Gender mainstreaming as feminist politics
Till min familj
Gender mainstreaming as feminist politics
A critical analysis of the pursuit of gender equality in Swedish local government
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Title: Gender mainstreaming as feminist politics. A critical analysis of the pursuit of gender equality in Swedish local government.

Publisher: Örebro University 2018
www.oru.se/publikationer-avhandlingar

Print: Örebro University, Repro 03/2018

ISSN 1650-1632
Abstract


Gender mainstreaming is often described as a strategy to increase gender equality in states and other institutions and/or to make them more gender aware. It should however be considered a contested concept, and the aim of this thesis is to produce a critical perspective and empirical knowledge about whether, and if so how, gender mainstreaming contributes to a more (gender) equal society. The production of gender mainstreaming as gender equality policy is investigated, using both feminist new institutionalism and discourse theory.

The study investigates whether, and if so how, gender mainstreaming is facilitating new public management by transforming the ambitions of feminist politics into a neoliberal strategy adapted for public administration.

The case examined in this study is a local government gender mainstreaming project conducted in a municipality in Sweden. The case also includes vertical and horizontal outlooks and is categorized as a critical case. To study “what is not there” in the empirical material, the concepts of silences and silencing are used as both theoretical and methodological tools.

The thesis shows that gender mainstreaming produces a gender equality policy that is disconnected from political parties, and that gender mainstreaming becomes a common good. This, I argue, produces a non-political politics, which includes a governing technique that privileges political consensus, articulated in terms of nonConflict and win-win.

The thesis identifies a conflaion between gender mainstreaming, as a strategy, with the policy objective of gender equality. Gender mainstreaming did not create space for addressing gender-based violence, or include the voice of the women’s movement, from which it can be concluded that gender mainstreaming does not contribute to feminist politics. This could have societal consequences and can influence, or even hinder, actual political change.

Keywords: Gender mainstreaming, gender equality, feminist politics, public administration, feminist political theory, local government, discourse, feminist new institutionalism

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Förord

Jag vill inleda mitt förord med att uttrycka mitt största tack till Örebro kommun, både för att ni möjliggjorde Forskarskolan för Offentlig Förvaltning i Utveckling och för att jag fick en sådan generös tillgång till er och ert arbete när jag gjorde mitt fältarbete. Ett stort tack även till professor Erik Amnå och professor Stig Montin som förvaltade forskarskolan i dess början och antog mig som forskarstudierande, och även ett stort tack till professor Jan Olsson, som övertog rodet.

Mitt största tack riktar jag till min huvudhandledare docent Gun Hedlund. Avhandlingen hade aldrig blivit klar utan dig. Tack! Ditt engagemang och ditt tålamod är beundransvärt. Till min bihandledare Charlotte Fridolfsson vill jag också rikta ett stort TACK!

Nästa stora tack riktar jag till professor Hanne Marlene Dahl, Roskilde universitet, som gjorde ett fantastiskt jobb under slutseminariet. Ett speciellt tack riktar jag även till Erik Hysing och Sofia Strid för era inspel i slutskedet.


Tack Anna, för att du alltid har varit så där alldeles lagom intresserad av mitt jobb, du har gjort mitt liv rikare. Till alla mina vänner – tack för glädje, stöd och vänskap!

Mamma och pappa. Ni har gjort så mycket för mig, där ert stora stöd under den sista tiden bara är en liten del. Supersyster Tina och supercoola Klara: ni är Bäst!

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1. Introduction

Gender equality should be understood as the political and social goal of equal rights between the genders, with power, resources and opportunities being equally distributed.¹ Feminist politics are politics that effectively contribute to this aim. The struggle for gender equality has a long history, and the participants, places, ideas and strategies have shifted over time. In public administration, the policy field of gender equality has included both legislative processes and policies aiming for change in other ways. One contemporary strategy for how to achieve gender equality is gender mainstreaming (Schmidt 2005).

Gender mainstreaming has been described in several ways and is a contested concepts (Daly 2005, Bacchi and Eveline 2009). For now gender mainstreaming can be described as a strategy to make states, organizations or businesses more (gender) equal and/or more gender aware. Different definitions of gender mainstreaming pinpoint different aspects of the strategy, such as planning, analysing, or evaluating gender in the policy process. One widespread conception of gender mainstreaming is the Council of Europe definition, whereby it is:

the (re)organization, 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 (Council of Europe 1998).

In this thesis I will nuance this description, and show that the strategy lacks lucidity. The thesis will provide knowledge about whether, and if so how, gender mainstreaming can contribute to a more (gender) equal society, by providing a critical understanding of how gender mainstreaming is conceptualized and implemented in research and local politics. Theoretically, in this thesis I recognize gender mainstreaming as an analytical category, understood as a floating signifier, and will refer to it as a strategy (Howarth 2000).

The implementation of gender mainstreaming has been extensive worldwide, and could be recognized as a global phenomenon. Institutions such as the UN and EU adopted this strategy in the mid-1990s (Verloo 2005a); it is

¹ Global actors such as the United Nations include and express such goals in both the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) convention and in Agenda 2030. See also the national gender equality objectives in Sweden (SOU 2015:86).
also practised in the global south (Madsen 2011); in higher education (Lyle-Gonga 2013), and is implemented within the European Union (Pollack and Hafner-Burton 2000). The spread of gender mainstreaming has resulted in a great variation of execution in practice. The strategy includes a wide variety of features, from turning political ambitions into political objectives to the use of checklists and other administrative routines. Furthermore, the extent of involvement of the women’s movement in gender mainstreaming and the degree of its institutionalization within the state apparatus differ widely, ranging from non-existent (Sweden) to very high (Taiwan) (Andersson and Hedlund 2012, Peng 2015).

Because of the extensive global variation of gender mainstreaming, and the extent and strength of the strategy, it can be viewed as an example of a fast-travelling concept (Said 1983, Knapp 2005). Gender mainstreaming takes on different shapes and it transforms when filtered through agencies or applied to new arenas. National sub-levels, regions and local government are not isolated units, and gender mainstreaming have been applied and adapted to the different levels of public administration. It is within the context of a mixture of global ideas, governmental policy making, local self-government and feminist ideology demanding change that local governments try to operate and do gender equality by introducing gender mainstreaming. When it comes to local governments’ ability to implement gender equality policy, there are divergent views in the literature, with some arguing that it is more easily done in local settings and others that it is less difficult at the national level (Outshoorn and Kantola 2007).

At the same time as gender mainstreaming could be described as a global political and administrative phenomenon, it also configures and integrates into the global employment of new public management (NPM). How gender mainstreaming fits neatly into this neoliberal phenomena of NPM has already been investigated to some extent (Prügl 2011, Rönnblom 2011). However, in prior research on gender mainstreaming, NPM has been discussed as a precondition which influences the implementation of gender mainstreaming. In contemporary readings of gender mainstreaming, this standpoint needs to be further investigated to also include how NPM and gender mainstreaming are mutually supportive and intertwined processes. In an era when modern public administration is permeated with NPM, processes and discourses that intend to integrate “everywhere” have to be examined in the light of the hegemonic NPM discourse. One cannot make assumptions about how the discourses of gender mainstreaming and NPM relate to each other.
I also suggest that gender mainstreaming constitutes a new paradigm of gender equality work in practice. As a result of the worldwide political and management engagement with gender mainstreaming, it has become a norm that is hard to disregard or dismiss at any political or administrative level. Scholars (see Chapter 2) have debated its potential, but how we understand and describe its success or failure is, as shown in Article I, not based on observable shifts of power or redistribution of resources. After more than twenty years of political and administrative commitments to gender mainstreaming, uncertainty remains about what substantial results the strategy can contribute. Despite this lack of conclusive results, gender mainstreaming is still framed as the primary strategy for achieving gender equality today (SOU 2015:86). Moreover, how we understand this has traditionally been seen as a consequence of failed or incomplete implementation of gender mainstreaming. I am not convinced that this is the correct way of framing the question, and I believe the question should rather concern whether the strategy itself is, or potentially could be, able to deliver a feminist politics, or if it has the potential to be used in such a way. I therefore call for a critical investigation of gender mainstreaming, where the use of critical should be understood as aligning with critical theory and with Fraser’s political position (1985). This investigation therefore relates to and includes questions and critiques formulated within a feminist tradition.

One reason for the lack of results is that there is no consistency in how to investigate the progress of gender mainstreaming. Moser and Moser (2005) describes the progress of gender mainstreaming in international institutions and organizations using a typology based on different stages of adoption, for example the adoption of terminology. Callerstig (2014) instead argues that feminist implementation studies should be used to understand the progress of gender mainstreaming. She states that this is an underdeveloped field of study, and I agree in so far as this perspective is important because it enables one to study the process of implementation as a gendered processes. But both approaches above fail to critically understand what actually goes on within the organizations. They also lack the ability to capture and investigate the impacts and outcomes of gender mainstreaming. In addition to the investigation of changed terminology and implementation as a gendered process, a more detailed examination of how power operates within the black box of public administration is needed.

Scholars have called for further theoretical discussion of gender mainstreaming as a concept (Bacchi and Eveline 2009). Daly argues, and I agree,
that gender mainstreaming is underdeveloped as a concept, but is better developed as a policy approach (Daly 2005). The plea for theoretical development by scholars is loud and clear (see for examples: Daly 2005, Verloo 2005b, Wittbom 2009, Norrbin and Olsson 2010). I will contribute to this further theoretical development of the concept of gender mainstreaming by applying and investigating specific theoretical concepts in empirical cases. My studies thereby respond to the need to investigate the doing of gender mainstreaming, and my ambition is to go beyond output-oriented evaluation studies and instead to study the black box of gender mainstreaming. I have investigated if and how gender mainstreaming is facilitating NPM by turning the ambitions of feminist politics into a neoliberal strategy adapted for public administration.

1.2 My position in normative and feminist research

Before continuing on to my aim and my research questions, I wish to address an aspect related to normative and political positions of research. In Swedish political science, there is a prevalent discourse about how normative and political one’s research can/should be. Badersten (2005) argues that this is due to a concern to blur the line between “analysing politics” and “doing politics”, and that “proper” political science should be value free. This, according to Badersten is faulty reasoning, and he argues instead that we should commit ourselves as scholars to seeking scientific answers to normative “should” questions. Badersten continues by positing that it is commonly accepted that should-questions are normative, and that they originate from a value or from a value-assertion. He concludes that this is a good thing, because when values are articulated the hierarchy between them is made visible. And as a consequence, different normative positions are made clear enabling priorities to be set.

This has also been an ongoing discussion among feminist researchers, one of the most influential contributions being a 1987 text by Sandra Harding that is still relevant today (Harding 1987). She argues that there is no specific technique or method to do feminist research. Instead, Harding (and Norberg 2005) states that value-free research is an unachievable ideal, which is consistent with Badersten’s argumentation. Moreover, Harding argues that the pursuit of value-free research makes science less relevant. I therefore think that Harding supports my normative ambition of wanting

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2 The question of whether social science can be objective and neutral is another discussion.
this research to be useful for the development of gender equality and women’s emancipation (Harding 1987).

So, although I subject gender mainstreaming to empirical and theoretical interrogation in this thesis, I am not actually arguing for or against its use. My intent is instead for my research findings to be used for the purpose of promoting equality. Critiquing gender mainstreaming does not indicate being opposed to the political objective of increasing gender equality. This needs to be made clear. When I choose to write about an issue (gender mainstreaming) that is being applied to something (increasing gender equality) in a critical way, it can give the impression of being a critique of the political project itself. Critics may argue: if it is not working, why bother doing it at all? Ending gender mainstreaming is not my intent or wish. Our society is unequal, and it is in the interest of our democratic society that we should strive to create an effective and progressive gender equality policy.

Furthermore, in my opinion, the position of critical research must be defended (Fraser 1985). In this modern era of global and local challenges, good research is often described as research that can be directly applicable and useful for society. While I do not disagree as such, I do emphasize that it is of vital importance for research to reflect and comment on societal phenomena. Being critical of the subject at hand is an important part of being a researcher in academia. And as I argued above, critical perspectives on an issue do not have to correspond to having a critical judgment of the issue itself. Just as the normative approach challenges mainstream political science, so does being a feminist researcher in political science.

In Swedish research on gender and politics, I can observe this tension in two dimensions, as shown in Figure 1. In the first dimension, the tension is between positions of being “normative” or “value free”. The second tension is between being “critical” and being “applied”.

Regarding the first dimension (normative–value free), I would categorize most researchers in the field of politics and gender studies in Sweden as falling on the normative end of the spectrum, in that they would argue that any increase in gender equality is a good thing. This is also true for Swedish feminist scholars in political science when investigating gender equality policy (Rönnblom and Eduards 2008).

With regard to the second dimension (critical–applied) I can see a variety of positions. When looking at Swedish research on gender and local government, I find that the focus has been on women’s conditions and interests in municipal politics (Hedlund 1996, Folkesdotter 2002), resistance to gen-
nder equality (Pincus 2002), consequences of women’s presence in local politics (Gustafsson 2008), and local regimes of masculinity (Nilsson 2008). And when trying to understand these different focuses and variances, it is likely that some areas have led to more “tolerance” than others in mainstream political science. Research that focuses on political party culture or parliamentary systems, or on descriptive studies of implementation, falls into the category of “applied” research, and therefore leads to more tolerance. Research that challenges the core of political life or problematizes the distribution of power is more often described as non-useful and normative, and therefore is not as widely accepted (Rönnblom and Eduards 2008). This is also visible in research about gender mainstreaming. Most research on gender mainstreaming would fall into the first category, that of being applicable, useful or descriptive (see Wittbom 2009, Callerstig 2014). In the second category of critical studies of gender mainstreaming, I can identify only a few contributions (see Rönnblom 2011), and there seems to be a need for more empirical studies. With regard to the dimensions presented above, my research can be categorized as normative and critical. This concludes this exposition on normative and feminist research, and I will now elaborate on my aim and research questions.

![Figure 1: Dimensions in research on gender and politics.](image)

**1.3 Aim**

Returning to the points made in the introduction, the aim of this thesis is to provide a critical understanding and empirical knowledge about if and how gender mainstreaming can contribute to a more (gender) equal society.
My research questions are:

- What type of gender equality policy is gender mainstreaming producing?
- To what extent does gender mainstreaming contribute to feminist politics?

In this thesis, attention is given to gender mainstreaming in local governments by targeting critical aspects of this strategy. The empirical focus is on local government in Sweden. I mainly focus on discourses, but I also investigate the institutionalization of gender mainstreaming and silences within it. My empirical findings on this will constitute a theoretical contribution to the field of research on gender mainstreaming.

In this study on gender mainstreaming, the overarching topics of the black box, feminist politics, and neoliberalism will be considered. To be able to answer my research questions, I will therefore engage with the black box of doing gender mainstreaming in public administration. The term “black box” is a metaphor that refers to what goes on within the bureaucratic public administration in local government, between the input and output. There are several components within the black box that affect the modus operandi of the municipalities, such as gendered norms, NPM and governance. In several ways, the black box has been opened, for instance in regard to the role and position of cross-sector strategists (Svensson 2017), where the strategists’ main task is described as being to promote “their” issues horizontally and to mainstream them in otherwise hierarchical organizations. Mainstreaming of gender equality policy is one of the more highly developed fields of “mainstreaming”, while others fields, such as sustainability, human rights, and public health are catching up. The black box of public administration in Sweden is deeply affected by NPM, and in this thesis I will investigate how NPM is intertwined with gender mainstreaming.

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3 David Easton’s description of the political system has received much justified criticism, from several directions. Putting most of that aside, my focus on the black box could be seen as an effort to create better understandings of what goes on within the political system, between the inputs and outputs (Easton 1953).

4 Gender mainstreaming could also have been investigated through an alternative approach, as depending on the conflict- or consensus perspective of the culture in Swedish local government (Lantto 2005).
Neoliberalism is the second of the overarching topics of this thesis. The diverse definitions and characterizations of neoliberalism and NPM constitute a vivid topic of debate within political science, a debate in which I do not intend to engage. Neoliberalism can be both a new social logic and a set of organizational reforms. NPM consists of the elements of neoliberalism that are manifested in public administration.

The third overarching topic of the thesis is feminist politics. I define feminist politics as politics that effectively contribute to the political and social goal of equal rights between the genders, with power, resources and opportunities being equally distributed. Feminist politics are hence understood as a) politics that transform/destabilize the gender regime (patriarchy); and b) politics establishing/delivering equal opportunities (either input or output oriented) in which women’s multiple (intersectional) voices are heard. To do this I have focused on three issues – power, conflict and gendered violence – all of which are core issues for feminist politics.

In this thesis, gender equality policy could theoretically be described as an empty signifier, but empirically I investigate gender equality policies that are politically described as such. Some policies may have unintended gender equality consequences. Gender equality policy has the potential to be feminist, and may lead to feminist politics, but does not necessarily do so. Gender equality policy and feminist politics may be produced by the same strategy, but this does not mean that they are the same. Whether or not, and to what extent, they actually are the same remain empirically open questions. In this thesis, gender mainstreaming links gender equality (policy) and feminist politics; gender mainstreaming bridges gender equality and feminist politics, in that the two research questions explore, first how gender mainstreaming produces specific types of gender equality policy, and second, to what extent it contributes to feminist politics.

To conclude, NPM constitutes the political context for public administration in local government in which the strategy of gender mainstreaming is carried out. This context affects what type of gender equality policy that gender mainstreaming produces. The contributions of this process to feminist politics are the topic of this investigation.

Even though the empirical focus of this thesis will be on gender mainstreaming in local government, my case includes both horizontal and vertical outlooks. This calls for a brief initial presentation of my case, which is a local municipal gender mainstreaming project called Sustainable Gender
Mainstreaming in the Municipality of Örebro⁵ (HJÄMT) in the city of Örebro, which also was the starting point for this thesis. The HJÄMT project was one of many in a larger national programme initiated by the Swedish centre-right coalition government, and carried out by Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions⁶ (SALAR). The national Programme for Sustainable Gender Equality⁷ (PSGE), had the aim to implement gender mainstreaming in municipalities and regions, and the Örebro project was one of 140 different projects that were carried out within the programme. I will return to present the case and explain its horizontal and vertical outlooks in Chapter 4. As the context of the case is important for the position I am arguing in this thesis, I will briefly expand the following section to include the context of Sweden.

1.4 Gender mainstreaming in Sweden

To better provide the necessary context to my research, I will now describe gender equality policy, first at national and then at municipal level in Sweden. In prior research, gender equality policy has been described in several ways, one of the most established descriptions being as a narrative of the historical evolution of a specific political field established during the 1960s and 1970s in Sweden (Florin and Nilsson 2000, Tollin 2011, Hirdman 2014).

In regard to gender mainstreaming, there has been an explicit political commitment to this strategy since 1994 (Regeringens proposition 1993/94:147), and this commitment has been rearticulated several times since (SOU 2005:66, SOU 2007:15, SOU 2015:86). At present (2018), the Social Democratic–Green government has establish a new state agency for gender equality. The agency will be responsible for monitoring and supporting the implementation of gender mainstreaming in governmental agencies and in municipalities (SOU 2015:86).

Studies about gender and politics analysing the Swedish national government are broad and vital field in political science (Rönnblom and Eduards

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⁵ In Swedish: Hållbar jämställdhetsintegrering i Örebro kommun.
⁶ In Swedish: Sveriges kommuner och landsting (SKL). SALAR is an interest organization, a negotiating party in the labour market and lobbying organization. The organization is governed by a political body at the time of my study this was a centre-right coalition government. SALAR are strong advocates of NPM and neoliberal ideas.
⁷ In Swedish: Program för Hållbar jämställdhet.
2008). But when the scope is restricted to activities conducted by local governments, only a limited field is left. In consideration of the empirical focus, on local governments in this thesis, attention must be given to research that touches upon this political and administrative level.

1.5 Gender mainstreaming in municipalities

The municipalities face a complex situation, being responsible for implementing the national gender equality objectives, while at the same time being sovereign entities. Local government is regulated by the Municipal Act, which dictates what municipalities must perform (Kommunallag 1991:900). This act contains no provisions requiring municipalities to engage with gender equality issues, and there is nothing regulating how gender equality work should be conducted in practice. Hence there are no regulations about the extent to which municipalities can be forced to comply with national gender equality policies. Instead the Municipal Act mandates that municipalities formulate and conduct politics and policies as they see fit with regard to the power vested in local governments. This act gives municipalities permission to undertake any action related to their own circumstances. So, in some sense Sweden lacks a law on gender equality. This makes it possible for there to be quite extensive local variations (Larsson and Bäck 2008, SKL 2008c).8

Local governments have sovereignty regarding taxation, urban planning and housing, and as a result of the decentralization in the 1980s, they also have increased and extensive responsibility for social welfare, education and health (Montin and Granberg 2013). In a comparative perspective, local government in Sweden has far-reaching autonomy.

The tasks and functioning of local government are of great importance for their citizens. The municipality is the institution where global and national reforms, actions and ideas are implemented. The municipalities affect people’s lives differently depending on gender (Hedlund 1996). In Sweden, local government provides services such as child care, elderly care, schools, and city planning. Municipalities are also large employers. In the present

8 On the other hand, there are several laws that directly target issues that often are included in gender equality policy, such as the law on abortion ( Abortlag 1974:595); the criminalization of intimate partner violence (Brottsbalk 1962:700); the law against discrimination, including by gender (Diskrimineringslag 2008:567); the law regulating parental leave (Föräldraläningslag 1995:584); the law regulating social services for intimate partner violence (Socialtjänstlag 2001:453); and laws on schooling and higher education (Skollag 2010:800; Högskolelag 1992:1434).
decade there has been an increased focus on gender equality in the municipality’s role of service provider (Andersson and Hedlund 2012, Callerstig 2014). In her thesis Callerstig investigated the implementation of gender mainstreaming. She studied how gender equality policy was put into practice in different local projects during the late 2000s. In her research she refers to a division of gender equality policies as “internal” and “external”. Internal policies should be understood as initiatives targeting an organization’s employees and aiming to create equal workplaces, while the external policies are associated with “service provision”, for example services provided by the municipality for external client groups (Callerstig 2014). Using her division between internal and external policies, it enables traces of both policies to be found in the early work stemming from the Equal Opportunities Act which was passed in 1980 (Diskrimineringslag 2008:567, the current anti-discrimination act). The gender equality work conducted in Swedish municipalities derives from this law. The law prohibited a number of forms of (gender) discrimination (e.g. sex discrimination, wage discrimination and sexual harassment), but also decreed that employers must work actively to promote greater gender equality. The municipalities’ efforts to achieve gender equality have been done in accordance with the obligations imposed by that paragraph, targeting areas such as salaries, recruitment and gender equality mapping. Formerly, activities associated with the internal perspective were predominant in Sweden, but this seems to have shifted in recent years. Now the focus has turned towards creating effective output in the external services (Andersson and Hedlund 2012).

In many ways the municipalities are the executors of national policies; many of their activities are regulated on a national scale while others are the result of local decisions. What activities (for example initiatives, policy recommendations, or reforms) that local governments have been doing over the years to improve gender equality in different areas has however not yet been mapped out in research. Different aspects have been covered, but not enough to enable a comprehensive description. In 2008 SALAR presented what was described as an empirical overview of the Swedish municipalities’ work with gender equality. However, it lacked a relevant mapping of what had been done, and instead was focused on what should come next (SKL 2008c). Further extensive descriptive exploration is not within the scope of this thesis. Before ending this first chapter, I first want introduce the articles and how they came to be a part of this kappa.
1.6 Background of the articles – how they came to be

This section is intended to supply context for my four articles and discuss how they are interconnected within my thesis. Although the different articles can and should stand alone, they focus conjointly on different aspects of gender mainstreaming. As described in the introduction, I investigate gender mainstreaming from the following angles: the black box of gender mainstreaming, how it contributes to feminist politics and how it is intertwined with neoliberalism.

As a feminist researcher, I have maintained a normative ambivalence towards gender mainstreaming throughout my fieldwork. The different articles mirror just this ambivalence. My case, including its vertical and horizontal outlooks, originates from Sweden and the national programme PSGE and local project HJÄMT (see discussion in Chapter 4). Alongside my ambivalence towards gender mainstreaming, I encountered pride and confidence in the projects among leading actors in PSGE and HJÄMT. During my fieldwork these dual tracks formed both theoretical and empirical dissonances, which I was not easily able to comprehend. My need for clarification resulted in the research questions posed in the four articles incorporated in this thesis. In figure 2 I present an overview of the articles and the kappa and how they fit together.

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<td>Neoliberalism</td>
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<td>Feminist politics</td>
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*Figure 2: Overview of the thesis*
1.6.1 Article I: The myth of Sweden’s success

The first article investigates Sweden and the myth of the success of gender mainstreaming (Article I). During my field work investigating PSGE and the local Örebro-project HJÄMT, I made an overview of the empirical and theoretical field of gender mainstreaming research. In it I found several positive references to Sweden that puzzled me. The message of success was repeated at seminars and in lectures by policy agents and consultants as well as in written documents such as grey papers and academic journals. My experiences from field work and the knowledge that I had obtained about local government and the history of gender equality policy did not fit into the picture of Sweden given by the academic literature. I observed a dissonance between this story and other statements, which directed me to the following aim: to analyse how this discourse of success is constructed and to increase the understanding of its components (Article I: 1). As I conclude in the article, the success story about Sweden is constructed of several components. One of my major conclusions in this article is that there is a conflation of gender mainstreaming with gender equality, and that this has been a vital part of the construction of Sweden as the best case of gender mainstreaming. So, in that sense, my case had significance for the article on the myth of success (Article I), even though the PSGE and the HJÄMT case are not explicitly referenced or used as empirical material in the article.

1.6.2 Article II: Learnings from gender mainstreaming education

In the second article I engage with the interconnection of gender mainstreaming and NPM, as well as the black box of gender mainstreaming. The article focuses on understanding the position of education and knowledge in gender mainstreaming management (Article II). I do recognize that these components are necessary and important for successful organizational development. But it seemed to me as if the confidence about what “adequate knowledge” would be able to accomplish was disproportionately high. The prominent role given to education seemed to leave little room for alternative policies. Education and information have been important strategies within Swedish equality policy for decades, for example in projects to encourage men to take parental leave and to facilitate women entering male professions and educational programmes. The emphasis on knowledge and education in the “modern strategy” of gender mainstreaming seemed so troublesome to me that I had to investigate why. When Fridolfsson and I began to explore the positionality of education, the connection to neoliberalism, understood as both a specific political culture and the production of specific
political subjects become apparent to us. The cases of PSGE and HJÄMT are used as illustrative examples of how knowledge management and evidence-based ideals have entered public administration. Therefore the article ended up with the aim of investigating gender mainstreaming as the workings of technologies of governmentality (Article II: 1).

1.6.3 Article III: The question of feminism in gender mainstreaming
The third article is on the topic of non-conflict (Article III) in the local Örebro-project HJÄMT. It originated from what I saw as a lack of visible resistance against the municipality’s gender mainstreaming policy. I asked myself, why was this? When I did my fieldwork in Örebro I had prior knowledge about how some minor gender equality projects had been introduced, conducted and received in Swedish municipalities in the 1990s (Pincus 2002). Pincus discussed different ways that resistance, both latent and manifest, arose (2002). But I could not fit what I experienced in Örebro into her model. I had to pose questions about what caused this lack of observable resistance. In the article my aim was to examine how the hegemony of gender mainstreaming discourse is reproduced in this context and how conflict is avoided as the concept of feminism was excluded from the local gender mainstreaming discourse. I did this by examine how the exclusion of feminism and conflict was articulated when gender mainstreaming was introduced as a new way of doing gender equality work in the municipality. I here investigate the embeddedness of neoliberalism with its tension between the values of democracy and efficiency in public administration. I ended up identifying two main struggles and several silences.

1.6.4 Article IV: Doing gender in municipal politics
The fourth article, on gender-based violence (Article IV), is important because gender-based violence is often described in Sweden as being the most explicit and extreme form of gender inequality. It is also one of the six sub-goals in the national gender equality goals. In 2006, this national sub-goal received a substantial increase in funding in the centre-right coalition’s national budget. At the same time, one of the most influential social welfare

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9 The original four sub-goals was expanded to six sub-goals in 2015 (SOU 2015:86). The sub-goal on gender-based violence was left practically unchanged.

10 The fiscal budget was increased from 37.5 (Swedish crown) in 2006, to 393 million (Swedish crown) in 2007. The fiscal budget for 2017 is now 248 million (Swedish crown). The centre-right wing coalition was in government 2006-2012.
laws was also changed (Ekström 2016). The responsibility of the Social Welfare Boards was increased, and the previous formulations that they should support victims of violence in general, and victims of intimate partner violence and children who witnessed violence in particular, were changed to say they have to do those things.

During the same period, gender mainstreaming was described as the best strategy to increase gender equality in the Swedish municipalities. The national project PSGE was launched at this time (see Chapter 4). In my fieldwork on PSGE and HJÄMT, including the documentation and interviews, the references to the national gender equality policy goals were often explicit. The sub-goal of ending violence, however, was never addressed or problematized. The absence of engagement with the question of gender-based violence in the PSGE project was striking in that regard. Keeping in mind the ongoing political statements that gender-based violence is the most important gender-inequality question, I found the exclusion of this question both noteworthy and questionable. As a teacher of political science I had helped develop an undergraduate course on gender-based violence (emphasizing intimate partner violence). I taught the course and did my fieldwork at the same time, which made the silence about gender-based violence in both PSGE and HJÄMT especially striking. This was a case where me and Gun Hedlund could put gender mainstreaming to an empirical test. Gender mainstreaming and gender-based violence were both prioritized gender equality policies at the same time, but how were they (dis)connected in local government? In our research question we asked if gender mainstreaming contributes to changes in, and institutionalization of the municipalities’ work on combating violence against women. Our results indicate that the gender mainstreaming was not facilitating the efforts to reduce gendered violence within our investigated municipalities.

1.7 Structure

The structure of this thesis is as follows. In this introduction, I have contextualized gender mainstreaming and discussed the aim and research questions. In Chapter 2, I discuss variations and conceptualizations of gender equality policies under the heading of women’s rights, positive action and gender mainstreaming. At the end of Chapter 2, I will present my own framework of critique of the inherent problematics within gender mainstreaming. In Chapter 3, I discuss my theoretical frameworks and present my understanding of feminist institutionalism and discourse theory. Thereafter follows a discussion on how to study silences and “what is not there”.

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The chapter ends with my positions on gender, politics and NPM. My materials and methodological position are laid out in Chapter 4. Here I describe my studied cases: the PSGE programme and the HJÄMT project. I account for the materials used in the different articles, and engage in a methodological discussion. Chapter 5 summarizes the articles and highlights my conclusions. In the final chapter I the findings from the four articles are summarized and I will provide answer to my two research questions. Finally, in my concluding remarks, I expand on the implications of this study for research and policy.
2. Theories on gender equality policies

Distinguishing between different versions on gender equality policy are important, as they describe how feminist politics has been manifested in political strategies to bring about change. As argued in chapter one, I want to highlight the inherent complexity that arises when allowing a conceptual definition to originate from its political output. The concept of gender equality should not be treated as self-explanatory. As Bendl and Schmidt argue, the conceptual value of gender equality, and of gender mainstreaming, is limited, because of its conflicting meanings and inherent contradictions (Bendl and Schmidt 2013). I agree that there is a lack of theoretical in-depth definitions of these concepts and I suggest that gender equality theoretically should be described as an empty signifier (Howarth 2000). Empirically, I investigate gender equality policy that are politically described as such.

In a doing gender equality policy perspective (Magnusson, Rönnblom and Silius 2008, Ekström 2012) it is argued that gender equality is what gender equality does. I can see the advantage of this way of describing gender equality policy. It makes it possible to identify and problematize who and what are being included or excluded in the political discourse (Carbin 2010, Tollin 2011). However, I also see a risk in this argument because it could then be argued that gender equality policy can be anything one wishes to define it as. Another variant is that gender equality policy is policy implemented explicitly to achieve gender equality, and that it may have unintended gender equality consequences. Gender equality policy has the potential to be feminist, and may lead to feminist politics, but does not necessarily do so. Gender equality policy and feminist politics may be produced by the same strategy, but it does not mean that they are the same.

In this chapter I will deal with my first research question: What type of gender equality policy is gender mainstreaming producing? I will present a

11 When making this distinction, one must reflect on how the categorization of gender equality will mobilize the analysis. If the criterion is the doing of gender equality policy, then one could apply the frames of political language. Then an investigation of budget items, programmes and reforms that are described as promoting gender equality would be fitting. But if the criterion of the analysis is that the policy could affect at least one of the genders, then all politics and policies could be gender equality policies. Finally, if the criterion is that the policy should affect the gendered relations, then the analysis would have much more limited frames, regarding political reforms.
model that describes different versions of polices on gender equality work, including gender mainstreaming and in this section I will use polices and approaches interchangeable to describe the strategies. Each of the approaches women’s rights, positive action and gender mainstreaming will be exemplified by a short quotation. The focus is on the variations of gender equality polices. I will relate the different approaches in my model to each other. In a later section I describe attempts by scholars to critically understand the challenges of gender mainstreaming, and present their different ways of clustering and thematically discussing the challenges and theoretical vagueness of gender mainstreaming. Finally, I will present my own framework of critique. I wish to focus on the inherent problematics of gender mainstreaming. This is done by introducing aspects of gender mainstreaming that have not been properly addressed in the feminist research presented in the chapter.

2.1 Categorizations of gender equality policies

Policies targeting gender equality are often described and categorized into three approaches, strands or waves (Booth and Bennett 2002, Verloo 2005a, Rees 2005, Squires 2005; 2007, see more examples in: Daly 2005, Stratigaki 2005, Callerstig 2014). During the last 15 years, scholars have been categorizing the different approaches and policies using different concepts, and they have also been focusing on different aspects, such as on specific policies, empirical foci or theoretical conceptions. This has resulted in several versions of the categorization. Some scholars argue that the approaches can be used to show variations in gender equality policies (Squires 2005; 2007), others that they should be used complementarily (Booth and Bennett 2002, Daly 2005, Stratigaki 2005). Other scholars have focused solely on one approach (see for example Bacchi 1996), and I will include a limited number of such contributions in my presentation below.

In the case of this thesis, I want to argue that an important reason to focus on prior categorizations of the variations of gender equality policies is that they create contrast and make gender mainstreaming (somewhat) clearer. I will return to this in Chapter 6 and discuss gender mainstreaming.

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12 There could be several ways of understanding the logic in the approaches. One could be in terms of their supposed effects on gender norms and gender relations, and another could concern what problem the policy intends to solve. I would argue that a comprehensive application of Carole Bacchi’s approach What’s the problem is represented to be? (1999) could be a way to move forward.
in light of other forms of gender equality policies. In discursive terms, when defining gender mainstreaming from the inside, the outside of the categorizations becomes visible (Howarth 2000). I argue that the same goes for the reverse: when the outside becomes more sharply defined, the inside become clearer.

So, in the following sections I will focus on the variations between these polices, one at a time. Other researchers may have originally labelled and sorted their different approaches under other headings, leaving me responsible for the (re)categorization in this section. In addition to my reorganization of their approaches, I will supplement each section with other research that I consider as contributing to each approach.

Below I wish to present my model of gender equality policies under the headings *women’s rights, positive action* and *gender mainstreaming*. 
## Table 1: Model of gender equality approaches.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author(s)</th>
<th>Women’s rights</th>
<th>Positive action</th>
<th>Gender mainstreaming</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Verloo (2005a)</td>
<td>Equal treatment in legislation</td>
<td>Specific or targeted gender equality policies</td>
<td>Gender mainstreaming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Booth &amp; Bennett (2002)</td>
<td>Equal treatment perspective</td>
<td>Women’s perspective</td>
<td>Gender perspective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Squires (2005; 2007)</td>
<td>Inclusion/Presence</td>
<td>Reversal/ Voice</td>
<td>Displacement/ Process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rees (2005)</td>
<td>Tinkering</td>
<td>Tailoring</td>
<td>Transforming</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2.1.1 Approach: Women’s rights

Equal treatment in legislation is focused on providing equal access, and correcting existing inequalities in legislation, so that individual citizens are formally equal. This strategy is often framed within a liberal discourse, holding individual citizens responsible for using their formal equal rights. (Verloo 2005a:23)

In the words of Mieke Verloo, the first approach focuses on guaranteeing the same rights and opportunities for women as men in legislation (Verloo 2005a). Booth and Bennett argue the same thing by describing women’s rights as actions that aim to guarantee women the same rights and opportunities as men in the public sphere (Booth and Bennett 2002). In addition to this, they argue that there is a chronological dimension of gender equality politics. They associate women’s rights, which they call the equal treatment perspective, with the first wave of feminism (Booth and Bennett 2002), arguing that this strand began with feminist demands for women’s right to vote and to be elected to public bodies. This demand was articulated in a global feminist movement and the resulting changes, which led to increased legal rights for women, can perhaps be seen as the first tangible effects of this approach (Bergqvist et al. 2008).

Judith Squires focuses on slightly different aspects when presenting two ways of theorizing women’s rights in gender equality work (2005; 2007). First she uses the concept of inclusion when pointing to the incorporation of women, and their conditions and lives, into a world of political and legal discourses. She argues that this world consists of ready-made and pre-existing frames, which are adapted to men’s lives and conditions. She shows that women are allowed to be present as legitimized actors (Squires 2005). In her next contribution she instead uses the concept of presence (Squires 2007), and points to that fact that women, just by being there, generate potential change in the direction of a more equal condition.

A constructive line of reasoning is found in Rees’ text where she labels women’s rights as tinkering, and argues that “equal treatment legislation ‘makes good’ the discrimination faced by women in a legal system designed for men” (Rees 2005: 557). In line with Verloo, she concludes that this is an individualized, rights-based approach, and that it creates the possibility to compensate for biases in law. The argument is that the law is based on men’s living conditions and experiences, but that it is now possible to modify these laws or create new ones that are adapted to women’s conditions and needs, for example in the areas of pregnancy and parental leave.
This approach to women’s rights has several consequences. It has influenced the Europeanization, where the focus of equal legal rights for women and men has been significant in the EU context (Bergqvist et al. 2008, Strid 2009). Another consequence of this approach is the adoption of gender quotas in parliaments, which has had an impact on a global scale. Adopting quotas can be described as a way to ensure the presence and/or inclusion of women in political assemblies. Because of the argument for regulated presence and inclusion, I view this policy as belonging to the women’s rights approach, which is essentially a liberal position. The spread of gender quotas is remarkable, most significantly in non-OECD countries. Gender quotas have been introduced in different forms, from legally regulated quotas to party recommendations (Dahlerup and Freidenvall 2006). The literature identifies three broad types of gender quota policies: reserved seats, political party quotas, and legislative quotas (Krook, Lovenduski and Squires 2009) which can be used to ensure the presence of the underrepresented gender.

The women’s rights approach has been criticized for a number of reasons. The first is that it does not change the overarching bias of the law or change how the world works; it only grants women more access to existing structures (Verloo 2005a, Wittbom 2009). This is also in line with Rees’ argument above. Furthermore, gender in itself is not treated as a category which can be criticized or questioned in this approach, and only two genders are given analytical, and thus political, positions. Neither femininity nor masculinity are problematized to any substantial extent, and the approach is accused of seeking gender-neutrality (Verloo 2005a). Finally, with its focus on individuals, the approach lacks a structural dimension. It has been criticized on that the individual perspective allows no space or possibility to include (interest) groups (such as women) (Bergqvist et al. 2008).

2.1.2 Approach: Positive action

The starting point for the strategy of specific or targeted gender equality policies is the recognition that all citizens cannot always use equal rights to the same extent, because of persistent gender inequalities that exist at the level of society. (Verloo 2005a: 23; emphasis in original)

Just as in the previous section, I borrow a quote from Mieke Verloo this time to illustrate positive action. In this section I have included different types of policies, all categorized by me as variations of positive action. Verloo frames this approach very well when she argues that the aim is to create conditions that
guaranty equality of *outcome*. She argues that measures following this approach are meant to counterbalance the unequal starting points of men and women (Verloo 2005a). Booth and Bennett (2002) also emphasize this in their understanding of the *women’s perspective*. They include initiatives that recognize women as a disadvantaged group in society who both deserve and require special treatment, and actions that specifically target the lives and conditions of women (Booth and Bennett 2002). They also argue that, from a historical perspective, this approach should be associated with the second wave of feminism (Booth and Bennett 2002). This approach can be characterized by its inclusion of new issues such as equality in the family and the workplace. Reproductive rights and gendered violence were also important issues in this approach.

Squires’ way of conceptualizing this approach is called *reversal*, because “the system”, she argues, is forced to alter and adapt when new areas of significance for women are added to the system. The concept of reversal allows for new types of action to take place, because the system has to respond and include new perspectives (e.g. women’s perspectives). Squires argues that because women’s and men’s life-experiences are different, their needs are also different (Squires 2005).

In her work from 2007, Squires uses the term *voice*. I understand this position, as she describes the changes caused by the changing priorities initiatives of the women’s movement. I would call this the presence of a group-based political voice. Getting access to a political *voice* is also the main argument in Anne Phillips’ work, where she argues that inclusion of so-called “private sphere issues” is highly relevant for closing gaps in political practices, and for making policy relevant for both women and men (Phillips 1995). Phillips can be used to illustrate the difference between Squires’ two positions, as *presence* can have both descriptive and substantial dimensions. Phillips presents her two dimensions, descriptive and substantial, as signifying a change in emphasis from numbers to content (Phillips 1995). As I understand Squires’ first position, reversal, it corresponds to Phillips’ descriptive dimension, because Squires refers to “being there”, in numerical terms as numbers of bodies. In her second approach, voice, the reference should be the change in content and topics in the political conversation.

This group-interest perspective is also present in the work of Rees, who builds on the notion of women having such a group disadvantage (Rees 2005), and conceptualizes this approach as *tailoring*. By this she means that the concept entails that women have had a disadvantage in relation to men,
and that this perspective favours initiatives that make women gain more equal terms.

I would argue that it is impossible to discuss positive action without including the important work done by Bacchi in her book Affirmative Action (Bacchi 1996). When introducing the term affirmative action, which I understand as equivalent to positive action, she mentions that it has several possible interpretations and decides to use a definition from Ann Johnson:

Affirmative action is a generic term for programmes which take some kind of initiative either voluntarily or under the compulsion of law, to increase, maintain, or rearrange the number or status of certain group members usually defined by race or gender, within a larger group. (cited in Bacchi 1996:x)

Bacchi concludes that this approach can both be proactive and address current discrimination. But she also argues that there are problems within the use of positive action as a political policy, problems such as a lack of conclusive change. She points to a comparative study of how positive action had been carried out in six countries. There were several reasons for the outcome, where the problematic use of the term women, potentially essentializing the experiences of different women, combined with a lack of political ambition to promote “women’s issues”, showed that little progress was produced by the approach of positive action.

As in the section on women’s rights, several effects can be argued in relation to positive action. One effect of positive action is the emergence of gender equality agencies. These are units inside, or closely linked to, government structures. They can operate at multiple levels, ranging from global actors, like the UN, IMF and World Bank, to regional centres such as the EU, and state administration. Such units can have different assignments, from serving an advisory role to making recommendations, conducting evaluations and so forth (Squires 2007). A second effect of this policy consists of special initiatives and projects on issues of special interest for women or especially focusing on women (Pincus 2002). At an operational level, this approach has led to many political initiatives in the form of establishing women’s policy agencies and projects.

As I argued in the section on women’s rights, quotas can be compatible with this first approach, but I wish to qualify this by arguing that quotas also can be consistent with the positive action approach. A form of quotas, called content quotas can be used for illustrative purposes. This was the outcome of a political campaign in the 1980s in Sweden, called “every other
one for the ladies”\textsuperscript{13}, in which Freidenvall investigated how the “women deficit” was constructed and formulated as a political problem (Freidenvall 2006). The campaign “Every other one for the ladies” aimed to introduce and enforce gender quotas in public arenas, such as in political assemblies, to achieve more equal representation. She also investigates how the different political parties discussed and prepared to resolve this “deficit problem” using political reforms within the nominating process. Hence, I argue that the policy to ensure that the presence of women, as both input and output, in political assemblies, is part of the positive action approach.

Positive action has been criticized for how it relates to gender(s). In several cases, positive action strategies use gender and women as synonyms. This implies the conception that men as a group have no, or very little to do with the policies. Moreover, gender is used, in both women’s rights and positive action as a binary category. Finally, positive action is often criticized for generating a separation between the ordinary work and the work of increasing gender equality in organizations. This allows the ordinary work to be left unchanged (Wittbom 2009). Now I will turn to the third and final approach, which is gender mainstreaming.

\subsection*{2.1.3 Approach: Gender mainstreaming}

The distinctiveness of the gender mainstreaming approach is that it seeks to institutionalize equality by embedding gender-sensitive practices and norms in the structures, processes, and environment of public policy. (Daly 2005:435)

Here I use the words of Mary Daly to introduce gender mainstreaming, the third and final approach of gender equality politics in my categorization. In this section I refer to the same scholars as in the sections on women’s rights and positive action. In Daly’s quotation, she points to some of the key factors of the approach, such as the institutionalization of practices and norms into processes. Verloo argues that gender mainstreaming addresses “the problem” of inequality at a more structural level (Verloo 2005a). This includes identifying gender biases in current policies and assessing the impact that gendered biases have in the (re)production of gender inequality. She argues that this approach requires policy makers both to make themselves capable of incorporating gender equality into their policies, and to actually do so (2005a). As in the prior approaches, the scholars uses different words

\textsuperscript{13} In Swedish: Varannan damernas.
when they describe gender mainstreaming. Booth and Bennett (2002) call it the gender perspective, Squires used both displacement (2005) and process (2007), Rees labels it transforming (2005), and finally both Daly (2005) and Verloo (2005a) uses the term gender mainstreaming, see Table 1. Verloo argues that gender mainstreaming addresses the problem of gender inequality on a more structural level, with its focus on identifying gendered biases in the (re)production of gender inequality. She argues that this approach could lead to a fundamental transformation of society (2005a).

Booth and Bennett agree that the gender perspective promotes actions that aim to transform both organizations and society (2002). They also emphasize that there are differences within the categories of women and men, yet they still use the binary categorization of genders. To illustrate their position with respect to the different gender equality policies, they use the metaphor of a “three-legged equality stool” (Booth and Bennett 2002), and argue that all three perspectives, women’s rights, positive action and gender mainstreaming, have to be mutually supportive to be successful. As in the previous approaches, Booth and Bennett ascribe gender mainstreaming to a wave in feminism, now called the third wave. This third wave has been described as more intersectional and inclusive than the previous versions (Gillis and Munford 2004).

When describing gender mainstreaming, Squires uses the concepts of displacement (2005) and process (2007). She uses displacement when arguing the potential to transform an entire political and administrative system by aiming “to deconstruct those discursive regimes that engender the subject” (Squires 2005:368). In a later version she uses the concept of process to describe what gender mainstreaming comprises: “a set of tools and processes designed to integrate a gender perspective into all policies at the planning stage by considering the likely effects of policies on the respective situations of women and men, and then revising the policies if necessary” (Squires 2007: 39). In her second version she points to the planning stage of public administration. She also argues that one should distinguish between “participative-democratic” and “expert-bureaucratic” models of gender mainstreaming. The participative-democratic (or agenda-setting) approach, according to Squires, focuses on participation, presence, inclusion and empowering of disadvantaged groups, and in the case of gender mainstreaming, one can argue that this would be women. Squires’ second model, expert-bureaucratic, targets gender experts and the “bureaucratic creation of evidence-based knowledge in policy-making, where the gender experts
usually aim to integrate a gender perspective into existing policy paradigms without questioning them” (Squires 2007:4, italic by author).

I appreciate Squires’ attempt to describe the division between transformative inclusion of voices (displacement) and transformative administrative routines (process), but the model is, in my view, problematic in that it describes two distinctive modes that leave no room for variation. Squires pre-excludes the possibility of a bureaucratic model that, by challenging existing policy paradigms, has transformative potential. I will return to this question later.

Finally, Rees supplies the most radical description of gender mainstreaming when she explicitly uses the concept of transforming to describe what gender mainstreaming potentially entails. She says that her transformative perspective is derived from the 1990s and focuses on systems and structures, and that it aims to achieve substantial change through both deconstruction and redistribution of power (Rees 2005).

To conclude this section, I would argue that by applying my model to approaches of gender equality polices (women’s rights, positive action and gender mainstreaming) I have shown differences between the three approaches regarding issues relating to gender, politics and power. I have also shown that there are some modifications within the approaches, though not extensive ones, in how the scholars describe their concepts. I will relate my conclusions in Chapter 6 to this model. I now wish to go more deeply into the already identified critique of gender mainstreaming, to be able to expand on the discussion of the black box, feminist politics and neoliberalism.

2.2 Gender Mainstreaming – earlier critiques

This section will be devoted to identifying how scholars have described challenges within gender mainstreaming. Moreover, I suggest that this research has overlooked and left out important aspects of the problems inherent in gender mainstreaming. First I will give a brief account of the attempts to categorize the criticism in research so far, then I will offer my own understanding of the most relevant challenges in gender mainstreaming, by presenting my framework of critique.

First I can conclude that the description and focus of gender mainstreaming shifts dramatically, something that has been discussed in my articles (Article II, Article III) as well as by other scholars (Stratigaki 2005). It has, for example, been determined to be a social innovation (Schmidt 2005), a method (see Booth and Bennett 2002), a feminist strategy (Walby 2005a), an administrative routine (Rönnblom 2011), a meta-instrument (Halpern et
al. 2008), a new form of governance (NFG) (see Squires 2007), and a transversal policy instrument (Jacquot 2010). On an operational level, the range of descriptions is equally wide, from it being a set of tools, to a changed perspective, impact assessment (Hafner-Burton and Pollack 2002, Squires 2007) segregated statistics, or the inclusion of the women’s movement in governmental agencies (Peng 2015).

Within these ways of conceptualizing gender mainstreaming, several common vaguenesses and challenges have been identified and discussed. The critique of gender mainstreaming has produced a large number of articles, which causes for a literally overview and systematic presentation. Several publications focus on how the different versions relate to each other in a comprehensive way (Hankivsky 2005, Walby 2005b, Sainsbury and Bergqvist 2009, Norrbin and Olsson 2010, Milward et al., 2015).

Sylvia Walby identifies six major critical issues in gender mainstreaming (Walby 2005b). I agree with Walby that all of her six challenges are valid, but with the passing of time, I would argue, they have developed unevenly, leaving room for an alternative way of understanding the challenges. This is why I do not think Walby’s categorization would be the most fruitful path to use for discussing contemporary challenges.

Turning to Hankivsky, she focuses on the disconnection between gender mainstreaming and feminist theoretical groundings (Hankivsky 2005). She identifies two major concerns with regard to gender mainstreaming. First she points to the involvement of the state, before turning to the conception of gender. In regard to her first point, she argues that feminist theory has a much more complex understanding of how states can and should contribute to increasing gender equality than she can identify within the strategy of gender mainstreaming. I agree (as does Verloo 2005a), and I will return to the question of how gender mainstreaming relates to the public later on in this section. In regard to her second concern, she argues that the way gender mainstreaming displays and uses gender as its primary means of categorization is obsolete. She states, and I again agree, that gender mainstreaming does not move the complex body of theoretical work on gender away from feminist theory and into the strategy of gender mainstreaming. She finally

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14 These are the tension between gender equality and the “mainstream”, gender mainstreaming as sameness, gender mainstreaming as difference vs. transformation, gender mainstreaming as strategy vs. vision, gender mainstreaming in relation to other complex inequalities, the relationship between expertise and democracy and finally the implications of international regimes (Walby 2005b).
shoots down this approach by stating that “there are in fact no real possibilities to adequately improve or expand the GM framework” (Hankivsky 2005:978). I will return to the gender argument later in this chapter when I present my framework.

The Swedish Secretariat for Gender Research at the University of Gothenburg has identified in a literary overview (Norrbin and Olsson 2010) four categories of problems in gender mainstreaming. The first problem is in line with Hankivsky’s second concern: that its use of gender is problematic and it reproduces gendered differences. They argue that because gender mainstreaming’s purpose is to visualize the categories of men and women, it contributes to solidifying the perceived differences between the genders. The second problem they raise is that gender mainstreaming is not a new way of doing gender equality work, but is basically a reuse of already established methods, though they are not clear about how this lack of innovation is a problem. Their third criticism is that doing gender mainstreaming is too complicated, which makes it a threat to other forms of gender equality work. They argue that gender mainstreaming is only enforced to create job opportunities for so called “experts”. Their fourth remark is finally that the policy of gender mainstreaming has become a vision in itself, and that the end goal is not gender equality but a constant procedure of gender mainstreaming (for similarities see Walby’s fourth tension) (Norrbin and Olsson 2010).

My last example of how scholars have tried to organize and present critiques of gender mainstreaming is an article from 2015 where Milward et al. argue that their critique can be summarized in the following five points. The first is that gender mainstreaming has led to a loss of political analysis, meaning that the political will and political prioritizing are more engaged with improvements of technical tools of the strategy than formulating transformative goals. This criticism encompasses both the separation of gender mainstreaming from its feminist roots and the “deficit” argument, which arises when central concepts have been split off and delinked. Their second criticism targets the focus on technical improvements, arguing that despite rapid development in the technical dimension, gaps and failures can be identified in technical inputs. They illustrate this problem by showing how the

15 In Swedish: Nationella sekretariatet för genusforskning, “The central aim of the agency is to strengthen the impact of research and knowledge related to gender and gender equality in academia and the rest of society” http://www.genus.se/en/about-us/about-the-secretariat/ 2017-07-03.
lack of clearly defined goals and non-articulation of performance standards cause vague input, and subsequently flaws in output. A third argument concerns the problem of the gendered organization, where the gendered biases in current organizations are too extensive for gender mainstreaming to handle. There is not enough leverage in gender mainstreaming to successfully transform the organization. However, an increased understanding of the gendered nature of organizational practices such as procedures, routines and cultures must be emphasized (Milward et al. 2015, see also Lowndes 2014). The fourth argument put forward by Milward et al. concerns problems in outcomes analysis, which include the ability to cause external change. I understand their argument, as they identify a lack of political ownership. This political responsibility is much more explicit in the *positive action* approach. Lastly, they argue that the implementation of gender mainstreaming is an act of subversive complicity in a wider project of governance, as a technology to govern gender instead of to increase gender equality (Milward et al. 2015).

As described at the beginning of this section, gender mainstreaming has attracted a great deal of criticism from scholars. However, there is a need to add new perspectives to this corpus of prior research. As I argued in Chapter 1, in studies on gender mainstreaming the overarching topics of *black box*, *feminist politics*, and *neoliberalism* should be considered. I will do this by presenting my framework of critique.

### 2.3 My framework of critique

It is now time to return to my aim, which is to provide a critical understanding and empirical knowledge about if and how gender mainstreaming contributes to a more (gender) equal society. Here I want to combine the contributions of previous critical research on gender mainstreaming with what I have identified in my articles. To conclude, I here suggest an altered set of categories for the *inherent* problems in gender mainstreaming. It is a question not only of reorganizing the critiques that I have accounted for above, but also of pointing to aspects of issues that have not yet been properly addressed. I will use the following aspects in a critical discussion of gender mainstreaming: *obscurity, gender, politics, neoliberalism*, and *organization*. I will return to my framework of critique in Chapter 6.

### 2.3.1 The obscurity of Gender Mainstreaming

As shown in the previous section, several scholars have pointed to the messiness/vagueness/obscurity of gender mainstreaming. They have argued that
gender mainstreaming lacks lucidity and is bursting with vagueness, and I agree. According to Moser and Moser, there are inconsistencies in vocabulary, in policy and in implementation of gender mainstreaming (Moser and Moser 2005). In my article on myths of success (Article I) I conclude that there is a conflation between gender mainstreaming (viewed as a strategy) and gender equality (as a policy objective).

My argument is that when gender mainstreaming’s effects are discussed there is no consistent use of indicators, due to the variation of the strategy. One of the more frequently cited criticisms of gender mainstreaming is that it is empty rhetoric (Stratigaki 2005, Rönnblom 2011). On the other hand, Prügl argues that the discourse of gender mainstreaming has co-opted feminist rhetoric and distorted feminist goals in the process (Prügl 2009). Sjöstedt Landén and Olofsdotter conclude that “there is no consensus as to what gender-mainstreaming practices include or how they should be defined”, and I agree with their statement (Sjöstedt Landén and Olofsdotter 2016: 165). I conclude that several of my respondents displayed a pragmatic attitude towards language, using concepts they believed would lead to a “successful” outcome (Article III).

Another factor in the obscurity of gender mainstreaming is the conflation of gender mainstreaming as a vision and as a strategy, where the strategy has become the end goal, for example the implementation of new administrative techniques (Walby 2005b, Rönnblom 2011). In Article II we identified a goal displacement tendency that privileges the means or instrumental goals (education) over ends or the ultimate goals (increased gender equality) (Article II). Walby suggests that what is “new” about the strategy of gender mainstreaming is that the definition of gender equality could come in second place (Walby 2005b).

2.3.2 About gender in Gender Mainstreaming

When it comes to gender mainstreaming and conceptions of gender, there have been several prior discussions in the research. One of these, as mentioned above, is argued by Hankivsky, who states that “GM is inherently limited and limiting because it always prioritizes gender as the axis of discrimination and moreover, the conceptualization of gender that GM rest on is clearly outdated” (Hankivsky 2005:978, italics in original). A variation of this line of critique is that gender mainstreaming favours gender over other forms of discrimination or, as Walby puts it, over other complex inequalities in a non-fruitful way (2005b).
One potent criticism of gender mainstreaming concerns the inconsistency in how gender should be understood in gender mainstreaming. Does it refer to women, to men, to gendered relationships, or to something else? We do not know. This touches on the question of gender neutrality. Squires who is well aware of this problem, points to the significant shift from *women’s rights* (inclusion/presence) and *positive action* (reversal/voice) to *gender mainstreaming*, by identifying that women, per se, could be absent from gender mainstreaming (Squires 2005; 2007). A theoretical consequence of this is that effects of gender mainstreaming could possibly only affect men. Here Hankivsky becomes relevant again because she points to the lack of (feminist) theoretical grounding in gender mainstreaming (2005). Gender could refer to a complex theoretical body of literature, but instead gender mainstreaming understands gender in terms of sex roles and a binary distinction between male and female (Calvo 2013). In my article on gendered violence I analysed how the concept of gender was articulated, and identified two variants. One is that the categories of women and men were used as binary categories, and the other was the use of gender-neutral expressions. This variance was present even within the same municipality, where inconsistencies between the analysed documents revealed an ambivalence about how to articulate gender in relation to gender mainstreaming and gendered violence (Article IV).

Even if some point to the positive effect of being able to include men and boys in policies (Article III), other scholars cite the negative effects of this, and argue that it leads to a loss of focus on the underprivileged position of women and girls (Ward 2016).

### 2.3.3 Transformative power and politics

Prügl claims, and I agree, that the discussion about gender mainstreaming lacks a “theorization of operations of power” (2009: 175). Alnebratt and Rönnblom make a similar point in a slightly different way when they focus on the lack of political conflicts in their observations. They argue that political conflict has to be one of the active ingredients when addressing asymmetrical power relations, but state that they cannot observe it in gender mainstreaming (Alnebratt and Rönnblom 2016). I concur, and in my article

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16 This win-win (for both men and women) position was argued by several of the respondents, when discussing the expected outcome of the gender mainstreaming work (Article III).
I can see how the strategy of gender mainstreaming is turning into an issue of political consensus, rather than one of political conflict. I will return to this in Chapter 3, where I expand on the concepts of politics and power. But, first I want to conclude that when focusing on the possibility for, or ability of gender mainstreaming to articulate conflict, I have not found any guidance or examples in the academic literature.

As previously discussed, several scholars have written about, and argued for, the transformative potential of gender mainstreaming (Squires 2005, Walby 2005a; 2005b, Jacquot 2010). I have also discussed how uncertainties remain about what substantial changes may be produced as a result of the strategy. In the absence of studies that would show such transformative change, some scholars argue for using “a strategy of small wins” instead (Callerstig 2014, Ylöstalo 2016). I understand this as a move away from the transformative perspective, and as indicating that the lack of substantial results is a result of unsuccessful implementation. It further indicates a belief that gender mainstreaming can be seen as an incremental track, and not a fast track towards gender equality.17

Several scholars ask why there is a lack of substantial results from gender mainstreaming (Bacchi and Eveline 2003, Daly 2005, Moser and Moser 2005, Walby 2005b, Benschop and Verloo 2006, Prügl 2009, Keisu and Carbin 2014). Squires, however, provides an important contribution when arguing that it is the actual process of gender mainstreaming that is the problem, among others (2005). She points out that doing gender mainstreaming requires the involvement of other people outside the project management team. As described in Chapter 1, in the definition from the Council of Europe, the aim is to reorganize policy making 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” (Council of Europe 1998). But, as Squires aptly points out, how to include them is actually the problem, and one has to develop strategies for how to avoid alienating people in the process (Squires 2005). This is elegantly illustrated by Sjöstedt Landén and Olofsdotter (2016), who describe how a government agency in Sweden organized a gender equality conference discussing gender mainstreaming without using the words gender or gender (in)equality, ostensibly in order

17 Using the terms fast track and incremental track when describing the variances within the field of gender equality is inspired by the gender quota literature. Quotas are viewed as a “fast track” to equal representation for women. (Dahlerup & Freidenvall 2006).
to avoid alienating people. This is also the topic of investigation in my article on non-conflict (Article III). In the article I show how Mouffe’s distinction between agonism and antagonism can be useful, for understanding possible resistance and conflict, and argue that agonism is an impossible articulation within the (consensus-oriented) neo-liberal context of the project. The interviewees positioned themselves in relation to a fabricated opposition, an anonymous other, an imagined very critical antagonist whose reaction must be taken into consideration at all times. This caused the project leaders to avoid issues that could possibly cause conflicts (Article III).

Verloo argues that this kind of strategic action leads to the avoidance, through strategic framing, of specific, sometimes loaded, questions about (more often than not) women’s conditions (Verloo 2001). In my article on non-conflict I identified such silences within HJÄMT, including avoidance of gendered violence and failure to include the working conditions of women employed by the municipality (Article III).

This can also be illustrated by Ward’s discussion of gender mainstreaming and gender-based violence. When results of gender mainstreaming analyses show gendered differences in exposure to gender-based violence, she argues, there is in fact less opportunity to launch programmes that target this injustice because of the focus on gender instead of women. She also states that initiatives or actions with a direct focus on empowering women are increasingly obscured within gender mainstreaming projects (Ward 2016). Ward uses this argument to support the supposed uncoupling between positive action and gender mainstreaming. I could not identify this uncoupling, but I did conclude that gendered violence and gender mainstreaming are still distinct policy areas at local level (Article IV).

2.3.4 Compatibility with neoliberalism

Following Hanne Marlene Dahl, neoliberalism can be both a new social logic and a set of organizational reforms (2012a). I investigate gender mainstreaming and its connection to neoliberalism in my article on knowledge and education in gender mainstreaming (Article II). In this article we posit that gender mainstreaming should be characterized as a neoliberal practice embedded in public administration. We argue that gender mainstreaming fits well into the package of NPM and its associated market solutions and that through gender mainstreaming, knowledge and learning have come to replace other forms of gender equality policy. Evidence-based evaluations seem to produce a certain kind of results. Educational efforts are measured
in terms of participation satisfaction and preserved individual usability, rather than their effects on increased gender equality (Article II).

Several scholars are engaged with the topic of gender mainstreaming and neoliberalism (Bacchi and Eveline 2003, Norrbin and Olsson 2010, Rönnblom 2011). Descriptions of gender mainstreaming as individualistic, measurable, and profitable, show how it fits into neo-liberal agendas.

As I pointed out in the section on obscurity, there is a conflation between gender mainstreaming as a vision and as a strategy. Some have argued that the strategy has become an objective in itself, and that the strategy of mainstreaming gender has been replaced by a strategy for how to implement the strategy of gender mainstreaming (Interview: Lundkvist 2009). So instead of gender mainstreaming being a strategy (means) for achieving gender equality (the objectives), the objective is now to implement gender mainstreaming (Rönnblom 2011) or, as Sara Ahmeds puts it, “we end up doing the documents instead of doing the doing” (quoted in Alnebratt and Rönnblom 2016: 136).

Rose (1991) shows how audits and evaluations shape the political content because, as he argues, if there will be an audit, it must be possible to audit. According to Sjöstedt Landén and Olofsdotter (2016), the use of quantitative measures is important in gender mainstreaming projects. They observed an implementation process where the management wanted numbers to create visual understanding of the progress, using measurable statistics. As a result they concluded that activities within this gender mainstreaming project were adapted to fit this need for quantifiable objectives. According to Alnebratt and Rönnblom the widespread use and implementation of indicators is not just affecting the auditing, but also guides what the political projects as such should do (2016).

Callerstig shows in her thesis that it is more likely that administrative procedures, for example checklists, will be introduced than more structural and deeper changes (Callerstig 2014). Critiques of gender mainstreaming have also identified how, since the 1990s, the increased use of rational bureaucratic tools and checklists has been replacing the aim of transformation of policy and institutions (Woodward 2003a). Kantola and Squires suggest that evidence-based policy-making has encouraged feminist NGOs and gender experts to deploy economic rather than political discourses to frame their gender analyses (2012).

Gender mainstreaming can be regarded as a prototypical technology of government, according to Prügl (Prügl 2011). She uses this Foucauldian perspective to shed light on the political rationalities embedded in feminism
and gender mainstreaming. The mechanism and logics are found to both the bureaucracy and the conduct of people (Prügl 2011). She argues that feminist knowledge has been modified into gender mainstreaming to make it available to the government in the form of practical administrative routines. This would mean that feminist knowledge about gender, inequality, and discrimination has been transformed into the rationality and techniques of gender mainstreaming to enable its implementation by government. Those systematic routines include management techniques such as collecting statistics, checklists, evaluations and gender budgeting. She argues that this Foucauldian approach both constrains and empowers feminist knowledge when it is inserted into the gender mainstreaming (Prügl 2011). After my investigation of the myth of Sweden’s success with gender mainstreaming, I argue against this position, showing in two of my articles that feminist politics is not incorporated into public administration using gender mainstreaming. Issues of power are avoided in favour of the win-win discourse and silences are created in regard to feminist issues, for example gendered violence (Article I, Article II, Article III).

2.3.5 The organization of gender mainstreaming

Several studies focus on public administration and gender mainstreaming, and here I want to engage with this critique by expanding on some of the points relating to how the work of gender mainstreaming is organized.

In her study of the EU Commission, Maria Stratigaki (2005) focuses on the political nature of public administration itself. She states that gender mainstreaming’s most important element is the broadening of the responsibility for the issue, which also it its major weakness. It can replace gender equality-specific politics and be used as an excuse not to enhance conditions for women (Stratigaki 2005). Despite the progress of gender mainstreaming since The Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing (1995), and the Beijing Platform for Action, Stratigaki shows how administrative decisions within the EU have had immense negative impact on the implementation of gender mainstreaming. The administrative decisions obstructed and depoliticized the implementation of gender mainstreaming within the EU Commission, as well as causing a weakening of positive action (Stratigaki 2005).

Stratigaki asserts that the shift from positive action to gender mainstreaming largely has been used as an alibi for neutralizing the benefits of positive

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18 I use the concept of broadening in Article IV, where we investigate the relationship between gender mainstreaming and gendered violence.
action through policy softening and institutional weakening within the EU (Stratigaki 2005). In my article on non-conflict (Article III) I have identified how the logic of implementation is adapted to fit the whole municipality, where it is described as a win-win strategy. I can see that the adaptation of gender mainstreaming within HJÄMT is done with the experiences from the EU commission in mind. Kantola and Squires argue in a similar vein as Stratigaki, stating that when gender mainstreaming is everyone’s responsibility, it can be used as argument for abolishing special women’s policy agencies within the state apparatus (Kantola and Squires 2012).

Outside the domain of the state, the position of the women’s movement is significant because the presence of a movement posits a possible voice for articulating (group) interests of women. When the Beijing Platform for Action launched gender mainstreaming as a strategy for gender equality work in all nations, it signalled a change of course in transnational gender equality policy. It was argued to be a link between the aim of empowerment of women and the transformation of women’s issues from marginal policy ghettos into a general concern (Woodward 2003b). In prior research on gender equality policy, Woodward has shown the importance of the so-called velvet triangle, which refers to how femocrats, academics and the women’s movement worked together to increase gender equality (Woodward 2003b). Peng (2015) shows that gender mainstreaming, in Taiwan can be the incorporation (or possible co-optation) of the women’s movement. In Sweden the women’s movement is absent from the strategy of gender mainstreaming in public administration (Andersson and Hedlund 2012, Article I).

I will return to the issue of the organization of gender mainstreaming, as well as the position of the women’s movement in Chapter 6, where I will engage in a discussion about the effects on the velvet triangle of neoliberal ideas of expertise and the market. In the same chapter I will also return to my research questions. Now I will expand on my theoretical perspective and discuss my articles in relation to their theoretical positions.
3. Theoretical perspectives – a critical position

To be able to address the aim in Chapter 1 – to provide a critical understanding and empirical knowledge about if, and how, gender mainstreaming can contribute to a more (gender) equal society – I had to relate gender mainstreaming to issues of power, conflict and what I call silences. This creates a common denominator for how, theoretically, methodologically and empirically, we can understand the outcomes of gender mainstreaming. First, I present the theoretical approaches and comment on how they were mobilized in the articles. After that follows a brief description of my use of feminist institutionalism and discourse theory. I then describe and discuss how to study silences and “what is not there”. Finally, at the end of the chapter, my position on gender, politics and NPM is presented.

In the thesis’ aim, I state that I will provide a critical understanding in my study of gender mainstreaming alluding to the tradition of critical theory. Fraser suggests that critical theory is not characterized by any specific epistemological or philosophical traits, but rather a clearly political one (Fraser 1985). The political position of critical theory is described by Fraser as follows:

A critical social theory frames its research program and its conceptual framework with an eye to the aims and activities of those oppositional social movements with which it has a partisan though not uncritical identification. The questions it asks and the models it designs are informed by that identification and interest. (Fraser 1985: 97)

Following her position, I have attempted to understand and critically examine the production of gender mainstreaming, using questions and critiques formulated within a feminist tradition. In Chapter 1, I discussed how the different articles reflect my ambivalence towards gender mainstreaming from a feminist standpoint.

3.1 Theoretical perspectives – a discussion

The specific theoretical approaches differ in each of the four articles, and two major theoretical frameworks are employed in this thesis. One article (Article IV) draws specifically on feminist new institutionalism and three articles (Article I, Article II, Article III) draw on discourse theory. My theoretical standpoint has not shifted radically over time, as articles may appear to indicate. The chronologically first article (Article IV) has a different the-
oretical framework from the others. To some extent this is because the article was co-written, but it is more due to the theoretical framework fitting the specific aim of the article: to investigate municipalities as gendered institutions. In the second co-written article, discourse theory was mobilized (Article II). The core concepts in the article, such as governmentality and ideology, have other theoretical strengths, enabling a different analysis of the production of gender equality policies.

Although they are different in their conceptual approach, the two perspectives could be argued to be ontologically compatible, and their respective strengths can be used to complement each other. This is because the institutional perspective, feminist or not, is not sufficiently centred on the study of power as production. Moreover, in studying institutions power is always at play (Foucault 1990), if not always explicitly (Røvik 2000, Krook and Mackay 2011). As will be discussed later in this chapter, I do not view institutions as something natural or essential instead they organize and mobilize bias in ways that make certain outcomes more or less likely (see Franceschet 2011). This constitutes a mode of power which structures institutions and politics to privilege certain interest over others. I would argue that expressions of power are of specific relevance when studying a political strategy described as having the potential to transform society.

Power is central to feminist theorizing and research, and the study of power is inherently difficult and ambiguous, also in this dissertation. Nevertheless, I apply a productive perspective on institutions and argue that institutions themselves are media of power.

Power in this picture consists of radical acts of decision and institution, which involve the drawing of political frontiers via the creation of multiple lines of inclusion and exclusion. The exercise of power thus constitutes and produces practices, policies, and regimes. But power is also evident in the sedimentation of social relations via various techniques of political management, and through the elaboration of ideologies and fantasies, where the function of the latter is to conceal the radical contingency of social relations and to naturalize relations of domination. (Howarth 2009: 309; emphasis in original)

Even though I refer to Howarth’s view of power and aim to move beyond a perspective on power as mainly re-distribution, I wish to recognize the material side of power. Being in “possession” of power entails controlling resources or (re)distribution – institutionally, functionally or as an individual. Here the discursive perspective and the feminist institutionalism approach are conjoined in the need for a concrete theory of power. Finally, I
use a productive concept of power, where the dynamics of the strategy are visible both in the construction of language and in institutionalization (Foucault 1972, Fischer 2003, Schmidt 2008; 2010). Foucault’s take on power and knowledge is also central to my understanding of governmentality, which is applied in Article II. Technologies of the self and technologies of domination cannot be seen as separate entities; rather they are intertwined in the construction of conduct (Lemke 2000). In the case of gender mainstreaming, we therefore argue that self-regulation and institutional practices are interconnected processes (Article II).

Before presenting my use of feminist institutionalisms and discourse theory, I want to emphasis that concepts such as gender, politics and power cannot be treated as separate entities. Instead, their shifting and intertwined focus constitutes the backbone of what a feminist perspective in political science, including its societal relevance, is all about. As argued in Jónasdóttir and Jones (2009), the field of feminist theory and political research is both fragmented and contested. They claim that the contemporary debate focuses on how to think about what we can know in contrast to what we should be doing, which they argue should instead be how to think about what we can do (Jónasdóttir and Jones 2009:3). They express this critique in the setting of a debate between critical realists and post-structural feminist theories. I find their request for an altered agenda relevant. Their call is also in line with the normative position I employ (see Chapter 1). I agree with the need for an approach that methodologically and systematically can distinguish between discursive and non-discursive practices of the material in both discourse theory and feminist institutionalism. Just as questions related to gender, politics and power are essential for feminist theory, they are also fundamental for feminist politics.

My theoretical point of departure is that there is no understanding without interpretation. I also claim that interpretation is challenging but unavoidable. How one understands something is always dependent on one’s frames of reference (Denzin and Lincoln 2013). This is one reason why theoretical and methodological discussions and reflections should not be completely separated. The use of theory is thus not a neutral activity, and should not be separate from the use of methods – the two being interconnected in the act of interpretation. The line between theory and method, however, is sometimes delicate and blurry, and the distribution of content between this chapter and Chapter 4 (on methods) is my construction.
3.2 Feminist Institutionalisms and Institutions

Feminist institutionalism should not be categorized as a single strand in the same way as other established forms of institutionalism, such as historical, sociological, discursive, or rational behaviour institutionalism. Rather, the feminist prefix should be understood as an ambition to integrate processes of gender in any of those strands (Krook and Mackay 2011). It should therefore properly be labelled feminist institutionalisms, to emphasize the ambition of integrating gender into various theories of institutionalism. The number of scholars engaging in this approach and the body of literature are growing rapidly (Hudson et al. 2017).

Krook and Mackay argue, and I agree, that adding the word feminist as a prefix instead of gender shows an openness to engage in the political project of emancipation of women, and not just to theoretically describe, analyse or discuss gender per se (Krook and Mackay 2011). This ambition fits well with my own normative position of critically engaging with gender equality policies with the intention of improving them, and not to abandon or abstain from the political project of gender mainstreaming.

Feminist institutionalism has the same unruly application of the concept “institution” as do other forms of institutionalisms (Krook and Mackay 2011), and Krook and Mackay follow Guy Peters’ argument that: “an institution as a structural feature of the society and/or the polity […] may be formal (a legislature, an agency in the public bureaucracy, or a legal framework), or a changed set of norms” (cited in Krook and Mackay 2011: 11). One of the most important contributions of the field has been its demonstration of just how “sticky” informal rules about gender can be (Lowndes 2014).

I view institutions as repeated sets of procedures which make certain outcomes more or less likely. The outcomes are gendered (Acker 1990; 1992), and the gendered processes are specific in public organizations (Stivers 1991; 2002, Findlay 2015). Within an institution the processes are often entangled, for example in the case of gendered rules, gendered actors, gendered effects and gendered outcomes (Lowndes 2014). Moreover, I find the concept of feminist institutionalisms useful in that it can be used to study both formal institutions (rules-in-form) and informal institutions (rule-in-use) (Björnegard and Uggla 2017).

As argued in Article IV, the theoretical approach of new institutionalism has often had a gender-blind perspective in relation to organizational studies. When we were designing the study of gender mainstreaming and gendered violence, we needed a theoretical perspective that could profoundly
engage with and discuss institutions and institutionalization, as well as gender. Moreover, we wanted the theoretical framework to able to discuss gender as a *performative* practice. This can be explained as the framework having the capacity to include processes where gender can have several kinds of influence. We decided that feminist institutionalism provided the tools for such an approach in the article on violence and municipalities (Article IV). Our position is that institutions and gender are intertwined both in how language is used (rules-in-use) and in the formal institutions (rules-in form) that constitute the municipality’s policy documents.

Although feminist institutionalisms are able to contribute to a much-needed focus on institutions, I suggest that, with the exception of discursive institutionalism (Schmidt 2008) they all share some of the other institutionalisms’ lack of focus on the production of power (Rövik 2000, Krook and Mackay 2011). Bacchi and Rönnblom, discussing feminist institutionalism and its relation to institutionalism, argue that feminist discursive institutionalism can be described as a contradiction in terms (2014). They argue that institutions, and other political categories, should not be conceptualized as *discrete entities*. If they are investigated as fixed *objects of thought* they become “givens”; instead they should be described as *open-ended assemblages* (Bacchi and Rönnblom 2014: 171), though this leads to a loss of analytical potential. Their criticism is harsh but important. It brings the discussion back to the beginning of this chapter, where I apply Jónasdóttir and Jones’ (2009) call for the development of a way to systematically distinguish between discursive and non-discursive practices of the *material*.

As discussed in Article IV, we wanted to use the potential and the strengths of feminist institutionalisms to study municipalities as gendered institutions. Because of my position that institutions are (unevenly) repeated sets of procedures which privilege certain interest over others, it is possible to analytically distinguish between formal institutions as discrete entities (such as municipalities) and other formal institutions (such as the strategic document on combating gendered violence), which are less frequent in public administration. At the other end of the institutional spectrum we find informal institutions such as open-ended assemblages (rules-in-use). The latter are investigated when we mobilize our conceptual framework (Article IV). Each end of the continuum is a result of the production of power.

### 3.3 Discourse theory

I adopt an open and pragmatic position with regard to discourse theory, engaging with different theories depending on the research question at hand.
In my writings, I have not exclusively used one specific school of discourse analysis (for example discourse theory, critical discourse analysis or discourse and social psychology). Rather, a common denominator in the articles is their focus on power, silences and conflicts. I will therefore expand on each of these in the following section.

In three of my articles, on myth of success (Article I), on education and knowledge (Article II), and on non-conflict (Article III), I use theoretical insights from discourse theory in slightly different ways. In this section I will therefore briefly summarize which theoretical tools from discourse analysis that I have mobilized in the articles. I will begin with a discussion of central topics related to theories of discourses.

Discourse is a social and historical technology of mind (Miller and Rose 1990), and according to Laclau and Mouffe discourses and “the material” can not be separated (1985). Discourses constitute subjects and objects, as well as their relationships (Foucault 1972). Common to the approaches in my articles, and to post-structuralism as an ontological departure, is that language, subjectivity, social organization and power are linked together by language (Howarth 2000). The language does not reflect social reality per se but instead gives meaning and structure to the social. In line with Miller and Rose (1990) I believe that discourses also structure knowledge. We use knowledge to comprehend our surroundings and to determine what we consider true and real, at the same time as discourses exclude other possible social orders. This leads me to understand language as consisting of competing discourses, which in turn makes language a site of exploration and struggle. An example of this is found in Article III, where I analyse interviews and use discourse theory to understand how and why HJÄMT is avoiding the concept of feminism.19

Also related to this is the concept of gender mainstreaming, and how it can be understood in discursive terms. In Article III, applying Rönnblom’s argument (2011) I describe gender equality as an empty signifier (Article III: 204) whose content depends on context and societal power. In line with Rönnblom, I find contemporary gender mainstreaming to be fuelling increased auditing and administrative routines. In Article I: 4, I describe gender mainstreaming as a floating signifier.

Also central to my use of discourse theory is the concept of hegemony, explained by Torfing in the following way:

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19 I used feminism as a methodological tool to create crisis (see section 3.4).
[We] can define hegemony as the expansion of a discourse, or a set of discourses, into a dominant horizon of social orientation and action by means of articulating unfixed elements into partially fixed moments in a context crisscrossed by antagonistic forces. [...] hegemony brings us from the undecidable level of non-totalizable openness to a decidable level of discourse. (Torfing 1999: 101–102)

Winther Jørgensen and Phillips (2000) suggest that hegemony exists when a discourse consists of deposited power, but the traces of power have disappeared. Hegemony is thus a discourse that has become so self-evident that one forgets that the world is politically constructed (Winther Jørgensen and Phillips 2000). I agree, and understand hegemony as (temporarily) unchallenged discourse. My research is further an investigation of gender mainstreaming as ideology, as I use hegemony and ideology as synonyms. I consider ideology to be closely connected both to the formation of discourses and to political power, as exercised by the government, but also through such institutions as the family, corporations, schools, and in science an thought knowledge regimes. The concept is used in Article II, where ideology is explained not as a ready-made package of ideas, but rather as something continuously shaped and made natural or true in a certain context (Jaeggi 2009). The concept of ideology is read as both produced by and reproducing discourses (Article II).

Fridolfsson (2006) explains hegemony as an imaginary totality which becomes visible through its exclusions. I agree, and also understand hegemony as articulated through chains of equivalence, where concepts are linked together as temporarily fixed elements. The exclusions are, at the same time, the (temporarily) excluded possibilities in the discourse (Howarth 2000). I identify two chains of equivalence in Article III; see Chapter 5.

Inspired by Laclau (1990) I argue that hegemony becomes visible in times of crisis, and I use this as a methodological approach in the article (Article III). Methodologically, I found it useful to introduce an artificial crisis in order to observe hegemony. I therefore brought up the concept of feminism in the interviews in order to make the respondents articulate what was si-

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20 In political theory ideology has been given several definitions (Stoddart 2007) and my use of it is in line with current post-structuralism and post-Marxism such as Foucault and Laclau and Mouffe, even though, Foucault in fact, came to drop the use of ideology for his preferred term, “discourse”.

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lenced. Laclau himself did not use crisis as a methodological approach; instead he had a theoretical approach to crisis, and described it in terms of greater societal crises, such as the crises of representative democracy, Marxism and capitalism.

3.4 Understanding “what is not there”

As described at the beginning of this chapter, my study of gender mainstreaming needs to relate to issues of power, conflict and silences. I will therefore expand on how, theoretically, I understand silences and how methodologically, I have gone about studying “what is not there”. I argue that silences, gaps and absences can be expressions of power, and that it is possible to study them using discourse theory, despite their posing theoretical and methodological challenges. To provide a critical understanding of gender mainstreaming, I needed to be able to identify and articulate what was missing from the descriptions within HJÄMT and PSGE.

The importance of silences has been discussed and articulated by post-structuralist theorists such as Foucault (1990) and Derrida (1970; 1976). According to them, discourses, or texts, demand an otherness, the outside, which has to be considered a precondition to the construction of the discourse itself. Silences are thus not the opposite of elements or moments in a discourse, but are a mere extension of them. Important contributions to analysing silences have also been made by feminists such as Fraser (1985), Bacchi (2009) and Dahl (2012b). Fraser, in an article on Habermas and (the absence of) gender writes of the importance “that one read the work in question from the standpoint of an absence” (Fraser 1985: 99). Bacchi made an important contribution to the field of silences, with her “what’s the problem represented to be” approach. This proposes that a researcher should ask six different questions (Bacchi 2009; 2010). One of the questions focuses on silence, asking “What is left unproblematic in this problem representation? Where are the silences? Can the ‘problem’ be thought about differently?” (Bacchi 2009: 12). The purpose of this, according to Bacchi, is to stimulate reflection and consideration of contradictions.

This line of argument is one of the central theoretical questions in discourse analysis, but it does not provide much help or guidance on how to methodologically study silences. Hanne Marlene Dahl discusses how to capture and articulate what is not there in the empirical material, and how one can identify this as manifestations of power (Dahl 2012b). Her way of reasoning is clearly inspired by poststructuralist ideas, but her contribution is about the how: how silences, or parts of them, can be identified in texts
(Dahl 2012b: 2). The silences toward which we (she and I), direct our attention are not the kind that we can find in political rhetoric, where information may be strategically withheld from political opponents. Such silences can be categorized as pertaining to political power games.

Instead I concentrate on the societal, discursive processes with an analytical focus on texts. Hence attention is directed to the silences that in a general way limit what we can think and say. These silences are related to both power and powerlessness. Power hides its aspect of power through silencing, while silence is associated with powerlessness, that is, with what cannot be said.

Silence, however, is not just "something" that is. Silence is not just a passive "negative space" (Ward and Winstanley 2003: 1262–3), but is a process. It is produced and reproduced by subjects, and hence silencing is a more suitable term than silence when it comes to capturing what is at stake when something is made silent and thus invisible. (Dahl 2012b: 3f, my translation)

Dahl argues that three different methodological techniques can be used to capture this: comparative discourse analysis, deconstruction and memory work. Among these choices, the work in this thesis is most closely related to deconstruction. My understanding of silences as foreclosed positions, deeply embedded in the construction of discourses, and as expressions of power, is also in line with Derrida’s view (Derrida 1970, Dahl 2012b: 12).

3.5 Gender, politics and NPM

As discussed at the beginning of this chapter, here my position on gender, politics and NPM will be presented. The concepts are entangled to each other, and therefore the following sections will take the shape of a prism, where the different concepts are centered but not treated as solitary items.

3.5.1 Gender as a political category

When focusing on the concept of gender, I have found inconsistencies in the body of theoretical writings on gender mainstreaming as well as in the policies, as shown in Chapter 2. One consequence of this inconsistency is that it is possible in gender mainstreaming polices to target men and/or boys, leaving women or girls out of the policy, something that was impossible within the women’s rights approach or the positive action approach.

Even though gender is one of the most central concepts in gender research, feminists disagree on its meaning. Is gender something people “have” or something they “do”, or is it an “institution”? Hankivsky (2005)
argues that the concept of gender must transform over time, and I agree. However, I argue that the concept must be not only time-sensitive, but also context-sensitive. Gender could represent a physical body, an identity or an experience, or could be used for political, analytical, or juridical reasons, but gender can also be regarded as practice, process and/or social structure. I recognize that power is in play in all the categories above; nevertheless, in the following I want to focus on gender as a political category.

When gender is used as a political category, my position is to argue that gender equality policy should target the relationship between the genders (Gustafsson 2008). This is a classic stance in politics: that (group) interests should be used to make political demands and to bring about change (Phillips 1995, Gustafsson 2008). I agree and want to emphasize that focusing on the relationship between the genders per se does not lead to increased gender equality; it is the relationship between them that ought to be politicized. To argue this case, I turn to an essay by Maud Eduards in which she makes this distinction clear, when she discusses the “and” in Swedish gender equality policy and what happens when politics focuses on the genders simultaneously in contrast to politicizing gendered relationships (Eduards 2011), she writes:

They just EXIST, standing there with their “and” as a barrier to a political transcendence. Women and men as given categories, uniform and essential. Balance and harmony. No room for gender as a social construction, no worries that the language binds us in gendered simplifications. An “and” cannot mean power. (Eduards 2011: 30; my translation, emphasis added)

She describes how men’s and women’s issues are collectively defined as gender issues, but when they take material form, in politics, the effect is not the same for men as for women because of the difference in power between the genders. When framing it as women and men, girls and boys – they are interconnected at the same time as they are kept apart. They are constructed as opposites, but not in a battle of power (Eduards 2011).

Eduards argues for giving gender a political position as category when questions of power are at hand. She uses a classic argument from feminist Catharine MacKinnon when arguing for women’s need for political organization, and states that if power/powerlessness is the difference between the

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21 For example, in regard to gendered bodies, the meaning of the concept have changed several times, from one-gender models and two gender models to a variety of different gendered bodies (Laqueur 1994).
genders, we need to think about representation and organization differently (Eduards 2002: 151). Hence, Eduards argues that the political category of gender should function as legitimating separatism and special organizations for women (2002). I would argue that this supports the approach of positive action from Chapter 2.

### 3.5.2 Politics, the state and feminist movement

In contemporary writings on gender mainstreaming there is no consensus about how to understand the political, but in the introduction I defined feminist politics as a politics that effectively contributes to the political and social goal of equal rights for the genders, with power, resources and opportunities being equally distributed. Feminist politics are understood as politics which transforms or destabilises the gender regime (patriarchy) and/or politics that establish and deliver equal opportunities. To do this, women’s multiple (intersectional) voices must be heard. This corresponds to different aspects of classical positions in political science: an institutional definition focusing on the public (institutions); the authoritative distribution of values; and finally, the exercise of public power (Lundquist 1993).

In the first perspective, Lundquist emphasizes public institutions and their activities. Institutions act in public arenas on subnational, national and international levels, and consist of both individuals and communities. Politics is what takes place within institutions, while other spheres of life are described as non-political (Squires 2004). The second perspective described by Lundquist is the authoritative distribution of values. This is similar to Easton’s classic model (Easton 1953) and Harold Lasswell’s classic definition from 1936: “Who Gets What, When, How?” (cited in Peters 2004).

The first and second perspectives have both been criticized by feminist scholars (Fraser 1985, Squires 2004). In regard to the first perspective, this way of describing politics as public or private has been problematized, and the feminist criticism is that issues affecting women’s lives have not been fully incorporated into the political; they have rather been characterized as private issues and therefore not legitimate to pursue (Squires 2004, Jansson and Freidenvall 2011). Criticism of the second perspective has centred on what “a value” would be in this context. Fraser argues that a redefinition of the concept of public value is needed. For example, child-care activities are typically associated with women and have not traditionally been understood as a public value (Fraser 1985). The criticisms of the first and second perspective could be compared to the discussion in Chapter 2, where the
approaches of women’s rights and positive action both show how the experiences of women do not “fit” into how the world is organized.

The third perspective, the exercise of public power, contains the most extensive range of what politics could entail. According to this perspective politics is what is politically framed, including its inclusions and exclusions, as the result of previous power battles (Squires 2004). In discourse theory this can be studied by deconstructions (Howarth 2000) and silencing (Dahl 2012b).

I will now turn focus toward how the strategy of gender mainstreaming relates to the state. The contested relationship between increased gender equality and state involvement has been an ongoing discussion in feminist theory, and has been the topic of previous gender equality work (Hernes 1988, Bacchi 1996, Borchorst and Siim 2002, Hobson 2004).

The discussion about the position of the state should have relevance for gender mainstreaming and should be problematized to a much greater degree. One should not take for granted that the state will (or can) play an active role in promoting gender equality. When policy texts on the strategy make the government responsible for executing and implementing gender equality policy, this is not an issue. If the “nature” of the state is patriarchal (McKinnon 1987, Walby 1989) any initiative could potentially be harmful for women. I want to formulate the question in the following way: Can the state be a trusted ally in the struggle for increased gender equality, or is the state an obstacle (or enemy?) to overcome. Hernes (1988) makes an important contribution to the field when she emphasizes the potential for the Scandinavian societies to transform into women-friendly societies. She recognizes that mobilization and participation from “below” (feminist and other social movements) combined with integration and policymaking from “above” (political elite and state bureaucracies) were effective for policy change. This has been further developed by Alison Woodward, who shows the importance of the so-called velvet triangle of femocrats, academics and the women’s movement (2003b). The promising development was connected to the social democratic welfare state that, she argues, reduced men’s power in relation to women. A consequence of this shift is that women’s dependency shifted from the private to the public sphere, from dependence on individual men to dependence on the state (Teigen and Wångnerud 2009). This is relevant in regard to the programme of PSGE and the HJÄMT project for two reasons. The first is that the programmes were designed to ensure that the state would provide equal services for all its citizens (SKL 2007), mandating and encouraging the state to provide for all citizens. This
is in line with the social democratic welfare tradition that Hernes promoted (Hernes 1988). The second point concerns Hernes and Woodward’s emphasis of the importance of women’s movement. They argue that participation from below is important when mobilizing for increased gender equality. The movement is absent from this policy, both in PSGE and HJÄMT. I will return to the velvet triangle in light of NPM below.

3.5.3 Features of NPM
Finally, the gender mainstreaming strategy is introduced in the context of NPM. Neoliberalism can be both a new social logic and a set of organizational reforms. NPM consists of the elements of neoliberalism that are manifested in public administration. Though not a coherent philosophy, NPM has some characteristic features that have been adopted on a broad scale in the Swedish municipalities. I suggest that the implementation of gender mainstreaming adapts to the hegemonic position of some of the core features of NPM in Swedish municipalities: increased emphasis on civil rights; increased privatization; and increased power of management (Montin and Granberg 2013).

As discussed in my articles (Article II, Article III, Article IV) there has in recent years been an increased focus on equal output in services for citizens. This is in line with the first characteristic feature of NPM: increased emphasis on civil rights. A focus on citizens’ rights constitutes the central target of both PSGE and HJÄMT. In HJÄMT the aim of the project was to ensure legislative rights for men and women, as is shown in the catchphrase from HJÄMT: “In Örebro municipality we guarantee service on equal terms for every citizen regardless of gender” (Örebro 2008, translation by author).

Moving to the next feature of NPM, Ahl et al. (2016) observe that there are ongoing governmental initiatives to support privatization and increase women’s entrepreneurship (2016). This is evident in PSGE’s efforts to supply the local projects with support from the private consultancy market (Interview: PSGE 2010). This new form of governance, called market feminism, is deeply embedded in neoliberal market reforms (Kantola and Squires 2012).

I want to suggest that the feminist market is a new and important feature when it comes to understanding gender mainstreaming. The most important features of market feminism are an increase in the number of consultants and “gender experts” and a shift toward more neoliberal market mechanisms, such as accountability, auditing and budget discipline, technologies that favour “analytical tools”, and economic arguments (Keisu and Carbin...
Another feature of market feminism, according to Kantola and Squires, is that feminist engagements with public policy agendas have shifted from women’s movement activism to private sector organizations (Kantola and Squires 2012). I suggest that the shift in form of agency from the women’s movement to market-organized feminism can clarify a difference between Woodward’s categorization of the Velvet triangle (Woodward 2003a, Woodward 2003b) and Kantola and Squire’s market feminism (Kantola and Squires 2012). Hedlund and Lindberg even suggest that gender experts have replaced the women’s movement in policy making (Hedlund and Lindberg 2012).

I now turn to the next feature of NPM, which is the growing power of management in relation to politics. This was investigated in Article III. The political decision to introduce and implement mainstreaming as a strategy was unclear and vague about what kind of gender equality was to be implemented in public administration. This caused the administration to interpret and implement measures according to their own judgments. Vague political decisions are nothing new, and should not be mistaken for an effect of NPM. However, the lack of engagement among the political parties who could have argued different political standpoints, effectively gave the management a mandate to “own” both the initial framing and the implementation process (Article III).

Many studies have treated the state and state employees as rational actors, implying that once civil servants and policy-makers are enlightened, they will begin to combat gender inequality (Prüg 2009). This is consistent with our identification (in Article II) of statements showing a causally deterministic assumption among project participants that increased knowledge would lead to political change in the form of increased gender equality.
4. My materials and a methodological position

Below I present my empirical materials in depth, as well as the methods selected and used in the empirical investigations. I will also engage in a methodological discussion. This thesis is a single product, in which the different articles contribute both as individual items and as part of a coherent study of gender mainstreaming. The starting point of my thesis project was the selection of my case study, a local subproject, HJÄMT, in the municipality of Örebro. The municipality and its project constitute the core of my case, but my case also has vertical and horizontal outlooks, which are illustrated in Figure 3.

The local project in Örebro was a sub-project of the national programme PSGE, conducted by SALAR. The frames constructed, within PSGE had an impact on the design of HJÄMT, because SALAR is selectively applying aspects of gender mainstreaming and thereby adapting it to local government. The vertical outlook looks to the Council of European Municipalities and Regions’ (CEMR) Declaration on gender equality between women and men and to the EU as “clouds” with less influence. CEMR is an organization that represents local authorities and has a presence in more than 40 countries. One of the themes of the CEMR platform is gender equality, for which the organization recommends gender mainstreaming as the preferred strategy. CEMR has also developed the European Charter for equality of women and men in local life. This charter offers local governments a way to make a public commitment to gender equality. Sweden has a relatively high number of signatures, which may be explained by PSGE. When PSGE was first launched and municipalities were applying for funding, SALAR decided that the municipalities were obliged to sign the European Charter to display their political commitment to gender mainstreaming and gender equality politics (Interview: PSGE 2010). Despite the large number of signatory municipalities in other countries, none of them have had a national programme similar to the Swedish programme, which makes Sweden’s national initiative unique.

The horizontal outlook of my case consists of my study of five municipalities and their institutionalization of the prevention of gendered violence as a part of gender mainstreaming (Article IV). The vertical outlook here looks to the national level, where national policies are developed and adopted concerning gendered violence (and gender mainstreaming).

The map of the case and its outlooks is presented below in Figure 3. In this figure, I describe how the meta-discourse on gender mainstreaming influences how both PSGE and HJÄMT, as well as the five municipalities, deal with gender-based violence and gender mainstreaming.

![A multilevel governance setting:](image)

Figure 3: Case map, including vertical and horizontal outlooks.

In the following sections, I will give a description of the PSGE programme and the HJÄMT project. I will also account for the empirical material used in my four articles, where I expand on my observations and my interviews. Following that, I will turn to the documentation, both from HJÄMT and from other sources. I will finally conclude this chapter with a discussion about methodology, scientific measurements and quality of research.

### 4.1 HJÄMT and PSGE

The study of HJÄMT and PSGE constitutes the empirical material in two of my articles (Article II, Article III). In the other two articles (Article I, Article IV), the data primarily comes from other empirical sources. I will account for the different sets of empirical material in each of the articles in section 4.2. However, to create a better understanding of the collected data, I will first present the programmes of PSGE and HJÄMT in a more detailed manner.
4.1.1 The case: Örebro and HJÄMT

The background of my decision to study PSGE and HJÄMT has been presented in Chapter 1. As described in the introduction, the case studies have been crucial for the entire thesis, as it is in the close empirical investigations that I have been able to develop my understanding of gender mainstreaming as it is produced in local politics in Sweden.

The choice of case seemed reasonable because of the open-minded attitude in the team leading the project in Örebro. I find two explanations of this. First, Örebro has a history of being a subject of research on women/gendered issues and politics. This shows the long-standing commitment of the municipality to facilitate and contribute to this type of research. Second, Örebro municipality has a history of being a forerunner in gender equality work (Andersson and Hedlund 2012). As early as the 1970s the municipality was described as a model town, and in the 1980s this relatively “women-friendly” municipality had a high representation of women in political associations, a well-developed child-care system and plenty of work opportunities in the public sector. When active gender equality work began to take off in Swedish municipalities in the early 1980s, Örebro was leading the field. An Equal Opportunity Council was established and active gender equality work had already begun a year before the Gender Equality in the Workplace Act was passed by the Swedish Parliament in 1976 (Interview: Andersson 2010). The influence of the radical feminist movement was evident among politically active women. For example, between 1976 and 1983, 2,200 day-care places were created, a women’s shelter was opened, and women in local politics took action against strips clubs and prostitution (Hedlund 1996).

Secondly, Örebro’s HJÄMT project was something new in the municipality, and aimed to incorporate gender awareness into existing management agendas and systems. The catchphrase was in Örebro municipality we guarantee service on equal terms for every citizen regardless of gender (Örebro 2008, translation by author). The HJÄMT-project was initiated by

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23 Gun Hedlund wrote her thesis on women’s conditions and interests in municipal politics in local government in 1996 (Hedlund 1996). And in 1999, Gunnela Björk published her thesis about women and citizenship, in Örebro at the beginning of the 20th century (Björk 1999). Finally Katarina Larsson shows in her thesis that women’s participation and organization in the 1940s and 1950s had a great influence on the city planning in Örebro (Larsson 2004).

24 In Swedish: I Örebro kommun garanterar vi service på lika villkor för varje medborgare oavsett kön.
the gender equality delegation and formally approved by the city council (the highest decision-making body in the municipality), in the fall of 2008. The city council decided to sign CEMR’s *Declaration on gender equality between women and men* in December 2008. The project was carried out by a project team consisting of key civil servants and a politician, hereafter referred to as the project management team.

I wish to give a closer explanation of what kind of case this is. Sharan B. Merriam urges qualitative researchers to clarify the case by answering questions such as: What are the boundaries of the case? She states that it is “the unit of analysis, not the topic of investigation” that characterizes a case study (Merriam 2009: 41). Applying her reasoning to my research, the boundaries of my case study consist of the initial phases of HJÄMT. I have therefore not included aspects of possible effects resulting from the project. My case vertically extends to PSGE when the national framing of the project limits and shapes the local project, stretching the time frame of my field study from 2007 to 2010.

So what kind of case is HJÄMT? The local project HJÄMT can be described as a *best case* project, for the following reasons (Merriam 2009): the project had sufficient funding, both internal and external; there was clearly stated and outspoken support for the project from both the political and administrative management; the civil servants responsible for the project had adequate education, experience and knowhow; the local project was supported by the national project PSGE and included benchmarking, training sessions, workshops and access to experts. In 2016, eight years after the project was initiated, Örebro was designated one of SALAR’s seven model municipalities. This supports the claim that Örebro can be categorized as a *best case*.

At the same time the project can be categorized as a *typical case* (Article III), as it is one of several projects with similar aims and designs carried out in Swedish municipalities between 2008 and 2012.

Expanding the discussion to all my articles, I want to posit that my *core* case (HJÄMT) and its outlooks rather should be understood as a *critical*...
case, if the requirement for a critical case is that it is valid for all (or many) cases. I believe that the findings for this case will be visible in other cases of gender mainstreaming in local level government, because when I empirically study my case I study the inherent problematics in gender mainstreaming using Sweden, which has been described as a locus classicus for gender mainstreaming (Article I), and Örebro, described by SALAR as a model municipality, as illustrative cases. If the inherent problematics is found in HJÄMT, they will be found in other municipalities and organizations as well. The preconditions for a successful outcome could not be better. Furthermore, as described in my article about the myth of Sweden’s success (Article I) the productions from Sweden could be expected to serve as a benchmark for other countries and global actors through academic-literature and grey papers. So even if the production of gender mainstreaming in Örebro is not yet being imitated internationally, it is probably just a matter of time before it comes to be benchmarked.

4.1.2 The programme for sustainable gender equality (PSGE)

As previously mentioned, HJÄMT was one of the local projects in a larger national programme called PSGE. The initiative was jointly proposed by SALAR and the Swedish centre-right coalition government who held office between 2006 and 2014 (Interview: PSGE 2009, PSGE 2010). The PSGE programme was organized and carried out during the years 2008–2013. The initiative was at first planned to run during 2008–2010, but was extended for an additional three-year period. Municipalities, county councils and regions was given the opportunity to apply for financing. In the first round of applications, SALAR had 2 million euro to distribute, but received applications for 8 million euro (Interview: PSGE 2009). The huge interest from the applicants was met when the government increased the budget several times (Regeringsbeslut IJ2007/3277/JÄM, IJ2008/813/JÄM, IJ2010/941/JÄM U2011/6116/JÄM, Riksrevisionen 2015). In the end, after several rounds of applications, 140 different local project ended up being funded by PSGE (Riksrevisionen 2015). The government funding for the programme was increased to 25 million euro, making it one of the largest single expenditures in the history of Swedish gender equality politics. The aim of the national programme was to introduce and implement gender mainstreaming

27 The first round of applications granted funding to 87 projects, the second round to 53 projects.
28 245 million SEK.
in municipalities and regions on a larger scale than ever before. In SALAR’s application to the government, the intention was that the local projects should help the members to “provide services of equal worth to girls and boys, women and men, to ensure an equal distribution of resources regardless of gender” (SKL 2007), and strengthen the municipalities as providers of equal services for all their citizens (Interview: PSGE 2009). I want to emphasize that the explicit intention of PSGE was not to replace the “internal” gender equality work which was already established in Swedish public sector. The internal work targets organization’s employees and aims to create (gender) equal workplaces (see Callerstig 2014).

The organization that preceded SALAR, the Association of Municipalities, had experience from previous projects in the 1990s, called JämKom (Article I). But at that time, the projects were carried out in small-scale initiatives intended to introducing gender mainstreaming in six local authorities (Svenska kommunförbundet 1998). The project in the 1990s was also financed by the government, but with a much more modest budget (Pincus 2002). These previous experiences were among the reasons that the PSGE programme was placed under SALAR (Interview: Lundkvist 2009). Apart from the 140 different local projects, SALAR applied for and was granted funding for a gender mainstreaming project of its own (Interview: PSGE 2009).

4.2 Empirical material in the thesis

I have used three techniques when gathering the empirical material from the PSGE programme and the HJÄMT project. They can be categorized as observations, interviews and documentation. Returning to Merriam, she suggests that a case study should consist of an assembly of different methods, with interviews, observations and documentations being her (and my) main categories (Merriam 2009). Apart from materials from PSGE and HJÄMT, I have used additional materials in my articles, which will be described in upcoming sections.

But before continuing on to describe the interviews, observations and documents, I need to address the issue of time in relation to my material. The fact that some of the empirical material from HJÄMT and PSGE was collected several years ago could raise questions, however, I would argue that this is of less importance. First, because my in-depth insight into the municipality’s current work on gender mainstreaming, I can conclude that

29 In Swedish: Svenska Kommunförbundet.
the logics and rationalities stemming from the early stages of the PSGE programme and the HJÄMT project are still present in the work going on today. Secondly, because I am not studying the effects produced by the project, it is of minor significance if the results are published one, five or ten years after the empirical material was gathered.

4.2.1 Observations

My observations are from the HJÄMT project, where I took part in the project management team’s meetings on 10 different occasions, and recorded all sessions (Management team meetings 2009-2010). I observed and recorded a one-day workshop where the management team meet with a consultant (Boman, Ann 2009-03-11), and also participated, together with the management team, in a one-day seminar at SALAR, where I observed and recorded parts of the seminar (SALAR 2009-05-26). I finally observed and participated in a two-day workshop where the project was launched in the municipality (Workshop 2009-05-15/16). In total I observed 14 events during the years 2008–2010. The recorded materials from the workshops and meetings consist of 25 hours in total. In addition to the observations of HJÄMT, I attended (and recorded) a full-day conference arranged by the Swedish Secretariat for Gender Research (Jämi, conference 2009-01-28). The aim of the conference was to launch a parallel governmental initiative to implement gender mainstreaming in government agencies in Sweden. Among the speakers at the conference was Minister of Gender Equality Nyamko Sabuni (JÄMI 2009).

In political science the act of observation as a method is often not problematized enough, and when the method is referred to in the methodological literature, this way of gaining knowledge is described as essential, longstanding and time consuming (Bryman 2008). I do not fully agree with Bryman. On the contrary, I do not think that observation has to be the only (or even main) method for gathering material and in need of a methodological discussion. I therefore argue that my observations are important, even if they are not my main method and are not extensive.

For methodological guidance, I turn to the academic discipline of ethnography, where this method is one of the most common ways of obtaining knowledge. Öhlander (1999) describes some of the core questions regarding observations. The most common distinction that is made concerns whether the observation is known to the informants, in other words, whether it is open or concealed (Öhlander 1999). It would have been impossible for me to do a concealed observation. The workshops and the meetings were all
for a selected few, and I could not access any of the sessions without being invited. So I did an open observation.

Another way to categorize the method of observation is by level of participation. Öhlander describes the different levels of participation on a scale ranging from observation, to participant observation and finally interactive observation (Öhlander 1999). The difference between participant observation and interactive observation lies, of course, in the intensity of interaction. When engaging in a case study where observations of meetings and workshops are combined with interviews and joint travel; the researcher and respondents become entangled with each other over time. In my case, the distance entailed by our different roles, as researcher and respondents, became less emphasized over time. As described by Öhlander, interaction can be a catalyst for the researcher, a way to gain access to places and people that otherwise are difficult to approach (Öhlander 1999). In my case, I did not seek to engage other respondents in my observations outside the project management team, so interaction was not used as an access tool.

Öhlander describes open observation and focused observation as lying along a scale, where the researcher starts out with open observation, observing “everything possible”, and then continues to focused observation where assumptions and hypotheses can be examined (Öhlander 1999). I have not followed this process as described by Öhlander; instead I began my observation in the focused phase, where I exposed myself to a quite limited setting. The observations primarily contributed to Article II and Article III. The contribution mainly concerns the framing of the events, and deals with questions such as: Who took part in the event? What issues were discussed in the different settings? I will return to the ethnographic approach when discussing methodology in section 4.3.1, where I engage with how to do science using this approach.

4.2.2 Interviews
In addition to the observations I interviewed key respondents from government at the national level and key respondents at municipal level, in total eight interviews, which were recorded and transcribed (Management team 2009; 2010, PSGE 2009; 2010). The transcription was done in line with recommendations for turning oral statements into text (Klein 1990). I therefore did not notate pronunciation, accent, phrasing or visual expression e.g. body language. I have indicated pauses by inserting “…” in the transcription, to be able to show hesitation. I have chosen to turn spoken language
into readable text. I assessed that the alternative of employing a more complex and comprehensive method of transcribing would not benefit the intended analysis of the interviews (Klein 1990).

The interview subjects were all promised anonymity. I wanted them to feel that they would be able to speak freely about their experiences and opinions regarding the project. Because of the specificity of the project, however, they were informed that, although their participation and interviews would be treated anonymously, others initiated in the field would be able to identify them.

At the beginning, I conducted a test-interview with one of the public officials involved in HJÄMT with the aim of testing the interview-structure that I had developed. The interview turned out well, and I did not make any extensive alterations to the interview structure. The interviews were thematic semi-structured interviews (Flick 1998). They were conducted in Örebro University facilities, at SALAR and at the offices of the Ministry of Gender Equality between 2008 and 2010. I mainly used the interviews in Article II and Article III.

I also conducted two further interviews, with the key consultants, Gertrud Åström (2009) and Fredrik Lundkvist (2009). The interview with Åström was carried out in a conference setting when we were able to find some time between activities. Lundkvist, on the other hand, arranged for me to meet him at his workplace, where we had both privacy and sufficient time for our interview. The interview with Åström was semi-structured and lasted for half an hour; the one with Lundkvist can best be described as an in-depth interview, and we talked for two and a half hours.

The interviews were for most part used for analysing the production of discourse, with the interviewees’ statements being investigated. However, I have also to a limited extent treated the interviewees as informants who have supplied me with facts and information; see examples in Chapter 2 (2.3.4), in Chapter 3 (3.5.2), and in Chapter 4 (section 4.1.2).

In addition to observation, there has been a long tradition in political science of conducting interviews (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009). I will return to and expand on methodological issues in relation to interviews and observations below.

30 Before the interviews I prepared myself by emulating Davies & Esseveld (1989) scheme of stages of interviewing: arrival, introducing the research, beginning the interview, during the interview, ending the interview, after the interview.
4.2.3 Documentation

The third and final type of empirical material used in my articles is documentation, and I have used materials from PSGE and HJÄMT as well as other documents. The documents from PSGE and HJÄMT include internal and external communication materials, such as project plans, memos, strategic documents, drafts, graphic profiles and e-mails. From this, I have used project plans (SKL 2008b), applications (SKL 2007, SKL 2007/2009, SKL 2008a, Örebro kommun 2008), reports (Örebro kommun 2009, Örebro kommun 2010), and promotional materials (Swedish Defence University Collage no year A, no year B).

Three evaluations are also included, one of HJÄMT conducted by the municipality itself (Örebro 2010); another of HJÄMT by an external evaluator for the SALAR funding (Demokratikonsult och samarbetspartner 2010); and one of the national programme PSGE done by external evaluators (Svensson et al. 2013). I have used this material in Article II and Article III.

Apart from the empirical material from PSGE and HJÄMT, I have used additional empirical data in two of the four articles (Article I, Article IV). In the article on gender-based violence (Article IV) the material consists of five municipal general policy documents and five municipal action plans on gender-based violence, taken from five municipalities. The selected municipalities were Göteborg, Malmö, Stockholm, Umeå and Uppsala.31 The materials from the five municipalities constitute my horizontal outlook; see Figure 3.

In the article on the myth of success (Article I), I have used other texts, namely academic texts (N=20), grey literature (N=9) and official reports (N=3).32

4.2.4 Summary of empirical data

As described above, the four articles use different sets of empirical data. A detailed discussion of each article can be found in the article summaries, in Chapter 5. Here is an overview of the empirical materials used in the different articles:

31 Complete references to the material can be found in the article.
32 Complete references to the material can be found in the article.
| Article I: The myth of success | - Academic texts N=20  
- Grey literature and mixed texts N=9  
- Official reports N=3 |
| Article II: Education | - Interviews:  
  - 8 interviews on PSGE and HJÄMT (transcribed and analysed)  
  - 2 interviews with key consultants, Gertrud Åström and Fredrik Lundkvist (used as reference material)  
- Observations:  
  - 14 events within HJÄMT,  
  - 1 one-day seminar at SALAR  
  - 1 two-day workshop in Örebro, |
| Article III: Non-conflict | - Interviews:  
  - 8 interviews on PSGE and HJÄMT  
  - 2 interviews with key consultants, Gertrud Åström and Fredrik Lundkvist (used as reference material)  
- Observations:  
  - 14 events within HJÄMT,  
  - 1 one-day seminar at SALAR  
  - 1 two-day workshop in Örebro, |
| Article IV: Gendered violence | - Five municipal general budget and policy documents (Göteborg, Malmö, Stockholm, Umeå, Uppsala),  
- Five municipal action plans on gender-based violence (Göteborg, Malmö, Stockholm, Umeå, Uppsala). |

Table 2: Summary of empirical data used in articles.
4.3 Methodology

As described in Chapter 1, this is a critical study of gender mainstreaming. To this end, I developed a research design that enabled me to engage with different critical approaches to gender mainstreaming. Even so, when doing interpretive readings of texts, issues of methodology need to be addressed. A common denominator in the analysis of my empirical material is that I developed my understandings of the texts by creating categories and themes. This turned out to be a valuable method for the study of power, conflicts and silences, with silence in particular constituting a methodological challenge (Dahl 2012b). The closely related question, about how theoretically understand what is not there (e.g. to study silences), cannot be separated from the methodological challenges. I therefore expand on this issue in the chapter on theoretical perspectives; see section 3.4.

As discussed in Chapter 1, my research design developed over time. Different methodological choices were made for each of the four articles, and, as previously described, all four articles are based on a variety of empirical materials. However, a common denominator between them is that they focus on different kinds of texts to investigate gender mainstreaming. Another common denominator in the articles is that I do not intend to triangulate my different empirical materials, thereby making them into a coherent narrative. Instead I claim that the different forms of empirical materials can articulate different meanings (Article I, Article II). I wish to refer to Richardson and Adams St. Pierre’s suggestion that post-structuralism crystallizes instead of triangulates; they posit that a text is not a rigid, fixed object, but rather is a crystal with an infinite variety of shapes and viewing angles (Richardson and Adams St. Pierre 2008). This is important when dealing with discourses, silences and ambiguities in texts.

The empirical material used in this thesis contains statements that are not compatible or consistent – and I argue that this is why they are so important. The language in public policies is often ambiguous, and meaning is (re)formulated (Yanow 1993). I find this way of relating to my empirical material appealing. So in my own words, I investigate some of the possible contemporary forms and interpretations of gender mainstreaming.

However, making interpretations is difficult. My own frame of reference clearly affects what I focus on in the transcriptions of the interviews, what

33 Here I categorize verbal articulations as texts, and verbal statements have been turned into text when transcribed.
I note in my observations, and what I find most important in texts. I accept Denzin’s position that all texts are biased (Denzin and Lincoln 2013), reflecting the position of the researcher. If researchers do account for their frame of reference the interpretations (analyses) can be scrutinized from that position. My frame of reference is a result of daily practice. By this I mean my lifelong training as a person, a woman, a public servant, a feminist, a teacher and a PhD candidate and future researcher in political science. My position as a public servant calls for discussion of an ethical dilemma in this study; this dilemma will be discussed at the end of this chapter.

4.3.1 Scientific measurements
When discussing quality of research in terms of validity, claims of “knowledge” and “truth” are often not far behind (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009). But, as I have shown, the production of politics is not separate from the production of knowledge (Article I). Therefore, I will not refer to knowledge and truth in assessing the validity of this study. Moreover, I will instead make use of what Kvale and Brinkmann write about the coherence criteria in validity. These criteria concern how well the statement/articulation matches reality, and Kvale and Brinkmann argue that a way to test for validity is to search for “internal logical contradictions”. Their discussion about validity assumes that the stories the respondent tells (or the articulation made) is inherently logical and coherent (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009). However, I use different materials to identify and analyse the contradictory and conflicting stories in gender mainstreaming. This makes the measurement of coherency not applicable to my case. According to Kvale, it is the responsibility of the researcher to show that the story is coherent and to

34 Just as the author’s frame of reference is important in writing, it has influence on the (expected) reader. In regard to this discussion, Yanow has described this as the third hermeneutic and the importance of the reader’s expectations of an academic text. What prior knowledge do readers bring to the table and what expectations does a reader in political science have? (Yanow 2009). Yanow’s colleague Schwartz-Shea (2006) reflects on this arguing that traditionally trained political scientist have a commitment to measurement, hypothesis testing and causal analysis. She argues that these scholars have created criteria based on how work in the natural sciences is evaluated – but suggests that this is hopefully no longer the case. Traditionally trained political scientist ought to have the proper training to incorporate interpretative skills, methodological variances, and different ontological perspectives. Only time will tell if she is correct.
treat the respondent’s story fairly by making a trustworthy (valid) interpretation of the interview. But when the research question aims to make those contradictory and conflicting stories visible, it is not the researcher’s responsibility to sort them out. Identifying and clarifying contradictions in the respondent’s statements, as well as in the analysis of them, does not indicate that they are wrong, or not valid. My method of using contradictory and conflicting statements did not allow the objects of study any opportunity to oppose my analysis of their articulations, as is often recommended.

Trustworthiness, therefore, has to be sought in the context of the research design. Yanow suggests that the elements of place, time, exposure, positionality, access narratives and data details should be used to justify scientific measures, instead of using more common criteria such as validity and reliability (Yanow 2009), or using reflexivity, which is common in feminist research (England 1994). Yanow’s recommendations are directed at political ethnographers, but can be extended to all researchers using interpretative methods. In my case, this way of reasoning should primarily be applied to my fieldwork, but I extend the argument to my empirical material as a whole. I will now discuss the elements one at a time, because I do believe they are valid when studying issues that are difficult to “prove”, such as issues of power, conflicts and silences.

In regard to **place**, Yanow suggests that the author give attention to the settings of the study and to the choices and decisions that led up to that setting (Yanow 2009). In my case the setting was the municipality of Örebro, and more specifically the HJÄMT project. My affiliation with the municipality through the Research School of Public Affairs (see section 4.4), gave me an initial advantage in getting access to the top management and to the project. Because the initiative to study the HJÄMT project came from the municipality, they wanted me to have full access. I did not engage with other parts of the municipal organization, which would have been necessary if I was aiming to study the effects of the project.

The dimension of **time** stems from anthropology and ethnography, where extensive time periods are regarded as essential. In political ethnography this is of less importance. The presence in “the field” is different when studying a political and administrative process than when studying, for example
agriculture or political communication, where periodization is important.\textsuperscript{35} In the case of agriculture, the change of seasons brings different activities; for political communication, periodical elections or term of office may affect the levels of rhetoric and political conflict. Of greater importance, to me, was the ability to access the time and place where the formulation of the project content was decided, and to observe how frames were arranged and formulated. So, in my study of HJÄMT and PSGE, I attended meetings and other events where the project was discussed, but I did not “walk the hallways of City Hall”, casually engaging in discussions with employees who were not part of the project. I have not aimed for saturation in my empirical material. However my ambition has been to capture the lived experience or tacit knowledge of the project management, which is a common aim in ethnographic studies (Bryman 2008). This does not mean to reflect on their everyday experiences but to engage with how they formulate and construct the project, based on the local context. An important aspect of my study concerned how to capture and formulate silence; see Chapter 3. This was not possible in the observations, but it could be done in the interviews, where I could “set the stage” and introduce elements that I wanted the respondents to discuss. This resulted in an article on non-conflict (Article III) which was inspired by Laclau (1990) and in which I introduced the concept of feminism as an element of crisis in the interviews.\textsuperscript{36}

A power relationship is inherent in actions such as interviews and observations, which Yanow describes in terms of \textit{positionality}. Often the researcher, as a well-educated expert, has the upper hand in these situations. This has been extensively written about, for example within anthropology and ethnography (see Hoffmann 2007 for further references) where the power balance is often unequal. When studying people in marginalized situations, much attention must be given to this, because it has effects on access and positionality. In my case, the power relationship was not the same as what is traditionally put forward in methodological literature. I would rather argue that the balance of power shifted both over time and between myself and the different participants, they being top politicians and senior management figures.

\textsuperscript{35} In agriculture the seasons are important, because tasks are tied to different time periods over a full year. To draw conclusions about level of conflict in political communications you might want to include times of elections, and not just the intermediate years.

\textsuperscript{36} See more on Laclau and this method in Chapter 3.
To access narrative (Yanow 2009) I attended meetings and activities both as an observer and in a participatory way, even though I more often observed than participated in the discussion. I often felt that more participation was expected of me, when I was encouraged to contribute to the project team’s efforts by providing ongoing evaluation of their progress. I did not do this for several reasons. Because of the critical ambition of my study, and its focus on constructions, problems, coherence, and silences, I found it difficult to take a constructive part in the discussion. I also did not want to influence the process by sharing my tentative results. On the other hand I made efforts to establish positive relationships with members of the project team, and they were aware of my presence and of my intention to study them. Other researchers have discussed the difficulty of being a part of a municipal project while at the same time maintaining one’s independent position as a researcher (Lennqvist-Linden 2010). I can attest that in my case it has been a balancing act.

4.4 Ethical dilemma
It is common for PhD candidates to discuss their reasons for choosing their area of research. Because we were part of the Research School of Public Affairs, a collaboration between the municipality of Örebro and Örebro University, it was expected that the results from our theses would be useful in the municipality’s everyday dealings. They ought to contribute to the development of their public administration, and possible even to policy recommendations. From the very founding of the research school, the municipality asked whether a PhD candidate could give some attention to a new development project. My supervisor asked me if I would be interested in this, and I said yes. I was not, however, interested in doing a formal evaluation of the project, which is what the municipality had asked for. The main reason for this was that I wanted to maintain distance to my research object and formulate my research questions independently. This historical narrative is important to mention in this context, because of my relationship to the field of study, namely Örebro municipality.

37 This could be seen as an illustrative example of the normative expectations of applied science from public administration and public policy makers. Questions such as –what works? –what activities cause what effects? –how can we apply it? Are often raised in regard to social science. Here I want to refer back to the section on dimensions in Chapter 1. I do think that usefulness of research is important, but not in the sense of making immediate policy-recommendations.
Since 2015 I have been an employee of Örebro municipality. I now divide my time between my two positions, working at the municipality and continuing the process of writing my thesis at Örebro University. Having such close ties with the municipality in charge of the project that is my field case affects me in several ways. For one, I have much greater insight into what can be done within the confines of a municipality. Everything is done after giving careful consideration to political, juridical, and economic aspects, at the same time as development has to ensure engagement from administrative leadership and the grassroots bureaucrats, and must constantly keep the interests of the citizens at the forefront. My appreciation for people within public administration has increased. But I consider it to have been intellectually necessary to have finished my fieldwork and completed large parts of my analytical work before becoming employed by the municipal organization.

Another consequence of my involvement in Örebro municipality is that I am particularly careful in my writing of this thesis, because I care about the organization that I am studying – and I also care about the hard-working people therein, some of whom are my friends. Nonetheless, I do not believe that my affiliation with Örebro municipality has affected my critical perspective on gender mainstreaming or the PSGE and HJÄMT projects. Back in 2015, when I was hired by the municipality, two of my articles were already accepted or published: Article III and Article IV. Article I does not focus on local government and Örebro municipality. The chronologically last article, Article II, co-written with Charlotte Fridolfsson, was presented at a conference as early as 2014. The contents of the article were embryonic and sketchy at the time, but much of the analysis and conclusions has remained stable. The timetable of the articles is therefore manifest evidence that my academic independence and autonomy are sufficiently ensured.
5. Summaries of the articles

This chapter summarizes the articles: Andersson 2017 (Article I); Andersson and Fridolfsson 201X (Article II); Andersson 2015 (Article III); and Article IV (Andersson and Hedlund 2014) and highlights their conclusions.

5.1 Article I: The myth of Sweden’s success

In this article I investigated positive references to Sweden that I had come across in international literature, in which Sweden was viewed as a successful case of gender mainstreaming. As described in Chapter 1, Sweden has had a political commitment to gender mainstreaming for over 20 years. The aim of this article was to investigate the discourse about Sweden in different texts, as well to increase our understanding of how recurring themes and descriptions were articulated in these texts.

Gender mainstreaming is a strategy for implementing national gender equality policy into all public arenas, and the implementation process has taken place both in national and local governance. But the discourse of success clashed with findings in my field work and the knowledge I had about local practices of gender mainstreaming. The intention of the article is not to “correct history” or to “tell the truth”, but rather to point to and investigate the relation between the success discourse and other selected texts that seem to tell a different story.

The discourse was articulated in academic papers, as well as in grey and mixed literature. In my analysis I argue that the dominant discourse about Sweden’s success was composed of several myths regarding the implementation of gender mainstreaming in national, regional and local governments. I deconstructed the identified articulations of these myths to identify discourses and the elements that constructed the discourses.

In the article I employed the theoretical concepts of myth, societal imaginaries and dislocations to investigate the moments in the dominant (and counter) discourses of gender mainstreaming. The concept of myth was used to grasp the function of myths: namely to repair dislocated structures by offering a transformed collective social imaginary.

I did not treat the concepts of gender mainstreaming and gender equality as self-evident or clear cut in this article, as I treated both as floating signifiers. Gender equality in Sweden is described in the article as a combination of the idea of the social-democratic welfare regime (Esping-Andersen 1990) and the potential woman-friendly state (Hernes 1988).
The material analysed for (de)constructing the story of Sweden came from different sources, and can be categorized into different groups: (1) relevant academic texts (N = 20); (2) mixed texts and grey literature (N = 9); and (3) official reports (N = 3).

In the selected empirical material, three different discourses are identified: (1) a discourse portraying Sweden as a successful case of gender mainstreaming; (2) a counter-discourse depicting Sweden as less successful in this regard; and (3) a conflation between gender mainstreaming and gender equality policy. They consists of four different elements which will be presented below.

I first identified the element of *adaptation*, showing how gender equality was conflated with gender mainstreaming in the dominant discourse of Sweden’s success. This is shown through a dislocation of meaning where gender mainstreaming and gender equality were used interchangeably in the empirical material (Article I: 12ff), where Sweden is constructed as “special” in regard to gender mainstreaming. In the second element of *integration*, I investigate the perceived success of the institutionalization of gender mainstreaming in public administration. I studied how it was articulated within national, regional, and local governance in the empirical material. The reading of the texts shows that there are different discourses dominating the different categories of texts. In the first category of text, I identified articulations such as “full spectrum” and “across levels of administration” in regards to the implementation of gender mainstreaming (Article I: 13). However, in the third category of texts, the official evaluations and reports on Sweden, there were no articulations supporting such descriptions. Instead I found statements describing the lack of successful implementation. This should be understood as a dislocating articulation that has not been incorporated into the discourse of success. A counter-discourse was identified in Sweden’s success story about gender mainstreaming (Article I: 13). When the national evaluations created dislocation in relation to the theme of integration, the dominant discourse disregarded this information in order to uphold the social imaginary of Sweden as a success.

The third element was focused on the municipalities in Sweden. I found articulations in the dominant discourse stating that Sweden had “passed the critical point” of implementation in municipalities. This element was an example of how articulations from the counter discourse were not incorporated into the dominant discourse, enabling the myth of *volume* to gain traction (Article I: 16). The fourth and final element in the construction was categorized as *initiatives*. I conclude that it is the “starting up process” that
is being referred to when Sweden is described as a “model country” in the dominant discourse of gender mainstreaming. Articulations showed that the emphasis was rather on the initiation of project (Article I: 18) than on possible effects and outcomes of the projects. The latter were missing from the texts.

I believe that these findings are relevant for how to build and frame gender equality policy recommendations in the future. If aspects of the social-democratic welfare state generate the most constructive conditions for increased gender equality, then this needs to be made clear in public policy in order to deliver effective implementation. This directly relates to the overarching topic of feminist politics in the thesis, where it also relates to the topic of neoliberalism, because Sweden is used as an illustration of how the neoliberal idea of “learning by example” serves as guidance for and evidence of the international spread of gender mainstreaming. I will return to this discussion in Chapter 6.

In conclusion, the description of Sweden in international research is of significance. Although discourses may be viewed as abstractions, or at least as connoting something innocent, they have consequences for the possibilities to formulate concrete action. The normative power of gender mainstreaming as a political myth is significant because it not only answers the “how” questions, but also constitutes a normative map that helps create political legitimacy for the strategy of gender mainstreaming. The discourse of Sweden’s success in gender mainstreaming can therefore affect future (re)constructions of the welfare system and can influence, or possibly hinder, real political change. I argue that the conflation of gender mainstreaming (viewed as a strategy) with gender equality (as a policy objective) has societal and political consequences for feminist politics.

5.2 Article II: Learnings from Gender Mainstreaming education

In this article we explored the position of education in gender mainstreaming and investigated how education was consider a key to achieving and increasing gender equality in Swedish municipalities. Increased education is a positive development, and whilst recognized the policy lying behind the changes, this study provides examples of how emphasis on education and training as a solution to problems of gender inequality, in some cases also can facilitate and maintain gendered power relations. We have investigated how the ideology of education is reproduced by rationalities and modalities within a national and local initiative, as we have engaged with the black box of gender mainstreaming in public administration. In our analysis we
use the empirical materials from PSGE and HJÄMT, which include interviews, observations and documents. We have read the materials as both produced by and reproducing ideology (Jaeggi 2009).

The approach on ideology production described in this article is in line with arguments by Dean (2010), Brown (2003; 2006) and Prügl (2011), who in different ways argue governmentality, as the “conduct of conduct”, should be understood and investigated in relation to governing techniques and regimes of government. We have considered how the neoliberal ideology of NPM is a necessary backdrop for our discussion, as it introduced a market-oriented management culture in the public sector. Gender mainstreaming can hence be discussed as neoliberal practice embedded in public administration.

To conclude this discussion of our starting points: we investigated technologies of government in a public administration permeated by neoliberalism, a key feature of which is that individual public servants need to have the right knowledge and training. Gender mainstreaming is discussed in this article in terms of the possibilities it affords when it comes to increasing gender equality or challenging power relations; e.g. through feminist politics.

In our reading of the material we identified and classified four gender-mainstreaming governmentality modalities: legitimation through science; professionalization; depoliticizing metaphors; and self-regulation. Using the four different modalities, we investigated how gender equality policy is transformed into a matter of knowledge and learning in Swedish municipalities, and how education and information about gender equality gained a prominent place in the municipal budgets and planning. These modalities are symptomatic of a goal displacement tendency that privilege the means or instrumental goals over end or the ultimate goals. We also identified that education, which everyone agreed was valuable, was constructed as a goal in its own right, and could eclipse other possible goals. Education of key personnel in the municipalities was, for example, a key factor in the application material from PSGE (SKL 2008a). Education was one of four designated areas where the municipality could apply for development funding. We also identified statements showing a determinist idea, with increased knowledge being assumed to lead to political change in the form of increased gender equality.

However, we also identified statements, articulated for instance in the often-used *Ladder Model* (SOU 2007:15) such as “celebrating successes” in
gender mainstreaming outcomes. This implies that the model could not possibly entail controversial topics. It would be difficult to celebrate when it comes to topics where some lose and some gain. One such topic could hypothetically be whether male employees would accept wage freezes or cuts to allow women as a group to catch up with them, and then celebrate it.

In our study we identified how knowledge was presented as both a goal and a solution to the problem of gender inequality. In our modality of legitimization through science we investigated how practices loosely connected to, or mimicking, science were used in gender mainstreaming projects. Academia was selectively used as an authority and as a legitimizer of “proper” knowledge. In the popular course “Gender equality Doing/Learning” (Swedish Defence University Collage no year B), civil servants and politicians in the municipalities were trained and educated to recognize that gender equality issues are questions of knowledge, rather than a political question. We also observed how the use of evidence-based evaluations promoted the use of figures and data connected to educational efforts. These used measurements of participants’ satisfaction and perceived individual usability, rather than evaluating and determining increased gender equality effects per se.

We also classified a modality professionalization, a means by which the gender equality guild is governed. We found how the creation and maintenance of a consultants’ market by governmental initiative fostered the education of experts and the creation of “more jobs”. At least two consultants were engaged in the HJÄMT project, in addition to the “certified” trainer from JGL. Our third modality shows how power was exercised through metaphors used in the HJÄMT training. We identified two arrangements: the development of new insights, and the prevalence of non-conflicts in PSGE and HJÄMT. In the first arrangement, metaphors like that of eyeglasses were used to symbolize the "causal determinant" solution of gender inequality, communicating that when new insights are achieved, change will follow of its own accord. The second arrangement, about non-conflict was identified in communications from both SALAR and Örebro municipality. The use of illustrations showing smiling faces indicated how conflicts were articulated as the antithesis to success; and success came to be articulated as consensus.

Our fourth and final modality concerned self-regulation, which consisted of individual introspection and scrutiny of personal feelings. It was postulated that a so-called inner journey was needed for people to change, rather than transformation being dependent on external controls and rules. The task of political transformation was thus placed on individual civil servants...
within the organization, with an emphasis on how knowledge and an altered mind-set would supposedly lead to improved gender equality.

The modalities are not intrinsically objectionable or worrying, the concern is more with the way they are being employed in this instance. In the article we argue that gender inequality is not just a matter of communicating correct facts. When gender inequality is framed in terms of a lack of (personal) knowledge and teaching/learning, other aspects become impossible to articulate within the hegemonic discourse.

The techniques and arrangements found in our article are illustrative examples of the conduct of conduct. Following this we suggest that gender mainstreaming fits well into the package of NPM and its associated market solutions and that through the implementation of gender mainstreaming as knowledge and learning came to displace feminist politics.

5.3 Article III: The question of feminism in gender mainstreaming

In this article gender equality is discussed in terms of how and why the strategy of gender mainstreaming avoids the question of gender conflict. The study investigates how feminism is described and rejected in a specific gender mainstreaming project in the municipality of Örebro, Sweden. In the article I have examined how the exclusion of feminism and conflict was articulated when gender mainstreaming was introduced as a new way of doing gender equality work in the municipality. The empirical material used in the article consists of interviews, observations and written documentation, from both the PSGE Programme and the HJÄMT project. The article is an empirical investigation of the black box of public administration and gender mainstreaming, as well as an investigation of feminist politics and neoliberalism in the context of local government.

Drawing on the theoretical concepts of hegemony and discourse, the article focuses on the silences – the unspoken questions and problems – surrounding the project. Because of the difficulties of studying what is not articulated, I introduced the topic of feminism as a crisis in the interviews (see more in Chapter 3). This is inspired by Laclau and his argument that hegemony becomes visible in times of crisis.

Theoretically, I did not find guidance regarding gender mainstreaming’s ability to articulate conflict in feminist research, and it appeared as if conflicts were absent from the theoretical literature on gender mainstreaming. I used the topic of feminism to create a methodological tool for crisis, because it connotes a specific understanding of gender equality where conflict
between interests is implied (Article III: 203). The hegemony is then articulated through chains of equivalence and difference.

My empirical analysis showed that resistance was expected and taken into account when formulating the local gender mainstreaming strategy (Article III: 214). This awareness was articulated, expressed and dealt with through the construction of agonism and antagonism. Using references to legitimacy and professionalism, the different positions were created within the project. These were constructed by means of a number of silences and exclusions (Article III: 209).

I identified two main “struggles” in my deconstructive reading, which showed that feminism was rejected because it was articulated as being in opposition to (1) professionalism and (2) legitimate political issues.

In regard to the first struggle, a chain of equivalence was formed between the concepts of debate, discussion, feminism and need. These were articulated as different from (or in opposition to) improvements, non-conflictual concepts, and benefits. The latter were conceptsfavoured by the HJÄMT project (Article III: 210). The construction favoured gender mainstreaming’s technocratic qualities, thereby enabling a political discussion about the content of this development to be avoided. The focus on technocratic qualities is in line with neoliberal ideas of public administration, and the political discussion was seen as a hindrance to improvements. In this first struggle I identify how the hegemonic discourse produced its own perceived opposition, an antagonist or non-legitimized opponent, thereby creating a non-political position (Article III: 211). The second chain of equivalence was established between facts, non-conflict, and equality on the one hand, and conflict and women’s needs on the other hand. This meant that, in this project, active gender equality work could and should take place without giving rise to harmful gender conflicts (Article III: 213).

The other struggle that I identified in the discursive reading concerned the distinction between the personal and the professional. Although the goal of gender mainstreaming in Örebro was external, with a focus on ensuring equal services for all citizens, and was not directed towards the employees themselves, it became apparent that the workers themselves were affected. The interviews revealed a personal dimension of this kind of development work in contrast to other forms of development projects. The respondents articulated it in the following ways “… [It] gets under your skin…” and “Well there’s a personal side and a professional side to it all the time, and you can easily relate it to your personal relationships, and that’s when you
can often feel threatened. I don’t know if you can find another kind of development work that is so two-sided and so delicate” (Article III: 213). These articulations showed what a balancing act the project was. If feminism, as the articulation of women’s group-interest, would be included, it would connote ideology and would not be professional. The analysis also showed that the separation between the personal and professional was in line with the technocratic (and neoliberal) version of gender mainstreaming employed in HJÄMT.

The article further concludes that conflicts are avoided in gender mainstreaming. This is done by articulating feminism as an impossible position, where silences make some issues possible or impossible to be included.

In conclusion, within the local discourse of gender mainstreaming there is a notion that this form of gender equality work ought to be performed without harmful or threatening gender conflicts. This means that the strategy of gender mainstreaming constitutes a short-cut to bypass controversial problems like equal treatment, special efforts for women, and men’s privileges in gender equality practice. I therefore conclude that gender mainstreaming does not contribute to feminist politics.

5.4 Article IV: Doing gender in municipal politics

In this article we were trying to put local government and gender mainstreaming to empirical testing to investigate whether it contributes to feminist politics. Gender-based violence is often described in Sweden as being the most explicit and extreme form of gender inequality, and combating it has been one of the national gender equality goals since 1994. Several different initiatives in the mid-2000s led to an increase in the municipalities’ awareness and obligations regarding this issue, such as an increase in national funding, new and stricter social welfare laws, and the establishment of the Health and Social Care Inspectorate. Gender-based violence is one of the core questions/struggles in the Swedish feminist women’s movement and for feminist politics.

In a parallel process, gender mainstreaming was described as the best strategy to increase gender equality in the Swedish municipalities through PSGE, the nationally funded project at SALAR pushing for gender equality in social services output. As previously described, the absence of engagement with the question of gender-based violence in both PSGE and HJÄMT was striking. The exclusion of gender-based violence was both noteworthy

38 In Swedish: Inspektionen för vård och omsorg (IVO).
and important, and we therefore deemed it fitting to use this puzzling fact to empirically test gender mainstreaming. This took the form of an investigation of the interconnections between gender mainstreaming and gender-based violence in municipalities. Our intention was to find out if gender mainstreaming had created the intended spaces for work to overcome gender-based violence to enter into the municipalities’ activities and organization.

In this article we used a framework of feminist new-institutionalism, focusing on the local gender equality work as we investigated local variations in gender-based violence and gender mainstreaming policy in five Swedish municipalities. The choice of theoretical framework was based on two of the strengths of feminist new-institutionalism: its focus on both formal and informal institutions and what is described as a *doing gender* perspective. The *feminist* add-on contributes by enabling the theory to highlight gendered biases embedded in institutions.

More specifically, we wanted to investigate whether gender mainstreaming contributed to changes in and institutionalization of the municipalities’ work on combating violence against women. To do this we analysed two different forms of policy documents from five municipalities. We selected the municipalities’ annual document for their overall planning and budget, and their overarching municipal policy for combating violence against women. In public administration there is a hierarchy between different kinds of texts, depending the impact of the text. The planning and budget document is the most significant one in Swedish municipalities. The five municipalities were chosen strategically, by size and geographical location. One exclusion criteria was that the municipality had to have adopted a document on violence; this greatly affected the number of municipalities available for selection.

We developed a framework to analyse the selected public documents. The framework includes concepts that are of importance to investigating institutionalism and change/difference in and between the municipalities. Our concepts were framing, responsibility, designation of gender, dissemination, and visibility – all in relation to gender-based violence. Descriptions of the different concepts can be found in the article; the emphasis of this summary is on the analytical conclusions.

In regard to *framing*, we identify that one rule-in-use concerns how other documents (for example national and international policies and legislation) were being used to legitimize the local policy on gendered violence.
IV: 68). The two different policies (budget and planning vs. combating violence) show differences in this respect, with the policies on violence more often having a well-articulated framing. The rule-in-use we identify within responsibility shows variances in how well responsibility is outsourced, or self-imposed, in the different documents. Those differences can be understood as a way to deal with preservation of existing practices, in the form of vagueness or lack of responsibility. We also identify differences in the documents in regard to the introduction of new practices, such as legitimation and management (Article IV: 71). In the framework we find that designation of gender lacks stringency, even within the same municipality, which indicates a gap between rules-in-use in relation to both gender mainstreaming and violence (Article IV: 72).

To sum up, the empirical findings indicate that the presence of gender mainstreaming does not correlate with a positive transformation in combating gender-based violence. The results also reveal substantial differences between the researched municipalities, though they indicate overall that gender equality and gender-based violence are continuously perceived as unrelated policy areas. The analysis suggests that the integration of the two policy areas is largely affected by how doing gender is practised in the local context. Although gender-based violence is often considered the ultimate sign of gender inequality, and on the national level is a prioritized political issue, it does not always permeate the work against gender-based violence in local government. Therefore we can conclude that gender mainstreaming is not contributing to a feminist politics in local government.

One other important result from this study concerns the relationship between gender mainstreaming and positive action, about which we were able to identify two (out of five possible) cases of positive action combined with institutionalized gender mainstreaming (Article IV: 73). This is important when discussing the relations between gender mainstreaming and other forms of gender equality policies and how they can contribute to feminist politics. I will return to this in Chapter 6.

The research design of this article does not enable us to problematize change over time or to study agency within the municipalities. With regard to time and change, a longitudinal study would have been beneficial. For example, the annual documents for planning and budget are constantly evolving, because they describe the political priorities for the upcoming years. An important, institutionalized, implemented and successful development of an issue does not necessarily show up in this kind of document, because then the political actors do not have to emphasize it. Due to the lack of a
time perspective, we cannot draw conclusions about effects, causality, actors or intentions. The selection of cases, with inclusion of 5 (out of 290 possible) municipalities, limits the possibility to generalize the results.
6. Revisiting Gender Mainstreaming

In this thesis, I have undertaken a study of gender mainstreaming to provide critical understanding and empirical knowledge. I have moved beyond output-oriented evaluation studies to instead study the black box of gender mainstreaming. I have also investigated whether, and if so how, gender mainstreaming is facilitating NPM by transforming the ambitions of feminist politics into a neoliberal strategy adapted for public administration. This was done by applying a model that describes different versions of policies on gender equality work, including gender mainstreaming. I then presented my own framework of critique of gender mainstreaming. I have related gender mainstreaming to the black box of public administration, to feminist politics and to neoliberalism, with the purpose of creating a context in which gender mainstreaming can better be understood empirically, methodologically and theoretically.

In this final chapter I will return to the questions that I posed at the beginning of this thesis. I will begin by commenting on how I have critically studied gender mainstreaming as a strategy for creating a more equal society. I will summarize my findings and compile answers from the previous chapters, as well as provide reflections on the results from the articles. I will begin with the first research question: What type of gender equality policy is gender mainstreaming producing? In answering, I will mobilize my framework of critique that I presented in Chapter 2. I will then continue with the second research question: To what extent does gender mainstreaming contribute to feminist politics? Finally I will expand on the implications for research and policy of this study.

6.1 A critical study

I suggest that gender equality work in practice, and especially gender mainstreaming work, constitutes an interesting and typical case of how politics and administration collaborate in the shaping of local government policy, and for engaging in a discussion about where to draw the line between politics and administration.

This thesis is not an evaluation of HJÄMT and PSGE; nor is it an implementation study or a study of any other positive or negative effects of HJÄMT or PSGE. The aim has rather been to provide a critical understanding of gender mainstreaming as a strategy for creating a more equal society. I subject gender mainstreaming to empirical and theoretical interrogation, which has had some consequences for how I describe the HJÄMT project.
and the PSGE programme. I have selected this critical case for the reason that it can contribute to creating an effective and progressive gender equality policy contributing to feminist politics. While I use Sweden, and Örebro, to study the inherent problematics in gender mainstreaming, I argue that the problems within HJÄMT will be found in other municipalities and organizations as well. The preconditions for a successful outcome could not be better than in my selected case.

Following in Fraser’s critical tradition, I have formulated my questions to critically examine the production of gender mainstreaming, using critiques that have been formulated within a feminist tradition.

6.2 Gender equality policy production

To provide conclusions about what type of gender equality policy that gender mainstreaming is producing, I will reconnect with the approaches in Chapter 2, as well the overarching topics of black box, feminist politics and neoliberalism. Because of these concepts’ close interconnections and entanglement with each other, I will mobilize my framework of critique from Chapter 2, and accordingly discuss the following aspects: obscurity, gender, politics, neoliberalism and organization.

My study of the black box of gender mainstreaming in local government does not indicate that the PSGE programme or the HJÄMT project in any way are examples of failed or incomplete implementation. Instead, I suggest, the production constitutes how gender mainstreaming is carried out in local government.

The third approach of gender mainstreaming, as described in Chapter 2, produces potentially transformative politics at all levels of public administration. In my studies of the HJÄMT project and PSGE programme, I have not identified explicit objectives or other articulations that could be understood as transformative. Such aims could have been directed toward achieving substantive changes, possible objectives of which could have been deconstruction of gendered power or redistribution of resources. However, as described under the heading of women’s rights in Chapter 2, the explicit aim of HJÄMT and PSGE was to embed gender-awareness into all levels of public administration, so that the municipality would be able to guarantee equality in output. The explicit intention to include the entire municipality in the implementation of gender mainstreaming needs to be emphasized, because it corresponds to the gender mainstreaming approach.
The three approaches of women’s rights, positive action and gender mainstreaming are different and they produce different gender equality policies, and I see production related to the three approaches in PSGE and HJÄMT, emphasising the obscurity of the approach.

In Chapter 4, I described how the overarching aim in HJÄMT and PSGE is to ensure that the legislated right of men and women to receive proper social services are met. This is consistent with the women’s rights approach, and with the increased emphasis on equal output of services for citizens which is described as one of the features of NPM. This enables the project to be categorized as being in line with the legislative approach to women’s rights, because it targets the municipality’s exercise of public authority.

Turning to the second form of gender equality policies, positive action, I want to highlight the establishment and function of the gender equality delegation, because the delegation should be recognized as ensuring a political voice for gender equality work in Örebro. However this function serves to facilitate, ensure and express gender issues, not women’s issues. Theoretically, positive action privileges the category of women over gender, and consequently women’s issues and interests are to be articulated within positive action. Gender mainstreaming, on the other hand, privileges the category of gender over women. This means that articulating gendered interests is given priority over articulation women’s interests. The mere establishment and presence of the gender equality delegation could be described as to producing a gender equality politics that recognizes, or represents, women as a disadvantaged group in accordance with the positive action approach.

In other global forms of gender mainstreaming, women’s movements are invited into the state agencies to guarantee that women’s interests are served and their voices heard (Peng 2015). In both the HJÄMT project and the PSGE programme, the women’s movement, and therefore also women’s political voice, is absent. Such actors could have been brought in with the task of articulating women’s (group) interests.

My findings show that gender mainstreaming produces a gender equality policy that is disconnected from the work done by political parties. The institutionalization of the gender equality delegation in the municipality of Örebro should also be understood as a governing technique that privileges political consensus. Throughout the HJÄMT project, the delegation was compelled to signal consensus about the gender equality project (Andersson and Hedlund 2011). The political parties were not ascribed different ideological positions in regard to gender equality and the gender-mainstreaming
project. Instead, gender mainstreaming was described as a *common good*. This produces a non-political politics.

The absence of the women’s movement and the establishment of the delegation can serve as an illustrative example of what Mouffe calls post-politics (2005). The lack of political options deprives the citizens of opportunities to take part in agonistic debate because their political interest are not articulated from within the political parties (Mouffe 2005).

To enhance the understanding of the position of non-politics in PSGE and HJÄMT, Mouffe’s distinction between antagonism and agonism is useful (2005). Hence, potentially productive position of agonism is absent within government. This produces a discourse of gender mainstreaming in which gender equality work can and should take place without creating damaging conflicts, whether political or gendered (Article II, Article III). Instead, gender mainstreaming is consistent with articulations such as win-win, and non-conflict (Article III). In my investigation of the black box, the production of a discourse of non-conflict politics became apparent. Smiling faces and other illustrations indicated how conflicts were articulated as the antithesis to success; and success came to be articulated as consensus (Article II, Article III).

In my examination of silences within the projects, the discourses were investigated as from both the inside and outside, where the outside represents the excluded possibilities (Derrida 1970). In my discursive reading of the HJÄMT project, I identified that the management team wanted to avoid describing the project in feminist terms; see articles on education and knowledge (Article II); and on non-conflict (Article III). By not articulating (feminist) conflict, it was possible for the project to gain an appearance of legitimacy and professionalism. The project’s *legitimate* position was constructed as being in opposition to debate, discussion, feminism and needs, and the professional was articulated as in opposition to the personal, the latter described as being ideological and/or feminist.

The position of *the personal* is complex, and Fridolfsson and I have pinpointed a modality where the lack of gender equality at an organisational level, allegedly could be corrected through increased (individual) knowledge (Article II). As described in the article on education (Article II) knowledge and learning are central concepts in gender mainstreaming (see also Lindholm 2011). When the driver of change shifts from external control, rules, regulations and provisions, to personal attitudes and values, gender equality becomes an individualised task and path of personal development, and increased knowledge is expected to emerge from an inner journey (Article II)
from which aspects of power have been disconnected. The increased focus on attitudes and values is partly articulated through the metaphor of “gendered eyeglasses”, but also in the talk about change. Hence, within the black box of public administration, we identified self-regulation as a governmentality technique for acquiring knowledge.

We identified that education had become both the goal and the solution in gender equality policy. As a positive value in itself, the importance of education was constructed as a non-controversial axiom, something everyone could agree on. Positive action, and gender mainstreaming both emphasize the need for adequate knowledge, but there is no shared understanding of what this knowledge is or what it should be used for. The statements showed that there was an idea of automatic change, where increased knowledge is assumed to lead to political change in the form of increased gender equality (Article II).

As discussed in Chapter 3, the close links within the velvet triangle are emphasized in the process of institutionalizing gender equality politics. However, when contemporary market feminism is added to the understanding of the velvet triangle, neoliberal effects on the depoliticization of gender issues must be discussed. When gender expertise replaces the contribution from the women’s movement within market feminism, the idea of empowerment through social movement is sacrificed. Fridolfsson and I identified how the gender equality guild was governed within PSGE (Article II). The inclusion of gender experts and market oriented consultants should be seen as a new version of the velvet triangle. Privatization, as a feature of NPM, and the growing cadre of feminist experts must be highlighted and put in relation to the absence of the women’s movement. Market actors are accountable to their funding bodies rather than to traditional political constituents (Kantola and Squires 2012).

Another aspect of accountability is found among the actors involved in PSGE and HJÄMT. I conclude that gender mainstreaming produces politics where it is difficult to make demands of responsibility. This is important in a democracy, because there are no institutionalized procedures to demand responsibility from public administration. Public administration is not responsible to “the people” but only to the politicians. This is in line with neoliberalism, where policy decisions increasingly are taken in “quasi-non-governmental organizations (quangos)” such as SALAR. The citizens have no possibility to hold SALAR accountable for the gender equality policy that they produce.
The placement of PSGE at SALAR could also be seen as a result of the lack of gender equality agency, and there has been no central governmental agency that could facilitate and execute such a program.

6.3 Contributions from gender mainstreaming?

So, to what extent does gender mainstreaming contribute to feminist politics? In my articles I conclude that feminist politics is not incorporated into public administration using gender mainstreaming, and that issues of power are avoided in favour of a win-win discourse. Moreover, I conclude that silences are created in regard to specific feminist issues, for example gendered violence (Article I, Article II, Article III). Gender mainstreaming did not create space for the issue of gender-based violence in the Swedish municipalities we investigated (Article IV), and the results revealed substantial differences between the municipalities, indicating that gender equality policy and gendered violence are perceived as unrelated policy areas in municipalities. This indicates that when municipalities do gender mainstreaming, the inclusion of feminist issues, such as gendered violence, is optional. Nevertheless, we were able to identify cases where positive action was combined with the institutionalization of gender mainstreaming. This is important, since the approach of gender mainstreaming could theoretically also be combined with positive action in local government. As described in Chapter 2, scholars have suggested that gender mainstreaming should include all three approaches, while others have argued that the approaches are mutually exclusive. I have now shown that, in local government, there is no opposition between the production of gender equality politics described as positive action on the one hand, and gender mainstreaming on the other hand.

As discussed in Chapter 3, the ability (or capacity) of the state to involve itself in gender equality policy is not problematized within gender mainstreaming; and I engage in this discussion in the article on the myth of success (Article I). The analysed material does not reflect any of the historical discussion about involving the state or state agencies in gender equality, or any reluctance or hesitation about doing so. Earlier discussions about the potential women-friendly state (Hernes 1988) or theories about the patriarchal nature of the state (Walby 1989, McKinnon 1987) are absent. This relates to the overarching topic of feminist politics in the thesis. In an article (Article I), I describe how the discourse of Sweden’s success refrains from incorporating articulations that describe the uneven implementation in Sweden. When Sweden is lifted up as a model country when it comes to gender
mainstreaming, it is aspects of the social-democratic welfare state that are described. I also describe the conflation between gender mainstreaming, as a strategy, with the policy objective of gender equality. I argue that this has societal and political consequences for feminist politics because the conflation can affect future (re)constructions of the welfare system. If the political legitimacy is ascribed to gender mainstreaming instead of to gender equality it can influence, or even hinder, actual political change.

6.4 Concluding remark

I would like to conclude with some final remarks. In Chapter 1 (section 1.6.3), I described not being able to characterize the experiences from HJÄMT in terms of Pincus’s model of resistance to gender equality work within public administration (2002). I wondered if the mismatch was due to my case or her model. While I still do not know why I, or my respondents, did not observe resistance within HJÄMT, I do now know that the project was articulated in a non-conflict, win-win manner without explicit aim to be transformative. Pincus, for her part, investigated eight gender equality projects in six different municipalities. The projects she studied were formulated within a gender-power discourse aiming to challenge power structure within the municipalities. The (neutral) gender discourse in HJÄMT may have resulted in less focus on gendered power. This means that the effects of the PSGE programme need to be revisited.

It is possible that the effects on gender equality of HJÄMT and PSGE remain to be seen. As I have argued (Article I), what can be envisioned and conceived as possible is important in creating an equal society. Successful cases have normative power, even if they are composed of myths. Regardless of what actually is institutionalized, new imaginations of what is possible are created in local government.

When developing a critical understanding gender mainstreaming the effects of neoliberalism, including the establishment of a feminist market, are substantial and should be given further attention in research. I have found that in the story of Sweden the “starting up process” is emphasized, rather than the possible effects and outcomes of the project (Article I). The marketization of gender mainstreaming projects may stimulate this development. Within this process of gender mainstreaming and neoliberalism, further research could contribute in several directions. One example would be to investigate the effects of feminist consultants who operate in the market. Is it possible for such consultants to sell transformative analytical services?
The growing consultancy market should also be investigated, asking questions such as: Is it possible to be a “successful consultant” and also argue for transformation and (re)distribution. Or, does a “successful consultant” divert attention from issues such as social justice and the importance of a well-developed welfare state. If the market provides for these (feminist) women, who will plea for public welfare? And if the model of local gender mainstreaming from Sweden (which is applied in a social democratic welfare state; and a potential women friendly state), was to be implemented within liberal or conservative welfare states, would the outcomes be (potentially) women friendly?

Finally I would propose that the position of the state needs to be revisited. When the public sector, here the state and the municipalities, is the facilitator of the gender mainstreaming discourse, demand from the women’s movement becomes foreclosed positions. I do not mean to say that the state is a patriarchal institution; however, the results from this thesis show that silencing can be a factor in this – and that it needs to be addressed.
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