirical and constructive aspects might help to sort out political interest and (theoretical) research. It’s a challenge to grasp gender as a process independent of sex, since the mixture of both sometimes blurs ones view. One may ask: why is a gender perspective of importance? Do we address gender in ‘the name of equality’ and/ or in order to secure a well-run public sector, better policies etc.?

More adequate concepts should be developed. We don’t necessarily need to develop completely new concepts, but rather new ways of combining existing concepts, such as norms about how the question of gender can be handled in different ways and about the gender division of labour or emotional and human relations (combination of column one and two in figure two).
A major challenge is to develop a series of concepts which can form an analytical model to be used in empirical analysis. The concept of ‘gendered organizations’ or ‘norms’, need to be operationalized if we should be able to identify them. Again, one ought to consider what the study is about; policy and/ or organizational developments?

After writing this paper I’m convinced that we ought to secure a dynamic element in the analysis in order to describe and understand changes (empirical approach) as well as in order to foresee possible trends of development and be able to conduct constructive analysis. However, there’s not much help in the articles reviewed. However, in another article, examples of dynamic aspects are related to analysis of policy problems. The article addresses, how one can get to understand what is going on between two moments (t1 and t2) (Flugt & Gjelstrup, 2007).

Finally, one should consider what methods might be sufficient. Of course, the method should be of relevance for ones research question, but how do we proceed? Is it in order to pick out single concepts from both sociological and historical institutionalism (as Chappell does) and mix it with concepts from different gender approaches (as Kenney does)? I think, yes. But one has to make this explicit and discuss the consequences.

In the articles reviewed a number of methods of collecting data are suggested, such as interviews, surveys, narratives and so on. One should add observation as a method, studying processes of change. Comparative methods are suggested along with interdisciplinary approaches. However, comparative studies won’t be of much help in order to understand changes if one compare institutions instead of processes. Significant changes are not necessarily grasped analytically. One way to proceed is to use different methods over time, i.e. triangulation of methods in each study.

The mentioned approaches could be possible paths for future analysis of reforms and changes in public and political institutions in a gender perspective and hopefully be of help if one should answer the following central questions:
- How can one make gender explicit in new institutionalism through contributions from research on gender and organizations?
- How can new institutionalism contribute to development of theories on gender and organization?
- How can we study how institutions are gendered (without making an assumption that masculinities dominates)?
- How are organizations (institutions) and processes gendered? How can they be changed?

References
Figure one. Continuum.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Surya Monro</th>
<th>S.J. Kenney</th>
<th>Lovenduski</th>
<th>Connell</th>
<th>Chappell</th>
<th>Kenny</th>
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<td>useful concepts from NI</td>
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<td>Pol. Inst. are gendered</td>
<td>Public organization</td>
<td>Pol. Inst. examples</td>
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<td>Gender analysis</td>
<td>Gender analysis</td>
<td>Gender analysis</td>
<td>Gender is a process</td>
<td>Useful concepts from feminism;</td>
</tr>
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