Making equality work:  
Ambiguities, conflicts and change agents in the implementation of equality policies in public sector organisations

Every day, all over the world, public servants transform political decisions into action. Some of their work concerns the implementation of equality policies within public sector organisations. In this thesis the focus is on how equality policies are put into practice.

In international comparisons, Sweden is among the most equal of societies. However, there seems to be a contradiction between the widespread support for equality as a policy, and the conflicts and ambiguities that arise during its implementation. Yet, not all equality policies are the same; they differ both in terms of their content and the organisation of the work. So, how do these presumed differences affect the implementation work? And how do equality workers go about implementing equality policies?

In the thesis, these and related questions are discussed in relation to a study of one particular kind of equality strategy: gender mainstreaming. The starting point is that implementation is seen as the enactment of policies. The study examines how the implementation process developed over time, and the impact of the micro-practices of the "gender mainstreamers" involved. Overall, this research has sought to provide insights into the factors influencing the implementation process, and how these factors change over time. Different types and levels of conflict, both together and interlinked with different ambiguities, affect the practical work of implementing equality policy, where dilemmas inherent in the concepts of "gender", "equality" and "change" become central. The study shows how the specific preconditions for the implementation of gender mainstreaming make the local arenas of implementation crucial for understanding the outcomes, and how the conditions for implementation are themselves dynamic, changing over time.

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