For over 20 years, Sweden has had a political commitment to implement gender mainstreaming. It has been described as a strategy for implementing national gender equality policy into all public arenas, and the implementation has targeted both the national and the local level of politics. This effort has resulted in an international established story of Sweden’s success. However, there is variation to this story in the domestic articulations of the gender mainstreaming efforts in Sweden which is more nuanced, as they range from stories of implementation failure and political backlashes, to articulation of both implementation success and political progress. The empirical material analysed for (de)construction of the story is composed from different sources, such as academic texts, grey literature and official public reports and documents. This paper argues that there is a knowledge gap between the international success story on the one hand, and the domestic versions on the other. Using the theoretical concept myth and including theories of velvet triangle and feminist market, a discursive reading of empirical texts are conducted. The result shows that the story is composed of different articulations, namely the mix-up between gender mainstreaming (as a strategy), and gender equality (as a policy objective), the construction of Sweden as something special, the Swedish contribution to GM history, a myth of integration at all levels, starting up and of volume is the different parts.

Renée Andersson,
PhD candidate, Political science,
Örebro University
s-701 82 Örebro
renee.andersson@oru.se

Paper prepared for presentation at the ECPG Conference in Uppsala, 11-13 June, 2015.
Section: Governance, Institutions and Public Policy.
Panel nr P094: The Nordic Model of Gender Equality: Opportunities and Limits
Introduction

Gender mainstreaming is considered the new, modern, and innovating way of organizing gender equality work (Callerstig 2014), and it has resulted in extensive research and policies. It can be argued that embedded in the discourse of gender mainstreaming there is a story of development, innovation and future success (Schmidt 2005), and the ambition of doing better fits neatly into the practice of best case scenarios and the spread of good examples. However, stories can be told differently and in line with storytelling critique (Hemmings 2011), I will do a discursive reading of a story that is one of those taken-for-granted ones with the aim of understanding how it is constructed.

Sweden is of special interest as a case because of the unique position (that is) given to Sweden in the dominant story told about GM. As it will be shown, there is a story of Sweden’s success in introducing and implementing gender mainstreaming at all political levels, both in GM academic literature as well as in grey literature (evaluations, papers from consultants and so on). The spread of beliefs and descriptions of certain policies, which can be attributed to both research and practice, is of interest in this paper, when they are rearticulated in different contexts and at different levels – in the UN, EU, state authorities or in a Swedish municipality. But how does this story of gender mainstreaming fit into a theoretical discussion about state feminism and the potential women friendly state, as well as to the empirical discussion about Sweden as a socialdemocratic welfare regime? In articulations from domestic evaluations targeting gender mainstreaming, as well as in Nordic research, one can find nuances and complexities that indicate that the story of gender mainstreaming can be told differently. It will be argued that the domestic articulations should not be considered a variation of the dominant story of gender mainstreaming but rather belonging to a complete different discourse, one about gender equality. The purpose of this article is not to “correct” history or “tell the truth”. The aim is
rather to investigate the tension between the dominant story through the articulations of this idea found in academic literature, and the contrasting domestic articulations that tells something else.

Inspired by Gibb (2000), I will use mythical concepts as framework. This involves several elements, the first is showing how ignorance is constructed in the gap between knowledge and understanding. The next element in the construction is exploring the intimate relationship between different producers of texts. Finally, I will argue for including an element of a new evolved market feminism into the theoretical understanding. The article continues thereafter with a presentation of material and methods. Understanding Sweden as feminist welfare state precedes the empirical sections were the constructions of emergence, gender mainstreaming and gender equality, the knowledge gap, the intimate relationships and the market are accordingly presented. Findings and discussion concludes the article.

Mythical concepts

To better understand the dominant story told about Sweden regarding GM and the constructed myths thereof, further theoretical development is needed. My applied framework has three main points: the first is that the presence of myths is embedded in the discourse and the associated concepts. The second point in the framework is to understand the intimate relationship between politics and grey literature that follows this kind of normative questions (GM, entrepreneur), which includes the actors involved in the production of those texts, and lastly the establishment of a new (feminist/ entrepreneur) market. The applied frameworks that will be used in this article are inspired from Gibb (2000), and in this article I claim that there are several parallels that can be drawn between the emergence of (the production of) mythical concepts in the policy fields of gender mainstreaming and entrepreneurship.
The concept of myth(s) has been used by several scholars to be able to distinguish from knowledge based on rigorous analysis and understanding as something simplistic and distorted. Levi-Strauss (1968) argued that myths deals with unwelcome contradictions, and Edelman suggests that myths are both a societal and individual coping strategy to handle issues that are uncertain and controversy, which are full with ambiguities and anxiety (Edelman 1974). Other scholars, such as Laclau (1990), use myths to deconstruct dominant structural objectivity and question the objective reality, to be able to deconstruct what is seemingly natural and objective. Laclau (1990) argues that myths have societal functions in that they cover over dislocations and disruptions in events so discourses are upheld (Laclau 1990:60ff). Gibbs argument of using mythical concepts is in line (although not referenced!) with the argumentation of Laclus myths and social imaginary. But instead of focusing on dislocations and disruptions, Gibb talks about the gap between what he calls what is known and what is understood in policy terms and calls this element ignorance. The concepts of known and understanding should not be read as words connote that something is more real or something is more accurate. Rather the gap of ignorance makes myths both possible and plausible. Myths is here understood as the articulated story were the gap between knowledge and understanding seemingly make sense. The ignorance (in Laclaus words dislocations and disruption) are neatly embedded in the discourse and there are no threatening articulations to the master story. Gibb argues that myths include different sets of assumptions, partly about how the world works, and partly how to build policy actions and therefor (re)produces discourse (Gibb 2000). In line with Gibb, I argue that this gap of ignorance should be in the centre of my analysis.

In developing the second point of the framework, it will be argued that the explosion of research regarding GM has rendered in what Gibb calls the growth of both knowledge and understanding (Gibb 2000). Because of this substantial growth of academic and grey literature, in combination
with easy access to information through new technologies there is a perception that there is a lot of ‘knowledge’ about the issue. But embedded in this knowledge there is also the presence of ignorance. Gibb expands on the influence of myths over policy priorities, in his case, entrepreneurship. In alignment with other research areas, which also have had an explosion of published articles, the academic field of gender mainstreaming is at this point of time quite extensive. In both the case of entrepreneurship and gender mainstreaming, the political interest in the fields has rendered quite extensive grey literature. Among the others forms of grey literature, policy papers and consultant reports in the field of gender mainstreaming and gender equality has dramatically increased. In general, grey literature has not undergone peer review. These are sometimes written by academic scholars, but are never the less, not an academic product. To answer the second part of this point in the framework were the aim is to understand the intimate relationship between politics and grey literature and its importance in this case, I must turn to the theoretical field of governance. This is widely debated in literature and is here used to illuminate how processes of steering and coordination include more agents and processes than regulated by the state government. It is not only nation-bound agencies that play a role but also other types of organizations (Pierre & Peters 2000) as well as the academia.

There is a mutual interplay between new ideas in research, on the one hand, and changes in politics and public administration on the other. The interplay is complex and when ideas travel between the different fields, they are also changing. It is not a one-way direction either from research to public administration or the other way around. The interaction and messiness of the areas is of relevance to this paper. Governance as a flow of new ideas in policymaking travels in different directions and in the case of gender mainstreaming the purpose is to understand how the Swedish/Nordic participation in the European velvet triangle of femocrats (both politicians and bureaucrats), trusted academics and organized women’s movement (Woodward 2003a; Woodward 2003b) has been involved in story production. The importance of the velvet
triangle is emphasized in the process of institutionalizing gender equality politics. Woodward includes consultants in the same category as academics (2003b), but doesn’t elaborate on the consequents of this actor’s involvement. This indicates that there has been movement and fluidity between academic scholars and private consultants for quite some time. When adding argumentation to the one made from Kantola and Squires (2012) about market feminism (see below), one significant shift in agencies from women’s movement to market organised feminism is one factor impotent factor. The differences between Woodward’s categorisation of consultants and Kantolas and Squires market feminism is who those consultants have to be accountable to.

Now I turn to the third and final point of the framework. I argue that the diffusion inside the category trusted academics within the velvet triangle, as well as the diffusion between the different categories, must be highlighted because of the market development over the last decades. There has been an increased fluidity between academics and the market over the last 20 years due to several events. Because of the hardening conditions in universities regarding employment and working conditions for academic scholar, the redundant unemployed have had to turn to the market as consultants for livelihood purposes (REF). Adding to the growth of academics in the private market is also the EU structural funds (REF). To illustrate this development from a Swedish perspective the Swedish actor JÄMI can be used. The centre JÄMI, a hybrid organization between Gothenburg university and government agencies, was given a government assignment to develop and support the consultants market for gender entrepreneurs in 2008. This new form of governance can be called market feminism (Kantola & Squires 2012) and is deeply embedded in the neoliberal market reform. The most important trademarks for market feminism is an increase in consultants and ‘gender experts’, as well as a shift to more neoliberal market mechanisms (accountability, audit and budget discipline),
technologies that favours “analytical tools”, and economic arguments. Characteristics in market feminism, accordingly to Kantola and Squires, are also that engagements have changed from women’s movement activism to private sector organizations. This can lead to an increase in the ability to articulate gender issues that inevitably privilege particular conceptions of gender relations over others. Moreover, market feminism also has consequences for the depoliticization of gender issues, because the market actors are in higher degree accountable to founding bodies rather political constituents (Kantola & Squires 2012). This has potential implications on socialdemocratic welfare regime and the possibility of a feminist welfare state, as will be shown further on. The comparison made to Gibbs analysis on Entrepreneurship allows for extending the understanding of the velvet triangle and feminist market.

**Finding the story and its composition**

The majority of the articles concerning gender mainstreaming are not illustrated by good examples or success stories. But when screening the texts looking for those, a majority point to Sweden. In the search process I have found examples when also Finland or the Netherlands are put forward as forerunners of gender mainstreaming, but not in the extent as Sweden. The texts used as empirical material in this article are composed from different sources, such as relevant academic texts (books and articles), reports from organizations and consultants (categorized as grey literature) and official public reports and documents. The timeframe has not been limited, so it stretches from 1980’s to the present. The process for choosing the selected academic text has been done in the following way; the text should be written by an academic scholar in the field of gender mainstreaming and there should be mentioning of already achieved success or good examples, lastly there should be references to Sweden in the text. The method for selections has been both systematic and strategic, in the sense that I have screened Webb of Science, Google Scholar and Örebro University’s liberty database for significant texts. The
search strings has included the words *gender mainstreaming, best case, effects,* in combination with different countries. After reading key words, abstracts and screening the full articles I then made a final selection by identifying the articles which best illustrate, stand out and articulate the story of Sweden’s success.

The article also includes texts that are categorized as part of the grey literature surrounding gender mainstreaming. This category includes reports from organizations and consultants, which can be authored by academic scholars but edited by non-academic publishers. Among the others forms of grey literature, policy papers and consultant reports in the field of gender mainstreaming and gender equality has dramatically increased. Reports from the hybrid organisation Jämi is an example of this second form of texts. The third kind of text included in the analysis is official public reports and documents from governmental agencies in Sweden, evaluations from governments’ agencies are such items (Statskontoret [The Swedish Agency for Public Management], Riksrevisionsverket [The Swedish National Audit Office]). But there are some difficulties in separating the last to categories, because of the grey area of authorship between them. These texts have been detected using snowball technique (Bryman 2011), mainly by following references. I have exhausted the national body of evaluations and reports targeting gender mainstreaming and gender equality politics using this method.

After the text has been selected a discursive reading has been conducted of the chosen documents. In the reading I have identified articulations in the texts, in forms of *understanding, knowledge ignorance and myths* and critically analysed to find elements and underlying constructions. A possible difficulty in using academic text about gender mainstreaming as both empirical articulations and as theoretical text has been dealt with by being transparent in the
different ways text are referred to throughout the article. I will now move on to the case of Sweden and the potential feminist welfare state.

**Sweden as a feminist welfare state?**

But what makes Sweden such a significant and important case? As I will show below national gender equality policy in Sweden is not just a liberal discourse aiming at equal rights, but also targets opportunities and conditions which indicate societal demands for change. This can be identified in the government’s national gender equality objections. They have stayed (almost) the same since they were first adopted in 1994. Today they state that:

The objective of gender equality policy is that women and men are to have the same power to shape society and their own lives. Starting from this objective, the Government is working towards four sub-goals:

- Equal division of power and influence. Women and men are to have the same rights and opportunities to be active citizens and to shape the conditions for decision-making.
- Economic equality. Women and men must have the same opportunities and conditions as regards education and paid work which give economic independence throughout life.
- Equal distribution of unpaid housework and provision of care. Women and men must have the same responsibility for housework and have the opportunity to give and receive care on equal terms.
- Men’s violence against women must stop. Women and men, girls and boys, must have the same right and access to physical integrity.

As shown in the quotation gender equality objection is quite unique because the overall policy and discourse regarding gender equality has both feminist and radical features regarding power relations between women and men. The use of the concept power as well as pointing out men as in need of change displays the politicization of reproductive work in family life. This would indicate that Sweden can be categorized as a potential woman friendly state, at least in policy terms (Hernes 1985). International indexes also supports till categorization because gender equality in Sweden often enjoys high rankings. In Gender Gap 2014 Sweden is nr 4, Sweden is
in first place in EIGE:s index 2013 and in UN:s index GII (2013) Sweden is ranked the second most gender equal country. Those rankings points to the potential women friendly state is not just policy but also implemented politics in the government agencies. The relative high result of those rankings is due to what Esping-Andersen calls the socialdemocratic welfare regime in Sweden (Bergqvist, Olsson Blandy & Sainsbury 2007, Svensson & Gunnarsson 2012).¹ In such a regime, gender equality and welfare state are problematic to separate, because in a social democratic welfare regime there is a basic notion of equality. This equality includes policies targeting high levels of employment and of social policies with high levels of benefits and transfers aiming at compensate for income. That kind of reforms has in many ways generated gender equality. In categorizing welfare regimes Esping-Andersen identifies the relations between the state, the individual and the market as the most significant ones (Esping-Andersen 1990). This theoretical approach has been subjected to criticism from feminist scholars who argue that there are problematic underlying assumptions in Esping-Andersens theory. Esping-Andersens position presupposes a symbolic gender neutral position that transforms into the form of a man´s point of life-view. He fails to problematize dependency in the realm of family, and women disappear altogether from the analysis when leaving (paid-)work life (Sainsbury 1999). Related to this feminist critic one should analyse individual dependency in three different regimes, the male bread winner, the separate gender roles and the individual earner-carer (Sainsbury 1999, p.79), were Sainsbury argues that Sweden should be categorized as the latter. Hobson, however, suggest that Sweden represents the country that has moved furthest away from the single male bread winner household, through a redistributive policy change, to the emergence of the individualized worker model (Hobson 2004). Rather than the earner-carer regime, Sweden is a one-and-three quarter earner-carer regime because women are doing less paid and more unpaid work than men (Hobson 2004). Even through, or maybe because of,

¹ Those rankings concerns part of working life, life expectancy, maternity deaths, political representations, and monetary resources. They therefore measure gender equality, not gender mainstreaming.
Sweden being of the individual earner-carer kind or the individualized worker mode, much of
the gender equality politics relates to women´s participations to worklife and men´s (lack of)
responsibilities towards family-life (Svensson & Gunnarsson 2012).

But, feminists have had an ambiguous relationship to the potential women friendly welfare state
(Bergqvist & Olsson Blandy & Sainsbury 2007), which has been problematized by Helga
Hernes (1985). She argues that there has been a shift of dependence for women from the private
to the public, and raises the question if and in what way this affects the political power of
women. She argues that if dependence increases on the public for welfare it can lead to
transformation of the basis for citizenship from material and participatory rights towards
clientilization. This would be the basis for a liberal and conservative welfare state. The
relationship between women and the state is also in the centre of Hernes concept of state
feminism. This concept focuses on the relationship between the state and the women´s
movement and the variances in openness for political alliances between those (Hedlund &
Lindberg 2012). Hernes developed state feminism to explain the differences in integrating
failure or success between Scandinavian and Anglo-Saxon countries and pinpoints women´s
movements as a central agency in this development.

(Avoiding) Conceptual clarification of gender mainstreaming and
gender equality

To understand how the story of gender mainstreaming in Sweden is constructed, it is vital to
explore the concepts that are embedded in the myths. The relationship between gender equality
and gender mainstreaming is not self-evident and has to be problematized, being distinctive
different ideas/ strategies. In the case of gender mainstreaming, the vagueness and theoretical
diffusion is much debated (Stratigaki 2005, Andersson & Hedlund 2012). Gender
mainstreaming is often described as the main strategy for implementing gender equality but the strategy (meta-instrument) has, as will be shown below, its own peculiarities. When the UN’s World Conference on Women in Beijing launched gender mainstreaming as a strategy for the different nations’ gender equality work in 1995 it signalled a change of course in transnational gender equality policy. There was a link between the aim of empowerment of women and the transformation of women’s issues from marginal policy ghettos to a general concern (Woodward 2003a). Special women’s projects had been common in both development aid policy and national policies, although the new strategy meant that the role of man would also be emphasized and gender perspective included the relation between women and men. In addition, gender equality objectives would be mainstreamed and included in all contexts, so that in decision making, budget work, planning and in all kinds of activities the effects of gender equality would be made visible. Critical aspects of gender mainstreaming has not focus ed upon the construction of stories in different texts, in this case the construction of Sweden as a successful case. In academic research about gender mainstreaming, the focus has at large been in criticizing the strategy and identifying and addressing the possible negative effects that this new way of doing gender equality work would result in. Gender mainstreaming is often described as a strategy to make states, organizations, or businesses more gender aware, and hence to make gender visible and to promote gender equality. But in some cases it has been argued that the strategy (or meta-instrument) has become an objective in itself. Instead of being the means towards the objectives of gender equality the objectives has become to implement gender mainstreaming (Rönnblom 2011). Some elements in gender mainstreaming, such as gender budgeting and checklists have been argued being in alignment with the neo-liberal discourse (Rönnblom 2011).
When turning to the conceptual construction and theoretical implications of the words *gender equality* [Jämställdhet] in the Swedish variation, *jämställdhet* cannot be translated as either sex or gender equality, but embraces only the specific equality between men and women (Svensson & Gunnarsson 2012). Even though the words are often treated in texts as self-explanatory or distinct concepts, there have been some attempts at problematize the concept. Magnusson, Rönnblom & Silius (2008) argue that there is neither true nor real gender equality, rather the concept should connote the *doing* of gender equality. Following this argument I want to elaborate on how it can, and have, been constructed in much different ways. To illustrate the different constructions, I use Sweden as an example. Here the concept of gender equality have been used in several ways, first when referred to as politics that specific targets women, men and/or gender relations. It is also used as a general sense of equality often associated to attitudes and values. The third construction is as one of several expenditure areas in the national budget post, and the forth construction is in reference to the national gender equality objections. Lastly, it has been used as a general (non-specific) policy field. The different variation of content is political in the sense that they are politically motivated and are used for different purposes.

Now we turn to the empirical section of the article, expanding on growth of knowledge and ignorance in GM, when conducting a reading of the constructed story of success in the Swedish case.

**The presence of myths**

**Sweden as ‘special’**

In effect, the cases studied are, apart from Sweden, all “hybrid” cases of gender mainstreaming” (Daly 2005).

---

2 In Sweden Gender equality is one of 27 budget post.
In both policy documents as well as in scientific articles about the gender mainstreaming we find several variations of how Sweden is portrayed as something ‘special’. The idea of gender mainstreaming in Sweden is articulated above as something different, and in opposition to other ‘hybrid cases’. In one sense it can be an articulation of a more evolved variant of gender mainstreaming but also illustrating something quite different. The construction of something ‘special’ is articulated in different ways, and as will be shown can, in line with Gibbs be considered as a myth. The following excerpt is from the same academic text:

Taking countries as a whole, at least three varieties of a gender mainstreaming approach can be identified. The first, with Sweden as the locus classicus, can be styled an “integrated approach.” Gender mainstreaming is employed in a global fashion, whereby responsibility for gender equality is extended to most, if not all, actors involved in public policy and is embedded across institutions in society (Daly 2005, bold markings by author).

Using Gibbs terms, this scholar understands Sweden as the locus classicus of gender mainstreaming, by identifying shared responsibility and embeddedness in public institutions as key articulations. In case of shared responsibility there is a report from Swedish national audit office (Riksrevisionsverket) with relevance to this articulation. The report is an evaluation of how the government uses its steering mechanisms in gender equality issues. This report articulates that only half of the government agencies are, by demands in the regulations letter, required to report on gender equality objections (Riksrevisionsverket 2000:17, p. 6). The report argues that this indicates that there has not been sufficient steering of the Swedish gender equality policies towards the government apparatus (Riksrevisionsverket 2000:17, p.XXX). The government has a substantial scope of influence over the government agencies, which they do not use in the case of gender equality steering. Moving to the articulation of embeddedness of gender mainstreaming in institutions, there is, in opposite to the understanding from Daly above, knowledge in the report from Swedish national audit office. In the same report from the Swedish national audit office it shows that of the investigated 55 government agencies, 35
answered that they have some kind of program/work of implementing gender mainstreaming. This entails that 20 government agencies have not made any efforts to achieve the national strategy of gender mainstreaming (Riksrevisionsverket 2000:17, p. 45). To argue the assumption of shared responsibilities and embeddedness of gender mainstreaming in institutions are difficult to do in line with Gibbs concept of knowledge and can therefore be considered a myth.

The academic text above also makes a direct connection between gender mainstreaming and gender equality, and as mentioned earlier this connection is not self-evident. Another example of how the connection between gender equality and gender mainstreaming is constructed as something “taken-for-granted” is evident in this next quote from a scholar text:

These countries [Sweden and The Netherlands] can be said to be in the relatively luxurious situation of knowing what gender mainstreaming is, having sufficient gender data and having developed a broad concept of gender equality (Woodward 2003a: 81).

This quotation is used to illustrate two things. First the already mentioned taken-for-granted connection between gender equality and gender mainstreaming and second is the articulation of having special insight on the nature, or essence, of gender mainstreaming. This articulation of “knowing what gender mainstreaming is” should be understood in the light of the theoretical discussion about ambiguous definition of gender mainstreaming. Articulating that something is what is done is a way of filling the gap between the practical use of a concept and the theoretical components. In line with formulation above, the possible gap is articulated as knowledge, but in line with this reasoning embedded with ignorance.
Sweden as an example of ‘total integration’

As has been shown, there are some embedded myths within the discourse of GM when refereeing to Sweden as a case in the investigated articles. Now we continue to the articles that articulate the perceived success of institutionalization of gender equality policy in state administration, at national and regional level. There are also references to the practice of gender mainstreaming at local level; those are discussed in a later section. Here we find the constructed understanding were articulations conclude establishment of gender mainstreaming strategies on all levels.

Sweden is the exception in that it has in place an entire “package” in the sense of an acceptance of the analysis of gender equality, as well as the integration of the full spectrum of relevant procedures for gender mainstreaming across levels of administration” (Daly 2005, bold markings by author).

There are, however, no empirical data that supports the statement with knowledge that there are relevant procedures at all levels of administration. A contrast to the confident picture in the cited articulation, it appears to be conflicting articulation in the Swedish domestic text. In the previous referenced national audit report and in one other evaluation state report, it states that gender mainstreaming in the Swedish case at the national level in state agencies is not a success story (see below) (Riksrevisionsverket 2000, Statskontoret 2005). This articulation is also found in a scholar text:

Equally sobering is that the task of gender mainstreaming the central administrative agencies and the regional and local administration is still in its infancy (Sainstbury & Bergqvist 2009).

Here the conflicting academic articulation makes sense because of the scholars in the later excerpts lived in Sweden. The articulations above are important because Sweden is governed
in a national level, a regional level, and a local level. All levels are involved in the implementation of gender equality, however in different ways. One mix-up identified is the one regarding the different levels and the associated duties. There are the 21 County administrative boards which are central government agencies at regional level. In those boards there work one gender equality civil servant. The country councils serve as an extension of the central government authority (Bergqvist, Olsson-Blandy & Sainsbury 2007).

The third level, municipalities, is emphasized as one of the cornerstones in Swedish welfare state. The municipalities have great influence over the citizen’s life, in organizing child care, elderly care, being a large employer, as tax collector and when doing political prioritizing, this affects women and men differently. There is, however, no agreement as to in what extent state interventions can be enforced onto municipalities. On the other hand there is an act that gives municipalities’ permission to undertake any action related to their own circumstances (Larsson & Bäck 2008).

In a third scenario the systematic use of gender analysis tools in the design and implementation of all policies is the signature piece of contemporary gender policy (Sweden). What this means in practice is that all public, private, and voluntary organizations (for example, ministries, public authorities, private firms, voluntary associations, and so on) become active participants in the attainment of gender equality in society and that they use dedicated means and methods for that purpose” (Daly 2005).

It is emphasized that an important factor in Swedes success is that there has been integration at all levels referring to gender mainstreaming. But in an national audit evaluation of gender equality politics and gender mainstreaming information about the municipalities is not sufficient, because it is not known what the municipalities actuality does to improve gender equality (Statskontoret 2005:15).
The mix-up between gender mainstreaming and gender equality

Then we turn to the construction of gender mainstreaming and gender equality and the perceived historical relevance and impact on contemporary politics. The construction of this element is by larger degree found in different actors from the velvet triangle. The collaboration between the state, the women’s movement and the academic field is present in many of the texts presented in this section. First we turn to an academic text where we find the following statement:

> In the international arena of GM, Sweden has always had special relevance. GM has been practiced since the 1970s (formally adopted as a central strategy in 1994) and there is strong institutionalization of gender equality policies [...]. Sweden is seen as having particularly favourable preconditions for GM, including a wide diffusion of egalitarian values, historic dominance of leftist parties, and over 50 percent female representation in the Riksdag (Parliament) (Hankivsky 2005: 633, bold markings by author).

Besides the references to what is described as gender mainstreaming history, the practiced politics, this statement indicates something more. It mixes institutionalization of gender equality policies and the implementation of gender mainstreaming in Sweden. This mix-up is also present in a text categorized as grey literature; a book published on behalf of United Nation and edited by an academic scholar. The chapter on Sweden is authored by a former femocrat, with experience from Swedish government, European commission and the Nordic Council of Ministers. She states that “it is important to realize that this ´model´ is based on a long democratic tradition” (Åseskog 2003, p160). In True and Mintrom (2001) article about transnational diffusion on gender mainstreaming, Sweden is described as an early and high level adoption country already in the time period of 1980-1984. They conclude that Sweden has a long history of gender equality politics but they do not present the empirical basis for this analysis but explains that characteristically for high level is central positioning and central planning in government bureaucracies (True & Mintrom 2001). In line with the argument about the mix-up between gender equality policy and gender mainstreaming, it can be noted that
Sweden had an established gender equality polity in the 1980’s. But the earliest articulations of gender mainstreaming can be found in 1987 were the Swedish government bill for gender equality argues that an assessment should be made about how decisions in different areas will affect women and men should be made prior to reforms (Proposition 1987:88:105). In light of this the quotation from Dalys article above can be revisited. In two domestic grey papers two different interpretations of the total integration at all levels can be found. The first is from a consultant documentation describing that the different local projects which have started due to external consulting since the 1990s has in fact not resulted in a lasting method on the local level. It also states that there does not exist any evaluations conducted by academic scholars that shows how 3R is implemented over time, including evaluations of its effects (Lundkvist 2010:11), and almost none focusing on the effects of gender mainstreaming (Norrbin & Olsson 2010). The other paper is best described as a pamphlet or report about gender mainstreaming, from the regional level of the governmental administration. The text is authored by a consultant/femocrat, active in the formation of the domestic framing and implementation of gender mainstreaming. A large part of this text consists of an expose over Swedish gender equality history, before the remaining part of the report that deals with how to establish or initiative gender mainstreaming in Swedish municipalities. When earlier project on gender mainstreaming is presented, the focus is on the initial fast with intended activities and strategies (Åström 2007).

The Swedish contribution

The development of gender mainstreaming is an example of multi-level governance where Sweden played a role (Pierre & Peters 2000, Callerstig 2014). Sweden was seemingly active in transnational networks and involved at the early stage of this policy process as well as later on.
Reasons for being active in marketing strategies or the spread of ideas can be normative, in the sense that it is considered to be the right way. Other alternative reasons for the spread of GM is to be “modern” or to satisfy constraint tied to allocation of funds, usually EU, or to improve effectiveness of government (Daly 2005). Another possible argument are that because Sweden lacks “hard law” in the field of gender equality, international agreements is very important. It is one way of pushing the domestic development, by having to live up to the binding international agreements in both the EU and UN, as the Amsterdam treaty or the Beijing document Platform for action. In that way the national level can be by-past and by applying multi-layered governance advantages can be achieved.

Another aspect of the construction of Sweden and gender mainstreaming intimate relationships is the connection to the Beijing conferens in 1995 (Silvell 2000, Stratigaki 2005). Silvells text is grey literature from the Nordic Council of Ministers final report on gender mainstreaming in the Nordic countries. She emphasise Sweden’s involvement in the transnational arena regarding implementing gender mainstreaming. Sweden’s participation in the Beijing conference is described as important and Stratigaki gives a special acknowledgement to the Swedish delegation in Beijing in one of her footnotes (2005).

The entrance of Sweden in EU, as one of the Nordic states, in 1995, is also described as a part of a window of opportunity when implementing gender mainstreaming in EU. According to Callerstig (2014), and Pollack & Hafner-Burton (2000), the Swedish civil servants who arrived at Brussels where familiar with gender mainstreaming and therefor a driving force in its development.

---

3 Sweden do have some hard laws in sub-fields regarding gender equality issues, for instance parental leave for both parents, laws against violence against women, discrimination laws etc.
Market constructions

Starting up

One aspect of the construction of market is the element of starting up, or initiative. Examples of this can be found in both grey and academic literature.

What makes Sweden distinct among all the cases is that in September 2011, the government reconfirmed its commitment to strengthening GM by developing a specific platform designed to cut across central, regional, and local levels. It is composed of: a strategy for GM in the government offices; a development program for government agencies; support for GM at the regional level; quality assurance of the development of GM in municipalities and county councils; and initiatives to gather and share experience and knowledge concerning the practical implementation of GM (Government Offices of Sweden 2013) (Hankivsky 2005: 633, bold marking by author).

It can be argued here that it is the starting up process that is referred to when describing Sweden as a ‘model country’. As shown in the quotation above, it is the development and initiatives that are put forward when describing Sweden, not the result or effects. This has ramifications on how the story of gender mainstreaming is told. Returning to Åseskog, she claims that “the mainstreaming process has only begun in Sweden and it is not possible to evaluate effects on policy processes in general” (Åseskog 2003, p 159). When turning to the resent conducted national program of PSGE, financed by SALAR(see below), when the Swedish government hastily gave SALAR the task to improve gender mainstreaming in the cities/municipalities in 2008, the story of starting up and initiative are still present. In the evaluations of the program PSGE it is stated that it has been focused on the process of the project rather than the possible effects on gender equality. In the evaluation of the program, Kontigo, the consultants conducting the evaluation this is repeated which shows that this construct is still present (Kontigo 2011).

---

4 Interview, Karin Karlsbo, Department of Integration and Gender Equality, 2010-02-19.
The second part of the market construction is the perception of volume, in that Sweden has moved beyond the most critical point of implementation.

For many years, Sweden has had, in its association of municipalities, large-scale projects on gender equality in local authorities. In connection with mainstreaming, a program called 3-Rs was launched and carried out by municipalities themselves (Woodward 2003a: 79)

The idea that gender mainstreaming seemed to travel among local authorities about the same time in the Swedish municipalities can be partly explained by the influence of the organization SALAR. SALAR being an independent employer and lobby organization for Sweden’s municipalities and regions and depend on financial support from the government and thus having entanglements into the national political arenas. The municipalities employee and lobby organization, SALAR, has played a leading role in both discourse production and in pushing gender mainstreaming into local politics, in two waves, one in the 90’s and one in the late 2000. A policy process started in 1995 when the government created expert and project groups and gave SALAR financial support with the task to improve gender equality policy in Swedish municipalities/cities by implementing the program JämKom (Svenska kommunförbundet 1998). The program JämKom was a pilot-project and took place in one or two selected board/committee in six municipalities with the aim to implement the so called 3R method (representation, resources and realia) on gender mainstreaming (Åseskog 2003). The articulations found in the final report from the projects (Svenska kommunförbundet 1998) are rearticulated in variation in other texts (Woodward 2003, Åseskog 2003, Åström 2007, Jutterdal 2008, Lundkvist 2010). As shown, the outcome of the program is also found in the academic literature, in the quotation from Woodward above, the articulation of the large-scale municipality project derives from this pilot-project in six municipalities. Possible effects and
achievements aside, a project consisting of six municipalities’ (of Sweden’s 290) cannot really account for a large-scale project.

Evident in the grey text by Åström (2007) is partly the push for external expertise, or as she calls it, the flying expert. Secondly is the focus on different management techniques. The interest for different management techniques was already established as a part of NPM trend in the municipalities (Montin 2007). Those two major themes in Åström (2007) are what Kantola and Squires refers to when calling on the change towards market feminism (2012). When gender mainstreaming had a boost at local level in Sweden 2008, this was a major feature. This time it is a real large-scale project which may be understood as a show-case for the government who wishes to create an image of strong gender equality policy. The financial impact on how gender mainstreaming was introduced to Swedish municipalities through the national program PSGE, and this 25 million euro funding accents this. When trying to identify the velvet triangle in the PSGE, the pillar of women’s movement is absent. This development is consistent with the increased influence from market feminism, when in the triangle the women’s movement has been replaced by consultants (Kantola & Squires 2012. There is also an overlap or flow between academics and consultants, in that the PSGE program is overseen by academic consultants [Swedish: följeforskare], academic scholars who are preforming consultant advising and process evaluations. The PSGE is in line with the neo-liberal shift of gender equality (Rönnblom 2011). This is articulated through how evaluations are designed. Kantola and Squires points to the change in accountability from states towards the market. This is articulated in a report from SALAR. This report states that many evaluations in Sweden focus on the extent of the project, in variables as participations, and the participants’ opinion of the project, instead of the effects of the projects. The report further concludes that this kind of evaluation doesn’t say anything about if and how any increase in gender equality has been
achieved (Jutterdal 2008:41). Because of the limitations on specific projects objections, rather than on national objectives, this allows for the state to act as a back-drop instead of being liable for projects, effects and how the objections are achieved.

**Conclusion**

In conclusion one must argue that the confusion and mix-up between gender mainstreaming, (viewed as a strategy), and gender equality (as a policy objective), is one vital part of the construction of Sweden as the best case of gender mainstreaming. Rather than arguing for the spread and transmission of the Swedish way of doing gender mainstreaming, other aspects should be put forward. Such an aspect is the Swedish welfare state. In line with Esping-Andersen categorisation of welfare regime, this should be recognized or imitated. This way of transference between form (gender mainstreaming) and content (the socialdemocratic welfare state/ individual earner-carer) with no sensitivity to the original context is remarkable because it allows for myths to turn in to stories.

One can conclude that there is obscurity concerning the objective of the few evaluations that exist. Where evaluations do exist, they don’t evaluate the effects of the projects on gender equality objections. It must also be seen as a gross overstatement to conclude that the strategy of gender mainstreaming is implemented at all levels in the Swedish public administration as argued in Daly (2005).

In the introductory sections I claimed that there were several parallels between the emergence of entrepreneurship and gender mainstreaming. In Gibbs argumentation the possible spread of ignorance is partly dependent on conceptions on how the world works. In the analysis it can be
concluded that Sweden works as an example of fortunate variation and development, and this works as proof of how the world is constituted.

It can be concluded that the spread of ideas in multilevel governance has not been one-way and ideas have spread in different directions, and by different actors. The importance of the velvet triangle has been repeated in literature, but the empirical data supports the argument by Kantola and Squires because it shows trademarks associated to market feminism. The replacement of women’s movement to market feminism should be investigated further, as the effects of this change are not researched in the context of the Swedish welfare state. Such investigations could give new findings and key aspects of how myths are constructed, as well as the how this myths functions in politics.

References


European Institute for Gender Equality (2013) *Gender Equality Index Report*.


Government.se/genderequality [read: 2014-11-08]


Laclau. 1990.
Levi-Strauss. 1968.
Lundkvist, Fredrik. 2010. 3R metoden – 10 års erfarenhet av jämställdhetsintegrering.
Proposition 1987/88:105 Om jämställdhetspolitiken inför 90-talet
Proposition 1993/94:147 Jämställdhetspolitiken: Delad makt delat ansvar.
Riksrevisionsverket 2000:17 Jämställdhet – hur styr regeringen?
Statskontoret 2005:1 En effektivare jämställdhetspolitik


UN: index 2013


Åseskog, Britta (2003) National machinery for Gender Equality in Sweden and other Nordic countries in Mainstreaming Gender, Democratizing the State?: Institutional Mechanisms for ...