Anne-Charlott Callerstig

Making equality work:

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

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- II. Callerstig, A-C. 2012. Gender equality and public services. In Lindholm, K. (ed.). 2012. *Gender Mainstreaming in Public Sector Organisations: Policy implications and practical applications*. Lund: Studentlitteratur (first published in Swedish in 2011)
- III. Callerstig, A-C. and Lindholm, K. 2011. The contradictory work with gender mainstreaming. English translation of article first published in *Tidskrift för genusvetenskap* (TGV) Nr. 2-3:79-96, 2011.
- IV. Callerstig, A-C. 2012. Public servants as agents for change in gender mainstreaming: the complexity of practice. In Andersson S., Berglund, K., Gunnarsson, E. and Sundin, E. (eds.). 2012. *Promoting Innovation: Policies, practices and procedures*. Stockholm: VINNOVA.
- V. Callerstig, A-C. and Lindholm, K. 2013. Effects of gender mainstreaming. In Svensson, L., Brulin, G., Jansson, S. and Sjöberg, K. (eds.) 2013. *Capturing Effects in Programmes and Projects*. Lund : Studentlitteratur.

INTRODUCTION

Realising equality through public sector organisations.

Why study equality work in public sector organisations?

Why should we care about work in public sector organisations when trying to understand the outcomes of equality policies? Does it really matter? I believe it does, and I think I have a strong case to support my argument too. It may in fact be that to a large degree politics is shaped and given content in public administration more than it being a matter of decisions taken by politicians.

All over the world, every day millions of bureaucrats transform political decisions into actions. In Sweden alone, in 2012, there were approximately 1 300 000 people employed in public sector organisations, the majority working in local municipalities (SCB 2012). Public servants are professionals charged with the specific task of turning overarching and often imprecise political objectives into concrete actions. They are people like you and me who might strive to be neutral but will inevitably influence the way politics is given content and is carried out. The way in which they implement policies, within any given context, will in the end have a great impact on the results. This has led some political scientists to suggest that political administration *is* politics (Jacobsen 1997).

In keeping with this way of thinking, my area of concern is, as the title suggests, equality politics, with the main focus being on equality politics concerned with political, social and economic conditions from a gender perspective or what is sometimes referred to as the *politics of gender equality*.

In this thesis the focus is on the implementation of equality policies in public sector organisations. This is where politics becomes “fixed” (Lombardo, Meier and Verloo 2009, Bustelo and Verloo 2009), that is, the process where a particular meaning and content is given to equality objectives that are often vaguely formulated. This “fixation”, or the establishment of the meaning of equality in terms of what it is (or is not) and how it can be achieved, followed by actions undertaken to realise the objectives set for implementation, is an intricate two-way process. In this process, agency and framework conditions are interlinked in complex patterns that produce the specific and contextual outcomes of politics. Studying implementation processes means focusing on this particular process, or “what happens between policy expectations and (perceived) policy results” (Hill and Hupe 2009) and trying to understand why this is so.

Gender equality politics has a fairly long history in state interventions. In many countries, including Sweden, it has been institutionalised into the welfare state system since the 1970s. The implementation of equality politics in public

sector organisations thus has a comparatively long history. But, at the same time, the implementation process in public sector organisations has been sadly under-researched (Stivers 2002, Connell 2006). One reason might be that public administration and the public servants who inhabit it are still understood by many to be the neutral tools of politics, the Weberian ideal type of rational and objective implementers. They attract less interest among political scientists than what are understood to be areas of high politics, such as the actions and decisions of high-profile politicians in national or international assemblies. Another explanation might be that a gender perspective and studies of gender equality politics have been the focus of relatively few studies overall compared to mainstream research in areas such as organisation studies, implementation research or political science in general. Most studies are still conducted without a gender perspective and on policy areas other than gender equality. The lack of this particular type of research is also visible in feminist or gender research fields. There has been little focus within gender research on public administration or policy implementation processes in general and on the implementation of gender equality politics more specifically.¹

The presence of a gender perspective in politics is nevertheless, according to many politicians and scholars alike, understood to be crucial in effectively addressing many of the world's current social, political and economic crises (Walby 2011). The somewhat low level of interest in the implementation of research in the area of gender equality politics is therefore surprising. The lack of interest in researching how the work done in public sector organisations affects the outcomes, or what happens after a policy has been adopted, is troublesome. The way in which equality politics has taken shape within the framework of public sector organisations is crucial in understanding gender equality politics, its processes and outcomes, in order to understand why certain policy measures are being used, what the results are and why, to name just a few examples in relation to the policy area itself.

It is important, from a democratic point of view, because the work in public sector organisations gives legitimacy to the political system and because transparency and accountability are key to public influence. It is important from the point of view that the delivery of public services needs to be efficient and not misuse the public funding that taxpayers provide. It is important in order to understand how political organisations and policy processes might be improved and what kind of public discussions need to take place to improve its content. Another strong argument is that a lot of evidence suggests that implementation problems in relation to gender equality politics are frequent and thus need more research. This argument is especially important from a *feminist implementation*

¹ This is not said to diminish, in any way, the important research that has been done in other and related fields such as feminist policy studies, theories around state feminism and politics or feminist evaluation studies, but rather to direct attention to the implementation perspective.

perspective, a subject matter and a theoretical framework that have been on my mind since the very beginning and which will be discussed at some length in the theoretical section to follow.

Turning back to the topic of this thesis, and in light of the arguments above, I am starting my journey with the firm belief that implementation processes and public administration are an essential part of the political system, and an important and often understudied part of the process; this is not, however, the whole story. To study implementation also means to study organisations. And to study the implementation of public policies means to study the actors and processes within public sector organisations. In fact, to study the implementation of equality policies in public sector organisations, be it the introduction of new gender equality units or policy objectives, means to study implementation as an organisational change and learning process. This is because new objectives and policies seldom come with ready-made solutions; instead, public servants have to learn how to solve the problems in focus and they have to invent solutions, and, most of the time, this entails changing the way things are done. This will be discussed further in the theoretical sections to follow.

To learn more about the prerequisites for the implementation of gender equality policies in public sector organisations, I needed an example, and preferably one that could be studied and compared as case studies. I have chosen to study the implementation of a particular type of policy or equality strategy: the implementation of so-called *general* policies, or meta-policy instruments; i.e. an instrument that seeks to rationalise existing ones (Halpern, Jacquot and Les Galés 2008) by integrating new perspectives. This can be found, for example, in environmental policies from the early 1990s (Angell and Klassen 1999). In terms of equality politics, it means studying the implementation of an equality policy that has as its overall aim to place equality perspectives and equality political goals, to *integrate* them, at the centre of other, or what are understood as “mainstream”, political areas and policy processes.

Gender mainstreaming

I have focused on the case of *gender mainstreaming*; an approach that has rapidly spread around the world since the mid-1990s when it was early on adopted and recognised as a key strategy by the UN. The strategy of gender mainstreaming is today an international phenomenon (Walby 2005), it has been adopted by politicians and put into practice in many parts of the world and as such is irresistibly interesting to researchers, like myself, studying its implementation in the realm of gender politics. It is also a widely “contested concept” and one where the borders between theory and practice have been found to be particularly thin (Walby 2005, 2011). This makes gender mainstreaming exceptionally interesting in terms of the development of gender equality politics in general and

in relation to comparisons and discussions about how to understand different types of equality policies or strategies.

Gender mainstreaming is an important part of contemporary gender equality politics and the feminist movement. It was introduced by feminists as a way of coming to terms with some of the difficulties they encountered and as a means of revitalising equality work. It might be considered as a prolongation of state feminism, if state feminism is understood to be activities of government structures that are formally charged with furthering women's status and rights or the "gender equality machinery" put in place in many countries (MacBride, Stetson and Mazur 1995, Kantola and Squires 2012). The consequences of such development might be efforts to mainstream gender issues across state institutions, not only limited to women's agencies. Other trends are also likely to have contributed to the development of gender mainstreaming, such as the influential ideas of New Public Management (a point made by several authors, one being Jacquot 2010). It has also been influenced by broader societal processes visible in the spreading of ideas often associated with neo-liberalism and also trends of globalism. These developments have been argued to more broadly affect state practices and changes to feminism, such as diversity politics and changes towards a more market-oriented feminism (Kantola and Outshoorn 2007, Kantola and Squires 2012).

Gender mainstreaming is, as mentioned above, both a success story and also a highly contested strategy for change (Hearn 2012). Sylvia Walby (2011) argues that, despite the claims of some early 21st century debates, feminism is not dead; it is quite the opposite: very much alive and creative. The "feminist project" has, however, transformed; it has taken new shapes and entered into new areas that make it unrecognisable to some. Part of the transformation lies in the strategy of gender mainstreaming. This development has led to the introduction and integration of feminist issues and gender knowledge into the heart of mainstream organisational work, where it is currently transforming the political agenda (ibid.). Others have taken a less optimistic view, agreeing in principle that gender mainstreaming is a possible, even likely, transformative strategy but that it has been much more difficult to accomplish in practice than was originally foreseen (Verloo 2005). It has been found to be a disappointment (for an overview of these discussions, see for example Jacquot 2010, Meier and Celis 2011). The feminist project might not so easily transport itself into mainstream politics. The cost might be losing the political edge once gender policies become intermingled with other political objectives and, even worse, it might become an alibi for cutting financial resources for other types of initiatives, such as specific actions for women (Stratigaki 2005). Gender mainstreaming has also been problematised as a particularly vague strategy and more about format than content, where creating new checklists and tool-boxes becomes the end of the strategy, rather than facilitating any real transformation and thus rendering it to be a solely technocratic or procedural approach (Meier and Celis 2011). It has been seen as an example of the general neo-liberal trend in public administration where the quest for eco-

conomic efficiency, measurability and control has spread at the cost of values such as justice and equality. These discussions and trends are all part of the general context of my study and I will return to them to make some general observations later.

There are, however, still a lot of blank spots and research is needed in order to gain a better understanding of the implementation of gender mainstreaming and its outcomes (Mergaert 2012). There are still many different and important questions that need to be asked, particularly concerning the practical applications of the strategy, before any concrete conclusions can be drawn about its effectiveness. And research is needed to inform the discussion about the observed differences in terms of the outcomes of different types of equality policies or strategies and why this might be so.

To sum up so far: I have chosen to study the policy area of gender equality and the case of gender mainstreaming from an implementation perspective where gender, equality, public sector organisations and actors are all important and recurring themes. These issues will be described and discussed in more detail in the chapters that follow in the first part of the thesis (the introduction) and in the five published papers that constitute the second part of the thesis. The results upon which my study draws are derived from four different case studies of the implementation of gender mainstreaming in three public sector organisations: two Swedish local municipalities (with two case studies in one and one case study in the other) and one government agency. Three of the gender mainstreaming initiatives (in the municipalities) studied are part of the Programme for Gender Mainstreaming, a development programme for gender mainstreaming in local municipalities funded by the Swedish government and run by the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SALAR). The fourth case study focuses on the work carried out in a Swedish government agency due to the general provisions in Sweden for government agencies to work with gender mainstreaming. Three of the initiatives thus have similar pre-conditions and one differs in significant ways, which makes it a good starting point for a multiple and comparative case study (Yin 2006), further explained in the section on the research process.

With personal experience as a “femocrat” myself (*femocrat* is a term that has been used to describe civil servants working with gender equality, either as a specific position or as a complement to other tasks; see Borchorst (1999) for an account of femocrats in the Nordic countries), I know that the work to implement gender equality policies in public sector organisations is not easy; in fact, it is very difficult. My admiration goes out to those who, year after year, try to make the world of tomorrow a little bit better, often with very limited resources, lack of sympathy and sometimes even in the face of severe resistance. When I first set out on the quest to learn more about the prerequisites, the complications and the beneficial factors in the process of implementation of equality policies, it was these actors I had in mind, their ambitions and actions and their working environments. I wanted to understand why some gender equality initiatives seem to

make a big difference while others fail utterly. What were the specific ingredients or variables of those different initiatives and how did they impact, negatively or positively, on the implementation process, on the practical work? And how can the strategy of gender mainstreaming be understood from this perspective? Is it a good strategy for implementing gender equality objectives in public sector organisations? Is it a good strategy for creating a more gender-equal society? I do not pretend to be able to answer all of these questions, and the scope has to be a bit narrower for practical reasons, but I hope that the study can make a contribution to knowledge about the implementation of equality policies by highlighting some of these perspectives.

The preconditions and causes of change, such as the impact of change agents and organisational or institutional features (which may limit or enable change), are all important for the outcomes of policy implementation processes. The implementation is reliant on individuals as actors both in the way in which they generally effect implementation, how they “do” gender (West and Zimmerman 1987) and how they will adopt new policies to de-gender them or “undo” gender (Deutsch 2007). In the course of the research process, I have departed from different theoretical perspectives that seemed to bring important elements into the explanation of the results of the case studies. They have been at the crossroads of gender theory, organisational studies and traditional policy implementation studies. These perspectives that, taken separately, have not seemed to be sufficient to open the “black box” of the implementation of equality policies, have together proved more fruitful and formed the foundations of my studies, which I refer to as *feminist implementation studies*, to be explained in the theoretical chapter.

Another important feature of my study is that I have chosen an interactive research approach to accompany the empirical research, exploring questions together *with* participants of gender mainstreaming initiatives rather than doing studies *on* them, because I believe it is a suitable approach for my studies. It produces good research results, hopefully it aids in the development of the practical work and it also, from my point of view, makes the research more fun. I will discuss why I understand this to be so in the chapter about the research process. For now, it is sufficient to say that the interactive approach has placed the participating gender equality practitioners, the gender mainstreamers, at the centre of the research process, in my accounts of the results and in the analysis.

This is therefore my own story, their story, and our joint story. Hopefully, it can shed some light on the implementation of equality policies in public sector organisations and how such policies may be developed as well as making a more theoretical contribution to the topic of the implementation of gender equality policies in public sector organisations.

Aims and research questions

In the following section I will outline the main aim and the questions that have guided my study. The overall aim of the study is to contribute to knowledge about the implementation of equality policies in public sector organisations. Through the study of influential factors that impact on the implementation process of gender equality policies, the ambition is to contribute to an understanding of the outcome of implementation processes within this policy field.

The study focuses on the implementation process of *integration or mainstreaming strategies*, i.e. strategies that seek to integrate an equality perspective, or dimension, into everyday policy planning and delivery and by the ordinary actors in public sector organisations. This is done by studying the factors influencing the implementation process of gender mainstreaming. Individual case studies have been conducted on four gender mainstreaming initiatives in two local municipalities and one government agency and the results have been studied individually and also compared in a meta-analysis. The main research questions are:

- How was gender mainstreaming implemented in the selected cases?
- What were the main factors influencing the implementation process and why?
- What was the role of actors in the work to implement gender mainstreaming?

Some important clarifications, definitions and delimitations

What kind of phenomenon is gender mainstreaming and how might it be studied? In the following section I will continue to discuss gender mainstreaming as a specific type of policy, measure or strategy and also discuss some of the more general questions that have been raised about its effectiveness and implementation. A more detailed description of the history of gender mainstreaming and prior research will follow in a later chapter.

Gender mainstreaming as a case: a meta-instrument for implementation and a policy in itself

There are several definitions of gender mainstreaming. According to one often-cited definition, gender mainstreaming is the:

[...](re)organisation, improvement, development and evaluation of policy processes, so that a gender equality perspective is incorporated in all policies at all levels and at all stages, by the actors normally involved in policy-making (The Council of Europe's Group 1998).

Gender mainstreaming was launched by the UN in the mid 1990s as a way to boost work with gender equality by expanding it into new and non-specific gender equality policies and policy areas. So how can we understand what type of

gender equality policy gender mainstreaming is in terms of its implementation? Gender mainstreaming can be seen as an example of what in Sweden are sometimes called the “general demands” that are placed on public-sector organisations (Grönlund and Svärdsten 2005). It is furthermore the main strategy in implementing the overarching national gender equality objectives and in this respect it is an example of a horizontal implementation process (Svärdsten and Grönlund 2005). This makes it different from other equality policies, such as those that focus on a specific objective and follow a more linear implementation process.

In previous research there have been several attempts to account for different types of gender equality strategies or policies. There have been attempts to describe them chronologically, such as in terms of their historical development, or by structuring them by their change strategy or in terms of their underlying assumptions about what constitutes gender equality and how to achieve it. Often, three main gender equality models are discussed in relation to equality strategies with a somewhat different terminology (Squires 2005, Rees 2001, Wittbom 2009). One example is a model developed by Teresa Rees (1998, 2001, 2005), in which she defined three different general policy approaches in gender equality strategies in the European Union (EU) that she calls “Tinkering”, “Tailoring”, and “Transforming”. According to Rees, these three approaches can also be related to three different time periods: the 1970s, the 1980s and the 1990s. Rees describes tinkering as policies aiming at equal treatment, individual rights and legal remedies. This was the main approach during the 1970s. Tailoring approaches, which came to be dominant during the 1980s, build on the notion of group disadvantage. Women as a group have traditionally been disadvantaged in relation to men and tailoring approaches build on initiatives to help women compete with men on equal terms. Both tinkering and tailoring strategies are built on liberal feminist perspectives and have been challenged on the grounds that they do not question, but accept, the male norm. The transformative perspective which surfaced during the 1990s via the gender mainstreaming concept, argues Rees, focuses on systems and structures and builds on a relational view of gender that emphasises differences between women and between men (*ibid.*). Deconstruction and redistribution of power are important aspects of the transformative approach. Judith Squires has described the development in a similar way in strategies focusing on “inclusion”, “reversal” and “displacement” (2005), later also described in terms of a focus on “presence”, “voice” and “process”; gender mainstreaming being an example of the latter (Squires 2007).

Even though there might be an agreement in principle about the type of strategy to which gender mainstreaming can be related (post-modern, de-constructive, process and systems oriented), there have been many discussions suggesting that the strategy in itself can incorporate many different definitions of gender and gender equality along the lines of perspectives such as difference, similarity and diversity or liberal and radical approaches, and these differences have consequences for its implementation (Nentwich 2006, Walby 2005). It has been sug-

gested that these different perspectives themselves create variations in terms of the actors and measures that are understood to be appropriate in gender mainstreaming (Squires 2005, Nentwich 2006), described in the table (Table 1) below.

Table 1. Variations in mainstreaming strategies

	INCLUSION	REVERSAL	DISPLACEMENT
Model	Integrationist	Agenda-setting	Transformative
Gender Perspective	Equality	Difference	Diversity
Aims	Neutral policy-making	Recognising marginalised voices	Denaturalising and thereby politicising policy norms
Processes Indicators	Bureaucratic Policy instruments	Consultative Politics of presence	Deliberative Cultural transformation
Actors	Experts	Identity groups	Political citizens

Source: Adapted from Squires 2005

Others have emphasised the fact that the different perspectives can be said to be complementary rather than exclusive (Booth and Bennett 2002, Stratigaki 2004). This vagueness in terms of what gender mainstreaming strategy entails, i.e. what type of gender equality model it supports, has been put forward as a potential explanation for policy failure and one of the inherent problems of gender mainstreaming (Squires 2005). It is reasonably clear, however, that gender mainstreaming is intended as a policy measure that should be applied in other policy areas and measures. In line with this thinking, Jacquot has called it a “meta-instrument” (Jacquot 2010, p.124), which she defines as an instrument to coordinate existing policy instruments and make them more effective. It is thus aimed at rationalising other instruments, but is also a gender equality policy in itself (Jacquot 2010, p.124). Gender mainstreaming can contain a wide spectrum of policy tools or policy instruments. Gender mainstreaming initiatives typically start with an examination of the current conditions, such as with a mapping of inequality in an organisation, setting out how and why a gender and gender-equality perspective is relevant. Gender-based differences are then analysed, and a plan of what needs to be done is drawn up if this is considered necessary. In order to analyse gender differences, theories about the importance of gender in different contexts and policy frameworks and criteria for evaluating gender differences in relation to existing gender-equality policy frameworks are needed.

Suggestions for the specific actions and changes that are deemed necessary are then made and implemented, at least in principle (Callerstig and Lindholm 2013). Because gender mainstreaming is a meta-instrument, implementation will vary according to its usage by different actors (Jacquot 2010). As a meta-instrument to be applied in many different types of settings, gender mainstreaming opens up space for different types of interventions, in very different policy areas and in different sectors of society. The common factor here is that gender mainstreaming seeks to reveal and *de-gender politics and policy*, i.e. to incorporate a gender dimension into existing policy fields and into public sector organisations, with gender equality as its main aim and overarching objective.

In terms of its context, gender mainstreaming can be said to be part of a larger trend of governance and more precisely “governance by insertion” (Jacquot 2010). This means that it belongs to a set of transversal policy instruments aimed at managing multidimensional and complex issues, such as gender equality, through integration both horizontally and systematically at all stages of policy-making and all levels of the governance system (Jacquot 2010, p. 119; see also Halpern *et al.* 2008). This will be discussed further below, but let us first turn our attention to some of the issues that have been discussed around gender mainstreaming.

Gender mainstreaming and its implementation: some issues and questions

How then can gender mainstreaming be studied in terms of its implementation process and with a gender perspective as the focus? As has by now become clear, gender mainstreaming is a simple yet complicated strategy. Gender mainstreaming, as a meta-instrument, targets the core processes of policy implementation, what might be seen as the backbone of public administration. With this approach also come difficulties, such as the risk of being co-opted, the risk of being silenced in organisational power struggles and the risk of too much emphasis being placed on strategies of change from ‘within’, potentially draining resources from other types of initiatives. And as Ferguson so eloquently asked back in the 1980s: can the master’s tools really change the master’s house? (Ferguson 1989²), implying that the intricate relationships within societies are built on gender injustices and the role of its institutions is to (re)create them. A general starting point for my studies is the notion that public sector organisations are gendered in a multitude of ways and that this affects the implementation of policies (in various fields), which will be discussed further in the theoretical chapter in this introduction. The ambition of gender mainstreaming is that it should lead to “better” implementation in that it seeks to understand the ways in which general (mainstream) policies are gendered and how that affects the process of imple-

² The quotation is originally from Audre Lorde “For the master’s tools will never dismantle the masters’ house” Lorde (1984).

mentation and, in the longer run, the outcome in terms of equality from a gender perspective. And not only this, gender mainstreaming has the ambition to be “transformative”. Jahan explains how the strategy aims at transformation processes that entail:

[...] prioritising gender objectives among competing issues, reorienting the mainstream political agenda by rethinking and re-articulating policy ends and means from a gender perspective. (Jahan 1995, p.13)

In doing so, “women not only become part of the mainstream, they also reorient the nature of the mainstream” (Jahan 1995, p. 13). Gender mainstreaming at the level of *policy-makers* in the European Council’s definition, above, is about policy formulation, to ensure that a gender perspective will be applied throughout the policy processes of a (any) political field. Objectives on gender equality should ideally guide these endeavours and *specific* policies and initiatives to eradicate gender inequality and gender-based discrimination should be kept in a dual-track fashion as is emphasised, for example, by the EU. Results from gender analyses, conducted as a consequence of gender mainstreaming, can lead, as Jahan claims, to new, re-formulated objectives or the “prioritisation” of gender-equality objectives that can be included in other policies or in policies of its own, thus informing current or creating new political agendas, similar to Jahan’s description of a transformational process above (Jahan 1995). So should this not then be enough to guarantee a gender perspective in public policies? No, because the unavoidable discretion of public professionals (see for example Lipsky 1980 for a discussion), which is a necessary part of all implementation processes (including the role of public officials in planning and delivering policies), makes it necessary to put in place mechanisms for actors to uncover the gendered aspects of mainstream policies also at the implementation stage of the policy process (how to differentiate between policy and implementation will be further discussed in the theoretical chapter). Gender mainstreaming at the level of public administration deals with the implementation of policies, even though it is clear that public officials themselves are involved in policy-making through the way in which they can affect the implementation of policy objectives and also be involved in policy formulation (Jacobsen 1997). The “actors normally involved in policy-making” in the above definition therefore, according to my understanding, also include public servants.

To study the work with gender mainstreaming in public sector organisations is to study the implementation of a meta-instrument or policy in itself, but it is also to study the gendering and de-gendering of implementation processes, i.e. what gender mainstreaming entails in practice. In Sweden, as will be explained in the background chapter, many gender mainstreaming initiatives have targeted public servants and public service in the delivery phase. However, the above reasoning also points to the fact that politicians are important actors since the mainstreaming process aims at a more structural transformation, such as in Jahan’s

description above, which is beyond the mandate of public servants, at least in principle. And it has been argued that the effectiveness of a mainstreaming programme depends on the extent to which it makes connections with existing policy frameworks (Verloo 2000, Teghtsoonian 2004). Yet, it is public servants who have the professional and in-depth knowledge of the policy areas where they work and who can analyse and suggest necessary changes based on this. The linkage between public servants and decision makers therefore seems to be of particular importance in relation to gender mainstreaming.

Gender mainstreaming and the context: Public sector organisations

As has already been explained, I am studying the implementation of equality policies in public sector organisations and it is important to say a few words about this context. One important issue is to discuss the relevance of this context for my study, or, phrased differently: what is special about public sector organisations compared to other types of organisations, particularly in the Swedish context and in terms of implementation? Even though I am not investigating public sector organisations per se, they are the context and the sites for my studies. The specific features of public sector organisations, such as being within the domain of the state in a broader sense, and within the discourse of public service and public ethos, are believed to have specific consequences for the implementation process (Lundqvist 1994). Some of these consequences are discussed in the theoretical chapter but it is necessary to discuss a few aspects here. Also, it should be emphasised that “organisations” are not here understood in a simplistic way, but as embedded in a social context, referring to both the social places of organisations and the social structurings of social relations (Hearn and Parkin 2003). There have furthermore been large, on-going changes within the Swedish public sector in recent years and a trend towards privatisation (Hearn 2012), but the state still is a major player in terms of governing, financing and ownership. A few words will also be said about this.

Over the last decade there has been a lot of empirical research trying to map differences and similarities between public and private organisations. Rainey and Bozeman (2000) conducted a review of 25 years of research in 2000 and concluded then that there had been and still were a lot of myths in circulation about both the presumed differences and the similarities between public and private and also non-profit organisations. These have often centred around themes such as the existence or non-existence of greater goal ambiguities in public service and public sector organisations, the belief that public sector organisations are more hierarchical (i.e. differences in organisational structure) and to a greater extent controlled by central governing mechanisms. Different understandings have been found to be supported by research evidence to varying degrees (see Rainey and Bozeman 2000 for an overview). Even though these questions are not specifically addressed in this thesis, they are relevant in terms of how to interpret the re-

search results. There are significant differences between, for example, government-owned organisations and private organisations that are government *funded*, related to the fact that government ownership often subjects organisations to oversight rules relating to personnel, purchasing, budgeting and accounting (ibid., p.456). At the same time, other research shows that the existence of rules and “red tape” and their reinforcement are correlated with other factors, such as size, technology and work processes, rather than being a matter of whether it is a public or a private organisation (ibid., p. 458).

In Sweden there are many different types of “ownership” within the public sector. For example, an investigation in 2004 showed that the state was the largest owner of companies in Sweden, with 60 companies³. In 2012 the number was 54 companies, which is a decrease, but some 175 000 people are still employed in these companies⁴. Many different types of hybrids between public and private ownership also exist, with different contextual factors impacting on the organisation and culture of such organisations (Ahrne 1998). In this thesis I have studied work with gender mainstreaming in two different municipalities and one government agency. There are of course also differences between these two types of public sector organisations, and also differences within them where even different organisational units may show different sets of characteristics (ibid.). There are also differences between how different organisations relate to gender equality policies due to specific and contextual factors (Mazey 2000).

To say something as an overview of the situation: All the initiatives that have been studied are organisations that can be defined as operating within the domain of the public sector. The public sector in Sweden consists of national, regional and local levels, each level having both elected political assemblies and a delivery or administrative part. The state is organised at both national and regional levels. County councils and the municipalities are organised at regional and local levels. Often the pension system, public companies and private entrepreneurs that are partly or wholly financed by public resources are included in what counts as the public sector (see overview below).

³ <http://www.regeringen.se/sb/d/2462/a/13476>

⁴ <http://www.regeringen.se/sb/d/17686>

Table 2. Overview of the Swedish Public Sector

	CENTRAL	REGIONAL	LOCAL
	State	State Municipalities (county councils and regions, county administrative boards)	Local municipalities
Pensions system	AP-funds		
Public companies	State-owned companies	Municipality-owned companies	Municipality-owned companies
Contracted non- public organisations that deliver publicly financed services	Private companies, non-profit organisations, NGOs, etc.	Private companies, non-profit organisations, NGOs, etc.	Private companies, non-profit organisations, NGOs, etc.
Other organisations that provide public services	Private companies, non-profit organisations, NGOs, etc.	Private companies, non-profit organisations, NGOs, etc.	Private companies, non-profit organisations, NGOs, etc.

Source: Adapted from Statskontoret (Swedish Agency for Public Management) 2012

The Swedish public sector, like those in many other parts of Europe, has undergone substantial changes in recent years (Hearn 2012). In Sweden, some specific characteristics of the changes in the public sector that have taken place in recent years are notable; the number of government agencies decreased between 2000 and 2011. The trend is to have fewer but larger agencies, down from 643 in 2000 to 377 in 2011 with a decrease in employees of 20%. At the same time, the purchasing of services from private companies by the municipalities and regions has increased substantially. The monitoring and evaluation of public services have increased, with new mechanisms and organisational structures introduced for this purpose, such as specific organisations working on the evaluation of public sector performance. At the same time, citizens have become less satisfied with the services delivered by the municipalities. They are more satisfied with the services provided by the municipalities than those received from government organisations. The overall size of the public sector in Sweden has decreased since 2000 if measured in terms of GDP, and to a larger extent for the state sector than for the municipalities. The number of employees in the public sector also decreased from approximately 30% to 28% of the workforce between 2000 and 2010 (Swedish Official Statistics, SCB). 5% work in the state sector (2010). The gender representation is fairly equal in total numbers of employees for the state sector but women are heavily over-represented in the municipality sector, which em-

employs approximately 80% women (especially within professions such as healthcare and education).

Women are also under-represented in administrative decision-making positions, both in the state sector and the municipalities and to a greater extent in traditionally male-dominated areas and less in typically female-dominated areas and also in the lower ranks of decision-making such as members of boards as opposed to chairs of boards. In general, there are more women than men working as managers in the public sector, but women are still under-represented as managers in relation to the overall proportion of the total number of employees, the number of employees in the public sector, and men are over-represented as managers in relation to their share of the employees. The wage gap is higher in the state and in the county councils than in the municipalities. The wage gap is also higher still in the private sector than in the public (Swedish Official Statistics, SCB).

GENDER MAINSTREAMING: HISTORY, PRIOR RESEARCH AND THE CASE OF SWEDEN

Turning back to the question of the implementation of equality policies, and especially to gender mainstreaming in Swedish public sector organisations, the background or the history that constitutes the context of my study needs to be told before I can discuss the theoretical framework and, connected to this, the research process. The background consists of the developments that have accompanied gender mainstreaming, important trends in western European welfare state systems today, such as an increasing process of globalisation and Europeanisation, where the EU is presumably one of the most influential factors. Other trends of importance include the movements often summarised under the concept of New Public Management (NPM), which is understood by many to be part of the wider neo-liberal turn in European politics (as an example, see Kantola and Squires 2012).

In order to understand the implementation of gender mainstreaming in Swedish public sector organisations, several things are important. One is the more general development of Swedish politics with an increasing Europeanisation, which makes it difficult to fully understand national politics without a European contextualisation (Vifell 2009). Another point is that the policy development of gender mainstreaming is today to a large extent set in a transnational context (Walby 2005, 2011). In the following section I will discuss some of the developments, experiences and discussions surrounding gender mainstreaming. I will also give some background about gender equality politics and the history of gender mainstreaming in Sweden.

Gender mainstreaming: origins and development

The strategy of gender mainstreaming was first introduced in 1995 at the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing and has gained rapid popularity since then. So much so that it has been described as an “international phenomenon” (Walby 2005, 2011). In the middle of the 1990s, after 40 years of gender equality politics in the European Union, based on equal treatment and positive action in the labour market, gender mainstreaming was launched as a new strategy in the EU political framework.

Gender equality in general has become one of the more distinguished political areas of the European Union. This does not mean that all policy areas today

have a clear gender perspective but the issue of equality between women and men has been on the agenda since the end of the 1950s and, as such, has a long history. The common gender equality politics of the (EU) today consists of three main areas: gender equality legislation; soft regulations, including financial contributions; and the general notion of integrating a gender perspective into all EU policy areas, referred to as gender mainstreaming. Gender equality is usually put forward as a fundamental right, a common value of the EU, and a necessary condition for the achievement of the EU objectives of growth, employment and social cohesion.

In 1957, a provision for equal pay was made part of the Treaty of Rome (Article 119). At that time, however, the main argument for equal pay was not primarily equality, but rather that the practice of different pay scales for women and men was considered a threat towards the goal of a uniform market. But, at the same time, it marked a start for policies that were designed to target the different working conditions of women and men and to set equal treatment as an overall community aim. Since the original Treaty of Rome, a number of revisions have been made that have broadened the scope of that initial and isolated commitment to ensure equal pay between women and men.

The directives that followed Article 119 during the decades following the Treaty of Rome were issued in line with the equal treatment strategy and also focused on employment policies, mainly ensuring formal rights for women as workers. In the field of equal treatment between women and men, by 2010, 13 European Directives had been adopted. These are legally binding for EU Member States, and all members must incorporate them into their national legislation (Gender Equality Law in the European Union 2008, EU Rules on Gender Equality: How are they transposed into national law? 2009).

Among the softer steering mechanisms, the European Commission has used “peer pressure” as a method, meaning that joint guidelines between member states have been developed in areas like employment policies, followed by annual reports on progress and comparisons between member states (Pollack and Burton 2000). Since the beginning of the 1980s, a shift towards positive action or “equality of outcome” has been noted by several researchers. Another shift is the broadening of the scope so that other policy areas than merely those in direct relation to employment and the economy have been included, such as trafficking and gender-based violence (Rees 1998, Pollack and Hafner-Burton 2000).

In 1996, the European Commission committed itself to gender mainstreaming, which marks a shift in the gender politics of the European Union since all EU policy fields are now seen as relevant for gender equality initiatives. In the Treaty of Amsterdam in 1997, the promotion of gender equality was assigned as one of the fundamental tasks of the EU. Through the Amsterdam Treaty, a requirement was introduced to eliminate inequality and to promote gender equality in all activities. It also inserted a new article allowing the EU to take measures to

tackle all forms of discrimination based on sex, alongside a number of other grounds (Articles 2, 3, 13 and 141).

Even though gender mainstreaming is today put forward as a key strategy for gender equality, what is called the dual-track agenda is thought to be the best approach. This means retaining specific initiatives and applying a gender perspective to all policy areas. In addition, The Council of Europe states that specific gender equality policies (legislation, mechanisms, actions to address specific women's interests, research and training) are a necessary prerequisite for the successful implementation of gender mainstreaming (Stratigaki 2005, Council of Europe 1998, p.21).

Gender mainstreaming as an equality policy or strategy

In 1990, gender mainstreaming was introduced into EU documents as one of the most innovative features of the Third Action Programme for Women and Men. The additional "and men" in the title was also a new approach. Two separate definitions were proposed in the plan: 1) to take into account an equal opportunities dimension and the particular problems encountered by women in all relevant policies and 2) to integrate equality into general mainstream policy (Stratigaki 2005).

Initially, the use of the term "gender" in policy discussions in reality did still mean "women" but it marked a transition in European gender politics where the context shifted from a "women's dimension" to a "gender dimension". The labour market and vocational training were the primary targets for gender mainstreaming, even though "all relevant policies" were mentioned. In the 1998 report on gender mainstreaming by the Council of Europe, three different sets of tools were outlined: 1) analytical (to demonstrate the problem), 2) educational (to create an understanding of the problem) and 3) consultation and participation (to create a process by which current policies are addressed and, if necessary, rethought) (Verloo 2005). The third dimension, consultation and participation, which suggests that democratic discussions of gender equality should be part of a gender mainstreaming process, have so far gained less attention and mainstreaming has often been framed as a strategy of "pursuing existing ends, rather than of challenging them" (Squires 2007, p.152). The equal opportunities office of the European Commission was in charge of implementing the new strategy and at first this was done by suggesting that all employment policies should be put through a Gender Impact Assessment (GIA).

During the early days of gender mainstreaming, individual actors were particularly important for the adoption of the strategy, as was the impact of the Nordic countries, which enforced the importance of a gender perspective in community policies (Stratigaki 2005). The implementation of gender mainstreaming through the Third Action Programme within the commission itself turned out to be much more difficult in comparison to its success outside. The explanation for

this is the strong alliances that were made with women's constituencies within the European Parliament and the European Women's Lobby (EWL) but also with individual politicians and gender experts. The head of the Equal Opportunities Unit between 1992 and 1996, Agnès Hubert, was particularly important in this respect (Stratigaki 2005). Also, the Swedish commissioner, Anita Gradin, who was partly responsible, together with the European Parliament group on women's right, for the extension of the responsibility for gender equality to more than one commissioner and the forming of the Group of Commissioners for Equality (*ibid.*).

Gender mainstreaming: a contested concept

Gender mainstreaming has been widely considered by many policy actors to be a progressive and largely successful way of enforcing gender equality in the European Union. One of the explanations for the "popularity" of the strategy is that it questions "the liberal concept of equal treatment that views public policies as neutral" (Stratigaki 2005, p.168). However, gender mainstreaming, even though it has been regarded as a potentially powerful and transformative strategy, has also been argued to have been broadly misinterpreted, and as such to even be a potentially counterproductive approach (Stratigaki 2005). The vagueness of the concept is reflected in the many different meanings it has been given during the implementation process, stretching from seeing gender mainstreaming as a complement to equal treatment and positive action, to regarding it as a replacement for positive action (*ibid.*). For example, this can be the case when positive action has been successful in challenging existing power dynamics and changing gender relations; if the existing gender equality policies are seen as an annoyance, then a gender mainstreaming strategy can be used as an excuse to end previous initiatives (*ibid.*). Still, the potential of the strategy, applying a gender perspective to all policy phases rather than just in the delivery phase as in positive action measures, can be argued to be a potentially far more transformative approach than previous strategies (*ibid.*).

Research on gender mainstreaming has been conducted on its historical and political development, on prerequisites or criteria for success, on the transformation of the strategy from one context to another (supranational to national) and from one level to another (national to local) (Stratigaki 2005). Most analysts of gender mainstreaming, however, agree that the strategy is complementary to other strategies and that it cannot be a replacement for specific objectives and measures (*ibid.*).

Sylvia Walby (2005) has described the current discussions and research on gender mainstreaming in relation to six main topics: 1) gender equality and the mainstream, 2) gender equality and gender mainstreaming, 3) vision or strategy? 4) diverse inequalities, 5) expertise or democratization? and, finally, 6) the transnational nature of the development of gender mainstreaming.

The first topic Walby discusses is the research focusing on what happens when specific gender equality goals meet other (mainstream) political goals and policy fields. The main concern here is the paradox that the new political idea (gender equality) must be seen as relevant to the policy area into which it is supposed to be integrated, otherwise there will be no successful implementation. However, during the process of making gender equality relevant to different policy areas, important gender equality aims may themselves be lost in the process. This has been shown in several studies, both international and Swedish (Meyerson and Kolb 2000, Wittbom 2009). Another dimension of this problematic is the idea of gender mainstreaming as potentially transformative, and thus agenda setting, which can, if successfully applied, change the very foundations of the policy field. Or else, the more moderate inclusionary goal, that is, for a gender perspective to simply be “added” to the current agenda, sometimes referred to as the “integrationist” approach (Walby 2005). This is also related to the feminist problematic of the tension between pursuing equal treatment and the contradictory goal of the recognition of difference, which may have the negative side effects of assimilation (equal treatment) or essentialism (recognition) (Squires 2007). To understand what happens when gender equality goals meet mainstream policy fields, research has been undertaken with the aim of understanding the translation or negotiation processes of implementation, using for example a neo-institutional perspective (Wittbom 2009, Mergaert 2012) or Framing Theory (Verloo 2007). This also involves the question of how “success” is being defined and measured in gender mainstreaming initiatives and also who is being involved in the process of defining both the problems and the solutions of gender equality policy agendas.

The second issue Walby (2005) discusses is concerned with the fundamental question of what vision or which understanding of gender equality is being implemented in gender mainstreaming initiatives. In the research in relation to this topic, the discussion focuses on questions concerning and departing from issues of difference, sameness and particularity. Translated into political strategies, these have been categorised into initiatives described with one terminology: inclusion, reversal or displacement (Squires 2005) or with another named equal treatment/opportunity (sameness), special programmes (difference) or transformation (Rees 1998), as was discussed earlier. Other researchers argue that the three main perspectives are really just three different aspects of the problem and that they are complementary rather than mutually exclusive (Stratigaki 2005, Walby 2005, Booth and Bennett 2002).

Walby also discusses a related issue, the third in her account: whether these perspectives are to be considered as strategies towards mainstream goals, i.e. as instrumental, or as end-visions of gender equality or perhaps both (Walby 2005). The issue of gender equality, visions and strategies also involves questions about the relationship between institutional or structural processes on the one hand and individual/relational processes on the other, which leads us to the next issue.

The fourth major issue in gender mainstreaming research, according to Walby, is the question of “diverse inequalities”. In many of the studies on gender mainstreaming the question of the intersections between various social categories has been problematised, both in the theoretical analysis and in the practical political strategies to counter discrimination and promote gender equality and diversity. The discussion has focused on whether gender mainstreaming, or perhaps “diversity mainstreaming”, is the best way to realise gender equality objectives (Squires 2005, 2007). If resources were to be allocated away from gender equality policy initiatives as a consequence of bringing other inequalities onto the agenda, then it could mean that less attention might be given to specific gender-related problems as well as the structural causes of these problems. In addition, there is the apparent risk of “competition” between different inequalities and the problem of simplified thinking about different strands of inequalities in “one size fits all” concepts (Verloo 2006). On the other hand, some researchers have reasoned that not considering other processes of inequality might jeopardise the whole gender-equality agenda itself since some of these processes are so interlocked that working with one would automatically require working with others (Acker 2006, Holvino 2008). Judith Squires argues that gender mainstreaming, if considered to be a potentially transformative strategy, would as a consequence simultaneously have to be a strategy of diversity (Squires 2005). One argument for this is that a solution to trying to solve the difference/sameness/particularity problematic, and also the transformational potential of the strategy, can be found in an intersectional approach. To be able to ask “the other question” would, however, also mean that a lot more emphasis must be placed on an inclusive model of participatory democracy, preferably a deliberative model, because this requires not only expert knowledge but also ensuring that marginalised groups are included and accounted for in the policy process (Squires 2005).

According to Squires, and with reference to the plurality of equality agendas held by diverse groups, this is surely not simply a matter of the implementation of a technocratic tool (*ibid.*, p.367); it would have to also involve the “target groups” in some way, such as through the empowerment strategies emphasised as an example by Verloo (2001). This also relates to the fifth area of the research issues outlined by Walby (2005), namely that of expertise or democratisation. This issue goes deep into the core discussions of feminist theories, relating to issues raised, for example, in standpoint perspectives, post-colonial critiques and queer perspectives. But it also touches on several important topics in connection with different democracy models and theories of citizenship, such as representation and identity politics.

The last issue in Walby’s description is the transnational character of the development of gender mainstreaming as theory and practice. To this might also be added the close relationship between some of the research carried out and researchers in the area and the development of gender mainstreaming practices and practitioners in the field, such as in the realm of the experts’ groups of the Euro-

pean Commission, Council of Europe and EIGE (the European Institute for Gender Equality). Research has also shown the importance of collaboration, such as in the example of the “velvet triangle” described by Woodward (2003), linking feminist bureaucrats, trusted academics and the women’s movement in the development of gender mainstreaming (Woodward 2003). Many of the above-mentioned issues, besides being concerns in research, are currently the subject of lively debate among policy makers who work with the day-to-day implementation of gender mainstreaming.

Another discussion in relation to the larger question of the possible transformation of existing discourses and practices in organisations, is what happens when equality activism becomes professionalised and takes on board the popular, contemporary management rhetoric and tools of NPM (New Public Management). There is no common definition of the trends in public administration often summarised under the wider concept of NPM. In short, it refers to the shift in governance from rules and regulations to outcome performance, entrepreneurialism, market orientation and scientific management (Swan and Fox 2010). NPM has brought with it a culture of auditing (Swan and Fox 2010, Jary 2002) with the monitoring, measuring and evaluation of equality, such as gender impact assessments; a development for which new skills and competences are required from equality workers.

These new equality work practices have sometimes been referred to as “the technicalisation of equality work” (Kothari 2005, Rönnblom 2011), in which the main focus of the work becomes the quest for “tools” such as new models, guides, webpages, tools, checklists and good examples. It also goes together with a trend towards privatisation and movements of both centralisation and decentralisation which have changed the pre-conditions for gender equality work so fundamentally that it has led Kantola and Squires to describe it as a shift from state feminism to a more market-oriented feminism (Kantola and Squires 2012). There has been a diffusion of actors operating within the public domain and a quest for “gender expertise” which can open up new arenas for gender advocates in the wake of evidence-driven policy development. Under market-oriented feminism, however, equality actors increasingly turn to and answer to the market, which might limit the opportunities for more radical approaches questioning the system itself (Kantola and Squires 2012).

Gender equality politics in Sweden

The situation of women and men in Sweden

Sweden is ranked first among the EU Member States on the EU Gender Equality Index (Plantenga *et al.* 2009, www.eige.eu). However, there are some remaining problems from a gender perspective. At the workplace level, problems like sexual harassment, equal pay issues, work-related inequalities in health and

work-family dilemmas are among the issues. The overall problematic leadership structure on the labour market is another prevailing target within Swedish equality politics. In 2007 there were only five women holding executive directorships in the 291 companies listed on the Swedish stock market and women made up only 18% of company boards. The gender segregation on the labour market persists both horizontally and vertically, at large and in individual work-places.

Women and men work in different sectors and occupations and also hold different positions. Approximately 80% of all working men are privately employed and almost half of all working women are employed in the education, health care and social care services, which are largely to be found in the public sector. Women in general also occupy less senior positions than men. Horizontal and vertical gender segregation in the labour market prevails and, among other things, impacts on pay levels. On average, women's pay is about 16% lower than men's and this has been the case for at least the two last decades. When factors such as age, qualifications and occupation are taken into account, the general pay differential between women and men is still about 7%.

Women also work part time, either voluntarily or involuntary, to a much greater extent than men. About every third employed woman works part time, compared with one man in ten. It is more common that men's part-time work is a matter of choice, while many women work part time because they cannot find a full-time job. Women also dominate among those with temporary contracts. Women have a higher rate of absence due to illness than men, and account for two thirds of sickness benefits claimed and they are also on long-term sick leave to a greater extent than men. Gender differences in the labour market are greatest among people born abroad and especially among newly arrived immigrants.

Women perform more unpaid work in the home than men and assume more responsibility for the care of children and the elderly. An increasing number of fathers are using the parental allowance days to take care of their children; still they fail to use slightly more than a fifth of the available days. (The description above is mainly taken from Country report of Sweden 2009.)

Gender equality politics

Gender equality politics has a fairly long history in Sweden. The first governmental unit working with gender issues was installed as early as 1972 – the advisory council to the prime minister on equality between men and women (*Jämsköllshetsdelegationen*), followed by the establishment of a ministerial post. In the early 1980s an under-secretary of state and the creation of the Division for Gender Equality strengthened the resources of the minister for gender equality (Sainsbury and Bergqvist 2009).

Since the beginning of the 1980s, all Swedish employers have been obligated by the Equal Opportunities Act to undertake so-called “active measures” towards equality in working life, including measures to promote an equal distribution be-

tween women and men of various types of work and within different categories of employees. This act contained both a ban on gender-based discrimination and a legal obligation for employers to instigate active measures to promote gender equality in the workplace, including a demand for annual written gender equality plans (later changed in 2009 to every third year).

From 1 January 2009, Sweden has a new equality act replacing previous acts against discrimination on the grounds of gender, sexual orientation, disability, ethnicity and religious beliefs. At the same time, a new ombudsman against discrimination started work, replacing the four previous ombudsman agencies.

The objective of Swedish gender equality policy is that women and men are to have the same power to shape society and their own lives. The following interim objectives indicate the direction of the government's policy in this area:

- Equal division of power and influence. Women and men must 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 to, and possibility of, physical integrity (Regeringens skrivelse 2011/12:3).

In June 2009, the government presented a strategy for gender equality in the labour market and the business sector. This strategy contains initiatives to combat gender divisions in the labour market and business sector, promote gender-equal conditions for entrepreneurship, increase gender-equal participation in working life and enhance gender equality in working life conditions (Government Offices of Sweden 2014: <http://www.government.se/sb/d/4096>). Gender equality policy was allocated SEK 1.6 billion for the period 2007-2010 and almost SEK 1 billion for the period 2011-2014. Taken together, this is the largest investment in gender equality ever made in Sweden. Apart from the special gender equality allocation, initiatives for women's enterprise, gender equality bonuses and tax credits for household services were financed with other funds. This means that the budget for promoting gender equality in practice is even larger (ibid.).

During the previous electoral period, the government adopted three action programmes: one to combat men's violence against women, honour-related violence and oppression, and violence in same-sex relationships; one to strengthen efforts against prostitution and trafficking in human beings for sexual purposes; and one to prevent and hinder the marriage of young people against their will.

The government also adopted a strategy for gender equality in the labour market and the business sector⁵. In a communication to the *riksdag* in March 2012, the government presented the direction of gender equality policy during the period 2011-2014. SEK 239 million was allocated to gender equality policy in 2013.

In 2013 work focused on:

- developing and creating the conditions for integrating a gender perspective into all activities of central government, municipalities and county councils,
- promoting gender equality in the labour market,
- continuing to promote gender equality in schools,
- continuing to increase knowledge about women's health,
- combating men's violence against women, honour-related violence and oppression, and violence in same-sex relationships, and preventing the marriage of young people against their will,
- combating prostitution and trafficking in human beings for sexual purposes (ibid.).

Gender mainstreaming in Sweden

In addition to the legal ban on discrimination and active measures contained in the anti-discrimination act, gender mainstreaming has been the main strategy for reaching the goals of gender equality politics since the beginning of the 1990s. Several initiatives on gender mainstreaming have been developed in recent years. Gender mainstreaming has been the Swedish government's overarching strategy for gender policy since its bill 'Shared power, shared responsibility' (*Delad makt – delat ansvar*, Govt. Bill 1993/94:147). However, the history of gender mainstreaming is longer than that. Below, some reforms and initiatives of special importance for the development of gender mainstreaming at national, regional and local levels are described.

In 1984, the first gender mainstreaming strategy was adopted, stating that a gender perspective was to be integrated into all policy areas so that all decisions were to be analysed on the basis of their respective implications for both women and men (SOU 2007:15). In 1987, the government proposition on gender equality

⁵ In June 2009, the Government presented a strategy for gender equality in the labour market and the business sector. The strategy contains initiatives to combat gender divisions in the labour market and business sector, promote gender-equal conditions for entrepreneurship, increase gender-equal participation in working life and enhance gender equality in working life conditions.

politics for the 1990s included a formulation that all political reforms should include an assessment of the impact on gender equality (Prop. 1987/88:105 p. 8).

In 1993, a government bill recommended the creation of gender equality officers attached to county administrative boards with tasks similar to the gender equality division in government offices (Prop. 1993/ 94:147). Since 1995, experts on gender equality issues have been attached to each county administrative board. These experts support the board in its mandate to promote gender equality measures such as initiating projects, improving the knowledge base, and supporting and following up the various initiatives. They also support the different sections of the organisation in their gender mainstreaming efforts. The bill also underlined a dual strategy, that mainstreaming should be complemented by specific measures.

In 1994, the government decided to introduce special terms of reference for all government committees of inquiry, directing them to include gender impact in their reports (dir1994:124). In 1994 the government also decided to issue an additional instruction to Statistics Sweden (the central statistics office) stating that all official statistics in Sweden shall be disaggregated by sex unless there are special reasons for not doing so.

In 1995, the government allocated two million SEK to the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SALAR) for a project aimed at acquiring new knowledge, developing new methods for gender equality work, and permeating the work of local authorities with a gender perspective. The project, called JämKom, resulted in the 3R method, which is still widely used at all levels of public administration. SALAR presented the work in seven reports. The main report, *Härifrån till jämställdheten* (From here to gender equality) was presented in June 1998 and presented a theoretical approach and methodology for gender mainstreaming. The government granted SALAR a further allocation for a training course for project managers, aimed at spreading the experiences gained from the JämKom Project and the gender equality analysis method, the 3R method.

In 1997, the government appointed a working group on method development for gender equality. In 2001, its findings were presented in a final report together with a methodological handbook entitled "Just Progress".

In 2000, the government initiated an investigation into how equality was expressed in the government agencies' directives and how it was reported back to the government (performed by the Swedish National Audit Office). One conclusion was that the goals set out in the appropriation directions from the government were not clearly linked to the gender equality objectives and that there was often a lack of guidance on how to apply gender mainstreaming.

In 2002, a steering group for gender mainstreaming was appointed within the government's offices with the purpose of coming up with a plan for sustainable gender mainstreaming within government offices and agencies, one reason being the results of the investigation in 2000.

In 2004, an additional study carried out by the Swedish Agency for Public Management (*Statskontoret*) showed as one of its main results that there had been no major changes since the Swedish National Audit Office's review in 2000. In order to review Swedish gender equality policy, a gender policy commission was established. Based on the findings and final report of this commission, the Swedish parliament passed an equality policy bill in 2006. In this bill, gender mainstreaming was identified as the main strategy for achieving the gender equality objectives and it was stated that each ministry and each policy area is responsible for gender equality within its proper field and should formulate customised objectives to be reached, designate assignments to the agencies, and require follow-ups, reports, and evaluations on these objectives and assignments. All this should be done within the framework of regular activities and resources.

In 2005, the Swedish gender mainstreaming support committee (*Jäm-Stöd*) was given the mission to report on the agencies' responsibility for implementing gender equality policy, developing methods and supporting the exchange of experiences. The committee produced both models and methods, which it presented in a publication on methods for gender mainstreaming. In the final report, the committee noted, like the Swedish agency for public management and several other EU countries, that a prerequisite for successful gender mainstreaming is the creation of support functions. This is the background for the creation of JÄMI (*ibid*).

In 2008, the Swedish secretariat for gender research was commissioned by the government to set up a programme to support governmental agencies in their work with gender mainstreaming. The programme JÄMI was set up and ran until the end of 2010. In the government's instructions to the Secretariat, four assignments were specified: to develop methods, create forums, inform, and create opportunities for support structures. As a response, the Secretariat outlined JÄMI, a programme consisting of a wide range of activities, studies, workshops, seminars, round-table discussions, forums, networks, national and international conferences, a summer school, an undergraduate course, various publications, websites, databases, and newsletters. The work was conducted in consultation and collaboration with various organisations and experts from academia, government offices, non-government organisations (NGOs), and consultants worldwide.⁶

National platform for gender mainstreaming

In September 2011, the government decided that the on-going gender mainstreaming efforts should be strengthened and developed based on a platform, and with efforts at central, regional and local levels. This platform is described in the overall gender equality strategy 2011-2014 (Skr 2011/12: 3), where a more de-

⁶ This description of the historical development is mainly taken from JÄMI (The Swedish Commission for Gender Mainstreaming) <http://www.jamiprogram.se/english/1-11-report-jami-a-swedish-commission-for-gender-mainstreaming/the-background-of-gender-mainstreaming/>

tailed description of the background, purpose and goals of the government's efforts to promote gender mainstreaming are also provided. The platform comprises five different parts:

- Strategy for gender mainstreaming in government offices,
- A development programme for government agencies,
- Support for gender mainstreaming at regional level,
- Quality assurance of the development of gender mainstreaming in municipalities and county councils, and
- Initiatives to gather and share experience and knowledge about the practical implementation of gender mainstreaming.

Gender Mainstreaming in Government Offices

The government offices are comprised of the offices of the prime minister, the ministries and an administrative office. In Sweden the principle of collective responsibility of the government has been adopted. This collective responsibility includes joint preparation of bills (*gemensam beredning*) and consultation on bills (*delning*). Another specific feature of the Swedish system is that matters usually belonging to one ministry in other countries are divided between the ministries and semi-autonomous central administrative bodies. The general ordinance (*verksförförordningen*) regulates the activities of all central administrative bodies as well as issuing specific instructions concerning the responsibilities of a particular administrative body (*myndigheters instruktioner*) and budget directives (Sainsbury and Bergqvist 2009).

The model for the work of gender mainstreaming within government offices today consists of four main components according to the main gender mainstreaming strategy:

- Management and control
- Education and training
- Methods and tools
- Coordination, support and organisation

The prime minister is ultimately responsible for the implementation of the strategy. All ministers are responsible for gender mainstreaming within their respective policy areas. The minister for gender equality is responsible for coordinating and managing the internal work with gender mainstreaming within the various government offices.

The organisation of gender mainstreaming at the civil servant level consists of the Division of Gender Equality, gender equality coordinators in the ministries and an organisation within each ministry. The Division of Gender Equality is responsible for managing and coordinating all gender mainstreaming work within

government offices. In each ministry there is an appointed gender equality coordinator and together they form the inter-ministerial group IDA/JÄM. All ministries have separate gender mainstreaming action plans which are updated on a yearly basis. In addition, in each ministry there are responsible persons appointed for all divisions.

Evaluations and follow-ups are done through an annual quantitative analysis (i.e. follow-up) conducted by Statistics Sweden on the implementation of gender mainstreaming within all government offices. A comprehensive evaluation will be carried out in 2015 of the implementation of gender mainstreaming at government offices based on strategy for gender mainstreaming.

Strategy for Gender Mainstreaming in Government Offices

The government has adopted a new gender mainstreaming strategy for government offices for 2012-2015. The aim of gender mainstreaming efforts is to provide the government with the best possible conditions to ensure a gender equality dimension in all areas of government policy. The strategy therefore covers all decision-making processes but identifies a number of key processes that are consequently given special priority.

The work in government offices is based on the definition from 1998 by the Council of Europe (*Strategi för arbetet med jämställdhetsintegrering i Regeringskansliet, Bilaga till regeringsbeslut 2012-03-01, nr 11:1 Dnr U2012/1388/JÄM*)

The overarching objective is defined as: “The government should have the best possible pre-conditions to ensure that a gender equality perspective should permeate all government policy.” (ibid., p. 2)

Five guidelines are presented in the strategy to ensure efficient and cohesive work with gender mainstreaming in all government offices:

1. All statistics presented in government bills and written communications should be disaggregated by sex.
2. Government bills should include an analysis of what consequences the proposal might have for women and men, girls and boys. National policy goals for gender equality are the starting point for analysis.
3. Instructions to government authorities should be clearly gender mainstreamed. A gender perspective on instructions will contribute to fulfilling the national policy goals for gender equality.
4. Terms of reference shall present how a gender perspective should be applied by the commission when relevant.
5. A gender equality analysis should be conducted as part of the preparation of EU matters within government offices, when decisions are to be made by the Council of Ministers. The purpose of this is to ensure that a gender

equality perspective will be applied to any issues that may have an impact on the equality between women and men.

Two areas in particular have been identified as important processes for gender mainstreaming: the committees of inquiry (*kommittédirektiven*) and the proposals for new government bills (*propositioner*).

The government has recently initiated a development programme at government agencies with the aim of strengthening and further developing gender mainstreaming so that their activities contribute even more effectively to achieving gender equality policy goals. Eighteen agencies have been tasked with drawing up a plan for gender mainstreaming that will be implemented in 2014. Selected agencies will showcase good practice and lessons learned about how gender mainstreaming in central government operations can be conducted in an effective and sustainable manner. The Swedish Secretariat for Gender Research at the University of Göteborg has been tasked in 2013-2014 with supporting the agencies concerned and spreading the lessons learned to more agencies via the portal Jämställ.nu (www.includegender.org). This initiative is part of the platform for gender mainstreaming described above.

The programme for gender mainstreaming (SALAR)

In 2008, the Programme for Gender Mainstreaming was set up by the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SALAR), following a decision by the Swedish Government to fund an initiative to support work with gender mainstreaming at the local level. Today the programme is part of the national platform for gender mainstreaming. The initiative was originally planned for 2007–2010 but was endorsed for two additional periods with a total funding of appr. 25 million euros in 2008–2013, making it one of Sweden's largest initiatives on gender equality. The programme is part of the National Platform for Gender Mainstreaming and specifically targets efforts to develop gender mainstreaming in the country's municipalities and county councils. Over the years it has funded 88 initiatives on gender mainstreaming. SALAR has developed a comprehensive strategy to coordinate and support the participating local authorities as well as measures to reinforce gender mainstreaming in non-participating organisations. Capacity building and training activities have been a major part of the programme, amounting to up to 25% of the total programme budget.

Gender mainstreaming in policy making

Today, gender mainstreaming in policy making is legally manifested in an ordinance stating that all government commissions and inquiries must consider the consequences of their proposals for gender equality. Furthermore, there is an ordinance for all public statistics to be sex-segregated. Apart from these legal ordinances, there are documents of a soft law character that guide gender mainstreaming in public authorities (Svensson and Gunnarsson 2012).

Evaluations and previous studies of gender mainstreaming in Sweden

Evaluation of efforts towards gender mainstreaming in Sweden have revealed both positive and more troublesome results. In the programme JÄMI, which had as one of its aims the investigation of the prerequisites for sustainable gender mainstreaming, the main lessons learned were summed up in the following factors (developed further in the final report of the programme):

Success factors

- A systematic, goal-oriented approach which is carefully followed up is a major success factor.
- Having the support of management is an identified success factor. There is an identified need for executives and managers within public administration to receive training in these issues.
- An approach adapted to the context and activity of each organisation is a major success factor.
- Cooperation is a clearly identified success factor.
- Research-based work is another identified success factor.
- Gender mainstreaming from an intersectional perspective can help to avoid some of the problems with the strategy identified by researchers, for example, the risk of reinforcing stereotypes and norms, a one-sided focus on women, and the danger of excluding large groups of citizens by homogenisation.
- The exchange of experiences between stakeholders from different fields is an identified success factor.
- Communication adapted to the public is an identified success factor, for example, talking about and demonstrating that gender mainstreaming is a question of basic democratic rights.

Conditions, problems, and needs

- Adapted infrastructure is necessary for gender mainstreaming. For example, JÄMI has launched a national portal for gender mainstreaming, a website, a database, and a mailing list; set up an undergraduate programme; published reports and memos; and established networks and forums as well as tools for how to integrate gender into procurement and follow-up. However, these need to be maintained and developed. There is a need for individual actors, projects, and programmes to document their work on gender mainstreaming.
- There is a recognised need to develop, strengthen, and coordinate governmental control so that it becomes clearer and can function as a supporting and guiding framework.

- There is a documented confusion among agencies regarding the mission and assignments they should fulfill in terms of gender mainstreaming.
- There is a need to review and coordinate a commonly used terminology across government offices and agencies as well as public administration as a whole.
- There is a need for continued efforts to create a more sustainable bridge between practical and theoretical knowledge as well as between different fields.
- There is a need to monitor and develop norms concerning gender equality issues within public administration and policy.
- There is a need for advanced procurement skills within the agencies.
- There is a recognised need for new and more extensive research on gender mainstreaming.
- There is a need for different actors to interact and coordinate their work in order to avoid duplication.
- There is a need for transparency, i.e. making material, documentation, experiences, and knowledge of gender mainstreaming visible and disseminating them so that more stakeholders and citizens can realise the benefits of gender mainstreaming and the function of the public administration's efforts to work towards achieving gender equality objectives (Andersdotter Bengtsson 2011).

Other evaluations have come to similar conclusions, such as emphasising the need for national support and coordination, increased clarity in terms of objectives, and permanent support structures for the work at all levels (Boman, Sjöberg and Svensson 2013).

Is Sweden the most likely case for gender mainstreaming?

The gender equality measures described above, together with other initiatives, make the institutionalisation of gender equality in Sweden strong compared to elsewhere, including the other Nordic countries (Borchorst 1999, Sainsbury and Bergqvist 2009). It has been argued that Sweden is the most likely case for gender mainstreaming in terms of comparisons between different countries (Sainsbury and Bergqvist 2009, Daly 2005, Rubery *et al.* 2004). Several reasons have been mentioned, including: gender equality has a long history of institutionalisation; gender equality issues have been introduced into multiple policy areas and the formulation of gender equality as a goal has been comprehensive; the specifics of the national gender equality regime are favourable (with a dual-earner model, affordable childcare, generous paid parental leave etc.); gender discrimination has generally been placed high on the equality agenda in politics and the resistance is low and support high from the public (Sainsbury and

Bergqvist 2009). Egalitarian values, the dominance of left-wing parties, and the high representation of women in senior positions in politics has made researchers cautious about comparison and adoption of the Swedish model since many other countries do not display these favourable preconditions (Daly 2005, Sainsbury and Bergqvist 2009).

Capacitation elements in the development of gender mainstreaming in Sweden can be argued to consist of a mixture of political commitment, objectives, and an organisational structure, at least in part. Incapacitation elements include the weak steering and support for gender mainstreaming in relation to government agencies and also a lack of understanding of how to relate a gender perspective to specific policy areas and a lack of interest in the matter because it is also widely believed by many that Sweden is already a gender equal country. Recent years have also seen the rise of anti-feminist movements and radical men's groups (ibid.). Studies conducted on the work of gender mainstreaming in Swedish government agencies have furthermore revealed a gap between the description of measures taken and the degree of perceived success of the implementation of gender mainstreaming strategy by the same agencies (Olofsdotter Stensöta 2009, 2010).

Two questions that seem relevant to the specific case, apart from what has been described above, relate to the actual translation of the theory of gender mainstreaming both into its national (governmental) interpretation and the translation into specific programmes such as the Programme for Gender Mainstreaming (SALAR). In the most recent description by the Swedish government, gender mainstreaming (in Swedish translated into “gender equality integration”) is said to be the main strategy in Sweden to reach gender equality objectives. Gender equality integration (gender mainstreaming) means that all political decisions should include a gender equality perspective.⁷ In the Programme for Gender Mainstreaming (SALAR), the main objective is said to be to “create tangible and permanent improvements through the gender equality projects of those granted support.” One central goal is to create a “gender equal” service provided by local and regional authorities to citizens (Taking quality improvement to a new dimension: Programme for gender mainstreaming 2009).

Another issue in connection with the Swedish context is the common division between what is perceived as “internal” gender equality policies on the one hand and “external” gender equality policies in Swedish public sector organisations on the other. “Internal” policies are understood as gender equality initiatives directed towards an organisation's co-workers, i.e. equal opportunities and active measures to promote gender equality in the work-place such as those that should be part of the obligatory gender equality action plans, the aim being to create gender equality in the workplace.

⁷ <http://www.regeringen.se/sb/d/3267>

“External” policies are instead associated with core activities, the service provided by the organisation for an external “target group”. The governmental initiative, JämStöd, stated that these aspects are two different and separate areas. It is said that gender mainstreaming:

[...] is not confined to the usual gender equality issues: that women and men should have the same chance to advance in their careers, that there should be no unjustified pay differentials, or that both sexes should be represented at all levels in an organisation etc. These relate to staff policy and are dealt with under the Equal Opportunities Act. Here, the aim is to mainstream gender into core activities, which is a completely different matter. (SOU 2007:15)

In the practical organisation of these two “different approaches” to gender equality, the internal and external aspects are often handled by different departments in the organisation. Also, in the Programme for Gender Mainstreaming (SALAR) it is stated that gender mainstreaming does not include the relationship between employers and employees, which is regulated by anti-discrimination legislation. This legislation includes protection against discrimination in relation to public service and other areas such as education, but these areas are not usually mentioned in connection with gender mainstreaming in Sweden. I would suggest that both the issues of the Swedish interpretation of gender mainstreaming strategy and the specific organisation of gender equality work need to be included in research on gender mainstreaming initiatives in Sweden. But before I can continue to discuss the results of the case studies, i.e. how gender mainstreaming was implemented and what the important factors impacting on the process were, including the role of change agents, the theoretical framework of the study needs to be outlined.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: IMPLEMENTATION OF EQUALITY POLICIES IN PUBLIC SECTOR ORGANISATIONS

In this chapter, the specific issues relating to a gender perspective in implementation research, or what is described below as feminist implementation studies, will be discussed. An overview of some important earlier findings will be presented, the general theoretical starting points used in the case studies will be described and, as the final part of this chapter of the introduction, the theoretical framework for the meta-analysis will be outlined.

Why study the implementation of equality policies?

We live in an era characterised by high levels of mobility, both between and within countries. Europeanisation and globalisation have affected the way we live our lives and have transformed the society we live in. The composition of Sweden's population and labour force does not look the same as it did a few decades back and the trend is towards an increasing heterogeneity (Hearn 2012). A diverse society is here to stay. Many changes have also taken place over the last few decades in relation to equality from a gender perspective. Sweden is often portrayed as one of the world's most gender equal countries, and important societal actors, including the government, have actively promoted change in many areas. There are, however, still many remaining problems from a gender perspective, including equal pay issues and working conditions, work-related inequalities in health, education, family responsibilities and violence, which are in many aspects similar to those of other countries. Gender-based inequalities persist both in Sweden and elsewhere (Hearn 2012). A powerful illustration of this is provided by the United Nations in its estimation that women do two-thirds of the world's work, receive 10 per cent of the world's income, and own one per cent of the world's property (Lorber 2005, Frisby, Maguire and Reid 2009).

The problems of gender inequality are interlinked with other problems and other forms of social inequalities, and also to general societal problems, such as economic down-turns and unemployment. Thus, specific equality policies are needed to meet existing and emerging societal problems so that current inequalities are not worsened and in order to form adequate strategies to address them.

Equality politics usually departs both from safeguarding individual rights and the idea that this is necessary from a societal perspective. Equality politics

and policies evolve in themselves too. Parallel to societal developments and developments in terms of the state of equality, Swedish equality policies have to some extent been given new content. Yet, many goals have remained unchanged for a long time, such as measures to change gender patterns in the labour market or to combat sexual violence. The impact of EU legislation, following Sweden's membership of the EU, has led to an increased emphasis on formal equality and anti-discrimination. This means a shift towards a liberal rights tradition as opposed to the earlier emphasis on substantive equality and removing structural inequalities in line with the dominant Nordic welfare state model that previously influenced Swedish equality politics and legislation (Svensson and Gunnarsson 2012). In recent years, the importance of different social categories and the relationship between these has increasingly been problematised. In research, an intersectional approach has gained ground and in policy development gender policies have been merged with concepts such as diversity and multiple discrimination, thus also affecting the organisation of equality legislation and bodies in Sweden and across Europe (Krizsan, Skjeie and Squires 2012, Svensson and Gunnarsson 2012, Hearn 2012).

Equality constitutes an important democratic value. Work with equality in public sector organisations is deemed significant from several aspects in this respect, both symbolically and practically. The important role of public sector organisations in setting a good example is one aspect. In addition to this, public sector organisations have a good opportunity to make an impact on equality outcomes through their direct contact with a large proportion of the population on a daily basis. Public officials represent the democratic state in many different ways and the average citizen is far more likely to meet public bureaucrats than elected representatives over a lifetime.

Face-to-face interactions and the way in which we are treated as citizens in our encounters with public administration often define what a government is to its citizens and whether it is regarded as fair, efficient and humane or arbitrary and bureaucratic (Peters and Pierre 2007). Symbolically, public administration can function normatively and the perceived outcomes of the work with equality will similarly impact on how citizens view equality policies in general. Public service can furthermore function as a mediator in terms of what is understood as the "public" (Newman and Clarke 2009), a point that will be discussed in the final part of the thesis. Let us now turn to the specific questions concerning the study of policy implementation processes.

A gender perspective in implementation research or feminist implementation studies

What does a gender perspective in implementation research mean, or what does feminist implementation studies entail? My first answer to this question is; I do not know! My initial search for previous studies within the area of “feminist (policy) implementation research” or “feminist implementation studies” resulted in nothing. And a search on Google (September 2013) on those specific terms still gave no hits.⁸ So does this mean that such research does not exist? The answer to this is, of course, no. There are many studies of in a broader sense “what happens between policy expectations and (perceived) policy results” (Hill and Hupe 2009) with a gender perspective and also those that specifically mention implementation. As an example: a search in Academic Search premier on the terms “gender” and “implementation” gives 1837 hits (September 2013). From this, it can be concluded that gender is an issue that is referred to in relation to implementation. The way in which gender plays a role in these studies is, however, not always very helpful for me in addressing my own research questions. It can, for example, mean that gender is referred to in terms of gender variations in medical research or that gender is used as a variable when constructing survey studies. This “application” of gender is, of course, also important but my quest for a gender perspective in relation to policy implementation is somewhat different and more pervasive; it is a perspective where gender is at the forefront of the research and where the social construction of gender and the consequences of these “gendering processes” are in focus. It entails a feminist perspective where attention to inequalities related to gender is at the centre and, furthermore, where the issue is how to challenge and *change* them.

This particular understanding means that the study of policy implementation from a (my) feminist perspective is engaged with the doing and undoing of gender, as argued by Deutsch (2007); i.e. it is about more than just stating the existence of gendering processes or the impact of gender on and in implementation processes. The question of “undoing” means asking how and when the importance of gender diminishes or changes in cases where it is creating inequalities, and how more equal gender relations can be established with attention directed towards the “implementation problem”. This does not imply, however, that there is only one feminist perspective in relation to what constitutes the problem of inequality or only one way to study gender (Calas and Smirich 2006, Hearn and Parkin 2003). But feminist theories, being always partial and contest-

⁸ Since this completing this study I have been in contact with a new project, “Gender Equality Policy in Practice”, convened by Joni Lovenduski (Birkbeck College, UK) and Amy G. Mazur (Sciences Po Paris/Washington State University), with a similar aim as my own study. This new project studies how gender equality policies are processed after they are formally adopted in democracies in Europe and North America, and the central question addressed is how policy makers can assess the impact of their decisions.

ed, at the same time often have in common that they have acted as an intentional counter to dominant theories about human experience (Frisby, Maguire and Reid 2009).

Here it might be warranted to say something about the critique of implementation research, that it risks becoming “misery research” (Rothstein 1988) and that implementation research can be, and often has been, used for dubious political reasons leading, for example, to excessive controls or even unjust downsizing of important public services (Saetren 2005). The risk is that such research will contribute to the growing “culture of auditing” (Jary 2002) in public sector organisations and that perceived “poor” results might be used as an excuse to end certain initiatives. In the field of gender equality, where resistance or low priority towards the objectives is frequent and where reports of implementation problems are common, this can be a real danger. Some research has also reported that, in practice, gender equality policies are evaluated more often than other policies, which raises doubts as to the underlying agenda of why these evaluations are made (Sundin and Rapp 2011). From my perspective, however, this is yet another good reason why more research is needed, and especially research that can nuance the picture of gender equality policy as a hopeless field for implementation but that still takes into account the difficulties and challenges involved!

There are several additional things that need to be discussed in relation to how to understand the interface between gender, or feminist, studies and implementation studies. One, as already mentioned, is the naming issue: should this particular type of research be called a “gender perspective on implementation”, “gender and implementation” or “feminist implementation studies”, or something else perhaps, such as “gender-sensitive implementation”? Even though it is hard to find studies or researchers that define themselves as doing feminist implementation research, there are several mentions on the internet of “feminist implementation”, but these often refer to the practice of implementing something with a feminist perspective; examples being the use of a certain feminist pedagogy or feminist organisational principles in the process of implementation or in the implementation design. A gender perspective in implementation research or feminist implementation could, however, be conducted on initiatives that have tried to use “feminist implementation principles” or on the implementation of equality policies or in fact any other kind of implementation process in any other kind of policy area with or without an explicit gender perspective. It is not limited to the study of the implementation of gender equality policies or the use of feminist implementation principles. It could be applied to any implementation process.

I believe the distinction between applying feminist principles in implementation processes and feminist implementation studies is important to make. It also points to the research gap in existing implementation studies, where the area of equality policies is rare as a research subject and where a gender or feminist perspective as a starting point in implementation research studies as a whole is scarce. The naming issue furthermore relates to the way in which gender is given

priority in the research: is it a variable used to explain research results or does the research depart from gender or feminist theory? This in turn is connected to different epistemological, ontological, theoretical and also methodological world-views and reasons for conducting research.

I have no good answer to this question and settle with the notion that it is always important to articulate one's own starting points, to position oneself and to avoid a hegemonic perspective in science, such as speaking for everybody and no one in particular, as emphasised both in feminist studies and more generally in sociology and political science (Haraway 1991, Gouldner 1970). In this discussion it is furthermore relevant to practise some self-reflexivity towards the way in which research itself contributes to the establishment of certain meanings in relation to gender and gender equality (Honkanen 2008), and how research can have the potential benefit of problematising what is not being represented in current policy discussions, to emphasise where the silences are and what consequences this might have (Bacchi 1999).

One answer to why there is (as yet) no (or at least not a very outspoken) specific sub-field within the domain of policy implementation studies that specifically addresses gender or feminist questions might also be the fact that implementation research in itself is a multidisciplinary area and hence is conducted in many different disciplines (Saetren 2005). There are examples of studies that address the particular research subject of my own study, i.e. the implementation of equality policies, and there are many studies that address "gender equality work" in organisations, as we will see below. There are also those that particularly address the implementation of gender mainstreaming, for example, within the field of GAD (Gender and Development) (see Rao and Kelleher 2003, 2005 and Moser and Moser 2005, Wong 2013). But let me first discuss some general departure points of implementation studies and my own use of some central concepts and definitions. This is also important in order to follow the research process and for the discussion of the results of this study. This discussion will be structured as an overview of the central issues within implementation and organisational studies and how they may be related to the field of gender or feminist research. It should be emphasised that many of the different issues mentioned below constitute a wider research area.

Policy implementation and public policy

An implementation perspective seems very relevant in order to understand the outcomes and effectiveness of gender equality policies and perhaps in particular to understand the outcomes of gender mainstreaming policy.

Implementation research is usually portrayed as being part of two larger areas (sub-disciplines) of political science: public policy/policy analysis and public administration. It grew out of evaluation studies (Winter 2007), with early studies being carried out during the 1950s (Saetren 2005), and is concerned with the

overarching question of “what happens between policy expectations and (perceived) policy results?” (Hill and Hupe 2009), as previously mentioned. The difficulties in achieving political goals have been referred to as the *implementation problem*, the “problem” being understood as the fact that political decisions are not always implemented as the policy makers intended (Sannerstedt 2001, Jabobsen 1997).

How to define implementation, policy and especially public policy is a long discussion which will not be recapitulated here in any depth (see, for example, the account in Hill and Hupes 2009). It is sufficient to say that implementation presupposes policy, i.e. without policy there can be no implementation. But, at the same time, policy is an inseparable part of implementation, as has been argued by Pressman and Wildarwsky (1984, p. xxii):

We can work neither with a definition of policy that excludes any implementation nor one that includes all implementation. There must be a starting point. If no action is begun, implementation cannot take place. There must be also an end point. Implementation cannot succeed and fail without a goal against which to judge it. (Pressman and Wildarwsky 1984, p. xxii)

Then how should we understand policy? As Hill and Hupe explain: “Policy involves behaviour as well as intentions, action as well as inaction. Policies have outcomes that may or may not have been foreseen” (Hill and Hupe 2009, p. 4). Furthermore, the purpose of a policy may be defined retrospectively, implying that policy is a process over time. This process can involve both intra- and inter-organisational relationships (ibid.).

In terms of how to understand the “public”, as in public policy, it can be argued that, even though private actors might be participating in all aspects of public policy making, the policy itself “involves a key, but not exclusive, role for public agencies” (Hogwood and Gunn 1984, p. 23).

In the study I use, as also suggested in Hill and Hupe (2009), the broad definition of a public policy is:

A purposive course of action followed by an actor or a set of actors in dealing with a problem and a matter of concern...Public policies are those policies developed by government bodies and officials. (Anderson 1975, p. 3)

In the course of my research I have often been concerned with the issue of how to define “equality policy”, and whether I should try and define within strict limits what constitutes an “equality policy”. However, I have refrained from doing this, as in many ways the whole of my research revolves around the contested meanings of equality, including but not only gender equality. Many of these issues are discussed in the thesis through the case material. Furthermore, the ambiguity and contested nature of equality policies are not limited to the policy formulation phase in a traditional sense but rather affect and effect the whole implementation process. However, to discuss what can be seen as equality and what

equality is or could be in a more general sense would involve engaging with feminist theory, social theory and political theory, amongst other literatures, and as such would be another thesis in itself.

Implementation processes

The traditional, and today widely questioned, understanding of policy implementation processes is a top-down, “rational” chain of command. On this understanding, the ideal implementation is being performed by a unitary organisation, such as the army, where orders are carried out by trained and obedient soldiers. In this view there is a clear top-down link between the centre and the local and a hierarchical relationship between them. As implementation research has developed, this model or theory of implementation has been somewhat expanded. It has been found to fit poorly within the reality of multi-organisational policy and context in modern society (Exworthy and Powell 2004, Saetren 2005).

Implementation research has developed in relation to broader trends in politics. The current trend is that the governments of today want to address social problems in a manner such that they are seen as overlapping and interrelated and where a single-line policy programme implementation model is not seen as suitable to achieve the perceived policy outcomes. This “new” form of governing the state is what is referred to as governance and has influenced both the setting up of policy implementation in practice and theoretical research on implementation (Saetren 2005). In practice, this development can be understood as a transition from central steering to a more interactive type of governing (Montin and Hedlund 2009). This does not, however, mean that one steering principle has replaced the other, rather that the two forms co-exist (Meehan 2003). Montin and Hedlund (2009) argue that it is in fact not really about “new” forms of steering; rather, governance is believed to consist of new and complex forms of steering, some parts consisting of legal and financial instruments, others of collaboration through mutual trust. Different forms of inter-organisational collaborations (Huxham and Vangen 2000), steering through networks and decentralisation, privatisation and project-type working methods (Czarniawska-Joerges 1988, Peters *et al.* 1998) are regarded as common features of governance. These new “modes of governing” have had a great impact on the nature of policy and implementation design and the work in public sector organisations. Together with this development has been an increased privatisation and fragmentation in terms of who is a public actor and also what constitutes good management principles (Kantola and Squires 2012). Gender mainstreaming has been described as an example of the new modes of governance (Jacquot 2010), and the results of my study will be discussed in the context of this later.

These developments have influenced how implementation scholars today perceive implementation processes. The implementation of political objectives is today often seen as something that happens both vertically and horizontally, such as central to central or local to local, as in joined-up governance at the centre or

the periphery (Exworthy and Powell 2004). It involves not only the public sphere but also civil society and private enterprises. It can be bottom-up or top-down or both (Matland 1995, Saetren 2005). The discussion on top-down versus bottom-up types of implementation models have, however, continued with the search for influential factors that affect the process, such as: are they mainly to be understood from a bottom-up or top-down perspective, in many studies. These discussions have both empirical and theoretical consequences as well as more normative issues related to them (see Matland 1995, Saetren 2005 and others for an overview) and are likely to continue. This discussion is also important for my own study and I will return to this question below and also at the end of the theoretical chapter.

Policy measures

Different forms of policy measures or policy tools are used in implementation processes in order to achieve the intended goals (Schneider and Ingram 1990). Sometimes these will be prescribed in the policy itself, such as policies on quotas, and sometimes the implementation design will be left more to the implementers. There are many different theories on policy measures and what constitutes the most effective means of steering an implementation process (Bemelmans-Videc, Rist and Vedung (eds.) 2003). There are also different ways to study policy tools. One way to understand policy tools is to regard them all as activities that affect the outcome of an implementation process. Policy measures can also be understood as specific measures used in a specific case. Policy measures can be proactive (such as regulations, economic means, communication and information, capacity building etc.). They can also be reactive (such as supervision, evaluation and auditing). It is also common to divide policy instruments into internal, examples being measures to control internal implementation processes, and external policy instruments, such as measures directed towards other organisations or citizens (Johansson 2006). Policy measures can be applied at all levels of organisation, between central and regional authorities or between regional and local authorities (Bemelmans-Videc, Rist and Vedung (eds.) 2003). Often, different forms of policy measures have been used in combination.

Policy measures are sometimes portrayed as mechanisms to make people start to do something or to stop doing something, which is often necessary in order to meet the objectives of a policy (ibid.). Policy measures are built on the belief that people will change their current ways of acting if there is a reason to do so (Johansson 2006). Schneider and Ingram (1990) have proposed five different categories of policy tools built on different assumptions about how to change individual behaviour and create the necessary motivation, which will be outlined below. They are: authority, incentives, capacity-building, symbolic and learning, each building on different principles (ibid.).

Table 3. Policy Tools

Strategy	AUTHORITY	INCENTIVES	CAPACITY BUILDING	SYMBOLIC	LEARNING
Principle	Regulations	Positive and negative payoffs	Increased Knowledge and capacity	Attitudes, norms and values	Learning processes

Source: Adapted from Schneider and Ingram (1990)

Different behavioural assumptions are also reflected in different equality policies. One example is Dahlerup and Fredrievall (2005), who have discussed two different approaches and their consequences for gender equality strategies. In simple terms, there is a more positive and a more negative approach towards changing gender equality. The positive approach emphasises an incremental, i.e. gradually increasing, perspective, where gender equality is seen as something that gradually emerges, and also emphasises the use of soft control measures, such as gender training.

The other, more negative, approach is based on a radical change perspective and stresses the need for strict control measures, such as laws and regulations. The latter model has been referred to as “the fast track model” and the former as “an incremental model” for gender equality (Dahlerup and Freidenvall 2005). The fast track model emphasises that change will take coercive methods and that there is likely to be resistance to change initiatives. In the incremental model on the other hand people are assumed to change their behaviour when they get more information and it is hypothesised that attitudes and values will change gradually in the process towards a more gender equal society. Different perspectives on what constitutes gender equality are implicit.

Table 4. Two Change Strategies to Promote Equality

	THE INCREMENTAL MODEL	THE FAST TRACK MODEL
Problem	Attitudes and values	Structural discrimination
Solution	Information, training and public debate	Laws, regulations and sanctions
Change approach and expected outcomes	- Positive change perspective - Formal equality (<i>de jure</i>)	- Negative change perspective - Actual/real equality (<i>de facto</i>)

Source: Adapted from Dahlerup and Freidenvall 2005

The discussion on policy instruments is related to the discussion on top-down versus bottom-up implementation models that is common in implementation studies, as discussed earlier (Hill and Hupe 2009). This problematic has also been discussed to some extent in relation to the implementation of gender policies as well. It is raised implicitly in the description of different gender equality models (Squires 2005, 2007, Rees 2001), where the different perspectives entail that the importance placed on different actors varies in the models, such as prioritising gender experts in integrationist models or citizens in displacement models, i.e. the legitimacy of different actors in political processes (Squires 2005). This mirrors top-down versus bottom-up discussions in implementation research (see for example Matland 1995, who discusses the normative issues linked to these different perspectives). It also has a practical, or functional, dimension, such as how to ensure the necessary support in an organisation.

The importance of securing the engagement of top management and also middle management (Andersson *et al.* 2009, Mergaert 2012) has been the focus of earlier studies, which might be referred to as a more top-down emphasis on the implementation of gender policies. But the opposite perspective has also been argued by Verloo (2005) and others (as discussed above), who have discussed the lack of engagement of the women's movement and also the absence of empowerment perspectives in gender mainstreaming initiatives. Squires (2005), for example, has discussed the potential of citizens and the deliberative aspects of gender equality policies.

During the practical application, a variety of tools have been used in the implementation of equality policies such as gender mainstreaming (Moser and Moser 2005, Rao and Kelleher 2003, 2005), showing problems of a lack of coherence and a "patchwork" approach in the implementation process where neither a top-down nor a bottom-up model have been applied satisfactorily. There have also been examples of studies that have sought to evaluate the outcomes of different policy instruments used in equality strategies (Kalev, Dobbin and Kelly 2006, Timmers *et al.* 2010, Dobbin, Kim and Kalev 2011).

The question of different forms of policy measures, and the assumptions upon which they rest in terms of behavioural change, have also been discussed, at least implicitly, in relation to gender mainstreaming. For example, Hafner-Burton and Pollack (2009) have argued that the reason that gender mainstreaming has not achieved the anticipated results is because the incentives have not been right.

Compared to initiatives within the frame of equal opportunities, which have been supported by regulations and sanctions, gender mainstreaming has been implemented through soft mechanisms such as peer pressure and an open method of coordination, i.e. emphasising the need for more top-down approaches.

Role of actors in policy processes

Both in mainstream implementation theory and in gender studies it has been suggested that individual actors can have a great impact on the outcome of implementation and change processes in public sector organisations and act as change agents. One example is the study of “policy entrepreneurs”, who have been shown to be important in the conjoining of the streams necessary to create policy windows, as discussed earlier (Kingdon 1995). A policy entrepreneur is an “advocate of proposals”, somebody who seizes the moment and opportunities that have arisen, either predictably or unexpectedly, to push for their own alternative or solution (Kingdon 1995). Policy entrepreneurs have been found not only to open policy windows themselves but also to create networks to make policy agendas happen (Oborn, Barrett and Exworthy 2011). Another example is the street-level bureaucrat, a professional who has close contact with clients such as teachers or police officers, who have been found to have such a great impact on policies through the discretion they hold as professionals that it has changed the way implementation researchers understand the processes of implementation (Lipsky 1981, Exworthy and Powell 2004). In feminist organisation research, one type of policy entrepreneur is the “tempered radical”, somebody who recognises unequal relations in their own organisation and works to change them from within (Meyerson 2001, Meyerson and Fletcher 2001, Meyerson and Scully 1995). This will be discussed further below.

Outcomes of implementation processes

How then can we judge the success of implementation processes? To continue the overview of the implementation field, one central discussion in implementation research today is about whether the success of implementation processes should be judged on the external outcomes of a strategy, i.e. how does it affect the possibility of reaching its objective (for gender mainstreaming this is gender equality in a broader sense)? Or whether it should be judged according to the internal outputs, i.e. what has been accomplished and why? Or whether, as Jacquot suggests, a less functional understanding is required, where gender mainstreaming is seen as a process of change rather than a policy instrument (Jacquot 2010).

When policy fails, or indeed when it succeeds, the traditional view within policy research has been to see it as separated into two parts: one concerned with how it has been formulated and the other with the implementation stage. According to this, problems can be found either in relation to how policy has been formulated (examples being: problem conceptualisation, theory evaluation and selection, specification of objectives, programme design and programme structure) or in the way it has been carried out (examples being: resource adequacy, management and control structure, bureaucratic rules and regulations, political effectiveness, and feedback and evaluation) (Wolman 1981, Exworthy and Powell 2004). The strict division between policy formulation and implementation has, however, been widely questioned, as mentioned earlier, and the relationship be-

tween them found to be intertwined in a complex and fluid way. Departing from Kingdon's research on interacting streams in relation to agenda setting and the opportunities for "policy windows" (Kingdon 1995), Exworthy and Powell suggest that the outcome of social policy is dependent on (at least) three interacting streams: policy, process and resources (Powell and Exworthy 2001, Exworthy and Powell 2004). Policy deals with goals and objectives and process is about causal, technical and political feasibility. Resources are concerned with resource adequacy, not simply financial resources but also human resources, including staff time, power, reputation and ownership, all important factors in organisations that might hamper implementation (*ibid.*). The streams can be understood as a "series of windows" for change (*ibid.*, also Kingdon 1995). In addition, "policy loops" can be understood to operate on different levels with a somewhat separate logic but at the same time interdependently (Wihlborg 2011).

Many implementation scholars today have abandoned the idea that it is possible to establish a causal relationship between specific initiatives and their impact on complex societal problems, such as gender inequality. Different models of analysis have been suggested as alternatives to more simplistic models for the evaluation of initiatives' impact on societal change. One example of such a model is contribution analysis, where it is recognised that many different factors impact on change and a policy initiative is seen and analysed as one possible contributor to change rather than seeking a causal relationship (i.e. attribution) (Mayne 2012). This way of understanding and examining the effects of gender mainstreaming initiatives on an aggregated level is close to my own perspective and, furthermore, the focus of this particular study is not to examine the outcomes of gender mainstreaming for changing gender inequality at a societal level.

What then, does it matter that the implementation of the policy studied is within the field of equality politics? The "problem of implementation" of equality policies can be represented in different ways; one is that implementation processes, whatever the political area being studied, constitute a general problem. This means that it is difficult to implement policies regardless of policy areas and some factors might be general and thus generalisable and some might be contextual and specific. Another way to describe this is that the implementation of gender equality may be argued to pose a specific type of implementation problem. Examples of "particular" problems could be said to be that gender equality politics concerns identity issues, norms and values in connection with how one understands self and others. In this sense, one general question can be stated as: why is it so difficult to reach gender equality objectives and what seem to be the main obstacles in relation to implementation processes in public sector organisations?

From another perspective, however, the opposite question can also be asked: how is it that we have seen such impressive progress in certain contexts (national, organisational, policy areas etc.) compared to other contexts and in what way

has the implementation process been important to this outcome? It is important to note that, in the transformation towards a more gender equal society, public sector organisations have not and are not merely the instrumental tool to implement the measures necessary to create change on a societal level; rather, these organisations have simultaneously changed themselves. This is a parallel process and, in this respect, the implementation of strategies to integrate a gender perspective is in itself a process of change – the transformation of the system which at the same time is going to be the main tool in the implementation of equality policies. From this perspective, studying the implementation of gender mainstreaming is to study change in progress; to me this means not only to study the forces hindering change, but also how and when the system actually changes and the progressive forces that enable change. This motion, or the changes that can be observed and theorised, is, in my opinion, crucial to the knowledge necessary to create strategies for change but also to understand and create theories about change. How the implementation process is related to processes of change will be discussed next.

There are, however, and this must be clearly emphasised, no simple answers to the normative question of what the correct understandings of gender are in relation to a perceived gender equality problem or what constitutes a gender equal society. It is not my aim to answer this question. Rather, this contribution aims to explore and visualise impacting factors such as the potentially different understandings of gender, equality and change that inform the strategies developed and the experiences taken from the work and also other contextual and institutional factors. Through this, it is possible to discuss what gender mainstreaming turns into during the implementation of the strategy, and why.

Implementation as the enactment of policy

To study the implementation of equality policies such as gender mainstreaming in public sector organisations is to focus on the “*enactment stage*” of the policy process or, to put it differently, how policy is turned into action (Schofield 2004, p. 293). During the process of implementation, the ability to understand how to operationalise political objectives and policies becomes a central feature. As Brodtkin puts it:

[T]o implement implies process; it also implies ability: the ability to convert the ‘state’s policy promises into the state’s policy products’ (Brodtkin 1990, p. 108).

This is because, when a new policy goal is introduced, ready-made solutions in order to operationalise the new policy seldom accompany the work. Instead, public servants have to *learn* how to solve the problems in focus. Schofield writes about how this entails “inventing solutions to the problems presented” and continues by explaining:

[I]mplementation is about policy becoming action [...] policy has to be operationalized into action. This is done through inventing solutions to the problems presented by the policy [...] it is at this point of task design and retention of a particular solution that the point of operationalization comes about. (Schofield 2004, p. 303)

Previous research has shown that in this “process of invention” it is important that public servants have the capability (e.g. the competence, capacity and resources for the work) and the willingness to realise the objectives and also the comprehension (i.e. knowledge about and an understanding of the content of what is to be achieved) (cf. Sannerstedt 2001). A fourth aspect can be added to these: awareness (i.e. in order to integrate a gender perspective, public servants must be aware of the fact that gender is continually “done” in organisations and how each and every one of us is part of this process) (West and Zimmerman 1987, Martin 2006, Andersson *et al.* 2009, Callerstig 2012a). The above reasoning points to the fact that both contextual and individual factors have an impact on the implementation process and that it is indeed a matter of both change and learning.

From a more general perspective, implementation processes such as gender mainstreaming can be understood as development processes where it is important to balance structure and process in order to create long-term effects from the work. A general model for development work has been used as a starting point for the case studies. This model differentiates between what leads to short-term results and long-term effects, the point being that these mean different things.

Figure 1. Model for development work

Source: Model in Lindholm (2012) p.48, adapted from Halvarson, Sandberg and Öhman 2009)

Short-term results follow from clear objectives, an engaged project leadership, constant monitoring etc. But something quite different is needed if long-

term effects are to be achieved, i.e. what have been called intermediary agents and processes. Intermediary objects are the changes that should remain when a project has been completed. It could be a person who has been employed to continue the work and disseminate the results, a routine that has been introduced, or a work plan that is used in the on-going work (Halvarsson, Sandberg and Öhman 2009). By effects is meant the project's long-term impact on the organisation's activities (Svensson *et al.* 2007). Earlier research shows that sustainability requires a balance between structure and process (Svensson *et al.* 2007). Too much focus on structure, i.e. top-down measures, risks making the participants passive and impeding innovation. Too much process, i.e. a unilateral focus on participation and learning, will slow the process down and runs the risk that the work will become diffuse and unfocused. Structures are partly expressed as clarity with regard to what should be done (such as a coherent idea expressed as visions, aims and goals) and partly as an awareness of how something should be done, especially when it comes to leadership, management and ownership. An active ownership is expressed in terms of strong organisations and institutions that can implement and incorporate the results into their everyday activities and future ventures. Participation that supports change and learning should be real, experienced and an integral part of the process. However, the requirement for participation has to be balanced against what is realistically, practically and economically possible (Callerstig *et al.* 2012).

Learning, and especially learning that is development-oriented, is another important prerequisite if the results are to lead to long-term effects (Lindholm ed. 2013, Ellström 2001, 2010, Ellström, Ekholm and Ellström 2008). The above model (Figure 1) constitutes a base from which we could continue to discuss different aspects of the implementation process with the participants in terms of what were seen as prerequisites and where obstacles to an effective implementation might be found. The model was used in the joint learning process as part of the interactive research approach, explained in the chapter on the research process. It is a general model for development work and is used to gain a further understanding of what has been found to be important when implementing gender equality objectives and policies in public sector organisations. We must also know a little bit more both about the specific setting, i.e. gender and organisational actors and processes in general, and about the work with gender policies in public sector organisations and the impact of actors more specifically. In the following sections this will be discussed.

Gender and public sector organisations

How then do we go about deciding when to study, analyse and understand how gender mainstreaming has been implemented and the influential factors impacting on the process, taking into account that it entails a change and learning process where actors, organisational and institutional features are all of im-

portance? In order to understand that, we must know a little bit more about what has been previously learned from research and also to have some idea of how to use this understanding in a way that can hopefully contribute to some new understandings. The following sections mirror my own research process, where different theoretical elements have been used to explain the results of the case studies. They consist of the theoretical perspectives used to explain the implementation process in the individual case studies and the perspectives used to explain the similarities and differences found between them. The research process has been abductive, implying a continuous interplay between empirical findings, analysis and theory development. This is further explained in the chapter on the research process to follow. But let's start from the beginning.

Equality issues can be studied and have been studied in different ways in public sector organisations. Some prior research with relevance for my study, such as gender and public sector organisations and the impact of gender on implementation processes, will be discussed below. However, it should be stated initially that there is still a relative lack of studies on the topic within the mainstream research on public sector organisations and implementation (Broadbridge and Hearn 2008, Connell 2006). On the other hand, there is now a wider range of studies on gender and public sector organisations within the gender studies field (Savage and Witz 1992, Stivers 2002, Connell 2006, Chappel 2006).

The research on gender and organisations, which has been a focus since the 1970s, has very convincingly shown that organisations, including those in the public sector, are gendered in many respects. The field of gender and organisation is today diverse and includes so many theoretical perspectives that it is hardly possible to speak about it as one theory but rather as several different theories and also different research approaches (Hearn and Parkin 2003, Calás and Smirish 2006). To researchers, the genderedness of organisations has important implications for understanding how they function and, specifically, for the way in which gender operates in organisations. Joni Lovenduski (1998), in a review of research on gender and institutions, has outlined four areas of knowledge that are essential to the study of gender and institutions. She concludes that it is necessary to have an awareness that: 1) everyone in an institution has a sex and performs gender; 2) the experience of individuals in institutions varies by both sex and gender; 3) sex and gender interact with other components of identity – for example, race and ethnicity – that also have implications for models of femininity and masculinity; and 4) institutions have distinctively gendered cultures and are involved in processes of producing and reproducing gender (Chappel 2006). These might seem to be rather obvious points but the fact is that most of the organisational studies that have been done completely lack or have only a very rudimentary or even “crude” understanding of gender and gender relations (Hearn and Parkin 2003).

Below, I will outline some key aspects of how gender operates in organisations and then continue to discuss some factors that have been found to be important in

the implementation of gender equality policies and for equality work in organisations.

The daily “doing” of gender in organisations

What is the importance of gender in organisations? Joan Acker describes it as a fundamental element of organisational structure and work life and “present in [its] processes, practices, images and ideologies, and distribution of power” (Acker 1992, p. 567). Sometimes this “presence” is open and overt and sometimes deeply hidden in organisational processes and decisions that seem at first to have nothing to do with gender.

The daily “doing” of gender is important in order to understand gendered processes in organisations. The basic assumption that many researchers share is that gender is something that we do, rather than something that we are. Gender is, to put it differently, continually enacted and not merely a product of socialisation processes (West and Zimmerman 1987). It is, according to Martin, “the repertoire of actions or behaviour – speech, bodily and interpretive – that society makes available to its member for doing gender” (Martin 2006, p. 257). In these processes, gender is ‘done’ continuously in the organisation or, as Connell puts it, gender is a set of (potential) actions and at the same time a system that is in action (Connell 1987). It is the “what to do/can be done/is done relative to a particular gender status and identity” (Martin 2006, p. 257). One general point that has been raised is the often un-reflexive doing of gender in organisations. Much, perhaps most, of the practising of gender in an organisation is unintentional and un-reflexive (Martin 2006). Another important aspect of the gendering of organisations is that it operates in connection with ordinary and everyday processes and is visible in organisational structures and symbols.

Different forms of inequalities and domination processes are also frequently found in organisations (Hearn and Parkin 2003, Calás and Smirich 2006). One way of understanding inequality in organisations is, as Acker puts it:

Systematic disparities between participants in power and control over goals, resources, and outcomes; workplace decisions such as how to organize work; opportunities for promotion and interesting work; security in employment and benefits; pay and other monetary rewards; respect; and pleasures in work and work relations. (Acker 2006)

The way in which inequality is produced and reproduced is furthermore not bounded or limited to a specific organisation, it affects and is affected by inequalities in the organisational context. Earlier studies have concluded that the way that gender operates in organisations not only affects the organisation itself but organisations also create and reproduce gendered divisions of labour, cultural definitions of masculinity and femininity, and ways of articulating men’s and women’s interests that reach beyond their borders (see Connell 2006, p. 838). And, vice versa, organisations are affected by societal gender institutions, and

what Aruna Rao and David Kelleher have called, the “deep structures of organisations” (Rao and Kelleher 2005). Societal gender institutions, such as taken-for-granted assumptions and “ways of thinking and working, that underlie decision making and action” (p. 64), are being institutionalised into gendered practices in organisations but also into the general understanding of how and why gender equality work should be done (Acker 1992, Wahl 1992). These gendered institutions create gendered processes in organisations, which means that:

[A]dvantage and disadvantage, exploitation and control, meaning and identity, are patterned through and in terms of a distinction between male and female, masculine and feminine. (Acker 1992, p. 251)

Holvino highlights how identity formation and institutional and relational processes are in fact interlinked in a very complex way (Holvino 2008). The inner reality of an organisation must therefore be connected to external mechanisms, i.e. factors in the organisation’s environment, for a change to be possible (see also Rao and Kelleher 2005). According to Holvino:

Without an analysis of this social context – the relationship between the “outside and the inside” – and how these relations support and hinder change, organizational change interventions are likely to have very limited impact. (Holvino 2008, p. 18)

Gender furthermore intersects with other inequality processes which have an impact on equality work in organisations as well. Intersectionality is here broadly understood as:

[T]he interaction between gender, race and other categories of difference in individual lives, social practices, institutional arrangements, and cultural ideologies and the outcomes of these interactions in terms of power. (Davies 2008, p.68)

In her later work, Acker has pointed to the importance of an intersectional perspective in order to change organisational inequalities such as gender inequality, arguing that:

Change toward greater equality is possible, but difficult, because of entrenched economic (class) interests, the legitimacy of class interests, and allegiances to gendered and racialized identities and advantages. (Acker 2006, p.460)

Analysing gender in organisations

The gendering of organisations can be analysed by examining the current situation. Different ways to analyse how gender operates have been suggested, often along the lines of investigating a gender perspective in relation to organisational representations, relations, symbols, culture and power hierarchies as well as the “gendered self”. One example is the early and influential work of Joan Acker (1992, also quoted above). These theoretical perspectives have furthermore led to the development of numerous analytical frameworks.

As an example, Dana Britton outlines three main ways of investigating an organisation as gendered: 1) by looking at its structure (such as the way in which organisations are defined and structured); 2) by looking at the extent to which occupations and organisations are male or female dominated; and 3) finally, by examining the ways in which an organisation is described symbolically and ideologically and conceived of in terms of discourses (Britton 2000). Another broad distinction is to view an organisation from the perspective of four main categories: from a structural, leadership, symbolic or change perspective (Wahl *et al.* 2001).

In order to analyse how gender intersects with other inequality-producing processes in organisations, Joan Acker introduced the term “inequality regimes”, which she defines as “loosely interrelated practices, processes, actions, and meanings that result in and maintain class, gender, and racial inequalities within particular organisations” (Acker 2006, p. 443). In her article on inequality regimes, Acker suggests that some processes specifically create inequality regimes in organisations. These are processes that are: 1) organising the general requirements of work and class hierarchies; 2) recruitment and hiring processes; 3) wage setting and supervisory practices; and 4) informal interactions while “doing the work” (Acker 2006).

Public sector organisations

Several researchers have discussed the way in which gender operates in the context of public sector organisations and how this affects the work with gender equality (Stivers 2002). There is reason to believe that the gendered processes of organisations affect the implementation of policies generally in public sector organisations and equality policies specifically. Connell (2006) describes how “gender regimes” in public sector organisations affect the implementation of equality policies. According to Connell, four interlinked organisational dimensions that all affect the ways in which organisations are gendered can be studied (similar to Britton’s suggestion above and several others, see also Acker 1992, Hearn and Parkin 2003, Calás and Smirich 2006). These are the: gendered division of labour; gendered relations of power; emotion and human relations; gender culture and, finally, symbolism. One example is given by Benschop and Verloo (2006), who describe how gender hierarchies affect the implementation of gender mainstreaming in organisations so that, if not taken into account, these processes can effectively hinder the work with gender equality and become a “Sisyphus stone” (Benschop and Verloo 2006). Another impacting factor is the specific context; in public organisations this can be rules, regulations and political objectives but also the degree of contact with civil society and citizens (Olofsdotter Stensöta 2009).

Bureaucracy ideals

Bureaucracy as an organisational ideal is based on the principles of hierarchy, functional rationality, objective expertise, and an impersonal rule-based structure. These principles were designed at a time when women did not have access to authoritative positions in public sector organisations. Hierarchy, objectivity and rationality can be considered as values that are traditionally associated with male ideals, beliefs that came to be institutionalised into an organisational form, i.e. the administration. Objectivity, rationality and the non-attached or non-emotional approach are intended to exclude any issues that might be considered as belonging to the personal from the bureaucratic structure. In contrast, women have historically and ideologically been associated with the private and personal sphere, with needs and feelings, resulting in an emotional stereotype according to which women are regarded as unstable, unpredictable and too sentimental for society's tougher positions. Weber's ideal bureaucracy can in this sense be said to symbolise everything that women were not considered to be. The criteria for what is considered appropriate in the public sphere seem to indicate a principle that also excludes women or the female (Franzway *et al.* 1989, p. 144, see also Florin 1994 for a similar argument). Weber himself described bureaucracy as a rationalised form of patriarchy, although he might not have been using the term patriarchy in the modern, more critical interpretation. The following quote, however, is typical of his reasoning:

Bureaucratic and patriarchal structures are antagonistic in many ways, yet they have in common a most important peculiarity: permanence. In this respect they are both institutions of daily routine. [...] The patriarch is the "natural leader" of the daily routine. And in this respect, the bureaucratic structure is only the counter-image of patriarchalism transposed into rationality. (Weber 1948, quoted by Ramsay and Parker 1992, p. 253)

The institutional context

Public sector organisations are confronted with many different (and sometimes conflicting) political directives and goals. Gender equality goals in themselves can be in conflict. Organisations exist within a broader societal and institutional context to which they will respond in order to legitimise their existence in different ways and to fit in with different types of demands. Institutions are "comprised of regulative, normative and culture-cognitive elements that, together with associated activities and resources, provide stability and meaning to social life" (Scott 2008, p. 48).

Some institutional pressures manifest as regulative demands, such as the demand for an equality plan or gender mainstreaming. The process of institutionalisation as it is suggested within neo-institutional theory can look quite different depending on the demands that are being placed on an organisation. The way in which organisations respond to institutional demands can also vary within the

same organisation (Scott 1998, 2008). Some institutional demands are only adopted into the formal structures and decoupled from the technical core of the organisation. When this happens, in its clearest sense, there will be only a formal compliance with the demand and no action will take place in the organisation (Wittbom 2009). An example of this could be when an equality plan is just a document that is never put into practice. The risk of being decoupled from the technical core, that is from the main activities of the organisation, will increase if the demand is considered to have no relevance for the organisation or if it is considered too complicated and there seems to be no way to “solve” it, as shown for example by Nilsson (2007). These two interrelated problems are important with regard to gender equality work in organisations.

Implementation of equality policies in public sector organisations

As discussed above, different factors have great impact on the daily routines and practices within organisations, including initiatives to implement new policies such as gender mainstreaming. In the following, some specific findings about factors that have been found to impact on the implementation process and equality work in general will be discussed.

The effectiveness of public sector organisations can be seen in their ability to translate policy objectives into actual policy. As discussed earlier, this is generally considered to be an important aspect of public confidence in the policy. Meanwhile, the political process by which political objectives are transformed into a concrete practice is far from simple. This has been called the “implementation problem”, prompting famous studies such as the legendary Pressman and Wildavsky report from 1979 entitled “Implementation: How Great Expectations in Washington Are Dashed in Oakland; Or, Why It’s Amazing that Federal Programs Work at All”. In their study, the two researchers showed that there was not *one* particular factor that caused the implementation problem but rather it was the sum of all the (many) decisions taken along the way (Pressman and Wildavsky 1979). This and other early implementation studies demonstrated the vast complexity of implementation processes, and ever since then implementation researchers have been trying to understand the variables and provide models to enable a comprehensive explanation (Matland 1995, Saetren 2005).

The implementation process has also been found to be complicated in relation to gender equality policies. The quest to map and understand the impacting factors and variables that affect gender equality policies is therefore perhaps not so surprising. It is similar to what has been experienced in mainstream implementation research and has led to different studies of equality policies in terms of what factors will enable or hinder their success. Many of the findings from this research, such as the important role of managers or the significance of a commit-

ted staff, have also been discussed as significant in relation to implementation in the realm of other policy areas. They can be said to be related to a more general implementation problematic that will impact on the process regardless of which policy area it concerns (Sveningsson and Sörgärde 2007).

However, we know from prior research that some problems are particularly common in gender equality initiatives, such as: gender equality objectives are seldom prioritised in an organisation, there is often a lack of support from management as well as a general lack of resources and the work is largely driven by enthusiasts (Callerstig 2012a). Lack of awareness about the way we all “do” gender in our everyday actions and how this results in gender equality, or the lack of it, is widespread (Andersson 2009). Gender equality, in addition, is in itself a complex policy issue and it is often difficult to find one sole cause of gender inequalities, which in turn places greater demands on the implementation process.

Lut Mergaert, in a study on the implementation of gender mainstreaming within the European Commission, discusses four conditions for effective gender mainstreaming based on her own and previous research:

- The willingness of the organisation to question and effectively address the deeply rooted structures of power, gender hierarchies, values and frames that exist within the organisation;
- Tackling gender mainstreaming implementation as a phased process, consisting of the following stages: thorough analysis and questioning of existing structures precedes the planning and definition of actions and of structural provisions. This is followed by the careful and comprehensive equipping of all actors (with tools and resources) and duly monitored implementation;
- Consultation with and involvement of civil society and/or experts during the policy process;
- Accountability structures and systems or “hard incentives”: holding people responsible for actions undertaken and their results (Mergaert 2012, p. 55).

The impact of the various actors on the implementation process, both positive and negative, and change agency both deserve more attention and will be discussed next.

The impact of actors and change agency

The role of public servants acting as change agents in implementation processes has been problematised to a small extent within traditional implementation research (Schofield 2004), even though there are studies such as the theories on policy entrepreneurs discussed earlier. This relative lack of research also applies to change agency in studies of equality initiatives (Tati and Özbilgin 2009), even

though some important studies do exist, which will be discussed in the following section.

The impact of change agents on changing gendered and discriminatory processes and practices in organisations has been discussed in terms of the role of employees in private companies. Previous studies have found change agents who operate alone with an agenda for change built on personal motives and individual experiences of unjust conditions and practices. For example, Colgan and Ledwith's "movers and shakers" (1996), who were women who acted on their own to create more equal working conditions for themselves, or Meyerson and Scully's (1995) "tempered radicals", struggling with the dual loyalties that go with trying to change things from within. Tempered radicals are employees who acknowledge unfair or unjust practices or conditions in their organisations and want to change them, but who at the same time remain loyal to and support the overall objectives of the organisation. The strategies that tempered radicals choose are often characterised by minor and sequential change, e.g. carefully deciding which route to take, seeing opportunities when they arise, turning disadvantages to advantages, building alliances and creating learning opportunities (Meyerson and Scully 1995, Meyerson 2001).

Another type of change agent being discussed is the equality worker, a strategic change agent with a sanctioned agenda and a specific mission to change existing conditions in order to reach pre-set goals. Equality workers have often been categorised as either equal opportunities officers focusing on legal and democratic aspects or diversity officers, focusing more on the business argument for change (Tatli and Özbilgin 2009). An additional type of change agent is the participant. These can be participants in a change initiative or employees affected by the proposed change; often portrayed as either "passive implementers or grim resisters" (Howard 2002). Still, they have been shown to be important in their role as executors of decisions and some researchers have emphasised their crucial influence (*ibid.*). Participants are also important in order to receive the necessary support for change and also the knowledge to translate gender equality goals into action (*ibid.*). Another group of change agents that has been studied are the managers, whose actions or non-actions are crucial to gender equality change initiatives (as shown in numerous studies), including not only top management but also the role of middle managers (Andersson *et al.* 2009).

In Sweden, the political scientist Helena Olofsdotter Stensöta has studied the JÄMI programme for gender mainstreaming in governmental agencies. In her study, she examines how three theoretically distinct tools of government, i.e., steering, leadership, and knowledge/resources, contribute to successful implementation. One conclusion of this study is that leadership support is the only significant factor contributing positively to gender mainstreaming success based on the analysis (Olofsdotter Stensöta 2009).

Change agency has also been discussed in relation to bureaucrats, i.e. the "femocrat" (Franzway *et al.* 1989) and also bureaucrats who inhibit change (Fer-

guson 1984). In earlier Nordic research, the concept of the gender equality bureaucrat, or femocrat, has been used to describe individuals who implement gender equality objectives in the public sector. Femocrats have been regarded as important for the social development that led to Sweden becoming one of the world's most gender equal countries (Borchorst 1999). But the femocrat's work has also been problematised. Research has shown that gender equality work in the public sector is sometimes undertaken as a matter of duty or that it can even have undesired effects (Magnusson, Rönnblom and Silius 2008). The position of public employees who work with gender equality objectives has often been regarded as problematic. Gender equality is often a marginalised issue in an organisation and femocrats have to struggle with the existing gender structures that they are trying to change (Pincus and van der Ros 1999, p. 202). Another discussion in relation to the larger question of the possible transformation of existing discourses and practices in organisations is what happens when equality activism becomes professionalised and takes on board the popular, contemporary management rhetoric and tools of NPM (New Public Management). Discussions have focused on the potential outcomes of equality workers' own engagement with professionalisation and managerialism processes. One commonly expressed concern is that equality work risks being co-opted into the dominant, "mainstream" organisational and professional discourses. It therefore loses its critical edge through engagement with these ongoing de-politicising processes.

The femocrat also has yet another problem, in that a bureaucrat is supposed to be a neutral and non-political expert, i.e. on the one hand they have to implement the political decisions that have been made and at the same time "stretch" or even oppose the prevailing rules and regulations in order to meet gender equality objectives. The problem has also been shown to increase at certain times, for example, when staff lacking theoretical knowledge and political engagement have gradually become more gender aware and sometimes also adopted feminist values (*ibid.*, p. 204). These employees, according to Meyerson, feel a dual loyalty, towards upholding the ideals and objectives of their organisations as well as changing them towards greater gender equality (Meyerson 2001). Femocrats are characterised by ambivalence and are often torn between the desire to be part of the organisation and the need to resist what they regard as unfair conditions. But they are people who work within, and not against, the system. Femocrats resemble what have been referred to in research as tempered radicals (Meyerson 2001).

So what does change agency mean in relation to gender mainstreaming? Previous studies have shown that problems in implementing gender mainstreaming can lead to a situation where gender advocates "sell" the gender mainstreaming strategy in new areas, using the "business case" to support their arguments and hoping they can bring social justice perspectives on board as well. However, retaining a dual agenda of gender equality and business goals in the practical work might turn out to be difficult (Meyerson and Kolb 2000).

Elaine Swan and Steve Fox (2010) describe how the discussion on equality workers can be divided into two main and interrelated areas: the first stemming from an ideological point of view and entailing discussions about the different understandings which the term diversity may contain; the second being the “politics of practice debate” (ibid., p. 571), which refers to discussions about resistance to and co-option by dominant discourses when engaging with professionalised diversity work. They argue that these debates have largely been built on understandings of diversity work as either social activism or human resource (HR) practices, i.e. the notion of the “good” social justice versus the “bad” business case argument, or as critical social activism from the outside versus instrumental and uncritical HR practice from the inside. Furthermore, they argue that this binary division may not be very helpful in understanding the micro-practices used by equality workers. One of the arguments is that there is no simple, generally applicable description of what counts as “political” or “critical” and that social activism may draw on many different arguments and ideologies, which may stem from completely different political standpoints such as socialist or liberal accounts of the world. According to Swan and Fox, apart from the fact that activism may draw on different types of ideologies, it is also in reality often hard to tell where resistance ends and co-option starts (or vice versa) in the strategies employed by equality practitioners. Another connected discussion with relevance for the examination of equality strategies is the tendency to understand organisational practitioners as either passive implementers or grim resisters in relation to equality policies. Strategies have thus often been devised to meet with these two “groups”, leaving little space for practitioners as change agents (Howard 2002).

Mainstream theories of the change agent’s role in organisational change have been criticised for assuming change actors to be rational, apolitical, disembodied, de-contextualised and autonomous. Tatli and Özbilgin have suggested that an equality officer’s agency should instead be studied, with combined attention given to individual, structural and relational dynamics, including the resource and constraint implications of situatedness, relationality and practices of change agency (Tatli and Özbilgin 2009).

The vagueness of gender equality objectives and resistance towards gender equality work

When reviewing earlier research, two prominent themes frequently recur and emerge as central. They are: the vagueness of gender equality objectives and resistance towards gender equality work (see also Mergaert 2012, Lombardo and Mergaert 2013). These will be discussed in the following sections.

The vagueness of gender equality objectives and policies

One of the central themes in the studies of gender equality policies and gender equality work is the difficulties surrounding how to understand the concept of gender equality, such as the nature of inequality and how to address it. Furthermore, earlier studies have shown that gender equality is seldom defined – or is defined in different ways by different actors (Lombardo, Meier and Verloo 2009, Angervall 2005, Nilsson 2007).

The discussions about the vagueness of the concept of gender equality have many different dimensions, both theoretical and practical; for gender equality politics in general and for gender mainstreaming. Many different researchers have found the concept of gender equality be particularly open to different interpretations and understandings. Research has shown the existence of very different interpretations by different actors and in different contexts (Benchop, Halsema and Schreurs 2001, Booth and Benneth 2002, Angervall 2005, Hearn *et al.* 2005, Nentwich 2006, Rönnblom and Silius 2008, Lombardo, Meier and Verloo 2009, Kelan 2010, to name just a few). The consequences of different interpretations have been discussed in terms of political processes, such as distorting the meaning of gender equality (Rönnblom 2009) from an equality perspective; one example is who are being represented in the discourses of gender equality and who is not (Calas and Smircich 2006, Holvino 2008, Honkanen 2008) and also in terms of the practical implications of equality work in organisations (Nentwich 2006, Wahl 2007, Swan and Fox 2010, Angervall 2005). It has also been problematised how the interpretations in themselves are emergent processes, it is a “discursive process” (Lombardo, Meier and Verloo 2009), in which the exact meaning of gender equality is established in a political process that reflects different political opinions.

Gender equality policies from this perspective can be understood as a “politics of doing”. This means that the outcomes can only be truly understood by studying the process and not merely by pre-examination of the concepts, such as how they are used in a specific policy document, since this can change during the course of the process (Eveline and Bacchi 2009). The continuous interpretations of the meaning of gender equality have been found to shape the entire policy making process and, as Bustelo and Verloo explain, this has consequences for:

[...] the way the policy problem is defined and represented, how it is addressed and implemented, and how it evolves and changes over time in different contexts and is taken on board by various actors. (Bustelo and Verloo 2009, p. 153)

How gender is understood is, thus, a key factor in explaining how action is taken in relation to gender initiatives in the public sector (see also Connell 2006, Duerst-Lahti and Kelly 1995). This relates to the underlying assumptions of different understandings of gender equality. Connell (2006) uses the example of the notion of a “glass ceiling” to illustrate how this type of metaphor is related to a specific equality model where there exist “barriers” to women’s advancement in

organisations, such as left-over stereotypes from before, that can be removed but where the organisation in itself is seen as gender neutral (*ibid.*). The articulation, and application, of different perspectives in and through the work with gender mainstreaming by gender experts and employees of an organisation may also vary depending on the context and can differ both in location and over time in the same organisation (Angervall 2005, Swan and Fox 2010, Nentwich 2006). That several different perspectives and gender methods are applied in parallel (Squires 2005, Nentwich 2006) is also assumed to have an impact on the outcome, although few evaluations have been made specifically linked to the use of different approaches or perspectives or combinations of them (Timmers, Willemsen and Tjeldens 2010).

Another complication to which the openness of the concept of gender equality can lead is that the complexity of gender problems, which precludes simple solutions (Halford 1992, Acker 2000), can also lead to the risk of getting caught in (endless) discussions of problems and solutions (Eriksson-Zetterquist and Styhre 2008).

Part of the discussion surrounding the concept of gender equality is how it can be understood in relation to other, intersecting inequalities. Some researchers have shown how the intersections of different social inequality processes impact on the implementation process but that an intersectional perspective is often missing in gender research on organisations (Holvino 2008). One problem with the analysis of inequality in organisations that do not have an intersectional perspective is that they risk creating a false picture of what the problem is for all individuals in a certain “category”, for example, all women in an organisation, and can easily become normative (Calas and Smircich 2006, Holvino 2008).

One explanation for why it has been so difficult to implement gender policies could be, as discussed earlier, the complex intersections between gender and other social categories, which make the processes more complex to address. If the relationships between different inequalities and the way they are (co)produced are not considered in the practical work, it will be difficult to achieve the desired results (Acker 2006). However, “intersectionality” is not a unitary concept or a single theory but rather a broad framework of theories much like gender theory. In fact, the vagueness of the concept of intersectionality has been discussed in a similar manner, rendering Davies to suggest that part of the explanation for its popularity is the concept’s alleged weaknesses – its ambiguity and open-endedness (Davies 2008). It has become a modern buzzword (*ibid.*). Furthermore, the political ambition to sometimes simplify and “merge” different equality policies might obscure the fact that different forms of inequalities, discrimination and equality policies might have very different problem constructions and histories (Verloo 2006). The “one size fits all” approach to addressing multiple forms of discrimination is based on an incorrect assumption of the sameness or equivalence of the social categories that are connected to the various inequalities and of the mechanisms and processes that constitute them. It fails to

address the structural level and continues to fuel the political competition between inequalities (Verloo 2006). This potential “conflict” between different interpretations and stand-points has also been addressed by others.

Jeff Hearn (1998) discusses the “complexity” of gender relations in organisations, referring to the many different meanings that gender relations can have or refer to, between different individuals, more collectively and/or in different parts of an organisation. These differences Hearn refers to as ambiguities; contradictions and ambiguity, i.e. the existence of two or more meanings, are common in relation to gendered relationships in organisations. One example of this is that gender relations can be understood both as changing and static at the same time. These ambiguities can exist in relation to common (and gendered) organisational activities, such as various forms of communication, which may have more than one meaning for the participants, either individually or collectively. Another example is that ambiguities can be seen in the behaviour of one individual or in differences in an actor’s meaning and the observer’s understanding.

Another type of complexity in relation to the meaning of gender in organisations is the various forms of contradictions that might exist. Contradictions are different forms of conflicts, oppositions or antagonisms that might exist because of different interests and conflicts of interest (such as in the Marxist use of dialectics). In organisations, fundamental contradictions and conflicts of interest might, for example, exist between women and men, in gendered exploration and oppression (Hearn 1998).

A third type of complexity discussed by Hearn (1998) is the paradox, literally “beyond belief”, where elements of linguistic meaning, as in ambiguity, are combined with elements of social structure, as in contradiction. Paradox thus “brings together interpersonal interaction and oppositional structures in the form of social processes, and specifically the possibility of the impossibility” (ibid. p. 2).

Ambiguity, contradiction and paradox are, according to Hearn, different ways of analysing gendered complexities, and the tensions within those complexities. They refer to different aspects of social reality: meaning, structure and process, and to various types of complexities: dual meaning, opposition, antagonism and conflict and the possibility of impossibility.

Resistance towards gender equality work

The second dominant theme in earlier research on gender policies and gender equality work is the different types of conflict surrounding equality work, such as the prevalence of active or passive resistance against such objectives and policies and the work with them. The problem of resistance has been observed and discussed by different scholars (see Mergaert 2012, Lombardo and Mergaert 2013, Bergqvist *et al.* 2013, Lee-Gosselin, Briere and Hawo 2013, to name just a few). Some researchers link resistance more to institutional features of organisational

change and others to individual attitudes and values as well as processes of stratification and power.

Susan Halford (1992) has discussed a specific form of conservatory force in public sector (bureaucratic) organisations that has an impact on the implementation of equality policies. It relates to the concept of organisational inertia. The concept of inertia seeks to explain how it is that there seems to be a lag in terms of an organisation's ability to adapt to changes in its environment. This phenomenon has sometimes been interpreted as an internal resistance to change or forces that strive to maintain the organisation in its original form. Inertia is explained by both internal and external constraints, such as a limited information flow and information processing capacity, limited investment capacity in equipment and personnel and conservatory social and cultural forces. Organisational change inertia has also been found to vary across different types of changes and depending on which part of the organisation is being exposed to pressure for change. Organisations do change, but at different speeds, both in comparison with other organisations and also within the same organisation (Scott 1998, p. 218, Abrahamsson 2000, p. 82). Halford has written about a specific form of inertia in public sector organisations, bureaucratic inertia. The argument is as follows: the more bureaucratic an organisation, particularly with respect to the division of labour and hierarchical structure, the greater the resistance to change. In organisations with a fragmented structure, information and knowledge flows will be limited both horizontally and hierarchically. However, without information and knowledge, it is difficult for people to change their behaviour.

A strict division of labour in public sector organisations can also lead to a situation where it may be difficult to cope with the uncertainty that change brings. Restrictions on information and the exchange of knowledge, along with uncertainty among employees about what is expected of them, often create a tendency towards simplification. Policies that deal with problems that have a clear and simple solution will be more easily accepted. Issues related to different gender aspects do not usually follow this simple template (Halford 1992, Wahl *et al.* 2001). An organisation's inertia should not, according to Halford, be considered as an unsolvable obstacle. But neither can it be reduced to a purely technical issue in the sense of the organisation's ability to learn and self-initiate development processes. This view might lead to a neglect of the potential conflict between the demands of learning and self-organisation on the one hand and the realities of power and control on the other. In cases where employees themselves are encouraged to evaluate their work and initiate changes, it will threaten existing power structures in the organisation (Halford 1992, Wahl *et al.* 2001). Organisational change also entails changes in attitudes to some extent and inertia is reinforced by those attitudes and values which currently prevail. Halford argues that an essential element of this concerns the gendered attitudes and values of the organisation (Halford 1992, p. 169).

There are some examples of studies that have aimed to understand what affects the outcomes of gender equality processes from an implementation perspective, and these have specifically addressed the issue of resistance and how it operates in the implementation process. In a Swedish thesis from 2002, Ingrid Pincus of Örebro University seeks to answer the question of why the implementation of the Swedish government's gender equality policy for the most part comes to a halt when it is to be implemented in local organisations. The framework applied to investigate the implementation process is a modified form of Peter Bachrach and Morton Baratz's non-decision-making model. One of the central contributions of the study is the illustration of the different methods and barriers used by men in leadership positions to prevent, inhibit and obstruct the institutionalisation of gender equality policies in the operations of these local authorities (Pincus 2002). Pincus found that resistance could be divided into an active and a passive form. These forms of resistance could be found at all stages of the implementation process (Pincus 2002, also Pincus and Van der Rose 1999, p. 207).

Lee-Gosselin, Briere and Hawo (2013) discuss progress and resistance in gender mainstreaming initiatives along the lines of three dimensions of measures undertaken in gender mainstreaming initiatives: technical, cultural and political. They argue that it has been far easier to see progress in the technical area (such as conducting analyses and diagnoses of gender equality, creating projects and policies, impact studies, information systems, monitoring and evaluation and in systems of human resource management) because resistance is generally lower there than in the cultural and political areas. Yet, they conclude that gender mainstreaming demands a sustainable transformation process that could lead to the institutionalisation of gender equity in order to be successful (similar to the arguments made by Jahan (1995) and others) and that this would require activities in the cultural and political areas as well. Examples of cultural areas, according to Lee-Gosselin, Briere and Hawo, are to be found in relation to: vision and mission, values and behaviours, power relationships, image, sense of belonging, enthusiasm and commitment, openness to change, stereotypes, access to information and mechanisms of communication and workspace. The political dimension is understood as: the role of leaders, the role of influential people both internally and externally, organisational structures dedicated to gender and budget allocation (Lee-Gosselin, Briere and Hawo 2013).

Resistance and obstacles in the political area were found to include the limited involvement of top management, the lack of internal expertise and credible people to implement gender mainstreaming, misunderstanding and the illegitimacy of gender mainstreaming programmes (*ibid.*). Resistance and obstacles found in the cultural dimension were: poor adaptation between the organisational culture and the gender mainstreaming programme, stereotypes, a denial that inequality existed and insufficient resources (*ibid.*).

To sum up the theoretical perspectives outlined in the previous sections: certain specific factors have been found to impact on the implementation of equality policies and organisational equality work in addition to general factors known from earlier implementation research. I have discussed how gendered organisational and broader institutional factors affect equality work and the process of implementation of equality policies. The potential roles of a variety of actors in the implementation of equality policies have been addressed. I have specifically outlined and discussed two important themes found in earlier research: the vagueness of the concept of gender equality and resistance towards equality initiatives. I have shown how this vagueness and the discursive politics connected to the establishment of the problem and the solution affect the implementation process. In addition to this, I have discussed how the general inertia within change and learning processes, including specific problems of bureaucratic organisations and the existence of both passive and active resistance towards equality work, is of crucial importance for understanding the implementation of equality policies.

How then can we understand the implementation of gender mainstreaming in the light of this evidence, and what are the gaps in the research? What can be said to be the important factors impacting on the implementation process? Is it the organisational processes and institutional factors, the commitment and involvement of actors, top-down or bottom-up forms of implementation, or something else? Current research seems to indicate that all these factors are important, but how can this be understood and how might they be differentiated in order to inform the analysis and to answer my research questions?

Gender mainstreaming is often portrayed as a leadership-driven, top-down policy. But previous research seems to indicate that a bottom-up perspective might be of similar importance. This is strengthened by the fact that gender mainstreaming has been widely adopted but seems to have met with a lot of uncertainties and resistance in the implementation phase. How can the implementation process and outcomes of gender mainstreaming be analysed given this somewhat mixed message?

This will be discussed in the following section, where an alternative way of understanding the factors impacting on the implementation process will also be discussed. This way of understanding the implementation process does not merely depart from an orientation towards either a top-down or a bottom-up perspective, but it uses these perspectives in a way that will allow for a more complex and process-oriented analysis of equality initiatives such as gender mainstreaming. In doing so, I will argue that a slightly different and perhaps more comprehensive picture will appear that will allow us to understand why and when certain factors are more important than others and that also takes into account the fact that the circumstances might change during the course of implementation, allowing for factors to become more or less important. It is also a way of trying to further our understanding of the vagueness and resistance problematics that seem to hinder gender equality work in general, by making an attempt to differentiate the

analyses of these two dimensions to see if they are more or less apparent in certain cases or under certain circumstances, perhaps during certain phases of the implementation process, and if so to problematise why this might be the case.

A theoretical model for the analysis of the implementation of equality policies

The search for variables and the quest for “solutions”, i.e. that researchers should produce the correct answer about how to “do” successful gender equality work in terms of the implementation of gender equality policies, is similar to what has been experienced by many implementation researchers before in other policy areas (Matland 1995, Saetren 200). The urge to develop new methods, tools, checklists etc. in relation to gender mainstreaming can be regarded as part of this desire. Mieke Verloo (2001) argues that, even if it is true that such instruments can be very helpful, this approach overlooks the political nature of gender equality work and the institutional context. It is not possible to find a final solution that can be applied generally and, furthermore, all “solutions” that are developed will always need to take into account contextual elements. The underlying assumptions that the demand for general solutions rests on are technocratic and rationalistic in that it assumes that gender inequality is a simple problem, or that research can provide the final analysis of the problem, and then action can follow (Verloo 2001). This denial of the political character of the gender problematic is the first problem in understanding the implementation process according to Verloo. She writes:

The gender problematic is not a simple problem, but a messy one, or a wicked one, or simply a political one, meaning that there is no real consensus about what the problem is exactly, about why and for whom it is a problem, about who is responsible for the existence of the problem, who is responsible for solving it. This means that there is an on-going political power struggle over these definitions. (p. 14).

Instead of trying to find a simple solution that is generally applicable, the complicated interaction between interests, ideas and institutions with political opportunities, networks that will be mobilised and the on-going strategic framing of gender equality by policy actors must inform the analysis (Verloo 2001, p. 14). It is a political and indeed often conflictual process. And even if conflict and disagreement about the objectives of gender equality are at first not apparent, they will appear during the process of implementation (*ibid.*).

The “messiness” or complexity of addressing gender equality problems, the struggles over definitions and the conflictual nature of the implementation process were evident in the review of earlier research, as shown above, where two themes have been found to be particularly dominant: the vagueness of gender equality objectives and resistance towards gender equality work. In order to take

these findings and arguments further and to contextualise the implementation of equality policies within the political scene, the work of Richard Matland (1995) on policy implementation is of particular interest. Matland argues, similarly to Verloo (2001), that instead of focusing on finding even more variables that can be shown to have an impact on the implementation process or to argue whether top-down, bottom-up or network types of implementation processes work better, an analysis of the policy areas that are in focus should be undertaken prior to investigations of it and before setting up implementation programmes.

This analysis is intended to take on board the political nature of policy implementation and to seek to understand the particular dynamics of different policy areas. Matland argues that the (any) implementation process is dependent on the level of conflict and ambiguity in a particular policy area and that this will have a substantial impact on the implementation process and outcomes. Even though all policy implementation is affected by both top-down and bottom-up factors, Matland argues that certain factors will dominate in certain policy areas and they will be dependent on the specific nature of that policy area and the conflict and ambiguity levels inherent within it. However, the specific conditions under which certain factors become more important than others and the reasons for this have to a large extent been ignored in earlier implementation research (Matland 1995, p. 153). However, if the contextual nature of different policies is not taken into account, measures may be applied that will actually worsen already existing problems. In order to investigate the pre-conditions for implementation, Matland has developed a model, the ambiguity-conflict model, which he describes as a contingency model. It provides an analytical tool for identifying which theoretical models best describe the implementation process. This is done through an analysis of the levels of conflict and ambiguity in the relevant policy areas. Conflict in a policy area can affect both the objectives as such and the means to reach them. Conflict exists, according to Matland, where there is an interdependence of actors and an incompatibility of objectives and a perceived zero-sum element to these actions. Policy conflict will be present when the policy is seen to be of direct interest to more than one actor and where they have incongruous views (this is similar to what Hearn (1998) has described as contradictions). The differences can refer to both the professed goals of a policy and the programmatic activities that are planned to carry it out (Matland 1995). High levels of conflict mean that it is difficult to find a “best solution” to the problem. This leads to long periods of negotiation and the formation of different interest coalitions. Compromise can be one solution but so can the strict enforcement of measures or no solution at all, which means that non-action can be the result when a policy area is characterised by high levels of conflict.

There are different understandings in implementation research of whether and how conflicts can be handled. Some believe that it is possible to limit conflict, for example by limiting the changes that a policy will bring about. Some conflicts are difficult to avoid, especially when they are based on an incompati-

bility of values. Types of conflict resolution methods also change with the level of conflict, where persuasion or problem solving are usual at low levels of conflict and bargaining and coercion are more common at higher levels of conflict (Matland 1995).

The other dimension that will affect implementation, argues Matland, is the level of ambiguity that surrounds a policy area. Ambiguity can exist in terms of both the objectives and the means to reach them. This can mean that the objective is symbolic or visionary or that the solutions to the problem are not known, or both. The level of ambiguity can be either negative or positive for implementation. It can be negative because it can lower the sense of legitimacy and urgency in the implementing organisations and thus create low priority. It can be positive in that it opens up space for experimental learning. Another aspect is that ambiguity can reduce resistance towards a goal. One negative effect of very clear objectives is that they are more likely to lead to conflict. Earlier studies have shown how programme goals can be removed, if understood as conflictual, while policy implementation is being considered during the policy formulation phase (Matland 1995). Ambiguity should therefore not be considered a flaw in policy, argues Matland (1995, p. 171) because it can be a prerequisite for getting new policies passed and is a precondition for an open learning process where solutions are not yet known. Implementation in these cases can be an opportunity to reach new policy goals; it can be a phase where principles and visions as well as technological knowledge are tested. This point seems to be of particular importance in the case of gender mainstreaming which, as has been discussed before, can be understood as a process involving change and learning. The degree of ambiguity affects the implementation process in many different ways. It influences the ability to monitor activities, and the likelihood that policy is understood in a similar way across locations. It also affects the probability that local contextual factors and the impact of actors will vary sharply across implementation sites (Matland 1995). Even though the level of ambiguity might vary, it is likely that some types of ambiguity cannot be resolved and are an inherent part of policies and organisational life, as discussed above (Hearn 1998). Matland also proposes that the levels of both conflict and ambiguity can change during the implementation process and that this will then also change the conditions for implementation. Based on an analysis of policy areas and the levels of conflict and ambiguity, a matrix consisting of four different types of implementation can be created.

Figure 2. The ambiguity-conflict matrix (Matland 1995)

		CONFLICT	
		Low	High
AMBIGUITY	Low	<i>Administrative Implementation</i> Resources	<i>Political Implementation</i> Power
	High	<i>Experimental Implementation</i> Contextual Conditions	<i>Symbolic Implementation</i> Coalition Strength

Source: Adapted from Matland (1995)

Matland argues that low levels of both conflict and ambiguity in a policy area (administrative implementation) mean that it is clear what the problem is and how it might be solved and that there is a general political consensus that it is an important goal and how it should be accomplished. In these cases, implementation is mostly about administration and supplying the right resources. Under these circumstances, implementation can best be understood from a traditional top-down perspective. This does not mean that implementation is necessarily easy but it does mean that it is mostly technical. When something goes wrong it is usually due to insufficient resources and a lack of clear instructions.

When instead there are low levels of political conflict and high levels of ambiguity (experimental implementation), implementation will be “experimental”. This type of implementation is in its character bottom-up oriented and it is important to provide the right kind of learning environment as well as information exchange and feedback in terms of learning across sites. Contextual factors will determine the outcome and it is also dependent on which actors are involved and active. This will furthermore vary from site to site with large local variations, according to Matland (1995). Learning is the most important outcome of this type of implementation and conformity and compliance to a strict set of rules and regulations should be avoided.

In cases of high levels of ambiguity in terms of what the problem is and how it might be solved as well as high levels of political disagreement on what to do (symbolic implementation), implementation will be more problematic both in terms of conflicting interpretations and battles over support on a local level. Both top-down and bottom-up perspectives on implementation are relevant in these cases. Here both feedback and learning are important but struggles over both resources and the “right” perspective will prevail because of the ambiguity and conflictual character of the problem. The formation and strengths of local level

coalitions will have a great impact on the implementation process. Similar and competing coalitions are likely to occur at different sites. Professions are important and may influence and compete over different understandings of solutions to problems. Individual actors at the local level are very important and the impact of these actors is dependent on the strength of the coalition network to which they belong (ibid.).

The last case is when there are high levels of political conflict and low levels of ambiguity (political implementation). Here implementation will be “political”, meaning that it involves political conflicts and power struggles over the control of resources. This makes a top-down perspective on implementation relevant; focusing on sanctions and incentives, i.e. hard policy measures to ensure that action is taken at the local level. Monitoring is relatively easy because of the low level of ambiguity concerning what to do. Outcomes will be determined by power. Here, support from the general public, upper-level politicians, resources and the commitment of the implementing officials are important (ibid.). The differences in terms of the various scenarios of implementation are displayed below in a table using Matland’s description of how conflict and ambiguity levels affect policy implementation.

Table 5. Different types of implementation processes

	ADMINISTRATIVE	POLITICAL	EXPERIMENTAL	SYMBOLIC
Characteristics of policy area	Consensus on objectives, solution to problem known.	Clear but conflicting objectives.	Consensus on objectives but high ambiguity in terms of solutions. Local variations.	Conflicting objectives and high ambiguity in terms of solutions.
Implementation model	Rationalistic, top-down	Top-down	Bottom-up	Top-down and bottom-up
Impacting factors	Clear implementing structure, resources and capacity building	Auctorial steering, Policy measures (sanctions, incitements)	Learning environment Engagement/commitment	Strengths of coalitions at the local level. “Implementation battles” at the local level. Conflictual and dominated by local actors.
Risks	Lack of resources and ability	Local actors act on their own agendas	Low priority in implementing organisations, good but isolated development	Lack of action, non-implementation

Source: Adapted from Matland (1995)

As discussed earlier, it can be argued that the wider policy area of gender equality politics has characteristics described by Matland as a high degree of both conflict and ambiguity, judging from previous research. However, it is also relevant to address the potential differences between different kinds of gender equality policies that might show different levels of conflict and ambiguity when compared to each other. This would also mean that different factors are of importance for different types of policies.

When reviewing previous research on gender mainstreaming, the results seem to indicate that the policy is close to, and bears many resemblances to, the definitions that Matland uses for low-conflict/high-ambiguity policy areas. This is true at least initially and when what should be done has not been precisely defined or even what the problem to be addressed is. Gender mainstreaming, to further clarify, has been widely adopted and often with relatively low levels of political conflict or even with a general consensus in favour of policy adoption, but at the same time there seem to exist considerable ambiguities in terms of what the policy exactly entails. When compared to other policies, this type of open-ended, non-routinised policy that gender mainstreaming often entails, and in the light of what we know of its implementation, therefore places gender mainstreaming in the third corner of Matland's model.

In the figure below, gender mainstreaming is compared with examples of other types of gender equality policies which might be argued to show differing degrees of conflict and ambiguity levels. Even though all equality policies might be argued to show relatively high levels of conflict and ambiguity compared to other type of policy areas, my point here is that different types of equality policy might show different levels of conflict and ambiguity and that this might also have consequences for their implementation. As an example, anti-discrimination legislation could be said to be an example of a policy that shows a relatively high level of precision in terms of its goals and the means to achieve them, as well as a political consensus on the need for such legislation. This can be compared to policies that aim for equality in outcome or result-based equality, such as quotas or affirmative action, where even though it is fairly clear what should be done and why the political conflict level is high and there are different positions on the justification and effectiveness of such policies. An example of a policy that might be said to show high levels of uncertainty about how to reach its goals, in terms of the aims and the immediate goals as well as political conflicts in terms of its justifications, might be policies in the sphere of post-gender/transgender/queer-oriented policies. However, the analyses of an equality policy, or any type of policy, might look very different in other contexts, such as other national settings or locations in time, one example being the issue of quotas in Norway where political conflict over the policy is lower than in Sweden.

Figure 3. Model for ambiguity-conflict levels in different gender equality policies

		CONFLICT	
		Low	High
AMBIGUITY	Low	Anti-discrimination legislation (de jure)	Quotas or affirmative action (de facto)
	High	Gender mainstreaming	Post-gender/ Queer/Trans-gender

Source: Adapted from Matland (1995)

Let us now turn to the specific case of gender mainstreaming and use it as an example. If the analysis is correct, then the important factors specifically impacting on the implementation process of gender mainstreaming could, according to Matland, be related to the fact that it is a matter of experimental implementation where a participatory “bottom-up” type of implementation must be organised and where learning will be the main, and most important, outcome.

However, another question then follows, concerning whether the levels of conflict and ambiguity will change during the process since learning could also entail changing organisational processes and systems in order to integrate the newly acquired knowledge into daily operations (an argument made by, for example, Lee-Gosselin, Briere and Hawo 2013).

In the case of gender mainstreaming, it is also possible that the levels of conflict will rise during the implementation process at the same time as the levels of ambiguity will be reducing once it becomes clearer what constitutes the equality problem and how it might be solved in the specific context of the thematic area where gender mainstreaming is applied. This is likely to happen since gender mainstreaming means not only to better understand how a gender equality perspective can be applied but also to propose and implement measures to enable its integration, i.e. to change existing systems, processes and practices.

This also means that the political level could become more important during the process. Politicians and senior managers are important in order to take the decisions necessary to ensure more structural changes which might be a result of the more technical parts of the gender mainstreaming process. It can furthermore become a case of political implementation if disagreement exists about the new policy goals and especially if it concerns the allocation of resources, according to Matland (1995). If this holds true, it would also mean that the political level, or central level actors, is as important as the administrative level but it may be that the impact of central actors will vary throughout the gender mainstreaming process. Matland explains the process thus:

As the ambiguity level decreases the policy moves upward, toward the political implementation quadrant. A decrease in ambiguity, either through explicit goals or a crystallization of discussion around a limited number of possible means, would provide central level actors an increased opportunity to assert some control and influence. When the policy is very clear, the macro level actors are able to exert considerable control, and this becomes a case of political implementation. (Matland 1995, p. 170)

In a situation where there is both substantial conflict and an ambiguous policy, which could also occur in situations when, for example, it is unclear what constitutes the nature of the problem, or when there is more than one way to solve it or different views on what the outcome should be, neither the top-down nor bottom-up model is entirely suitable to describe the implementation process. The macro implementers who are so influential in top-down processes have considerable problems in structuring and monitoring the activities at the local level. However, Matland argues that centrally located actors are still of great importance through the provision of resources and incentives and through keeping a focus on the area at issue. The high levels of conflict will make the process highly political but it will be dominated by local actors (Matland 1995, p. 170).

The third implication of using Matland's model is in terms of understanding the potential outcomes of specific gender mainstreaming activities, since gender mainstreaming in itself can result in many different types of impact depending on the measures taken and in which policy area they are applied and by which actors (Jacquot 201). Gender mainstreaming can be understood as in itself containing different types of policy instruments that could have varying levels of ambiguity and conflict. One example of the varying types of measures that could be undertaken is given in the popular "staircase model" developed as the result of a Swedish government investigation, described below.

In 2005, the Swedish gender mainstreaming support committee (JämStöd) was set up to assist with national gender mainstreaming, i.e. within government offices and agencies. Its mission consisted of reporting on the agencies' responsibility for implementing gender equality policy but also developing further methods and supporting the exchange of experiences. The committee developed

working models and methods that would have a major impact, both in Sweden and internationally. These were presented in a publication on methods for gender mainstreaming. In the final report, the committee noted, like the Swedish Agency for Public Management and several other EU countries, that a prerequisite for successful gender mainstreaming is the creation of support functions. The gender mainstreaming manual (SOU 2007:15) describes a methodical approach using a working model called Procedure for Sustainable Gender Mainstreaming, or ‘the Ladder’. The Ladder provides an all-round picture of all the steps that, according to the Committee, should be included in systematic, continuous work towards gender mainstreaming (recommended methods were also suggested for each step).

- Step 1:** Fundamental understanding of gender and problems of gender equality
- Step 2:** Examination of the conditions for change
- Step 3:** Planning and organisation
- Step 4:** Examination of activities
- Step 5:** Survey and analysis
- Step 6:** Formulating objectives and measures
- Step 7:** Implementing the measures (no method provided)
- Step 8:** Evaluating the outcome

The different types of measures, such as those in the example provided above, could be analysed in terms of their respective levels of conflict and ambiguity. One example, departing from Matland’s model, could be to understand measures with low levels of conflict and ambiguity, such as initiatives to collect statistics, draw up checklists and make minor adjustments to mainstream policies as an outcome of an administrative type of implementation or what Lee-Gosselin, Briere and Hawo (2013) call the “technical dimension”. Another “group” of measures might be detected where the ambiguity is higher, such as in awareness-raising initiatives and efforts to promote behavioural change in terms of ensuring equal treatment for all regardless of gender but where conflict might be fairly low. A third area of mainstreaming mechanisms might correspond to the description of a symbolic implementation situation and might involve measures and mainstreaming initiatives that target more deeply rooted organisational systems and processes, where there might exist a high level of ambiguity both in terms of goals and means, as well as internal conflicts. Second and third areas might be said to resemble the cultural dimension described by Lee-Gosselin, Briere and Hawo (2013). The fourth type of gender mainstreaming measures might be those used to ensure more structural change, such as concerning political priorities in the overarching framework of public services and which could be argued to re-

side within the “political dimension” described by Lee-Gosselin, Briere and Hawo (2013). One example of this could be an analysis directed towards resource allocation, such as gender budgeting.

To sum up, in terms of the research questions asked initially, i.e. “what are the influential factors that impact on the implementation process and why?” and “what are the roles of actors in the process?” then the implementation of gender mainstreaming could be affected according to Matland’s matrix by the (varying) levels of ambiguity and conflict throughout the implementation process. Different type of measures could also display different levels of ambiguity and conflict and this might affect the outcomes. If the hypothesis is correct, then this also means that how the implementing actors, the gender mainstreamers, will be able to handle both conflicts and ambiguities will depend on different impacting factors during the course of implementation, including the involvement of managers and politicians, especially during the later part of implementation.

In the analysis chapter, beginning with the results of the case studies, I will describe how the gender mainstreaming implementation process developed over time, and also the strategies for implementation that were developed by the gender mainstreamers. I will also discuss the involvement of managers and politicians and how this affected the process and whether different parts of the gender mainstreaming policy have different conditions for its implementation.

However, I will start by describing how the conflicts and ambiguities inherent in the policy area presented themselves as different types of dilemmas that the gender mainstreamers in my study faced when developing strategies for implementation. I will do this in the methodological chapter of the introduction and also discuss how these dilemmas can be used in a learning process in an interactive research approach and as a vital part of a change and learning process, not so much by solving them as by making them visible, and how to use them when trying to understand what to do and what the potential results might be. In the later analysis chapter I will furthermore discuss what the dilemmas meant for the implementation process and how they were handled by the gender mainstreamers.

THE RESEARCH PROCESS

The research process for this study has been a long one. If the starting point is set when I first joined the research team following the Programme for Gender Mainstreaming (SALAR), it started as early as 2009 and lasted until the completion of the thesis in 2014. It has also been a process in which many different people have been involved; some for the entire process, others during different stages and activities. In this chapter I will try to summarise the most important features of the research process even though it is difficult to give a full account given the limited space and the need to avoid too many repetitions. The different case studies have furthermore been described individually in four of the papers in the thesis and the interactive approach has been the subject of the fifth paper. Taken together, the five published papers and the introduction, constitutes the thesis.

An interactive and abductive approach

In order to make the research design understandable, it is important to say a few words about the general starting points for my study. In terms of how it has been designed and conducted, the abductive approach means that there has been an interplay and exchange between empirical data and theory throughout the entire process. It also means that approaches or elements in the research process that are more inductive and grounded in empirical observations (Strauss and Corbin 1990) have been combined with more deductive elements developed from a theoretical perspective (Dubois and Gadde 2002). Abduction has been described as an investigation of the relationship between everyday language and concepts (*ibid.*, p. 555). It defines a way of understanding the research process as a movement back and forth between different research activities rather than seeing them as different and separate phases where one phase gives way to another.

The abductive approach has also meant that the research process has been iterative in terms of how the case studies have evolved; one example being the kind of questions that have been in focus and the kind of empirical data that have been collected, both of which have changed with the emerging results. This process has in turn been guided by an emerging theoretical framework. During the process, the search for relevant theoretical perspectives to aid in the analysis has been a recurrent feature. The “need” for additional theory, i.e. to explain the emerging results, has been a consequence of the empirical findings and analysis. It has been conducted in a way that Dubois and Gabbe (2002) have described as a “systematic combining”, meaning the matching of theory and empirical findings that informs the direction and re-directions made in the course of the study. This

process, in turn, is made possible by the continuous development of the theoretical and analytical framework (ibid.).

A preliminary theoretical and analytical framework that consists of articulated “preconceptions” (ibid., p. 555) has been used as the starting point for the case studies. It has been a theoretical model for organisational development processes (Lindholm (ed.) 2012, p. 48, developed from Halvarson, Sandberg and Öhman 2009) infused with theoretical elements from gender or feminist studies, implementation research and also concerning the specifics of organisational equality work. These theories have constituted the basic elements that have been used to define analytical units and construct questions for the empirical work, as well as the more theoretical questions. During the process, and in light of the results from the case studies, this framework has been developed allowing for the refinement of the existing questions and also for new questions to be formulated. This has led to the need and search for additional theoretical elements, one example being models to explain the outcomes of implementation processes, and for the development of the analytical framework.

Case studies offer a good research strategy for an abductive approach because they provide the opportunity to conduct an intertwined and non-linear research process, such as in the present study. Initially, the research was conceptualised as individual case studies designed with a “replication” rather than “sampling” type of logic. This meant the selection of three case studies that had similar pre-conditions (replications) and one that differed in several important ways but contained similar analytical units. This is a common approach in multiple-case-study research designs (Yin 2006), as explained further below. Later in the research process, the individual case studies were compared to find similarities and differences between them. This comparison and the “matches” and “mismatches” found in relation to the initial theoretical framework resulted in the search for additional theoretical elements to help explain the findings of the meta-analysis. This resulted in a further development of the theoretical framework where one important step consisted of adding in the theoretical perspective of the ambiguity-conflict model (Matland 1995), explaining development and change in ways similar to the more general model, p.64 but adding two important factors to explain the outcomes from a meta-perspective.

With the help of the ambiguity-conflict model it was possible to explain why the cases showed similarities that could not be explained solely by the existing pre-conditions. Instead, it was necessary to examine the particularities of various policy fields (in this case gender equality policies and gender mainstreaming) and especially the levels of conflict and ambiguity inherent in them (Matland 1995). This in turn made it reasonable to argue that the implementation of (certain) equality policies per se will result in an implementation process that will show some similar characteristics even in different settings and over different time sequences. This could also help to explain the patterns that were found in the comparisons across the cases and how and why the process developed over time.

In the following sections I discuss both why and how the research design was constructed, the empirical work involved and some of the concerns and experiences that arose from working with the selected approaches.

Research together *with* and not *on* participants

Dubois and Gadde (2002) discuss the use and important role of “active empirical data” in an abductive approach to research. In my own study this type of data is equivalent to the data that comes out of the collaboration with key actors. Seeking the involvement of actors who have been engaged in the implementation of gender mainstreaming strategy in the organisations that have been studied can be referred to as an interactive approach to research (Svensson and Aagard Nielsen 2006). Interactive research has developed out of action research and has been particularly popular within Scandinavian research on workplace development (*ibid.*). It differs from traditional action research in its emphasis on establishing joint learning processes with the aim of supporting development work and making theoretical contributions but where the responsibilities of researchers and practitioners are understood to be different.

The case studies were thus conducted in a manner that Herr and Anderson (2005) describe as “outsider(s) in collaboration with insider(s)” (p. 31). The aim was to study certain questions or themes in the process of implementation (chosen together with the participants) but with emphasis on different responsibilities, one example being what the researcher is responsible for (research on the implementation of policy) and what the participants are responsible for (the implementation of policy). The case studies have therefore been research *on* action more than action research in a more traditional sense. The aim is, however, that the results will preferably be “needs oriented” in the sense that the participants perceive that they can make use of them in their continuing work. Thus, needs oriented research departs from the “needs” of the participants.

I begin with the idea of interactive research as a “middle way” between more traditional research and action research, with a focus on establishing joint learning processes between the researchers and the participants, the ambition being, as described by Svensson and Aagard Nielsen, “to carry out research together with – not on – the participants” (Svensson and Aagard Nielsen 2006, p. 4).

The collaboration with and participation of practitioners (as in together with and not on) are crucial elements of interactive research. At the very heart of this approach is the belief that research benefits from the participants’ everyday lived experiences of the problem that is being studied. The shared interest in learning more about an issue can be the starting point for a joint project in which researchers and practitioners can work together, bringing in different and complementary knowledge. The practitioner will contribute with a complex, practical and contextual understanding, and the researcher with a more theoretical and abstract understanding. The idea is that, while the practitioners work practically to

“solve” the problem, the researcher works to gain new knowledge in order to develop theories and abstract models. In interactive research, however, the researcher does not consider her/himself to be in a privileged position in the learning process. The researcher should ideally be open to questions and criticism from the participants. But at the same time the researcher must possess, and be respected for, her/his professional competence in such areas as handling data, constructing theories, organising a learning process, relating results to existing research and ethical matters in connection with the research process (Svensson and Aagard Nielsen 2006).

In my own study, the interactive method and especially the analysis and reflection seminar were helpful in analysing the results and finding potential explanations for them from different perspectives, which is a way to achieve both internal and external validity (Yin 2006). There are of course many instances where the research process might go wrong and where the actors involved might make the wrong assumptions for different reasons, in relation both to themselves as persons, the empirical sources used and so on. The interactive approach, where the practitioners are involved in the initial interpretations of the results, as well as the use of different types of data is one way of increasing the validity.

It is also important to stress that the role of the researcher in interactive research is not to *solve* problems but rather to assist the participants in the process of defining and analysing problems, often by re-contextualising them, and to create arenas where new ideas can be explored. The idea is to balance a double task, to satisfy the needs of the participants at the same time as research is being produced that can add to existing knowledge and be open for critical discussion in the scientific community. This means contributing to the learning process but not by supplying ready-made solutions (Westlander 2006).

One criticism and a difficulty with interactive research is the close relationship between researcher and participants and the need for the researcher to keep a critical distance. Another problem that has been noticed has to do with the perceived benefits for participants and organisations in participating in the research. Uneven power relations or the difference between personal and organisational (business) interests between management and employees might lead to very different reasons to participate. This might also affect the possibility of participating on equal terms. Here the researcher has a responsibility from an ethical perspective to clarify the purpose of the research and also the different roles and responsibilities of the actors involved. The risk of losing a gender perspective during the course of the research has been reported (Meyerson and Kolb 2000, Ely and Meyerson 2000).

In some feminist-oriented action research projects there has been a clear and outspoken ambition to bridge the gap between theory and practice. The overall emphasis on the difference between these two can itself reinforce the very gap that interactive research projects try to escape; there is therefore a need to be cautious and aware of this problem in working with this type of intervention (Hearn

2000). The dichotomy of researcher–practitioner also reflects a normative privilege of interpretation in favour of the researcher. This privilege, which is often given to the researcher by the participants, furthermore reflects the status of science in our society (Gunnarsson 2007).

Feminist interventions in organisations and interactive research

Although the feminist contribution to organisational theory and research has been substantial, there is still relatively little research on how to use this knowledge in order to change organisations in ways that will make them more gender equitable (Meyerson and Kolb 2000). This question is also related to how a gender perspective can be used in participatory types of research, such as interactive research.

There are many different arguments as to why a feminist perspective can contribute to interactive or action-oriented research. One is related to the validity of the results. Gunnarsson argues that an interactive approach can create a more “robust knowledge”. It can increase validity both of and in science by contextualising and bringing in women’s own voices in the interpretation and production of science, which has traditionally been a male-dominated field throughout history (Gunnarsson 2006, 2007).

Participatory forms of research, such as interactive research, can also serve as a “consciousness raising tool” (Gunnarsson 2006). It can serve to counteract the internalisation of oppression and personal blame for a situation and instead shift the focus to the broader societal forces constraining the lives of individuals. This can lead to an examination of the connections between behaviour, gender, other axes of oppression and social structures (Maguire 2009). Based on the work of Freire (1970) and Thompson (2000), Maguire argues that the usefulness of theories lies in this re-examination of “common sense” (Frisby, Maguire and Reid 2009) because, as Dorothy Parker put it, “theory is a tool to think with” (Frisby, Maguire and Reid 2009).

In my own study, this aspect is particularly reflected in the use of ideological dilemmas, described below, for reflection about strategies for gender equality in connection with the individual, organisational and institutional context of practical work to implement equality policies.

There is another reason why an interactive approach is the “transformative character” of the feminist approach to research. One of the key features of feminist research is to generate insights that can be used to pursue societal change. This brings with it a search for explicit tools to enable feminist actors to enact change (Maguire 2009). Furthermore, feminist theories can be thought of as bringing in alternative theoretical frameworks, strategies and tools for questioning taken-for-granted assumptions and power arrangements (Maguire 2009 and

also Beilin and Boxelaar 2010). Participatory approaches such as interactive research are particularly suitable for close-to-practice research, one reason being that a lot of the daily practice in terms of doing gender in organisations is unreflexive (Martin 2006), change strategies are built on tacit knowledge and are unexpressed and informal.

In terms of my own study, it has been a key ambition to make visible the change strategies and underlying assumptions of individual behaviour, the nature of gender and equality and change processes. It has been conducted with the purpose of assisting in equality work by creating spaces for reflection and discussion about why a certain approach was selected, the potential outcomes of different approaches and alternative ways of organising the work. Besides learning together with public servants, one potential of this type of “applied research”, i.e. research that begins with a perceived problem, is that the results may also contribute to theory building that can inform policy development. The aim of creating policy-relevant theory is considered important by many social scientists (George and Bennett 2005, p. 263).

A case study research strategy

The research was conducted as multiple case studies. As a research strategy, case studies have been subject to a lot of critique, one reason being the belief that case studies are problematic in terms of their limited ability to lead to generalisations because cases are situation specific (Yin 2006, Dubois & Gadde 2002). Yet, case studies offer unique opportunities in terms of both studying empirical phenomena and making theoretical developments; one reason being described above, i.e. the possibility to both test and develop theory in a specific and holistic setting. Depending on the type of question that is in focus, different research strategies can also be argued to be more suitable. Yin gives the example of how a survey study might be more useful for answering questions about the occurrence of something, i.e. answering “what” type of questions, whereas a case study might be more suitable to answer “why” type of questions, even though there are many overlaps between different strategies. Another point made by Yin is that a case study strategy might include both quantitative and qualitative methods for data collection and analysis (Yin 2006), which further problematises the earlier perceived division of research strategies along the lines of positivistic and hermeneutic research traditions (Lundquist 1993). In fact, one advantage of case studies is that they can allow for many different types of empirical data collection (Yin 2006).

The selection of cases, analytical units, methods of data collection and empirical questions as well as the method of analysis are all part of the research design, which will be described next.

The research design

The case studies

The aim of this study is to investigate cases in detail in order to create as full an understanding of something as possible (Silverman 2005). All the cases in my study are examples of initiatives within the public sector to integrate gender into the core activities of the organisations. All these cases have characteristics that are similar, such as being located within a local municipality, as well as different, such as focusing on administrative or planning functions versus delivery of service at the citizen level.

These similarities and differences can be used to compare and analyse the research problem at hand based on, for example, comparing what is similar when the differences are taken into account or the opposite, what stands out as different when the similarities are used as a basis for comparison. Case selection in case study research has the same twin objectives as random sampling; that is, generating a representative sample that includes useful variation within the dimensions of theoretical interest (Seawright and Gerring 2008). The cases were all selected as being on-going initiatives to implement gender mainstreaming in a public sector organisation.

In my study, the cases were selected to allow for data that enables a comparison. They were selected on the grounds of being similar as well as showing certain important differences, explained in more detail below. To some extent, pragmatic reasons also have to guide the selection process. This is common, especially in doctoral research where money, time and travel possibilities are often limited. Being part of a research team following the Programme for Gender Mainstreaming (SALAR), the discussions about my selections also took part in a wider context where my own cases were discussed in relation to others. Working with an interactive approach, another important selection criterion was to find gender mainstreaming initiatives where the participants were willing to participate in an interactive research venture.

Three case studies in local municipalities within a specific government equality programme

One of the first steps in the research process was the initial formulation of the research questions. My main interest, as described in the introduction, is the implementation of equality policies. During the launch of a large-scale governmental programme for gender mainstreaming, a unique opportunity appeared to study the implementation of a specific equality policy in different cases but with similar pre-conditions. As I became a member of the research team, together with the other researchers I set out to study the programme in an interactive environment. An initial theoretical point of departure was a general theory of organisa-

tional development processes used in earlier studies of other large-scale governmental development programmes, such as those within the implementation of the European Social Fund in Sweden. This model (p. 64) was complemented by specific theoretical elements focusing on the impact of gender on organisational development and the implementation of gender equality policies in public sector organisations. The overarching research problem was described and a research plan was constructed. The selection of cases was discussed with the programme management team at SALAR and it was decided to select cases where the work was judged to be advanced and to proceed according to the plan. This meant that cases should be selected where no major obstacles had been encountered which, for example, could lead to the termination of the project, or other major destructive impacts that the programme management was aware of. This did not, however, mean that the cases selected should be “problem free” or that only “successful” cases would be chosen but rather that the likelihood was that a “normal” implementation process would occur. In this respect, the cases should be representative of an average implementation situation with no known extreme “positive” or “negative” factors impacting on the situation. The cases to be studied were selected in two of the largest municipalities in Sweden, which also had a history of working with gender equality and had an existing gender equality infrastructure. Two of the case studies were conducted in the same organisation. This was because an opportunity arose to study gender mainstreaming in the central planning and coordination unit after the first two studies had been completed. The benefits of conducting this study were then judged to be greater than the disadvantage that two of the case studies would be in the same organisation.

The analytical units were similar in all cases, but their levels differed: one was at a local service delivery level, one at middle management level and one at a central planning level. The case studies also concerned different types of public services, different “levels” of the organisation and different functions. All the case studies were limited by the timeframe imposed by the programme. Table 6 below outlines some of the main features of the cases.

The data collection was similar in all cases and is described in more detail in the individual papers (Callerstig 2012a,b,c, Callerstig and Lindholm 2013) of this thesis, including a separate paper on the use of the interactive approach (Callerstig and Lindholm 2011). Initial interviews were conducted in all cases where the initial question to be focused on was determined together with the project management. After this, semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted with key actors who had been identified with the help of the project management. Key documents were also collected and analysed. The results of interviews were analysed and a preliminary report was written and sent out to the participants. They were then invited to participate in an analysis and reflection seminar where the results were discussed with the help of the participants. After the analysis and reflection seminar was completed a new report was sent out to the participants and they were offered the opportunity to comment on the content of this as well.

The details of this process are further described in the paper on the interactive approach (Callerstig and Lindholm 2011).

The case study of a government agency under general equality regulations

As well as the three case studies described above, an additional case study was selected that had different preconditions. It was conducted in a government agency where the work to implement gender mainstreaming was a result of the general provision for government agencies to work with gender mainstreaming. It thus differed from the first three case studies in that the work was not a result of participation in a specific government programme and it had not received additional funding for the work. Another important difference was that this time the work was studied over a longer timeframe, from the point when the agency was started until the present, which meant a time-span of over 10 years. This also had important implications for data collection whereby the interviews and documentary studies were complemented with an exercise in which the interviewees were asked to do an exercise mapping out critical incidents (Flanagan 1954) on a time-scale guided by semi-structured interview questions. The main features of the case studies are described below (Table 6).

Table 6) Overview of case studies

	1) SOCIAL SERVICES UNIT MALMÖ	2) EDUCATION DEPARTMENT GÖTEBORG	3) CENTRAL PLANNING UNIT GÖTEBORG	4) GOVERNMENT AGENCY OF VINNOVA
Organisation	Local Municipality	Local Municipality	Local Municipality	Government agency
Analytical units/ location/level	GM actors and processes in a local unit	GM actors and processes at middle management level	GM actors and processes in the central planning unit	GM actors and processes in the entire agency
Core activities/ function	Service delivery	Planning and coordination	Central planning and coordination	National policy planning and implementation
Policy sector	Social services	Education	Public service across sectors in local municipalities	Innovation
GM initiative	GM project in Government programme	GM project in Government programme	GM project in Government programme	GM implementation as a result of general provision
Timeframe for study	Approx.1 year	Approx.1 year	Approx.1 year	Approx.10 years

Data collection and analysis

In the following section I describe how the data was collected and analysed and how the joint learning process, which was an important aim of the interactive approach, proceeded.

The role of “dilemmas” in the research process

The concept of dilemmas was not something that was initially brought into the research process. In the case studies, the search for dilemmas both in the analysis of the data from interviews and documents and as a basis for the joint learning with the participants was an emergent process that appeared as a result of the first studies. I will discuss the implications of this discovery here since it affected the research process.

The dilemmas, paradoxes or contradictions found in and surrounding gender equality work are a well-known problem and have been discussed in different ways. Gender relations in organisations can be understood in terms of many different ambiguities; they may, for example, on the one hand be rigid and static and simultaneously be constantly changing and contextual (Hearn 1998, 2000). Another ambiguity is that the everyday generation of gender is often un-reflexive but yet done very precisely, repeating the same pattern over and over again (Martin 2006, Andersson *et al.* 2012). A classical paradox is to be found in Wollstonecraft’s dilemma: in order to change the existing gender relations we might end up reinforcing the very thing we want to change. A related problem is the problem of sameness, particularity and contextuality (Billig *et al.* 1988).

The empirical data for my study was collected in three of the case studies within the Programme for Gender Mainstreaming (SALAR), which the projects were part of, co-administered by SALAR (Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions) in 2009–2010. I later used the same approach in the examination of my other case study (in the government agency of VINNOVA) where I continued working on my own. Throughout the whole research project, however, I have been part of a research team that included three researchers besides myself with the aim of following the Programme for Gender Mainstreaming (SALAR) in an interactive and on-going manner and this has influenced my work with the other case study both in terms of methods used and because the results from my other case studies were discussed with the other researchers.

The Programme for Gender Mainstreaming (SALAR) was initiated by the government and carried out by SALAR. The programme has aimed at generating explicit and lasting results in the form of improvements to public services from a gender equality perspective. The research project following the programme consisted of case studies, surveys and analysis seminars with the aim of building a joint learning process on the issue of conditions for sustainable development work in organisations, the specific case being gender mainstreaming.

One of the first case studies was my own study of the gender mainstreaming initiative in the education department of Göteborg Municipality. This case study revealed various problems in connection with the theoretical framework of sustainable development work that we were using (p. 64, related both to the structure and the process of the project design and the following work. This case had shown, for example, that one major problem faced by the management of the initiative studied was how to get school principals to assume full responsibility for the work and treat it as something that had real meaning for their everyday work in schools, as well as how to overcome resistance and create engagement and support for the work.

The results of the case studies, including my own, was going to be discussed at the initial national analysis seminar, gathering over one hundred people from the different initiatives granted funds by the Programme for Gender Mainstreaming (SALAR). The theoretical framework for sustainable development was used as a basis for the analysis seminar. The discussions that followed from the presentations were later described by some participants as chaotic and at some points rather upsetting. There was no common consensus on how to understand the results or what to learn from the studies.

When we (the research team) later analysed the seminar, we summarised the discussion that had been going on into different recurring themes that showed various contradictions in relation to the model for sustainable development work. These were linked to how the problem of gender equality was understood by the participants and, accordingly, how it should be solved. We understood these recurring themes or issues under discussion to be dilemmas, in the sense that they were not problems that could be easily solved but rather must be handled by the participants in the gender mainstreaming initiatives studied. We also wanted to understand more about the dilemmas we had seen and try to find other examples of such issues. We decided to begin with the dilemmas we had uncovered and to provide the participants with a description of a model or theoretical concept that could be used to illustrate these dilemmas (Callerstig *et al.* 2012).

In the later case studies, we (Callerstig and Lindholm 2011) developed the approach that is described in one of the papers that make up this thesis (Callerstig and Lindholm 2011). In the paper we discuss the development of the approach based on two case studies, one conducted by me (the case study in Malmö City) and one by Kristina Lindholm. The approach included the use of dilemmas in order to help the participants to reflect on their future work with gender mainstreaming and for us to analyse the material.

One way to understand the difficulties associated with planning strategies for gender equality is the notion of wicked problems. The concept of wicked problems has its origins in the late 1970s and was formulated by Horst Rittel and Melvin Webber (1977) in their article “Dilemmas in a General Theory of Planning” to describe difficulties in solving certain problems in social planning due to incomplete, contradictory and changing requirements. One problem in social

planning, according to Rittel and Webber, has been the vision of a perfectly rational plan, based on a notion that the right solution can be found in a scientific-research-like manner. However, unlike research in a controlled (positivistic) situation where all the factors can be identified and the causal relationships determined, in social planning there are often no such clear causalities and the complexity makes the whole process anything but rational. This is also due to the fact that:

[T]here is nothing as the indisputable public good; there is no objective definition of equity [and] [...] even worse, there are no “solutions” in the sense of definitive and objective answers. (ibid., p. 155)

Lacking a clear problem definition and with different and sometimes conflicting interests amongst various stakeholders, the rational-scientific model of planning cannot be applied. According to Rittel and Webber, wicked problems have a set of commonly shared characteristics that separates them from scientific-rational “research problems” (ibid.). This is similar to the description of lived ideologies as compared to intellectual ideologies, resulting in ideological dilemmas when we try to reason and make sense of different perspectives and strategies described by Billig *et al.* (1988), which will be discussed next.

How then could the dilemmas be understood?

According to Billig *et al.* (1988), liberal, modern society leads to a number of dilemmas, examples being democracy versus authority, equality versus experts, and individualism versus collectivism. Dilemmas cannot only be detected on a more general ideological level, but are also important in our everyday lives as they provide structure to the rationale of thought and speech. Dilemmas are about sense-making, how arguments are structured. They arise when it is impossible to choose one aspect to explain a situation. For example, a problem might have both an individual and a more structural explanation.

An overarching dilemma in relation to gender equality is the question of sameness and difference. Dealing with this dilemma during practical work means that one particular way of understanding it precedes the other, which has implications in terms of the actions taken and the solutions proposed.

Billig *et al.* (1988) do not write specifically about gender equality work but there are some gender and organisational researchers who do. Benschop, Halsema and Schreurs (2001), Nentwich (2006) and Kelan (2010) have all used the concept of ideological dilemmas to highlight contradictions around gender inequality in organisations. Claes Nilholm emphasises that it may also be important to make a distinction between what the participants in a study experience as a dilemma and dilemmas that are largely seen from an analytical perspective (Nilholm 2009). Sometimes, but not always, these coincide, so that both researchers and practitioners experience the same dilemma.

One conclusion drawn from the case studies is that the concept of ideological dilemmas can provide a better understanding of the complex ways in which people deal with inequalities in an organisation (Callerstig and Lindholm 2011). In this thesis, I argue that by studying micro-practices we can learn more about the implementation of equality policies in public sector organisations and dilemmas are a useful way of doing so, one example being how actors are reasoning about how and why something is done or not done.

Dilemmas as a sensitising concept in the research process

In the continuing search for dilemmas in the accounts given by participants in the gender mainstreaming initiatives studied, there was no fixed understanding of what kind of dilemmas should be looked for. The way I have used the concept of ideological dilemmas in my case studies can rather be understood as similar to what has been understood as a sensitising concept. This notion was first described by the sociologist Herbert Blumer, the founder of symbolic interactionism. According to Blumer (1969), a sensitising concept differs from what he described as “definitive concepts” and as such is not meant to use “fixed and specific procedures” to identify a set of phenomena but instead to give “a general sense of reference and guidance in approaching empirical instances” (Blumer 1969, p. 148). Where definitive concepts provide prescriptions of what to see, sensitizing concepts merely suggest directions along which to look (Hammersley 2006). Sensitising concepts are often used as part of deductive research approaches, i.e. when patterns, themes and categories of analysis emerge from the data rather than being imposed on it a priori (Patton, 1980, Bowen 2006).

Sensitising concepts can be used as an interpretative instrument and a starting point in qualitative research or as background ideas that inform the overall research problem. They can be tested, rejected or refined or simply used to lay the foundations for the analysis of research data (Bowen 2006, references to Glaser 1978, Padgett 2004, Charmaz 2003). Sensitising concepts have also been used in abductive research; see for example Qvarsell (1996) and also Andersson (2003).

The research phases

The research phases followed the same pattern throughout the different case studies and are summarised below. It should be emphasised, once again, that these phases were iterative, overlapping and not linear as in more traditional research processes.

The problem orientation phase

The problem orientation phase was the period when problems were formulated and identified in the work with gender mainstreaming within each organisa-

tion together with the gender mainstreamers. These mainly consisted of the leaders of and participants in the initiatives but also other staff who worked with gender mainstreaming. Joint learning throughout the process, from problem definition to analysis of the results, is an important aspect of an interactive research approach (Svensson *et al.* 2007). It is crucial to find a common question around which researchers and practitioners can design their learning in the research project. This common question will guide the continuing research and should ideally be able to contribute to scientific knowledge and theory development, as well as assisting in the development of the practical work. During the problem orientation phase we wanted to identify a problem that the gender mainstreaming initiatives were struggling with in each case study. Initial interviews were therefore carried out in which questions were asked that sought to find issues that seemed fundamental from both the practitioners' and researchers' points of view. These problems, and the ways in which they were represented, contained different ideological dilemmas.

The exploratory phase

During the exploratory phase, a deepened understanding of the common problem formulation and the dilemmas emerged. The case studies were built upon interviews with key actors within the initiatives, such as project managers, stakeholders in the organisations and participants more generally. Central documents were used as background information and sometimes additional information such as web-blogs were studied. The main material consists of interviews and analysis and reflection seminars (described below as part of the analysis and reflection phase).

The interviews were semi-structured (Kvale 1997). The aim was to get an idea of what the interviewees perceived as central when working with gender mainstreaming, what they saw as inequality problems within their organisation and their thoughts about change towards gender equality. The interviews each lasted approximately one hour. All the interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed, completely or partly, and analysed together with written notes taken during the interviews. Based on the interviews, different dilemmas were identified, which were later discussed in an analysis and reflection seminar. In total, 39 interviews were conducted in the four case studies that have been used in the thesis (13 interviews in the Education Department, Göteborg City; eight in Social Services, Malmö City; 15 in the Central Planning Office in Göteborg City; and finally three in the Government Agency of VINNOVA).

The analysis and reflection phase

The analysis and reflection phase was carried out in several steps. In the first step, directly after the exploratory phase was finished, the empirical material was discussed with the interviewees from each case study. The next step was an analysis and reflection seminar, to which participants (gender mainstreamers) from

other gender mainstreaming initiatives within the programme for gender mainstreaming (SALAR) were also invited. In case study 4, which I conducted on my own, the same approach was followed but the seminar attendees consisted only of participants from the case study and I had only one analysis and reflection seminar with the participants of that particular initiative.

The primary processing of the empirical data in each case study was summarised in a written document that was sent out in advance of the reflection and analysis seminar. In this document, there were examples from the interviews, and an illustration of the dilemma that was thought to be central to that particular organisation's work with gender mainstreaming. The document also contained a number of questions that the participants were asked to reflect upon in preparation for the seminar.

Instead of trying to give an answer – or find a solution – to the dilemmas and argue for one particular position, the dilemmas were emphasised and clarified with the expectation that collectively we (researchers and practitioners) could enhance our understanding of them. During the seminar feedback we discussed the empirical material and the participants gave alternative interpretations and representations. The aim of the reflection and analysis seminar was to create opportunities for joint analysis, learning and critical reflection (Svensson *et al.* 2007). The reflection and analysis seminar is a way to validate the material and the initial analysis (Eikeland 2006).

Through the background document and the seminar it was possible to examine whether the participants recognised the scenarios and theories presented, and whether they could provide additional interpretations. In addition to deepening the analysis and our understanding of the results obtained and the dilemmas presented, the participants were supposed to discuss various approaches and implications of these, but without getting stuck in solution-oriented reasoning about right and wrong. The design of this part of the seminar was inspired by Nentwich's call for "playing around" (Nentwich 2006). Nentwich argues that one possible application of the concept of ideological dilemmas, in addition to critical reflection, is to develop future change strategies:

In this sense, creating new strategies for change would mean trying out and playing around with many possible understandings and perspectives, instead of favoring one side over the other and forcing a decision. "Playing around" would mean systematically analyzing the interpretative repertoires used, the discourses drawn upon, the assumptions made and the identities constructed in order to investigate the possible consequences of each one. Knowing the consequences in a certain context would provide a basis for making strategic decisions in the process of change towards equality. (Nentwich 2006, p. 516)

During the analysis and reflection phase, different interpretations and perspectives could be tried. The aim of the questions sent out before the seminar was that they would lead to discussions about how the dilemma could be addressed

rather than dissolved. The analysis seminar was organised to facilitate reflection. During each seminar, which usually lasted about two to three hours, the participants were divided into different groups. Initially, a member of the project group would give a description of the work with gender mainstreaming and the experiences and problems they had encountered. The researcher then presented empirical data from the interviews and the documentary studies and theoretical perspectives were presented. The participants were then invited to discuss the questions, with the help of a moderator whom they themselves appointed, and write down the results of the group discussions, which were later discussed by the whole group. Discussions about the future came to revolve around possible approaches to different perspectives in order to highlight underlying assumptions among the participants.

Shortly after the analysis seminar, a summary of the analysis based on the results obtained from the interviews, the analysis seminar and the interpretations was sent to all participants. All interviewees were anonymous throughout the entire research process. The participants were asked if they wanted to comment on the content, if they felt that anything needed to be added or if they thought anything had been misconstrued. Respondents wrote that they recognised themselves in the descriptions, and sometimes also made suggestions for corrections of things they saw as errors.

The publications that came out of the case studies were also sent to the managers of the gender mainstreaming initiatives, who were given the opportunity to comment on them, and they were also asked if they wanted the organisation to be anonymous or not. All replied that they would like to have the names of their organisations included in all accounts of the case study (such as in this thesis).

The VINNOVA case

In the case of VINNOVA, the process was similar but slightly different from the first three cases, mainly because of the different features or pre-conditions for the implementation process being studied. The difference consisted of the number of interviews, which were fewer and consisted of just three interviews, and also the interview method, where one interview was conducted with two of the main actors as a memory exercise where the interviewees were asked to point out critical incidents, i.e. incidents that the interviewee understood as having major significance for the development of gender mainstreaming in the organisation. This was done on a timescale that had been illustrated on wall charts, followed by questions about the different incidents that had taken place (similar to the critical incident technique, CIT, first described by Flanagan in 1954). For this exercise, I had help from Kristina Lindholm (fellow researcher from the team following the Programme for Gender Mainstreaming (SALAR), who helped me take notes. The whole session was also recorded. Later, as in the other case studies, the results were presented to the participants in an analysis and reflection seminar in a similar manner.

Analysis of individual cases and cross comparisons and meta-analysis of all cases

As mentioned at the beginning of the introduction, gender mainstreaming can be seen as a meta-instrument or “governance by insertion”, meaning that it is integrated both horizontally and systematically at all stages of policy-making and of the governance system (Jacquot 2010). The case studies examine different aspects of this type of steering by studying cases that exemplify what gender equality is being inserted into, at what level of the policy process this takes place and how it is being integrated. All of the case studies resulted in important findings “on their own”. They were all conducted and analysed as separate cases in the manner described above. During the final stage of the work, data from the individual cases was compared and additional questions were asked, which had been partly formulated as a consequence of the results in the individual cases. Some of the findings were found in all case studies, including the VINNOVA case, which differed from the others in its pre-conditions. This provided strong evidence that the result was not limited to cases where gender mainstreaming strategy was implemented in local municipalities and within the specific context of the SALAR programme.

The comparison and meta-analysis made it possible to search for similarities and differences across the case studies. This resulted in a “pattern” that to some extent could be explained by the specific contexts of the individual cases. Examples of this are, firstly, that the nature of the dilemmas encountered could be seen as related to the policy area that was in focus and, secondly, that the location and tasks of the unit studied would affect the process in different ways. These were variations that were important but could be explained by the different contexts. In a similar fashion, the similarities were analysed against the different contexts of the case studies. This made it possible to detect a pattern that was visible when the case studies were compared and which showed that the actors and the processes “behaved” in a similar manner in spite of the variations both within the more similar first three cases and in the last case that was different in many significant ways. This pattern could also explain why the process developed as it did in all cases, which would not have been possible from just analysing one specific case. The use of the ambiguity-conflict model (Matland 1995) made it possible to detect similar phases in all cases. These phases were related to the different levels of ambiguity and conflict in the process of implementation of gender mainstreaming which, if only judged from one case, might have been understood as case specific and context related.

Analytical schematic models

In the analysis of the individual cases and in the comparison, the main aim was to find evidence that might support or contradict the theoretical framework. In the comparison and meta-analysis, the aim was to map both similarities and

differences with the focus set on the “most important” features of the cases, i.e. those that have relevance to the theoretical questions (Yin 2006), thus avoiding becoming lost in less important details.

Table 7) Analytic schematic model of key concepts and themes

Themes/ key concepts	1) SOCIAL SERVICES UNIT MALMÖ	2) EDUCATION DEPARTMENT GÖTEBORG	3) CENTRAL PLANNING UNIT GÖTEBORG	4) GOVERNMENT AGENCY OF VINNOVA
Focus in joint learning /Dilemma(s)	Individual- structural- contextual	Individual- structural- contextual	Individual- structural- contextual	Individual-structural- contextual
	Public interest: realistic- rationalistic- idealistic	Incremental –fast track perspective	Top-down –bottom-up	Co-optation- subversive practice
Actors	Tolerance/ relativistic problematic Street level bureaucrats /equality workers	Learning- dissonance perspective Middle managers /equality workers	Central planners and coordina- tors/politicians/equ ality workers	Research officers
Change strategy	Tempered radicalism/small wins strategy	Tempered radicalism/small wins strategy	Tempered radicalism/small wins strategy	Tempered radicalism/small wins strategy
Activities	Joint development work Service delivery	Gender training Middle management	Result-based management Coordination /monitoring /evaluation	Mixed methods Policy planning
Location	Bottom-up	Middle-out	Top-down	Top-down
Theoretical focus	Implementation processes Street level bureaucracy /public interest	Implementation processes Individual and organisational learning	Implementation processes Steering	Implementation processes Change actors/ change agency

Table 8) Cross case comparisons and meta-analysis

Themes/ key concepts	SIMILARITIES ACROSS CASES	DIFFERENCES ACROSS CASES
Dilemma(s)	<p>Related to ambiguities and conflicts in the implementation process</p> <p>Related to how to understand what equality is and how it might be achieved (gender, equality and change)</p>	Dilemmas related to core activities of the site of implementation studied
Actors	Change actors use ambiguities in change strategies to handle conflicts and secure support for the work	Specific organisational and institutional features affect change actors' micro-practice and strategies.
Processes	Increasing levels of conflict in the implementation process	Change strategy/approaches in initiative vary at the different sites.
Key factors	Factors impacting on the implementation process vary through the implementation and are dependent on the different types of conflicts and ambiguities encountered in the process and during various stages of implementation.	Context-related factors related to organisational and individual differences.

SUMMARY OF PAPERS IN THE THESIS (1-5)

1. Implementing gender policies through gender training

Callerstig, A-C. 2012. Implementing gender policies through gender training. In Lindholm, K. (ed.). 2012. *Gender Mainstreaming in Public Sector organisations. Policy implications and practical applications*. Lund: Studentlitteratur. (first published in Swedish in 2011)

In this book chapter, the strategies or measures taken in order to implement gender mainstreaming in an organisation are discussed in relation to gender training. Gender training is regarded as one of the more central features of gender mainstreaming and major training efforts are common in gender mainstreaming initiatives. How then should training be considered in relation to the possibility of establishing the fundamentals of a sustainable change process in the organisation in order to integrate a gender perspective? What kind of impact does training have on the work with gender mainstreaming, and does it endorse the efforts? These are the questions under discussion in this chapter. The point of departure is a case study of a gender mainstreaming initiative in the City of Göteborg. The initiative was run by the Department of Education with the aim of implementing gender mainstreaming in all schools in the city. The case study was carried out between 2009 and 2010. The results are based on interviews with project managers, departmental managers and school principals. The primary strategy in the initiative was to train and coach school principals to produce their own action plans for gender mainstreaming. Different/general prerequisites for implementation are discussed in relation to gender equality objectives. In the chapter it is discussed whether gender training can meet all, or some of these prerequisites. This is done in relation to the dilemma of incremental change models and so-called fast-track change models for gender equality. The case study shows that individual learning and organisational learning have to complement each other. The results also show that if training is to be effective it must be connected to organisational learning and supported by steering mechanisms and organisational capacity building. An assumption that has been made and is discussed is that sustainable development work presupposes an ability to combine strategies in a reflexive way. Process-oriented training, where knowledge and actions go hand in hand, where new insights are mainstreamed into daily work and where the results become part of future development work, places much greater demands on the organisation as a whole. Another conclusion relates to the development of the change strategy in the project. The City of Göteborg began with a more theoretic-

cal learning approach but gradually changed track to emphasise stricter controls in parallel with Management Training and responses from the department's managers. Previous research has indicated that, in general, political areas are often developed from softer forms of control (such as different capacity-building approaches) into stricter control mechanisms (such as regulations and the use of sanctions). Correspondingly, there is a tendency for "newer" political areas, which are largely characterised by uncertainties about objectives and strategies, to use learning strategies for development. Later, when experience has increased, stricter forms of control can be applied (Schneider and Ingram 1990). Education and training are usually regarded as a soft control instrument. Gender mainstreaming is a relatively new policy area in the Department of Education, which may explain the changeover from softer to stricter controls over the course of time. When the uncertainty about what should be done was reduced, it became easier to demand results. The management training initiative played an important role in this.

2. Gender equality and public services

Callerstig, A-C. 2012. Gender Equality and public services. In Lindholm, K. (ed.). 2012. *Gender Mainstreaming in Public Sector organisations. Policy implications and practical applications*. Lund: Studentlitteratur. (first published in Swedish in 2011)

In this book chapter, the role of street-level bureaucrats in gender mainstreaming initiatives is discussed and also how public service itself can be understood from an equality perspective. The discussion draws upon a case study of a gender mainstreaming initiative in the social services department in Malmö, one of Sweden's largest cities, located in the south of the country.

Street-level bureaucrats are able to influence the results of different political objectives in their work because they make decisions that affect the type of activity to be carried out (Lipsky 1980). They take decisions through balancing different perspectives in order both to meet the needs of the client and ensure that policies are being properly implemented. When they integrate a gender perspective into their work, street-level bureaucrats have to merge and prioritise several different perspectives, such as general policy goals, gender equality objectives and the client's perspective. It is street-level bureaucrats who interpret what impact the different perspectives should have on the decisions that affect their clients and, ultimately, the outcome of the gender mainstreaming implementation process. But what determines the interpretations made and what are the consequences in terms of gender mainstreaming? The questions that are discussed in this book chapter are: on what basis did the social services staff interpret, account for and prioritise the different perspectives involved in gender mainstreaming work?

And: what consequences might different perceptions and approaches have for work with gender equality?

The case study was carried out between 2009 and 2010 and is based on 13 interviews with project managers, social services staff and the steering group. Key documents were analysed, e.g. applications, project descriptions, so-called vignette descriptions and the project's final report. This material also formed the basis for local and national analysis seminars, where the results were jointly analysed and discussed with the participants. An intersectional approach was part of the joint learning process. Based on the interview responses, three main approaches or dilemmas to the direction and prioritisation of gender equality work were identified. These perspectives correspond to three different classic "civil servant ideals" (cf. Schubert 1957, Box 1992). These ideals are based on different views of the role of public administration in relation to society (the public interest) and the political system. In the gender mainstreaming project studied, the social workers had to interpret and balance social services objectives, gender equality objectives and the individual perspective in their daily encounters with clients, both when making decisions and while creating routines for the work. The case study shows that street-level bureaucrats have a substantial amount of discretion and are in a position to make judgements that affect the outcome of gender equality work (cf. Lipsky 1980, Sannerstedt 2001). The interviews showed that there were different perceptions of what a gender equality perspective was in relation to the proposed intervention. It was clear that there were many different ideas about what constituted a gender equality problem and how it should be solved (cf. Bacchi 1999). For instance, there were different perceptions about which gender equality objectives should form the basis of the work. Gender equality policy goals at municipal and national level were regarded by many as not particularly relevant to the work of the social services, with the exception of objectives concerning violence against women. It was rather the individual's situation, and not gender equality at a societal level, that was at the heart of the interviews that were conducted. It also became clear that there were different viewpoints about the extent to which social workers should take into account different understandings of gender equality due to religious ideas and cultural practices. The different perspectives that surfaced and stood out as central in the gender mainstreaming of social services are examples of dilemmas in the work with gender equality in public organisations. The central question is not primarily about how gender equality should be understood, but rather how the boundaries for gender equality are conceived in relation to the work of the social services. The results show how complex the implementation of gender mainstreaming is in practice.

3. The contradictory work with gender mainstreaming

Callerstig, A-C. and Lindholm, K. 2011. The contradictory work with gender mainstreaming, English translation of article first published in *Tidskrift för genusvetenskap* (TGV). 2-3:79-96.

This article discusses how the actors involved in integrating a gender perspective into mainstream organisational processes have to deal with many difficult-to-solve questions or dilemmas in their everyday work. The strategies used to implement gender mainstreaming rest on various and often contradictory understandings of gender, gender equality and change strategies. The article draws on two case studies of public organisations working with gender mainstreaming where qualitative interviews and analysis and reflection seminars were conducted with the actors involved in the project. The main aim of the article is to discuss an interactive research approach as a way of reflecting upon the various understandings and underlying assumptions upon which different change strategies are based. Theoretically, the paper uses Michael Billig *et al.*'s concept of ideological dilemmas (1988) as well as theories on gender equality, organisational change and interactive research. A central argument is that contradictions can be problematic if they are ignored but fruitful if used as a starting point for discussions about how future change strategies can be formed. Julia Nentwich's notion of "playing around" (Nentwich 2006) is discussed as a way of reflecting upon and developing strategies based on the specific dilemmas found in the case studies. Different phases in the interactive approach are described and discussed: the problem orientation phase, the examination phase and the analysis and reflection phase.

4. Public servants as agents for change in gender mainstreaming: the complexity of practice

Callerstig, A-C. 2012c. Public servants as agents for change in gender mainstreaming. In Andersson S., Berglund K., Gunnarsson, E. and Sundin, E. (eds.). 2012. *Promoting Innovation. Policies, practices and procedures*. Stockholm: Vinnova.

This book chapter describes and discusses the actions taken to integrate a gender perspective (gender mainstreaming) within the Swedish government agency of VINNOVA. Theorists on gender mainstreaming suggest that the strategy may lead to co-optation by the dominant discourse in an organisation and thus no transformation of the current agenda will take place. Others have argued

that it provides an opportunity to change by addressing the root causes of problems. Previous studies on the implementation of gender mainstreaming strategy have often been built around analyses at a theoretical or policy level. This chapter takes a different approach by examining the micro-practices developed by actors in public organisations when implementing gender mainstreaming strategies. This is done by examining the roles of both actors and agency. The chapter is based on the results of a case study of the work at VINNOVA. These results are initially described in the chapter based on the actors' own accounts of their work. The intriguing "story" of developments in the organisation is followed by a discussion of the micro-practices and strategies in use, based on notions of tempered radicalism (Meyerson and Scully 1995, Meyerson, 2001a,b) and small-wins strategies (Weick 1984). The questions of co-optation and subversiveness are problematised through an examination of the different strategies of resistance and negotiation (Swan and Fox 2010) used in and around the work. In this context, notions of actors and agency are seen as interlinked, bringing together political intervention and professional and personal positioning (Parsons and Priola 2012) in the practical equality work.

5. Effects of gender mainstreaming

Callerstig, A-C. and Lindholm, K. 2013. Effects of gender mainstreaming. In Svensson, L., Brulin, G., Jansson, S. and Sjöberg, K. (eds.). 2013. *Capturing effects in programmes and projects*. Lund: Studentlitteratur.

This book chapter addresses the question of what results and effects can be seen from gender equality initiatives and what cannot be seen, and the reasons for this. The starting point is a study of the work on following up the results and effects of gender mainstreaming in an initiative on gender mainstreaming in Swedish municipalities and county councils. The City of Göteborg had decided to gender mainstream its web-based coordination system for handling planning, budgets and follow-up, including all service sectors and units in the city. The main questions posed in this chapter are: Can there be results and effects from gender mainstreaming which are not known, or which co-workers do not understand the importance of, namely, surprising and unexpected effects? We also want to study whether undesired results and effects take place, and how these can be managed. The study is based on some 15 interviews with individuals working in the municipal management office, education administration, schools, pre-schools and the municipal council of the City of Göteborg. The interviews were carried out during 2012. We start out by discussing different implications of measurement and effects from gender equality work, including different understandings of what constitutes a gender problem and what should be the solution as well as the positive and negative effects of the process of measurement and the control mechanisms themselves. Based on the results, we discuss the conditions

for gender mainstreaming in complex organisations and how both contextual and functional factors impact on how the work can be organised and followed up. In addition, the vertical and horizontal flow of information is discussed. The study shows that there are a number of different effects, both intended and unintended, which for different reasons are not described as effects in the follow-ups that have been carried out. In the study, we noted the problem of measuring and analysing gender equality in organisations, and at the same time found examples of different stories about work on change. We see these stories as an opportunity to develop the work of studying the effects of gender mainstreaming. Another clear experience in Göteborg was that gender equality problems are complex and must be handled in different ways at different levels in an organisation. The study also shows that differences between examples of gender equality work at different levels are large, and that follow-up systems do not take sufficient account of this. Differences in what are seen as the main tasks in different parts of an organisation, for instance between planning and practical activities, must be managed. Small local results need to be captured. Different interpretations of gender equality, as well as the complexity of the issues, create a tendency to solve gender equality problems in small steps. Steps that lead to desired effects are difficult to anticipate and require being open to surprising effects. One example of this is goals that were removed because they were difficult to measure. The requirement of measurability sometimes has an unintended, unpredictable and negative effect. Another result discussed in the chapter in relation to why the effects of gender mainstreaming are so difficult to measure is to regard them as embedded in organisations' regular processes and follow-up systems, and also in the staff's daily and informal routines. Changes that take place due to gender mainstreaming often happen within the frame of regular work. This means that the effects are not necessarily reported as a consequence of gender equality work. Other examples are small improvements, such as how forms are designed, premises located, how material in the preschool is used and so on. The long-term effects of all these smaller changes are difficult to predict or specify. They are often based on an argument that it is wrong to treat people differently on the grounds of gender, unless there are good reasons for doing so, rather than on a theory of what could be the effects in the long term.

Table 9. Overview of papers (in chronological order)

Publication	1	2	3	4	5
Title	Implementing gender policies through gender training	Gender equality and public services	The contradictory work with gender mainstreaming	Public servants as agents for change in gender mainstreaming	Effects of gender mainstreaming
Publication	book chapter	book chapter	article	book chapter	book chapter
Published in	Lindholm, K. (ed.). <i>Gender Mainstreaming in Public Sector organisations. Policy implications and practical applications</i> Lund: Studentlitteratur.	Lindholm, K. (ed.). <i>Gender Mainstreaming in Public Sector organisations. Policy implications and practical applications</i> Lund: Studentlitteratur.	English translation of article first published in Tidskrift för genusvetenskap (TGV), nr 2-3, 2011.	Andersson S., Berglund K., Gunnarsson, E. and Sundin, E. (eds.). 2012. <i>Promoting Innovation. Policies, practices and procedures</i> . Stockholm: Vinnova.	Svensson, L., Brulin, G., Jansson, S. and Sjöberg, K. (eds.) <i>Capturing effects in programmes and projects.</i> , Lund : Studentlitteratur.
Publication Year	2011 in Swedish 2012 in English	2011 in Swedish 2012 in English	2011	2012	2013
Author(s)	Anne-Charlott Callerstig	Anne-Charlott Callerstig	Anne-Charlott Callerstig and Kristina Lindholm	Anne-Charlott Callerstig	Anne-Charlott Callerstig and Kristina Lindholm

MAKING EQUALITY WORK: AMBIGUITIES, CONFLICTS AND CHANGE AGENTS

In this chapter I return to the questions raised at the beginning of the introduction to discuss the results of the case studies and what can be learned from them. Through the study of influential factors that impact on the implementation process of gender equality policies the ambition is, as described earlier, to contribute to an understanding of the outcomes of implementation processes within this policy field. The main questions that have been asked are: How was gender mainstreaming implemented? What were the main factors influencing the implementation process and why? What was the role of actors working to implement gender mainstreaming?

In the theoretical chapter, a framework for feminist implementation studies was outlined and discussed and a model for analysing the implementation of equality policies was suggested. In this part of the thesis I will show how these perspectives have been used to analyse the results of the case studies and possible conclusions will be outlined and discussed. The description will be based on the findings from the case studies individually and also in a comparison and meta-analysis. The methods and approaches used were described in the research chapter and in the paper about the interactive research approach that is part of the thesis.

In the following section I will describe how the implementation process developed over time and the strategies for implementation that were developed. Important points from the case studies will be raised and discussed, but it should be stressed that they have been covered in more detail in four of the papers that make up the thesis, where fuller accounts are provided.

In this section I will also discuss the involvement of managers and politicians and how this affected the process and the commitment and participation of public servants in general and gender mainstreaming actors in particular. I will discuss whether different parts of the gender mainstreaming policy and implementation process have different conditions for their implementation. Furthermore, I will discuss what the dilemmas encountered in the practical work meant for the implementation process and how they were handled by the gender mainstreamers.

Factors impacting on the implementation process

An important perspective when trying to understand policy implementation processes is viewing them as organisational learning processes and gender mainstreaming as an implementation process that entails organisational change. The questions explored thus relate to the overall question of how organisational processes and practices in public organisations that rely on, sustain and produce gendered outcomes can be changed. The preconditions and causes of change, such as the impact of change agents, organisational processes and institutional features (which may limit or enable change), are important in order to understand the outcomes of implementation processes. In the case studies I have also been interested in the interplay between different factors in the process of implementation, such as the role of change agents in the context of (public sector) organisations.

The implementation process is reliant on individuals both in the way in which they generally affect the implementation process and how they will adopt new policies to de-gender them. Both in mainstream implementation theory and in gender studies it has been suggested that individual actors can have a great impact on the outcome of implementation processes. The roles of these actors have, however, been studied to a lesser degree. Early on in the research process it became evident that the actors, or the gender mainstreamers, in the initiatives studied, faced a number of difficult-to-solve questions in their work to implement gender mainstreaming.

In order to understand the strategies for implementation that were developed by the actors involved and why they were chosen, I began with the concept of ideological dilemmas and used it in different ways. The overarching aim in doing so has been to understand the reasoning of the gender mainstreamers in an interactive approach where the dilemmas served as a starting point for joint learning. One of the aims was to allow the gender mainstreamers to reflect on their strategies (Callerstig and Lindholm 2011).

The concept of ideological dilemmas was originally intended as a contribution to the debate about ideologies. Billig *et al.* (1988) used the concept to distinguish between what they called intellectual and ideological dilemmas, the first being coherent, rational and theoretical while the second were non-coherent, contradictory and, as a “lived ideology”, understood as “common sense” or common knowledge in people’s lives. Lived ideology combines and reproduces different parts of intellectual ideologies. In its broadest sense, it can be said to be a *set of values and beliefs, characteristic of a given society* (Pietilä 2008, Billig *et al.* 1988). Lived ideologies are inherently contradictory, fragmentary and inconsistent and consist of different forms of dilemmas. In thinking, making arguments or making choices the dilemmatic character is a necessary part of everyday reasoning and is based on different and sometimes conflicting values. In the anal-

yses of the micro-practice of the gender mainstreamers in this study, the concept has been used as a way to connect theoretical perspectives with practice and to make visible the underlying assumptions within different strategies, approaches and choices. In the case studies, the search for the “lived ideology” of gender equality work and the dilemmas inherent in it have been a crucial part of the research approach (Callerstig and Lindholm 2011). This has been done through making them visible, and by comparing them to theoretical models to test their assumptions (further described in the previous chapter).

In four cases of gender mainstreaming in two municipalities and one government agency, in-depth investigations that took a close-to-practice perspective of the implementation process were carried out. Within these locations, four different cases were studied with different characteristics; one that focuses on the implementation of gender mainstreaming at the middle level of the organisation, or middle management, and one that focuses on the local level of the organisation, that is, in the service delivery phase. The third case study focused on the implementation of gender mainstreaming at the central levels of the organisations, that is, at the level of planning. And finally, the fourth focused on the process of working with gender mainstreaming in the entire organisation.

Other differences concerned different policy areas of intervention (i.e. social services, education, innovation policies and central steering) and different change strategies: gender training (Education), participatory bottom-up (social services), top-down (Göteborg City) and a mixed method (VINNOVA).

The case studies were conducted using an interactive methodology and beginning with the ideological dilemmas encountered during the study. The dilemmas have been described, compared and problematised using theories of implementation and organisational learning and change processes in general and theories on gender equality work in particular. As part of the interactive approach, and early on in the cases studies, the practitioners were introduced to a general model of learning and change processes in organisations with commonly known factors that affect the opportunities to establish long-term change and learning processes, as described in the theoretical chapter (p. 64).

The model constituted a base from which we, the researcher and the gender mainstreamers, could continue to discuss different aspects of the implementation process in terms of what were seen as prerequisites and where obstacles to effective implementation could be found.

The case studies can thus be seen as separate cases with results and findings that can “stand alone” and they can also be understood as the empirical data from which I have made a comparative analysis from a broader meta-perspective. The meta-analysis has allowed me to use the material from the case studies in a different way and to compare similarities and differences across sites. In the comparative analysis, the approach takes a step back from both the individual and

case-specific perspectives and also from the interactive methodology (the participants were not involved in this part of the analysis).

By applying the ambiguity-conflict model developed by Richard Matland (1995), I proceeded to compare the results from the individual case studies to further the understanding of what factors were particularly affecting the implementation process of gender mainstreaming and how to differentiate between them. As described earlier, I wanted to understand how the ambiguities and conflicts affected the implementation process and whether different factors were important in different parts of the process. I also wanted to understand what could be said about the way in which the implementing actors, the gender mainstreamers, have handled the conflicts and ambiguities inherent in the policy area in their strategies throughout their work and thus what impact they have on the implementation process. In the analysis I have also posed the question of whether there was a shift in the implementing process towards less ambiguity and at the same time higher levels of conflict during the course of implementation. The last analytical question that was posed was to investigate whether different parts of the gender mainstreaming policy framework can be understood as having different levels of ambiguity and conflict. In the next parts of this chapter I will describe and discuss the results of my study.

Findings from the individual case studies

The case studies each revealed important findings of their own and I will start by discussing some of these and then continue to compare and discuss them from a meta-perspective. The cases studied are furthermore described in four of the papers that together with the introduction make up the thesis and the interactive approach is discussed in the fifth paper.

Göteborg City: Education Department

The case study in Göteborg City Education Department, together with the one in Malmö, was the first to be conducted in this research. In Göteborg Education Department the initiative was focused on training and capacity building for important actors within the school system in the municipality. This was seen as a way to ensure the requirements needed to meet the objective for gender mainstreaming, which was formulated as being that all the actors within the school system in Göteborg should have the necessary knowledge to integrate a gender equality perspective into their work. In order to ensure this, mandatory gender training was developed and carried out for all school principals and also for important members of staff in the Education Department. In the study, I collaborated primarily with the gender mainstreaming project manager and process leader. We decided together about the questions to be studied and who to interview. During the interviews and discussions with participants, the most dominant ideological dilemmas found in relation to the strategy being developed were issues

related to individual and organisational learning. The dilemmas were apparent in statements such as: “Nobody should need to be a gender expert, it’s a matter of following the rules,” and, simultaneously: “gender equality is a knowledge area and if you don’t understand it properly you may worsen the situation.” Other examples were: “a gender perspective should be internalised so that you don’t have to think about it,” and, simultaneously: “you need to be constantly reminded and aware of how you do gender on a daily basis.” There were also arguments such as: “all students should be treated in a gender-neutral way,” and, at the same time: “we need to create a more equal representation in different areas of education,” and also: “we need to take into account the differences between boys and girls.”

Additional examples can be found in relation to the conditions necessary for change, such as: “when the head of department is involved it becomes important to the principals,” simultaneously with: “if the principals can’t see how it’s important to them they won’t do anything.” These forms of reasoning were leading into complicated and somewhat contradictory arguments, such as: “the managers need to take responsibility and make the issue their own – then they will lead the others,” and: “we need to lead them so that they will assume this responsibility.” But, at the same time: “they have to feel that it’s their issue and we can’t really tell them how to do it; they have to do it themselves.”

In the analysis seminar we, the researcher and participants of the initiative, discussed the results using different theoretical models; the first were the model of “fast track change” versus “incremental change” towards gender equality (Dahlerup and Freidenvall 2005) and we discussed what kind of assumptions these two perspectives rest on in terms of both how to understand the nature of inequality and how to bring about change. The other theoretical models we used were related to the role of knowledge and gender training. Here it was the relation between attitudes and values and changed behaviour that was the focus: what would be the best change strategy – to start with a changed behaviour or a change in attitudes and values? This mirrored the dilemma of classical pedagogy/learning theory versus dissonance theory (Vedung 1991, Billig *et al.* 1988).

Also in relation to this model, we discussed the different assumptions underlying each perspective. Inherent in the reasoning was also the dilemma of egalitarian versus authoritarian ideals (Billig *et al.* 1988, Schneider and Ingram 1990) of change. The participants then discussed how to proceed with the project. An interesting development was that the overarching objective for gender mainstreaming in the Education Department was changed from “everybody should have the necessary knowledge” to “all activities should be gender mainstreamed”. One result of the case study was that it showed that training and capacity building are necessary in gender mainstreaming initiatives but that individual and organisational learning must be developed in parallel or “hand in hand” in order to be effective. It also showed that vaguer policy goals combined with soft types of measures such as training could be useful at first, when little is

known about the problem and how to proceed, but that more precise goals and harder policy measures could be more useful once it becomes clearer what to do.

Malmö City: Social Services

In the case study in the Social Services Department of Malmö City, the ambition of the gender mainstreaming initiative studied was to develop guidelines for social services staff, i.e. the social workers, on how to work with a gender equality perspective in their daily encounters with clients. A survey was sent out to social workers in order to discover how they currently applied a gender perspective in their work. The results of this made it clear that they had very different understandings not only about gender equality (in all aspects) in itself but also how it related to their profession as social servants. Intermingled with the different understandings and dilemmas was also the question of how to deal with intersecting inequalities. This was of particular importance in an area that has many immigrants and pressing social problems such as unemployment, crowded housing and drug abuse. One problematic for the Social Services was to determine how “cultural differences” should be taken into account in various situations, such as how to deal with honour-related violence or issues of parenting ability. In the interviews and the dilemmas found in the accounts, it became clear that the different understandings of how this should be done were conflated with professional ideals in rational arguments such as: “we need to be neutral, transparent and abide by the legal framework” and simultaneously the realistic understanding portrayed in: “we need to take into account the individual perspective,” or, in a more idealistic view: “we need to make a general decision that gender equality should always be at the forefront when we make decisions.” It could also be dilemmas in relation to how to understand individual “choices” and structural preconditions (also described by Billig *et al.* 1988) in arguments such as: “we cannot interfere with individual choices if they are not harmful to the person in question.”

In relation to how to bring about change the discussions concerned how to relate to the local community, one perspective being that: “we should make clear our own position, the legal framework and be transparent and communicate what we base our decisions on,” and another was: “we must learn more about how they understand gender equality,” and yet another: “we must meet with the citizens, discuss and come to joint agreements on how to work with these issues.” In the analysis and reflection seminar we discussed how the notion of different “cultural perspectives” can blur the discrimination against individuals who oppose certain practices that some supposed leaders might claim are valid for a whole group (Deveaux 2006).

We also discussed different interpretations of the role of public servants and social workers based on classic public interest models and the assumptions these rest on (Schubert 1957). This was done with the help of a model in which three positions are outlined: the rational, the realistic and the idealistic perspective.

Based on this model, a discussion took place about how different individuals in an organisation might take different positions or struggle with handling several perspectives and their respective positive and negative values; how an entire initiative can gradually move from one perspective to another and also the consequences that could result from individual cases of decision making involving clients if different perspectives were applied. One result of the case study was the clear evidence that civil servants have substantial discretion in their decision making ability and that their own interpretations and decisions will have great impact on the outcomes of gender mainstreaming. The purposes and benefits of different measures developed in gender mainstreaming initiatives, such as check-lists or even public meetings, will furthermore be understood and applied differently by the different actors involved depending on how they reason, based on the dilemmatic character of the underlying values informing the discussion. Another finding was that what started as a local initiative took on a broader perspective in trying to influence other parts of the municipality, including politicians, which showed how the long-term and substantial effects of gender mainstreaming are dependent on collaboration between different levels in an organisation. It also showed that a holistic understanding of gender inequalities is important; one discussion in the social services being how a problem (the same problem) might look very different in different locations in time or space.

Government agency of VINNOVA

In the case of gender mainstreaming in VINNOVA, a government agency that funds research especially in relation to innovation and economic growth, the strategy for developing gender mainstreaming in the whole organisation was studied. As a starting point for the joint learning, the study focused on the overarching question of the thin borders between co-optation and subversion. Is it possible to create change from within? One example of dilemmas in connection with this question was how to deal with the resistance and lack of priority given to gender equality goals where a certain amount of co-optation might be necessary to create change in the long run. Interviews were conducted with individuals who had worked with developing strategies for gender mainstreaming in the organisation and increasing the capacity among its staff. Other aspects connected to ideological dilemmas were apparent in terms of why the integration of gender was important in the innovation policy area, for example, as instrumental to the mainstream objectives or as a means to an end i.e. gender equality. Dilemmas were visible in arguments such as: “a gender perspective will lead to better research and is a means to reach the agency’s objectives,” and simultaneously: “a gender perspective is a democratic issue and a goal in itself.” Also, in relation to how or whether to explicitly address gender: “we need clear results to convince the employees that gender equality is important” and simultaneously: “we mustn’t talk so much about gender equality because it will create resistance.” Another example was dilemmas in relation to gender and organisational change

in arguments such as: “we need to get gender into the ordinary organisational systems and processes because this is what counts,” at the same time as: “gender and power operate outside the formal organisational systems, you have to know the informal structure to succeed.” In the analysis seminar we began with theories on tempered radicals and small-wins strategies (Weick 1984, Meyerson 2001), and co-optation versus subversive strategies (Swan and Fox 2010). The different steps that had been taken to implement gender mainstreaming were analysed, showing a pattern of seizing opportunities to act for change as they arose, the building of alliances, along with increasing pressures both from within the organisation and from the outside, among other aspects. It was discussed how one key ingredient was the incremental working methods that had been employed, where one result would point to the next steps to take, rather than a pre-planned strategy outlined at the outset of the work. It was possible to outline and analyse this strategy in terms of different phases and different strategies in connection with them, but only as a retrospective endeavour. This way of working had ensured a more flexible change strategy, but was at the same time demanding and time consuming. The VINNOVA case study shows that the actions of change actors at the local level can be of great importance, along with the coalitions they form. However, this is a vulnerable process and needs the support of managers at all levels of the organisation. In the case of VINNOVA, it was clear that when the agency got a new head of mission the prerequisites of the gender equality work changed considerably.

Göteborg City: Central planning unit

The second case study in Göteborg City was conducted in relation to an initiative that focused on integrating a gender perspective into the new central monitoring and coordination system of the city. In this study, different aspects of steering and also how to measure gender (in)equality were the focus. It mainly concerned performance results from a gender perspective and also the results from gender mainstreaming initiatives in themselves. Ideological dilemmas were visible in terms of arguments about the risks and benefits of steering and monitoring and what needed to be achieved in order for gender equality to become a vital part of the municipality’s work. Examples were reasoning such as: “we need to monitor and measure progress or nothing will happen,” and at the same time: “if we measure too much people will only focus on those things that they know will be monitored.” Other examples were visible in arguments such as: “not all things can be measured” and simultaneously: “we know too little and need to measure more things from a gender perspective.” It could also include reasoning such as: “too many surveys and mappings are done when we already know what needs to be done,” and at the same time: “there’s a lack of gender disaggregated data and this is an obstacle to development.”

In the analysis seminar, we discussed different theoretical perspectives on monitoring and evaluation, both mainstream and from a feminist change perspec-

tive. We discussed how different parts of the organisation and different functions need different kinds of data and talked about different perspectives on gender equality deriving from different positions or “levels” in an organisation; such as from an individual or a more aggregated level, or qualitative versus quantitative. In addition, we talked about how these different perspectives also entail different methods of investigating gender inequality, ranging from direct observations to collecting and analysing large quantities of data from a gender perspective. In connection to this, there are also inherent dilemmas relating to individual or more structural understandings of society and the processes of inequality.

We also reflected over the differences between informal learning and tacit knowledge among gender mainstreamers, formal mechanisms for learning and how efforts to strengthen learning could better take into account the informal learning that is currently on-going. This was based on findings suggesting that a lot of informal accounts of the prevalence of gender inequalities and the results of attempts to change them were reported in a storytelling fashion (Sole and Wilson 2003).

We furthermore discussed the political aspects of evaluation and the potentially negative side effects of NPM-inspired techniques. From the case study it became clear that the vertical and horizontal barriers in the organisation were hindrances to learning across sites. These barriers also led to information flows travelling unevenly in the organisation, with important results being lost as a consequence. The different interpretations of gender equality, as well as resistance or lack of interest, were intermingled throughout the process of implementation. The results showed how information travelled unevenly through the system, filtered through both the technical system and personal abilities to understand the significance of the information from a gender perspective. They also showed how progress towards change was much faster in local settings where the work was often focused around more minor changes that could be implemented “on the spot”, whereas more fundamental and deeper structural changes were much slower and required the active role of politicians and high-level officials at central levels of the organisation. Taken together, these issues created a situation where the progress of gender mainstreaming would look very different in different parts of the organisation.

Dilemmas in the implementation process

How then did different forms of conflict and ambiguity impact on the implementation process and how were they handled by the actors involved? In the following, I will discuss how to understand the conflicts and ambiguities that were encountered and how these were visible as dilemmas for the participants but also how they laid the foundations for change agency.

From the very start of the study, it was clear that the participants of the gender mainstreaming initiatives under study were struggling with difficult questions

in relation to the design of the initiative and when they started working to realise the plan that had been set up. We understood these as ideological dilemmas (Billig *et al.* 1988) encountered during the practical work. The occurrences of dilemmas were visible in all the case studies we conducted; some were very similar and other differed. When deciding on an implementation strategy, the often vague objectives and directives gave general and not very helpful indications as to what should actually be done, in terms of what the problem to address was and more specifically how to address it. The gender mainstreamers had to “invent” solutions to the problems presented (Schofield 2004), and since the problem in itself was only vaguely formulated they had to define or “fix” it (Lombardo, Meier and Verloo 2009). The way in which this happens can be understood as a discursive process. A discursive approach to politics means seeing it as a constant process of action in which people act and domination discourses are (re)produced and challenged (Rönblom 2009, p. 107). Gender equality is an “open” political concept that “travels” between different policy areas, organisations, and even countries. During this process the concept is filled with meaning and will at various points become “fixed” and be given a specific meaning during the policy process (Lombardo, Meier and Verloo 2009). This can happen at a political level but also at the administrative level where policy is put into action (Schofield 2004, p. 293). During the process of implementation, the gender mainstreamers had to interpret and transform the policy into practice based on their understandings of what gender equality is and how it might be accomplished. These various understandings are not coherent or consistent; on the contrary, they are often contradictory and of a “dilemmatic character” (Billig *et al.* 1988, Nentwich 2006, Benschop, Halsema and Schreurs 2001, Kelan 2010, Hearn and Piekkari 2005). They rest on different forms of ideology, or shared beliefs, and can be observed in arguments and reasoning involving different perspectives and conflicting understandings.

Dilemmas are not confined to only two opposing views, nor can they be understood as simply a choice between two negative options (Billig *et al.* 1988). Billig *et al.* (1988) explain how the dilemmatic character of ideology often concerns different but important values that are contradictory, but not only in a negative sense. Dilemmas highlight tensions and are enabling since they help people to think meaningfully about the world (*ibid.*).

Another important feature in the case studies was that, in the implementation strategies that were developed, an incremental approach to change was apparent, together with the individual positioning as tempered radicals displayed by the actors (to be discussed further below). Furthermore, during their work to implement policy, the gender mainstreamers *use* dilemmas in their change strategies or as part of their change agency. This will be discussed next.

The dilemmas of gender, equality and change in the practical work

The results of the case studies show that in the work to mainstream gender equality in public sector organisations many difficult-to-solve dilemmas based on the concepts of *gender*, *change* and *equality* were encountered during the implementation process. These dilemmas rest on different interpretations of what the problem to be solved is (gender inequality) and what the solution might be (gender equality) in relation to the policy area where gender mainstreaming is being applied and how change can be achieved. The way in which the actors cope with these dilemmas has been a recurring theme throughout the case studies and a central feature of the results is that they also show that the dilemmas about what to do are related to dilemmas in relation to how to do it.

In the analyses of the data collected in the case studies, different dilemmas have appeared that concern different aspects of gender mainstreaming work, notably concerning how to deal with the concepts of “gender”, “equality” and “change” in the implementation strategies developed. These had both theoretical and practical implications. Examples of dilemmas found in the case studies are outlined in the table below showing both their theoretical and practical nature (Table 10).

Table 10. Dilemmas in gender equality work

	THEORETICAL QUESTIONS	PRACTICAL QUESTIONS	EXAMPLES OF DILEMMAS
Gender	How should gender be understood in different contexts?	What is the impact of gender in relation to the service provided?	Sameness-difference-contextual Intersections Individual-structural
Equality	How should equality be understood in relation to mainstream policy areas?	What should be the goal of the equality initiative, both short-term outputs and long-term effects?	Inclusion-reversal-displacement Formal-substantive
Change	How do gender relations change? How can processes and practices which rely on, sustain and produce gendered outcomes be changed?	How should a strategy for change be designed? What measures should be used to create change in the current situation?	Long term-short term Instrumental-end-means Incremental-radical Egalitarian-authoritative Co-optation-subversion

The dilemmas encountered in the case studies were connected to efforts to understand exactly what it means to integrate a gender equality perspective into mainstream work. These dilemmas were centred on how to understand a gender perspective in relation to the core work of the organisation and how to understand what equality would mean in relation to the mainstream objectives of the organisation involved and the service provided. Furthermore, they were connected to questions of how to endorse change in the organisation so that a gender perspective could inform the design and delivery of services in such a way that it would affect equality between women and men in a positive way, or at least not in a negative way.

In the following descriptions, some examples of dilemmas from the case studies will be given. These examples are taken from the case studies and have been further described in four of the papers in the thesis but are repeated here to highlight some of the findings. The first example relates to dilemmas in understanding gender.

Example from Case Study 2: “GENDER AND INTERSECTIONS”

An important discussion in gender equality work in recent years has been whether, and how, other equality strategies should be taken into consideration (Walby 2005). A starting point for the project “Gender equality – a new ambition” in the Social Services Department in the City of Malmö has been to understand gender mainstreaming on the basis of how different social categories interact, especially with regard to ideas about gender and ethnicity. In the research, this is referred to as an intersectional perspective, here understood as “on the basis of theories of power to understand how different social categories interact, affect and depend on each other” (Eriksson-Zetterqvist and Styhre 2007, p. 180). According to prior intersectional research, it is necessary to plan and implement different equality policies with a perspective that includes awareness of the complexity of how different forms of stratification processes are co-dependent (Crenshaw 1997). A person is always much more than simply a “woman” or a “man”, and other perspectives, such as class, age, sexual orientation and ethnicity, need to be included in the analysis. At the same time, some research has indicated that an intersectional perspective is difficult to apply in practice. It can, for example, be difficult to maintain a focus on the gender perspective (Lombardo and Verloo 2009). Booth observes two approaches in the work of applying an intersectional perspective in public service activities: one focused on making the process more democratic and equal, e.g. by consulting and including representatives of different groups in the planning process, and the other focusing on the outcomes of planning, e.g. by allowing experts to carry out impact analyses on the different proposals (Booth 2006). In the case study in Malmö it became clear that there were different viewpoints about the extent to which social workers should take into account different understandings of gender equality due to religious ideas and cultural practices. At

the local analysis seminar it was discussed how a tolerance perspective (Deveaux 2006), i.e. when the problem is turned into a question of what should be tolerated, might make the scope of the discussion too narrow. This is because, what is regarded as a problematic cultural practice or custom from a gender equality point of view is often not simply a “problem of tolerance” between what the society can or cannot accept. On the contrary, customs and practices that are seen as problematic from a gender equality perspective have often been subject to questioning and debate among those concerned. It is therefore important to understand practices in their specific contexts, e.g. by asking who is for and who is against and what are the power relations between them (*ibid.*). Other questions that were discussed included whether certain problems, such as violence against women, have common grounds or must be understood contextually, e.g. with regard to specific cultural norms. This is a classic dilemma in feminist theory which can be related to particularity and similarity and the degree to which women’s subordination can be understood as universal (Billig *et al.* 1988).

Another example of a dilemma encountered in the practical work is related to how to understand the nature of inequality and how to change it.

Example from Case Study 1: “FAST TRACK OR INCREMENTAL CHANGE”

Gender training is regarded as one of the more central features of gender mainstreaming and major training efforts are common in gender mainstreaming initiatives. How then should training be considered in relation to the possibility of establishing the fundamentals for a sustainable change process in the organisation in order to integrate a gender perspective? What kind of impact does training have on the work with gender mainstreaming, and does it endorse the efforts? The point of departure here is the case study of a gender mainstreaming initiative in the City of Göteborg. The project was run by the Department of Education with the aim of implementing gender mainstreaming in all schools in the city. The primary strategy in the project was to train and coach school principals to produce their own action plans for gender mainstreaming. Previous research has shown the importance of staff having capability (i.e. having the competence, capacity and resources for the work), the willingness to realise the objectives and comprehension (i.e. knowledge about and an understanding of the content of what is to be achieved) (cf. Sannerstedt 2001, Lundquist 1987). A fourth aspect can be added to that, i.e. an awareness of the fact that gender is continually “done” in organisations and how each and every one of us is part of this process (Martin 2006; Andersson 2009). In this case study, the dilemma of incremental change models and so-called fast track change models for gender equality were a starting point for the joint learning. The case study shows that individual learning and organisational learning have to complement each other. The results also show that if training is to be effective it must be connected to organisational learning and supported by steering

mechanisms and organisational capacity building. Apart from the need for initiatives that aim to improve knowledge, it is also important to create conditions that generate *new* knowledge when this is lacking. It is difficult to apply strict controls to an area where causes, effects and conceivable solutions are still largely unknown. This requires a knowledge-based exploration where creativity and new thinking are encouraged, and where staff develop their learning in their own specific fields. The City of Göteborg began with a more theoretical learning approach but gradually changed track to emphasise stricter controls in parallel with management training and responses from the department's managers. Previous research has indicated that, in general, political areas are often developed from softer forms of control (such as different capacity-building approaches) into stricter control mechanisms (such as regulations and the use of sanctions). Correspondingly, there is a tendency for "newer" political areas, which are largely characterised by uncertainties about objectives and strategies, to use learning strategies for development. Later, when experience has increased, stricter forms of control can be applied (Schneider and Ingram 1990). Education or training is usually regarded as a soft control instrument. Gender mainstreaming is a relatively new policy area in the department of education, which may explain the changeover from softer to stricter controls over the course of time. When the uncertainty about what should be done was reduced, it became easier to demand results. The management training project played an important role in this.

A third example relates to how to understand change, in this case in terms of the impact of gender training on change processes.

Example from Case Study 1: "LEARNING AND CHANGE"

This example builds on the same case described in the example above. It raises another concern in relation to change that is similar to the first example and more generally connected to preconceptions and assumptions about behavioural change.

How should we understand the relation between people's knowledge, attitudes and values on the one hand and organisational change on the other? In the case study relating to the management training project, this problem was discussed with participants on the basis of two main theoretical models. The first starts out from the assumption that it is necessary for people to have the relevant knowledge first so that they can change their actions as a result, here referred to as the *theoretical learning model*. The second model is mainly oriented towards changing people's behaviour and is based on the idea that individuals acquire the knowledge they need as they go along. This model is known as *dissonance theory*.

In essence, the theoretical learning model is based on the influence of individuals' knowledge, attitudes and values; something that is expected to lead to reflection, which in turn gives rise to the individual changing his or her actions. This approach has been criticised for being too individualistic, rationalistic and unrealistic.

tic. Even if individuals know what is right and proper, they do not always act on the basis of this knowledge. Relations like power, interest, resources and other factors, which are more to do with organisational and institutional relations, are neglected in this perspective. If knowledge and insight do not lead to gender equal actions, then what is the alternative? One option is to apply a strategy that builds on external control. The idea here is that it is individuals' actions that will be influenced, not their insights as to why they should behave in a certain way. The starting point for this analytic model is that action comes first and insight follows on from this. The individual will avoid dissonance (contradictions) and instead strive towards views that agree with the reason for the action. According to dissonance theory, reflection arises as the result of a changed action. In terms of gender equality, this can mean that the use of a steering document, e.g. relating to the allocation of resources, can indicate the relevance of the activity by starting out from a gender equality perspective. When managers and staff begin to work in new ways this also gradually affects their knowledge, attitudes and values. There is a parallel here with the idea of the normative effect of laws, i.e. that people's attitudes and values can be changed with the aid of legislation that determines what is right and wrong. Knowledge is acquired when it is "needed" to change actions. There is also a flipside and limit to this strategy, namely that it invites resistance and that it can initially be difficult for those concerned to do something when they do not understand its value. The two models are based on different assumptions about the possibility of finding "the right solution" to an actual problem. The theoretical learning model starts out from a rational view of the knowledge that we can have about the world. By "getting to the bottom" of a problem and sharing everything we know about it, the right decision about "the best" solution can be made. The dissonance model starts out from there not being any clear-cut or "correct" solutions, but that we instead usually regard the "right" solution as the one that we are actually working with. When we begin to act in new ways, we often change our view of what is "right".

It is clear from the case studies that the dilemmas encountered in gender mainstreaming not only relate more generally to people's understanding of the concepts and theories of gender, equality and change, such as in the examples above, but that they also reflect the area of public service within which the gender mainstreaming initiative is being carried out. Differences were apparent in the case studies both in terms of the specific professional field involved and the role or functions of the tasks carried out (i.e. central planning and administration or the operation and delivery of the organisation's services on the ground). This might be thought of as a rather obvious point but the great variations that exist are usually not reflected in the general directives for gender mainstreaming that the initiatives rest on. This has also been shown to be true for other types of equality policies (Connell 2006). Below, I will discuss some of the findings of the case studies and how they might be understood.

The policy area and the professional field

One of the central themes that emerged when comparing the case studies was that the dilemmas encountered were both similar and different and that some of the differences can be related to the policy area in focus and the particular professional field of that policy area. Public policies, including equality policies, are often designed in standardised terms and expected to apply across a whole organisation or even across sectors (Connell 2006), even though great variations might exist between them in terms of gender patterns (*ibid.*) or the kind of service being provided. Organisational structures are furthermore closely related to social categorisation processes, which vary depending on the action involved – defence, police, health or social care (Wahl *et al.* 2001, Andersson 2003) and this has been found to affect the implementation process (Benschop and Verloo 2006).

Prior research has concluded that the policy area of implementation also affects the implementation process. One example is that gender mainstreaming has been adopted at different speeds within different policy areas of the EU, which can be explained by the variations in working methods across policy areas, different levels of resistance, the interest and influence of equality actors (being more focused on social issues) and the varying external pressure for change (Pollack and Hafner-Burton 2000). Pollack and Haftner-Burton conclude that the variation can be explained by a combination of the specific structural mechanisms in the various areas and the specific circumstances. They also emphasise the key role of agency and the work of strategic actors in overcoming obstacles to implementation through “a skilful process of strategic framing” (*ibid.*, p. 450).

One example of the impact of the policy area and the professional field is the case study in the social services. Previous studies have shown that a particular problem when gender policies are applied is the general emphasis on individual perspectives within the social services (Callerstig 2012b). This was also confirmed in the case study in Malmö City Social Services. Another example is the differences between Education (Göteborg City) and the area of innovation policy (VINNOVA). Whereas gender equality has been on the agenda in school politics for a long time, it is a fairly “new” issue in terms of innovation politics. There were also findings related to how different features of the location and the function of the unit(s) where the initiatives were based impacted on the dilemmas. This will be discussed next.

The functions and levels of organisation

In the case studies, the function of a particular section of an organisation, such as central planning and administration or the operation and delivery of the organisation’s services on the ground, was also found to have a great impact on the type of dilemmas that were prominent. One example is the case study of the work in the central planning unit in Göteborg City, described below.

Example from Case Study 5: “THE COMPLEXITY OF MULTILEVEL ORGANISATIONS AND PROCESSES”

In the case of gender mainstreaming in the central planning and monitoring system in Göteborg, various dilemmas became visible in the efforts to manage the steering and monitor the progress of gender mainstreaming within the whole organisation. The dilemmas encountered could be related to differences from a “central”, “middle” and “local” view of the organisation and variations in gender mainstreaming approaches. For instance, there are different perceptions of work on gender mainstreaming at different levels, which is of importance in determining what results can be seen. From the local perspective, work is based on directives to the organisation, and also central follow-up systems. From the central perspective, it is important to understand how the results of (specific) local development work can be used to manage and develop work in the city. This means that specific experiences need to be asked for, generalised and applied more widely at different levels. An intermediate level, such as administration, a board or a city district is also important in creating long-term effects. The discussions concerned how gender mainstreaming becomes context-dependent and related to organisational levels. At a central level it is possible to see differences between gender equality initiatives in many different service sectors in the municipality. The disadvantage is that it may be complicated to make correct analyses without qualitative data being available (most of the data available on this level is quantitative). At the local level, “small goals” for the local school or preschool are often important, whilst it may be difficult to describe the work in a more generalised way. Difficulties from the point of view of an intermediate level include understanding the context where effects occur. Gender mainstreaming is run at different rates in different parts of the municipality, and inertia towards change is stronger at higher levels. Questions concerning priorities must be taken up at a higher level and decisions take longer to make. Local levels can see effects more rapidly, but the impact is often limited to their own units.

The role of public servants and public service

Besides the more organisational features affecting the kind of dilemmas that were encountered, as shown above, the dilemmas were also found to be intermingled with more general dilemmas of public service and ethics. One example concerns the expert or citizen perspective which is deeply rooted in the issue of the role of public administration: in a general sense, should the “public” steer or guide the citizens (Denhart and Denhart 2006)? In the case study in the Social Services Department in Rosengård, Malmö City, different perspectives on the role of public servants and what is best from a public interest perspective was an apparent dilemma that became intermingled with the change strategies developed. This is described below.

Example from Case Study 2: “THE IDEALISTIC, REALISTIC AND RATIONALISTIC PERSPECTIVE”

The problem concerned how social workers should interpret, balance and prioritise between different perspectives in gender mainstreaming efforts. In the social services the problem with gender mainstreaming efforts came to revolve around how the work itself would be designed, and the direction it should take. The starting point was the social workers’ encounters with their clients and the general objectives of the social services. One aim of the project was to develop guidelines on how a gender perspective could be considered in the day-to-day work of the social services. A central question was how the clients’ interests could be handled in relation to gender equality issues. Interwoven with this was the sameness and difference dilemma, which was visible in the underlying assumptions about how to design actions for women versus those for men and in discussions about whether measures and actions should be the same or different for women and men. One question that was discussed was whether traditional and existing gender patterns were (re)created when different resources were spent on women and men. Were differences concerning the actions taken a sign of inequality or an adjustment to different conditions for men and women, and what consequences might this have for gender equality? Based on the interviews, we identified three main approaches to gender equality work in the social services, which were discussed in an analysis seminar. These approaches were put in relation to three administrative ideals emanating from different conceptions of society and the public, civil servants and the role of public administration (Schubert 1957). The first approach, called the realistic perspective, is based on a view of society in which there is no common or shared interest but instead a variety of interests deriving from various individuals and groups. In this perspective, there is no unambiguous or clear-cut “public interest” that can guide decisions. From the realist perspective, in the best of circumstances, public employees function as catalysts, where different interests are appraised and balanced, or as mediators between different interests. From a realistic perspective, the client’s best interest is the highest priority, which may mean that unequal or even discriminatory practices may be accepted if it is deemed beneficial to that client’s interests. The second perspective, which was prominent in the interview material, is the rationalistic perspective, which is based on a more rational approach to public administration. Civil servants are seen as neutral experts who implement policy objectives through the existing framework. The objectives are there to be followed and decision-making is understood as a largely technical-rational process about how to make correct decisions. It is not seen as part of the work description for public servants to account for utopian visions. The work consists mainly of making “correct” interpretations of the rules based on the given situation, in the most neutral way possible. Equal treatment and transparent decision-making are seen as important. The rationalistic perspective implies that social workers should always follow existing rules and directives on gender equality. The third perspective is the idealist perspective, which is based on a more pla-

tonic view of public administration, i.e. the idea that certain ideals and values of what is right and wrong do exist in relation to the interests of the public. Regulatory frameworks are always seen as incomplete and decisions must instead be guided by basic ethical and democratic values. Discussing fundamental values and ideals is therefore an important part of the work of a public servant. From an idealist's perspective, gender equality is an overarching societal ideal that has to guide the decisions that social workers make. These different perspectives are, of course, generalisations and simplifications, and can be seen as examples of ideological dilemmas since they are contradictory and often occur in parallel, and both legitimise and challenge societal power relations. None of these perspectives was visible in a clear-cut manner in any individual interviewee. Rather, there was usually a combination of arguments, where the emphasis sometimes lay more with one perspective than another or where the respondent was struggling with how to balance and prioritise among different approaches and possible strategies for change. When discussing the dilemma with the social services, it was revealed that none of the perspectives described above could be seen as "the right one". The characteristics of the dilemma between the realist, the rationalist and the idealist perspectives also could not simply be transferred to a specific character or position in the workplace. As an example, a gender equality advocate does not need to start out from an idealistic perspective. The discussion dwelt on the idea that all these perspectives contain important principles, but can lead to negative consequences if applied in too one-sided a way. For example, one risk with the realist perspective is that it may consolidate existing unequal conditions. The rationalist perspective is likely to be too conventional and innovative thinking might be impeded. The idealist perspective may seem naive and meet resistance; individuals become subordinated to ideals, assessments can be arbitrary and it can be difficult to find concrete solutions to specific problems. Discussions about the future came to revolve around possible approaches to the different perspectives, both in order to highlight underlying assumptions among the social workers themselves and in working with their clients.

To sum up: in the gender mainstreaming initiatives studied, different types of dilemmas were encountered that were related to how to understand the concepts of gender and equality and how to bring about change towards gender equality. Furthermore, the dilemmas were found to be intermingled with the specific features of the policy area and the organisation involved, the professional fields involved and the function of the units studied, and also with general ethics of public service and with the public interest debate more broadly.

In the following section, the ways in which the dilemmas were used by the gender mainstreamers in their change strategies will be discussed.

Change agents and change agency

Part of the strategy for implementation includes the way in which the actors responsible for implementation ensure that general change prerequisites are put into place. For example: adequate resources, support from management, time and also the capability to relate to contextual factors such as the area of implementation (Schofield 2004). Part of the strategy concerns change agents' attempts to "sell" new policy goals to other members of the organisation and, in so doing, to create the necessary support and engagement (Rouleau 2005). Strategies can be formal or informal to varying degrees (Mintzberg 2000). It can also sometimes only be possible to understand them retrospectively, at least in part, as the VINNOVA case shows. So what can be learned from these case studies about the change strategies that were developed during the implementation of equality policies? And what do the results tell us about the strategies developed by public servants to implement gender mainstreaming? These questions will be discussed next, based on the similarities and differences found in the case studies. The conclusions will be exemplified with findings from the case studies.

One major feature of the work to implement gender mainstreaming by the actors involved in the initiatives studied is that the strategies they developed show many signs of tempered radicalism and small wins strategies.

Tempered radicals and their working methods

The binary division between social and political activism by *outsiders* and the co-opted and instrumental methods of *insiders*, as discussed in the theory chapter, leaves little room for the tempered radicals described by Meyerson and Scully (1995). Tempered radicals are employees who acknowledge unfair or unjust practices or conditions in their organisations and who want to change them but who are at the same time loyal and support the overall objectives of the organisation. Tempered radicals use small wins strategies, i.e. they seek out opportunities to make changes in a small fashion, building alliances and securing support as they go along, and they work to create change from the inside. They can be progressive forces at the same time as they are constrained by the boundaries set by the organisation and themselves (Meyerson 2001). They want to change what they view as unjust and unequal conditions but they work with organisations and not against them (*ibid.*).

Drawing on three large empirical studies of diversity work, Swan and Fox (2010) give examples of how diversity workers use different strategies to resist current inequality regimes in an organisation and how they strive to develop new conditions. They discuss three different types of strategies or micro-practices; the first is strategies that Swan and Fox call "discursive resistance" (Swan and Fox 2010, p. 577), where diversity workers reflexively use language, where they deliberately choose how they frame an issue, and how this changes according to the situation. The equality practitioners studied were aware of the difficulties and

risks of using different types of arguments, but at the same time they used these fears and risks as well as the positive connotations associated with different understandings of the concept. One example was the use of various understandings of concepts so that they functioned sometimes as carrots and sometimes as sticks.

The second type of strategy was for equality practitioners to use their own status as “outsiders”, and what Swan and Fox (2010) call “strategies of embodiment” (ibid., p. 579), that is, drawing on their own identities as minority representatives and the tendency to count bodies in diversity work. This means that diversity workers themselves embody the discourse of difference that is often part of diversity ideologies and use this as a means to change their organisations. By being different, they challenge the status quo of the organisation (ibid.).

The third type of strategy is where diversity workers deliberately use technologies of organisational management and professionalisation to gain support for their work. This strategy includes using culturally masculinised NPM knowledge and techniques to gain status in the organisation. The diversity workers also used the opportunities afforded by new means to present, problematise, examine and solve issues at the same time as they claimed that they were aware of the limitations and risks associated with using these techniques.

Incremental or small wins strategies

Incremental change, or a small wins strategy, has been argued to be a possible strategy towards gendering organisations and a way to achieve gender equality objectives (Weick 1984, Meyerson and Scully 1995, Meyerson 2001, Charlesworth 2007). One of the advantages of the strategy is believed to be that changing organisations in small steps lowers resistance to change. Meyerson and Fletcher (2001) suggests that the small wins strategy is “a powerful way of chipping away the barriers that hold women back without sparking the kind of sound and fury that scares people into resistance” (p. 126). Small wins is a strategy built upon incremental change, meaning small and concrete changes aiming to alter the small and to a large degree unnoticed biases that are deeply embedded in an organisation, biases whose very importance or impact are hardly noticed until they are gone (Meyerson and Fletcher 2001).

A small wins strategy is useful, according to Meyerson and Fletcher, when the more obvious and clearly discriminatory practices have been dealt with in an organisation and when “the problem with no name” remains, meaning the work practices and cultural norms that often at first appear to be unbiased but together form a “subtle pattern of systematic disadvantage” (ibid., p. 128). Other features of the small wins strategy are linked to individual psychological factors where small wins are believed to make large-scale social problems easier to handle in terms of stress levels and anxiety. The theory also rests on the idea that the complexity of many social problems makes more radical solutions difficult since both the causes of a problem and the consequences of the proposed solutions are diffi-

cult to comprehend and control. The theory of small wins originates from the US American organisational psychologist Karl Weick (1984) and discussions about the role of social science in understanding and solving existing and pressing social problems.

Weick argues that a re-definition of the scale of social problems is important in order to create the capability and the necessary psychological pre-requisites at both individual and organisational levels. Small wins is “a concrete, complete, implemented outcome of moderate importance. By itself, one small win may seem unimportant. A series of wins at small but significant tasks, however, reveals a pattern that may attract allies, deter opponents, and lower resistance to subsequent proposals” (Weick 1984, p. 43). The visibility of the results is an important part of a small wins strategy according to Weick since it attracts new allies and this in turn makes new actions possible. Small wins are not a strategy as in the classical logical implementation chain. They can be summarised retrospectively but they have in themselves a fragmentary character driven by opportunism and dynamically changing situations; they “stir up settings”, which makes them impossible to predict since “each subsequent attempt at another win occurs in a different context” (ibid., p. 44). Many of the strategic actions taken consist of identifying, gathering and labelling several small changes that are present but unnoticed and that could be grouped under a variety of different labels. Weick also suggests that working in a small wins fashion fosters reflection and learning, which are necessary in order to solve complex social problems. Meyerson’s studies of equality advocates in organisations who put their beliefs into action in order to change organisations from within, i.e. what she calls tempered radicals, show that they often use small wins strategies.

Throughout the case studies, there were many examples of how dilemmas were used in strategies for resisting the current gender regime in the organisation. There were also clear signs of tempered radicalism, one example being in the VINNOVA case.

Example from Case Study 4: “A STRATEGY OF SMALL BUT VISIBLE WINS”

The small wins strategy was visible in many ways in the gender mainstreaming work in VINNOVA. One example was what was termed the visibility strategy; in particular, the strategy that was emphasised by participants in the joint analysis seminar to produce “solid products”, with the analyses of VINNOVA-NYTT, an internally produced news magazine. Building initiatives on the results of previous work in order to create a sense of continuity was also considered important. Moreover, the aim of finding new alliances within the organisation often led to the use of connections made possible by other newly gained allies. Another finding which indicated that the strategy was built on small wins was the fact that there was no previously envisioned strategy; no plan that had foreseen the paths taken,

even though it was possible to summarise the different steps retrospectively. The lack of a “master plan” for the work did not mean, however, that there was a lack of strategies; rather, it meant that the plan itself was an emerging process in which adapting to changing circumstances was part of the strategy. It was understood that it was possible to construct this process in retrospect when the different actions, occurrences and outcomes were considered as an interlinked pattern, but not in advance as a pre-constructed strategic plan and not as a rational or linear process.

In the case of VINNOVA, the question of how to balance co-optation and subversion in change strategies became part of the joint learning. Inherent in the change strategy were different ideological dilemmas concerning the nature of inequality, power, behavioural assumptions and change (discussed by Billig *et al.* 1988 as part of the dilemmas of modern society).

Gender mainstreamers use dilemmas actively in strategies for change

It was clear from the interview responses and in the discussions in the analysis and reflection seminars that the gender mainstreamers used the dilemmatic character of the problems they encountered in their strategies for change. This meant that they could use different and opposing positions or perspectives in parallel in the various arguments they made to secure support and create the necessary conditions for change in their organisations. It was also clear that the positive and negative sides inherent in these perspectives and dilemmas were often understood by the actors involved and furthermore that different perspectives could be emphasised and used in different circumstances. This change strategy was clear in the case of gender mainstreaming in the agency of VINNOVA, described below.

Example from Case Study 3: “SPEAKING TWO LANGUAGES”

It became clear from the interviews and the analysis seminar at VINNOVA that the vagueness of the terms “gender”, “gender equality”, “gender mainstreaming” and of the concepts of “innovation” and “growth” was recognised by the actors involved in gender mainstreaming work in the organisation. Moreover, this vagueness opened up space for negotiation and was used deliberately. The notion of being “able to speak two languages”, for example, in terms of gender and economic growth, social and natural sciences etc., was also considered important in gaining legitimacy, relative to the organisation internally and towards outside gender researchers and collaboration partners. Another situation discussed by the interviewees was whether to refer to “gender equality” in policy documents (which might in some cases be seen as too political) or the more neutral and scientific term “gender”, which appealed to the cultural norms of an organisation which mainly had academics as staff and research as its core objective. In other circumstances, for instance when addressing the poor representation of women in science

or regarding prospects of research funding, “social justice” was seen as a more justifiable argument and used accordingly. Another example was the use of NPM strategies, where apparent dilemmas were recognised by the actors of VINNOVA and deliberately used in the change strategies they developed. This could be seen in the deliberate use of the management techniques of the organisation by the actors involved, such as the everyday planning, monitoring and evaluation techniques used in the organisation at large. For example, the use of the logic impact model and the quest for gender-disaggregated data. These techniques were used as platforms for negotiation and resistance by the actors involved. Another aspect believed to be very important by the public servants interviewed in the case study was the legitimacy gained when research results backed up the proposed actions, much in line with scientific management ideals. These types of arguments could also be used to question initiatives believed to be gender-blind or where the gender aspects had not been investigated. During the discussion, the actors involved argued that they understood the potential risks of applying NPM techniques. For example, the Agency’s general reliance on seemingly gender-neutral statistics and how statistics could sometimes hide gender disparities.

Gender mainstreaming: the process of implementation and how it developed

Returning to the question of how the process of implementation developed over time and what characteristics were visible in the implementation process, I will continue discuss and compare the results of the different case studies.

In the process of implementing gender mainstreaming it was clear that the work in the different organisations and locations followed certain phases or “logic”, even though the circumstances as to why the initiative had started were different in the government agency to those in the municipalities. In all cases, the decision to start the work was taken based on quite general proposals about what problem to address, or as general policy decisions but where it was not clear exactly what the initiative would mean in practice. In the government agency, one important starting point was the formal requirement to work with gender mainstreaming imposed on all government agencies; in the municipalities the spur was the opportunity to apply for money from the Programme for Gender Mainstreaming (SALAR) based on a perceived problem or area that needed further work to integrate a gender perspective.

Bottom-up or top-down?

In all cases, it was clear that both a top-down and a bottom-up approach were relevant in terms of the implementation but also that the importance of these factors changed during the process of implementation. In Göteborg City Education Department, initially a bottom-up approach that incorporated learning and the

engagement of participating actors was crucial. Later, the involvement of the head of department was important in order for actions to be taken in relation to the new findings. The results of gender impact assessments, like the analysis of how resources were distributed from a gender perspective, could not however be handled by the department itself; it needed the influx of actors at more central levels of the city, and also that new decisions were taken by politicians. In the case of the Social Services Department in Malmö, it was clear that the involvement of local managers was important in order to start the initiative but that the social workers themselves had to be engaged and “convinced” that gender equality was an important feature of their work. This was especially so, since their time and resources were seen to be very limited, with the needs of the clients far outstripping the resources available. Also, learning, in terms of understanding the impact of gender on decision making and on gender inequality from both an individual and a structural perspective, had to take place. Over the course of time there was a slight shift in the way in which the gender mainstreaming manager worked; from focusing on the internal aspects to turning to other parts of the organisation, central planners and also politicians. One late activity was a training exercise for politicians where the social services case was used as an example.

The different phases of implementation

In the following section, the different phases of the implementation process will be described and discussed. The way the process is described is a generalisation and a simplification to make influential characteristics and factors more visible. In reality the process was not so clear-cut in the sense of one phase being replaced by the next one. Instead, often the phases were parallel, fluctuating and iterative. Still, in order to describe and analyse the process, a simplification and generalisation can be helpful at this point. In the analysis I return to the ambiguity-conflict matrix (Matland 1995).

The first parts of the implementation process in all the cases studied were, as previously described, marked by the need to work out what to do and how to do it. The people responsible for the initiatives (such as project leaders, steering groups and process leaders) were at this time discussing gender equality in general terms and the conflict levels seemed to be fairly low. In connection with the formalisation of how to implement gender mainstreaming, different types of studies and assessments were conducted in all the initiatives. Examples of activities carried out include surveys, the collection of gender-disaggregated data and other forms of assessments and evaluations. The strategy was at first formed more generally and with a focus on developing a plan for defining the problem and making a plan for the gender mainstreaming work to come; one example was the decision to invite gender scholars and start a pilot project at VINNOVA and another was the design of the training for school leaders in Göteborg municipality. Ambiguities were visible in the investigation of a problem, i.e. gender discrepancies in the daily operations, where more knowledge was found to be need-

ed in order to decide what to do more precisely to make improvements in the daily operations. In the case of VINNOVA, the work to implement gender mainstreaming also included a search for resources to finance the activities.

After this initial search and planning phase, all of the initiatives set up learning and capacity-building initiatives of varying scope and depth for the organisation's staff. Often the different groups of employees were also involved in activities where they were to examine their ordinary work activities and decide on adjustments and improvements. Examples of this are in Göteborg where the school leaders developed "action plans" for their own schools, or in VINNOVA where employees were able to become gender equality "pilots" and in Malmö where the co-works were involved in examining their clients' journals to find gender and ethnicity markers. Common problems reported during this learning and capacity-building phase were a lack of engagement from some co-workers who did not show up and sometimes heated argumentations stemming from the employees' different perceptions of gender and gender equality. Often it was not so much overt conflicts as long debates about how to understand the causes of gender inequality, i.e. how to understand the roots of the problems in focus.

Because of these ambiguities and dilemmas, and also the now increased levels of conflict as a result of differing understandings, it is easy to see how this phase could lead to a lack of progress and instead endless arguments over the right interpretation, an observation also made in other studies (Ericsson-Zetterqvist and Styrhe 2008, Matland 1995). The dilemmas experienced showed that there were no simple solutions to the problems and that the search for the right solution might not be very helpful in terms of creating action. Earlier research on organisational development has shown that organisations often make decisions based not on a rational decision-making process, but on an irrational process where the solution decided upon was based on criteria other than "best evidence", in what Nils Brunsson has called action-rationality (Brunsson 2000, see also Ericsson-Zetterqvist and Styrhe 2008). This process was also visible in the next phase where the support and priority given by senior officials and managers was crucial for action to come about. In this more action-oriented phase, which followed the learning and capacity-building phase in all the initiatives, new routines, guidelines and action plans were supposed to be set up and executed.

In all the initiatives, the conflict level increased substantially during this period while disagreements, not only about how to understand the problem but also what to do and how to actually do it, were becoming more apparent. To these phases an additional phase can be added, or in some cases a lack of an additional phase; this was the policy re-formulation or political decision-making phase. This meant the phase where the decisions necessary to create deeper change in terms of adapting processes and systems that were creating inequality needed to be made. Here the results from the gender mainstreaming initiatives needed to "travel" up to, and come to the attention of, the appropriate decision-makers, and

also new decisions needed to be taken. These could be decisions about the division of resources to areas of education with many girls and to those with many boys, or how the municipality would support sports and cultural activities. If decisions were not made, the changes that the administrative level could propose would sometimes be only “single-loop” or superficial, i.e. they would not affect the cause of the inequalities at hand.

In the case study of the new steering and monitoring system in Göteborg, it was clear that this “flow of information” to the decision makers would not happen easily. Here the processes of the municipalities and the government agency differed and it was also clear that this would look very different depending on what level of the organisation the initiative was conducted at, as well as the kind of work that was done, i.e. planning or service delivery, and what the circumstances were, for example, rules and regulations affecting the area. One example was social services, which is a type of operation that is regulated heavily, and some of the problems concerning these regulations could not be easily changed, even by the municipality politicians. Part of the complexity of reaching the politicians was considered to be that they also needed to understand how to interpret gender discrepancies in order to be able to make decisions. In Malmö, training politicians therefore became one aspect of the development work. Also, in Göteborg it was evident that politicians needed something more than mere statistics in order to be able to make new decisions. In all the initiatives, politicians were important to the gender mainstreamers, who were reflecting a lot on the best ways to involve them. In the case of VINNOVA, it was also clear that simply involving politicians could mean increased priority internally, even if the involvement only meant asking for information.

Below, the developments based on the results of the case studies are displayed in relation to the ambiguity-conflict model (Matland 1995). Again it is worth emphasising that the phases were not linear but rather iterative, overlapping and sometimes running in parallel, but the generalisation clarifies the relationship between the ambiguities and conflicts affecting various parts of the work and the factors that were important in the implementation process. Also the model shows that concerning certain aspects, the gender mainstreaming strategy can be understood as clear-cut in terms of both goals and means and that, especially before action is considered, it is likely that this understanding is shared, i.e. conflict levels are low (and thus to some degree be described as administrative implementation). Also the learning and capacity-building phase in particular could be placed in several positions in the model, even in the first quadrant; examples being if short information type of sessions were to be counted as learning and capacity building. Not all initiatives could be said to be representative of political implementation at least not in any clear sense even though the logic of the developments was to move in this direction. The point here is, however, to show that the impact of factors that affect the implementation process varies with the levels

of ambiguity and conflict related to the specific measures undertaken as part of the implementation design. The arrow in the model indicates this movement.

Figure 4. Model of ambiguity-conflict levels for gender mainstreaming according to different phases in the process of implementation

Source: Adapted from Matland (1995)

An analysis of the data from the case studies shows that the factors impacting on the implementation phase varied according to the different phases, much along the lines of Matland’s model (1995). In the search and planning stage and in the learning and capacity-building stage, the setting up of a learning environment and also the availability of gender-disaggregated data and other data, as well as input from gender theory, were vital. It was also clear in all the initiatives that this was a complicated and dual process of both individual and organisational learning, where professional knowledge and know-how had to be conjoined with a critical gender perspective and an understanding of prevailing gender inequalities as well as existing gender equality objectives. This process demanded the input of process leaders/facilitators in the learning process who could understand both dimensions. Support from managers was also important during this phase, largely in order to emphasise the importance of the development work taking place, to ensure that time and resources were available and to signal that

the involvement of co-workers was important for the learning process. Difficulties were related to learning across gender mainstreaming initiatives which could make good but isolated progress. In the more action-oriented phase where the planned changes were supposed to be made as a consequence of the learning or where additional learning processes were to be set up, such as in the case of the Göteborg Education Department, the role of managers and other influential key actors became increasingly important. During this phase, the role of the managers was to put pressure on important actors to act and to start to demand results from the work or, as in the case of VINNOVA, to enable the proposed changes to happen by granting the budget and incorporating the proposed new actions into important steering documents. When action plans were to be made and implemented, conflicts in terms of the right way to address a problem could also occur between equality actors, similar to what Matland has described as “implementation battles”. This could, for example, be observed as a tension between a more instrumental understanding of gender equality as opposed to a more rights-based perspective. (From the interactive research point of view this was treated as a dilemma to be problematised rather than solved.)

During the policy reformulation or political phase, the managers were important as gatekeepers who could enable information to reach the political levels or prevent this from happening. But the real power was in the hands of the politicians and, depending on whether or not they were prepared to take action and take a stance in favour of a gender perspective, more profound changes could be proposed. Both in Göteborg and Malmö stories about specific politicians taking action to support change were reported in the interviews, but so were the difficulties in getting gender mainstreaming as a strategy to have a deeper impact precisely because of the lack of such actions. In the interactive approach, the relation between specific gender equality objectives and gender mainstreaming as an open and more exploratory strategy were problematised since this connection seemed to be weak throughout the implementation process.

In the case studies, it was clear that the gender mainstreamers adapted to the different phases by changing their strategies to fit with the circumstances. Early in the implementation process this was visible in the way in which they tried to make the initiatives as concrete as possible and also to fit in with the organisational agendas. They fought to obtain the means to carry them out and the support to do so, they indulged in intricate strategies where they wanted key actors to learn but also to assume responsibility and to start to lead the process. They tried to manage both the conflicts and the ambiguity levels by working both to strengthen the top-down pressure and to obtain bottom-up support and involvement. The gender mainstreamers were often catalysts for change with their in-depth knowledge about the process and the way in which they balanced different measures to apply pressure at the same time as facilitating and encouraging the necessary learning. They actively used different dilemmas to handle both ambiguity and conflict. In all the initiatives it was evident that this was at the same

time extremely pressing and that many of the responsible actors involved were suffering emotionally and perhaps also in terms of their careers. Even though a lot of energy was invested by these individuals, they had to suffer a lot of setbacks and difficulties. Especially in the action-oriented phase where the plans and new knowledge were to be put into action, the strength of coalitions formed locally was very important, as Matland has also indicated (1995). Here the strategies of the gender mainstreamers were very important to the outcome since they were very active in forming and taking advantage of local coalitions.

The outcome of different gender mainstreaming activities as part of the implementation process

The third implication of using Matland’s model was described earlier in terms of understanding the potential outcomes of specific gender mainstreaming activities, since gender mainstreaming itself can result in many different types of outcomes in the policy area in which it is applied. Gender mainstreaming can therefore also be understood as containing different types of policy measures with varying levels of ambiguity and conflict inherent in them. Potential differences in terms of different activities within gender mainstreaming policies were discussed earlier in the theoretical chapter and are also outlined below (Figure 5).

Figure 5. Gender mainstreaming as a set of different policy measures

		CONFLICT	
		Low	High
AMBIGUITY	Low	Administrative routines and information (technical)	New policy goals (political)
	High	Individual learning and behavioural change (individual learning)	Structural change (organisational learning)

Source: Adapted from Matland (1995)

In all the cases, it was evident that certain parts of the gender mainstreaming strategy were being more easily adopted than others. In all cases, more administrative procedures, such as producing checklists, were easily introduced, and different forms of examinations such as new surveys were easily agreed upon both in terms of what to do and why. The more advanced forms of individual learning, such as process-oriented training, generated a higher level of resistance in all the cases studied and also made visible the different understandings of the root causes of existing gender inequalities as well as challenging existing power structures in the organisation or the status quo. When deeper structural changes in the organisations were called for by the gender mainstreamers, these turned out to be the most difficult parts of the implementation process in all cases and change was less likely to come about, or it required the formation of an alliance that could exert both internal and external pressure for change, such in the case of VINNOVA. The division of resources from a gender perspective was an example of an issue that became very “political” in the case studies, both in terms of how gender equality was interpreted, for example, whether the goal should be formal or de facto equality and whether this was something that public servants should decide about at all. In order to achieve change in instances where the division of resources had been found to be problematic, the political levels needed to become involved and this did not always happen. The findings of the case studies support the analysis of gender mainstreaming as a set of different policies or policy measures within a policy which in turn renders different outcomes. Examples of this are given in the model below.

Figure 6. Examples of different outcomes from gender mainstreaming

		CONFLICT	
		Low	High
AMBIGUITY	Low	<i>Technical outputs etc</i> Checklists and tools Gender disaggregated data Surveys Policy statements and information	<i>New policy goals</i> A more equal division of resources and power from a gender perspective
	High	<i>Individual or behavioural changes</i> Increased awareness and capacity among staff Changes in attitudes and values Changes in treatment of clients	<i>Organisational changes</i> Gender perspective as an integrated part of service planning and delivery in systems and processes

Source: Adapted from Matland (1995)

Reflections on the implementation process

In this final part of the analysis chapter, the results will be reflected upon, with a focus on the potential implications they may have for the process of implementation of equality policies.

In all the case studies it was evident that one particular concern of the actors involved was how to ensure the durability of the initiatives that had been started. Gender mainstreaming is not a “once and for all” effort; it is a complex and open-ended process because gender equality is in itself an open-ended process involving various forms of ambiguity, conflict and dilemma (Acker 2000, Hearn 1998). This means that implementing gender mainstreaming policies entails establishing a long-term and on-going process of organisational change, i.e. a sustainable process as opposed to a “quick fix” or a short-term project (Svensson *et al.* 2002, Lindholm *et al.* 2012).

Other recurring themes in the implementation process were resistance and power struggles in connection with gender equality objectives and/or more technical issues such as how to coordinate gender mainstreaming in complex organisational settings. In relation to this, the communication flows and how to establish a process where experiences from single initiatives could be fed back to decision makers, giving them the opportunity to make necessary changes, proved to be important but difficult. Finally, enabling a learning environment where mechanisms could be developed to embrace dilemmas as a part of the implementation process was also important but demanding of time and resources.

So are ideological dilemmas in relation to gender equality and gender equality work especially apparent in gender mainstreaming or integration strategies because of the high levels of conflict and ambiguity that are so dominant throughout the larger part of the implementation process? It is possible to argue that gender mainstreaming is being so easily adopted precisely because of its high levels of ambiguity which, at least initially, lower the risks for conflict at the political level. In the Programme for Gender Mainstreaming (SALAR), many municipalities that applied for funding have signed the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR) gender equality declaration during the period. However, when work to implement the strategy begins, the levels of conflict are likely to rise. This happens when the resistance against or low prioritising of gender equality work becomes apparent, sometimes fuelled by the problems of understanding what to do together with a failure to understand why it is important. Local conflicts that surface when the existing gender regimes are being challenged, or “implementation battles” that concern the “correct” interpretation of gender equality, are likely to occur during gender mainstreaming initiatives.

Ideological dilemmas also exist in the implementation of other types of equality policies, where the policy might show lower levels of ambiguity or conflict; it can rather be seen as an inherent part of the enactment of policies or as lived ideologies. In the case of gender mainstreaming, the contradictions and

complexities are in many respects the dilemmas of the local implementers, the gender mainstreamers. It is they who have to transform policy into practice. However, even as the dilemmas pose problems, they also offer opportunities, perhaps especially in this type of strategy where the process seems to be especially fluid. The dilemmas can be used as a platform for creating change strategies and in many different ways they can inform change agency as have been discussed. The dilemmas can also be used as a basis for learning on a collective level, one example being how dilemmas were used during the interactive research process. In the individual case studies, we saw early on that the gender mainstreamers were considering different dilemmas and furthermore that they were also using ambiguities in their change strategies and we started to use these dilemmas in our work with them. The dilemmas became both a method and a way to understand the strategies that were being developed to implement gender mainstreaming. In the meta-analysis, and when the individual case studies are compared in order to try to understand the implementation of equality strategies, the dilemmas become a signifier for the process of implementation. These ambiguities and conflicts have an important role in enabling an understanding of the kind of contexts and factors that will have an impact on the implementation process. When both conflict and ambiguity are high, the strengths of local coalitions and local support will be important. The dilemmas can be used as a starting point for a local learning process, but such a process needs support and the conflicts need to be carefully handled.

In gender equality work, and in the practice of gender mainstreamers while trying to make sense of gender equality and how to create change, both the ambiguities and conflicts inherent in the policy area manifest themselves as ideological dilemmas. It is a lived ideology that conflates the understanding of gender equality with strategies for change, which includes how to handle conflict and resistance and create legitimacy and support for the work. Furthermore, the inherent dilemmas are used by the gender mainstreamers not only to construct meaning for themselves but also to actively reproduce certain meanings in certain contexts. It is truly a discursive politics on the micro-level that, when brought into focus, will reveal important facts about the process of implementation of equality policies and the impact of actors in a given setting (Nentwich 2006, Benschop, Halsema and Schreurs 2001, Kelan 2010). The process of defining what concepts mean is an inherently political process. Lombardo, Meier and Verloo (2009) write about discursive politics in which the concept of gender equality is given different meanings in different contexts and by different actors. Gender equality is given a specific content, it is “fixed”, in its practical implementation and during this process it can either gain a more ambitious scope than originally intended or “shrink” into a more limited approach. It can also be reformulated or “bent” so that gender equality will turn into something else entirely, such as economic growth (Rönblom 2009). Eveline and Bacchi (2005) come to a similar conclusion and describe how gender is “done” in an on-going process and there-

fore must always be analysed in its specific context regardless of the label put on the initiative, be it “gender mainstreaming” or something else (*ibid.*).

Transformational change in terms of gender mainstreaming can be understood as a change that entails agenda setting, i.e. the transformation and reorientation of existing policy paradigms, changing decision-making processes, prioritising gender equality objectives and rethinking policy ends (Walby 2005, Jahan 1995). But gender mainstreaming initiatives are often operated as projects that do not really go well together with the ambition that would require long-term change processes. Of my case studies, most of the initiatives depended on external financing and had a fixed starting time and an end date by which final reports had to be produced and evaluations of the initiatives made. Only the VINNOVA case was operated and driven as an ordinary part of the organisation.

In all the case studies, a model for sustainable development work (p. 59), has been used as part of the interactive approach in order to outline different variables and so that the participants could focus not only on the short-term results of the initiatives but also on how to establish change and learning processes that will enable long-term effects. The importance of keeping a focus on both control mechanisms such as steering and monitoring and demands for results were evident in all case studies. They were clearly expressed in the dilemma in the Education Department of the City of Göteborg, where the project transformed the change approach and problem definition from an emphasis on lack of knowledge and gender training to one on stricter control and prescriptions for action and results. However, it is not just how you do things but what you do that will affect the outcomes of the implementation process (Grönlund and Modell 2006). Also, from this perspective, the dilemmas will be important and furthermore they are inevitably linked to ways of enabling change and to conflicting interests as the quest for more gender equal relations, organisations or even society will inevitably challenge the dominant gender regime.

The results of the case studies show that discursive policy struggles and resistance towards the work are a refiguring process and an unresolvable feature of the implementation process. This also means that the dilemmas encountered during the process cannot be handled using a traditional, rational and linear implementation model.

Another recurring feature of the case studies was the ability of the organisations to cope with change on different levels within the organisation. Again Göteborg is a good example, this time in the case study of the gender mainstreaming of the overarching system for steering and monitoring in the city. The specific context should also be considered, most notably spatial and time factors and also the impact of actors such as policy entrepreneurs.

The transformative ambition includes an institutional transformation, as argued above. Rao and Kelleher acknowledge that the transformation of gender relations requires access to, and control over, material and symbolic resources. In

addition, it requires changes in deep-seated values and relationships that are held in place by power and privilege. Transformation is therefore seen as both a political and personal process (Rao and Kelleher 2005). Internal and external pressure for change have been found to be important in several previous studies of equality initiatives in public sector organisations (Acker 2007, Rao and Kelleher 2005) and this is an apparent feature of the case studies in my own study, as is the importance of active engagement at the political level to act on the experiences and outcomes of the efforts to mainstream gender equality in public sector organisations. This study thus supports the arguments made by Verloo (2001) and others, expressed by Rao and Kelleher (2005) as:

All approaches to bringing about gender equality must have a political component. This is because gender relations exist within a force field of power relations, and power is used to maintain existing privilege. (Rao and Kelleher 2005, p. 59)

In order for gender mainstreaming to become agenda-setting and transformative in relation to policy content, gender equality objects must guide the process but the experiences gained from mainstreaming efforts must also feed back into the political dimension of the policy process in order to affect agenda setting at the political level. It is not just about turning policy into practice but also practice into policy.

Maria Bustelo shows that evaluations can be the last but crucial step in a policy process where a gender perspective enters into the process (2011). Implementation studies have their roots in evaluation. Gender mainstreaming is the gendering of implementation, to study how a gender perspective affects the implementation process, which can be said to have great similarities to conducting a gender-based evaluation. The results of an evaluation should ideally inform and potentially improve the object of evaluation. Many of the results from the gender analysis in the initiatives studied such as apparent, but unjustified, imbalances in the division of resources between women and men, must be transferred to policy makers and senior managers within the organisations.

Furthermore, the issue of the potential outcomes and long-term effects of general equality strategies such as gender mainstreaming deserves some attention. Policy formulation takes place within the implementation process at different stages of implementation, not just initially, and this was also visible in my own study. This might make it relevant to use the concept of policy loops (Wihlborg 2011) and extend and apply them according to Exworthy and Powell's (2004) division into three main processes which coincide with the three different levels of the policy process. Applying the model in this way makes it visible how policy-making is an on-going process and also highlights the connection between the different parts and functions of public administration and the political level. In the case studies, the lack of communication, or even the presence of miscommunication, between the different actors or instances that must be involved in

order for the strategy to be effective as a transversal policy measure was a striking feature.

As has been discussed at some length, the dilemmas encountered during the implementation process are important. Mechanisms for learning are a reflection of both the design and results of gender mainstreaming and it has been argued that they are a crucial factor in successful implementation. Gender mainstreaming entails changing existing processes and practices in public organisations (Callerstig *et al.* 2012). It can be understood as the introduction of a change in public policy or policy re-design where learning processes have to be facilitated, and where the results of new insights and investigations have to be transformed into the daily routines and practices of the organisation. In most cases, operationalisation requires learning in order to find the necessary solutions to problems. Traditional linear and mechanistic models of implementation have been criticised for their lack of reflection and development-oriented learning, when applied to new and complex problems (Adler *et al.* 2004). A change process based on feedback and learning loops is instead thought to function well in social settings, where the participation of different actors creates the necessary conditions for development work, success and impact. It is mainly the creative, innovative, expansive, exploratory and developmental sides of learning that have been emphasised to improve change processes (Ellström 2001, Elkjaer 2001, Engeström 1996, March 1991, Dewey 1989) even though adaptive learning also needs to be balanced (Ellström, Ekholm and Ellström 2007). One problem is that questions about the role that gender plays in organisations are rarely found in research on learning (Kelleher 2002) or in organisational change theories (Miller, Mills and Helms Mills 2009).

As a guide to the analysis of the implementation process of equality policies, the results of my study can be used to formulate the following areas and questions:

Table 11. Questions for the implementation of equality policies

AREA	QUESTIONS
Ambiguity and conflict	What is the level of conflict and ambiguity regarding the policy in question? What are the main issues of concern? Who are the main actors? What factors might be important in the implementation process given the results of this analysis?
Equality objectives and policy framework	What equality objectives should guide the implementation? What different or competing perspectives on equality might reside within the policy to be implemented?
Inequality regimes	What is the situation of the inequality regime of the organisation(s) involved and how might it impact on the implementation process?
Policy area of implementation	What is the impact of the policy area and the professions involved in the implementation?
Policy measures or theory of change	How can existing processes and practices that rest on and sustain gendered outcomes be challenged and changed?
Organisational and individual capacity	What is the individual and organisational capacity to support the implementation of the policy? How might a sustainable development process be supported that enables both individual and organisational learning?
Policy and implementation loops	What does the policy implementation process look like for the problem in focus? Who “owns” the problem? How can a flow between different policy loops be accomplished?
Reflection and learning	What are the dilemmas encountered in the practical work? How might these dilemmas be used for reflection, learning and development of the work?

DISCUSSION

The results of the study: a summary

Gender mainstreaming is an open-ended strategy for change which can be very useful to further the understanding gender inequality, and how it is produced and sustained in public service and by public sector organisations, its actors and processes. Gender mainstreaming can be a powerful tool for learning and change, to challenge and unsettle current inequality regimes in organisations, and to create a more informed public service. Yet the strategy itself gives little direct guidance on how to “solve” the problems of inequality, and is widely guided by rather abstract policy goals precisely that which enables experimental learning. The vagueness furthermore renders gender mainstreaming a political strategy that it is easy to agree on. This is part of its success story and has contributed to the adoption of gender mainstreaming on a large scale across the world.

However, through the study of its implementation, it has been shown that the work to put gender mainstreaming into practice is far from smooth and without any problems, rather the levels of conflict increase during the course of its implementation. During the implementation process, gender mainstreamers frequently face different forms of difficult-to-solve dilemmas in relation to how to understand gender and equality and how to bring about change. Changes that are more superficial, and where the level of conflicts is lower, are easier to bring about than changes that relate to the organisational “deep structures” of inequality (Rao and Kelleher 2005). The latter would often require the engagement of politicians to make decisions that alter the fundamental preconditions of public service. In this study it was shown that this happens occasionally, but in order for it to happen, good communication flows between the administrative and political levels are crucial. This demonstrates that, in the end, the outcome is dependent on a political and not merely on an administrative process. The study has also shown that it is important to distinguish between different types of equality policies (gender mainstreaming being one) in order to understand their implementation, and furthermore that the pre-conditions can change during the course of implementation. It has also shown that an equality policy in itself can contain different types of strategies and policy tools with different conditions for implementation.

Beginning with the ambiguity-conflict model (Matland 1995), I have argued that the levels of ambiguity and conflict inherent in a policy area, or even policy tool, will affect its implementation. The results of the study have furthermore shown that implementation is a dynamic process where conflicts and ambiguities change during the process. This process is interlinked with individual, organisational and institutional factors that can sometimes be very specific and contextual, tied to certain organisations and policy areas, and sometimes more general and

linked to overarching features of public sector organisations and public service. The results show that individuals can, and do, make a difference and that the ambiguities, conflicts and dilemmas that exist in and around change strategies open up a specific type of change agency. This also illustrates the fact that a policy must be studied in relation to how it is put into action in order to understand its outcomes. Equality policies are in this sense enacted or “done”, and the outcomes will always vary to a certain degree with the specific context of their implementation. This does not mean, however, that it is useless to try to find broader patterns or general features; on the contrary, such research can be very helpful in order to understand the developments in a specific case and not least in designing, learning from and improving equality policies. The search for the “perfect” strategy might be a dream or a vision and even if it is recognised as an unrealistic dream by equality practitioners themselves, the search for a “better”, more efficient way to “do” gender mainstreaming often seems to motivate their work (another dilemma in itself). It is therefore important to keep this dream alive. Furthermore, the unsolvable dilemmas inherent in equality policies, which inevitably result from lived rather than abstract ideologies, might not be all bad and can indeed be used as a starting point for learning and change.

Following the first cases where the problem of understanding how to design and carry out gender mainstreaming initiatives was first analysed by us, the researchers in the research team following the Programme for Gender Mainstreaming (SALAR), we started to use the dilemmas we encountered as part of our interactive methodology in the research project following the programme. We (Callerstig and Lindholm 2011) used Michael Billig *et al.*’s (1988) concept of ideological dilemmas to guide our work. Later I used the same approach in the case study of the work at the government agency of VINNOVA.

In this thesis I have used the concept of ideological dilemmas (Billig *et al.* 1988) in several different ways: as a theoretical perspective to explain the reasoning of gender mainstreamers implicit in their strategies for change, as a sensitising concept in the methodological approach to analysing data and as a starting point for a joint learning process together with participants in the different gender mainstreaming initiatives. Furthermore, ideological dilemmas have been used as a perspective on how dominant discourses of equality are produced and reproduced and, in relation to this, as a way to understand implementation processes.

Feminist implementation studies

I have discussed feminist implementation as a way of studying implementation processes in general and equality policies in particular. Feminist implementation studies, I have argued, imply taking into account the gendered nature of implementation processes. This means studying organisational processes and practices in public organisations which rely on, sustain and produce gendered outcomes. It means studying the enactment of policy with a gender perspective in focus. And finally, it means studying how institutional features, the deep struc-

tures of inequality, condition implementation processes. In my view, feminist implementation studies entail not merely studying how gender is done but also how it is “undone”, how existing gender relations might be challenged and unsettled. It means making different forms of power relations visible not only from a gender perspective but also in relation to other dimensions, such as class, ethnicity, sexuality and age. This involves studying implementation as a process of organisational learning and change, including the role of actors in implementation processes and change agency. It is important to study both successful and less successful cases in order to understand “what works” (Bergqvist *et al.* 2013).

Feminist implementation studies might entail the study of different factors affecting the implementation processes that have been the specific concern of, and discussed in, the case studies in this thesis. They have concerned, among other things, how to understand the role of various actors and the impact of change agency, power relations, conflicts and contested meanings of equality goals, as well as gender in and around organisational processes. This is closely related to discussions about the state, feminist movements, and feminist activism from within and without. The case studies have been concerned with the impact of different contexts, such as street-level bureaucracy, different professional fields and the discourses of the public sector ethos. The impact of broad changes, such as New Public Management and neoliberal trends affecting the “public”, has been a recurring theme. Apart from these issues, key questions have also concerned very practical issues, such as how to steer, monitor and evaluate policy implementation from a gender perspective, and the implementation of specific equality policies, within which reside deeply theoretical and complex issues.

An interactive approach, like the one used in my research, is one way of embracing a feminist perspective in the research process; this can act as a “consciousness raising tool”, and can assist in a more democratic form of knowledge production (Gunnarsson 2005, 2006), as discussed.

The results in context: gender mainstreaming as part of (new modes of) governance

Public services have undergone large changes during recent years. Cutbacks and the fragmentation of public services into multiple providers, many located in the private sector, have changed the way in which public administration functions. Political tendencies have turned into an “arm’s length relationship” (Newman and Clarke 2009, p. 3). In terms of EU governance, legitimacy problems in relation to both citizens and governments have changed governance systems and transformed the mechanisms of EU policy-making (Jacquot 2010).

The context of gender mainstreaming and the work of public sector organisations cannot be understood without taking into account international developments, such as international human rights regimes, policies emanating from the

UN, transnational organising and the international economy (Kantola and Squires 2012). There is a need to deal with the complexity generated by multilevel governance by looking at the mobility of discourses and institutional changes beyond the state (Kantola and Squires 2012). This also makes visible the linkages between, and the mutually constitutive character of, local, national and supranational levels of organisation. One important aspect of this multi-level governance is the shift of responsibility from state to non-state actors. With it come new actors, agendas, loyalties, coalitions and risks but also possibilities (Kantola and Outhoorn eds. 2007, Kantola and Squires 2012).

Discussions about new emerging forms of governance, such as partnerships, networks, different forms of democratic practices, co-production and choice, have been widespread. They include discussions of the negative impact of privatisation and NPM-inspired control mechanisms (*ibid.*). Can gender mainstreaming be understood as part of this new trend?

According to Jaquot, gender mainstreaming is a typical example of new modes of governance (NMG) because it is a soft, non-binding and flexible instrument that differs from the traditional regulatory and economic measures that have previously been central to EU gender equality policy (Jacquot 2010, Hantrais 2008). Jaquot places gender mainstreaming in the domain of NMG as “governance by insertion”, meaning a transversal policy instrument aimed at managing multidimensional and complex issues, such as gender equality, through integration both horizontally and systematically at all stages of policy-making and of the governance system (Jaquot 2010, p. 119, see also Halpern *et al.* 2008). It complies with the quest to increase the efficiency of public policies by overcoming the functional segregation and compartmentalisation of the problems (Jacquot 2010) and it is part of a policy paradigm that emphasises coordination and “joined up” governance. Where does that leave gender mainstreaming as a potential strategy for gender equality? The results of my study show that gender mainstreaming may not be so easily classified as a soft policy instrument when the whole implementation process is taken into account. The implementation of gender mainstreaming may lead to a development whereby a gender perspective is inserted into “harder” types of policy instruments, such as public procurement or budget provisions. It can also mean that an initially non-binding commitment becomes stricter, with more emphasis on outputs than inputs, as in the case of the Education Department of Göteborg City.

Meanwhile, in Malmö City, the results of the case study indicated that the arguments in the discussions and underlying paradigms had changed from being more individual and idealistic towards the regulatory perspective. The functional understanding and analysis of gender mainstreaming as a policy instrument might not give the whole story either, since gender mainstreaming may transform existing models of gender equality. Jacquot comes to a similar conclusion in studies of how gender mainstreaming changes the content, extent and nature of EU gender equality policy itself (Jacquot 2010).

Everyday dilemmas of equality work in the public sector affects the public imagery of equality

According to Newman and Clarke (2009), the public services can act as a medium of “publicness”, i.e. the combination of things, ideas, issues, people, relationships, practices and sites that have been made public.

In the process of the making and re-making of the public, i.e. the formation of public imaginaries, collective identity and solidarity attachments, the public imaginary is being created, and furthermore:

It is in the everyday dilemmas of public service work that the meaning of concepts associated with the public sphere – openness, tolerance, equality and justice – are being remade and re-inscribed. (Newman and Clarke 2009, p. 4)

New forms, sites and practices of publicness have implications for public service. According to Newman and Clarke, public services have been a key site for the struggle over meanings around the alignment of equality and difference dilemmas. Public services have mediated “changing norms, values, translating them into new discourses, decision-making templates, job descriptions, training manuals, complaint procedures, customer service units and other technologies” (ibid., pp. 113). Issues such as equal opportunities, managing diversity, community empowerment and multi-cultural education, all associated with “contested compositions of the public”, have emerged from, rather than being imposed on, public service practice (ibid.). Following this argument, gender mainstreaming could be seen as part of the process of mediating publicness in public services. Public service professionals promote and translate ideas into practice, which in turn can become contested and displaced by other ideas (ibid., p. 115).

There is evidence that inequalities are deepening in Europe. These are affected by the current economic crises, corporate remuneration and state taxation policies, unemployment and cutbacks in public services, to name just a few aspects. The impact of neo-liberal ideas on society at large, and in particular on public sector organisations and the trend towards NPM, is all part of that process. However, the impact on equality work in the public sector is complex and contradictory and cannot be simply understood as “negative” or through black-and-white binary kinds of arguments, such as the “activism on the outside, and co-optation on the inside” discussion in the VINNOVA case study. The contemporary emphasis on individualism, decentralism, and entrepreneurship can, and is, used at times by equality workers to serve their own purposes. Also the blurring of the boundaries between the state and society, including the increasing involvement of non-state actors and citizens, can provide new arenas and new allies. Additionally, certain forms of identity politics, even though they can have negative consequences, may provide legitimacy for the “equality cause” in public politics. This may also open up new debates and strategies around complex issues where gender equality has been “stuck”, bringing along “new” concepts such as anti-categorical and intersectional perspectives that can change the way

gender (and other) inequalities are understood. It is a process of re-making and re-inscribing and a struggle over contested meanings (Newman and Clarke 2009).

Following the results of my study, it seems to be a kind of paradox that the increasing control mechanisms placed on public sector actors can actually provide new areas for resistance towards the current gendered order. Control demands are set up and made precise so they can be measured; this grants opportunities to discuss what constitutes the concrete problems of inequality in different areas and how to formulate strategies to address them. Control mechanisms can grant access to new areas for gender experts, making it possible to reveal conditions that have previously been hidden making them visible through the use of gender-based statistics and evaluations. Control also often leads to discussions of accountability and for demands that responsibility is being placed on someone in particular that action will be taken as a response to the goals set up which challenges old habits of non-implementation as a passive form of resistance. Control mechanisms also become questioned and resisted, and this can open up reformulations and re-visions of what public service is all about. The negative effects occur when control turns into a form of technicalisation, meaning that the procedures of control are uncritically being followed and goals are “ticked off” as accomplished, even though they have had no real impact on gender inequalities (see Wittbom 2009), or when goals are not questioned, or when they are removed because they cannot be measured (as in the second Göteborg case study).

Gender equality is an open and often contested concept. Public debate and the politicisation of gender equality are therefore crucial. The dilemmatic spaces of publicness open up this type of discussion. It is a medium for change.

In this thesis, gender mainstreaming has been described as an instrument for rationalising other policies and policy instruments, but it is interesting to think a little bit about what the purpose is of this rationalisation? Is it to make policies more effective in reaching core objectives or in their contribution to gender equality, or both? And is the argument that, in order to make the mainstream policy more effective, a gender perspective must be applied, as in the rational way of doing things (i.e. without gender being taken into account any descriptions of “reality” will not be complete)? And following this logic, with a gender perspective in the mainstream equation will gender equality then automatically follow? If this is so, then the underlying assumptions need to be brought into question. This line of argument fails to take into account either the dilemmas inherent in public policy and gender equality or the fact that implementation processes might not be at all rational. Success is not guaranteed if we can only find the right design/solutions/tools. This is a denial of the political character of gender equality politics, as argued by Verloo (2001). But rationalistic thinking is not a problem restricted to equality policies; in fact it might be an inherent problem of implementation theory and public policy in general that it is built on the belief in the possibility of establishing causal relationships, as in: when A is done, B will fol-

low. This does not however mean that it is meaningless to try to make such predictions, rather it means that any such assumptions should be made clear and become part of the discussions recognising the dilemmatic and political character of policy-making and policy implementation processes.

Limitations and research gaps

The process of conducting a thesis is long. I started in 2009 and finished in 2014. Would I have made the same choices today as I did at the beginning? Would I make the same analysis of the first case if it were conducted today as I did then? For the most part, I believe that I would have worked in a similar way. Perhaps I would have avoided some of the mistakes made by someone who is new to a job, such as spending a little too much time reading theories and previous studies that did not really have much to do with my particular research problem. And maybe I would have better understood the connections between my empirical interests and questions and the more theoretical ones. But then again, it has all been part of my own learning process and perhaps making mistakes is sometimes the best teacher. Also it has been a process of discovery and I did not really know when I started that I would develop an interactive approach using ideological dilemmas, or what theoretical concepts I would use in the analysis.

To be a bit more critical, I would say that one particular point in need of discussion could be the use of theoretical concepts from implementation and organisational theory that lack a gender perspective to explain the genderedness of implementation processes. Is it not a “catch 22” situation, as in “to find my glasses I need my glasses”? I do believe that much of the earlier theorising could be criticised for failing to take into account a gender perspective and would have benefited from gender lenses; nevertheless, it has also contributed to important theoretical developments that can be used to build on further (see also Freidenvall and Jansson eds.2011, where this argument is made in a convincing way).

I would also like to emphasise the need for studies that specifically address the issue of implementation within the larger field of feminist studies and would even go so far as to say that this is an important future area for feminist research. Feminist implementation studies need to take on board a critical perspective, to question implementation studies that lack a gender perspective when it is relevant. It needs to employ a critical perspective in the study of equality policies and implementation designs, both in theory-driven research and in more applied studies. The interactive approach could be used and developed to give voice to the subaltern, to inform and empower.

In my own study there are many issues and areas that I have not studied that are important in order to understand implementation processes better and in particular the implementation of equality policies. I think that more studies comparing the implementation processes of different types of equality policies would be interesting and would contribute to the understanding and development of equali-

ty policy processes. Here the use of the theoretical frameworks developed in my own study could be of further use.

A critique, or perhaps more a question, that has been raised in connection with the use of Matland's model concerns the possibilities of how to categorise policy fields in terms of, or along the lines of, the ambiguity-conflict matrix (Hill and Hupe 2009). This critique has to my knowledge not been developed further and it might be a possible and interesting question to explore. This is especially significant given the contributions made in gender studies concerning the two themes that I have called the vagueness or openness of the gender equality concept, and, secondly, the conflicts or resistance following the implementation process of equality policies. Would it be possible to develop a framework that could address these two themes in relation to gender equality strategies in order to develop a more differentiated understanding of the implementation process(es)?

It would also be worthwhile to compare the outcomes of different types of implementation designs for the same type of equality policy, including a discussion of the behavioural assumptions underlying the different policy instruments touched upon in my study. Studies of tacit knowledge and informal learning mechanisms, such as the "story telling" visible in one of my case studies, would be an interesting focus to develop in relation to change agency and learning but also in an instrumental way such as in how to understand the effects of equality initiatives. Studies that focus on the evaluation of equality policies and practical methods would be very useful, not least for equality practitioners.

I end this thesis much as I began, again expressing my profound belief that the study of the implementation of equality policies is a key issue for the future. It is my hope that I have been able to raise a few concerns that might contribute to these discussions.

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PAPER

I

Implementing gender policies through gender training

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Gender training is regarded as one of the more central features of gender mainstreaming (see e.g. Council of Europe 1998 and also the Swedish Government Official Report 2007:15). Gender knowledge is considered necessary for investigating and analysing existing policies and processes and for the integration of a gender perspective. Training for staff and managers affected by the “new” gender mainstreaming policy has also been regarded as essential. Gender knowledge is required in order to understand what and why something should be done and which skills are necessary in order to put the proposed measures in place. Without this knowledge and these skills the process will be in danger of coming to a halt. Knowledge is also considered to minimise the risk of resistance to gender equality objectives (Halford 1992). Major training efforts are therefore common in gender mainstreaming initiatives.

The Gender Mainstreaming Support Manual (Swedish Govt. Official Report 2007:15) contains a “ladder” model that shows how gender mainstreaming work could best be organised. The bottom rung of the ladder involves “fundamental understanding”. The description of the first step reads: “Before gender mainstreaming work begins, the entire organisation – from the management down – is offered training in gender equality and gender and also in what Swedish gender equality policy and the gender mainstreaming strategy entails” (Swedish Govt. Official Report 2007:15). According to the model, gender mainstreaming begins with large scale training in *gender equality policy, gender theory and gender mainstreaming strategy*.

In the Gender Mainstreaming Programme, training was highlighted as an important part of the change process and is an area that many municipalities and county councils have endorsed. Many gender mainstreaming projects

within the programme base their development strategies on building individual capacity (or competence) as the basis for the change process, rather than external control. How, then, should training be considered in relation to the aim of endorsing a sustainable change process in order to integrate a gender perspective? This is the subject under discussion in this chapter. The point of departure is a case study of a gender mainstreaming initiative in the City of Gothenburg. The project was run by the Department of Education with the aim of implementing gender mainstreaming in all the schools in the city. The strategy was to train and coach school principals to produce their own action plans for gender mainstreaming. The training initiative was called "Management Training in Gender". For the sake of simplicity, this is referred to as "Management Training" throughout the chapter. In the study of the Management Training, several questions were in focus, namely: What was understood as the main gender equality problems in the organisation? How were these problems linked to the training? and How did the project management and managers understand gender training in relation to gender mainstreaming? The results from the case study have formed the basis for the more general discussion in the chapter relating to: What kind of impact did the training have on the work with gender mainstreaming?

The Management Training consisted of two parts: a series of lectures and coaching sessions. The lecture series included basic knowledge about gender, gendered processes and power structures in society, gender equality in school and practical gender equality work. The Management Training consisted of one lecture per term during 2009-2010 and six sessions of coaching for each management group. The aim of the coaching sessions was to "convert knowledge into practice", which, according to the project application, meant that "the school management would decide how a gender perspective could be incorporated into the school's everyday educational activities".

The case study was carried out between 2009 and 2010. The results are based on interviews with the project management, departmental managers and school principals. Eight longer interviews were conducted with managers from the department and principals within the municipality. In addition, central documents in the project – such as the application, project description, consultancy report, final report and other documents – were examined, as was the project's web-blog. A local analysis seminar was held with participants (informants and project management) shortly after the

longer interviews were conducted. Two larger national analysis seminars were also arranged, with participants from the project and participants from other projects in the programme, in which the results of the case study were analysed. The project was not complete at the time of the case study, which meant that at the time when the longer interviews were conducted, the work to develop action plans was still in progress.

Before focusing on the analysis of the Management Training project the issue of gendertraining needs to be put into a larger context. Three concepts in relation to gender equality work – *comprehension*, *capability* and *willingness* – are introduced as a way of discussing training as a tool for change. The experiences from the Management Training project are also presented and discussed, as are the models that were used in the joint analysis seminars and the reflections made by the participants. The chapter concludes with reflections on training as a tool for sustainable gender mainstreaming work.

Gender equality as a professional field

In recent years the work with gender equality has developed into a professional field. Discussions about different strategies, methods and ways of working in and around the community of gender equality practitioners, can be regarded as a result of this professionalisation. Today Swedish universities run shorter and longer courses in practical gender equality work and it is also possible to train to be a gender equality specialist, for example through courses arranged by the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SALAR). The professionalisation of the work with gender equality can also be seen as part of a general trend that can be related to the spread of management theories in public service work (Squires 2007). In management-inspired rhetoric, the benefits of gender equality work for the general improvement of the work in the public sector are often emphasised. Gender equality is regarded as being beneficial for public services, e.g. by making them more efficient and effective. Today many organisations have gender equality targets and it is common for experts to be employed to ensure that these are reached. A survey conducted in 2003 showed that 78 per cent of the organisations surveyed were engaged in organised gender equality work (Swedish Govt. Official Report 2003:16).

At the same time as work with gender equality objectives has been prioritised, questions have also been raised with regard to how gender equality

work itself could be made more efficient and effective. In the following, some of the issues that have been discussed concerning the realisation of gender equality objectives are highlighted.

Comprehension, capability and willingness

Knowledge is important when planning gender equality work – knowledge about what is specific about gender equality issues and general knowledge about change processes, e.g. what is important when introducing new ways of working into an organisation. Other prerequisites, such as an understanding of the nature of the operation in which the work will be conducted, are also important. The impact of different stakeholders as well as various events in and around the organisation are also important for the change process.

Most of the issues that have been discussed in relation to how gender equality work is conducted, such as the important role of managers or the significance of a committed staff, have also been discussed in connection with other kinds of change processes, i.e. with other aims. Some issues can be said to be specifically related to the fact that the change process involves gender equality issues, while some are related to a more general change- and development problematic. Change is difficult to bring about, regardless of which policy area it concerns (Sveningsson and Sörgärde 2007). However, we know from prior research that some problems are particularly common in gender equality initiatives, such as gender equality objectives are seldom prioritised in an organisation, that there is often a lack of support from the management and a general lack of resources and that the work is largely driven by enthusiasts. A lack of understanding and awareness about gender equality issues is still a common problem. Furthermore, earlier studies have shown that gender equality as a concept is seldom defined – or is defined in different ways by different actors. Gender equality is also in itself a complex issue and it is often difficult to find one sole cause of gender discrepancies, which in turn puts greater demands on the change process. Unawareness about the way we all “do” gender in our everyday actions and how this results in gender equality, or the lack of it, is widespread (Andersson 2009). On the basis of this, it is easy to see why gender training is emphasised in the first step of the Gender Mainstreaming Ladder model mentioned earlier (Swedish Govt. Official Report 2007:15).

A general prerequisite for the implementation of public policies is sometimes summarised as the importance of staff having *capability*, i.e. having the competence, capacity and resources for the work, the *willingness* to realise the objectives and *comprehension*, i.e. knowledge about and an understanding of the content of what is to be achieved (cf. Sannerstedt 2001, Lundquist 1987). A fourth aspect that seems relevant in gender equality work is that there must also be an awareness of the fact that gender is continually “done” in organisations and how each and every one of us is part of this process (Martin 2006; Andersson 2009).

The argument here is that, similar to other implementation processes, sustainable gender mainstreaming processes require comprehension, capability and the willingness to implement gender mainstreaming as a strategy as well as an awareness of gender processes. At the same time, we know from prior research that these important prerequisites are often partly or completely missing, which creates problems in the implementation process. One question is therefore how can training initiatives help to create the necessary conditions? In other words, to what extent does training influence people so that they are better able to understand and want to implement gender equality objectives and how does it help them to become more aware of how they and others “do” gender? There are different perceptions of the roles that awareness raising and gender training play in the work for improved gender equality. In simple terms, there is a more positive and a more negative approach to the possibility of influencing gender equality with the aid of gender training. The positive approach emphasises an incremental (i.e. gradually increasing) perspective, where gender equality is seen as something that gradually emerges, and also emphasises the use of soft control measures, such as gender training. The other and more negative approach is based on a radical change perspective and stresses the need for strict control measures, such as laws and regulations. The latter model has been referred to as “the fast track model” and the former as “an incremental model” for gender equality (Dahlerup and Freidenvall 2005).

In order to understand the gender equality problems in the participating organisations in the Management Training project and the strategies that were applied to deal with them, the education department’s activities, the background, set up and implementation of the Management Training is outlined in more detail in the following section.

The Management Training project

Compulsory training for all school principals and managers in the municipality (City of Gothenburg) was decided on as part of a larger gender equality initiative entitled “A school for all”. The purpose of the training was that the managers would “be able to make assessments, analyses and decisions that contributed to increased gender equality”. The City Department of Education applied for and received funds for management training within the Programme for Gender Mainstreaming, which was compulsory for all managers. Other actors that were considered to be important, such as those working with quality management and planning also took part in the training. The training consisted of a series of lectures (one whole day and five half days) and six coaching sessions (three hours at a time). The lecture series highlighted different aspects of gender theory and gender equality policy. The training course followed the Gender Mainstreaming Ladder and its 8-step change management model (see Figure 8.1).

A “gender observation” method was also used as part of the coaching sessions. In this context, gender observation means making observations from a gender perspective and then analysing the significance in relation to school-related activities. A blog was created for the participants of the project, in which different examples of “gender observations” were presented.

The project’s overarching results were presented in a final report and included the work to change existing routines in relation to gender disaggregated statistics. Many new methods were also tested as a result of the project. In addition, a new system for mainstreaming a gender perspective into the budget process was presented by the department at the Programme for Gender Mainstreaming’s final conference in autumn 2010. As a result of the project, a “challenge” to other municipalities was formulated by the Department of Education: “The world’s most gender equal upper secondary school is in Gothenburg! It is part of our vision and our goal. Challenge us!”

However at the time the project began, the department’s gender equality work was sporadic. Some of the issues that the Department of Education had to deal with at the beginning of the project are discussed in the following section.

The Ladder – An overall view of all the parts that should be included in systematic and continuous gender mainstreaming work.

FIGURE 8.1 The Swedish Gender Mainstreaming Ladder (Swedish Govt. Official Report 2007:15).

FROM VAGUE GOALS TO COMPULSORY TRAINING

A project manager and a process manager, responsible for the coaching sessions, were employed to work with the Management Training project. Both had previous experience of working with gender equality issues in the municipality. The project manager had also been involved in HR-related work with equal opportunities within the department. According to several of the informants when the new project started, very little gender equality work had been done in the department. Gender equality was not prioritised in the organisation. It was driven by “enthusiasts” and gender equality tasks were assigned to those who showed interest in such issues rather than being a general priority.

According to the informants, the existing gender equality objectives were vague and the work was making slow progress. There was no clear understanding about what constituted a gender equality problem or how it might be solved, and there seemed to be little incentive to work with the issue. Gender equality work was not generally understood as being important, but was instead performed out of a sense of duty.

According to the informants, the Management Training project was seen as an opportunity to infuse new life into the work. Whereas in the past the efforts had focused on gender quality plans and personnel-orientated work (equal opportunities and positive action for the employees), the emphasis was now, through the project "A school for all", on the municipality's educational work and activities. Several of the informants emphasised that this new perspective made gender equality issues more interesting for the staff. Focusing on the actual work in the department, i.e. education, also seemed to reduce resistance to gender equality work compared to the previous, more personnel-oriented work. Fewer people protested and, as a result, more were able to see why gender equality issues were important.

The Department of Education's new director was appointed at more or less the same time as the new project started. His experience of developing gender equality work in another district in the municipality had been regarded as successful and was applauded by politicians and civil servants alike. According to the majority of the informants, the new emphasis on the main work of the department and the enthusiasm of the director were crucial for the development of gender equality work.

The significance of the Director of Education for the development confirms the importance of management supporting the issues. According to both the project manager and the process manager, an important key in the gender mainstreaming work was to create enthusiasm and engagement among the managers, and the Management Training project was understood to be an important part of this process. But this also meant that the managers had to understand and believe that gender equality issues were important to the work of the department.

A discussion that had previously been held between the project manager and the process manager related to how much they should plan and steer the gender mainstreaming work and how long they should wait for the managers to assume responsibility for it. It was considered that the probability of getting the managers to assume control would increase dramatically if the managers created their own action plans – although for this they needed to understand how. The change process strategy was regarded by the project manager and the process manager as "two-pronged": partly to acquire new knowledge and partly under the leadership of a gender equality expert to get the managers

to convert this knowledge into action plans. These action plans would then be followed up by the head of the department.

Apart from the lack of knowledge about gender and gender equality work in general, another obstacle to progress was that there seemed to be an overall lack of awareness about gender equality problems among the department's managers and staff. This lack of awareness was thought to contribute to a lack of engagement on the part of the management, which was also thought to negatively affect the staff's attitudes. One of the department's managers considered this to be the main obstacle:

It is not a group or a function that is the biggest gender equality problem. The biggest problem is that people – including myself – have so many deep seated ideas and if the management isn't interested – then nothing happens!
(*Department manager*)

This viewpoint was shared by the project staff. At the same time as it was important to give the managers the knowledge they needed, the project manager and the process manager realised that it was essential to get them to promote the subject in the organisation and take responsibility for the process. The reasoning was that getting the managers to initiate the work was vital in order to get other staff to recognise problematic gender discrepancies in the daily work. Working systematically with gender equality issues in the project meant a new approach for many managers and, in addition, it was the first time that management training had been made compulsory for all managers.

It's the first time that we've worked with this in this way; it has mainly been isolated measures before. For me it's the first time we've worked in more detail and that all the managers are involved. (*Department manager*)

For the department's managers the Management Training meant a personal learning process as well as developing the overall gender equality objectives for the department in tandem with the development of action plans for the city's schools.

A TRANSFER OF OWNERSHIP

For the reasons discussed above, getting the department's managers and administrators to formulate gender equality objectives was regarded as central by the project management in the initial project work. As indicated above, an earlier problem was that the work with gender equality had often been shaped and driven by enthusiasts. In order to ensure success, in the words of the project management the first step was to "transfer the ownership" of the development work from the enthusiasts to the managers. The existing vague objectives were not a good starting point for the development of action plans for the city's schools, but needed to be revised. This had also been highlighted by the organisational consultant that the department had engaged to assist in the work. That the management and not the gender equality experts should formulate the new objectives was regarded by the project management as something that would increase engagement also among the school principals and staff. The majority of the informants considered that the gender equality objectives needed to reflect the actual work and activities in the schools in order to be seen as relevant. One of the department's managers explained how important it was for the gender equality objectives to be connected to the core activities:

Gender mainstreaming is dependent on the management breaking down the objectives so that they become clear. Politicians and top management have to make these big decisions and street-level bureaucrats need to make sure that they reflect the reality. (*Department manager*)

Breaking down the gender equality objectives was experienced by many managers as difficult and the work in the coaching sessions was sometimes experienced as too theoretical and abstract.

In response to questions about what constituted a gender equality problem and what the relevant objectives for the gender mainstreaming work were, the informants often started out from their own personal experiences of the work, instead of from the national or municipal gender equality objectives. A common view was that it was the school staff that influenced the outcome of the education system the most. With regard to the treatment of students in the classroom, the majority of the informants considered gender-neutrality to be important. A common argument was that girls and boys should be treated

as equals and not on the basis of traditional gender roles. It was argued that a gender neutral interaction with the students must become so natural that it is taken for granted in the daily interactions. But at the same time, as the actions of the school staff were seen to be of great importance for gender equality, expecting all staff to become gender experts seemed unreasonable. As one manager explained:

We can't expect all the staff to be gender experts, although we can insist on equal methods. (*Department manager*)

The project manager also believed that all staff could not be expected to have the same knowledge about gender and gender equality, and instead argued for stricter external controls. She wanted a shift of focus from an emphasis on personal values and attitudes to practical guidelines and routines.

People should not need to decide whether they are feminists or not.
At work you should do as you are told. (*The project manager*)

Both the project manager and the participating school leaders and department staff emphasised the importance of improving knowledge, increasing awareness and incorporating gender equality into different routines and guidelines.

However, according to the informants, the Management Training had not convinced all the participants. At the time of the interviews the action plans were not complete and not all the principals were equally motivated. How would the department's managers then deal with the fact that so many of the municipality's school heads still, despite the compulsory Management Training, regarded gender mainstreaming work as "optional"? A lack of time and obligations to work with other development areas that were prioritised as more important were common objections in the interview responses, in addition to what had previously been pointed out as lack of interest and a general lack of knowledge and awareness.

A lack of interest and a lack of knowledge are the main obstacles. And as gender equality competes with everything else [...] adopting such a perspective is not always possible. (*Personnel manager*)

The role of the management was again emphasised with regard to highlighting and maintaining a focus on gender equality issues:

If the management is serious about this initiative it will take root, otherwise it will simply be a passing fancy. (*Department manager*)

The majority of the informants also stressed that if gender equality work was to be prioritised by the managers it had to be emphasised by the head of the department, e.g. in performance reviews or development dialogues. Many said that gender equality work had to be something that was monitored and evaluated.

The ideal is that you have very good objectives and that you are also prepared to follow them up. The task has to be made clear [...] You also have to measure. Measure, measure, measure! (*Department manager*)

Lack of time and the many different prioritisations were regarded as a risk in relation to the sustainability of the work with gender mainstreaming when the training period was over. A common view among the informants was that they would prioritise work that had deadlines and where there was some kind of central monitoring in place. With regard to sustainability, the project approach in the development work was seen as a risk factor, because focus, time and resources disappeared when the project came to an end. Several managers argued that sustainability in the work required more than simply establishing new understanding and awareness of gender issues. Instead, several informants talked about the necessity of active control and follow up, and argued that if this was not in place there was a danger that the results would not be sustainable.

There is a great danger that when this project is over it'll all be forgotten and that something else will be prioritised. (*School principal*)

This, together with the awareness and willingness of all concerned, was emphasised as crucial for integrating a gender perspective into the future work with education in the municipality.

Two perspectives on knowledge and change

How, then, should we understand the relation between people's knowledge, attitudes and values and organisational change? In the case study relating to the Management Training project the problem was discussed with the participants on the basis of two theoretical perspectives or models. The first starts out from the necessity of people having the relevant knowledge so that they can change their actions, here referred to as the *classical learning model*. The second model is mainly oriented towards changing people's behaviour and is based on individuals acquiring the knowledge their actions require. This perspective is known as *dissonance theory*.

FIGURE 8.2 A classical learning model (Vedung 1991).

In essence, the classic learning model is based on an approach in which the aim is to influence individuals' knowledge, attitudes and values; something that is expected to lead to reflection, which in turn gives rise to the individual changing his or her actions. This approach has been criticised for being too individualistic, rationalistic and unrealistic. Even if individuals know what is right and proper, they do not always act on the basis of the knowledge they possess. Relations like power, interest, resources and other factors, which are more to do with organisational and institutional relations, are largely neglected in this perspective. If acquiring new knowledge and insights does not lead to a change of behaviour, then what is the alternative?

One alternative is to apply a strategy that builds on external control. The idea here is that individuals' actions will be influenced, not their insights as to why they should behave in a certain way. The starting point for this

FIGURE 8.3 Dissonance theory (Vedung 1991).

perspective is that action comes first and insight follows on from this (see Figure 8.2). The individual will avoid dissonance (contradictions) and instead strive towards beliefs that agree with the reason for the action. According to dissonance theory, reflection arises as a result of a changed action. With regard to gender equality, this can mean that the use of a steering document, e.g. relating to the allocation of resources, can indicate the relevance of the activity from a gender equality perspective. When managers and staff begin to work in new ways this gradually affects knowledge, attitudes and values. Another example is the normative effect of laws, i.e. that people's attitudes and values can be changed with the aid of legislation that states what is right and wrong. New knowledge is acquired when it is "needed" in order to change actions. However, there is a flipside and a limit to this strategy, namely that it invites resistance and that it initially makes it difficult for those concerned to do something that they perhaps do not understand the value of.

The two models are also based on different assumptions about the possibility of finding "the right solution" to a problem. The theoretical learning model starts out from a rational view of knowledge. By "getting to the bottom" of a problem and exploring all the options, the right decision about "the best" solution can be made. The dissonance model starts out from an opposite view, namely that there are no clear-cut and "correct" solutions to problems and that it is common to regard the "right" solution as being in line with current actions. When we begin to act in new ways, we often change our view of what is "right".

Awareness, comprehension, capability or willingness?

One conclusion from the interviews that were conducted is that the gender mainstreaming work in the Department of Education developed from being more oriented towards increasing knowledge and awareness to having more emphasis on control and follow-up as the strategy for implementation. This took place in a parallel process that included learning about gender issues and a coaching session to tie the new knowledge to the daily activities and the actions of management. The results can be seen as an indication that the implementation of gender equality policies should be based on a strategy that includes both control and training in order to be effective. Simply offering managers and staff new knowledge and skills in how to work with

gender mainstreaming was not sufficient. Even so, such knowledge was at the same time essential for the capacity to work with gender issues, producing the necessary awareness about gender processes and creating understanding about why gender equality issues are important. In the Management Training project the strategy was to “transfer ownership” from the gender equality experts to the department’s managers and the school principals. Without the department’s managers’ active engagement, the training of the principals and the preparation of action plans would probably not have been quite so effective.

Another conclusion that can be drawn from the case study is that the content of the training must be clearly linked to the main activities and work of the organisation. Gender theory and national gender equality objectives were perceived as abstract and out of place in the daily situation. It was only when theories and gender equality objectives were linked to the core activities, e.g. to the work with quality assurance, that they were understood as important. A significant part of the work in the Management Training was to link theory and objectives to the everyday work.

The question of the balance between learning from within and controlling from without was discussed at the analysis seminars together with the participants in the project. One conclusion was that both approaches were important but not sufficient on their own. Both strategies have their advantages and disadvantages. A one-sided focus on the learning model is regarded as problematic, because it is easy for responsibility to be placed solely on individual members of staff. The organisation has to support the changes if there is to be any real result. The danger is also that change strategies based on the learning theory can lead to an understanding of gender inequality as something that people “bring into” the organisation and that insufficient attention is paid to the organisation’s routines and structures (Abrahamsson 2000). Furthermore, it is important to problematise all suppositions that people automatically change their behaviour when they acquire new knowledge.

Another discussion that took place at the analysis seminars concerned the ideal that the staff should have acquired knowledge about gender and gender equality so that they could act at an “unconsciously conscious” level, i.e. that they could practise equality without being aware of doing it. The question is how, if ever, you can reach that level of (un)awareness and whether

you can manage to “stay” there. Some research points to awareness being a long-term process and is something that you do not acquire in one single training session (Andersson 2009). “Unconscious consciousness” was seen by the participants as something that you had to actively work to create and uphold, and that the raising of awareness required a combination of both approaches. On the other hand, simply focusing on external control in line with dissonance theory was also regarded as problematic, in that gender equality work is very clearly about learning. You need new knowledge in order to achieve depth in the work and in order to become more aware of how gender is done by oneself and others in the organisation (Andersson 2009).

Yet another important matter that was discussed was how the concepts of reflection and knowledge relate to each other. There is often a tendency to place them on a par in discussions. Some seminar participants argued that in short projects little time was allowed for reflection, which rendered deeper learning, insights and understanding more difficult. The two different models or approaches for how gender equality could best be achieved were also discussed departing from the incremental and the fast track models.

There was no clear-cut preference among the participants for a gradual and self-generating development (incremental) or the more radical approach (fast track) in the gender equality work. Rather, a conclusion from the seminars was that it is not simply a matter of choosing between a radical or incremental approach when working with gender equality. Different organisations, situations and people or positions may need their own special combination of “tools”, such as training or action-oriented control mechanisms in the implementation of gender equality policies.

It might be possible to apply the two perspectives at the same time, in an alternating or parallel process. This would mean that gender training would increase the capacity for staff to achieve the objectives and that the demand for concrete actions would result in people being more motivated to acquire new knowledge that in turn would lead to new insights. A common experience among the participants was that a decisive factor in promoting processes of individual learning and organisational development is that all levels of management are actively involved in a project. Another conclusion was that this was even more important in gender equality work.

The City of Gothenburg began with a more theoretical learning approach but gradually changed tack to emphasise stricter controls in parallel with the

Management Training and responses from the department's managers. One example of how this was reflected was in how the overarching gender equality objectives in the department were formulated and the methods that were developed for analysis and follow-up in connection with the development work. For instance, gender equality aspects were emphasised in the budget planning as an important tool for the fulfilment of gender equality objectives. Previous research has indicated that, in general, political areas are often developed from softer forms of control (such as different capacity-building approaches) into stricter control mechanisms (such as regulations and the use of sanctions). Correspondingly, there is a tendency for "newer" political areas, which are largely characterised by uncertainties about objectives and strategies, to use learning strategies for development. Later, when experience has increased, stricter forms of control can be applied (Schneider and Ingram 1990).

Education or training is usually regarded as a soft control instrument. Gender mainstreaming is a relatively new policy area in the Department of Education, which may explain the changeover from softer to stricter controls over the course of time. When the uncertainty about what should be done was reduced, it became easier to demand results. The Management Training project played an important role in this.

The importance of gender training

Much of the learning and the reflection that was organised in the development work studied, e.g. through training courses, was individual in character. This was due to a number of different factors, such as a traditional view of training in which knowledge transfer is central. Organising training courses for individuals is not so difficult. However, if learning is to be converted into action, individual learning has to be linked to the organisation. Also, the management, routines, other members of staff and the culture all have to support individual learning if it is to result in changed behaviour and have an actual impact on the work. You could say that individual learning and organisational learning have to complement each other. These two processes must go "hand in hand" if sustainable development is to be the end result. The Management Training project was a way of including and educating the management. Training is compulsory in the municipality's

Department of Education. There is also a clear control and an active departmental management.

An interesting question that was raised during the project was whether gender equality as a policy area was generally characterised by a culture that emphasised softer controls, such as training and reflection, in contrast to other policy areas where stricter controls are stressed. It might also be the case that there is a progress from softer to stricter controls as the understanding of what needs to be done increases.

Another question that emerged was whether it is possible to eradicate inequalities that are clearly associated with power relations by training measures. This can be linked to the discussion about the *incremental model* and the *fast track* model towards gender equality. According to the *fast track* model, gender equality problems cannot be addressed by information activities alone because they are intertwined with a structure of power discrepancies. Gender equality should, according to this perspective, result in a shift in the power relations between the sexes, e.g. with regard to economic and political power. With this approach, change must be enforced by strong political actions.

According to the *incremental model*, on the other hand, the focus on power relations is not as accentuated. Instead, creating equal conditions for women and men is regarded as more important. In terms of the division of power from a gender perspective, it is not clear what the outcome should be. It mainly depends on individual choice. According to the incremental approach, change will be gradual and facilitated by changed values and attitudes. The results of the case study indicate that it is difficult to understand the two perspectives as a simple choice of strategy. They must instead be balanced.

Although training is a popular tool, previous research shows that it does not always influence people's behaviour (van der Doelen 2005). For example, it is difficult to reach all employees with training activities and there is a tendency to primarily reach those who are already knowledgeable about and interested in a subject. In addition, some research shows that people tend to absorb information that supports their current understandings and values. New knowledge does not therefore automatically change people's attitudes and insights (van der Doelen 2005). There is also a danger that existing "knowledge gaps" will widen as a result of education. Those who already "can" and "want to" will learn more, whereas those who cannot or do not want to absorb the new knowledge in a way that challenges their existing

views will either decide not to take part in the training courses or interpret the new information in a way that only supports their current understanding.

At the same time, information and training activities are important tools when it comes to change. Without understanding about what is to be done, why it is important and how it can be done, achieving the desired outcome in gender equality work is difficult. The lack of awareness about how gender is done in an organisation is also a problem. In order to bring about change that is long-lasting and deep-seated, long-term and purposeful work that contributes to gender awareness is necessary. Acceptance and legitimacy are also important in the introduction of new objectives, and comprehension increases the prerequisites for this. Gender mainstreaming strategies cannot solely be based on strict controls, because this would lead to resistance and de-coupling. The result would be that the necessary critical scrutiny of one's own work and activities would be missed out.

An important conclusion from the case study is that if training is to be effective it must be connected to organisational learning and supported by steering mechanisms and organisational capacity building. Apart from the need for initiatives that aim to improve knowledge, it is also important to create conditions that generate new knowledge when this is lacking. It is difficult to apply strict controls to an area where causes, effects and conceivable solutions are still largely unknown. This requires a knowledge-based exploration where creativity and new thinking are encouraged, and where staff develop their learning in their own specific fields. More research is also needed into how practical gender equality work can be developed through organisational learning methodologies.

One of the starting points for the case study has been to view the different strategies or perspectives as a genuine dilemma. In other words, there is no simple or best solution that fits all circumstances or contexts. Although a dilemma cannot be solved, it can be dealt with more or less successfully and with insight on the basis of the prerequisites that each situation provides. In one case, learning processes might be the most suitable for implementing gender equality policies, while external control could be a more successful strategy in a different situation. An assumption that has been made and discussed is that sustainable development work presupposes an ability to combine strategies in a reflected way. It is interesting in this context to think about the possibilities for development-oriented work and how the choice

of tools used in the practical work will affect the results. In short, process-oriented training, where knowledge and actions go hand in hand, where new insights are mainstreamed into the daily work and where the results become part of future development work, places much greater demands on the organisation as a whole.

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PAPER

II

Gender equality and public services

ANNE-CHARLOTT CALLERSTIG

In recent years it has become more common to talk about gender equality in public organisations as part of the ambition to modernise the public sector in general. The purpose of the integration of a gender perspective is believed to create a better service for citizens. Also, in the Programme for Gender Mainstreaming, an outspoken ambition has been to “guarantee the quality of publicly financed activities” in order to ensure that the work “meets the conditions of both sexes and that high quality and good results are achieved for women, men, girls and boys” (application for funds to support the gender mainstreaming of local authority activities, SALAR and government decision IJ2007/3277/JÅM).

The ability to analyse and consider women’s and men’s conditions from a gender perspective in municipalities and county councils is also considered to be important for the realisation of the national policy for gender equality. Gender mainstreaming is thus both about creating a better service for citizens and achieving gender equality policy goals. This duality is common in gender mainstreaming work and has been regarded as a problem by some and an advantage by others. The problem is that the focus on achieving gender equality is in danger of being lost when the business or instrumental perspective is taken into account (Meyerson and Kolb 2000). At the same time, it is an advantage that a gender perspective is being integrated in *all* areas of work and not merely treated as a separate issue. Those who are responsible for carrying out the work are ordinary members of staff and not gender experts.

Public employees who have close contact with citizens are often referred to as street-level bureaucrats. Street-level bureaucrats are able to influence the results of different political objectives in their work because they make

decisions that affect the type of activity to be carried out (Lipsky 1980). Street-level bureaucrats take decisions by balancing different perspectives in order to meet both the needs of the client and ensure that policies are being properly implemented. When they integrate a gender perspective into their work, the street-level bureaucrats have to merge and prioritise several different perspectives, such as general policy goals, gender equality objectives and the client perspective. It is street-level bureaucrats who interpret what impact the different perspectives should have on decisions made and, ultimately, the outcome of the gender mainstreaming implementation process. But what determines the interpretations made and what are the consequences in terms of gender mainstreaming? In this chapter, the everyday work of street-level bureaucrats is in focus and the possibilities for sustainable gender mainstreaming, i.e. work that leads to a long-term process of change in an organisation, are reflected on. The chapter is based on experiences from work with gender mainstreaming in the City of Malmö. In this particular case, a project on gender mainstreaming in the social services in the Rosengård area of Malmö has been studied.

The project was called “Gender equality – a new ambition” and was organised in relation to two “emphases”. The first was a focus on the internal processes that aimed to improve the skills of employees and conduct analyses of the existing activities, while the second was an external emphasis oriented towards policy development, where one important part was to come to a joint decision about how a gender equality perspective should be applied in decisions regarding social services’ clients. The staff experienced the latter emphasis as difficult.

Rosengård was characterised by a high proportion of immigrants, overcrowded housing and high unemployment rates. One of the starting points for the work was to understand how a gender perspective and gender equality objectives could be practised in relation to the complex reality encountered by the social services on a daily basis. In the project, the idea was to design a way of working with the gender equality objectives in relation to problems like addiction, abuse, poverty and crowded living conditions. The social services also wanted to determine whether other aspects, such as ethnicity and sexuality, had any significance for gender equality work in the interactions with clients. All this was to take place within the general framework of social services policy. A number of different measures were to be implemented in

order to help the individual social worker to incorporate a gender equality perspective into her or his ordinary and everyday interactions with the clients. An important point of departure for the project was to investigate how staff reasoned when making decisions that could have relevance from a gender equality perspective.

The questions that are discussed in the chapter, based on the experiences of the project, are:

- On what basis did the social services staff interpret, account for and prioritise the different perspectives involved in gender mainstreaming work?
- What might be consequences of the different perceptions and approaches be for the work with gender equality?

The case study was carried out between 2009 and 2010 and is based on thirteen interviews with project managers, social services staff and the steering group. Key documents have been analysed, e.g. applications, project descriptions, so-called vignette descriptions and the project's final report. This material also formed the basis for local and national analysis seminars, where the results were jointly analysed and discussed with the participants. The theoretical starting points are described in the introductory section of the chapter. Several different perspectives are problematised, especially gender equality objectives in relation to the general policies of the social services and an intersectional perspective in relation to public services. The work of street-level bureaucrats is also discussed. The chapter ends with reflections on the role of public employees and the possibilities and pitfalls of gender mainstreaming in public sector organisations.

Gender mainstreaming as a way of improving public services

The gender mainstreaming strategy has been regarded by some as part of a larger development, with the introduction of methods and models in the public sector based on a logic derived from corporate management, sometimes referred to as New Public Management (NPM). This has led to a stronger emphasis on efficiency, quality and a "customer focus" in public

service activities. The strategy of gender mainstreaming has sometimes been seen as a de-politicising of gender equality work, where the goal becomes instrumental rather than a means to an end. On the other hand, others have argued that compared to earlier gender equality approaches, the gender mainstreaming strategy is better able to contribute to lasting change due to its focus on mainstream policies and activities. The emphasis on management, efficiency and measurability has in this case been seen as a starting point for change, since it provides an opportunity to include gender concerns in existing policy fields (Swan and Fox 2010).

A number of different issues are important in this discussion, e.g. whether gender equality should be seen as an end in itself or as a means to other ends, i.e. instrumental. A fear that has been expressed is whether gender mainstreaming, due to its focus on ordinary operating procedures, is able to achieve the gender equality objectives. Questions have been asked as to whether mainstream policy objectives take precedence over gender equality objectives and whether the focus on individuals (clients) means that the structural framework is lost. Another fear relates to whether the gender mainstreaming strategy is able to deal with the interweaving of gender-based inequalities with other discriminatory processes, e.g. based on ethnicity, sexuality, class etc. (Verloo 2006). The results of the implementation of gender equality policies thus depend on how the strategy is interpreted – in which the street-level bureaucrat has an important role.

The interweaving of gender equality and mainstream policy objectives as well as different administrative or bureaucratic ideals also influences the street-level bureaucrat's decisions in terms of what is regarded as important in public services and why. In relation to administrative ideals, it is common to refer to the values from a legal-, efficiency- and democracy perspective – all of which need be taken into account and balanced. This balancing act between different values is a significant part of the work of employees in a politically controlled organisation (Lundqvist 1998). Gender equality is important from both a legal and efficiency aspect, as well as from a democratic perspective. But the ideals sometimes conflict with each other, which can make it difficult to provide for all three perspectives simultaneously. For example, working towards a more equal gender representation on the labour market can conflict with the goal to ensure that an unemployed person find work as quickly as possible.

Many of the projects in the Programme for Gender Mainstreaming have had to address the problem of balancing the different perspectives involved in gender equality work – and this was also the case in the project “Gender equality – a new ambition”. In practice, it is often the street-level bureaucrats who have to balance between the different objectives when making decisions about services for the individual client. In the following section, some of the factors that affect this balancing process are discussed.

The workaday world of the street-level bureaucrat

Public service work is not only determined by prioritisations made by politicians. The results are also affected by how policies are implemented. Prior research has examined what affects the outcome of a certain policy, e.g. to understand why it is possible to reach different results from similar objectives (Jacobsen 1997). This is not simply a technical matter, but is also a question of the “human factor”. Political policies are implemented by public service employees who, due to their professional standing, are able to influence the end result (Hill 2003, Jacobsen 1997; Lipsky 1980). In the following case it is the social services staff that put the politicians’ decisions into practice.

Prior research has shown that street-level bureaucrats have a considerable leverage on the kind of results that policies have. It has been shown that street-level bureaucrats, such as social workers, teachers and police officers, often have to assess and balance the interests of the public and those of the client. This applies to their function as experts, in relation to the needs of the clients and in their capacities as bureaucrats, or the executors of political decisions. Another special characteristic is that they often work with limited resources and have to deal with complex and difficult-to-solve social issues (Lipsky 1980). Moreover, the political objectives that the street-level bureaucrats work with are often vague, which means that they can be interpreted in a number of different ways. It is also important that public employees who meet the public face-to-face are able to interpret and make their own decisions, because politicians cannot have detailed knowledge about clients’ situations in the same way as street-level bureaucrats (Lipsky 1980). The nature of the services provided also affects how the different interests are taken into account. For example, within the social services the strong emphasis on the needs of the individual has been regarded as important for how gender equality objectives

are dealt with in practice (see the report *Jämställd socialtjänst? Könsperspektiv på socialtjänsten* 2004) [Gender equal social services? A gender perspective on the social services.]. In addition to the policy objectives and the client's situation, the street-level bureaucrat's own opinions, perceptions, experience, values, social and economic position, political interests and so on can affect the work. The personal approach to gender and gender equality is also significant in this respect (Halford 1992).

FEMOCRATS

In research, public employees who integrate gender equality objectives into their (mainstream) work have also been referred to as femocrats. In earlier Nordic research, the concept of gender equality bureaucrat, or femocrat, has been used to describe people who implement gender equality objectives in the public sector. Femocrats have been regarded as important for the social development that led to Sweden becoming one of the world's most gender equal countries (Borchorst 1999). But the femocrat's work has also been problematised. Research has shown that gender equality work in the public sector is sometimes undertaken as a matter of duty or can even have undesired effects (Magnusson, Rönnblom and Silius 2008). The position of public employees who work with gender equality objectives has often been regarded as problematic. Gender equality is often a marginalised issue in an organisation and femocrats have to struggle with the existing gender structures that they are trying to change (Pincus and van der Ros 1999:202ff.).

The femocrat also has another problem, which is that a bureaucrat is supposed to be a neutral and non-political expert, i.e. on the one hand they have to implement the political decisions made and at the same time "stretch" or even oppose the prevailing rules and regulations in order to meet the gender equality objectives. The problem has also been shown to increase at certain times, e.g. when staff lacking theoretical knowledge and political engagement have gradually become more gender aware and sometimes also adopted feminist values (ibid. p. 204f.). In the Programme for Gender Mainstreaming, gender mainstreaming has been implemented by ordinary employees of the different participatory organisations whose main professional duties lie in areas other than gender equality. These employees

therefore have a dual loyalty, both towards upholding the ideals and objectives of their organisations as well as changing them towards greater gender equality (Meyerson 2001).

Femocrats are characterised by ambivalence and are often torn between the desire to be part of the organisation and the need to resist what they regard as unfair conditions. But they are people who work within, and not against, the system. Femocrats resemble what has been referred to in research as *tempered radicals* (Meyerson 2001). Tempered radicals are employees who acknowledge unfair or unjust practices or conditions in their organisations and want to change them, but who at the same time remain loyal to and support the overall objectives of the organisation. The strategies that tempered radicals choose are often characterised by minor and sequential change, e.g. carefully deciding which route to take, seeing opportunities when they arise, turning disadvantages to advantages, building alliances and creating learning opportunities (ibid.).

THE STREET-LEVEL BUREAUCRAT AND GENDER EQUALITY OBJECTIVES

How, then, should gender equality objectives be viewed in the light of other policy goals? Gender mainstreaming and gender equality are broad concepts, and since the idea is that all sectors should incorporate a gender equality perspective in their work, there is no clear-cut and all-embracing objective that can be applied in all areas. What constitutes a specific gender equality problem has to be determined by considering the particular policy objectives and tasks in relation to overarching gender equality objectives (that can be specific to a policy field or even at a more overarching level, such as municipal or national gender equality objectives). One problem that has been discussed is how interpretations of gender equality come about and above all what the consequences might be (Bacchi 1999). Gender equality can be interpreted in many different ways, which means that the results of gender equality ventures can be quite different even within the same area of work. In the project “Gender equality – a new ambition”, the question of different interpretations and understandings of gender equality within the framework of the social services is a central issue, since this affects the decisions that are made by the social workers.

An intersectional perspective

An important discussion in gender equality work in recent years has been whether, and how, other equality strategies should be taken into consideration (Walby 2005). A starting point in the project “Gender equality – a new ambition” has been to understand gender mainstreaming on the basis of how different social categories interact, especially with regard to ideas about gender and ethnicity. In the research, this has been referred to as an intersectional perspective, here understood as “on the basis of theories of power to understand how different social categories interact, affect and depend on each other” (Eriksson-Zetterqvist and Styhre 2007, p. 180).

According to prior intersectional research, it is necessary to plan and implement different equality policies with a perspective that includes awareness of the complexity of how different forms of stratification processes are co-dependent (Crenshaw 1997). A problem with studies that lack an intersectional perspective is that they risk creating a misleading picture of what the problem is for all individuals in a certain “category”, e.g. for all women in an organisation, and that this easily becomes normative (Holvino 2010). A person is always much more than simply a “woman” or a “man”, and other perspectives, such as class, age, sexual orientation, ethnicity etc., need to be included in the analysis.

At the same time, some research has indicated that an intersectional perspective is difficult to apply in practice. It can, for example, be difficult to maintain a focus on the gender perspective (Lombardo and Verloo 2009). Two approaches can be discerned in the work of applying an intersectional perspective in public service activities: one focusing on making the process more democratic and equal, by e.g. consulting and including representatives of different groups in the planning process, and the other focusing on the outcomes of planning, e.g. by allowing experts to carry out impact analyses on the different proposals (Booth 2006).

As we have seen above, a number of different factors can affect the results of gender equality work. In order to have a better grasp of the street-level bureaucrat’s situation and adjustments, the following section describes how gender mainstreaming was implemented in practice in the social services.

The road towards a joint perspective on gender equality

At the time of the case study, two components of the work within the gender mainstreaming project in the social services remained: an exchange and a discussion with the public (i.e. citizen meeting), both of which are regarded as important in projects of this kind, and following the citizen meeting, the establishment of joint guidelines. However, the discussions that gave rise to the project had already begun in 2006. At this time, two specific phenomena had been observed by the management of the social services prior to the gender mainstreaming project. One observation was that there was generally little interest in discussing gender equality issues from a workplace or equal opportunities perspective in ordinary staff meetings where it was included as a recurring point on the agenda. This had rarely stimulated interest in the topic or led to any real results in terms of the work.

The second observation made by the management group was that there was in fact a lot of interest in discussing gender equality issues from a client perspective, such as how to act in different situations. One example given was expecting to talk to a woman in a family but being met by a man who claimed to be her spokesperson. Other matters that were discussed included how the need for a more unified approach in the interactions with clients could be satisfied, and who or what determined how different standpoints should be made. One conclusion was that what seemed straightforward in theory, or from the point of view of overarching gender equality- and mainstreaming objectives, was not quite so easy in practice. Based on the discussions, an attempt was made to raise the issue of gender equality from a new angle. A new approach was tested, in which discussions were initiated based on real and everyday situations in the encounters with clients. In contrast to previous conversations, the attempt resulted in lively discussions and, furthermore, a number of difficult issues surfaced relating to the staff's own approaches and opinions. As a result, it was decided to do a survey to find out how the staff actually reacted in different situations. Some examples of the questions asked were: Do you relate in the same way to a young man who has been evicted and is homeless and seeking help as you would a young woman in the same situation? Or, how would you act if you realised that a girl's brothers had as much or more power to decide things for her as her parents? The results showed that there were many different

perceptions of the situations encountered by social workers and this was emphasised in the following project application:

There are a large number of different perceptions about which type of gender equality is desirable, which balances and imbalances that can be tolerated and what the different personal boundaries are for different patriarchal values and behaviour.

The major differences in how the staff responded to the survey served as a wake-up call for the management on the necessity to initiate collective work on gender equality issues among the social workers. It was obvious that the staff needed support in how to apply a gender equality perspective in their daily work. Working with personal beliefs and values was also regarded as central to any future work on gender mainstreaming.

"GENDER EQUALITY – A NEW AMBITION"

An application to SALAR was submitted and the social services were subsequently given a grant to enable them to gender mainstream their activities. The project organisation comprised of a project manager and a steering group consisting of the executive board, of which the director of the Individual and Family Care Department (IoF) and the three unit managers were members. A researcher from a nearby university was also associated with the work as a "reflector", which meant being a sounding board for the steering group and a coach for the project manager. There was also a reference group, with representatives from the staff groups in all the three units. All members of staff – about 70 people – were included in the project and participation in the activities was compulsory.

The project followed the two previously mentioned "emphases", namely analysing the work in the department from a gender equality perspective and developing joint guidelines for the future work. The survey that was carried out prior to the application to SALAR was further processed by the project manager and formed the basis for the project work. Some of the work in the project consisted of so-called vignettes, which can be described as mini case descriptions based on real situations that staff members could use for reflection and discussion. In the vignettes, gender- and ethnicity markers could

be substituted and any variations in the results be discussed. Seven vignettes were distributed: one concerning a homeless parent of undisclosed gender and two relating to young people. The vignettes dealing with youngsters came in four variations – two girls and two boys, two with Swedish sounding names and two with names that suggested a different ethnic origin. Another two vignettes concerned the view of sexuality with regard to girls versus boys. The reflections from the discussions were then collated and distributed among the staff.

The staff groups also studied a selection of real cases and how these were described in the journal notes. Special gender equality groups were formed with members of the staff with the aim of studying and discussing the work. A series of external lectures was also held. Joint seminars and experience-exchanges were also initiated with the social services in two other municipalities with similar activities and problems. In addition to the work in the social services a training course for the district's politicians was held, and efforts to develop gender-disaggregated statistics were also made.

THE EMERGENCE OF NEW PERSPECTIVES

The results of the first survey led to extensive work with personal beliefs and attitudes and the ways in which norms were reflected in the everyday work. Several examples of how conceptions of gender and gender equality affect the work of the social services were observed during the project's life span. The project's final report contains a typical example of what the analyses showed: "Interventions have largely been carried out as activities (sport etc.) for the boys and counselling sessions for the girls. These have been made on an implicit assumption of boys as energetic and girls as empathetic." Another example concerns inquiries in which parental responsibility is in focus and where the results of the project led to a new perspective of the work: "Instead of thinking of mothers or fathers we try to think of parenthood and identify parental ability and sometimes a lack of parental ability regardless of the sex of the parents."

Intersectional perspectives were also highlighted in the project work. An example of this, indicated in the interview responses, is that efforts by the social services to stop domestic violence are based on certain assumed characteristics of this type of abuse that are not always correct. An example

given by the social workers was honour-related violence. Several people may be involved in such situations, although the traditional image of domestic violence is that one person is the perpetrator, usually the woman's partner. Another example was the lack of protected housing for men who have been subjected to honour-related violence. Traditional interventions are based on the assumption that it is women who need to be protected. Clients involved in these two examples are in danger of not receiving the appropriate help when social services work is planned on the basis of other "typical situations". It also underlines the importance of conducting intersectional analyses.

THE PROSPECTS FOR GENDER MAINSTREAMING

How, then, have the interpretations, adjustments and prioritisations between different perspectives been made in the social services? A clear result that emerges from the interviews is that perceptions about social work limit what can and cannot be done as a social worker. One basic premise is that all responses by the social services either have to stem from a concrete problem in relation to predetermined guidelines or from a problem raised by the clients themselves. It cannot just be a problem that is based on what the social worker understands as being a problem. A social services manager explained how certain issues are regarded as private and beyond the reach of the social worker if they are not highlighted as a problem by the client:

There is a private zone that no-one pays any attention to. I can express my opinion to a friend, but as a civil servant I can't get involved in anything if it hasn't been flagged up as a problem. (*Manager IoF*)

A similar perspective raised in the interviews is that there is a clear distinction between the responsibilities of the social services and the individual's own decisions. When issues are regarded as personal choice it is possible to point to alternatives, e.g. suggest a training course, although you cannot force a person to make the changes:

We can provide people with tools but we can't fix the problem for them.
(*Manager IoF*)

Gender equality work is also restricted in that an intervention only reaches individuals. According to several of the informants, gender equality problems require more in order to bring about change in society. Structures need to be changed – which is outside the social services' remit. This was highlighted in the first interview with the management group:

Everybody knows what we're actually talking about. But it is not our job to change patriarchal structures; we simply try to find individual solutions.

In contrast, some of the informants saw the opportunities as being significantly greater, especially with regard to the possibility of influencing individual people's situations. One argument was that there are always different ways of doing what has to be done. The majority of the informants were also positive to citizen meetings as a way of working with gender equality. However, many were sceptical of creating meetings with the public through the existing groups and interest associations in the local community, which they believed to represent a too limited section of the population and where far too few women were represented. However, as the social workers were largely positive, the reasons as to why the informants wanted citizen meetings varied. It was sometimes considered that citizens could contribute with new perspectives as to how concrete problems encountered by the social services might be solved.

For example, when we met contact persons who are fantastic, who know what the problem entails. They help us to align our own perspectives.
(*Welfare officer*)

Learning more about the clients was also considered necessary by some of the informants, e.g. in order to acquire a better understanding of what new arrivals from other cultures thought about gender equality. Several of the informants also believed that citizen meetings were important from a collaborative perspective and would create legitimacy for the gender equality work. Following the same line of argument, it was highlighted that a citizen meeting is a good opportunity to communicate what the social services is all about, e.g. which rules have to be followed.

Similar to the discussion about citizen meetings, the informants' arguments differed with regard to the project's ambition of developing joint

guidelines. Opinions varied from seeing it as a way of developing a clear and homogenous approach, to seeing the difficulties of predetermined approaches in complex and situationalised issues. Some regarded it as an instrument for the social workers, while others mainly saw it as principally a way of being transparent and justifying decisions in relation to the citizens.

SOCIAL WORKERS AS STREET-LEVEL BUREAUCRATS

In the social services it was clear that the work itself and the perspectives of how the work should be conducted had great importance when balancing between gender equality objectives and the objectives of the social services. It is possible to use prior research on street-level bureaucrats as an aid to understanding this process. Many of the findings pointed to a specific street-level bureaucracy problem relating to the duties of the social services. One example was that many of the informants described the difficult problems of the work and, in addition, its almost infinite needs. One social worker described the exposure and the heavy responsibility of the work as:

We are the last frontier. (*Social worker*)

The informants' discussions about the vague political directives and the sometimes conflicting objectives also support previous research results relating to the street-level bureaucrat's workaday world. The following is a quotation from an application underlining the reality of street-level public services: "Policies are often expressed in general terms and directions [...] When it comes to concrete actions school staff, social workers, healthcare workers, the police and anyone else working with these issues are expected to develop their own approaches." In this respect the overarching gender equality objectives were not regarded as being particularly helpful for gender equality work.

The municipality's gender equality policy objectives? What happens in reality is something very different – you ignore the goals. They are very vague and are not much help at the everyday level. (*Manager IoF*)

Prior research has shown that street-level bureaucrats have to develop their own approaches, but that the prerequisites – limited time and a lack of re-

sources – make the work difficult to manage (Lipsky 1980). The respondents also confirmed this image of the work situation and its impact on equality objectives:

Interest wanes because there is already so much to do with everything else. The problems are always there; we simply need time and space to deal with them. (*Manager IoF*)

It is clear from the interview responses that the individual perspective, i.e. what is best for the client, is at the centre of much of the decision-making. This sometimes makes it difficult to focus on the gender equality objectives, which are partly dependent on collaboration between the different public services and partly based on generalisations rather than specific situations. When political goals besides gender equality have to be considered, e.g. anti-discrimination on the basis of ethnicity or religious affinity, it becomes even more difficult to balance between the different gender equality- and equality objectives, individual considerations and rules and regulations of the policy area.

In previous research, street-level bureaucrats have been regarded as highly important; they are the last link in a political chain and will determine the end results. They interpret, prioritise and create routines for how the work will be organised. They have the discretion to design and shape the activities that will become the outcome of policies (Lipsky 1980, Jacobsen 1997). But what are the obligations of the street-level bureaucrat and how might the citizen's best interest be met? In order to answer the chapter's questions about what influences the decisions that street-level bureaucrats make and how they affect gender mainstreaming work, it is important to reflect on how street-level bureaucrats reason about their own mission. Should they steer or serve the public? Is it about representing society's perspective in relation to different interests, arbitrating between different interests, or perhaps serving as a democratic arena in which different perspectives can be encountered? How should the individual's interests be balanced against other goals? And what is most important – the gender equality objectives or the social services objectives? In the next section this will be discussed more in detail and an analysis model presented.

THE REALIST, THE RATIONALIST AND THE IDEALIST PERSPECTIVE

Based on the interview responses, three main approaches to the direction and prioritisation of gender equality work were identified. The perspectives correspond to three different classical “civil servant ideals” (cf. Schubert 1957: Box 1992). The ideals are based on different views of the role of public administration in relation to society (the public interest) and the political system. The first approach, here referred to as the *realist* perspective, is based on a conflict of social interests. According to the realist perspective, there is no clear-cut and commonly shared “public interest”. Society consists of a number of different competing interests and perspectives depending on the possibilities for power and influence. Based on the realist perspective, public employees in the best of circumstances either function as catalysts, where different interests are appraised and balanced, or as mediators between different interests. Public employees thus resolve the conflict of interests that politicians and legislators have been unable to deal with and that result in vague and ambivalent directives. Public employees have to be able to deal with the different interests and minimise the frustrations of different groups. An important task is to take into consideration and mediate between the different interests, although finding a solution that suits everyone is not always possible. Many examples of this perspective emerged in the interview responses. A social services manager explained that one important aspect of the job was to listen to and try to understand the various arguments of different actors:

People who meet us should feel able to say what they want to say and that we have understood them. (*Manager IoF*)

The second perspective, which is here called the *rationalist* perspective, is based on a more rational view of public administration. Public employees are seen as neutral experts who put political objectives into effect by means of the existing legislation. The objectives are clear-cut and the decision-making is mainly a techno-rational process that is concerned with making correct decisions. In principle, two public servants who are given the same prerequisites and information should make the same decision. Standing up for utopian visions is not regarded as part of the job. The work is about making as “correct” and objective assessments as possible on the basis of the given

situation. Many examples of the rationalist perspective were given during the interviews. One was the problem of allowing personal values to influence the decisions of a social worker.

You have to do a good job; you can't simply be good and a missionary.
The legal rights of the individual are very important. (*Social worker*)

The third and final perspective, here referred to as the *idealist* perspective, is based on a platonic view of public administration, i.e. the idea that certain ideals and values of what is right and wrong exist in relation to the interests of the public. According to this perspective, legislation is always seen as incomplete and decisions must instead be guided by basic ethical and democratic values. The legislation should not be too controlling, but staff should instead be seen as the guardians and interpreters of democracy. Discussing fundamental values and ideals is therefore an important part of the work of a public servant. Several examples of this perspective emerged during the interviews. As an example, one IoF manager described the importance of discussing staff positions and talking about which values cannot be compromised, regardless of the cultural background of clients:

... we have to make a joint decision, e.g. as to whether [students] should be allowed to skip music class, physical education and so on. (*Manager IoF*)

Based on the interview responses to the above-named perspectives, three approaches to gender equality work crystallised: "The realist perspective", "The rationalist perspective" and "The idealist perspective".

TABLE 4.1 Different perspectives of gender equality work.

	"The realist perspective"	"The rationalist perspective"	"The idealist perspective"
Gender equality in relation to the services provided.	Different opinions, values and interests are always present. There is no single best solution. Most important is a good solution for the client given the situation. Public servants "mediate" and compromise between the different interests.	Rules and regulations form the basis of the assessment of needs and measures. Decisions should be based on legislation. Public servants should be neutral implementers.	Guidelines are based on fundamental democratic principles. Some ideals cannot be compromised. Public servants are also citizens and issues of equality concern all people.
Principles	Compromise and mediation	Transparency, neutrality, rule of law and equal treatment.	Democracy, gender equality and human rights.
Joint guidelines for gender equality	Difficult to realise. Decisions always depend on the specific situation.	Importance of clear-cut rules. Citizens should know what to expect.	The legislation is always incomplete. Fundamental values and starting points should be live conversations.
Public meetings on gender equality	Important to learn about different approaches and perspectives.	Important to communicate, rules and routines.	Important to meet and discuss fundamental human values.

When the analysis model was discussed with the social services, the conclusion was that none of the perspectives could be regarded as "the correct one". Also, they could not easily be transferred to a singular specific character or position in the workplace. As an example, a gender equality advocate does not always argue from an idealistic perspective. The point is rather that all the perspectives contain important principles. But all the perspectives can also have negative consequences if they are rigidly applied. For example, the realist perspective risks reinforcing existing gender relations and gender stereotypes. Rationalists also risk being too conventional in their work, which seldom leads to any real change if rules and routines are based on non-problematised norms. The idealist can appear as naive and encounter resistance. She or he may prioritise ideals rather than individuals, decisions can be arbitrary and it might be difficult to come up with concrete solutions to

immediate problems. The above perspectives were evident in the interviews, but could not be identified in a clear-cut way in any single person. Instead, a combination of arguments was common, where the emphasis was sometimes on one perspective more than another, or where the informant struggled with the problem of balancing or prioritising between the different perspectives.

During discussions about the model with the social workers in Rosengård, it was suggested that when it came to gender equality issues, the general preference had shifted from a realist perspective towards a more rationalist perspective. One person said that, in the discussions about citizens meetings, the starting point had initially been that of the idealist perspective, but that this approach had been revised. Instead, it was common to believe that the goal was not to arrive at a common understanding that included the citizens, but was rather to initiate a dialogue and listen to comments about the guidelines that the social services had used in its development work. The discussions that took place in the social services also raised questions about what happened when different people, e.g. the manager and a subordinate, adopted different perspectives in gender equality work. According to the participants this was not uncommon, and could obstruct the work and create conflict.

Prioritising between different perspectives

In the gender mainstreaming project studied, the social workers had to interpret and balance the social services objectives, the gender equality objectives and the individual perspective in their daily encounters with the clients, both when making decisions and creating routines for the work. The case study clearly shows that street-level bureaucrats have a substantial discretion and are in a position to make judgements that affect the outcome of gender equality work (cf. Lipsky 1980, Sannerstedt 2001). The interviews showed that there were different perceptions of what a gender equality perspective was in relation to the proposed intervention. It was clear that there were many different ideas about what constituted a gender equality problem and how it should be solved (cf. Bacchi 1999). For instance, there were different perceptions about which gender equality objectives should form the basis of the work. Gender equality policy goals at municipal and national level were regarded by many as not particularly relevant to the work of the social services, with the exception of objectives concerning violence against women.

It was rather the individual's situation, and not gender equality at societal level, that was at the heart of the interviews that were conducted.

It also became clear that there were different opinions about the extent to which social workers should take different understandings of gender equality due to religious ideas and cultural practices into account. At the local analysis seminar it was discussed how a tolerance perspective (Deveaux 2006) might make the scope of the discussion too narrow. This is because what is regarded as a problematic cultural practice or custom from a gender equality point of view is often not simply a "problem of tolerance" between what society can or cannot accept. On the contrary, customs and practices that are seen as problematical from a gender equality perspective have often been challenged and debated by those concerned. It is therefore important to understand practices in their specific contexts, e.g. by asking who is for and who is against and discerning the power relations between them (*ibid.*).

How the street-level bureaucrat relates to intersectional matters is important. However, the central question now seems to relate to how the boundaries for gender equality are conceived in relation to the work of the social services, rather than how gender equality should be understood. Should one be a realist and compromise between the different interests, should one strictly follow the rules that have been drawn up, or be an idealist and focus on the main values? The perspectives also affect the way in which the gender equality objectives are interpreted, as discussed above. The interviews conducted within the social services also demonstrated that there were different perceptions about the reason for developing joint guidelines and about the role of citizens in the process. Different arguments were put forward based on the realist, rationalist and idealist perspectives. Different aspects of the gender mainstreaming work were emphasised as important. On the one hand it was essential to create a more equitable process, i.e. to include and consult the clients more, and on the other to create more equitable results, or in other words to be more of an expert and better at analysing and assessing the potential outcomes in terms of gender equality.

What, then, is specific for the street-level bureaucrats who, in addition to the work-related perspective and the citizen-oriented perspective also have to deal with gender equality objectives in relation to their ordinary tasks? One important aspect is the degree to which gender equality is regarded as an end in itself, or as a means to other ends (instrumental), and how street-level

bureaucrats relate to this. Another result of the case study that should also be problematised concerns the balance between more introspective work, with a focus on gendered processes in one's own organisation and the need to understand the results of the work at a more aggregated level. It is easy to lose the structural perspective when working with a small and sometimes quite homogeneous section of the population. Problematising and relating one's own work to the "deep structures" of the organisation is also necessary (Rao and Kelleher 2003).

In the interviews it was often stated that the national and municipal gender equality objectives did not have any direct relevance to the work, except e.g. with regard to issues of violence and the legal ban on discrimination of clients in relation to social work. Gender equality objectives and social services objectives were often regarded as two separate things. Analysing how one's own work creates and recreates unequal structures in society was regarded as important, although as this was only done to a limited extent in the project, it is work that still needs to be done.

Previous studies with a gender perspective on the social services have also highlighted the tendency to focus on an individual perspective and the need to conduct structural analyses (The National Board of Health and Welfare 2004). Also in this case study, the client perspective appears as decisive. A sole focus on an individual's rights and opportunities is problematic and raises questions about the transformative possibilities of gender equality work (Squires 2007).

In the work with the case study, a starting point was concrete everyday problems experienced in the work. Different "solutions" and the premises on which they were based were highlighted and discussed. The different perspectives that surfaced and stood out as central in the gender mainstreaming of the social services are examples of dilemmas in the work with gender equality in public organisations. The results show how complex the implementation of gender mainstreaming is in practice. They also support previous research, which has emphasised the need for more analyses in order to understand how different gender equality initiatives, such as gender equality or gender mainstreaming policies, often obscure or strengthen other types of power relations (cf. Crenshaw 1997; Verloo 2006). The results also point to the need for more research into the practices of gender equality work, and especially the outcome of the work. Gender equality as a means to an end or as instru-

mental is really not the main issue. Neither are the epithets that are chosen for the work. It is ultimately always about the small, daily adjustments, balances and decisions made by individuals. We create gender equality through our everyday actions.

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PAPER

III

THE CONTRADICTORY WORK WITH GENDER MAINSTREAMING

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gender mainstreaming, ideological dilemmas, interactive research, gender equality, public organisations, organisational change

Summary

This article discusses how the actors involved in integrating a gender perspective into mainstream organisational processes have to deal with many difficult-to-solve questions or dilemmas in their everyday work. The strategies used to implement gender mainstreaming rest on various and often contradictory understandings of gender, gender equality and change strategies. The article draws on two case studies of public organisations working with gender mainstreaming where qualitative interviews and reflection and analysis and reflection seminars were conducted with actors involved in the project. The main aim of the article is to discuss an interactive research approach as a way of reflecting upon the various understandings and underlying assumptions upon which different change strategies are based. Theoretically the paper uses Michael Billig's concept of ideological dilemmas as well as theories on gender equality, organisational change and interactive research. A central argument is that contradictions can be problematic if they are ignored but fruitful if used as a starting point for discussions about how future change strategies can be formed. Julia Nentwich's notion of "playing around" is discussed as a way of reflecting upon and developing strategies based on the specific dilemmas found in the cases studies. Different phases in the interactive approach are described and discussed: the problem orientation phase, the examination phase and the analysis and reflection phase.

Gender mainstreaming encapsulates many of the tensions and dilemmas in feminist theory and practice over the last decade and provides a new focus for debates on how to move them on (Walby 2005: 321).

Gender mainstreaming is both a theoretical concept and a contemporary policy approach. Sylvia Walby describes how gender mainstreaming summarises productive tensions in discussions on feminist theory and practice. This is because many theoretical discussions with practical implications dwell within the gender mainstreaming strategy. There are tensions between sameness and difference, gender equality goals and organisational goals, experts and democracy, and gender equality and other forms of equalities. These tensions are important for the type of change that we want to see in practice and thus how the work for gender equality should be designed. Gender mainstreaming as a political strategy for achieving gender equality objectives was launched in the mid-1990s as a result of work for women's rights within the UN. The strategy has spread widely both internationally and nationally. All public services in Sweden today are obliged to integrate a gender perspective, in all areas of their activities. Gender mainstreaming has evolved over a period of time, characterised by rhetoric in public administration and management in which concepts such as efficiency, evidence, measurability and evaluation have increasingly gained support. The strategy is often put forward as a way to make public services more effective and modern. The Swedish government has in recent years helped to intensify work on gender mainstreaming in a number of initiatives. In a two-year research project, we have studied a large publicly funded programme on gender mainstreaming in Swedish municipalities and local governments called *Hållbar Jämställdhet* [Sustainable equality]. In our work studying this programme it has become clear that practical work with gender mainstreaming activities is complex and contradictory, in terms of both content and implementation. In several ways the tensions Walby describes above have been emerging.

The purpose of this paper is to discuss an interactive research approach to examine and reflect upon work with gender mainstreaming based on discussions with gender mainstreamers. By the term "gender mainstreamers" we mean individuals employed in public organisations who are involved in working to implement gender mainstreaming strategy. They could be project leaders for a gender mainstreaming project, but may also be employees who do not work specifically with gender equality as their main tasks but who are involved in integrating a gender perspective into the ordinary tasks of the organisation. The political ob-

jectives that should guide gender mainstreaming, i.e. gender equality objectives, are often vague and complex. This leads to initial discussions of what the problem to be solved is (what gender inequality is) and what the solution should be (what gender equality is). These discussions occur when gender equality policy objectives need to be realised in practice and translated into an organisational setting. We believe that, in order to gain a better understanding of the results, it is important to study gender mainstreamers' reasoning about the issues and problems they face.

Carol Bacchi and Joan Eveline describe how gender equality is being "done" in a continuous process during practical work (Eveline and Bacchi 2005). Gender equality objectives thus obtain a precise content in the wake of implementation. The gender mainstreamer has to deal with issues of *how* a gender equality perspective should be understood in relation to a specific area. He or she must – consciously or unconsciously – relate to different change strategies. The choice of change strategy is circumscribed by the prevailing possibilities for action. This includes whether it is possible to discuss power relations and equality issues in the organisation, whether there is support from management and middle management and whether there are sufficient resources and active and committed employees. It is not unusual for a number of different, and sometimes conflicting, approaches and strategies to exist within an organisation in terms of perspectives on gender and change (Nentwich 2006, Hearn 2000, Squires 2007) and regarding what strategies of change should be applied (Dahlerup and Freidenvall 2005). Previous research shows that people working with gender equality often use different perspectives and change strategies simultaneously (Nentwich 2006, Walby 2005, Booth and Bennett 2002). Different perspectives and strategies are likely to influence the outcome even if few studies have been conducted specifically to assess the application of different strategies and methods, or combinations of them (Timmers *et al.* 2010).

One way to understand this complexity in terms of perspectives and strategies is to analyse gender mainstreaming in terms of dilemmas. In this paper we describe how we worked with dilemmas using an interactive research approach. The interactive approach was a point of departure where collaborative learning and development in the organisation was central. Our understanding of learning and organisational change is based on the notion of developmental learning (Ellström *et al.* 2008) in relation to gender mainstreaming. We believe that learning is an important part of the development of gender mainstreaming, and that collaboration between researchers and practitioners can contribute to increased knowledge about this field. By studying the contradictions at work when gender mainstreaming is implemented in terms of ideological dilemmas, we have been able to highlight different approaches to gender mainstreaming and link them to theories of gender and organisational change. In this paper we start with a description of the notion of ideological dilemmas and previous research related to this concept. We continue by giving empirical examples from two different pub-

lic services in order to discuss some of the dilemmas gender mainstreamers experience and how we have used these dilemmas as the basis for reflection on change strategies.

Dilemmas within gender mainstreaming, a conceptual review

In our study of gender mainstreamers' discussions about change strategies we have been inspired by previous studies that problematise differences and contradictions in gender equality using the concept of ideological dilemmas (Kelan 2010, Nentwich 2006, Benschop *et al.* 2001). We agree with these scholars that dilemmas can be a useful way to examine the tensions and contradictions that arise around gender equality in an organisation. Using Michael Billig's concept of the ideological dilemma, we examine how gender mainstreamers create meaning around change strategies (Billig *et al.* 1988). Research about change strategies is an important part of a larger field of research on organisational change (Alvesson and Svenningsson 2007). When talking about change strategies we are referring to the ways in which gender mainstreamers believe gender equality objectives can be achieved, including an interpretation of how gender is understood in a specific context (Lombardo, Meier and Verloo 2009). A fruitful way to explore strategies for change is to study these as ideological dilemmas. The term derives from discourse theory (Billig *et al.* 1988, Wetherell and Potter 1988). A starting point is that knowledge viewed as "common sense" is composed of many contradictory elements that people use to understand themselves and their environment. Dilemmas are ideological in that they provide structures for argumentation and in speech by maintaining, legitimising or challenging power in social relations (Billig *et al.* 1988). People use different forms of interpretive repertoires for making sense in a specific context, and these repertoires are often conflicting. According to Billig *et al.*, modern liberal society has led to a number of dilemmas, such as democracy versus authority, equality versus expertise and individualism versus man as a social being.

Dilemmas not only operate on a more comprehensive ideological level, in systems based on political and philosophical ideas, but they are also important for everyday life and thinking in lived values and practices. Our everyday conversations with each other often contain parts of dilemma character, which Billig *et al.* illustrates with common sayings, where contradictions are often the basis for the intended lesson. An ideological dilemma can have both an individual and a more social, structural cause. An example of an ideological dilemma in daily activities is teachers' comprehension of a teaching situation where they not only strive to achieve a democratic, more equal classroom environment, but also exert authority and have power over what is the "right" form of knowledge and way to express oneself. A general dilemma in relation to gender equality can be the question of sameness and difference, for example, the belief that all, regardless of

gender, should have equal opportunities for a good education, at the same time as there are differences in experiences, abilities and needs that must be taken into account. In everyday situations, dilemmas are often used in such a way that one particular approach to understanding a situation takes precedence over another, which may cause consequences in terms of what kind of actions or solutions are encouraged. The nature of a dilemma, however, makes it a type of problem that is impossible to “solve” in reality. Since the argument in favour of one position also involves arguments against another position, the identification of the dilemma is seen as more fruitful than trying to solve it by arguing for a specific understanding. We believe that dilemmas in gender equality work can be understood as different kinds of choices and conflicts of interests where there are no simple answers as to how to proceed (Nilholm 2005). A problem usually has a solution, while it is not possible to solve dilemmas, and they must instead be managed in development work.

Claes Nilholm emphasises that it may be important to make a distinction between what the participants in a study experience as a dilemma and dilemmas seen from an analytical perspective (Nilholm 2009). Sometimes, but not always, these dilemmas coincide, so that both researchers and practitioners experience the same dilemma. Michael Billig *et al.*'s research focuses on dilemmas that do not stem specifically from a gender equality perspective. However, there are gender and organisational researchers who use the concept to aid in understanding various aspects of gender equality work. Julia Nentwich discusses the implications that ideological dilemmas may have in gender equality projects (Nentwich 2006). The dilemma Nentwich particularly highlights is the sameness versus difference dilemma in feminist theory. Sameness is an attempt to reduce inequalities between women and men by formulating policy efforts aimed at equal treatment. A difference perspective attempts rather to highlight differences in relation to gender and formulate political policies that take differences between women and men into account. Nentwich studies how understandings of equal opportunities are constructed in everyday conversations among individuals who have a formal assignment to work with gender equality and how they use complex and often contradictory ways of understanding gender equality. In her study, she asks gender equality officers about their daily work, and what they see as current problems in the work with equal opportunities. She also asks these officers about their personal visions for the future and how they view change, what changes they believe are required in a company or an organisation, and what steps they believe are needed to get closer to their personal vision of equality. Nentwich finds that her conversations with the equality officers reflect discursive patterns on the sameness and difference dilemma in feminist theory. She shows that gender equality officers argue for sameness when they talk about visions for the future and difference when they talk about what gender equality is today or what the current problems are. Nentwich sees this as an example of an ideological dilemma in everyday conversation about gender equality (Nentwich 2006).

Yvonne Benschop, Lilian Halsema and Petra Schreurs (2001) have also used the concept of ideological dilemmas to highlight contradictions around gender inequality in organisations. Benschop et al. ask in an empirical study how we might understand the approaches that employees in the banking sector and the police use to cope with and understand gender inequality in the workplace. The presence of gender inequality is described as an ideological dilemma because several different positions co-exist in the arguments made by the interviewees. Employees in the two sectors make use of what Benschop et al. describe as liberal and individualised perspectives to explain inequality, and a combination of actor-based and structural explanations. In addition, the employees use a post-structuralist understanding of gender inequality where pluralism and differences are highlighted in order to explain it. One conclusion drawn by the authors is that the application of the concept of ideological dilemmas can provide a better understanding of the complex ways in which people deal with inequalities within an organisation. Elisabeth Kelan also uses the concept of ideological dilemma to study inequality in an organisation. Kelan explores how employees understand and describe gender discrimination in the workplace while at the same time arguing that the workplace is gender neutral.

Like Kelan, Nentwich and Benschop et al., we use the concept of ideological dilemmas to increase our understanding of contradictions and complexity in gender equality work. In our study, we focus on dilemmas expressed through the change strategies applied by gender mainstreamers. We start with a series of difficult-to-solve questions that we identify as key development issues in work with gender mainstreaming (Lindholm 2011). These questions often revolve around different ways to act in a certain situation and where the gender mainstreamers were looking for, and argued for, different solutions by referring to personal experience, political directives, legislation and sometimes to research in the field. We will now proceed to describe how we have used an interactive approach in our study of ideological dilemmas in gender mainstreaming efforts.

An interactive approach emerges

Interactive research has developed within the field of action research. In interactive research, the creation of a joint learning process between researchers and practitioners is a central feature (Svensson, Ellström and Brulin 2007). The task to develop or change an organisation is in contrast to traditional action research, which is seen mainly as the practitioners' responsibility. The main purpose of interactive research is to generate new knowledge and to contribute to theory development. Critical reflection and analysis is also considered to contribute to the development of practical work, particularly by creating conditions for long-term development and learning processes. Interactive research, like action research, is not linked to a particular theory or method but rather represents a

perspective or an approach to research (Svensson *et al.* 2007). What is important is the perception of practitioners as being interested in, capable of and able to contribute to creating a deeper understanding of what is being studied. To create a mutual relationship based on trust and transparency is considered an important condition for the results. This also means openly discussing various conflicts of interest and power relations between practitioners and researchers. Researchers must be able to critically examine the material but also allow themselves as researchers to be questioned. In comparison to previous studies on gender equality and ideological dilemmas, through the interactive research approach we have given the practitioners a more central and active role in our study; they have participated in the research process from problem definition to analysis of the results, which will be described below.

This article is based on two case studies of gender mainstreaming in two public organisations, a rescue service and a social service. The empirical data was collected within the Sustainable Gender Equality Programme, which the projects were part of, co-administered by SALAR, the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions, in 2009–2010. In total we interviewed approximately twenty employees. The interviewees consisted both of persons specifically engaged to lead the gender mainstreaming projects, and of employees who were supposed to integrate a gender perspective into their ordinary work. The professions represented in the interviews are: firefighters, social workers, administrative staff, managers and personnel managers. Those interviewed in the fire service were employed in two different local rescue services. The interviewees in the social services were employed within the social services Individual and Family Unit (IoF). The interviews were semi-structured (Kvale 1997). We wanted to get an idea of what the interviewees perceived as central when working with gender mainstreaming, what they saw as inequality problems within their organisation and their thoughts about change towards gender equality. The interviews each lasted approximately one hour. All the interviews were recorded, transcribed, completely or partly, and analysed.

We also conducted analysis and reflection seminars where we presented results from the interviews to interviewees and other participants. One purpose of the seminars was to discuss whether the participants agreed with the results and to document these discussions and integrate them into the analysis. Anne Öhman and Agneta Halvarsson (2009) write about analysis seminars as a method of interactive research and a way to organise a joint knowledge and learning process involving both researchers and practitioners. Analysis seminars are thus a recognised method within the interactive research tradition. Starting from the dilemmas focused upon in our study, we have given the analysis seminars a slightly different meaning as they have also come to include reflections on future work. Using examples from the two case studies, the approach is further divided into three main phases: a problem orientation phase, an exploratory phase and an analysis and reflection phase. Our work within the different phases has been

overlapping and the process iterative, which means that the work of the three phases has to some extent occurred in parallel. As an example: new empirical results could emerge during the analysis and reflection phase, which in turn affected the problem orientation phase. We will now describe these three phases in detail.

The problem orientation phase

The problem orientation phase was when we formulated and identified problems in the work with gender mainstreaming within each organisation together with the gender mainstreamers, who mainly consisted of project leaders and participants in the projects but also other employees who worked with gender mainstreaming. Joint learning throughout the process, from problem definition to analysis of the results, is, as mentioned earlier, an important aspect of an interactive research approach (Svensson *et al.* 2007). It is crucial to find a *common question* around which the researchers and practitioners can design their learning in the research project. The common question will guide the continuing research and should ideally be able to contribute to scientific knowledge and theory development as well as assisting in the development of the practical work. During the problem orientation phase we wanted to identify a problem that the projects were struggling with in each case study. We therefore carried out initial interviews in which we sought to find questions that seemed fundamental from both the interviewees' point of view and through our own understanding of gender equality work. These problems, and the ways in which they were represented, contained different ideological dilemmas. Through the interviews it became clear what the gender mainstreamers found difficult in the work of changing their organisations and in the different strategies to do so.

In the rescue service one dilemma, which is a common question in organisational change studies, was whether change is best accomplished by individuals (actors) or by creating new organisational conditions (structures). More specifically, the change strategy was focusing on how it was possible to create participation and conditions for learning about gender equality at various levels within the organisation. How could the equality project in the rescue service move from individual learning on gender equality to changing the routines and practices of the organisation, when facing resistance? The interviews showed that gender equality was defined as a question of increasing the representation of women as firefighters. In the rescue service a dilemma about sameness and difference in relation to the issue of increasing the proportion of women in the organisation was brought forward. In the interviews, different measures designed to create equal opportunities for men and women to be recruited as firefighters were seen as central. At the same time, a difference perspective was present in the arguments, based on beliefs that men and women have different biological attributes for working as firefighters. In the social services, the dilemma was expressed in a similar manner as in the rescue service, as a conflict between individual and

structural perspectives, but here in the social workers' daily encounters with their clients, common among street-level bureaucrats. More precisely, the problem concerned how social workers should interpret, balance and prioritise between different perspectives in gender mainstreaming efforts. We examined how the social workers were reasoning in decision-making, which could have relevance from a gender perspective, and the implications that different perspectives could have. How did the social workers' own perceptions about gender equality affect their decision-making and could the interests of the clients and gender equality goals be combined? The results from the initial interviews were later discussed with the project leader of each organisation and we decided together on the question that should be the focus of the interviews with gender mainstreamers during the exploratory phase. Together with the project manager, and sometimes an additional person, we decided who should be interviewed and we also discussed what topics would guide the interviews.

The exploratory phase

During the exploratory phase, a deepened understanding of the common problem formulation and the dilemmas emerged. The dilemma in the rescue service was about how the organisation could move from individuals learning about gender and equality issues to establishing common procedures and guidelines in order to develop work in the organisation. Practically, the dilemma turned into a question of whether the rescue service should continue with training on gender and discrimination issues for their staff. From this perspective, training was seen as necessary in order to raise awareness among individual employees, and a precondition for individual learning and changed behaviour. A different perspective was instead to work more towards changing structural conditions for gender equality in the organisation. The alternative to training was that the rescue service should work with positive action in the recruitment of firefighters, which meant that they could recruit applicants of the underrepresented sex if they had the right qualifications. The question of how gender equality initiatives can activate different forms of resistance in the rescue service was brought up. Previous research has shown that emergency services organisations generally have difficulty in implementing organisational changes, which can be explained by strong hierarchies and a lack of participation, communication and trust between different levels of the organisation (Dekker 2008).

In the rescue service, a major issue was how to deal with the problem of resistance from some employees and managers, and how it would be possible to create motivation to work with gender equality issues and create a common attitude among management and employees. To expose and examine underlying assumptions about resistance, the interviews showed that resistance could be understood as men's resistance to the increased representation of women and ethnic minorities etc. within the organisation, as well as resistance to changing the over-

all conditions at work and towards prevailing hierarchical management structures.

In the social services, the problem for gender mainstreaming efforts came to revolve around how the work itself would be designed, and what direction it should have. The starting point was the social workers' encounters with their clients and the general objectives of the social services. One aim of the project was to develop guidelines on how a gender perspective could be considered in the day-to-day work of the social services. A central question was how the clients' interests could be handled in relation to gender equality issues. Interwoven with this was the sameness and difference dilemma, which was visible in the underlying assumptions about how to design actions for women versus men and in discussions on whether measures and actions should be the same or different for women and men. One question that was discussed in the social services was whether traditional and existing gender patterns were (re)created when different levels of resources were spent on women and men. Were differences concerning the actions taken a sign of inequality or an adjustment to the different conditions experienced by men and women, and what consequences might that have for gender equality? Based on the interviews, we identified three main approaches to gender equality work in the social services, which were discussed in an analysis seminar. These approaches were positioned in relation to three administrative ideals emanating from different conceptions of society and the public, civil servants and the role of public administration (Schubert 1957).

The first approach, called *the realistic perspective*, is based on the view that there is no common or shared interest within society but instead a variety of interests deriving from various individuals and groups. From this perspective there is no unambiguous or clear-cut "public interest" that can guide decisions. From the Realist perspective, in the best of circumstances, public employees function as catalysts, where different interests are appraised and balanced, or as mediators between different interests. From a realistic perspective, the client's best interest is the highest priority, which may mean that unequal or even discriminatory practices may be accepted if it is deemed beneficial for the client's interests. The second perspective, which was prominent in the interview material, was *the rationalistic perspective*, which is based on a more rational approach to public administration. Civil servants are seen as neutral experts who implement policy objectives through the existing framework. The objectives are there to be followed and decision-making is understood as a mainly technical-rational process about how to make correct decisions. It is not seen as part of the job description for public servants to account for utopian visions. The work consists mainly of making "correct" rule interpretations based on the given situation in the most neutral way possible. Equal treatment and transparent decision-making are seen as important. The rationalistic perspective implies that social workers should always follow existing rules and directives on gender equality. The third perspective is *the idealistic perspective*, which is based on a more Platonic view of public administra-

tion, i.e. the idea that certain ideals and values about what is right and wrong exist in relation to the interests of the public. The regulatory framework is always seen as incomplete and decisions must instead be guided by basic ethical and democratic values. Discussing fundamental values and ideals is therefore an important part of work as a public servant. From an idealistic perspective, gender equality is an overarching societal ideal that has to guide the decisions that social workers make.

These different perspectives are generalisations and simplifications, and can be seen as examples of ideological dilemmas since they are contradictory and often occur in parallel, and both legitimise and challenge societal power relations. None of the perspectives was visible in a clear-cut manner in any single person amongst those interviewed. Rather, it was usually a combination of arguments, where the emphasis sometimes lay more with a certain perspective than another or where the respondent was struggling with how to balance and prioritise among different approaches and possible strategies for change. In the case studies, we found that the change strategies in both organisations were dealing with the question of how to move from individual learning about gender and gender equality issues, to finding common routines and guidelines for developing the core work of each organisation. In the rescue service, the central questions were how they could overcome resistance among some employees and managers, and create *commitment* and a joint approach among management and co-workers to work with the issues. In the social services, the central question was finding common ground for the direction their work would take, in other words *how* to work with gender mainstreaming. In both cases, there was a dilemma about sameness and difference in how the organisations could design interventions to address gender inequality. The interviews from the exploratory phase were processes and provided a basis for further processes with analysis and reflection.

The analysis and reflection phase

The analysis and reflection phase was carried out in several steps. In the first step, directly after the exploratory phase was finished, the empirical material was discussed with the interviewees from each case study. The next step was an analysis and reflection seminar to which participants (gender mainstreamers) from other gender mainstreaming projects were invited. Through processing the questions one more time we had the opportunity to deepen our understanding of the analysis and discuss how different dilemmas could be handled together with participants who were not directly involved in the project but whom we believed could identify with the more general issues that the dilemma was based upon. Our primary processing of the empirical data in each case study was summarised in a written document that was sent out in advance of the seminar. In this document, there were examples from interviews, and an illustration of the dilemma that we thought of as central to the particular organisation's work with gender mainstreaming. The document also contained a number of questions that we

asked the participants to reflect upon in preparation for the seminar. Instead of trying to give an answer – or a solution – to the dilemmas in the rescue services and the social services and argue for one position, which we did not think we could do, we chose to emphasise and clarify the dilemmas with the expectation that collectively we could enhance our understanding of them. During the seminar feedback we discussed the empirical material and the participants gave alternative interpretations and representations. The aim of the reflection and analysis seminar was to create opportunities for joint analysis, learning and critical reflection (Svensson *et al.* 2007).

The reflection and analysis seminar is a way to validate the material and the initial analysis (Eikeland 2006). Through the background document and the seminar we wanted to examine whether the participants recognised the scenarios and theories presented, and if they could provide additional interpretations. In addition to deepening the analysis and understanding of the results obtained and the dilemmas presented, we wanted the participants to discuss various approaches and implications of these, but without getting stuck in a solution-oriented reasoning about right and wrong. The design of this part of the seminar was inspired by Nentwich's call for "Playing around" (Nentwich 2006). Nentwich argues that one possible application of the concept of ideological dilemmas, in addition to critical reflection, is to develop future change strategies:

In this sense, creating new strategies for change would mean trying out and playing around with many possible understandings and perspectives, instead of favoring one side over the other and forcing a decision. "Playing around" would mean systematically analyzing the interpretative repertoires used, the discourses drawn upon, the assumptions made and the identities constructed in order to investigate the possible consequences of each one. Knowing the consequences in a certain context would provide a basis for making strategic decisions in the process of change towards equality. (Nentwich 2006, p. 516)

In the analysis and reflection phase, we wanted to try different interpretations and perspectives. We hoped that the questions we sent out before the seminar would lead to discussions about how the dilemma could be addressed rather than dissolved. The analysis seminar was organised to create reflection. During each seminar, which usually lasted about two to three hours, we divided the participants into different groups. Initially, a member of the project group would give a description of the work with gender mainstreaming and the problems they had encountered. One of us as the researchers then presented empirical data from the interviews and the documentary studies and theoretical perspectives were presented. The participants were then invited to discuss the questions, with the

help of a moderator whom they themselves appointed, and write down results from the group discussions, which were later discussed by the whole group. When discussing the dilemma with the social services, this process revealed that none of the perspectives described above could be seen as “the right one”. The characteristics of the dilemma, and the realistic, rationalistic and idealistic perspectives, also could not simply be transferred to a specific character or position in the workplace. As an example, a gender equality advocate does not need to start out from an idealistic perspective. The discussion dwelt on the idea that all perspectives contain important principles, but can lead to negative consequences if applied in too one-sided a manner. For example, one risk of the realistic perspective is that it may consolidate existing unequal conditions. The rationalistic perspective is likely to be too conventional and could impede innovative thinking. The idealistic perspective may seem naive and meet resistance, individuals become subordinated to ideals, assessments can be arbitrary and it can be difficult to find concrete solutions to specific problems. Discussions about the future came to revolve around possible approaches to different perspectives, both in order to highlight underlying assumptions among the social workers themselves and in working with clients.

In the interviews and the discussion in the rescue service, one conclusion is that neither of the two perspectives that were compared would work individually. Training of individuals and changing organisational conditions through affirmative action – i.e. enforcing change – should be combined. The respondents argued for both individual and structural change strategies. The respondents from the rescue service believed that both strategies might also have negative consequences. Education and training rarely create changes in themselves and affirmative action may increase resistance from some groups within the rescue services if they do not understand why a more balanced representation is important, according to the respondents. At the same time the participants in the analysis seminar thought that an increased proportion of underrepresented groups among firefighters could lead to an altered image of the profession, which in turn could increase the proportion of women who found their way into it.

Shortly after the analysis seminar, we sent out a summary of the results obtained from the interviews, the analysis seminar, and our own interpretations. We asked participants whether they wanted to comment on the content, if they felt that anything needed to be added or if anything was considered to have been misconstrued. Respondents wrote that they recognised themselves in the descriptions, and we also received suggestions for corrections of things they saw as errors.

Discussion

Gender mainstreaming is both a practice and a concept that contains contradictions. These are problematic if they are ignored but fruitful if used as a basis

for discussion about how future change strategies might be designed. In efforts to bring about changes that improve equality between women and men it is crucial to create arenas for learning and reflection on complex and sometimes contradictory perspectives and approaches. Systems for learning and reflection are often missing in many organisations as well as in evaluations of the results. Our initial starting point, and our conclusion, is that the exploration of different dilemmas can be a way to create prerequisites for reflection and learning. The interactive approach helped us in our efforts to facilitate a discussion of different strategies for solving the problems of gender inequality. Together with the participants, we were able to reflect upon the implications of different understandings and attitudes towards gender mainstreaming and we found that the contradictions between these different approaches are often impossible to completely resolve in a change process.

Central to the dilemmas is the need to highlight the complexity of the different problems being dealt with rather than making suggestions about how they should be dissolved. The recognition of dilemmas also means that there may be an opening for dialogue between practice and research, because a dilemma does not offer any clear way to take a stand. The interactive approach in which the dilemmas are highlighted can be a basis for joint learning between researchers and practitioners. At the same time, working with dilemmas brings forth questions about the role of the researcher and the risk should be considered relativistic. One of the advantages of this approach is the ability to focus on different and underlying assumptions in a dilemma in order to understand the consequences of different change strategies in relation to power and also the possibilities for action. Applying a dilemma perspective does not mean that all conflicts are seen as equal or of equal value, rather it is important to study which voices are given precedence, and what perspectives are raised in the discussions. Who argues against and who argues in favour and what is the power relationship between various groups?

A discussion of power relations in the practical implementation of gender mainstreaming is made possible by departing from ideological dilemmas, and by working interactively with a shared learning process between researchers and practitioners. The interactive approach also underscores the importance of exploring the researcher's role, and especially how s/he contributes to the meaning-making of gender mainstreaming efforts. This also clarifies questions of power, in relation to both research and the practical work with gender mainstreaming. An additional question about this is what possibilities gender mainstreamers have to "choose" strategies. What is the scope for change in relation to inequality in an organisation? The interactive approach to highlighting and analysing dilemmas has less chance of influencing the change process unless there are suitable circumstances in the organisation, expressed through a willingness to discuss relations of power and an openness to problems and difficulties, and in the form of trust, time, resources and support from management. If these conditions are in

place, it creates a basis for defining and analysing problems, identifying power relations, considering solutions in practice, seeing where they lead and to changing habits. When various dilemmas are consciously made visible it becomes a point of departure for gender mainstreaming efforts and offers new opportunities for change.

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PAPER

IV

Public Servants as Agents for Change in Gender Mainstreaming

– The Complexity of Practice

Anne-Charlott Callerstig

Abstract

This chapter describes and discusses actions taken to integrate a gender perspective (gender mainstreaming) within the Swedish government agency of VINNOVA. Despite the popularity of gender mainstreaming, its rapid spread and adoption both in Sweden and internationally, it is a largely contested concept. Theorists on gender mainstreaming suggest that the strategy may lead to co-optation with the dominant discourse in an organisation and thus no transformation of the current agenda taking place. Others have argued that it provides a possibility to change by addressing root causes. Previous studies of the implementation of the gender mainstreaming strategy have often been built on analyses on a theoretical or policy level. This chapter takes a different approach by examining the micro-practices developed by actors in public organisations when implementing gender mainstreaming strategies. This is done by examining the roles of both actors and agency. The chapter is based on the results of a case study of the work at VINNOVA; these results are initially described in the article based on the actors' own accounts of their work. The intriguing "story" of developments in the organisation is followed by a discussion of the micro-practices and strategies in use, based on notions of tempered radicalism (Meyerson and Scully 1995, Meyerson, 2001ab) and small-wins strategies (Weick 1984). The questions of co-optation and subversiveness are problematised through an examination of different strategies of resistance and negotiation (Swan and Fox 2010) used in and around the work. In this context, notions of actors and agency are seen as interlinked, bringing together political intervention and professional and personal positioning (Parsons and Priola 2012) in the practical equality work.

Keywords: gender mainstreaming, implementation, organisational change and learning, change agents

Introduction

This chapter describes and discusses actions taken to integrate a gender perspective within VINNOVA, a Swedish government agency with approximately 200 employees established in 2001. VINNOVA's main task is to promote knowledge-based or innovation-based economic growth which is also socially and ecologically sustainable. VINNOVA's particular area of responsibility is innovation linked to research and

development and its main task is funding needs-driven research, for which it has SEK 2 billion at its disposal annually. The main strategy for working with gender equality in VINNOVA is built on the notion of gender mainstreaming. Gender mainstreaming has been the core strategy for implementing the overarching political objectives for gender equality in Sweden since the mid-1990s and all government agencies are responsible for efforts to gender mainstream their work. The main components of the gender mainstreaming strategy are based on the idea that a gender perspective must be applied to all policy areas. This is because gender inequality and its roots are understood to be complex, multi-causal problems cutting across (all) policy areas and thus demanding cross-sector, multi-level attention to policymaking and implementation (Verloo 2005).

A gender perspective should, according to the gender mainstreaming strategy, be integrated into all steps of the policymaking process and become the responsibility of the actors normally involved in decision making. In order to meet the general requirements of gender mainstreaming, it is widely believed that knowledge and skills have to be distributed to both managers and staff. In addition to this, organisational processes guiding the “mainstream” work performed by the organisation have to be evaluated and new mechanisms for steering, monitoring and evaluation have often been introduced to meet the new gender requirements. Gender mainstreaming as such can be understood as an organisational change process. Expertise and resources are required in order to facilitate this change process. Despite the popularity of gender mainstreaming, its rapid spread and adoption both in Sweden and internationally, it is a largely contested concept. Theorists on gender mainstreaming suggest that the strategy may lead to co-optation with the dominant discourse in an organisation and thus no transformation of the current agenda; others have argued that it provides a possibility to change existing inequalities by addressing their root causes (Swan and Fox 2011). Still, a recent thesis shows that few studies have focused on the actual implementation of gender mainstreaming and little is yet known about the process (Mergaert 2012).

Departing from an understanding of policy implementation processes as organisational learning processes (Schofield 2004) and gender mainstreaming as an implementation process that entails organisational change (Callerstig et al 2011), the questions explored in this chapter relate to the overall question of how organisational processes and practices in public organisations which rely on, sustain and produce gendered outcomes can be changed. The preconditions and causes of change such as the impact of actions, change agents and institutional features (which may limit or enable change) are an important but as yet under-studied area (Hearn 2000, Linstead, Brewis and Linstead 2005, Benschop et al 2012). In the case study upon which the chapter draws, a central aim has been to better understand the change strategies developed by the organisational actors in order to implement the gender mainstreaming strategy of the Agency. Of special concern is the potential role of bureaucrats in public organisations to act as “agents for change” in organisational change processes; will they act in a way

that leads to co-option, or can they be agents of transformational change? This chapter describes and analyses the gender mainstreaming work in VINNOVA, departing from the question of what kind of strategies were developed by the actors involved and why, alongside a discussion of the potential outcomes.

Implementation of gender equality objectives in mainstream policy fields (such as, in the case studied, innovation and growth policy) is a complex process. In order to implement often ambiguous gender equality objectives, actors need to *learn* how to enact them in relation to specific and contextual tasks and in solutions to concrete problems in their everyday work (Callerstig 2011). This is not a once-for-all technical matter. Gender equality goals are often vague, rendering gender mainstreaming into open-ended processes where the outcome will be affected by the ongoing translation of gender equality into mainstream policy processes (Walby 2005, Eveline and Bacchi 2005, Bacchi and Eveline 2009). Strategies for implementing gender mainstreaming thus include an understanding of is the problem at hand (gender inequality) and what its solution consists of (gender equality and the path towards it) in a continuous process where new experiences must feed into the processes of policy re-design (Callerstig and Lindholm 2011). Strategies can be formal or informal and include personal vision and learning (Mintzberg 2000). Part of the general strategies for implementation include the way that actors responsible for implementation ensure general change prerequisites are put into place. For example: adequate resources, support from management, time and also the capability to relate to contextual factors such as the area of implementation (Schofield 2004). Part of the strategies also concerns change agents' attempts to "sell" new policy goals to other members of the organisation and, in so doing, create necessary support and engagement (Rouleau 2005).

Previous studies of implementing gender mainstreaming strategy have often been built on analyses on a theoretical or policy level. This chapter takes a different approach by examining the micro-practices developed by actors in public organisations when implementing gender mainstreaming strategies. This approach can provide new understandings of some of the difficulties related to the implementation of gender mainstreaming and the more general question of whether it can deliver the anticipated results. In other words, problematising the processes and outcomes the gender mainstreaming strategy from a close-to-practice perspective.

The chapter both addresses and problematises the role of actors and agency. The notions of actors and agency are seen as interlinked in the way that Parsons and Priola indicated. They pointed out that equality practitioners' agency or activism at an institutional level often serves as a "bridge between political intervention and professional and personal positioning" (Parsons and Priola 2012 p.2). The chapter problematises the role of equality practitioners as agents for change based on the study of work at VINNOVA, which is described initially in the article departing from the actors' own accounts of the work. The intriguing "story" of the developments in the organisation is followed by a discussion of the micro-practices and strategies in use, based on the

notions of tempered radicalism (Meyerson and Scully 1995, Meyerson, 2001) and small-wins strategies (Weick 1984). The questions of co-optation and subversiveness are also problematised through an examination of different strategies of resistance and negotiation (Swan and Fox 2010) used in and around the work.

Gender equality work in VINNOVA

Like a number of Swedish governmental agencies, one of VINNOVA's specific tasks is to work to strengthen gender equality within the Agency's field of competence. Since its establishment in 2001, VINNOVA has initiated calls to support applied and needs-driven gender research and support for the integration of a gender perspective (gender mainstreaming) into innovation system and processes. The aim of these activities has been to strengthen and develop the full potential of innovations systems and processes and contribute to the fulfilment of the national gender equality objectives set by the government. Parallel to this, the Agency has worked to integrate a gender perspective internally in the organisation. Both the internal and external initiatives are part of VINNOVA's activities to implement the government's gender mainstreaming strategy.

The chapter draws on the results from an interactive research study of VINNOVA's equality work carried out in 2009-2010. This was conducted with the overall aim of studying strategies for sustainable gender mainstreaming processes (Lindholm et al 2011) in public sector organisations. Its specific focus was how VINNOVA's work could be developed in relation to policy development on a European level (mainly regarding the work on gender and innovation by the European Commission). The interactive research approach represents a more distanced relationship than traditional action research (Nielsen and Svensson ed. 2006). The researcher can be described as an "*outsider(s) in collaboration with insider(s)*" (Herr and Anderson 2005 p.31). One aim of the study was to create a common learning process built on an agreed problem or issue which needed more attention. For the case study, individual interviews were held with officers whose specific task it was to develop VINNOVA's work with a gender perspective in the organisation and with other officers involved in the Agency's European activities. The research followed a methodology using ideological dilemmas (Billig et al 1988) as a starting point for joint learning processes (Callerstig and Lindholm 2011). One recurring theme in the case study was the dilemma of creating change using either the "business case" or the social justice argument for the integration of a gender perspective into the Agency's activities.⁵⁶

Based on the interviews and working materials, three phases were identified for the work of integrating a gender perspective into the work of VINNOVA. These phases

⁵⁶ Thanks to Kristina Lindholm for valuable help in the interview process and reflections on the interactive research approach. Thanks also to my thoughtful and patient supervisors, Jeff Hearn and Susanne Andersson.

were later discussed with VINNOVA officers in a joint analysis seminar in the spring of 2011 and are described below. The descriptions of the work largely stem from interviews with two key actors, called “Agneta” and “Karin” in the chapter. Agneta was employed in the Agency from the start and had been working on gender mainstreaming at VINNOVA in parallel with her main duties at the Agency, up until the time of the case study. Karin started working with gender issues at the Agency a few years later and was also seconded from another agency for a few years.

Agneta’s formal position was that of a case officer in the Manufacturing and Working Life Division. Amongst many other things, her duties included working with various research calls, contact with the projects, arranging conferences and publications, directing the evaluation work, writing reports, planning future initiatives and collaborating with external stakeholders.

Karin’s position was as a case officer with the main task of conducting analyses in the Analysis and Evaluation Department (formerly the Department for Innovation Systems). After the reorganisation, she worked in the Manufacturing and Working Life Division. Part of her work as an analyst was to produce studies, often in collaboration with international partners.

Agneta had previous experience working with gender issues dating back to the 1970s. For example, she was involved in starting up a network for women scientists in Sweden. She also had previous experience of gender equality objectives in public research policy at other government agencies.

Karin was new to working with gender issues when she started to work with Agneta but developed skills and knowledge over time and briefly left the Agency to work as a gender expert in a regional county council. For Agneta the work at VINNOVA was the last step in a long public sector career in research-related policy, whilst Karin, at the time of the case study, was in the middle of her professional development and professional and academic advancement processes. Agneta was a trained scientist herself with personal experience of conducting research and working within academia. Karin had no such experience but was developing an interest in research involvement for the future.

The results of the case study have also been discussed with one of the researchers involved in developing the work at VINNOVA (later employed by the Agency) and a subsequently employed officer engaged to develop the gender perspective work in funds-driven research.

Agneta and Karin's story

– strategies for gender mainstreaming at VINNOVA ⁵⁷

The phases in the strategic work for integrating gender into VINNOVA's core processes will be described and discussed in the following section. It consists of three chronologically divided phases: "Startup and building the fundamentals (2001-2005)", "Consolidation and expansion (2005-2009)" and "Re-orientation (2009-?)". However, in the analysis seminar, these phases were understood by the participants not as a rational implementing process in the traditional sense. Rather, they were considered to reflect an iterative, pragmatic, fluent and incremental process. This process was understood as being possible to construct in retrospect when the different actions, occurrences and outcomes were considered an interlinked pattern, but not in advance as a pre-constructed strategic plan and not as a rational and linear process.

The phases are summarised in the following table and will then be described in more detail.

Gender mainstreaming strategy at VINNOVA, summary of phases

Startup and building the fundamentals (2001-2005)	Naming the "problem with no name" Building on previous research Gendering the inside Creating legitimacy for the work A three-step plan; i.e. engage gender <i>and</i> mainstream researchers in new perspectives; use results from new research to develop the internal work and in so doing; increase pressure for change internally and externally
Consolidation and expansion (2005-2009)	Incrementalism and new alliances From a gender perspective <i>on</i> innovation to gender <i>and</i> innovation Increasing professionalisation of the work internally Increasing visibility and legitimacy Placing responsibility with the management
Re-orientation (2009 - ?)	New organisation, new co-workers Diversity on the agenda Europeanisation and increasing cooperation across borders The next step in supporting gender and innovation? Old alliances dissolved and new ones take shape

Startup and building the fundamentals (2001-2005)

Naming the "problem with no name"

The gender equality work at the newly established VINNOVA agency started in 2001 when one of the newly recruited officers (called "Agneta" in this chapter) in the Manufacturing and Working Life Division and who had previous experience working with a gender equality perspective suggested developing the work of gender mainstreaming (GM) as two separate parts. The first would consist of a strategy for implementing

⁵⁷ Examples from the gender mainstreaming work are given in the chapter to exemplify the strategies used. These examples only represent a handful of all the activities carried out; for practical reasons, it was not possible to include them all.

gender mainstreaming in relation to the core objectives of the Agency, e. g. as specific measures for integrating a gender perspective into future research calls. The second was to develop the capacity to work with gender issues within the Agency itself. Agneta was given the mission to develop the strategy and started to investigate methods which could be used to integrate a gender perspective into the everyday activities of the Agency. One example was the search for gender disaggregated statistics concerning the present work and also previous research in relevant areas. It soon became clear that a gender perspective was not something which could easily be integrated and monitored – since a gender perspective, including operational goals for the work, was missing in the existing systems of the Agency and also in the related research areas. One example Agneta pointed out was the lack of gender-sensitive indicators; this made it hard to point out any direction for the gender mainstreaming work. Another was the lack of sex-disaggregated data which made analysis difficult. At the same time it was clear that a gender perspective was important, both in terms of a social justice perspective (e.g. the current situation for women and men in research) and in terms of the reaching general growth objectives (e.g. the existence of a gender perspective in relevant research areas). In consequence, the first actions taken meant establishing a basis for the work in the organisation. This included formulating how a gender perspective was relevant to the existing objectives and initiatives in the Agency, since a gender perspective was largely absent and currently not discussed. The responsibility for gender mainstreaming was placed with the Manufacturing and Working Life Division; this affected what kind of organisational resources could be drawn upon and what kind of objectives for the gender equality work could be established. According to Agneta, this was an advantage since a gender perspective could be linked to issues of working life and placed within her field of responsibility. However, it also meant that the gender work was not placed at one of the more influential departments in the Agency and had no specific budget to refer to. Consequently, the task of drafting a plan for the gender mainstreaming work was not accompanied by a mandate for Agneta to establish an organisation for the work. These decisions had to be taken and executed by the managers.

Building on previous research

A decision was made by Agneta early in the process to develop gender mainstreaming based on previous research on gender equality work, work-place organisations and more generally on gender research in relation to the main areas of the Agency's policy field. According to Agneta, this was because research evidence showing the relevance of gender and how it could be applied would assist in the adoption of a gender perspective in the various areas and activities of VINNOVA (e.g. in research grant programmes). In order to gather useful evidence, a smaller seminar was organised and researchers from the field of gender research within entrepreneurship, innovation and regional development were invited. Collecting evidence and good examples from the researchers turned out to be more difficult than anticipated. As Agneta put it,

“The gender researchers did not want to discuss either the gender equality work or economic growth issues”.

One reason might have been that many gender scholars in Sweden had previously avoided getting involved in gender equality politics because of the mistrust which might be created by mixing research with politics. The disinterest shown in economic growth issues might be explained by several factors such as lack of gender researchers within this particular area and also the feminist critique of neo-liberal politics. These have created a general scepticism towards engaging with the field. The somewhat disappointing results from the seminar led to the idea that the necessary knowledge had to be supported and developed within VINNOVA itself.

Gendering the inside

One of the conclusions after the seminar was that the particular knowledge needed in order to gender mainstream the Agency's work could not easily be collected from outside the organisation. The strategy instead was to initiate a process from within. An action-orientated research project was initiated with gender researchers; its specific aim was to uncover gendered processes in the internal work of various areas (Gunnarsson et al 2007). Agneta recalls the developments:

“A major call with the main focus on models and methods for gender mainstreaming was planned to open in 2004. In the meantime it was important to create legitimacy for gender mainstreaming and raise competence about gender and equal opportunities within VINNOVA. My main idea was that R&D for gender mainstreaming financed by VINNOVA should also be used for VINNOVA's internal work with gender mainstreaming.”

Aided by the research project, the mission was also to build capacity among the actors normally involved in the Agency's work; they would be trained to integrate a gender perspective into their ordinary duties in the Agency. As part of their training, these employees would analyse their own organisation, assisted by members of the gender research team brought into the organisation. This was also considered by Agneta as a way to strengthen contacts with gender researchers and create interest in the Agency's areas of work from a gender research perspective.

Agneta explains:

“In 2002 I contacted a researcher and asked her to draw up a competence-raising R&D project for VINNOVA's staff. The plan was accepted by management but I ran into problems when it came into financing it. As an R&D project money should come from VINNOVA's research budget but as a staff development project it had to be financed by the HR Department which, in turn, could not finance research. The problem was finally solved by calling the project a “pilot”. Pilots were started in order to test an idea about a call on a small scale and were freer when it

came to financing. The planned project was in fact a pilot because knowledge from this project was intended for use in drawing up the coming call. “

The project lasted for three years and resulted in internal reports and scientific publications, often showing the conflict between the mainstream values of the organisation and a gender perspective. One of the officers involved in the action research project (known as Karin in the chapter and one of the employee group being trained) became an important collaboration partner for Agneta in the work that followed. Karin had a position in another department where she could take measures to support the gender mainstreaming linked to gender and innovation research in ways that Agneta had not so far been able to do. Karin was also a highly respected person in the Agency who knew innovation policy thoroughly. According to the two officers, with Agneta's knowledge on gender issues, the collaboration turned out to be successful.

Creating legitimacy for the work

From the work so far it was clearly necessary to get more commitment from the managers of the Agency. Agneta explains how the pilot project clearly highlighted the problem:

“The next problem occurred when I tried to make the project VINNOVA's responsibility and get management engaged. As we could not agree on what “results” it would lead to, the responsibility for the project landed on my unit. On the other hand, management supported the fact that the project started with half a day of compulsory training in gender and equal opportunities for all of VINNOVA's staff. The importance of an active ownership within management became very clear in this project and this knowledge affected the formulation of future calls. It also led to a request for someone to have gender mainstreaming as a specific responsibility within management. This decision turned out to be very important for the call that was opened in 2008. “

Parallel to the strategy of building an organisation of gender-trained officers was the aim of increasing the legitimacy of mainstreaming gender into the Agency's work of funding needs-driven research. According to Agneta and Karin, VINNOVA as an agency was dominated by a scientific discourse originating in the natural sciences tradition and with a strong belief in traditional scientific methods. This was recognised early on as a potential problem but also a possible opportunity for change. The relevance of gender could be argued from a scientific standpoint by presenting solid evidence from research. At the same time, the traditional notion of objectivity and neutrality of science was raised as problematic from a gender perspective. One of the arguments was that earlier and more traditional research results often lacked validity because of their gender blindness. This turned out to be a balancing act between two different research traditions. Moreover, as Agneta put it, in order to succeed, “you

must be able to speak both languages". One aspect of this balancing act was the demand from a natural science perspective to present predictable results, preferably in figures which did not make much sense for qualitative projects, for example dealing with values. However, convincing evidence was important to find according to Agneta and Karin. One of the first research results from the internal pilot project was an analysis of the organisation's magazine, VINNOVA News, which was convincingly shown to demonstrate a clear gender bias. According to Agneta and Karin, this result was very important and thereafter used strategically to create legitimacy for the work with gender in the organisation. It became one of the first examples of an important strategy in the gender mainstreaming work; to produce clear and convincing evidence on how gender was relevant in relation to the Agency's activities. As Karin put it:

"Visible products create credibility in the organisation".

A three-step plan

According to Agneta and Karin, in order to achieve the aims of the gender mainstreaming work, a new and more integrated perspective on gender and innovation issues was necessary. To do this the strategy for integrating a gender perspective into the core activities of the Agency, i.e. gender mainstreaming, had grown over its initial years and now consisted of three parts: increasing knowledge among gender researchers and mainstream researchers respectively; feeding back the new knowledge into the organisation and developing the internal work based on the results; finally, in so doing, simultaneously increasing the pressure for change from both inside and outside.

The first period of the gender mainstreaming work was characterised by efforts to bring gender onto the Agency's agenda, highlight the gender gaps in the core activities and build the capacity to implement the gender mainstreaming strategy. An emerging research field of gender and innovation was slowly taking shape, based on the first steps to integrate a gender perspective into established fields.

Consolidation and expansion (2005-2009)

Incrementalism and new alliances

Marking the turn into the second phase of gender mainstreaming in VINNOVA are the actions taken to build strategically on experiences from the internal work to put gender onto the Agency's agenda, based on the results of the research initiatives. According to Agneta and Karin, the efforts for strategic use of earlier wins were made in order to gain new alliances in the organisations and, in so doing, creating new opportunities for change. One example was using results from gender analyses of internal processes in the Agency; another was using examples from external research to build arguments for new initiatives. An important part of the gender mainstreaming strategy at this point was, according to Agneta, "using the possibilities that are created in the organisation". With new allies came new possibilities which were used by the two officers in order to develop the gender mainstreaming work. The importance of the new alliances was exemplified in the support given by a senior manager who subsequently assisted by

proposing development of a strategy to launch specific gender-related research calls. Finding and connecting with those who were influential in the organisation was seen as necessary in the gender equality work by Agneta and Karin. Consequently, the results of the work become more visible and gained legitimacy in the organisation. The strategic work involved access to internal resources which could be used to support external research projects as described above. These were then used to develop the internal work, especially when it came to the continuing development of future research calls launched in direct response to the findings of previous initiatives. An important opportunity developed that Agneta and Karin were quick to use

Agneta explains:

“There was no second call planned for the gender mainstreaming area but in 2008 an opportunity suddenly arose. The budget at my unit had a surplus of several million kronor which could be spent during 2008 but the 2009 budget was already fully allocated. I suggested a two-step call with pilot studies during 2008 and full financing from 2009.”

An external researcher was also contracted to write an evaluation report based on the experiences of the first calls and entitled *The importance of a gender perspective. Innovation, sustainable growth and gender equality. An evaluation* [my translation] (Fürst Hörte 2009). Another publication (Lorentzi 2009) was produced showing concrete examples of how the results of needs-driven gender research could draw on experiences from a programme launched under the name “Gender Perspective on Innovation Systems and Gender Equality”.

From a gender perspective on innovation to gender and innovation

The innovation theme had become increasingly important in general national growth politics as well as in the Agency. According to Agneta and Karin, the reason it was important to keep up with general developments in the organisation was that the areas currently being prioritised were also those which garnered the most support from management and, consequently, economic resources. However, the area of gender and innovation was a research area with little previous national or international research. Agneta and Karin took the initiative upon themselves to write a joint paper which they then presented at a conference aimed at mapping the research terrain. The idea of launching a specific call on gender and innovation was also developed. According to Agneta, who argued on the basis of the previously conducted study *What Happened Next?* (Sundin and Göranson, 2006) [my translation], successful gender equality initiatives were those in which a gender perspective could be established as a prerequisite and argued for as an important means of reaching other objectives. At the same time, Agneta was arguing that “numbers count”; one example being statistics showing the lack of female researchers in many important innovation research areas coupled with explicit gender discrimination and making a fraud out of many innovation systems. Experience from the results of the first research calls which were now being summa-

rised led to the idea of developing, expanding and connecting the notions of gender and innovation in research. This idea was summarised by Karin in the discussion in the analysis seminar as a strategy of “*stretching innovation to include gender and gender to include innovation*”.

Agneta explains the developments:

“At this time, VINNOVA put a lot of its efforts into further strengthening the so-called strong research and innovation (R&I) milieus that had long-term financing from VINNOVA. As the focus of the call I suggested was to strengthen these milieus by adding a gender perspective, the idea got very strong support from management. A Focus of Impact was compulsory for all calls and by creating a Focus of Impact for this call, following the same model as other calls, it was easier to show what “results” could be expected from this call. The theme of the call was still gender mainstreaming but for projects to get support they had to take place in one of these milieus. Also, the owner of the project had to be the head of the milieu and not the researcher, in accordance with findings of the project described above. By steering projects towards the R&I milieus, the focus of VINNOVA’s gender mainstreaming work came closer to the innovation concept and researchers within innovation. The aim was to make gender researchers better understand innovation and innovation researchers more familiar with a gender perspective.”

Increasing professionalisation of the work internally

An important development in this phase was the efforts to increase the professionalisation of VINNOVA’s internal work on gender mainstreaming. According to Agneta and Karin, the strategy at this point consisted of trying to mainstream the work with gender in the organisation by integrating a gender perspective into ordinary organisational activities such as monitoring, evaluations and specifications and into quality management. The evaluation described earlier can be seen as an example of this development. Another example is the use of the impact logic model (McLaughlin and Jordan 1999) to visualise the gender mainstreaming logic and its links with the core objectives of the organisation proposed by the officers (fig. 1). The use of Impact logic models was at this point a popular method in the Agency and launched as an effective management tool for use in the development of various initiatives. The trend towards using impact logic models was used by Agneta, who decided to develop an impact logic scheme for the gender calls. In so doing, she was able to show how gender mainstreaming could be applied in the same way as implementing other objectives in the organisation. An impact model explains the logic links or steps in a strategy or initiative, e.g. *what* measures (output) are believed to generate *what* outcomes and how this, in turn, is envisioned to be linked to the overall objectives (impact). The model developed is outlined below.

Gender mainstreaming impact logic model in VINNOVA

Increasing visibility and legitimacy

Part of the gender mainstreaming strategy also included actions aimed at creating legitimacy internally in the organisation by disseminating the good results of the external work. This was thought to strengthen the internal importance afforded to the work. An example of this particular strategy was creating visibility outside the organisation through book publications, articles, conferences etc. According to Agneta and Karin, external collaboration was another way of applying external pressure to the work.

Placing responsibility with the management

In order to create sustainable gender mainstreaming work in the organisation, one deliberate strategy was to try involving the top-level management of the organisation more, eventually placing full responsibility for gender mainstreaming with them. One example was the initiative for creating a Gender Action Plan early on in the work. According to Agneta and Karin, placing responsibility with senior managers in the organisation was one of the most important factors in creating real change. This was because the rest of the organisation was very sensitive to the actions taken by the management, both formally and informally. By constantly trying to engage managers and be visible in the Agency, the hope was to create real engagement and accountability so that the progress made would depend less on Agneta and Karin’s personal involvement and have a sustainable platform in the future. It became possible to solve a lot of issues once senior managers got involved.

Agneta explains:

“As a member of management now had the responsibility for gender mainstreaming at VINNOVA, financing of the second part of the call

could be solved. R&I milieus were handled by officers at different units of the department where the one responsible for gender mainstreaming was head. Therefore it could be decided that approved projects should be handled by the officers handling the milieu and financed by those officers' units. More officers were thus involved in the GM work at VINNOVA. The programme (TIGER) encompassing the call, including seminars for all projects once or twice a year, ongoing research and other initiatives to strengthen the programme and its projects was still run by me and after my retirement by [Karin] “

The second phase of the gender mainstreaming work, described above, was characterised by consolidation and expansion strategies. Previous achievements were deliberately used to strengthen the legitimacy of the gender mainstreaming work, both internally and externally. New alliances were built inside the organisation and the internal work of gender mainstreaming in the organisation was increasingly professionalised; one example being the impact logic model developed.

Re-orientation (2009 - ?)

New organisation, new co-workers

The startup of the case study in 2009 was done during a turbulent time for the organisation. A newly created organisational structure for the whole Agency was being developed and put into place which meant that many of the old initiatives were placed under new organisational headings and new managers. A part from this, a new head of mission was appointed by the government and Agneta was leaving for retirement. A new officer was recruited, with responsibility for the work with a gender perspective in innovation research and for developing specific calls. Karin became responsible for the work of developing gender mainstreaming in the Agency after Agneta.

Diversity on the agenda

Another important shift occurred with impact on the future gender mainstreaming work. The new head of mission declared early on that the work on gender should be expanded to more broadly include diversity targets. According to Swedish law discrimination is illegal on the grounds of sex, ethnicity, sexual orientation, age, religious beliefs, disability and transgender identity. Active measures are obligatory on the grounds of gender, ethnicity and religious beliefs. There are also other regulations on the work on gender equality and diversity for public sector organisations; these affect the core processes of the public sector. The trend in Sweden is similar to many other European countries where there has been an increased move towards merging different forms of equality work (Krizsan, Skjeie and Squires 2012). In VINNOVA this led to plans for development of a new equality strategy. In the interviews, the new importance placed on diversity was seen as both an opportunity to expand the work (so that it could involve an intersectional gender perspective) and a potential risk (if the gender work was going to lose resources and legitimacy due to the new direction).

Europeanisation and increasing cross-border cooperation

The impact of the increasing trend for Europeanising of VINNOVA's work was also considered an important aspect of Agneta and Karin's development of the future gender mainstreaming strategy in the Agency. Two studies were conducted, in line with the previous strategy of developing the gender mainstreaming work according to major developments in priority issues within the organisation. One was the case study which this chapter draws upon and the other was a publication in English which showed the developments in relation to gender and innovation published in the autumn of 2010 (Danilda and Granath Thorslund 2010) entitled *Innovation and Gender* with gender deliberately placed after innovation in order to emphasise the importance of mainstreaming gender into innovation policies and not treating it as something separate. Agneta and Karin were now also trying to find new collaboration partners in other European countries and were also increasingly interested in relevant developments in European politics, such as the work of the European Commission. The expanding European field of Gender in Science was seen as an important political area worthy of attention and a possible future means of increasing collaboration with external actors on a European level.

The next step in supporting gender and innovation?

One of the clearest results and a common thread in the gender mainstreaming work in VINNOVA was the development of the research field of gender and innovation. One important question raised in the interviews and discussions in the analysis seminar concerned what should happen after the latest gender call (TIGER). How much could the now internationally recognised Swedish field of gender and innovation research be expected to develop on its own? Or, should there be new and perhaps alternative calls to support new directions? Was there sufficient critical mass to uphold the research within the research community? What kind of future support was needed?

The discussions pointed to the fact that the time had come to assess the developments made and draw up new strategies for the future which might involve trying to reach beyond the gender research community to support the development within traditional innovation research. One conclusion from the interview respondents was that the actions taken by the Agency had led to many new "friends" among the gender research collective but still not enough among the mainstream innovation researchers, where additional efforts were needed.

Old alliances dissolve and new ones take shape

Many of the old alliances made with external collaboration partners are currently undergoing change, according to the interviews and discussions with the actors involved in VINNOVA's gender mainstreaming work. New ones might take shape in as yet unexplored areas, including increased involvement in Nordic and European collaborations. Other collaboration partners may also surface in the national arena. There was the recent development in which VINNOVA's gender work attracted attention on the

political level. For example, following the launch of the evaluation report entitled *His Excellence* (which showed a clear gender bias in Swedish research funding) former cabinet minister Maud Olofsson questioned the management about the work of VINNOVA. VINNOVA was put forward as “a good case” and this has created new visibility for the work and may prove an opportunity to move it forward. This interest was prompted by the national report *His Excellence* (Sandström et al 2010) [my translation] which was highly critical of the distribution of research funding from a gender perspective, but named VINNOVA as an exception.

The third phase in the gender mainstreaming work at VINNOVA is harder to analyse, partly due to the fact that future developments will show the impact of the latest ones and the kind of new strategies devised by the officers who continue VINNOVA’s gender mainstreaming work. It is clear from the interviews that developments so far have pushed the gender mainstreaming work into a situation where a rethink and a drafting of new strategies are necessary in order to continue developing the work. Otherwise, according to the interviews, there is a risk of the gender mainstreaming work being marginalised in the Agency.

The impact of actors on gender mainstreaming processes

How, then, can efforts to develop the gender mainstreaming work in VINNOVA be understood from an organisational change perspective? It is time to return to the questions asked in the introduction, regarding the potential role of civil servants in public organisations acting as “agents for change”, supporting organisational change processes necessary to implement gender mainstreaming. Will they act in a way that will lead to co-option or can they be agents of transformational change? These questions will be discussed in the next part of this chapter. Firstly though, some contextual and theoretical starting points will be outlined.

The role of *public servants* acting as change agents has been problematised to a lesser extent within traditional implementation research in general (Schofield 2004). The same applies to change agency in studies of equality initiatives (Tati and Özbilgin 2009), even though some studies do exist.

The impact of change agents on changing gendered and discriminatory processes and practices has been discussed in regard to the role of *employees in private companies*. There are change agents who operate alone with an agenda for change built on personal motives and experiences of unjust conditions and practices. For example, Colgan and Ledwitch’s “movers and shakers” (1996) who were women who acted on their own to create more equal working conditions, or Meyersons and Scully’s (1995) “tempered radicals” as described below. Change agency has also been discussed in relation to *bureaucrats*, i.e. the “femocrat” implementing change (Fransway et al 1989) and also bureaucrats inhibiting change (Ferguson 1984). Another type of change agent being discussed is the *equality worker*, a strategic change agent with a sanc-

tioned change agenda and a specific mission to change existing conditions to reach pre-set goals. Equality workers have often been categorized as either *equal opportunities officers* focusing on legal and democratic aspects or *diversity officers*, focusing more on the business argument for change (Tatli and Özbilgin 2009). The third type of change agent is the *participant*. These can be participants in a change initiative or employees affected by the proposed change; often portrayed as either “passive implementers or grim resisters” (Howard 2002). Still, they have been shown to be important in their role as executors of decisions such as the participating street-level bureaucrats in Callerstig’s (2011) study; their personal beliefs greatly affected the outcomes of the gender equality change initiative studied. Participants are also important in order to receive the necessary support for change and also the knowledge to translate gender equality goals into action (Callerstig and Lindholm 2011). A fourth group of change agents studied are the *managers*, whose actions or non-actions are crucial to gender equality change initiatives (as shown in numerous studies), including not only top management but the role of middle managers (Andersson et al 2009).

The work for gender equality described above is built on the strategy of gender mainstreaming. Recent years have seen a growing political interest in efforts by public sector organisations to implement the gender mainstreaming strategy in Sweden, one example being the two programmes financed by the Swedish government to support public authorities at national and local levels, JÄMI (2009-2010) and Hållbar Jämställdhet [Sustainable Equality] (2009-2013). Studies launched in relation to these programmes have shown the practical work to be complex, with many difficult-to-solve dilemmas in the everyday work of the public servants involved (Callerstig and Lindholm 2011). In many organisations there has only been formal adoption of gender equality objectives into equality policies, plans and appointments of responsibility. However, the actual larger scale transition into everyday core practices and processes has turned out much more difficult (Lindholm ed 2011). The influence of typically prevailing modern (and often gender-blind) management techniques may also serve to keep gender aspects invisible in an organisation, even in gender mainstreaming work. One of the central criticisms is that the strategy fails to deliver the anticipated results (Walby 2005, Squires 2005, 2007); this is explainable in some measure by the failure to change the gender biases that are common in many organisations (Benschop and Verloo 2006). Other explanations that have been proposed include what has been termed “discursive politics” in implementation processes (Lombardo et al 2009). One example is when the original meaning of gender equality shrinks or gets bent into new understandings and where the gender equality aims are lost or replaced by new ones, such as economic growth (Rönnblom 2009).

Research has also indicated that gender mainstreaming has had an easier transit into policy areas where a gender equality perspective has had a previous history (areas such as employment and social policies). On the other hand, traditional “hard” policy areas (such as VINNOVA), which are often understood as unrelated to people and thus

gender-neutral, have had a harder time adopting the strategy (Hafner-Burton and Pollock 2009).

Previous studies have also shown that problems implementing gender mainstreaming can lead to a situation where gender advocates “sell” the gender mainstreaming strategy in new areas using the “business case” to support their arguments and hoping they can bring social justice perspectives on board as well. However, keeping a dual agenda of gender equality and business goals in the practical work might turn out to be difficult (Meyerson and Kolb 2000).

Another discussion in relation to the larger question of possible transformation of existing discourses and practices in organisations, is what happens when equality activism becomes professionalised and takes on board the popular, contemporary management rhetoric and tools of NPM (New Public Management). There is no common definition of the trends in public administration often summarised in the wider concept of NPM. In short, it refers to the shift in governance from rules and regulations to outcome performance, entrepreneurialism, market orientation and scientific management (Swan and Fox 2010). It has brought with it a culture of auditing (Swan and Fox 2010, Jary 2002) with monitoring, measuring and evaluation of equality such as gender impact assessments; a development in which new skills and competences are required from equality workers. These new equality work practices have sometimes been referred to as “the technicalisation of equality work” (Kothari 2005, Rönblom 2011), in which the main focus of the work becomes the quest for “tools” such as; new models, guides, webpages, tools, checklists and good examples.

Discussions have also focused on potential outcomes of equality workers’ own engagement with professionalisation and managerialism processes. One commonly expressed concern is that equality work risks being co-opted into the dominant, “mainstream” organisational and professional discourses. It therefore loses its critical edge through engagement with these ongoing, de-politicising processes. Elaine Swan and Steve Fox (2010) describe how the discussion on diversity work can be divided into two main and interrelated areas: the first stemming from an ideological point of view and entailing discussions about the different understandings which the term diversity may contain; the second being the “politics of practice debate” (p. 571), which refers to discussions of resistance and co-option towards dominant discourses when engaging with professionalised diversity work. They argue that these debates have largely been built on understandings of diversity work as either social activism or HR practices, i. e. the notion of the “good” social justice versus the “bad” business case argument, or as critical social activism from the outside versus instrumental and uncritical HR practice from the inside. Furthermore, they argue that this binary division may not be very helpful in understanding the micro-practices which diversity workers use. One of the arguments being that there is no simple, generally applicable description of what counts as “political” or “critical” and that social activism may draw on many different arguments and ideologies, which may stem from completely different political stand-

points such as socialist or liberal accounts of the world. According to Swan and Fox, apart from the fact that activism may draw on different types of ideologies, it is also in reality often hard to tell when resistance ends and where co-option starts (or vice versa) in the strategies employed by equality practitioners. Another connected discussion with relevance for the examination of equality strategies is the tendency to understand organisational practitioners as either passive implementers or grim resisters in relation to equality policies. Strategies have thus often been devised to meet with these two “groups”, leaving little space for practitioners as change agents (Howard 2002).

Mainstream theories of the change agent’s role in organisational change have been criticised for assuming change actors to be rational, apolitical, disembodied, decontextualised and autonomous. Tatli and Özbilgin have suggested that an equality officer’s agency should instead be studied, with combined attention to individual, structural, and relational dynamics including the resource and constraint implications of situatedness, relationality, and practices of change agency (Tatli and Özbilgin 2009). Taking into account the broader context as suggested by Tatli and Özbilgin, a possible and perhaps more dynamic understanding of equality practitioners in forming equality strategies for change is the theory of tempered radicals.

Tempered radicals and strategies for change

The binary division between social and political activism from *outsiders* and the co-opted and instrumental methods of the *insiders* leaves little room for change agency. A different and more complex understanding of change from within is the theory of *tempered radicals* described by Meyerson and Scully (1995), and Meyerson (2001a, 2001b). Tempered radicals are employees who acknowledge unfair or unjust practices or conditions in their organisations and who want to change them but who at the same time are loyal and support the overall objectives of the organisation. Tempered radicals use small-win strategies; they seek out small opportunities for change, build alliances and secure support as they go along. They work to create change from the inside. They can be progressive forces at the same time as being constrained by the boundaries set by the organisation and by themselves (Meyerson 2001b). They want to change what they view as unjust and unequal conditions, but work with organisations and not against them (ibid.).

Drawing on three larger empirical studies of diversity work, Swan and Fox (2010) give examples of how equality workers use different strategies to resist current inequality regimes (Acker 2006) in an organisation and how they strive to develop new conditions. They discuss three different types of strategies or micro-practices; the first being what they have termed “discursive resistance” (Swan and Fox 2010 p. 577). This concerns equality workers’ reflexive use of language, where they deliberately chose how to frame an issue with this framing change according to situation. The equality workers studied were aware of the difficulties and risks of using different types of arguments, but at the same time they used the fears and risks as well as the positive connotations associated with different understandings of the concepts used. One ex-

ample was to use various understanding of concepts so that they would sometimes serve as carrots and sometimes as sticks.

The second type of strategy was when equality workers used their own status as “outsiders” in what Swan and Fox call “strategies of embodiment” (p.579). This entails drawing on identities as minority representatives and the tendency to count bodies in diversity work. The term strategies of embodiment means that diversity workers themselves embody the discourse of difference, often as part of diversity ideologies and use this as a mean of changing their organisations. By being different, they challenge the status quo of the organisation (ibid.).

The third type of strategy which Swan and Fox found was when the equality workers deliberately used technologies of organisational management and professionalisation to gain support for their work. This strategy includes using culturally masculinised NPM knowledge and techniques to gain status in the organisation. The equality workers also used the opportunities for new means of presenting, problematising, examining and solving issues at the same time, as they claimed they were aware of the limitations and risks associated with using these techniques. This has also been put forward in another study on equality work in research institutions, where “the rhetoric and practices of new managerialist equal opportunities has helped make visible the problem of ‘equality’” (Walsh 2002, p. 40, also Garforth and Kerr 2009). In certain circumstances, facts and figures can serve as stepping stones and open up sites of resistance (Swan and Fox 2010).

Agneta and Karin were not equality workers in the meaning that they had as their sole mission to work with equality objectives, nor were they “passive implementers” or tempered radicals operating in their organisation without specific objectives for gender and equality related tasks to rely on. The specific strategies in use will in the following sections be discussed from a perspective where elements from different positions as change agents have been influential. In order to explain the outcomes and strategies chosen by the officers in VINNOVA, it is also useful to reconsider the way strategies are usually thought of; often as an orderly and rational decision-making process where the prerequisites and objectives are considered and a strategic plan mapped out in advance. This did not appear to have been the case at VINNOVA. Instead the strategies developed in the work of integrating gender into VINNOVA’s activities display many features of what have been called a small-wins strategy (Weick 1984).

Incremental or small-wins strategies

Incremental change or small-wins strategies have been argued as a possible strategy towards (de)gendering organisations and a way of obtaining gender equality objectives (Charlesworth and Baird 2007, Meyerson 2001a, 2001b, Meyerson and Scully 1995, Weick 1984). One of the considered advantages of the strategy is the fact that changing organisations in a small-step fashion lowers resistance to change. Debra Meyerson suggests that the small-wins strategy is “a powerful way of chipping away the barriers

which hold women back, but without sparking off the kind of commotion that scares people into resistance” (Meyerson 2001a p.126). Small wins is a strategy built on incremental change, meaning small, concrete changes aimed at altering small and largely unnoticed biases deeply embedded in an organisation and whose importance or impact are hardly noticed until they are gone (ibid.). According to Meyerson, a small-wins strategy is useful when the more obvious and clearly discriminatory practices have been dealt with in an organisation and when “the problem with no name” remains, meaning work practices and cultural norms which often initially appear unbiased but which together form a “subtle pattern of systematic disadvantage” (Meyerson 2001a p.128). Other features of the small-win strategy are linked to psychological factors where small wins are believed to make large scale social problems easier to handle in terms of individual stress and anxiety levels. The theory also rests on the idea that the complexity of many social problems makes more radical solutions difficult since the causes of a problem and the consequences of its proposed solutions are both difficult to comprehend and control. The theory of small wins originated with the American psychologist Karl Weick after discussions on the role of social science in relation to how to understand and solve current, pressing social problems (1984). Weick argues that redefining the scale of social problems is important in order to create the capability and necessary psychological prerequisites at both individual and organisational levels. Small wins is “a concrete, complete, implemented outcome of moderate importance. By itself, one small win may seem unimportant. However, a series of wins in small but significant tasks, reveals a pattern which may attract allies, deter opponents, and lower resistance to subsequent proposals.” (Weick 1984 p. 43). According to Weick, the visibility of results are an important part of a small-win strategy, since it attracts new allies and this in turn makes new possibilities and actions possible. Small wins are not a strategy in the classical, logical implementation chain sense. Small wins can be gathered into a retrospective summary but are possessed of a fragmentary character driven by opportunism and dynamically changing situations. They “stir up settings” which makes them impossible to predict since “each subsequent attempt at another win occurs in a different context” (p.44). Much of the strategic actions taken consist of identifying, gathering, and labelling several small changes which are present but unnoticed and which could be labelled under a variety of different names. Weick also suggests that working in a small-win fashion fosters the reflection and learning necessary to solve complex social problems. Meyerson’s (2001b) studies of equality advocates in organisations who put their belief into action in order to change organisations from within (i.e. tempered radicals), often use small win strategies.

Discussion: Gender work in VINNOVA - co-optation or a subversive strategy?

The gender mainstreaming work at VINNOVA was characterised by different types of strategies with different aims and actions jointly forming a specific pattern in the chapter described as three different phases. One conclusion of the discussions in the analysis seminar (when the result from the case study was presented) was that the phases identified and their description appeared correct, however at the same time, they were the result of a retrospective reconstruction. Even though the results might initially appear like a neat and orderly rational strategy, the specific paths taken and the actions chosen were never part of an orderly envisioned or pre-planned strategy. Instead the strategy had grown out of the results of the preceding actions and depended on the support gained from different actors in the organisation. The actions taken were understood as building on each other, the former showing what the next step might be, guided to some extent by an overall objective or vision for the future but primarily by what were regarded as undesirable or current negative conditions in need of change. Another conclusion of the analysis seminar was that the process was iterative in that it was not a linear or chronological process, but rather that the themes of the different phases were seen as circular and recurring. The interviews also showed that the choices made were very much guided by pragmatism, whereas a specific wording used could be changed if, for example, it was deemed to strengthen support for the work in the organisation. In VINNOVA's case, many of the characteristics of small wins were visible. Another characteristic of the work is the strategies of tempered radicals (Scully and Meyerson 1995, Meyerson, 2001) and the specific strategies and actions of practitioners of equality relative to discursive and technicalised forms of resistance (Swan and Fox 2010). Some of findings in this regard will be discussed below.

A strategy of small but visible wins

The small-win strategy was visible in many ways in the gender mainstreaming work in VINNOVA. One example was what was called the visibility strategy; especially what was emphasised by the participants in the joint analysis seminar to produce “*solid products*”, with the analyses of VINNOVA-NYTT, an internally produced news magazine, was seen as an example. Building initiatives on the results of the previous work to create a sense of continuity was also considered important. Moreover, the aim of finding new alliances within the organisation often used connections made possible by other newly gained allies. Another finding which indicated the strategy was built on small wins was the fact that there was no previous envisioned strategy; no plan that had foreseen the paths taken, even though it was possible to summarise the different steps retrospectively. The lack of a “master plan” for the work did not however mean that there was a lack of strategies rather it meant that the plan itself was an emerging process in which adopting to the changing circumstances was part of the strategy.

Discursive resistance, or speaking two languages

It became clear from the interviews and analysis seminar that the vagueness of the terms “gender”, “gender equality”, “gender mainstreaming” and of the concepts of “innovation” and “growth” was recognised by the actors involved in gender mainstreaming work at VINNOVA. Moreover, this vagueness opened up for space for negotiation and was used deliberately. The notion of being “able to speak two languages”, e.g. in terms of both gender and economic growth, social and natural sciences etc., was also considered important in gaining legitimacy, relative to the organisation internally and towards outside gender researchers and collaboration partners. Another situation discussed by the interviewees was whether to refer to “gender equality” in policy documents (which might in some cases be seen as too political) or the more neutral and scientific term “gender” which appealed to the cultural norms of an organisation which mainly had academics as staff and research as its core objective. In other circumstances, for instance when addressing the poor representation of women in science or regarding prospects of research funding, “social justice” was seen as a more justifiable argument and used accordingly.

Using the technologies of NPM to negotiate spaces of resistance

Also clearly visible was the deliberate use of the management techniques of the organisation by the actors involved, such as the everyday planning, monitoring and evaluations techniques used in the organisation at large. For example, the use of the logic impact model and the quest for gender disaggregated data. These techniques were used as platforms for negotiations and resistance by the actors involved. Another aspect believed by Agneta and Karin to be very important was the legitimacy gained by research results backing up the proposed actions, much in line with scientific management ideals. These types of arguments could also be used to question initiatives believed to be gender-blind or where the gender aspects had not been investigated. In the discussion the actors involved argued that they understood the potential risks of applying NPM techniques. For example, the Agency’s general reliance on seemingly gender-neutral statistics and how statistics could sometimes hide gender disparities.

Impact of the political dimension of public organisations

One difference shown in the results from the VINNOVA study compared to private sector equality actors is that those working to develop gender mainstreaming in VINNOVA deliberately used the political implications of working in a public authority to strengthen their work. This was considered very important since direct directives from the government (regardless of policy area) would lead to actions in the Agency and the more precise the directive was, the greater the likelihood of concrete actions and visible results. Agneta and Karin believed that when gender equality was emphasised in the directives to the Agency, the likelihood of active gender equality work was greatly enhanced. The political implications of the work in VINNOVA were also clear in the strategies on how to be visible and engage with outside operations. The actors

involved believed that external visibility strengthened the internal legitimacy in the organisation by increasing external pressure for compliance. Other examples were actions believed to be important from a symbolic perspective, such as being visible at high profile events or taking part in organising high profile events. One example of such high profile event was the decision to participate in the politically important week in Almedalen (on the Swedish island of Gotland). Another was how to collaborate with others outside the organisation, connecting to various public authorities, employers' organisations, universities etc. The impact of public evaluations and peer pressure was also used deliberately by the actors at VINNOVA to increase internal pressure for action. It was agreed in the analysis seminar that when working in a public authority, political objectives, statements and missions in relation to gender equality are very important.

What then can we learn from the Agneta and Karin's strategic impact and their choice of strategies? According to Agneta and Karin and the other actors interviewed in the case study, many of the measures taken for advancing gender mainstreaming work in the Agency were successful. The fact that the strategic choices were guided by pragmatism was in itself considered an important and necessary factor. But various obstacles and complications in the work have also been discussed in the interviews and seminar and sometimes, the work was more difficult. A recurring problem was a common phenomenon in gender equality work and can be understood as the tendency to non-implementation of gender equality objectives in public organisations (Pincus 2002). According to Agneta and Karin this was characterised by reoccurring incidents in the organisation such as plans drawn up but never implemented, policies with no actions drawn up to realise them and specific tasks discussed but never outlined or made someone's specific duty. According to the interviews, another example was work being planned but never given any funds. However, given the large sum available to spend on developing the work this was not a major problem, according to Agneta. She also pointed out that one factor of great importance was the tendency to informal decision-making in the Agency. This could be an opportunity as well as an obstacle because it needed a sense of what to what to do and who to approach, and made an organisational blueprint hard to rely on. As Agneta put it *"Organisations are much more than systems and this makes general models useless"*.

Another problem was raised in the interviews with the actor, in relation to the gender mainstreaming work. There was a tendency amongst other co-workers and senior officers to question the work, using arguments of gender neutrality. Examples from the interviews could be very direct statements from others such as *"We don't work with gender equality at VINNOVA"*, or sometimes more indirect criticism. In the interview with Karin, one example was when one of her senior officers remarked to her that,

"You've put a lot of time into this". Also, according to the actors involved the goal of economic growth was always more of a priority than gender equality objectives in the Agency. This made it necessary to al-

ways use economic growth arguments to support the equality objectives and gender mainstreaming strategy.

The gender mainstreaming work in VINNOVA was an initiative which came about from the “middle” of the organisation; it was neither a bottom-up nor a top-down initiative. This meant that it lacked both the support of top management and commitment and engagement from co-workers in other parts of the organisation. Moreover the gender mainstreaming work was developed, at least in the beginning, outside the regular “chain of command”. This gave it a less powerful position in terms of making decisions and locating resources. On the other hand, it was developed in a strategically important position in that it was able to avoid some of the problems often encountered by more top-down or bottom-up-driven change initiatives and it was possible to develop the work relatively independent.

In the work to integrate a gender perspective, it turned out to be easier to support the development of the specific field of gender and innovation than to move into the mainstream of other areas in the Agency. Some departments had their own specific equality objectives, one example being the specific mission to support women in science. Another was the infrastructure department, which worked to support gendered aspects in accordance with the Swedish 6th Gender Equality Goal. However, according to Agneta the internal organisation for gender work in the mainstream activities was always “hanging loose”. One example of this, according to the interviews, was that the constructed intra-organisational group (JÄMSTRA) never became operative. One explanation for this by the actors involved was the lack of active support from top management. There was also never any real connection or exchange established between the internal work for equal opportunities in the human resources department and the gender mainstreaming work.

The dilemmas of change

The question of co-optation and subversiveness was linked to the overarching question of the “business case” versus the “social justice” perspective; this was recognised and dealt with by the actors involved in different ways. This problem can be understood as an ideological dilemma (Billig et al 1988). The term is derived from discourse theory and based on the notion that knowledge viewed as “common sense” is composed of many contradictory elements which people use to understand themselves and their environment. Dilemmas are ideological in that they provide structure for argumentation and speech by maintaining, legitimising or challenging power relationships. The nature of a dilemma makes it into a type of problem which is impossible to “solve” in reality. Gender equality practitioners encounter many different forms of ideological dilemmas in their practical work (Callerstig and Lindholm 2011). In VINNOVA, the business case was fruitful in that it proposed a gender perspective as central to the achievement of mainstream objectives. The main argument for this was that a gender perspective was a strong requirement, or means, of achieving the objectives of innova-

tion-based growth strategies which were central to the Agency. On the other hand, the social justice argument was the idea that gender equality was an objective in itself. This was strongly grounded in the government's gender equality policies which aimed to make public bodies contribute to equal representation, non-discrimination, economical independence, equally shared family responsibilities etc. The business case was important in creating strong support for the gender mainstreaming work and also proposed that the lack of a gender perspective in, say, research was important to the Agency, rather than the more political aim of obtaining a gender equality perspective. The social justice perspective was important in that gender disparities, e.g. women researcher or women's share of research grants, were easy to highlight and gave another source for legitimacy for the work. Agneta and Karin used both arguments to support their work and often tried to combine them (as in the impact logic model) rather than argue solely for one perspective. Using only the business case risked obscuring existing gendered power relations and inequalities and could thus lead to co-optation with the mainstream, largely gender-blind perspective of innovation, research and growth policies. Using only the social justice argument risked being seen instead as too far from the core activities of the Agency; a pointless body count which would not lead to actual transformation of the Agency's mainstream work.

Previous research has shown that gender equality practitioners often use different strategies and methods in parallel (Squires 2005, Nentwich 2006, Booth and Bennett 2002). The study of VINNOVA's work confirms that the actors involved used a variety of different strategies to resist and change the current inequality regime where the deliberate use of dilemmas, such as those described above, can be seen as a practice of discursive resistance. Both the risks and the advantages of the strategies above are self-evident but the long-term outcomes in terms of change are more unclear, with the results obtained so far being unstable, unpredictable and demanding of continuing attention. Swan and Fox conclude by noting that it is very hard to judge whether strategies like this can be seen as either co-optation or resistance and that a more nuanced understanding is necessary.

Co-optation and resistance can thus be seen as a dilemma in itself. While some co-optation is necessary to enter into the mainstream of policy processes, co-optation also needs to include resistance; this entails subverting underlying and gender blind assumptions from within. The aim of integrating a gender perspective into all activities of the Agency by actors normally involved in the process (the common description of the strategy of gender mainstreaming) has not so far been fully achieved at VINNOVA. The objectives were also adjusted and made more modest in the course of the work, but was this an example of co-option? The expansion of VINNOVA's fields of activities into needs-driven gender research and establishment of gender and innovation as a new research field was in line with the overall objectives of the Agency. However, at the same time it has opened the way to new knowledge and a potential rethinking and gendering of the traditional knowledge of the fields involved. This

might involve transformation of the field of gender research itself; engaging with the mainstream might very well be a two-way street.

In the case of VINNOVA, it is clear that the efforts to integrate a gender perspective have had a substantial impact on the agencies work in many different ways. As of 2012, ten officers at VINNOVA have gender as part of their expert areas in handling research programmes and a large budget has been allocated to the gender work of the Agency. The case study has raised many questions on how the outcomes of gender mainstreaming can be evaluated. Should hard outcomes be judged, such as budget allocations and new competence areas, or perhaps the establishment of a new field of knowledge integrating gender with prevailing mainstream objectives, as in VINNOVA? Or is it when a gender perspective has been integrated into the formal operating systems of an organisation or perhaps a shift in people's awareness, beliefs and attitudes. Perhaps it is the myriad small wins - gender biases so minor that they remain largely unnoticed until changed? These questions need further discussion.

The case study has also underlined the necessity of studying the implementation of gender mainstreaming and that fact that public servants' impact on the change process needs more attention when analysing gender mainstreaming. The open-endedness of implementation and learning processes such as gender mainstreaming, where ambiguous policy goals are being translated into action by actors of public organisations, is largely unpredictable. In consequence, unintended effects are inevitable, but they are not inherently good or bad so much as part of the risk of unpredictable change processes. By studying the micro-practices and strategies developed by the actors involved and the outcomes they lead to, we can learn more about the preconditions for change. However, predicting or prescribing recipes for change will remain a hazardous business.

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Effects from gender mainstreaming

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An important issue in recent years in the gender equality field deals with effects produced by gender equality initiatives. Reports of difficulties such as resistance, obstacles and a lack of resources are common and have occurred for as long as gender equality work has been carried out. Other difficulties which have been highlighted are how gender equality work runs the risk of being reduced to technocratic methods rather than dealing with the content of policies applied (Squires 2007, Walby 2009, Rönnblom 2011). Another related discussion, has dealt with the fact that gender equality initiatives are often run as short-term projects in which good results can be achieved, but where the work ceases when funds run out, thereby limiting the scope for long-term effects (Lindholm 2011). Research has at the same time shown that gender equality from an historical perspective has brought great progress in many areas of society (Hearn 2012, Walby 2009). This appears to be something of a paradox. Does gender equality development take place parallel with – or in spite of gender equality work? Or is there something in gender equality initiatives that we are unable to capture? In this chapter, on the basis of studies of practical work with gender equality, we wish to present and analyse attempts to solve the complex social problem that gender inequality represents.

The aim of the chapter is to deepen the reasoning concerning the question of what results and effects we can see from gender equality initiatives, what we cannot see, and the reasons for this. We take as our starting point a study of the work on following up results and effects from gender mainstreaming in an initiative on gender mainstreaming in Swedish municipalities and county councils. Can there be results and effects from gender mainstreaming which are not known, or which co-workers do not understand the importance of the

so-called surprising and unexpected effects? We also want to study whether *undesired* results and effects take place, and how these can be managed.

What is a result, and an effect?

The question of results and effects of gender mainstreaming initiatives is important for a number of reasons. Studies of results and effects are necessary to make possible further development of the work on gender equality (Moser 2005). For example, this can involve an understanding of what results are necessary to achieve in order to bring about the long-term effects aimed at. What then is a result, and what is an effect? Both results and effects are described in different ways by different authors.

One way of understanding results is that they cover everything that comes out of an organisation or an activity in terms of performance and effects (Lindgren 2006). Performances are the products or services which are produced. Effects on the other hand are not what is done in an organisation, but rather *the consequences* of what is done (Lindgren 2006, p. 50). Effects may be short-term and long-term, namely those that can be seen more or less immediately, and those that can be seen with a time lag. How then can complex development work such as gender equality be followed up if the focus is on sustainability – that is long-term effects, in particular surprising and unexpected effects?

In the following section, we will present how we approached the question of gathering material and also some fundamental starting points concerning results and effects of gender equality initiatives. This is followed by a report of the study, and a discussion of our findings. The chapter concludes with some reflections looking to the future.

What approach did we take?

The chapter builds on a case study of gender mainstreaming work carried out by the City of Gothenburg within the framework of the programme for Hållbar Jämställdhet (Sustainable Gender Equality). The programme was run over the period 2009-2013 by Swedish municipalities and county councils with the support of funds from the government. Essentially gender mainstreaming can be described as a strategy for implementing gender equality policy goals.

The idea is that a gender equality perspective should exist in all parts of the policy process (from planning to evaluation) and be applied by those who normally work with these different stages. The study is based on some 15 interviews with persons working in the municipal management office, the education administration, schools, preschools, and the municipal council of the City of Gothenburg. The interviews were carried out during 2012. They were semi-structured, and we started with an interview guide covering the theme of management, follow-up and development, responsibility and roles, as well as effects. Participants from the City of Gothenburg have been involved in different phases of the study, and we arranged two analysis and reflections seminars where results were presented and discussed. The research was carried out interactively with an emphasis on creating a joint learning process (Callerstig and Lindholm 2011).

Some starting points

Gender equality is a broad and changing political area. Gender equality and inequality can be related to issues such as the following; representativeness (distribution of women and men in different contexts), resource distribution (how societal resources are distributed between women and men), attitudes and values (what is regarded as female and male, and what value is attributed to this), norms (what are the norms in planning and implementation of different activities), power (financial and political power from a gender perspective), relational (social issues), legal (human rights, violence, discrimination, harassment), individual identity (how we perceive and act based on our gender identity), as well as intersectionality (the way in which gender interacts with and is related to other social categories).

Practical work on gender equality often begins with a mapping of existing inequality in an organisation. Gender based differences are analysed, and a plan of what needs to be done is drawn up if this is considered necessary. In order to analyse gender differences, theories about the importance of gender in different contexts and criteria for evaluating gender differences are needed such as national and municipal gender equality goals, as well as special goals in different societal areas, such as the school. There are also requirements on employers and education organisers to actively counteract gender discrimination and promote gender equality amongst employees –

and pupils, as well as students in accordance with the Act on Prohibition Against Discrimination.

Gender equality problems are often complicated. The types of problem complexes which gender equality problems can resemble have sometimes been referred to as Type 3 problems, multi-dimensional problems, *messy* or *wicked problems*. They are difficult to solve because of complex causal relationships, and when we try to solve them we sometimes produce a new problem as a result (Rittel and Webber 1973). It can be difficult to determine what are the causes and effects of gender inequality, and the problems often lack a clear beginning and end point (Acker 2000). This complexity means that theories on change are difficult to determine in advance, since the results obtained from gender equality initiatives are often those that indicate what the next stage in the change process should be (Meyerson and Scully 1995, Callerstig 2012).

The wide ranging area of issues that can be associated with gender equality, as discussed above, also means that there are many *different* problem concerning how results and effects can be followed up. Gender mainstreaming requires an understanding of processes of change in organisations. And also about the way in which gender equality perspectives should have an impact on decisions made in different organisational areas. Earlier research has shown that *gender mainstreamers* (Callerstig and Lindholm 2011, Callerstig 2012) must deal with many difficult dilemmas and standpoints in their attempts to apply a gender equality perspective in mainstream tasks. Effects are often difficult to anticipate, not least because the work can involve the introduction of a gender equality perspective in areas where a gender perspective earlier had been absent and where both practical experience and earlier research was lacking.

Measuring change in relation to gender and gender equality often leads to numerous questions such as: how can we identify qualitative changes which cannot be easily measured? How can change that is affected by a large number of different interpretations of gender equality be followed up? A narrow interpretation of gender equality may reduce it to purely the management of discrimination, whilst a broader interpretation could entail the application of an intersectional understanding (Lombardo, Meier and Verloo 2009). Gender equality can also be regarded as an instrument for achieving some other goals, such as economic growth (Rönnblom 2008).

Different approaches to gender equality have an impact on how we measure results. Quantitative goals, such as increasing the number of women or men, may be simple to measure and provide rapid results, but it does not provide an answer to what the effects of such measures will be in the longer term? Differences in interpretations and definitions of gender equality are dependent on what is regarded as a gender equality problem, and when gender equality can be said to have been achieved, is it when women and men are treated identically, or is it when different solutions for women and men are introduced, or perhaps both, or do solutions vary from situation to situation? Should goals be set short-term and based on the current situation (which might risk reinforce existing gender differences), or should work be directed towards a more long-term and visionary goal? Is it enough to achieve equal formal rights and opportunities (formal gender equality), or should the goal be gender equality in results (substantive gender equality)?

Another question is whether gender equality should be regarded as a goal per se, or as a means of improving work towards other goals (Callerstig 2011). Table 1 shows different orientations in terms of how gender equality goals can be formulated. The orientations can be regarded as dilemmas in the practical work of gender mainstreaming (Callerstig, Lindholm, Sjöberg and Svensson 2011).

TABLE 11.1 Examples of different orientations in gender equality work.

Aim	Instrumental perspective Gender equality work is an instrument for achieving other goals.	Intrinsic value perspective Gender equality work is an instrument for achieving gender equality.
Problems	Similarity vs difference perspective Gender inequality means that women and men are not treated the same, or the reverse perspective that existing differences are not taken into account.	Varying and context dependent Gender inequality is continuously created and based e.g. on different contexts and power positions.
Goals	Short-term goals Gender equality work should be based on existing and acute problems.	Long-term goals Gender equality work should be based on a vision and the causes of a problem (rather than symptoms).
Results	Formal gender equality Gender equality as formal rights and opportunities.	Substantive gender equality Gender equality as a result or outcome.

One example of an instrumental perspective may be that gender equality becomes a route to the achievement of other goals, such as to establish a tranquil and safe working environment in school. An intrinsic value perspective means that gender equality is a goal in itself, such as to establish a more even equal representation of women and men. What then is to be regarded as problematic from a gender equality perspective? Does gender inequality mean that men and women are treated differently (based on gender stereotypes) or perhaps the same (based on a problematic norm), or should the starting point be that gender inequality is a question of continuous “doing” and situation bound? An orientation towards formal gender equality may, for example, lead to gender neutral and non-discriminatory processes of setting wages. Substantive gender equality however would mean gender equality in results, such as reducing differences in total incomes and wealth between genders.

Are there risks involved in measuring? The requirement for quantifiable measures and goal management, where all work is targeted towards achieving the goal, can be said to aggravate and conceal the important route to the goal, and contribute to issues such as power and equal treatment being overlooked in the process (Walby 2005, Wittbom 2009). As noted in the introductory chapter, there is also a risk that one-sided focus on highlighting failures contributes to a “neo-liberal steering mentality” where the response to perceived failure is met by increasing demands for “measurable” results and effects. It is also relevant to ask precisely why gender equality initiatives appear to be rigorously scrutinised whilst other initiatives might remain unexamined (Sundin and Rapp 2011). Others consider that the emphasis on measurability, evidence and fact-based development also incorporates opportunities which provide new negotiating positions and grants access to gender equality experts and gender research in areas that were gender has earlier been absent (Swan and Fox 2010).

Gender equality work often deals with questioning existing priorities and distribution of resources, and influence, which makes the work particularly challenging. Including questions concerning results and effects from a gender perspective in evaluations can be one means of introducing gender in a final phase of a policy process where a gender equality perspective was earlier lacking (Bustelo 2003).

It is evident that there are risks associated with focusing on measuring

effects, at the same time as there are opportunities arising from studying results and the effects which they generate, in order to develop future gender mainstreaming work.

Gender mainstreaming in the City of Gothenburg

The City of Gothenburg has for several years been active in integrating a gender perspective into its public activities. Prior to our data collection the City had decided to gender mainstream its web-based coordination system for handling planning, budgets and follow-up (Rappet). Gender equality occurs in the City partly as a prioritised (specific) goal, and partly as an overarching and horizontal goal. The goals have varied somewhat over time. The prioritised goals applicable for 2011 and 2012 are that “the proportion of gender equality assured activities in boards and companies should increase.” By means of Rappet new opportunities were created for following up and evaluating work on gender equality. The municipal management office was coordinating and supporting the development work. Different managers had the responsibility for transforming gender equality work into concrete goals for the organisation and following these up, in Rappet. In addition, there are all those working in the municipality who have the general task of implementing gender equality goals in daily work with the inhabitants of the city.

In our study of the results and effects observed in the City of Gothenburg, we would like to highlight some aspects that we attach particular importance to. These are that work on gender mainstreaming produces effects that are difficult to measure as they do not fit into traditional (logical-rational) measuring systems. The effects are often hidden or embedded in general processes and organisational development, and sometimes appear only in informal and qualitative descriptions. We have noted that informants experience gender mainstreaming as leading to effects of changing awareness, but not in terms of changes in resource distribution. We have also seen a number of factors which impact follow-up work. Organisational structures, as well as different meanings attributed to gender equality work at different “levels” in the organisation impacts on what can and should be measured. Other conclusions are that a lack of interest in or opposition to gender equality work makes the follow-up of effects more difficult. There is

also unawareness and an inability to analyse the observed gender differences. We shall discuss these conclusions in greater depth.

EFFECTS REFLECT INITIATIVES

The majority of persons interviewed stated that one of the clearest effects of gender equality work in the City of Gothenburg was an increased awareness amongst employees in the municipality. Awareness is often expressed in activities that are difficult to capture in results – such as a more gender equal “welcome or reception”. One example is how girls and boys are treated in different education situations. One interviewee states that one result was that teachers, when their attention was drawn to the question of gender perspective, impose more similar requirements on girls and boys in their teaching. This may mean that when they become more aware of the issues, they appreciate that in their teaching role they are mediating unspoken norms and attitudes about boys and girls in relation to their skills and level of knowledge. At the local level, the staff can see the results of gender equality work, especially in relation to greater awareness amongst staff and changes in the behavior of children and staff. However, it is easier to measure the experiences of staff than changes amongst clients, children or youth as was stated by a number of interviewees.

I think we see results from teachers, those who are aware and actively work with their approach, point this out on all possible occasions, I see this as an important result that this reflection always exists and it comes quite quickly when you are aware. [...] Then I cannot answer for the others, the results amongst the children. I can't really answer that. Of course, we see that children play better, and yes, we see that they have extended their repertoire, I can also see this as a result.

(HEAD OF PRESCHOOL)

Greater awareness and knowledge is highlighted by many as a crucial foundation for work on gender equality. Heads of preschool say that when they document their activities, they can see a change, but they can't put their finger on *how* they would actually measure it. They say they have their goals

and try to fulfill the goals and carry out their activities. On the other hand, not very much is done to document the work or the effects that occur.

Initiatives such as those in education and the focus on how users “are treated” have produced effects which correspond to the focus put on initiatives to raise awareness among the employees. Similar initiatives studying how resources are distributed between users, or what influence women and men as users have on the organisation have not been carried out to any greater extent.

In cases where gender differences concerning power and resource distribution have been observed, this has not had any impact in the organisation. During the interviews, it emerged that different priorities displayed by men and women were not measured in the municipality, even though differences could be shown regarding one example being decisions the municipality takes concerning larger initiatives such as building arenas and the like. Another example given in an area which could be measured was the uneven distribution of financial resources between, for instance, female dominated and male dominated education programmes.

ORGANISATION DEVELOPMENT EFFECTS

Organisation development effects, arising as a consequence of raising awareness were according to the interviewees common, but these effects were only reported marginally, and not required in existing follow-up systems. One such effect could be that the staff through greater awareness of gender equality had reviewed routines in a school and changed their choice of playing materials. In the education administration, several interviewees believe that there was a problem that development of activities in a local unit was not covered in the reporting system, and that this type of result was not asked for.

When I'm out, I notice that they are working, but in some way stay there. This is a problem, e.g. in schools and it should be pushed up to the administration and incorporated in their organisation plans. They don't know how to report such matters. The system is very rigid and inflexible.

(EMPLOYEE IN EDUCATION ADMINISTRATION)

A person from the preschool also highlighted problems related to the static nature of the reporting system:

Rappet is a static system. Questions concerning how people are received are input as free text, but this can be difficult as the next level may not want to handle the free text. Results experienced by children disappear in the reporting system.

(HEAD OF PRESCHOOL)

INFORMAL REPORTS ABOUT EFFECTS

Although activity development effects were not reported in the official system, we saw that informally in the organisation there were many different stories from gender equality work. The reports from the work are important for the staff, and they cover descriptions of effects arising from gender equality work.

The qualitative stories we tell each other and other preschools, I can tell the parents and my manager, I'm more than happy to do this. I usually do this because I want to show the results [...] There is no system saying how this should be reported, it depends on my own energy and curiosity about others. It would be really good if it were possible to have time-limited learning dialogues, in a number of meetings. I think that is good, all learning dialogues are good and can lead to something.

(HEAD OF PRESCHOOL)

Qualitative stories as the interviewee mentioned above can be used as a form of learning between educationalists. One example is a story that was used in a preschool in Gothenburg, about "Stringing Pearls." The story shows how enhanced awareness about gender and gender equality is important in terms of attitudes to pupils:

One day at the preschool, one of the children wanted to string beads on a necklace ... and soon several others wanted to do the same ... when I have about five children aged 4–5, girls and boys, and I am helping them to use the thread and needles, up comes Filip, aged 4½ to the table, he puts his elbows on the table, with his chin in his hands and says; "Boys don't like threading

necklaces!" And looks at me ... I look at him and say: "Filip you're the one who doesn't like threading beads" and he nods ... but then you should say "I don't like threading beads". He doesn't comment... the other children look and listen keenly to me and Filip. I continue happy and positive; "At this preschool, any child who wants can thread beads". I pick up Filip's jar with a necklace he started some time ago, when I look down in his jar and see how far he's come, then Filip reminds me that he doesn't want to thread necklaces! I know, I answer, and put his jar on the table, after saying I've noticed this and that he's come quite a long way with his necklace and doesn't have so much left...

Around the table, Filip's best friend sits threading a necklace and looks questioningly at me, and I ask the children if anyone wants figure shaped beads? Figure shaped beads are always popular, and everyone wants them. I put some beads in each child's jar and ask Filip if I should put any in his jar and he nods. When Viktor gets his beads, then I take a pink dolphin out of the jar which ends up in Viktor's own jar and say: "Well, look, now you've got a dolphin". Viktor answers, yes! And looks grateful and threads it onto his necklace, and I think I see a critical look from Filip? The children continue threading their necklaces, and Filip also starts to thread beads into his necklace, I make no comment. He asks if I can tie it when he's ready and I answer: "Of course, but Filip you're already ready, wonderful!" Filip goes away with his necklace and when he meets my colleague, he shows his necklace and says: "Look, what I've made". The colleague feels the necklace and says: "BUT, how clever you ARE Filip!". Filip walks proudly over and puts his necklace in his locker and wants to take it home with him!

(STORY WRITTEN AND TOLD BY ANN LINDQVIST, PRESCHOOL TEACHER,
AMHULTSGÅRDEN, TORSLANDA)

Stories are used in different ways in the organisation, sometimes to mediate knowledge between persons in the same professional group, and sometimes as a way of illustrating what gender equality work "deals with" for different decision-makers – inside and outside the organisation. According to the interviewees, the stories put "meat on the bones" and were often used as a way of showing the relevance of work and motivating different actors, such as politicians.

Sometimes stories are shared about existing gender inequality and also about resistance to remedial work. One argument that came up was that

stories about failure are important, but that this is not something which employees like to share in official contexts. The reason is that the person responsible for the work could be negatively impacted. The stories are regarded as important by the interviewees in our study, since they concretise the problem and its solutions, and also relate what the effects were. At the same time as there is a lack of knowledge about how the effects of gender equality work can be captured in formal systems, a number of stories illustrate what gender equality has led to. The stories in our study cover both intended and unintended effects, they are examples of an oral tradition and express qualitative effects that do not fit into the current follow-up system in the City of Gothenburg.

GENDER MAINSTREAMING IN DIFFERENT PARTS OF THE ORGANISATION

Yet another result from our study is that the hierarchical organisational structure in the City of Gothenburg gives rise to special challenges concerning following up the effects of gender mainstreaming.

Public organisations plan, carry out and follow-up their activities in several different stages and at different levels. This could take place at a political level, in the form of overarching coordination and follow-up, or at a local level closer to the activities. In our research, we highlight how work on gender mainstreaming in the municipality differs between local and central levels in the organisation, as well as the relationship between them. Table 11.2 shows differences and similarities which we found concerning gender mainstreaming. For instance, there are different perceptions of work on gender mainstreaming at different levels, which is of importance in determining what results can be seen. From the local perspective, work is based on directives to the organisation, and also central follow-up systems. From the central perspective, it is important to understand how the result of (specific) local development work can be used to manage and develop work in the city. This means that specific experiences need to be asked for, generalised and applied more generally at different levels. Important in creating long-term effects is also the importance of an intermediate level, such as the administration, a board or a city district.

TABLE 11.2 Follow-up of gender mainstreaming in a municipality based on three perspectives – central, intermediate and locally in the organisation.

	Central level	Intermediate level	Local level
Goals	Development of all service areas.	Development of a service area.	Local development.
What can be seen in the follow-up?	Differences between gender equality work in different service areas in the municipality.	Differences between gender equality work in different activity areas in one service area (e.g. education-administration).	Gender equality work in local activities and gender equality when receiving users. "Small goals are important".
Obstacles	Difficult to understand contextual conditions affecting results. Lag in release of data.	Difficult to understand contextual conditions affecting results. How to weigh up central goals – in relation to local conditions?	Difficult to see how local work relates to circumstances outside the local unit.
Knowledge	Organisation and the management system, working methods, gender equality and gender equality strategies.	Gender equality work in a specific area, national goals, rules and also the gender equality goals of the municipality.	Local circumstances and how gender is done in practice.

Table 11.2 shows how gender mainstreaming becomes context dependent and related to organisational levels. At a central level it is possible to see differences between gender equality work in many different service sectors in the municipality. The disadvantage is that it may be complicated to make correct analyses without qualitative data available. At the local level often the "small goals" for the local school or preschool are important, whilst it may be difficult to describe the work in a more generalised way. Difficulties at the intermediate level in administration are understanding the context where effects occur.

Gender mainstreaming is run at different rates in different parts of the municipality, and inertia to change is stronger at higher levels. Questions concerning priorities must be taken up at a higher level and decisions take longer to make. Local levels can see effects more rapidly, but the impact is often limited to their own units. It may also be difficult to create an understanding of analyses at an aggregate level based on different perspectives of the organisation was one aspect that emerged in the interviews.

We never get anything from the people, we get it after it's been screened.
We never meet people, it is only through follow-up reports that we get our information.

(EMPLOYEE CITY MANAGEMENT)

At the intermediate level, detailed accounts about the work are not always interesting, rather the major features are analysed. It is possible to compare at the same time different and similar activities, and see in what ways they differ.

I would like to get a picture of whether there has been a change, but don't want to be overwhelmed by a mass of data.

(INTERMEDIATE MANAGER)

One disadvantage may be that it is difficult to get a complete picture of what goes on in the local service units, at the same time as this is necessary for managing development. At the local level, development of gender equality work focuses on a specific activity. Here it is important to have a close understanding and follow activities through "small goals". It may be difficult to describe effects achieved locally, and how they are used to develop the organisation.

We must have small goals which we can implement. It may be the case that we can review all the books we have at the preschool, and gender quality assure them. There should be a breadth in the range of books. One can continue looking at toys, and pictures on the walls, etc. What we have understood and what we see as results are what children meet in their everyday reality, the material we buy affects children, the books we read, and how we read them. Small things like this.

(HEAD OF PRESCHOOL)

In the interviews different effects were pointed out for users, such as the following:

- teachers' handling of pupils and preschool children
- increasing range of choice options in activities in the preschool

- support for pupils choosing a non-gender typical education
- better working environment for both girls and boys in preschool and school

Above all, it is about the “soft effects” which are a result of increased knowledge and changing attitudes amongst the city’s staff. Our study shows that there are a number of obstacles to achieving effects, as well as following up effects that have been achieved (both positive and negative). We have seen that there is a problem with a lack of communication between different parts – upwards and downwards – in the organisation. A lack of communication in an organisation can have a negative impact on gender equality work as it makes it more difficult to get support and participation (Halford 1992). Resistance or indifference to gender equality work is given as one explanation by interviewees as to why it is difficult to measure results, and this is confirmed by earlier studies into gender equality work in Swedish municipalities (Pincus 2002).

DIFFICULTIES IN FOLLOWING UP

Many interviewees point out that what is measured is what’s easy to measure, such as how many courses are run, rather than the quality of the courses. The majority of interviewees are doubtful about measuring the effects of the work. Measurement takes place primarily in traditional and “soft areas”, such as school and health care, where experience and knowledge exists from before. The interviews have shown that a lack of knowledge, as well as shortcomings in the material for analysis and how gender equality should be measured exists at all levels in the organisation. Interviewees referred to changes that they can see in the organisation, but they can’t put their finger on how they would measure this. One problem, taken up by an interviewee from the education administration, is that the requirement for measurable goals may run the risk of ignoring important parts as they are considered difficult to evaluate.

[...] Important things are instead removed from action plans because they don’t have measurable goals.

(EMPLOYEE IN EDUCATION ADMINISTRATION).

Interviewees think that shortcomings in the system are sometimes connected with the fact that it is only managers who communicate with each other between different levels of the organisation.

[...] One manager writes to another manager, who then reports on a number of different activities and these should then be compiled into a report.

(EMPLOYEE CITY MANAGEMENT)

There are difficulties for staff at the central level collecting all the statistics from all parts of the city to understand contexts and local settings. The quotation below gives an example of this.

It is difficult on the basis of aggregate data to build up a complete picture, the various units think we don't understand anything.

(EMPLOYEE CITY MANAGEMENT)

Several interviewees consider that following up results can support the work, and that this gives rise to new issues (and measurements). According to the interviewees, there is a progression in gender equality work, where it is possible to see development taking place in the types of questions made, and in what is followed up in gender equality work. This can reflect changes in gender equality work – from more rudimentary questions about gender representation to studies of gendering processes. Another interviewee says that it is possible to see a clear distinction in how things are now done based on results that have been achieved. Statistics by gender are asked for, and you go further and put new questions.

Work must be done in steps, first we had education initiatives, but that was not sufficient, now we have statistics disaggregated by gender, and now questions about how funds are allocated. You have to take small leaps, but first there must be conditions for making analyses.

(EMPLOYEE CITY MANAGEMENT)

The risks of measuring and tiredness from doing this is mentioned by several persons, as well as the difficulties of changing structures by working through the ordinary systems.

Follow-up is one thing, it is strict and we should invest in it, but we shouldn't "over-interpret" it, the system is good but it is only a part. But this involves many decisions that cannot be made via a system – it goes via people.

(EMPLOYEE CITY MANAGEMENT)

Several of those we interviewed consider that the follow-up system in the city is somewhat problematic, as results are seldom fed back. Learning takes place in another way – primarily as an exchange of experience in "face-to-face" formats between practitioners sharing similar tasks. Examples mentioned are head teachers meeting, preschool heads meeting, and teachers in a school forming a group to work together to apply a gender perspective in their teaching. According to some interviewees, these meetings can be further developed in terms of gender equality to facilitate learning between the different perspectives of the organisation. At the same time gender equality work is often run outside regular work, and exchange of experience and learning are generally under-developed.

Hidden effects

It is time to return to the discussion on what effects can be seen from gender mainstreaming. We consider that the answer is not unambiguous. On the one hand, gender mainstreaming is difficult. It involves complex problems and encounters resistance in the organisation. There is a lack of knowledge of gender equality issues, of how they can be studied and analysed. On the other hand, the initiative on gender mainstreaming in the City of Gothenburg has taken the initial steps, training has been carried out, awareness of the staff has increased, and studies of their own activities have been initiated. Effects of organisational development are reported by the staff. Earlier research shows that work on change takes time, and it is still too early to draw any firm conclusions. We have seen that there is a discrepancy between what effects are expected and how they are measured, and the effects which actually occur, and how they are reported.

How should the work in the City of Gothenburg be interpreted? The study shows that there are a number of different effects, both intended and unintended, which for different reasons are not described as effects in the follow-ups that have been carried out. Below we discuss some explanations of the results, and also the reasons why these are sometimes “not captured”.

In the study of gender mainstreaming, we have noted the problem of measuring and analysing gender equality in organisations, and at the same time found examples of different stories about work on change. We see the stories as an opportunity for developing the work of studying the effects of gender mainstreaming.

Stories and the learning that occurs in different groups of people sharing the same experiences and tasks at a workplace can contain elements reflecting their own identity, as well as experiences from practical work. A story is more than just the release of information, it provides scope for both context and feelings.

Stories can be a very powerful way of representing and conveying complex, multi-dimensional ideas. Well-designed, well-told stories can convey both information and emotion, both the explicit and the tacit, both the core and the context.

(SNOWDEN, 2000)

Stories can be used for studies of an organisation's existing gender structures, such as by sharing and reflecting over individual experiences of gender inequality, as well as facilitating collective learning around the tacit knowledge that exists in individual change strategies (Rindfleish, Sheridan and Kjeldal 2009). For instance, as in the example of “Stringing Beads” they can show how pedagogues work on building bridges and questioning attitudes about gender in teaching.

The stories often contain emotional and intuitive elements that can contribute to creating change (Rindfleish, Sheridan and Kjeldal 2009). Stories can be used to increase participation in work on change, and follow-up at the organisational level, and to study specific initiatives based on contextual factors that can have an impact on outcomes. Both are important starting points from a gender perspective. They can also help with change work by showing alternative interpretations of different phenomena, problematise

norms taken for granted, and also give an insight into how persons in marginalised groups are thinking (Lara 1999). Stories can also facilitate relearning of earlier patterns of behaviour where parts of what was learned consist of tacit or implicit knowledge which is difficult to influence based on traditional models of knowledge transfer (Sole and Wilson 2003).

The problem of using stories can be that of taking into account all the different stories that exist concerning a specific phenomenon (Buchanan and Dawson 2007), and also why and by whom a story has been shared. Critical issues about power relations and aims must be a part of the analysis. There is a risk that stories become an alibi to demonstrate that something is being done, and then they are used incorrectly as a symbol to show effective work on change. Story data analysed systematically, and based on different theories and models, can be verified with the help of other results, which reduces the risk of incorrect assessments, such as when good stories become an alibi for the organisation (McClintock 2004ab; Czarniawska 1997). If experiences from one example of gender equality work are used to develop work in another part of the organisation, or in another organisation, it is important to bear in mind the specific context from which the example originated.

Another clear experience in Gothenburg was that gender equality problems are complex and must be handled in different ways at different levels in an organisation. The study shows that differences between gender equality work at different levels are large, and that follow-up systems do not take sufficient account of this. Differences in what are the main tasks in different parts of an organisation, for instance, between planning and practical activities must be managed. Small local results need to be captured. Different interpretations of gender equality, as well as the complexity of the issues create a tendency to solve gender equality problems in small steps. Steps which lead to desired effects are difficult to anticipate and require an openness to surprising effects. The effects of gender mainstreaming are unpredictable since work on change is per se difficult to predict (Callerstig 2012). In our case study, we have seen examples of goals being removed as they were difficult to measure. The requirement for measurability has an unintended, unpredictable and negative effect.

One way of understanding why the effects of gender mainstreaming are so difficult to measure is to regard them as *embedded* in organisations' regular processes and follow-up systems, and also in the staff's daily and informal

routines. Changes which take place due to gender mainstreaming often take place within the frame of regular work. This means that the effects are not necessarily reported as a consequence of gender equality work.

One example of this is the school which reported a more tranquil and safe working environment and a reduction in complaints from pupils, but this improvement was not linked to the gender mainstreaming efforts that had been undertaken. In the future, a better work climate for pupils could lead to a reduction in gender differences both as regards performance and that fewer drop out from programmes they have started. Other examples are when gender equality work is made into a part of regular work on quality, that is applying a gender equality perspective to the goals of the organisation leads to higher quality of the service provided to citizens, but in what way this would lead to an improvement in terms of gender equality problems at a macro level is less clear for those involved. Other examples are small improvements, such as how forms are designed, premises located, how material in the preschool is used and so on. The long-term effects of all these smaller changes are difficult to predict and specify. They are often based on an argument that it is wrong to treat people differently on the grounds of gender, unless there are good reasons rather than on a theory of what could be the effects in the long-term.

The lack of a gender perspective in planning and implementation, as well as in the follow-up of policy initiatives can give rise to what Evert Vedung in the introduction to this book calls unintended effects. It can also provide explanations for the lack of intended effects, or negative and undesired effects. There is thus every reason to reflect over what type of effects are “seen” with and without a gender perspective in all forms of efforts to measure effects.

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