In the Business of Feminism: Consultants as Sweden’s New Gender Equality Workers?

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**Abstract:** Gender equality work in Sweden is increasingly carried out by private consultancy firms. In this paper, we examine the role of gender equality consultants and their way of doing gender equality in their work. Thereby the paper contributes with new insights into how feminist ideas, goals and strategies are constructed, interpreted and applied when institutionalized in market-based forms of governance: how does the marketization of gender equality work constrain and enable gender equality workers’ agency and how does it shape the meaning of gender equality? Drawing on interviews, our analysis demonstrate that many consultants view the market as a strategic arena for feminist activism; however, there is considerable ambivalence in many consultants’ attempts to navigate between and combine a position as activist with also being an entrepreneur and an expert. Further, in “selling” gender equality many consultants feel torn between their personal commitments to a conception of gender equality as justice and inclusion, and the necessity of framing gender equality in relation to the needs of the client. The logic of the market thereby frequently subordinates gender equality to other goals, such as quality, efficiency or profitability.

Keywords: Gender equality, consultants, market governance, governmentality, Sweden

If you would like to read the full paper, you are most welcome to email Elisabeth.olivius@umu.se!

Best regards,

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