

## Serbian Gender Working Group Study Visit to SALAR 17<sup>th</sup> -18<sup>th</sup> of October 2012

### Day 1

#### Jelena Drenjanin, vice president of “Moderatkvinnorna”

“Moderatkvinnorna” is a network for women within “Moderaterna” (The Moderate party, a Conservative-Liberal party) and was founded in 1912. The network’s purpose is to encourage more women to political engagement. This is done through leadership-courses for women where rhetoric, debate, advocacy and ideology are taught. It is seen both as a personal and a professional development and the goal is to get more women in senior positions.

Jelena explained that even though women are proposed work they often turn them down as they lack the self-confidence that is needed. Here the leadership course is needed. She thinks it is important to educate women about rules, laws and what is expected from them so they can feel prepared and confident.

Jelena also talked about education. In Sweden, as in many other countries, girls in general are doing better than boys. But there is also the question of ethnicity. In general, Swedish girls are top performers and boys with a different ethnical background (immigrated or with immigrant parents) perform poorly. How can we help these boys, as poor performance in school is a risk factor for committing crime later in life?

In Swedish schools women are in majority among employees, there are for example only 3 % men in preschool/nursery schools. How do we attract men? This is a challenge as nursery schools lack the status of schools and men wanting to work as preschool teachers are afraid of being accused as paedophiles. Another obstacle is the preschool itself, according to Jelena men are seen as rivals. However, a project shows that men have a lot of potential and can bring new ideas into the existing, sometimes conservative, organisation. But also parents can be a problem when they lack the trust for these men taking care of their children. One way of dealing with this is to have a window where you change the nappies. Through the transparency reliance is created.

The Swedish conservative/liberal government has introduced tax relieves for cleaning and other housework related services for families. This stimulates more women to start their own businesses. The government has also invested 1 billion SEK to stop men’s violence against women, for example by improving the support for victims. There is also a new law on “grooming” and there’s been a campaign to educate parents about this.

In Sweden every second marriage ends in divorce. As a result many children spend one week with their mother and the other with their father. How does this affect the children? Jelena explained this is a rather new trend and there has been no (or at least not enough) research done on this. The important thing is to listen to the children and their needs. From the age of 12 children can take part in court. In the end, one has to make a choice and decide what is the least bad for the children.

What does it look like in “Moderaterna”: are men in majority? Is it authoritarian and there for difficult for women? Jelena explained that is not the case and that women can be found on all types of positions in the party.

## Helena Spets, Gender expert at SALAR

Helena talked about the main principles of change and how to succeed with gender equality work. First it is important to identify the problem and to understand the problem properly before trying to solve it. After the attempt of solving it, it is very important to evaluate. Through evaluation one can learn and develop. The next step is then to rethink the problem from the point of view of your new knowledge, and from here start over again so that there will be a rising spiral of development and change!

It is also important to start by small steps rather than huge leaps as the risk of failure is larger when one tries to do too much at once. However, it is important to have both short-term and long-term goals, and to have the ambition and hope to be able to take the *huge* leap one day.

Inequality depends on power structures and societal norms obstructing us. Hence, if you meet resistance in your gender equality work, see it as a good sign as it means you have started to influence the power structure. You are on your way!

But, what does the resistance look like? The worst fear is not the others' but your own. Training is therefore important and to challenge yourself. This will help you to understand both the resistance and the problem.

Helena pointed out that many people and organisations work with preparations and analyses but few actually act. It's important to not forget about the results! One municipality cannot do everything, especially as there are so many external actors and factors influencing, but one can always change something.

Helena also emphasised the importance of not only adding the chocolate (gender equality) but to properly mix it into the cake: or, to gender mainstream and make gender equality part of the whole organisation and its decision-making processes.

As an ending Helena used photos and pictures to show how gender inequality is created. For instance she showed "congratulations for your baby"- cards . One was pink and suggested that the girl baby is pretty and will grow "as beautiful as she can be", while the other card was blue and told us the boy baby came into this world with strength and a will to discover it.

## Stina Svensson, national spokesperson of "Feministiskt initiativ" (F!)

Why is a feministic party needed in Sweden? Stina explained that despite Sweden's reputation of being the most gender equal country they reckoned, in 2004, that questions concerning gender equality had reached a halt or even a started to go backwards. F! was created by anti-racists, hbtq (homo-, bisexual, trans and queer)- and feminist organisations from the frustration over gender equality being low prioritised. Their first leader, Gudrun Schyman used to be the leader of the leftist party (vänsterpartiet). Their popularity rose after a press conference in April 2005 (18-19 % said they would vote for them) but soon there was a backlash. It was seen as a threat when women organise themselves and demand power. The film "könskriget" (The gender war) on Swedish television started a frenzy against feminists and Tiina Rosenberg from F! had to leave her political life after being threatened to death. F! also challenged the Swedish self-image as a gender equal society. However, the positive side is that other parties, in the parliament, started to call themselves feminists and the social democrats (who then had the power) created their network "Feministas". Finally there was a discussion about gender equality.

Stina also talked about the wage discrimination. Still there is a difference of 4400 SEK in average income in female vs. male sectors. This inequality is based on values and the Swedish model, when the union movement negotiate. Whenever unions of female sectors demand higher wages the male sector always demands more. F! raised this question through an action in Almedalen 2009 when Gudrun Schyman burned money (given by private individuals upset about these inequalities). This way, the question of wage discrimination came high up on the political agenda. Today unions of female dominated sectors such as SACO have joined F! in demanding that the industrial sector should not be the basis for wages. Men's violence against women is also an important question to F! as it is still treated as a separate interest and a "female" question but should really be seen as a security question according to F!. In Serbia women are afraid to go to the police and report violence against them. It is difficult to change and make them report crime. Sweden is struggling with this too. Even though there are many shelters for women and organisations helping the victims, this is a huge problem still. F! suggests these organisations should get fixed allocations. Research on men's violence against women in Sweden estimates this costs the society around 2-5 million SEK per year.

"Feministiskt initiativ" has always cooperated with NGO:s and see this as necessary when working politically and pursuing agendas. F! has feminism as an ideological basis, when others try to fit it in "a bit here and there", as they want to have the right perspective already from the start of creating politics. For instance, the budget is today written without any understanding of different groups having different possibilities of power and influence. Hence, gender budgeting is necessary according to F!.

Stina reckons the problem today is that everyone agrees, there is a consensus when it comes to gender equality and therefor very quiet. F! is needed to raise power and conflict issues and thereby influence the parties in the parliament. F! is a non-profit voluntary organisation without any public finances and their budget is consequently always small. Every second year there is a congress where spokespersons and the executive board are elected by the members. The executive board is open and has a transparent discussion with members. At the moment 25 % of the members are men and the numbers are increasing all the time. It is important to remember that not all women are feminists and not all feminists are women. Stina also pointed out that representation is important but not everything.

### **Katharina Tollin, PhD in Political science, Stockholm University**

Katharina presented three theories on gender since different theoretical perspectives help to understand the logic in other's opinions and to use the logic to your own advantage. What you see as a solution depends on what you define as a problem. There has never been only one feminist perspective, and any attempt to unite has resulted in division within the feminist movement. There are nevertheless a few things they have in common:

- Gender matters! Gender affects most things in your life, and the choices you make
- There is a structural pattern where women are subordinated
- Gender is not biological but a historical, social and political category
- We need a profound structural change!

### *Liberal feminism*

This perspective puts emphasis on individual freedom and universal equality but is critical of how these values do not cover women today and argues there has been an exclusion of women from the liberal project and modern democracy. Liberal feminism claims women are only seen as women, when men are seen as individuals and that women exist only for others (children, husband, and parents) rather than for her own self. This inequality is based on the old Greek worldview of dichotomies where culture is male and the opposite, nature, is female. For a long time this has influenced the way we see men and women and has created a female myth which has been used as an argument to shut her out of the public life, for instance voting and education. Liberal feminism admits there is a difference between the sexes but that it is due to separate upbringing. The liberal feminist device is to see even the private as political. For instance, how can a woman start a career on the same terms as a man if she has to stay at home taking care of small children? Reforms are therefore needed (rather than revolution) so that the female world can be assimilated into the already existing (male) structure. There is also a strong belief that education of women will give them the right opportunities to reach equality and individual freedom. This perspective is normally seen as the “real” feminism and dominates other perspectives today. Some liberal feminists are: Mary Wollstonecraft, Betty Freidan and Susan Moller Okin.

### *Radical feminism*

This perspective is critical to liberal feminism and says: add women and stir does not work! Radical feminism does not think equal treatment will lead to equality between the sexes as the base is unequal. The focus is here on the intimate relation between men and women. Sex, love and power are hence interesting to radical feminists. It is not the amount of women in politics that matters. Instead they look at the patriarchy and the sexual violence as the base for gender inequality. The patriarchy is a societal fundamental structure subordinating women. The superiority of men is global and women are therefore oppressed on the basis of being women. All women are different but are united in the fear of being raped, according to the Swedish academic Maud Eduards. The way sexuality is expressed in our culture influences how women adapt their lives. Radical feminism sees the sexes as social constructions. It is for instance natural and a norm for women to objectify themselves as sexual objects. The solution can therefore not be new laws or reforms as this is all based on cultural norms. Instead they advocate consciousness raising means. The solution has to be based on women’s own experiences and the female perspective on power and sexuality. Women have to share this undisturbed and organise themselves autonomous. Men cannot take part in this as they have other interests as a group and they will not yield their privileges voluntarily. Radical feminism does not trust the state as they see it as a male structure and does not want to assimilate “the woman” into it but to build their own organisations outside the male structure. Some radical feminists are: Catharine MacKinnon, Carole Pateman and Andrea Dworkin.

### *Postcolonial feminism*

Colonialism is not the past, according to this perspective, but indeed still existing through economic exploitation by the west of “the rest” and out this an “us and them” -view is created. It is important to feminists to scrutinise themselves and how the concept “woman” is being used. Which women do we talk about? And who’s experiences? According to postcolonial feminism only white, middle-class women are being seen as “proper” women in both liberal and radical feminism. From those perspectives it is easy to ignore for instance poor and/or coloured women, and their problems. We have to make visible the way we can exploit and create power structures even within feminism. Sex is a social construction but there are also other concepts affecting the power structure such as ethnicity, age, and class. The original figure: A/B, has been developed by postcolonial feminism into: B/-B, suggesting not all women share the same worth. For instance, the problem description within

liberal feminism was not relevant for poor women as they had always been working and radical feminist criticism of the objectification of women does not mean the same for black women as they have not always been seen as “real” women and consequently being objectified is not always seen as a negative thing. Postcolonial feminism argues that the liberation of women has to be paid by someone else: we see today a global movement where “nannies” from the east and south work for women pursuing their careers in the west. Feminism has for too long been based on a westernised norm which does not examine how things are in other places and no consideration has been taken to different contexts. Moreover, women with other experiences have not been asked about either their own situations or how they define “our” situation”. Instead “the other woman” is a created concept used by feminists to reinforce their own problems. Some postcolonial feminists are: Judith Butler, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and Chandra Talpade Mohanty.

All three perspectives can be summarised in three different claims:

1. Liberal: “One is not born a woman, one becomes one”
2. Radical: Gender is constructed through male supremacy
3. Postcolonial: Gender is regulated by capitalism, imperialism and colonialism

### Feministic hats

After Katharina's lecture the participants took part in an exercise, “the feminist hats”. Everyone presented their project, a quantitative study performed in their municipality, and then others could ask questions, criticise or give suggestions, but not from their own point of view but from one of the three feminist perspectives (hats) presented earlier. This is a tricky but fruitful and widening exercise as it forces you to think differently from what you're used to. When talking with the postcolonial hat there was a tendency to bring up Roma women and their rights and situations differing from other women in Serbia. When talking with the radical hat many brought in to focus the problem of sexual and domestic violence against women as well as the objectification of women.

## Day 2

### Fredrik Lundkvist and Biljana Maletin

Fredrik started off the day by asking: Why are you here? And some of the answers were:

- *to listen and learn as Sweden has come a long way in gender equality*
- *to change myself and through that change others*
- *because change is possible in Serbia*
- *to create capacity within our municipalities and to create knowledge to spread in Serbia*
- *we have never before seen how things are done in practice in Sweden and what gender mainstreaming actually means when implemented*
- *we're here to transfer knowledge; and we're here as part of a long-term plan to investigate how other European countries with well-developed gender equality have done.*

Fredrik added: you are here because you are all important and central actors!

Until now the participants have dealt with quantitative research in their towns and municipalities, for next time they will work with qualitative research so that they in the next step can work on an action plan for gender equality.

	<b>Problem</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Objective</b>
<b>Work</b>			
<b>Power</b>			
<b>Family</b>			
<b>Body</b>			

When working for gender equality we have to ask ourselves: what are the terms and conditions for men and women? What are the norms and the conceptions of men and women? *Curiosity*, the will to understand, is important when working with these questions. But also *comparison*, *theory* and *imagination* is needed.

Fredrik finished off by asking: Could things be different from what they are today?