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Gender Equality and Beyond:
At the Crossroads of Neoliberalism, Anti-Gender Movements, “European” Values, and Normative Reiterations in the Nordic Model

Editors

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Table of Contents

Gender Equality and Beyond: At the Crossroads of Neoliberalism, Anti-Gender Movements, "European" Values, and Normative Reiterations in the Nordic Model
Katarina Giritli Nygren, Lena Martinsson and Diana Mulinari 1–7

Basic Income: The Potential for Gendered Empowerment?
Alison Koslowski and Ann-Zofie Duvander 8–15

The Traps of International Scripts: Making a Case for a Critical Anthropology of Gender and Sexuality in Development
Rahil Roodsaz and An Van Raemdonck 16–24

Gender and Struggles for Equality in Mining Resistance Movements: Performing Critique against Neoliberal Capitalism in Sweden and Greece
Angelika Sjöstedt Landén and Marianna Fotaki 25–35

A New Service Class in the Public Sector? The Role of Femonationalism in Unemployment Policies
Paula Mulinari 36–47

Women's Coalitions beyond the Laicism–Islamism Divide in Turkey: Towards an Inclusive Struggle for Gender Equality?
Selin Çağatay 48–58

When the Personal Is Always Political: Norwegian Muslims' Arguments for Women's Rights
Hannah Helseth 59–66

Solidarity in Head-Scarf and Pussy Bow Blouse: Reflections on Feminist Activism and Knowledge Production
Lena Gemzöe 67–81

Feminism as Power and Resistance: An Inquiry into Different Forms of Swedish Feminist Resistance and Anti-Genderist Reactions
Mona Lilja and Evelina Johansson 82–94

"Sweden Has Been Naïve": Nationalism, Protectionism and Securitisation in Response to the Refugee Crisis of 2015
Mathias Ericson 95–102

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Editorial

Gender Equality and Beyond: At the Crossroads of Neoliberalism, Anti-Gender Movements, "European" Values, and Normative Reiterations in the Nordic Model

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Abstract
The social-democratic-inspired "Nordic model", with its agenda for gender equality, has been an important example for the development of political interventions to transform society but at the same time, it has functioned as an emerging gender normalising and stabilising structure. In the last decade it has also become the focus of antigender movements and ethno-nationalistic parties both as emblematic for the Nordic nations as well as a threat that must be destroyed to save the nation. This issue will elaborate further on gender equality as a node, a floating signifier in powerful and often contradictory discourses. We are inspired by scholarships of hope in a dialogue with articles that search for realistic utopias that might be considered to be "beyond gender equality". The included articles engage with the messiness and crossroads of gender equality in relation to the work-line, territories, neo-liberalism, religion, the crisis of solidarity and the success of anti-genderism agenda.

Keywords
anti-genderism; gender equality; neo-liberalism; racism

Issue
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1. Introduction

> Gender equality is one of the cornerstones of Swedish society. The aim of Sweden's gender equality policies is to ensure that everyone enjoys the same opportunities, rights and obligations in all areas of life. (Sweden Government, 2018)

The above-mentioned quote reinforced by a picture of a young (white) man embracing a little child is the opening sentence of the Swedish government's website on gender equality. The quote illustrates the fundamental role that gender equality has within the Swedish society and culture and defines gender equality as an issue demanding equal rights and state concern. The ideology and policy practice of gender equality has been historically located within a social democratic frame through the establishment of public policies that supported women's work outside the home and through social policies aiming to balance paid work with family life. Gender equality policies that evolved after the sixties and seventies show a transformation of family forms from a male breadwinner model to a dual earning one with state financed childcare and policies aiming to include men in care work (Lundqvist, 2017). The (partially) accomplishment of these goals, aiming to decrease inequalities between women and men was (partially) achieved through a number of social movements (particularly the women's and the labour movement) and an entanglement between women's needs and the needs of the labour market.

Gender equality policies have since its implementation been at the core of feminist analysis. Gender scholars and feminists' activists pointed to the huge gap between policy reform and the lives of women that were, despite reforms, located within a gender segregated labour market and continued to be the main responsible for social reproductive work (Borchorst & Siim, 2008). Different but fundamental readings were also provided by those feminist scholars that identified the normative regulation of heterosexuality and considered the nuclear family to be at the core of gender equality policies (Dahl, 2010; Martinsson, 2001) and by postcolonialism-inspired feminist scholars that named the appropriation of gender equality by ethnonationalist and value conservative social movements and political parties that redefined gender equality as a Western/Scandinavian value, which is threatened today by the Muslim Other (de los Reyes, Molina, & Mulinari, 2014).

In line with this discussion, we published the book *The Myth of Swedish Gender Equality* (Martinsson, Griffin, & Giritli Nygren, 2016; Mulinari, 2016). We argued that gender equality, as a state policy intervention, has not only contributed to recognise, once and for all, the vital feminist insight that the personal and the private is public and political but also that it can transform what might be understood as natural unequal gender orders as well as develop alternative gendered subjectivities, family forms, and societies. However, we maintained that gender equality state policies and practices are also a stabilising and even partly conservative force that reiterates and builds upon hetero-normative discourses, stable notions of traditional heterosexual nuclear families, and a recreation of gender binary notions. A binary "he" and "she" often implicitly becomes the transformative political subjects of gender equality and, as such, excludes other subject-positions. The gender equality norm also reproduces notions of Europe and the "Nordic model" as the crown of Enlightenment; they are framed by secularism and the Swedish modernity and held up as an example for others, such as racialised migrants and nations outside Europe, to assimilate to or follow.

Sweden as well as Nordic countries have, therefore, not only had an enviable reputation for gender equality politics and practices, but gender equality has also become an important aspect of the countries' self-image. Finally and central to the gender equality policies since its start is the integration of women into a capitalist-regulated labour market based on a worldview that defines paid work as eternally and permanently empowering for women. It is through paid work that woman, but also the Swedish society, are supposed to become both equal and modern. Paid work plays a fundamental role in welfare rights, from parental leave to pensions. Citizenship is made through paid work, up to a certain point. Gender equality strategies and policies have, therefore, become inseparable from a capitalist regulated labour market. This merging of gender equality with paid work in order to create the good equal life is framed through the dynamics of financial capitalism, class inequalities, and, not least, the "work-line" (*arbetslinjen*) that makes paid work mandatory for access to welfare support. It makes it difficult for many who are not able to work full time, of whatever gender, to live liveable lives. And not the least, the hegemonic work-line makes it more difficult for other strategies and societal visions to emerge.

To summarise so far: what we want to underline is how gender equality and gender equality policies build on problematic notions and norms on gender, sexuality, nation, capitalism, and, workability. On the one side, these policies have been women friendly and have had a positive impact on the lives of some women or, rather, on their life choices, but they also have, on the other hand, simultaneously served to legitimise capitalist labour market relations and normalise heteronormative family forms, re-established differences between groups, and recreated Eurocentric, colonial, and nationalistic stories and orders.

In the last decade, gender equality has become the node for discourses at the core of three radical social transformations: 1) the shift in the earlier eighties from a social democratic regime to a neoliberal one with a reorganisation of the welfare state towards neoliberal frames (Therborn, 2018), 2) a transformation of the Swedish labour and migration policies to bridge neoliberalism with exclusion policies towards migrants and refugees (Schierup & Ålund, 2011), and 3) an increase in the neo-Nazi mobilisations and a success of ethnonationalist political parties with strong anti-feminists' agendas (Norocel, 2010). The ethno-nationalist party Sweden Democrats understand gender equality as a European/Nordic value *and* argued that feminism and feminists not only destroyed men's masculinity and forced upon children the notion of gender that threatened the natural differences between the sexes but also supported multicultural societies that threatened the nation (Mulinari, 2016).

This decoupling of gender equality from feminism makes it possible to be pro gender equality (both in a neo-liberal and even neo-conservative frame) while at the same time resisting and questioning feminism as a project that vouches for inclusive and transnational social justice.

We have three aims with this issue. First, to elaborate further on gender equality as a node, a floating signifier in powerful and often contradictory discourses—it answers questions such as: what does this socio-political and affective messiness tell us not only about gender equality but also about its transnational and national contexts and imagined communities? Secondly, to explore the forms and dynamics through which gender equality is transformed in the production of forms of femo-nationalist (Farris, 2017), homo-nationalist (Puar, 2017), and the fundamental symbol of what ethnonatioalist parties identify as the "cultural Marxists and feminist lobby", a symbol that must be destroyed to save the nation, at the same time. Finally, we want to write ourselves within the tradition of scholarships of hope; thus, we will conclude the introduction through a dialogue about articles that search for realistic utopias (Wright, 2009) that might be considered to be "beyond gender equality".

2. The Messiness and Crossroads

As mentioned above, the social-democratic inspired "Nordic model" with its agenda for gender equality has been an important example for the development of political interventions to transform society but it has also been, at the same time, functioning as an emerging gender normalising and stabilising structure. It is its role as a floating signifier that provides the term gender equality with ongoing transformations in a society that it both takes part and constantly re-emerges with new meanings and performative effects. In the following section, we will outline the different crossroads and ongoing transformations that will be further explored in the contributing articles.

2.1. Gender Equality and the Work-Line

Feminist scholars have read the "Nordic model" through an exploration of the decommodification of care work, a decommodification that allows women's participation in paid work and allows a balance between family and work, making gender equality an honour and code word. It has upheld the welfare system and been part of its stabilising structure. This connection between work-line and gender equality is normative in a very material way, shaping and regulating whatever possible liveforms are desirable, excluding other lifeforms, and making invisible the diversity of labour practices outside the formal labour market. Many feminist scholars argue that it is important to deconstruct the relationship between gender equality and paid work in order to decouple gender equality from labour market demands.

Arguments for basic income models have been raised in order to make it easier to live outside these norms. In this volume, Koslowski and Duvander (2018) relate to this topic through the example of basic income and explore its potential to deconstruct the entanglement of paid work and consider paid work as a core value for gender equality. The authors thoroughly discuss what the basic income model might mean for gender equality. At the same time, as a basic income can be conceptualised as freedom, it is engendered and women's caring responsibilities could be reproduced if a base-income frame was secured. An independent core of income, the authors argue, is a way to attain autonomy, but it is not sufficient when it comes to challenging persistent gender norms.

2.2. Gender Equality and Territories

The understanding of gender equality as an idea, a policy, and a cultural practice emanating exclusively from the Global North has both disregarded the feminist struggles in the Global South and their contribution towards alternative forms of thinking, gender, and sexuality and reinforced the fantasy that gender equality is a Western cultural product embodied in the privilege of whiteness. To place gender equality, both temporally and spatially, as a modern western project and as one single movement coming from one place and spreading out in the world is, therefore, highly problematic (McDowell & Sharp, 2016). We find it important to challenge the notion of feminism as a Western project in order to recognise and celebrate transnational feminist struggles searching for alternative notions of gender equality and social justice (Rivera Cusicanqui, 2010). Even if questions regarding territories, spaces, and borders and its re-organisation in times of neoliberalism and financial capital are present in nearly all articles in this issue, two articles particularly have a specific focus on gender equality and territories.

Roodsaz and Van Raemdonck (2018) explore how gender and sexuality understandings operate within developmental projects aimed to transfer one specific conceptualisation of gender equality from the Global North to the Global South. The authors locate their efforts in a productive dialogue with the scholarship situated on the interface of postcolonial critique, critical development studies, and feminist theories. They discuss the ability of such development projects to interact with local epistemologies, addressing how these projects aimed at (re)shaping subjectivities that fit into certain expectations often fail and arguing for a critical commitment by resisting homogeneity, closure, and universalism, which require an open attitude towards and an active search for alternative ontologies.

Sjöstedt Landén and Fotaki (2018) argue that it is important to uncover how the gender equality discourse may become instrumental to capitalist accumulation, including the "devastation of natural resources", "exploitation of human and non-human life", and reifications of "desirable and undesirable people". The authors bring up a similar issue but from a slightly different angle using analytical pairing of centres and peripheries when analysing how the gender equality projects are entangled with urban centres, highlighting the need to recognise (feminist) struggles for the defence of land and water in areas deemed peripheral across Europe, thereby challenging the urban mainstream gender equality discourse at national and EU levels.

2.3. Gender Equality and Neo-Liberalism

The notion that the "problem" with gender inequality could be solved not from within the socially and democratically framed state institutions and policies but with a "little help" from the market was a result of the merging of discourses and practices of gender equality with neoliberal agendas (Boreus, 1997). Even though the assigning of equality rights to women and other marginalised groups continued during the nineties, the neoliberal discourse introduced an “entrepreneurial culture” and notions of “welfare dependency” within a number of fundamental reforms in welfare policies and caused a shift from citizenship rights to affect the ways in which gender equality was interpreted and acted upon (Wottle & Blomberg, 2011). Against the background of the national self-image of Sweden as gender equal and tolerant, concepts such as equal rights and gender equality were transformed towards important aspects of neoliberal discourses (Giritli Nygren, Fahlgren, & Johansson, 2016). The crossroads between gender equality, specific spaces, and neoliberalism cut through many of the contributing articles in this issue.

Paula Mulinari (2018) explores the dialectic relationship between the representations of migrant women and their economic–political role as workers in the current phase of capitalism and further elaborates this topic. While she is inspired by a feminist postcolonial tradition, she wants to create bridges that link this central feminist intervention with the field of feminist political economy. The author also analyses how discourses on gender equality act upon racialised boundaries between and within city spaces and between and within different groups of women. She shows how labour market policies targeting migrant women located within what has been dominated “migrant neighbourhoods” are, in the name of gender equality, used not only to legitimise unequal access to social rights and create new categories of workers but also legitimate higher levels of exploitation in the labour market.

2.4. Religion Contra Secularism

In recent years, we have, as mentioned previously, seen an intensified tension in the hegemonic discourse between religion (coded as Islam) and secularism (Berg, Lundahl, & Martinsson, 2016). The tension is used in diverse ways—not only to position religious beliefs against each other but also as an explanation for the growing threat of anti-feminism. The tension has been articulated in such a way as to homogenise the understanding about religion by excluding feminist transformative voices, key actors, and organisations challenging religious institutions from within (Kolankiewicz, 2015) and locating religion as patriarchal, traditional, and outside the scope of women’s rights.

There is a fundamental need to transcend the binary opposition to the understanding of secularism as women friendly and the understanding of religion as a threat to feminist agendas, a binary opposition at the core of mainstream feminism and women´s movement in Sweden. Three contributions in this issue deal with this crossroad and discuss the unified idea of gender equality as something that is tied to secularism.

Selin Çağatay (2018) uses examples from the Turkish context in order to criticise the way that secularism is understood, arguing for the need to shift the feminist analytical lens in the study of women’s activism away from binary approaches to secularism and religion. The author shows how up until the 2010s, gender equality had been a central element in Turkey’s official ideology and poses a fundamental question in the context of the authoritarian turn through the success of the ruling Justice and Development Party’s (AKP): what are the underlying assumptions of gender equality struggles in relation to modernity, Westernisation, and religion? Such questions might also be useful in the Swedish context in order to destabilise what the author defines as the “mythical mantra of gender equality” and to highlight the affinity between the state, nationalism, secularism, and dominant understandings of gender equality.

Hannah Helseth (2018) analyses the rhetoric developed in the personal narrative written by self-defined Muslims when arguing for women’s rights and the topos of individual autonomy. Her analysis shows how these accounts become personal when they argue for women’s rights while, at the same time, meet with both the explicit and implicit demands to represent Muslims as a group. While the narratives provide examples of the diverse forms through which women themselves represent their identities, the category of “Muslim women” shapes and regulates what are possible subject positions. The author analyses the tension between the Western conceptualisation of individual autonomy and the actual representation of Muslim women that lacks this quality as a result of belonging to what racist discourses identify as collectivistic cultures.

Finally, Lena Gemzöe (2018), like Çağatay, blurs the supposed divide between secularism/equality and religion/oppression by focus on two feminist campaigns both connected to clothes—the Hijab Call-to-Action in defence of Muslim women’s rights and a #metoo manifestation whose uniting figure was the pussy bow blouse. The hijab campaign displayed how racist, islamophobic, anti-migration, and sexist attitudes constrain the possibility for Muslim women to live gender equal lives in Sweden. The Pussy Bow Blouse campaign with its connections to #metoo and the Swedish Academy makes it clear that Sweden, despite its gender equality rhetoric, cannot provide safe places to women and secure women’s rights to not being subjected to sexual violence.

2.5. The Crisis of Solidarity and the Success of Anti-Genderism Agenda

During the Swedish election campaign in 2018, the anti-feminist and anti-gender rhetoric was made very explicit not only by the Sweden Democrats, the ethnonationalist party that gained a 17% electoral support and whose election program included the demand on stop for financial state support for scholarship on gender and racism, but also by other parties that followed and focussed their electoral campaigns on “gender nonsense (flum)”, arguing that teachers influenced by feminist ideas violently take away cars from small boys and dolls from little girls by imposing a feminist agenda when gender differences are natural and said that challenging these differences intimidates children’s healthy development (Sverker, 2018).

A violent and anti-Muslim agenda entangles this rhetoric where Islam is pointed out as a threat to the European values in general, specifically to the Swedish gender equality (Gardell, 2018; Kundnani, 2015; Listerborn, 2015). Muslim men, particularly, are systematically represented as dangerous for Swedish women, and the figure of “unaccompanied young boys” is used as an illustration of the chaos migration creates in the country. This anti-feminism/anti-gender and anti-Muslim and racist rhetoric is not completely new, but has moved from the periphery to the mainstream within the political field. This articulation appears today in new and radical (and more dangerous) forms (Eriksson, 2013) and acts upon a powerful entanglement of neoliberal ideologies and cultures, increasing the success of authoritarian, neo-fascist visions, ideas, and policies.

Despite the rhetoric that represents Sweden in international politics as a country inspired by feminism, Swedish international policies are at least partly to blame for the so-called refugee crisis as a result of its support to military intervention and its investment in profit driven and ecologically dangerous transnational corporations in the Global South. The public discourse in Sweden has changed from understanding refugees as a category of people in need of protection to defining them as a burden to the nation. We disagree with the assumption that Sweden is affected by a “refugee crisis”, as external forces that recreate notions of racialised populations as dangerous could be the cause for the success of the ethnonationalist parties or the reason behind the social democratic regime crisis. We would rather speak of a crisis of solidarity in a country with a neoliberal culture that defines human needs in terms of market profits and a fundamentalist assimilationist agenda, where migrants are seen as in need of education of “Swedish values”.

Lilja and Johansson (2018) seek in their contribution to this issue to respond to the challenges of anti-genderism by exploring how the multitude of, and interlinkage between, different forms of resistance are intertwined in power, showing a discursive struggle where feminist critique and anti-genderism emerge and challenge one another as an unstable process. Through their analysis of different forms of resistance emerges a complicated network of power and resistance where a feminist resistance might even be caught in an impasse, risking strengthening the very power it protests against.

This theme is also discussed explicitly by Mathias Ericson (2018) who explores how the idealisation of Sweden as a modern and gender equal country is articulated in current processes of securitisation and nationalistic protectionism—showing how neoliberalism and Swedish exceptionalism are entangled. This network or discursive emergence are also mobilised under the anti-genderism agenda today, expressed through public discourses that link the stability of gender to exclusionary notions of nationhood and belonging.

3. Important Implications for Future Feminist Theory and Practice—To Move Beyond

How can feminism and gender studies at the local and the transnational level address the diverse contemporary forms of anti-genderism and the growing resistance to pluralistic and inclusive understanding of genders and sexualities?

First, we would argue that it is important to not fall back into nostalgic fantasies of the “Nordic model” and its gender equality frame, entangled, as we have argued, both in hetero-gender binary, and colonial frames by normalising a strong capitalist work line and creating boundaries between European values and its others. We also find it vital not to develop any form of binarity or divide between a monolithic notion of feminism and feminists as “good” and defending gender equality against racist and anti-gender movements. Everyday practices of class privilege racism and nationalism are also present among and within (some) feminism and (some) feminists in the Nordic countries, a support that fuels the more outspoken antigender and racist forces, and needs continuously to be addressed and explored.

Second, we asserted that while opposition to feminism and gender equality policies is not a new phenomenon, recent developments mark a distinctly new phase, strengthening or, in some cases, establishing new global and transnational regimes of oppression and exploitation that gender scholars and feminist activists need to respond to. These responses need to be located within a feminist transnational agenda (Kaplan & Grewal, 2002; Mohanty, 2003) that has a commitment to both embodied local feminist knowledge and difficult and necessary conversations towards productive transnational feminist agendas.

Our third and concluding argument is that one of the core tasks of gender studies is to develop agendas for hope (Martinsson & Mulinari, 2018), opening our imagination and putting forward fantasies, visions, and ideas about alternative inclusive and democratic futures. We believe, that solidarity across conflictual locations, experiences, and visions evolves from the political bridges that feminists create between and through diverse struggles. And, in order to deepen our understanding of the many complexities, challenges, and possibilities of different feminist struggles against diverse but highly connected regimes of oppression and exploitation, we have to call for transnational and intersectional dialogues and analysis.

We hope that the feminist works already present in the articles that analyse the complex ways through which gender equality despite being an important feminist vision; also entangles with class privilege, racism, sexism, and heteronormativity; allows us to imagine worlds that transcend politics of gender equality as a governability discourse in finance capitalism towards more inclusive futures.

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Conflict of Interests

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Article

Basic Income: The Potential for Gendered Empowerment?

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Abstract
Basic income is likely to gain momentum as the next social welfare trend to sweep over the world with ideas of how to improve the fairness and efficiency of distributing money. Other earlier movements with similar ambitions to transform societies, ranging across the political spectrum from socialism to neo-liberalism, have led to very different consequences for strata of citizens, but have in common that they have de-prioritised gender equality in favour of other interests. Advocates of basic income suggest that in addition to pragmatic gains, such as a more efficient state administration, primarily a basic income will empower citizens, leading to the potential for greater human flourishing. Our question is whether this empowerment will be gendered and if so, how? So far, the basic income debate addresses gender only in so far as it would raise the income of the poorest, of whom a larger proportion are women. However, it is less clear how it might contribute to a transformation of gendered behaviour, making possible divergent shapes of life where binary and set notions of gender are not a restriction. We discuss the idea of basic income from a perspective of gender equality in the Swedish context.

Keywords
basic income; empowerment; feminism; gender equality; parental leave; Sweden; universal worker model

Issue
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1. Introduction

Basic Income is a social welfare movement currently gaining momentum across the world. It has ambitions to transform societies, with a particular emphasis on the empowerment of citizens, and greater human flourishing among its central goals. History shows us that a common characteristic of political movements this ambitious is that they have tended to de-prioritise gender equality in favour of other interests. Our question then is whether this empowerment would be gendered, and in that case how. Our discussion is hypothetical as basic income is suggested and debated, but not yet implemented.

The basic income debate addresses gender in so far that it would raise the economic situation of the poorest, of whom a larger proportion are women. Thus, gendered economic inequality may be decreased. Less clear, is how it might contribute to a transformation of gendered behaviour, supporting possible divergent ways of being where binary and set notions of gender are not a restriction. Of course, it would be unreasonable to expect a basic income to be a panacea for all social ills and advocates are not making such a claim. We discuss the idea of basic income from a feminist perspective in the Swedish context (as outcomes may vary substantially across countries, depending not least on progress already made towards gender equality). We consider that a basic income alone is unlikely to deliver on gender equality, as whilst it could be a necessary ‘instrument of freedom’, money alone is not a sufficient instrument with which to realise gender equality: other structures are also needed.

Gender equality is variously conceptualised and thus understandings of what a gender equal world might look like differ (see e.g., Charles & Grusky, 2004; Mandel, 2009; Olorenshaw, 2016). In this article, we take as our cornerstone that gender equality would be realised if there were no difference, at the population level, in the distribution of mothers and fathers taking parental leave and participating in the labour market. Some parents might contribute to this non-gendered distribution by sharing parental leave equally, whilst others might see a particular parent taking the majority of parental leave days, but importantly, on average, this parent would not be more likely to be male or female.

A universal basic income has yet to be introduced by any national government (De Wispelaere, 2016). There have been guaranteed minimum income experiments in the 1970s in North America (Forget, 2011) and more recent experiments such as in India (Davala, Jhabvala, Mehta, & Standing, 2015). Finland had a small-scale experiment in the field (Kela, 2016), as has Canada (Macdonald, 2016), and Scotland is working on the feasibility of a basic income experiment (Painter, Thorold, & Cooke, 2018). Gender equality has not been the focus of these experiments. In Sweden, a basic income is debated in various ways; from economic calculations around its feasibility to ideological discussions of its implication for the meaning of work (see e.g., Ekstrand, 1996; Jansson, 2003; Kildal, 2001; Paulsen, 2010). As such, this article is necessarily based primarily on theoretical reflections as well as being informed by empirical research on gender equality and policies such as parental leave that set out to reduce gender inequalities, particularly in Sweden.

The Swedish welfare state has long been premised on the universal (paid) worker model. Much care work has been transferred to public services in Sweden, and so to a certain degree is included in this definition of ‘paid activity as work’, but this is much less true of other domestic work. The universal worker model is concerned with human dignity, the right to work and economic independence, in a way that has been neglected in recent years, where the emphasis across the European Union has rather been on labour market ‘activation’ and benefit conditionality. The central tenet of the universal worker model is the value to human flourishing of being engaged in paid activity that is meaningful to a community; and an understanding of how core such a contribution is to social inclusion. In Sweden, this is often expressed through the workline (’arbetslinjen’), very prominent in the beginning of the 2000s, where every working-age adult is encouraged to participate in the labour market, to the extent that is possible. To participate in the labour market is also the basis for most benefits in the national social insurance system (Socialförsäkringsutredningen, 2005). The state is in part seen as responsible for providing individuals with the opportunity to contribute, which is important for gender equality. In this article, we explore how this fits or not with the basic income project.

Basic income is a freedom project. The question is whether money is sufficient to procure such freedom. Money, a floor to stand on, surely helps, but it will not be likely on its own to challenge norms, for example around parenting practices. We do not operate as individuals in isolation from structures: the structures of the household and family, community and states. A contribution of feminist policy-making and scholarship has been the observation that freedom of action is contingent on certain structures being in place (of which a basic income might be one). These structures rely on state intervention or ‘dictate’. It is impossible to entirely escape the norms, which govern our behaviour, but we can—and frequently do—use the state to help shape new norms. We consider which ‘structures’ are useful to the project of gender equality, and ask how compatible they might be with a basic income.

The article begins with a discussion of the universal basic income and gender equality. Then we explore that the conditions for ‘real freedom’ might entail active shaping of norms in a society and that the state may have a role to play here, beyond the basic income instrument. We bring examples of Swedish interventions, which have the aim of reducing gender inequalities.

2. Universal Basic Income from a Feminist Perspective

A universal basic income can be defined as ‘an income paid by a political community to all its members on an individual basis, without means test or work requirement’ (Van Parijs, 2004, p. 8; see also Van Parijs & Vanderborght, 2017). Whilst not a new idea per se, basic income as a policy proposal can be said to be one of the few truly radical shake-ups to welfare systems currently being mooted by actors across the political spectrum (Reed & Lansley, 2016). A key contrast between the basic income model and most current social welfare models is that those considered of core working age, and able to be actively seeking employment, would also receive such payments without means test or work requirement. This would include parents and other carers (Van Parijs, 2004). At its ideological core is a call for liberation, for ‘real freedom’ for all living within a given political community (Van Parijs & Vanderborght, 2017, chapter 1).

Many claims are made on what a basic income might achieve. Claims for a basic income include reducing poverty and benefit traps, cutting bureaucracy, matching security systems to better correspond with changes in working life, increasing wages, supporting creativity and entrepreneurship, reducing unhealthy dependencies within relationships, increasing wellbeing, and the list continues (Kela, 2016). Some also claim that a basic income would reduce gender inequalities in society (McKay, 2001). However, the basic income movement makes no claims to be an explicitly feminist project (whilst acknowledging there are various feminisms).

In some ways, a basic income would be similar to existing ‘cash for care’ policies, which are not generally associated with increased gender equality (e.g. Mandel, 2009). In part, this is because such cash benefits reduce political pressure to provide comprehensive care, education and health services. Although advocates of a basic income are clear that a basic income only replaces benefits up to that amount, and in no way replaces existing services, it is quite common in parental leave policy debates, that cash benefits are explicitly used instead of providing care services for very young children (e.g., Kurowska, 2019). The concern is that should such political trade-offs around resources occur, and should a basic income be seen as a replacement for early years education and care services as political compromise kicks in, this would have significant gendered implications.

The central question asked by those sceptical of the viability of a basic income is how the costs incurred would be borne by a society, initially and over time. In terms of the level of payment, Van Parijs and Vanderborght (2017) suggest a quarter of GDP per capita might be appropriate. For Sweden in 2017, this would amount to 114 450 SEK yearly (approximately €950 monthly). The recent Swiss Referendum in 2016 suggested 2,500 Swiss francs (approximately €2,155) per month. The Finnish experiment lands at €560 monthly, which is not sufficiently high to be considered a basic income in the sense suggested by its advocates. It is likely that a basic income payment would indeed be quite low due to the demands even a guaranteed minimum income would make on any tax base (Tobin, 1970). As such, other possibilities for funding might include changes to the tax treatment of capital or banking on public ownership of natural resources (Van Parijs & Vanderborght, 2017). In the case that the payment was relatively low, such as is typically the case for ‘cash for care’ policies, this has been associated with women becoming more rather than less financially dependent on their male partners (e.g. Mandel, 2009). Similarly, evidence from the Canadian guaranteed annual income experiment suggests mothers took longer maternity leaves, leading to increased economic dependency on their male partners (Forget, 2011).

Policies can be multi-dimensional in the way that they support citizens, going beyond financial support and services. Taking parental leave as an example, this is a policy—in the Swedish context at least—that aims to tackle gendered patterns of behaviour, by promoting fathers’ involvement with small children to a greater extent than might occur in the absence of the policy instrument (e.g. the daddy quota) (Castro-García & Pazos-Moran, 2016; Duvander & Johansson, 2012; Haas & Rostgaard, 2011). Parental leave is also a form of employment protection, and originally was a key determinant for women being able to keep an attachment to the labour force after becoming parents (Cedstrand, 2011). It is also credited with changing norms and behaviours. In Sweden, the reserved part for each parent in the parental leave was intensively debated when first introduced in the 1990s, but then extended without almost any debate in the 2000s (Cedstrand, 2011). So basic income poses a risk in its simplicity if there is the possibility that it might replace more complex policy instruments with financial benefit alone.

A basic income could potentially reduce unhealthy dependencies both within personal relationships and with employers. A worry however is that a basic income might be seen to reinforce barriers to the labour market for those who might most benefit from it (drawing upon the universal model of inclusion). Linked to this, there might also be less political pressure to safeguard routes into training essential for social mobility and integration (e.g., of migrant workers) (Hassel, 2017). Gender income gaps related to the differential return to work of mothers following childbirth may also become less of a political concern. This may also enhance social class and other differences between groups in any given society, calling for an intersectional analysis.

Whilst individualised basic income payments could well be an instrument of freedom to live individually for some, it is likely that many of us would still be living in households, and that many decisions (such as the division of paid and unpaid labour) would still likely be made at the household or wider extended family level. Whilst a basic income would provide women with unconditional income and thus recognise the social value of (gendered) caregiving (Fitzpatrick, 1999; McKay, 2001, 2005; Zelleke, 2011), it might also risk reinforcing gendered practices, and thus further entrench gender inequalities and maintain financial dependency within personal relationships (Robeyns, 2001). A basic income could contribute to poverty alleviation and personal independence for some, but it might also reinforce withdrawal from the labour market and public life for certain groups, such as mothers of young children, in so far as financial decisions were still taken at household level (Fitzpatrick, 1999).

3. Basic Income: A Necessary but not Sufficient Instrument of Freedom

> Under practically any imaginable basic-income reform, women would benefit far more than men, whether in terms of income or in terms of life options. (Van Parijs & Vanderborght, 2017, p. 185)

Women would disproportionately benefit from such an individual payment. So, why do some feminists feel uneasy about the prospect? What is the problem with wholeheartedly endorsing such a project? We suggest that the extension ‘in terms of life options’, might not be so obvious, at least if care work is part of the equation for a given individual.

A basic income is seen by its advocates as an instrument of freedom. If a basic income may entrench gendered patterns, it would do so in the context of a positive freedom. That is to say that a basic income would provide a greater freedom for a range of options, and if women ‘choose’ to withdraw from the labour market in favour of, for e.g., childcare, then this is quite different from a prescription to be carers: or is it? What about norms and the role of the state in shaping these? This is a feminist contribution: to have shown that norms and structures matter for the decisions we make. Choices are restricted by viable alternatives and norms of ’right choices’ are transformed into culture, traditional expectations and institutions endorsing certain choices.

Eduardo Suplicy, a Brazilian basic income 'champion' is famous for saying 'the best way out is through the door' (cited in Van Parijs & Vanderborght, 2017, chapter 1). His point is that the most obvious solution is sometimes a very good solution; in the case of lack of income being a restrictive factor for the exercise of freedom, the obvious solution is to distribute money more effectively and fairly so that more people can express their will to a greater extent. For basic income activists this translates as a payment, which is individualised, universal and unconditional. For feminism, there is perhaps a different, also obvious solution (men need to share the unpaid domestic and caring work), and it is not likely to be delivered by a basic income alone.

Basic income seeks to support our ambitions, without dictating what these should be. It makes the assumption that the power differential would be sufficiently shifted by the individualised payment to women for them to negotiate different domestic arrangements, and that norms would be flexible enough to accommodate a greater—and less gendered—range of 'life options'. The experience of the Belgium time credit scheme does not bode well in this regard. The time credit scheme allowed people a limited amount of paid time away from work, for any purpose. It was a seemingly gender-neutral scheme. However, it has seen extremely gendered use in practice. Mothers (but not fathers) in Belgium have overwhelmingly used their time credit account to care for children, in effect as an extension of parenting leave (Deven & Merla, 2019). Perhaps another example is the completely gender-neutral parental leave in Sweden: despite there being individual parallel rights for two parents, gendered practice endures, with women using the lion's share of leave. These experiences suggest that for a basic income to have an impact on the gendered practices of parenting, further thought would have to be given to how to achieve that specific goal. Gender equality is not a primary aim of a basic income, but it is a hoped for secondary consequence. Parental leave scholarship suggests that gender equality is most efficiently a consequence when it is an explicit policy aim, but that, as described above, even then it might fail to materialise.

Perhaps considering the distinction between gender equality and gender equity is helpful here. Gender equity is the value-laden concept that stems from the socially constructed expectations of female and male behaviour, which is based both on gender stratification and gender roles (Fraser, 1994). Gender equity is thus based on the experience of fairness and whose values are valuable, whereas gender equality would be easier defined by quantitative measures of gendered division of time and rewards of paid and unpaid work. Fraser (1994) would say that gender equality depends on female behaviour becoming the norm. Basic income has the potential to change the meaning of gender equity, either reversing back towards traditional gendered expectations, or alternatively liberating us from such stratifications and norms that limit our behaviour. There are many factors in hypothesising is such outcomes, but it seems clear that a basic income set at too low a payment rate would reverse development by necessity.

Firestone (1970, p. 1) observed that:

> Sex class is so deep as to be invisible…the reaction of the common man, woman, and child—That? Why you can't change that!...This gut reaction, the assumption about changing a fundamental biological condition, is an honest one….That so profound a change cannot be easily fit into traditional categories of thought, e.g., "political," is not because these categories do not apply but because they are not big enough: radical feminism bursts through them.

As with other big political movements, the basic income project does not appear to be 'big enough', remaining relatively conservative and essentialist with regard to its understanding of gender equalities. Perhaps it is precisely because a basic income would be such a revolutionary expansion of freedom, that this core unchallenged gender binary worldview is all the more disappointing. An independent source of income is a good start on the road to freedom, but, it is not a sufficient condition to challenge the persistent norms and prevailing gendered structures. To the extent that gender is based on norms and structures, which have to be challenged, basic income, as a gender-neutral idea that hides gender, could be argued to be a necessary condition, but not a sufficient condition to see female behaviour becoming the norm, thus leading us towards gender equality (Fraser, 1994).

4. The Social Organisation of Parenting and Gender Equality: Swedish Parental Leave Policy

Scholars and policy makers with an interest in how gender equality might be achieved have long observed that the social organisation of parenting and other care is the likely key (e.g., Firestone, 1970; Fraser, 1994; Koslowski, 2008). As long as a majority of mothers retain responsibility as a primary carer and a majority of fathers retain responsibility as a primary provider, this gendered split in the organisation of parenting is likely to spill over into gender inequalities across the life course. There is development over time, sometimes referred to as the (incomplete) gender revolution (Gerson, 2009), where Sweden is cast as a forerunner (Goldscheider, Bernhardt, & Lappegård, 2015). Indeed, Sweden is often considered one of the best places in the world to be a mother. However, also in Sweden, gender inequalities in both paid and unpaid work remain.

Whilst there is work to do before gender equality is fully realised in Sweden, its family policies have certainly led to high levels of female labour force participation, if also high levels of occupational sex segregation (Charles & Grusky, 2004). Historically, as elsewhere, Swedish mothers had been expected to withdraw from the labour market after the birth of a child (which is no longer the case). Parental leave has been a key institution in the fight against discrimination; and it became a new norm that mothers return to the workplace after a period of parental leave. However, where mothers, and not so much fathers, are the ones using family friendly policies such as parental leave, this is likely to have adverse consequences for women's earning capacities (Mandel & Semyonov, 2005).

Sweden is a pioneer of parental leave, expanding leave rights to fathers, in place now since 1974 (Cedstrand, 2011). Proponents of parenting leave policies typically support the idea that gender equality requires a change away from the assumption that mothers have primary responsibility for childcare. Seen in this light, parenting leave in a broad sense goes along the same lines as basic income, proposing freedom in what tasks are performed and by whom. The Swedish state perceives the continued lack of equity between mothers and fathers in leave taking as problematic and employs reserved months to each parent as an instrument to increase take up by fathers. This emphasis on supporting men as well as women with parental care work has led to changing norms, and it is today clearly normative for fathers to take part of the parental leave, something 9 out of 10 fathers do. Also, most men and women adhere to the idea of gender equal sharing of leave (Valarino, 2019), suggesting a trend towards female behaviour been seen as a 'norm', as noted above, necessary for gender equality (Fraser, 1994). Among parents living apart, shared residential custody is now increasingly common, seeing far more involvement by fathers in childcare than in many comparable countries. The language used in policy is now overwhelmingly gender-neutral emphasising both parents' equal importance, but with the potential to also hide remaining gendered behaviour.

The Swedish state can be said to have been particularly proactive, or 'hands on' in implementing structural changes before—and with the explicit aim—of changing gendered parenting practices. Indeed, Sweden is used as an illustration of how the state can change deeply rooted gendered ideologies (and norms) over time (Mandel, 2009). However, the extent to which the state should 'nudge' behaviour and intervene is debated in Sweden. A basic income may be seen as complementing a more 'hands off' approach.

It is also interesting to note that equal leave taking is not evenly distributed across socio-economic status: the fathers most likely to be using extensive lengths of parental leave in Sweden are highly educated and with high incomes (Duvander & Johansson, 2012). So, the social organisation of parenting is most gendered for those most likely to benefit from a basic income, who are also those most dependent on the availability of high quality and affordable early years education and care. Sweden has also been a pioneer in the availability of high quality and affordable early years education and care (ECEC), a service highly correlated with female labour market participation, which is well integrated with leave policy (Viklund & Duvander, 2017).

Parental leave payment in Sweden is approximately 80% of the wage for most parents. This might not necessarily be affected, in principle, by the implementation of a basic income, which could allow for the possibility of differences in levels of payments for different groups (e.g., such as fathers). Indeed, although mostly dependent on eligibility criteria linked to employment (given the universal worker model) parenting leave has been seen as one of a group of measures (another being a universal state pension) moving along the path to a basic income (Robeyns, 2001). However, as mentioned above, payment is only one dimension of parenting leave policy. In addition, it protects women's (and increasingly men's) position in the labour market, allowing them to return to their place of employment after a period of leave and it explicitly aims to support carers other than the birth mother, in particular encouraging increased care by fathers. A recent government commission on parental leave seeks to include also other carers in parental leave use, to better enable less traditional families (SOU, 2017).

Another aspect of current Swedish policies such as leave measures is that these types of benefits take account of specific needs at a given time as they arise (O'Reilly, 2008). This takes the risk away from the individual needing to plan ahead for a rainy day when care is required due to illness of a spouse or other family member; or for a more happy event, such as the birth of a child. As parental leave in Sweden is part of the national social insurance, it is based on the general idea of spreading risks over the population and the life course. It is an interesting question whether an individual payment of a basic income would shift such risk management back to the individual.

Sweden is known to be a particularly normative society, in that it is perhaps more difficult than in less normative societies (all societies are normative to some extent) to live outside the accepted 'best practice' norms. This currently shows up for those outside the normative universal worker model. Would a basic income exacerbate this existing social divide between those remaining on a low level of income and those on more average or higher levels of income? Would it create a two-tier system: a 'them and us' of lower income groups reliant on basic income and top up benefits and the higher income groups (who possibly resent paying for it all whilst having less 'free' time)?

So, the Swedish 'universal worker' model, or 'work line', which is such a core principle of many policies which are generally agreed to support gender equality, is possibly going to rub along as an awkward partner with a basic income. There seems to be a fundamental ideological conflict between the two ideas, a conflict much deeper than economic considerations of state budget, often expressed in the 'right to work' and also to meaningful work, not least by the trade unions, which may undermine the universal worker model, bringing its existence into question. If the universal worker model did not continue to hold firm, this would likely undermine related efforts to reduce gender inequalities. Sweden is a good case indicating that structural interventions based around a universal worker model are needed to reduce gender inequalities still today and probably far into the future.

It is not clear that a basic income payment would challenge gender inequalities. Indeed, it may reinforce a (male) breadwinner model even in a country like Sweden where norms are clearly moving towards gender equal sharing; the gender wage gap would likely prevail, and we may see a tendency towards women (in particular mothers) quitting labour market work in favour of living on a basic income.

5. Conclusions: Basic Income, a Radical or Conservative Policy with Regard to Gendered Empowerment?

A basic income promises 'real freedom', or a freedom from dictate; what role then for state intervention? The interplay between social policies and norms is of key interest to social scientists and policy makers. This is particularly clear in the arena of public health, in which the interventionist state often plays a strong role in changing our behaviours, for e.g., with regard to smoking, alcohol consumption, vaccinations, sugar consumption. There are other examples around environmental behaviours too, e.g. recycling and reduced use of plastic bags and other plastics.

Should the state not take action too with regard to gender equalities? Norms will develop: there is no such thing as total 'real' freedom. Legal frameworks however, such as parental leave policies can see changes to norms, even those as deeply embedded as parenting practices. In Sweden, such statements are hardly controversial, but choice and gender equality are sometimes contrasted, and the limits to state intervention are constantly renegotiated.

Basic income would potentially change the boundaries for state intervention, which for many sounds intuitively positive, and may well bring many benefits. However, if the state does not intervene regarding gender-equality, gender norms will be determined by other less visible forces, such as the power dynamics within households. It is likely that a universal basic income has the potential for empowerment for all, but for this to be achieved, attention will need to be paid to its potential for gendered outcomes.

The concerns raised here regarding the limitations of empowerment for women from a basic income—particularly with regard to whom remains holding the baby, doing the majority of domestic work and the majority of both formal and informal care work—are not in themselves arguments against the implementation of a basic income. However, there are certainly strong reasons to not let basic income replace other structures that have been shown to be relevant for gender equality, in particular the ones directed at supporting families, such as parental leave and childcare services.

McLean (2015, p. 2) notes that 'basic Income is in some ways a microcosm of wider feminist controversies regarding how the state can recognise the unpaid work women largely do without reinforcing existing inequalities, also known as Wollstonecraft's Dilemma (Lister, 1995; Pateman, 1988)'. Indeed, feminists involved with policy making sometimes find themselves falling into one of two camps: that of a more pragmatic approach and that of a more idealistic approach. The former aim to take the situation they see at a current time in front of them, such as mothers doing most of the childcare, and to support women in that situation. The latter might rather take issue with the root imbalance of this situation and aim to create a new situation where fathers are doing more childcare. Arguably, many aspects of the current Swedish welfare state are more radically ambitious than the idea of basic income in that it seeks change to the gendered division of both paid and unpaid work. The implementation of a basic income would be gender-neutral and so, in theory, fathers and mothers would have the same support. In practice, however, and especially given the likely low level of basic income, this policy might have the (unintended) consequence of encouraging a return to the breadwinner model of parenting, with one parent better able to stay at home, but another parent still needing to remain firmly attached to the labour market. Once again, we have a political movement, which has not fully embraced the challenge from radical feminism to move us beyond the 'fundamental biological condition' as observed by Shulamith Firestone (1970, p. 1) towards an equal distribution of care work.

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Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

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Article

The Traps of International Scripts: Making a Case for a Critical Anthropology of Gender and Sexuality in Development

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Abstract
In this article,[1] we look at colonialities of gender and sexuality as concepts employed in international aid and development. These international arenas reveal not only strong reiterations of modernist linear thinking and colonial continuities but also provide insights into the complexities of the implementation and vernacularisation of gender and sexuality in practices of development. Using a critical anthropological perspective, we discuss case studies based on our own research in Egypt and Bangladesh to illustrate the importance of unpacking exclusionary mechanisms of gender and sexuality scripts in the promotion of women's rights and sexual and reproductive health and rights in postcolonial development contexts. We provide a conceptual analysis of decolonial feminist attempts at moving beyond the mere critique of development to enable a more inclusive conversation in the field of development. To work towards this goal, we argue, a critical anthropological approach proves promising in allowing a politically-sensitive, ethical, and critical engagement with the Other.

Keywords
colonial; critical anthropology; development; gender; international aid; sexuality

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1. Introduction

Political scientist Nancy Fraser questions the rise of second-wave feminism's conjunction with the rise of neoliberalism (Fraser, 2009). Her analysis is of immediate relevance to the critical conversations surrounding the concepts of gender and sexual equality today as certain feminist ideals are still selectively employed in the shape of gender and sexual rights mainstreaming programs in international and national machineries. Fraser calls this the 'selective incorporation and partial recuperation' of some strands of feminist critique (2009, p. 99). Similarly, Eisenstein demonstrates how US mainstream feminism has 'helped global capitalism to increase its inroads into the Global South' (2009, p. 133). As a consequence of these processes, 'gender' has become elusive and a heavily 'disputed concept in the arena of politics' (Scott, 2013). It is a discursive construct that has been ascribed many meanings. Or, as Fraser postulates, the feminist social movement has resulted in an offspring of general discursive constructs that are 'empty signifier(s) of the good' (2009, p. 114).

In this article we depart from this broader analysis of the current state of notions of gender and sexuality in neoliberal regimes and its extensions in development policymaking, focusing on the Global South. We aim to join a conversation of scholarship situated on the interface of postcolonial critique, critical development studies, and feminist theories with respect to gender and sexuality. Our contribution lies in advancing a critical anthropological approach to gender and sexuality in development programs, based on our ethnographic observations in Egypt and Bangladesh. We will point at approaches that are *not* taken and courses that are not followed due to what we call the 'scriptedness' of international interventions concerning issues of gender and sexuality.

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[1] Both authors have contributed equally to this article.

This article focuses specifically on the uses and meanings of gender and sexuality within development programs. It examines the visible and invisible work that these concepts do in the context of postcolonial states. As early as the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) conference in Cairo and the 1995 Beijing Summit were held, scholars have critically examined the successes of transnational feminism (e.g., Grewal & Kaplan, 1994; Ong, 1996, 2011; Spivak, 1995). Another wave of critique started in the early 2000s, focusing on processes of fast-growing NGO-isation and its negative effects on grassroots social movements, particularly concerning women's rights (e.g., Grewal, 2005; Jad, 2005). In the same vein, several scholars in critical/radical development studies (Baaz, 2005; Escobar, 2012; Ferguson, 1994; Kothari, 2005; K. Wilson, 2012) have argued that the political project of development is still shaped by some of the key colonial paradigms: Western sexual and gender norms are portrayed as universal, the West is seen as more developed and burdened with the task to help others and development is understood as a linear process towards desirable social change.

Simultaneously, scholars writing on the interface of development and feminist concerns have attempted to expand on these initial critiques of NGO-isation by considering the messiness and complexity of effects of NGO activism in the field of women's rights (e.g., Bernal & Grewal, 2014; de Jong, 2009; Lashaw, Vannier, & Sampson, 2017; Van Raemdonck, 2013). Some approach gender and development through the lens of body politics (Harcourt, 2009) and argue for thinking gender and sexuality issues in terms of human rights in a bid to advance sexual rights within an overall development goal of well-being (Cornwall, Corrêa, & Jolly, 2008). Indeed, the initial agreements of the Cairo and Beijing conferences continue to form important international leverage for activists globally who attempt to advance women's rights and Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR)[2]. The Nordic countries have been particularly active in integrating conceptions of gender and sexual equality and SRHR in their development policies (e.g., Cornwall et al., 2008, p. 1). Sweden, Norway, Denmark, and the Netherlands have started to promote 'the human rights of LGBTI(Q) in their core development strategies' (Klapeer, 2017, p. 42). Political scientist and gender studies scholar Christine M. Klapeer, among others, has warned us, however, for the 'implications' of such an LGBTIQ inclusive European political agenda. She demonstrates how these development strategies equally involve homo(trans)nationalist norms and a strengthening of the age-old belief of European sexual exceptionalism.

In this article, we aim to look at international development discourses on gender and sexuality related subjects, but focus on how such interventions play out in the Global South. We are interested in how gender and sexuality understandings operate within development projects and how they interact with local epistemologies. We agree with the necessity of a radical scrutiny of the colonial mindset and want to make a case for a critical anthropology of gender and sexuality that assesses how development projects aim to (re)shape subjectivities to fit certain expectations but often fail spectacularly. For this reason, we use the term 'scripts' to refer to the explicit goals of projects. The standardised discourse formulated in the transnational sphere can be understood as scripts that operate as blueprints for action: e.g., for gender mainstreaming, sexual education programs, Violence Against Women (VAW) initiatives, or for campaigns against practices such as FGC (Female Genital Cutting). The steps to follow and the content to be covered during activities and awareness-raising sessions are often broken down in clear-cut and easy steps, such as for example the setting up of women's crisis centres in Russia as part of the international campaign against VAW (Hemment, 2014).

An anthropological approach enables us to study scripts and what lies beyond. This means that we are more interested in examining the implicit underlying goals and detecting silences, missing elements, and paths-not-taken of projects during implementation. Through empirical case studies of campaigns against FGC in Egypt and sexual education in Bangladesh, this article engages with certain impediments brought by development scripts related to gender and sexuality issues. We illustrate how these scripts involve exclusionary mechanisms that lock out beneficiaries' participation as full subjects possessing valuable knowledge. Scripts tend to not take beneficiaries' own awareness and already existing creativity and coping strategies as starting points of the conversation but rather aim to correct those. They are pragmatically goal-oriented toward behavioural change and therefore leave little room for real conversation and dialogue between equal partners.

In the next two sections, we rely on our cases of anti-FGC campaigns in Egypt and sex education promotion in Bangladesh to demonstrate the disregard of beneficiaries' own knowledge and the dominance of a secular bias. Subsequently, we aspire to move beyond deconstructionist critique and find inspiration in decolonial feminist theorising to conceive new ways forward. Our understanding of critical anthropology endorses an ethical relationship with the Other through extensive investment in contextual embeddedness and openness towards categories emerging on the ground, while simultaneously resisting and questioning dominant analytical concepts and frameworks in the field of development.

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[2] As specified in the official conference report, SRHR refers to a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being, the ability to have a satisfying and safe sex life and the capability to reproduce and the freedom to decide if, when, and how often to do so (United Nations, 1995, p. 40).

Rather than a rejection of deconstructionist critique, we intend to further develop this critical approach towards new frameworks which would allow a persistent critique of development *and* the construction of more inclusive concepts simultaneously. This move beyond deconstruction, as we will discuss, includes a decolonial feminist call for hyper-reflexivity and replacing a sense of 'being responsible for' to 'being responsible to' (Kapoor, 2008; Spivak, 1988, 2004), feminist objectivity and situated knowledge (Haraway, 1988), and ontological justice (E. Wilson, 2017). Our understanding of 'a move beyond' is therefore not 'a move away', but an expansion and further development of deconstructionist critique. This further development is needed to both recognise the importance of development work and to envision its continuation, albeit in different ways. As aptly put by Spivak, the task is to "engage in a persistent critique of what one cannot not want" (1993, p. 284). Finally, we argue that a critical anthropology of gender and sexuality will allow analyses toward a more inclusive conversation in aid and development.

2. FGC and Gender: Disregarding Beneficiaries' Own Knowledge of Their Bodies and Sexuality

This section is based on ethnographic research of awareness-raising campaigns against FGC in Egypt,[3] conducted between September 2012 and September 2014 in Cairo and Luxor governorates.[4] FGC is a highly gendered cultural practice. It has historically been strongly tied to constructions of womanhood and femininity, particularly to the moral realm of appropriate female sexuality and other gendered social behaviours (Boddy, 1989; Fabos, 2001; Malmström, 2009). It is popularly understood by practicing communities that FGC curbs excessive female sexual desire and helps women fulfil proper gender roles. In Egypt, the century-old univocal understanding of FGC as a rite of passage for all girls has, over the last decades, been replaced by a more ambiguous understanding. This shift in meaning indicates that campaigning discourse has successfully been incorporated in particular medical and religious arguments.

Despite the deeply gendered nature of FGC practices, international campaigning initiatives reveal interesting paradoxes. In the international sphere, FGC is formulated as a violation of women's and children's rights, and as a form of violence against women. These articulations allow for not directly addressing the gender and sexuality norms in which FGC is locally embedded. The observed paradox is therefore that underlying male-centred hegemonic gender norms are reaffirmed during the implementation and vernacularisation of campaigns. This also means that women's present and existing knowledge of their bodies, sexuality, and gendered social norms are not taken as a departure point for a conversation about FGC but are rather set aside.

This case study looked into campaigning practices of local NGO's and consisted of participant observation of awareness-raising sessions, interviews with trainers and NGO workers, and informal conversations with beneficiaries. Contemporary campaigning in Egypt departs from international scripts while local development actors vernacularize them. Local trainers of awareness-raising sessions simultaneously adopt and subvert the international script to fit the context and to engage with the life worlds of attending women beneficiaries. The first striking observation is that during these sessions, trainers had successfully translated the international fight against FGC into a fight for marriage. Trainers argued that the consequences of FGC are harmful to women and located this harm within the context of the marital bond, the natural context of sexual relations. The harm that women may suffer, such as a lack of sexual enjoyment, becomes then part of a larger whole, the social institution of marriage. They presented the reasoning that if women cannot enjoy sex, the marital bond inevitably will suffer. In this manner, local trainers engaged with women's concern of maintaining a stable and positive marital bond in order to persuade them to abandon FGC practices, successfully drawing on contemporary understandings of marital crisis and concerns with high rates of divorce.

A second major argument presented in awareness-raising sessions is the understanding that FGC does not affect sexual desire but rather sexual enjoyment. Relying on medical knowledge, trainers stress that the organs responsible for sexual desire are not affected by FGC.

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[3] These initiatives depart from the international policies that have been developed since the United Nations Decade of Women (1975–1985) and the subsequent international agreements. The World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna of 1993 established women's rights as an inseparable part of human rights. In December 1993, the Convention on the Elimination of Violence Against Women in New York was signed in New York, declaring FGC as a form of violence against women. The movement for the recognition of Sexual and Reproductive Rights (ICPD, Cairo 1993), the recognition of women's rights as human rights and activism against violence against women, are celebrated by activists as the most important achievements of transnational feminism.

The terminology used to describe FGC is often contested and can be described by various terms in Arabic or in English. Some terms emphasise the harm done by the practice (FGM) while others refer more to the cultural and traditional *rite de passage* element of which it was initially part (*khitan*), while other terms also carry religious references such as *tahara*, literally purification.

In Egypt, performing FGC has also been tightly connected to understandings of womanhood that are constructed around notions of bearing pain and bodily suffering (Malmström, 2009). After twenty years of state and NGO interventions, conventional reasoning for performing FGC has developed. Today, a popular discourse is that FGC is not always a requirement. It is considered needed when female genitalia are deemed to be in need of adjustment by medical professionals (Van Raemdonck, 2016).

[4] The discussion in this section is based on the PhD research project funded by the Research Foundation—Flanders (FWO) that investigated contemporary discourses and perceptions of FGC across the secular-religious divide (Van Raemdonck, 2016).

The brain is still able to produce sexual desire, but the genitals are harmed in their ability to fulfil it. The message that trainers deliver is then that FGC does not control women's sexual behaviour and therefore should be dropped easily. Instead, women are told that proper female, modest behaviour can only be instilled through values, education, and upbringing. Here, trainers successfully transformed the external bodily practice that was meant to ensure proper sexual and gendered behaviour into an internal disciplinary practice of sexual morality.

These ethnographic findings reveal the consequences of international scripts. The script presents the goal and the arguments for abandoning FGC and is pragmatically goal-oriented toward behavioural change. Trainers follow the goals of the script while subverting it in their translations of arguments. In the vernacularised campaigns of this study, the departure point remains hegemonic gender and sexuality norms that are dominated by male concerns. Women appear as victims of the practice (as not being able to fully enjoy sex) while at the same time being held responsible for keeping their marriages healthy and their families united (the threat of divorce due to unsatisfying sexual relations for the husband). We could state that the international script has indeed been translated into local ones that also found their ways into social and cultural discourse and play out in concrete everyday life.

The nature of both of these discursive travels is characterised by a one-directional transmission of knowledge from campaigners endowed with authority to beneficiaries/receivers. This approach is missing an open and inclusive dialogue that recognises women's own knowledge, coping strategies, and lived realities and departs from there. The dominance of scripts leaves little space for a real, creative engagement with these topics, which means that the potential of an active engagement with women's perspectives and understandings of gendered norms remains unexplored. The potential conversation that departs from these women's lived accounts rather than from hegemonic social discourse remains unexploited, leaving important questions therefore excluded and unexplored. A discussion that departs from women's own lived sexuality could, for example, include the diverse sexual experiences of cut women, their existing coping strategies, and approaches to enhance marital understanding and sexual enjoyment. It would reveal that not all cut women feel a victim of the practice but have managed to move beyond it and do not want to be perceived as victims.

We can conclude that what we called the scriptedness of international interventions reveals important shortcomings. It fails to address women beneficiaries as fully human subjects who already possess valuable knowledge of their own bodies and sexuality. Having undergone FGC seems to disqualify them from such recognition. It fails to address them as subjects who are able to reflect on their own gendered and sexual behaviour and to identify the underlying gendered rationales of FGC. There is a disregard for the active agentic role of women in living their sexuality and gendered relationships. Campaigning would benefit from approaching these women as full subjects who can actively and consciously discuss or make decisions about their sexuality rather than as passive recipients of new knowledge. In many ways, these are missed opportunities for inclusive dialogue and exchange, a goal shared by feminist pedagogies based on radical egalitarianism (Mukhopadhyay & Wong, 2007) as well as global justice actors more generally.

3. Sexular Education: The Dominance of Secularism in SRHR Development in Bangladesh

In this section, we will continue using a critical anthropological approach to reflect on a three-year research project called 'Breaking the Shame: Towards Improving Adolescent SRHR Education in Bangladesh' (2015–2018).[5] Our goal is to unpack how 'sexuality' is put into practice in the field of adolescent SRHR education in Bangladesh to argue that these practices are inherently linked to a secular exclusionary mechanism. Secularism and secularity are rarely discussed in the context of sexuality and development, as 'SRHR' is rendered a universal, natural, ahistorical, trans-spatial and thus an unquestionable framework and goal. This silence, however, ignores historical specificity and normativity of 'SRHR' as a script, and the possibility of alternative epistemologies and ontologies. Furthermore, it reinforces the coloniality of sexuality through a universalisation of the secular and the particularisation of the non-secular.

Halfway through the Breaking the Shame project, as a team of researchers, we organised a workshop in Dhaka for a diverse group of Bangladeshi youth. At the end of part of the workshop, a well-experienced trainer from our team provided answers to some of the young participants' burning questions raised during the day. Discussing 'sexual diversity', the trainer wrote the acronym LGBTQI on a whiteboard and started explaining what each letter referred to. After the letter G, a young man who had been one of the more silent participants raised his hand, stood up, and asked: 'But this is not allowed by Islam. It's considered haram.' A girl sitting next to him immediately stood up and said in a loud and clear voice: 'That doesn't matter. It's a personal choice. Individuals have the right to choose the way they want to live their life.' The trainer took a few seconds, mentioned that in his training he was only interested in 'fact-based information' and went on with the letter B. This example shows how religion becomes opposed to individual rights and so-called factual or scientific information. The silence of the trainer as a figure of authority implies his agreement with the girl and/or his reluctance to engage with 'the religion question'. The continuation of the training without discussing the boy's concern, furthermore, suggests a dismissal of religion as a legitimate source of knowledge in an SRHR training setting.

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[5] This project is funded by the Dutch NWO WOTRO Science for Global Development made possible by and based on the policy of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Four organisations collaborate on the research project, namely Radboud University Nijmegen from the Netherlands, James P. Grant School of Public Health of the BRAC University from Bangladesh, and United for Body Rights (UBR) and Adolescent Development Program (ADP) of BRAC as two leading NGOs working on SRHR in Bangladesh. The main goal of the project is to assess needs and gaps in existing SRHR education according to urban and rural adolescents as well as teachers and other important stakeholders and to develop, implement, and test improved SRHR education tools.

The importance of 'fact-based' information is emphasised by various trainers and NGO representatives in Bangladesh (Roodsaz, 2018, p. 117), which corresponds with the guideline of the Dutch organisation Rutgers[6] as an important provider of sex education curricula to Bangladesh and beyond. While 'religious and traditional beliefs' are seen as either entailing 'myths and misconceptions' or too complicated and sensitive, 'fact-based' sex education is assumed to be scientifically oriented and indisputable. Sexuality education is scripted as both authoritative and free of ideology, ready to be transferred to those who lack this knowledge and are living in misconceptions. However, due to their implications in historically specific socio-cultural and political systems, sexuality education programmes are inevitably normative (Lamb, 2010; Lesko, 2010; Rasmussen, 2010, 2012) and promote particular modes of subjectivity and agency (Roodsaz, 2018). Nevertheless, religion is either not mentioned at all or merely referred to as a potential obstacle or a dangerous territory. In one of our closed meetings, a colleague expressed his worries about providing youth with a link to 'such sensitive information that is incompatible with our religious beliefs', by which he meant homosexuality. Considering, on the one hand, the issue of sensitivity, and, on the other hand, the provocative goal of the project to 'break the shame', we decided to use Dutch-based websites in order to avoid potential local backlash, without actually engaging with 'the religion question'.

This lack of engagement with religion and religiosity seems to be a common practice among different organisations working on SRHR in Bangladesh. The latter became particularly clear during the 'Gender and Sexual and Reproductive Health Conference 2018 for Young Adults' in Dhaka. In one of the Q&A slots, a young man wanted to know how the panel consisting of Bangladeshi academic researchers approached religion in their research projects on SRHR. The replies revealed an uneasy relationship with the topic of religion: 'That wasn't part of our project. We didn't ask about people's religious beliefs.' 'Of course, religion is an important topic in our country, but our approach is based on universal human rights.' In one of the opening speeches, a representative of the Dutch embassy, as one of the main promoters and facilitator of SRHR programs in Bangladesh, emphasised the human rights approach to sexuality as part of the Dutch policy: 'In the Netherlands, we believe sex education is a human right.' As a script, SRHR education privatises religion and assumes a secular space in which human rights are promoted. This exclusion of religion from SRHR discussions and its implicit dismissal as incompatible with universal human rights conveys a secular bias in the field of SRHR development in Bangladesh.

This secular bias is problematic for various reasons. First, it implies a self-evident link between secularism and emancipation, an assumption, for instance, problematised by Joan Scott in her influential work on 'sexularism' (Scott, 2009). Correspondingly, Nancy Lesko (2010) has argued how in presumably oppositional progressive (such as comprehensive sex education) and religion-based (such as abstinence-only sex education) programmes, in fact, the same ideals of feeling secure, free, and happy, as well as clarity, effectiveness, and stability are promoted. While Scott troubles the necessarily emancipatory quality ascribed to secularism, Lesko problematises the binary oppositions attributed to religious and secular sex education models in terms of values and ideals. Secondly, through references to 'myths and misconceptions,' the secular bias disregards religious subjectivity and agency as false consciousness. This excludes non-secular modes of agency and subjectivity beyond autonomy and individuality that are shaped by frameworks of tradition, religion, and community (Avishai, 2008; Bracke, 2008; Mahmood, 2001). Thirdly, the secular bias avoids the difficult question of how to deal with competing worldviews and ontologies. Discussing the reluctance to use the concept of religion in sex education development discussions in Bangladesh, a colleague stated: 'No researcher or practitioner dares to use the word religion. The moment you do that, you will be positioned in the conservative camp.' The field of development and religion are apparently conceived of as mutually exclusive. The so-called 'neutral' language of sex education in this field, implicitly and sometimes strategically, serves to distract those involved from engaging in a complicated, yet necessary dialogue with those positioned outside the 'secular camp'.

However, such critical accounts of the secular bias should not lead to romanticising religion by locating it outside power and ideology and presenting it as authentic and homogenous (Haraway, 1988; Spivak, 1988). The religious standpoint, rather than being unitary, can be expected to be multiple, encompassing conservative as well as progressive views. Moreover, such views might be implicated in power relations along the lines of gender, class, race, and ethnicity. As such, they are not immune to critique, 'they are not innocent positions' (Haraway, 1988, p. 584). Furthermore, to represent those religious concerns as voiced in the field, which we have been doing in this section, is itself not a neutral act: given our specific academic institutional positionality and our background in feminist, decolonial, queer, and post-secular studies we get to 'edit' those stories (by choice, by default) while constructing an argument. As authors and researchers, we are as much complicit in the constructions of knowledge about sexuality in Bangladesh as any other actor involved, albeit the level of complicity might differ among the actors. Our claim, rather than providing an immediate, adequate, and objective account of the field of SRHR development in Bangladesh by pointing at a secular bias, is to consider a shared conversation in which underlying power relations are recognised and religion and religious concerns can be taken seriously.

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[6] https://www.rutgers.nl

4. Unpacking Scripted Gender and Sexuality Discourses

In the previous two sections, we employed a critical anthropological perspective to illustrate the scriptedness of sexuality and gender discourses as we encountered them in the fields of FGC-prevention and SRHR promotion in Egypt and Bangladesh, respectively. While the international anti-FGC and sex education programmes imply neutrality and universality of rights and health, we showed how in practice such efforts convey exclusionary mechanisms by neglecting and silencing competing perspectives and accounts. In the case of FGC-prevention in Egypt, women's own knowledge of their bodies and sexuality is disregarded due to an international and vernacularised scripted discourse that focuses on transmitting 'proper knowledge'. In the context of sex education in Bangladesh, we argued, a secular bias informs the dismissal of non-secular ontologies as opposed to a fact-based rights-oriented framework. We argued that both a politics of knowledge and a politics of being work together in these interventions, revealing their colonial heritage (Savransky, 2017). Together, our analyses point to the importance of a critical engagement with gender and sexuality programs as scripted interventions in development to enable a more inclusive conversation, a goal that we share with many actors involved in development. In the next section, we will engage with feminist decolonial accounts of (the possibility of) such an endeavour.

5. Feminist Decolonial Accounts of a Move beyond Deconstruction

As a way to move beyond colonial as well as problematic native representations of the 'Third World' as merely 'speaking for' or 'speaking about', Ilan Kapoor (2004) engages with the work of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak on the 'subaltern'. Kapoor particularly draws inspiration from Spivak's call for hyper-reflexivity among those complicit in the development, either as (academic) researchers or practitioners. He reminds us of how even attempts at 'valorising local knowledge' to 'empower' the subaltern to determine much of the development agenda, may risk reinforcing a mainstream liberal approach that assumes autonomy and speakability. Even good intentions might thus, yet again, result in silencing the subaltern (Spivak, 1988). This leads both authors to conclude that we need to move beyond yet remain in deconstruction. This ongoing critical approach, as Kapoor outlines, should encompass several components and qualities: tempering and contextualising claims; opening up possibilities for 'unlearning' of prejudices and habits by tracing them through history; allowing for a reconsideration of 'the problem' that we desperately want to solve as well as a reconsideration of dominant concepts such as 'democracy' and 'participation'; preparing ourselves for an 'unexpected response' such as the possibility of the irretrievable heterogeneity or non-speakingness of the subaltern and a reversal of information and knowledge production. As the basis of this hyper-reflexivity, Kapoor and Spivak suggest establishing an ethical relationship with the subaltern, which would enable us to 'respond to the appeal of the Other'. Through an intimate and a dialogical engagement with the Other, we might be able to replace a sense of 'being responsible for' to a sense of 'being responsible to'.

Although not focused on the field of development, Donna Haraway (1988)'s work on 'situated knowledge' provides important insights for a process of decolonisation beyond and within deconstruction. Addressing feminist scholarship, Haraway engages with 'feminist objectivity' as a situated account of all knowledge claims as historically contingent and a 'no-nonsense commitment' (1988, p. 579) to understand the 'real' world. Rejecting the universal 'conquering gaze', Haraway suggests constructing a usable, yet not innocent, feminist objectivity. By acknowledging and exploring the particularity and embodiment of one's necessarily partial perspective, she postulates, objective vision becomes possible. While she underscores the importance of learning how to see from another point of view, she also warns against romanticising the vision of the less powerful. The position of the less powerful, she explains, is 'not exempt from critical re-examination, decoding, deconstruction, and interpretation' (Haraway, 1988, p. 584). At the same time, Haraway (1988) continues, we need to come to terms with the agency of the 'objects' studied by resisting the politics of closure and finality. This approach requires a paradoxical mode of 'passionate detachment' as a simultaneous investment in seeking new unpredictable perspectives *and* the contestation of those perspectives. The possibility of a web of connections, solidarity, and conversation only becomes available, Haraway claims, when a joining of partial views, 'views from somewhere' (1988, p. 590), can take place. The goal is not to collect multiple voices, but to provide grounds for a power-sensitive conversation.

As a contribution to this discussion on the (im)possibility of a conversation in development, Erin Wilson (2017) argues for including 'ontological injustice' in our critical analyses, which engages with 'views of alternative worlds' (2017, p. 1077). Ontological injustice, Wilson explains, regards the possibility of other worlds rather than alternative views of the same world. This form of injustice, she argues, has received limited attention in the field of development (compared to material and epistemological injustices), yet is necessary to engage with in order to allow for more inclusive conversations and interactions across ontologies. Moreover, according to Wilson interrogating ontological injustices problematises the mere focus on 'translation', as translation 'can only be done through the imposition of categories and frames from one ontology to another' (2017, p. 1088). Instead, using insights from 'the ontological turn' in cultural anthropology, Wilson suggests to critically investigate dominant ontologies in development settings. The examples we have provided in sections two and three illustrate such an investigation, which we call 'critical anthropology'. Following these critical examinations, Wilson proposes cross-ontological communication and dialogue, which require new and shared categories to emerge in practice on the ground. As part of this anthropological commitment to contextual embeddedness, the necessity of multilingualism among theorists and practitioners could be considered, a proposition also made by Spivak (Spivak, 2004).

Combined, these suggestions for moving beyond deconstruction imply a fundamentally *ethical* engagement. This engagement is understood as an intensive and intimate endeavour that is simultaneously *politically sensitive*, as it is concerned with positionality and the situatedness of knowledge, regardless of whether this knowledge is produced by 'experts' or 'local' actors. While it aims for solidarity and an inclusive conversation, this ethical engagement promotes a *critical commitment* through resisting homogeneity, closure, and universalism, which requires an open attitude and an active search for alternative ontologies, not because we expect them to be better, but because they are needed to organise a more inclusive conversation.

6. Conclusions

In this article, we engaged with colonial continuities of gender and sexuality in international development interventions. International development and European national development programs aim to engage more and more with gender and sexual equality values. Especially Nordic countries have been prominent actors in incorporating LGBTIQ-inclusive measures in their development policies. We started with pointing at how such interventions, despite their best intentions, often reinforce civilisational West-versus-non-West dichotomies, while serving neoliberal agendas through depoliticisation and universalisation of the categories of gender and sexuality. In the two empirical middle sections, we provided an analysis of anti-FGC campaigns in Egypt and sex education programs in Bangladesh as two examples of development-oriented efforts to improve women's and young people's rights. We employed a critical anthropological perspective to point out that despite being presented as universal and neutral, such interventions are highly scripted in terms of both methodology and content. The interventions' methods are based on the unilateral transmission of knowledge or 'awareness', rather than a two-way interactionist open and inclusive dialogue. The programs' content disregards existing and competing knowledge and ontologies. These scripted features consequently contain exclusionary mechanisms such as silencing beneficiaries' own accounts of embodied knowledge and imposing a secular discourse.

Feminist decolonial accounts on the need to move beyond still remain in deconstruction, we outlined, provide valuable insights and tools to facilitate a more inclusive conversation through an ethical engagement with the Other. This will remain an ongoing process that should resist the desire for closure and finality, for which, we argued, critical anthropology forms a promising framework. However, this search for ontological justice could be challenging as not all actors in development projects might agree upon its terms of non-universality and non-closure. As discussed in the section about a secular bias in the SRHR field in Bangladesh, religious concerns can be as much an expression of genuine spirituality as they may be of worldly power, including dogmatism, extremism, and exploitation. This sheds light on the importance of a persistent critical approach while pursuing ontological justice. Engaging with this challenge remains an ongoing discussion among scholars within decolonial studies, as, for instance, can be found in the work of Collins (2017) on transversal politics, flexible solidarity, and coalition building.

Due to its commitment to understanding alternative ontologies, critical anthropology requires extensive investment in contextual embeddedness and openness towards categories emerging on the ground. Moreover, because of the emphasis on the unique relationship between the researcher and the interlocutor, critical anthropology allows for a situated and embodied understanding of this relationship. Such a critical anthropological account has the potential to endorse an ethical relationship with the Other by being responsive to its appeal while avoiding its romanticised and paternalistic representations.

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Conflict of Interests

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Article

Gender and Struggles for Equality in Mining Resistance Movements: Performing Critique against Neoliberal Capitalism in Sweden and Greece

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Abstract
This article explores the intersections of gender and centre–periphery relations and calls for theoretical and political involvement in gendered struggles against colonial and capitalist forces across different national contexts. The article raises questions about the possibility of resisting inequality and exploitation arising from capitalist expansion and extraction of natural resources in Sweden and Greece, outside of urban contexts. It does so by highlighting women's role in protest movements in peripheral places and questioning power relations between centre and periphery. The article also argues that making visible women's struggles and contributions to protest movements brings about vital knowledge for realizing democratic worlds that do not thrive on the destruction of natural resources and the institutionalization of inequalities.

Keywords
activism; capitalism; extractivism; gender; Greece; mining; neoliberalism; protest; Sweden; women

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1. Introduction

In the European context, gender equality is now often framed in the language of neoliberal competition between nation states about occupying a higher rank in the Gender Equality Index (Sjöstedt Landén & Olofsdotter, 2016; Verloo & van der Vleuten, 2009). In this discourse of gender equality, centre–periphery relations, within or between national contexts, are rarely discussed. In the EU Gender Equality Index for instance, Sweden is ranked top and Greece is at the bottom (European Institute for Gender Equality, 2015). Nevertheless, Sweden's high-ranking obscures inequalities between regions and different populations, particularly concerning women in the North, and in Greece experiencing the greatest recorded peacetime economic depression (Coppola, 2018), who are the focus of this study. This article explores the intersections of gender and peripherality and calls for theoretical and political involvement in gendered struggles against (neo)colonial and neoliberal capitalist forces from a transnational perspective, which, as we argue, apply equally in both countries. The aim of this article is to examine the ways in which women struggle against extractivism and mining, and how they go about making these struggles visible. The article raises questions about the possibility of resisting the inequality and exploitation arising from capitalist expansion and extraction of natural resources at the peripheries beyond urban contexts, of an egalitarian Northern European country (Sweden) and of the Eurozone country under a draconian austerity regime (Greece). We argue that a transnational perspective reveals the need for feminist solidarity between peripheries across national borders, despite the circulation of gender equality "success" stories. The study demonstrates that neoliberal extractivist expansion is trampling on gender rights in both Sweden and Greece. Our task as feminist intersectional researchers is to uncover how the gender equality discourse may become instrumental to capitalist accumulation, including the "devastation of natural resources", "exploitation of human and non-human life" and reifications of "desirable and undesirable people" (de los Reyes, 2016, p. 40).

Two issues lie at the centre of the analysis, namely the need to account for women's contributions to anti-mining struggles, and women's capitalist critique through protest movements. Specifically, we focus on our observations of the expanding extraction and exploitation of natural resources (Haikola & Anshelm, 2017) in both Sweden and Greece. This recent "mining boom" is widespread and global and yet it depends on the economic and political context in which it takes place; equally, women's opposition to these developments comprises distinctive local characteristics. Research indicates that women are directly affected by the material reality of natural resource extraction and are often the first to realize what is happening when companies arrive to establish or re-open mines (for a review, see Jenkins, 2014). This is because extraction and mining—as well as neoliberal states—are gendered regimes (Jenkins & Rondón, 2015; Stienstra, 2015). Various forms of resistance are performed by women against extractivist forces that organize political, socio-economic and cultural relations, including the use of gender relations to profit multinational mining companies (see Conde, 2017); yet such initiatives, we argue, do not necessarily build on mass protest and assembly, although they may certainly lead to such action.

The article examines parallels in women's resistance through activist movements emerging in response to the destructive consequences of extractive mining in their communities. In sharing examples from our previous work on women's struggles against mining in both countries, we aim to promote initiatives that counteract the invisibility of women and their struggles against neoliberalism in areas that are deemed marginal in both Sweden and Greece, thereby challenging the mainstream gender equality discourse at national and EU levels. In drawing attention to the role of women's struggles in peripheries, we also spearhead the critique against (neo)extractivism as a form of neoliberal capitalism and its various ways of institutionalizing inequalities.

2. Gender, Activism and Critique of Neoliberal Capitalism

In a recent review article on changes in protest movements against mining, Martha Conde (2017) observes that the role of violence in mining conflicts is understudied, as is the role of gender in counteracting mining expansion. As gender scholars, we also know that gender and violence are inextricably linked in many and varied ways in society. Yet women's role in protest movements and their willingness to engage in anti-mining resistance is relatively unexplored, even though women and indigenous women specifically, often play a crucial part in protest movements (Giacomini, 2015; Jenkins & Rondón, 2015; Nabulivou, 2006). While women's work is sometimes conducted behind the scenes, scholars have called for recognition of women's increasing agency and their capacity for self-organization in addressing mining-related concerns (Lahiri-Dutt, 2012). The study addresses this gap by making visible the issue of women's (in)visibility, which is not only key to gender equality, but is also important for understanding different forms of resistance to extractivist mining specifically. In doing so we take an inspiration from Judith Butler's (2015) work on precarious bodies suffering from neoliberal dispossession and the ways they enact their capacity to resist it by making their concerns public as they gather in the same space to make themselves visible. Butler draws on examples from recent protest movements conducted in city squares and public parks to construct her notion of a performative role of assembly. Demands for equality are thereby linked with the appearance of plural bodies in the same space: "If we appear, we must be seen, which means that our bodies must be viewed and their vocalized sounds must be heard: the body must enter the visual and audible field" (Butler, 2015, p. 86). However, mining activities are usually conducted in rural areas. Populations are dispersed and communities become fragmented by mining initiatives, while companies are often keen to place mines in sites where local populations are considered to be unimportant: for the disruption and destruction of their livelihoods does not appear to carry a significant political cost. These, for instance, may include indigenous populations who are not "meant to" exist on their own terms. Often, such struggles are made invisible by marginalizing the concerns of these populations, and specifically women, in societies that are otherwise understood to be highly egalitarian (Horowitz, 2017; Willow, 2016). This suggests that social institutions in such societies continue to be organized on an unequal basis, and that awareness of this inequality can be hidden if relegated to spaces that are considered to be "dumping grounds" (Lawson, Jarosz, & Bonds, 2010), "invisible" (Licona & Maldonado, 2014), or "no man's lands" (Lawrence & Åhrén, 2017, p. 150). Mining companies often contribute to invisibilizing these spaces as they create a new kind of enclosure for locals, turning commons into privately-owned gated spaces (Sassen, 2013). The transformation of public goods into private consumerist commodities is a central feature of neoliberalism (see e.g., Fotaki, 2017, for a discussion of public health examples). But not seeing and acting as if there were no people or culture in a space is at the heart of colonialist power and its alignment with capitalism (Harris, 2004). Research on the politics and experiences of indigenous protests, for example from Latin America, shows how indigenous peoples and women are lead protagonists in the struggle against neoliberalism (Rice, 2012, p. 3). Moreover, protests on the grounds of indigeneity bring to the fore ways of demarcating "the people" who may not necessarily strive for inclusion in terms of nation-state categories. In this article, we focus on examples from Sweden and Greece to demonstrate how protests against extractions occur in spaces that can be categorized as "hidden" from the (urban) public eye. Specifically, we examine women's role in initiating protests against extractivist mining, which are often conducted in remote locations.

The first contribution our study makes is to account for women's involvement in the anti-mining struggle and women's anti-capitalist critique through protest movements. The second, and related, contribution is to apply gender analysis as a means for counteracting capital expansion, and the dispossession and fragmentation of communities it brings about. Third, our focus on marginalized populations and spaces speaks to a broader critique of the centre/periphery binary, which divides populations on the basis of locations and their interaction with neoliberal logics. In bringing women's struggles to the forefront, feminist analysis opposes the process companies and states employ to render these places and populations inhabiting them invisible. The academic studies are often limited to the concerns of "the centres" but studying developments in peripheral economies and communities opposed to capitalist interests deserves more research attention. Much of the social movement literature's focus on the urban mass protests may (involuntarily) contribute to the ongoing construction of centres and peripheries that enables colonialism, capitalism and patriarchy to reproduce and thrive. Feminist ontology is well positioned to break with narratives emphasizing the need to stimulate the competitiveness of centres "in a global bidding war for footloose businesses" (Hermansson, 2013, p. 3). Overall, the article contributes to a feminist literature on protest movements by bringing in a perspective of the rural periphery to extend the body of research claiming that "across the globe resistance is played out by bodies that occupy pavements, streets and squares" (see e.g., Lilja, 2017, p. 342, with reference to Butler, 2015). The occupied spaces can also be located in sparsely populated areas, for example, in forests, gravel roads, hills and mountains. Such different modes of performativity of assembly, we suggest, opens up possibilities for often-silenced critiques of capitalism and patriarchy that cut across gender, ethnicity, sexuality and class (Horowitz, 2017; Pini & Mayes, 2013).

3. Extractivism in Sweden and Greece

The concept of extractivism is strongly connected with colonization and modern capitalism, and is thus also deeply linked to the dichotomized power relations of centre/periphery. This "extractivist mode of accumulation…has been determined ever since by the demands of the metropolitan centres of nascent capitalism" (Acosta, 2013, p. 62), although more recently, consideration of social "sustainability" and "equality" is often included in states' public policy, nevertheless, lending support to neo-extractivist agendas (Acosta, 2013, pp. 71ff.). It is commonly believed that Sweden has no colonial history. Yet since the post-WWII era, the Swedish state has been the sole owner of mining companies in Sweden, established largely through the colonization of Sami land (Lawrence & Åhrén, 2017). Such "colonial complicity" (Keskinen, Tuori, Irni, & Mulinari, 2009) is part of the hegemonic discourse of Sweden, which is simultaneously a country where support for human rights and gender equality ideals are a reality (Martinsson, Griffin, & Giritli Nygren, 2016). The current goal of public policy is to make Sweden an attractive country for mining industries in the global market. This is being achieved partly by charging relatively low fees for extracting minerals from Swedish grounds (Tillväxtanalys, 2016). Sweden has not been affected by the recent global financial crisis and its economy is growing. This is largely attributed to the neoliberal reforms centred on cutting costs and privatizing public services introduced by the consecutive conservative and social democratic governments in the last two decades (Hammerschmid, Van de Walle, Andrews, & Bezes, 2016). By comparison, Greece is the weakest Eurozone member that was severely affected by the 2010 Eurozone crisis with women bearing the brunt of the cost of the financial crisis including high unemployment and the retrenchment of public services (Daskalaki & Simosi, 2018; Fawcett Society, 2012). Historically, it scored low on gender equality and is still at the bottom of the European gender ranking. The ensuing neoliberal austerity (Charitsis & Velegrakis, 2013) and the rapid decrease of foreign investment in a heavily-indebted country led to governments' endorsing the "low cost", but highly environmentally-damaging, open-pit gold mining in Northern Greece. The expectation was that this would help resolve the country's indebtedness while addressing the issue of high unemployment. In short, while Greece was struck very badly in the aftermath of the global financial crisis and was being made a scapegoat for problems inherent in the Eurozone design, Sweden was largely unaffected; yet both countries are striving to attract mining companies from countries such as Canada, Great Britain and Australia. And while the purpose of attracting investment is different in each case, the logic of neo-extractivism is similar. In both cases, there is opposition to planned and ongoing mining activities by movements opposing to what they perceive as transnational acts of colonization and exploitation altering people's living environments and threatening their (cultural and material) existence. Hence, extractivism and exploitation can be understood as an ongoing crisis from the perspective of mining resistance movements (Stienstra, 2015). Moreover, in both countries, resistance is also directed against the state's implementation of neoliberal policies that hit hard the rural regions that are deemed peripheral.

3.1. Mining and Neoliberal Policy in Sweden

Sweden is currently ranked as one of the world's most attractive countries for mining investment (Tillväxtanalys, 2016, p. 11). The low cost of mining has led to the country being described as an Eldorado for global mining investors in recent years (Müller, 2013; Tidholm, 2012). Animated public debate has ensued on whether intensive resource exploitation should continue, given the conflicting interests involved (Haikola & Anshelm, 2016). For instance, estimates of the number of jobs that might be created by establishing new mines have been increasingly questioned (e.g., Haikola & Anshelm, 2017; Henriksson, Juhlin, & Pistol, 2015; Müller, 2015), and contrasted with the jobs that the mines might destroy. Examples have been presented of mining projects creating huge costs for municipalities with declining revenues from taxation, along with instances of tensions in the local economy, and severe environmental pollution (Müller, 2015). Moreover, locating the new mines in sparsely-populated regions in Northern Sweden, in inland areas fitting Lawson et al.'s (2010, p. 664) definition of "dumping grounds", suggests that mining is part of Swedish colonial history. As a result, "the rural regions become weak players in new rounds of corporate consolidation", including a "race to the bottom" in a chase for new investments (Lawson et al., 2010, p. 664).

The North of Sweden, where historical Sápmi[1] lands are located, have consistently been treated as an internal colony with an "infinite depot of raw materials" (Lawrence & Åhrén, 2017, p. 157). Since the 1600s, industrialization and colonialism have gone hand in hand through regulating and the subsequent commodification of space and people (Nordin, 2015). There are only a few urban centres in this part of the country, with long distances between communities. Forestry, tourism, reindeer herding, fishing, hunting and berry picking are core economic activities. Different types of colonial practices and categories of internal colonialism, especially in relation to indigenous people, can be traced back to the processes of exploration and exploitation of new mines. The government's current mineral strategy (Näringsdepartementet, 2013, p. 26) states, among other things, that: "the government is taking action aimed at promoting a living Sami culture based on ecologically sustainable wastewater treatment, as well as strengthening the ability of Sami to influence these decisions". It also states that the Sami are recognized as Sweden's only indigenous people. However, Haikola and Anshelm's (2016, p. 512) analysis of the Swedish government's mineral strategy shows that the opposite is true, since its previous colonial practices have been intensified under this strategy. For instance, Haikola and Anshelm (2017) identify a marked shift toward a neoliberal mineral policy since 2013. In this context, Sami organizations report a new kind of aggressiveness in authorities' actions that are directed against their community. Their criticism of the government's mineral strategy centres on making visible the concrete ways in which life in places where the new mines are planned and where they have already opened is negatively affected (Haikola & Anshelm, 2016, p. 512). These criticisms emphasize the short- and long-term social, economic and environmental impacts of mining on the Sami communities. Their aim is to open up debate on how mining might bring benefits and prosperity for local (Sami and non-Sami) populations and the environment at large. A number of important issues have been raised following these critical approaches, such as the impact of prospective job losses on communities when mines close and the long-term environmental and social problems that they leave behind such as diminished Sami rights, that could make communities even more vulnerable to future exploitation by new mines (Haikola & Anshelm, 2016, p. 513). This is symptomatic of a neo-extractivist stance, whereby countries with progressive governments may be aware of some of the ills of extractivism without genuinely seeking to overcome their reliance on this mode of accumulation beyond the level of discourses and plans (Acosta, 2013, p. 72).

More importantly for women's rights and resistance, incorporation of indigenous societies into the capitalist economy has historically "been highly gendered and has had many gender-specific consequences" (Kuokkanen, 2009, p. 503). For instance, it has resulted in the loss of Sami women's status, including their distinctive way of life and their specific role in securing the livelihood of their communities, while making the policies regulating it invisible. Women have opposed these developments by participating in many movements protesting the establishment of new mines all over Sweden. Here, we bring examples from an ethnographic research project highlighting three cases of resistance movements in the most sparsely populated Northern parts of Sweden. None of these was constructed as a women's movement, but women took active positions and were central to initiating and sustaining these protests. Two of these cases investigate mobilizations of Sami communities (Sjöstedt Landén, 2014, 2017a), while the third examines their role in agricultural and land-owning disputes (Sjöstedt Landén, 2017b). While women's participation in protests is typically linked with various other struggles, such as opposition to nuclear power and battles for ratification of the ILO 169 Convention (Sjöstedt Landén, 2017a), the examples of Swedish protest movements that are outlined next, all concern resistance to the prospect of establishing new mines (Sjöstedt Landén, 2017a).

During the summer of 2013, a protest camp was set up at the Gállok/Kallak exploration area in woods outside Jokkmokk, where both locals and protesters from other parts of Sweden and elsewhere tried to stop Beowulf

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[1] Sápmi is the name of the land of the Sami and covers roughly the northernmost parts of Norway, Sweden, Finland and the Kola Peninsula in the Russian Federation. The Sami are the indigenous people of northern Fennoscandia, as defined, for example, in International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention 169, which has not been ratified by Sweden (see e.g., Nordin, 2015, p. 251).

Mining's exploration for iron ore. The events in the municipality of Jokkmokk eventually attracted national and international interest (Lundberg Tuorda, 2014; Sjöstedt Landén, 2014). Several female and feminist artists and musicians were at the forefront of mobilization against the mine (see e.g., Sandström, 2017). Publicity the protest movements opposing such developments gain is crucial to how problems are defined and struggles initiated and sustained. Marie Persson and May-Britt Öhman (2014) describe the magnitude of devastation that development of a nickel mine would cause to the local community of Rönnbäcken in Björkvattsadalen in the municipality of Storuman. A mine would affect a huge area including urban centres, as a result of polluted water and the risk of dam rupture. They raise awareness of everyday life and share pictures of children picking berries and doing other activities: "Our life with nature—fishing, hunting, handicraft—we cannot live here if land and water are destroyed" (Persson & Öhman, 2014, p. 107). Struggles for land and water should therefore be seen as a cultural struggle for people to have the opportunity to define their lives (Escobar, 2001, p. 162).

Activists in Sweden also point to the difficulty of taking frontline positions in resistance movements in small places because, at a local level, they may become "too visible" and vulnerable to violence because of their engagement (e.g. Sjöstedt Landén, 2014). Openings of new mines are connected with threats of violence and violations to women's lives in various ways, particularly for those engaged in anti-mining activities. One female activist who led a protest in a Swedish village advertised to prospecting companies looking for uranium in the Oviken area in the municipality of Berg told a story of how she found a sign by the road to her house saying: "there is too much pussy here". The activists' hand-painted signs against the mining project had been taken down and instead there were a lot of signs saying, "yes to jobs" and "yes to the mine". The village schoolchildren tore down those signs, but finally, the antagonist "made a sign that was based on a giant iron plate that he welded to the wall. It was also 'yes to mining', 'yes to jobs'" (see also Sjöstedt Landén, 2017b, p. 175). The woman telling this story ended by noting that at that time she had been fearful of being followed, or of someone coming up to her house at night. These are some short examples of how protests become embodied in a way that is connected to materiality and topography that is different from streets and squares. Woods, lakes and streams, mountains, and village roads make out the material conditions that define life, livelihood, and social relations and cannot only be understood as temporarily occupied spaces.

3.2. Greek Neoextractivism in the Context of Crisis

Greece provides an important contemporary case study of the emergence of the political economy of extractivism in the aftermath of the global financial and the ensuing Eurozone crises. As the most vulnerable Eurozone country, Greece was no longer able to borrow on the capital markets after its indebtedness was exposed in 2010. This was exacerbated by harsh austerity measures following the flawed "bail out" (Independent Evaluation Office, 2016) administered by a troika of lenders comprising the IMF, the European Commission and the European Central Bank. In the process, the Greek government lost control of its internal policy and had to accept what the troika dictated. In line with the lenders' recommendations, attracting investment has become imperative for all post-crisis Greek governments. Transnational capital and global financial institutions such as the IMF consider Greece as a "resource rich but cash poor and indebted" state (Charitsis & Velegrakis, 2013). Hence, extractivism is promoted as a "win–win" development model, despite its highly problematical social, spatial, ecological and political outcomes for the area (Charitsis & Velegrakis, 2013). Eldorado Gold, a low-cost Canadian mining company, has declared its willingness to invest a billion US dollars as part of a plan eventually to source up to 30% of its global gold production in Greece (Tsavdaroglou, Petrakos, & Makrygianni, 2017), despite a documented case of the company's tax-dodging practices (Hartlief, McGauran, Van Os, & Römgens, 2015).

The case considered here involves extractivism and a resistance movement initiated by women (S.O.S. Halkidki) against extractive mining. This was launched in Chalkidiki Peninsula in Northern Greece, which is a very popular tourist destination and has a diverse and biologically important natural landscape, combining mountains, forests, sea and beaches. Besides tourism, the local economy is based on agriculture, livestock, fishing, beekeeping and forestry. Eldorado Gold, which owns all gold projects currently in development or operating in Greece, has now cleared an old forest to build Greece's first and biggest open-pit gold mine as well as an underground mine. Soon after gaining power in 2015, the left-leaning Syriza party, which was initially against the Canadian-owned gold mine's expansion plans, capitulated to all the lenders' demands and subscribed to the "development at any cost" ideology that characterizes neo-extractivism (Gudynas, 2010). At the same time, regional competition for resources and pressure to curb high unemployment have led to a gradual shift in European attitudes and policies toward mining. As an analyst from the Raw Materials Group (Thomas, 2013) explains, the rise of resource nationalism in many parts of the world is making Europe more attractive from a low political risk perspective.

The anti-mining protest initiated by women in the Chalkidiki region is a flagship example illustrating how extractivism has been challenged, with protests not confined merely to the immediate locale, but developing into one of the main social movements and expressions of social conflict in Greece (Charitsis & Velegrakis, 2013). Local communities affected by the extractive industry's activities are leading this social movement, strongly opposing the industry's development model and generally questioning the neoliberal onslaught on life and communities. In the following, we give examples on the forms of resistance exercised by S.O.S. Halkidiki, a women's activist movement against gold mining in Northern Greece. This case emerged from a larger ethnographic project (Fotaki & Daskalaki, 2018), and many of our respondents did not identify themselves as explicitly feminist, but their means of struggle and contribution to undermining neoliberal capitalist "development" lie at the heart of feminist goals promoting social change along the lines of equality and empowerment.

The example of anti-mining activities in Skouries in Chalkidiki shows women using their bodies to oppose extractivism through emplaced forms of protest by women (and minoritized others) attempting to reclaim their living space (Fotaki & Daskalaki, 2018). They use their bodies to demonstrate the destructive impact of mining on the environment and their communities, as they are often the first to experience the social and health burdens of extractivism. This inspires others and enables women to build conditions within broader activist movements to protest against mining corporations' activities. However, we should not underestimate the heavy price women often pay for their resolve and commitment, in terms of mental health issues, domestic violence and threats by those in the community who benefit from mining (Jenkins & Rondón, 2015). In our case, women who chained themselves to a wire fence separating the mining site from the public space were brutally removed by the police, even though their protest was peaceful. In both the Greek and Swedish cases presented here, we see how women put their bodies in the frontline of protest, thereby exposing themselves to various threats of violence originating from national policy level down to personal relationships in the local communities in which they live. These costs and threats are ubiquitous and intrinsic to their struggle. However, activists also point to examples from mining protests where prospecting and mining has divided communities and made solidarity between women difficult. These phenomena have also been observed in Greece, where unemployment reached 27% in 2016, with a worse impact on female employment in post-crisis Greece (Vaiou, 2014), leading to intercommunity divisions and an increase in gender violence. In the case of Skouries in Chalkidiki, some local women ultimately followed the example of Eldorado's male miners/employees in deciding to become site guards.

4. Gender in Mining Resistance in the Periphery

These brief examples of the anti-mining gender struggle from Sweden and Greece that were brought together address the issue of the invisibility of women's central role in protest movements while also showing how invisibility frames the periphery/centre relationships in neoliberal capitalism. In both countries, mining activities are located in distant rural locations that are very sparsely (Sweden) or relatively sparsely populated (Greece). In her work on embodied resistance against injustice, Butler (2015) primarily emphasizes the materiality of the street. Yet, she also acknowledges the dislocated character of urban movements and their spread between different (urban) "locales" in online contexts. Protest movements in sparsely populated areas also rely on online platforms and social media as an important means of organizing protest. Sjöstedt Landén's (2017a) examination of how mining protests in Sweden might be sustained through Facebook pages reveals that this is not only a strategy for spreading a message, but might also be seen as a way of populating spaces deemed empty and thus open to extraction (Sjöstedt Landén, 2017a). Online platforms are also used to extend the notion of the local community (Dahlberg-Grundberg & Örestig, 2016). For example, Facebook pages can be seen and "liked" by thousands of people, even though there may be only one or very few people at the protest site. Transnational feminist and indigenous movements are vital actors in linking local protests and pointing to the global character of extractivism and its negative effects on women. Facebook and other social media are only one of many different arenas in which struggles occur over definitions of the meaning of places and activities that should or should not happen in these spaces, which are important for both life and cultural reproduction. This also helps counteract the image of rural and sparsely populated spaces as empty areas that enables exploitation by the mining companies. Therefore, the visibility mediated, amongst other means, by Facebook and other digital platforms has an important political significance. Social media do not automatically make people more active but, for some, they may be a way of participating more actively in an extra-parliamentary political landscape in which alternative visions for local communities and society can be presented beyond the so called "mining boom". This also becomes a way of "populating" protest in invisible spaces. We propose that these are important means for counteracting practices of deeming a place to be "peripheral" which is only beneficial for the current and future exploiters. A clear example is the ongoing prospecting for iron ore in the municipality of Jokkmokk. At a conference with investors, the CEO of British investment company Beowulf Mining stated that, when asked what locals think about mining in the neighbourhood, he usually answers "what local people?" The publicity that this statement attracted has led to new forms of resistance, for example on the website *whatlocalpeople.se*, where descriptions of the exploration areas are made visible in the statement "we are the local people" (see Cocq, 2014; Lundberg Tuorda, 2014).

In Greece, with the anti-mining protest taking place in a remote area, the movement (which included many women) also relied on digital platforms and websites set up specifically to report on the struggle in Chalkidiki, namely *S.O.S. Halkidiki*, *Save Skouries* and *AntiGold Greece*, as important and powerful tools for publicizing the goals and objectives of the anti-mining struggle.

These served as ways of sharing information and support building for local community struggles, many of which were initiated by women. The activists use newsletters and email updates as well as scientific environmental reports on Eldorado's proposed and actual excavations in their online communications. The latter include an Environmental Justice Atlas report (Frezouli, 2014, p. 14) certifying the importance of the forest for the local population's livelihood:

> The open-pit gold copper ore mine will result to the destruction of a primitive forest, the drainage of the aquifers and to the pollution of atmosphere and land. The method of "flash smelting" that will be used has never been used in industrial scale production in the past and there are fears that the company will finally implement the method of cyanation.

Finally, visual materials, such as videos on YouTube of women inserting their bodies as a form of protest to prevent excavations (discussed above), were widely shared on social media, and were important for mobilizing people to take to the streets in support marches in the cities of Athens and Thessaloniki (Fotaki & Daskalaki, 2018). The women's movement in Skouries built alliances and supported other projects opposing neoliberal policies, such as water privatization in Thessaloniki (Daskalaki & Fotaki, 2017). Conde's (2017) review reveals a shift in the strategies used in resistance to mining movements over the last couple of decades. Alliances with extra-local actors have played an important role in this shift:

> Not only fostering movements to emerge, but also developing solidarity and political opportunities, facilitating the acquisition or co-production of technical knowledge and allowing for the emergence of alternative imaginaries of development. (Conde, 2017, p. 87)

Drawing on research on activism in other locales, including Canadian and indigenous contexts, Stienstra (2015, p. 647) raises the question of how relationships and caring occur under the crisis conditions imposed by mining exploitation on those living with its consequences and resisting it on a daily basis:

> This view of crisis illuminates how the local is intricately embedded into and reliant upon global political, economic and military relationships. It illustrates those included in and necessary for those global political, economic and military relationships (workers, miners, pilots, civilian staff, etc.) as well as those excluded from and seen as unnecessary to these relationships (women, Indigenous peoples, people with disabilities, care providers, etc.).

Women's opposition to environmentally and socially destructive extractivist mining demonstrates "the state of exception" (Klein, 2007) introduced by the crisis, specifically in the case of Greece. But the same state of exception, has also enabled the extension and reproduction of the enduring colonial societal structures of extractivism implemented on the lands of indigenous populations in Northern Canada (Willow, 2016), New Caledonia (Horowitz, 2017) and Latin America (Jenkins & Rondón, 2015). With reference to rural communities in the Andes, Jenkins and Rondón (2015) argue—along with Stienstra—that attending to women's experiences as anti-mining activists forces us to remember how continuing and extreme power inequalities enable the neoliberal extractivist model to dominate, and why such responses are necessary to counteract this. According to Haikola and Anshelm (2017, p. 2, with reference to Butts, 2015; Stuermer, 2013), in a neoliberal era, the extractive industries hold a special position:

> Their recurring cycles of boom and bust keep alive the promise of rapid industrialization and economic growth for peripheral communities that have found themselves on the losing end of the neoliberal restructuring of the economy, and they retain a strategic value within a context of resource security that is often highlighted by nation states in periods of regional and global instability or temporary drops in supply.

However, as Butler and Athanasiou (2013, p. 39) argue, "there is nothing merely economic about economics" because "economy" has become a way to distinguish populations that are considered "superfluous" and unnecessary in a certain kind of "economy" (2013, p. 40). This also teaches us about the effects of the interplay between peripheralization and dispossession. As Stienstra (2015, p. 647) puts it:

> With a focus on the local and those often excluded we recognize that an important story is of agency and resistance in crises. With the persistent involvement of Indigenous nations, women and others who resist, alternatives are imagined and created.

Morgan's (2017) study of women participating in protest movements in Indonesia shows that while dominant gender relations tend to exclude women from politics, the presence of women in protests may open up possibilities, in that rural struggles around land and dispossession may simultaneously serve as sites of struggle over changing gender regimes through their active participation in them.

5. Conclusions: Performing Critique against Neoliberal Capitalism

This article has addressed the relatively under-researched issue of women's resistance in sparsely populated contexts from a gendered perspective. It has demonstrated that women use diverse ways to resist and build support similar to those in urban localized protests, and has also highlighted the existence of long-term movements for indigenous peoples' rights around the world, often expressed through protests against various types of exploitation in non-urban environments. These are not fixed relations, and it is important to scrutinize how such movements affect gender relations in different times and under different regimes.

Our conclusion is that attending to gender in mining protests provides us with vital resources for opposing neoliberal capitalism, for instance by highlighting how minority populations that include indigenous women in rural locales organize themselves and their communities to oppose extractivist mining. Such issues are often omitted from discussions of gender equality policy, perhaps because their intersectional character is not addressed and they critique national narratives whenever gender equality is not linked with national projects (Martinsson et al., 2016, p. 4). We suggest that our examples highlight important aspects of how different inequalities (e.g., of gender, class, ethnicity) intersect with one another and provide a potential way to politicize the concept of gender equality. Women in anti-mining protests possess vital experiential knowledge of how gender inequality materializes in society, and may also teach us about how it can actually be resisted. In both our examples (Sweden and Greece), women are often seen as, and are in reality, family carers, so they are closer to the immediate risks of mining, both materially and symbolically. Therefore, as we argue, struggles against mining are ridden with invisible work, which often becomes the task of women. In both cases, the women also refused to be made invisible. Resistance to being made invisible is becoming an important part of the extractivist anti-capitalist critique. We therefore suggest a need to emphasize the (in)equality issues that are brought to the fore when activists talk about gender, including the invisibility of women's contributions and the silencing of their concerns in anti-mining activism. The feminist analysis, which raises questions about gender, may also be an effective way of formulating the extraction of natural resources as an ongoing crisis of capitalism.

In focusing on these initiatives, this article thus contributes to counteracting the process, core to neoliberal capitalism, of turning some regions and countries into exploitable invisible peripheries (Kousis, 2014). The process of "peripheralization" is indispensable for neoliberal capitalist expansion, for it enables the dispossession of populations. We have attempted to counteract this invisibility by populating "empty" places, showing how women struggle against these divisions of local community populations when mining initiatives are put into practice, and how they refuse to be divided. Highlighting the role of women in protest movements in peripheral places reveals how power relations between centre and periphery may be disrupted. Making visible the invisible struggles and contributions of women in protest movements also brings vital knowledge for realizing democratic worlds that do not thrive on the destruction of natural resources and the institutionalization of inequalities; something that should be core to discussions of gender equality.

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The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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Article

A New Service Class in the Public Sector? The Role of Femonationalism in Unemployment Policies

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Abstract
This article aims to explore the content embedded in the figuration of 'foreign-born unemployed women' and how discourses of gender equality are used to create an emerging racialised service class within the Swedish public sector. Influenced by the concept of femonationalism, the article explores how the introduction of the Extra Services unemployment reforms facilitates the creation of a service class whose purpose is to make it possible for the regular workforce to continue to function despite cutbacks and the neoliberal management of professional care work in the public sector. The study identifies a shift in the discourse, where, while migrant women continue to be represented as victims in public discourses concerning unemployment, they are also represented as being lazy and unwilling to work, qualities that legitimate the need for more repressive interventions towards the group, often described as feminist interventions that will rescue migrant women and their children.

Keywords
femonationalim; gender equality; labour market; migrant women; unemployment; Sweden

Issue
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1. Introduction

In September 2017, the Swedish Government, consisting of the Green Party and the Social Democratic Party, announced an investment of 135 million SKE for measures aimed to 'facilitate for foreign-born women to get access to paid work' (Government Press Release, 2017b). The government also gave central labour market actors, such as the Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth, directives aiming to increase the employment of 'foreign-born women' (Government Press Release, 2018). In the spring budget of 2018, a new investment of 141 million SEK was made, specifically to 'get foreign-born women into the labour market' (Government Press Release, 2017b). The goal to 'establish' (*etablera*) foreign-born women in the labour market is today a highly prioritised area of concern by the state and central labour markets actors, including municipalities, local governments, and civil organisations. The unemployment of migrant women is described as a problem for the women themselves as well as a challenge to gender equality in Sweden. Announcing several new reforms targeting foreign-born women before the Social Democratic Congress in 2017, Prime Minister Stefan Löfven and Minister of Finance Magdalena Andersson wrote:

> The employment rate among foreign-born is undoubtedly lower than it has been in a long time, but it still takes too long before migrants who have recently arrived to begin working. In addition, there are major differences between women's and men's employment that are completely unacceptable. This difference is not acceptable in a gender-equal country such as Sweden, where we built our wealth on the idea that everyone who can work works. We Social Democrats want to continue removing the barriers so that women will have the same opportunity to work as men. Our goal is for men and women to

> have the same power and the same opportunities to shape their lives. Therefore, we have abolished the child allowance introduced by the right-wing government. We are looking into parental insurance so that the newly arrived with children can get into a job faster and withdraw the establishment guarantee for all those who do not seek work. Of course, we should have the same requirement for new arrivals as for other job seekers. But we need to do more. Society has not taken this important issue seriously enough. We want to see more possibilities and also more demands. All women and men have the obligation to make themselves employable. We, therefore, propose the following to get more foreign-born women into work. (Andersson & Löfven, 2017, author's translation)

Among the proposals are investment in education, the validation of former work experience and competencies, as well as investment in Swedish for immigrants (SFI). Central is that the possibilities are regulated though demands. For example, higher demands are placed on women who are home with older children to read SFI and study during their parental leave. If the woman does not participate her "right" to social security is withdrawn.

When the Social Democratic Party, with the support of the Green Party, won the 2014 elections, one of their first decisions was to terminate FAS 3, a reform made by the conservative Reinfeldt government (2006–2014). FAS 3 was strongly criticised by both the Swedish labour unions and unemployment organisations as it neither created jobs nor paths towards work and forced unemployed citizens to work without any financial compensation (Paulsen, 2015). The 2014 government closed FAS 3 and instead created the Extra Services (ES) reform. The main and fundamental difference is that people are paid salaries in parity with collective agreements and that workers can be employed only in the public and nonprofit sectors in jobs where they supposedly do not do regular workers' tasks. The aim of ES is to 'stimulate the employment of people without support that have difficulties in getting employment' (Arbetsförmedlingen, 2018). Extra employees can be employed in the public sector, in fields such as healthcare, school, day-care, elder care or disability care or within state agencies as long as the employment is not within a sector that offers products or services to the market. Today, ES workers can also be employed in nonprofit organisations working with children and youth and registered religious communities. Formally, the categories of people who can access the ES reform are those who are unemployed and are inscribed in the Swedish Public Employment Service or who are newly arrived (Arbetsförmedlingen, 2018). People that are unemployed can have an ES employment for two years. ES was presented as a labour market policy intervention aimed at increasing, among other things, the employment rate of foreign-born women. One of the aims of the reforms presented by Löfven and Andersson is to break the 'isolation of foreign-born women' through the expansion of ES in the public sector.

> There need to be easier ways into the labour market, especially for those with little or no education who are older. Therefore, the Extra Services within the public sector needs to be expanded. It both strengthens welfare and functions as a way into the labour market, especially for foreign-born women. (Andersson & Löfven, 2017, author's translation)

The establishment of foreign-born women in the labour market is often articulated as a measure for promoting gender equality—for the women themselves, but also for the nation. According to gender scholar Sara R. Farris (2017), we need to explore the dialectic relationship between the representations of migrant women and their economic and political role as workers in the current phase of capitalism. Feminist researchers have shown how discourses around gender equality in Sweden are used to legitimise ethnonationalism and increased demands of forced assimilation (Martinsson, Griffin, & Giritli Nygren, 2016). Inspired by these researchers' contributions, this article aims to explore the representation of the unemployed foreign-born woman and how this hegemonic representation creates a specific type of emerging gendered and racialised labour force, though an analysis of ES.

Theoretically, the article aims to explore the strength of the scholarship that bridges a postcolonial focus on the creation of colonial and racist scripts within the labour market with a Marxist feminist emphasis on political economy and social reproduction (Farris, 2017; Lowe, 2015; Mohanty, 2003). The article is based on a qualitative case study of the unemployment projects taking place in the city of Malmö, Sweden during 2017–2018.

The article is organised as follows. First, a short overview of the field will be provided followed by a presentation of the theoretical and methodological frameworks. The article's central focus lies in the analysis of the ways these labour policies are acted upon at the level of the municipality and in the national political debate. The first identifies how the category of foreign migrant women is constructed in a workshop at the municipality. The second analysis, through selected speeches and documents, explores which ideas are embedded within the figuration of the unemployed foreign-born woman. The third identifies a shift from discourses of victims to be helped to discourses of ungrateful women resisting help. Finally, I will argue how this specific figuration of the foreign-born woman within labour market policy is, in the name of gender equality, used to create a specific service class within the public sector.

2. Governing the Unemployed: Gendered and Racialised Discourses

There is an incipient but growing field of research, inspired by intersectional analysis, which explores how migrant women's labour market participation has been affected by gendered, racialised, and class-based inequalities (de los Reyes, 2014). These studies have identified the position of migrant women in low-paying jobs, such as elder care (Lill, 2007), service work (Abiala, 2000; Mulinari, 2017), informal/formal care work (Gavanas, 2010) and, more recently, in professions like academics and medicine (Behtoui, 2017; Mulinari, 2018; Povrzanović Frykman & Öberg, 2018). This research shows the specific challenges that migrant women encounter, from a lack of recognition of their skills and qualifications to racist fantasies about migrant families' attitudes towards the participation of migrant women in the labour market (Anthias, Kontos, & Morokvasic-Müller, 2013). The contribution of this research has been fundamental for many reasons; one of the most important, in my view, is that it identifies the central role of everyday, institutional racism in creating a labour market segregated by class, gender, and race. Another important contribution is that these scholars have challenged the hegemonic representation in Sweden that migrant women do not engage in paid work. Studies have demonstrated not only the multiple and contradictory positions of migrant women in the labour market but also that migrant women have both challenged and made possible the heteronormative, gender-segregated labour market regime shaping Swedish industrial relations through their labour market participation (Ardalan, 2016; Mulinari, 2007).

Another relevant field of research that inspires my work is the scholarly tradition that critically examines how the category of 'migrants' is produced and reproduced within the 'unemployment complex'. In his study of unemployment policies and projects, financed by the European Social Fund (ESF), migration researcher Victor Vesterberg (2015) shows how labour market activities are aimed at ensuring that the participants emerge as employable by transforming them from 'migrants' to 'Swedish'. In a similar study analysing a number of these projects, Vesterberg and Dahlstedt (2018) show how the 'employable citizen' is created as the opposite of the racialised other. Migrant women, the authors assert, are represented as victims of their own cultures and traditions, and their unemployment is understood as being the consequence of these factors. The notion that 'cultural difference' explains unemployment among migrant women is, according to migration researcher Jenni K Larsson, the hegemonic explanation used by professionals within the Swedish Public Employment Service (arbetsförmedlningen) on both a national and local level (Larsson, 2015). Cultural geographer Malin McGlinn further develops these arguments and asserts that at the core of the logic of the ESF there is the need to create unemployed people so that Swedish/white professionals can be employed in different projects aiming to activate the unemployed (McGlinn, 2018). An important result and a central contribution of these studies is that they show that, despite the extensive evidence of ethnic discrimination and racism in the labour market, the professionals engaged in the expansive field of labour integration projects targeting mostly racialised populations continue to explain migrant women's unemployment in terms of their cultural background. Furthermore, these studies show that the representation of migrant women seems to be rather constant.

Another important contribution of these studies is that they identify the merger of social and labour policy. Researchers have explored the configuration of crime control and migration control, conceptualised as 'crimmigration' (Barker, 2017), which is leading to the increasing criminalisation of migrants. Parallel to this, and to some extent embedded within one another, it is possible to clearly distinguish an increasing merge between social policy and labour policy, with higher demands towards racialised citizens participating in labour and language activities in order to obtain social assistance (Dahlstedt & Lalander, 2018; Gubrium & Fernandes, 2014). While it is the Swedish Public Employment Service that is responsible for implementing the government unemployment policies, the municipality is becoming a central actor within the unemployment area as municipalities are responsible for the unemployed that are dependent on social assistance (Vikman & Westerberg, 2017). The merge between social policy and labour policy is hence often implemented through the local municipalities as these are responsible for social assistance. There are still few studies that explore the experiences of unemployed migrant women themselves within the unemployment complex. One of the few is gender scholars Katarina Gritili Nygren and Ulrika Schmauch's study of how newly arrived migrant women experience the 'integrationist' space of SFI. The authors show that, despite the ethnonationalist agenda as well as its repressive frame, the SFI environment is transformed by the migrant women themselves into an inclusive place of friendship and safety (Gritili Nygren & Schmauch, 2012, p. 610).

Swedish scholarship exploring the racial and gendered aspects of the unemployment complex is often theoretically inspired by debates on governability. This research has been crucial in challenging ethnonationalist assumptions at the core of both public debates and social policies. In the following pages, I will, inspired by their contribution, shift the focus from an analysis of classification systems based on race, nationhood, and ethnicity, and their impact in the labour market, towards an analysis of how these classifications systems regulate social policies regarding the creation of a gendered and racialised labour force, inspired by the concept of 'femonationalism'.

2.1. Theoretical Framework: From Governance to Labour Power

Sara R. Farris (2017) uses the concept of femonationalism to grasp the convergence between rather distinct political figures and political projects in their representation of Muslim and non-Western migrant women as victims in need of rescue. According to Farris, the discourse of femonationalism operates not only in right-wing xenophobic rhetoric but also within neoliberal workfare programmes and feminist-inspired integration programmes. Farris's originality lies in her ability to link racist representations of Muslim women as victims to an analysis of the role of migrant women in European labour markets. According to the author, femonationalism has a central role in the commodification of the racialised labour force into the spheres of social reproductive work, such as childcare, elder care, and cleaning.

Farris (2017) argues that migrant women constitute a specific fraction of the labour supply, a regular army of reproductive labour. According to Farris, gender scholars have made central contributions in analysing the colonial discourses embedded in the figuration of the foreign-born woman; however, she argues, there has been less research on the following question:

> Is there something specific to women, particularly to non-Western women, and more precisely, something specific to their political-economic role in the current conjuncture? (Farris, 2017, p. 188)

Farris challenges us to explore not only the representation of migrant women but also the political-economic function of this figuration. According to Farris, migrant female labour plays a crucial role in the restructuring of welfare regimes both by providing care and reproductive labour and by giving women—conceptualised as belonging to the nation—the possibility of being gender-equal. Farris argues that migrant women have their own scripted labour market: while on one hand it follows the rules of the existing gender and sexual contracts, on the other hand, it also follows the rules of what she conceptualises as a 'racial contract', 'according to which ethnic minorities and people of colour perform the least desirable and valued tasks in a society' (Farris, 2017, p. 194).

The author provides relevant insights by bridging poststructuralist studies of racism with the field of political economy, convincingly showing that femonationalism functions to guarantee the supply of female migrant labour, which plays a central role in the restructuring of European welfare regimes. Farris's analysis is based on the situations in France, Italy, and the Netherlands, countries that differ from Sweden in the ways through which social reproduction entangles labour markets. Nevertheless, I find her emphasis on the political-economic framework of the discussion on unemployed foreign-born women interesting in the Swedish context as the rhetoric is so similar regarding the homogenisation, victimisation, and even criminalisation of unemployed migrant women.

What I find relevant and original about Farris's contributions is that her theoretical scope moves beyond the focus on migrant women as a vulnerable group of workers to understand what category of workers they are made to be. Her contribution also moves beyond the focus on governance, which has dominated much of the analysis of migrant unemployment within the field of critical migration studies, towards an analysis that explores what forms of labour supply are created through these classifications. Thus, Farris creates a productive point of departure for exploring what form of labour supply migrant women represent in contemporary capitalism and how policies, regulations, discourses, and laws produce and reinforce this labour supply. In this article, I use Farris's theoretical frame to explore a specific labour market reform to analyse the specific role of ES and how the figuration of the foreign-born woman creates a specific form of labour supply. While I do not have the ambition of fulfilling her analysis, as my study is qualitative in nature, I want to carefully try to read my empirical material in a way that is inspired by Farris's theoretical framework. As migration and labour policies are becoming more entangled (Sager & Öberg, 2017), we need to pay more and closer attention to how labour market policies are used not only to legitimise unequal access to social rights and higher levels of exploitation but also to create new categories of workers.

2.2. Methodological Framework: 'Our Researcher'

Inspired by the tradition of institutional ethnography (Smith, 2006), in 2018, for over three months I have conducted fieldwork in diverse municipality projects targeting foreign-born migrant women. The study is part of a research project financed by Riksbankens Jubileumsfond (RJ), which particularly aims to frame the dialogue between academia and societal actors. Thus, the research project needs to be supported not only by the researcher's academic institution but also by the institution where the research project is to take place—in my study, the municipality of Malmö. Another important aspect of the research programme's framework is that the researcher is expected to move between the academy and the institution supporting the project; in my case, the municipality of Malmö became my workplace. While I had earlier experience of doing fieldwork in workplaces, my research position was often that of a generously accepted outsider; in this study, those who—to a certain extent—are my research subjects, the employees at the municipality, speak of and relate to me as their 'own researcher'. While I do not conceptualise my 'being there' as a natural access point to the truth regarding societal relations, I strongly believe that the focus on participant observation within feminist institutional ethnography (Campbell, 2004) enables a closer look at the practice of everyday life. Thus, the research design combines a prolonged stay in the field (three months) with a focus on following the action—doing in-depth interviews with both professionals and unemployed women. In this article, however, the focus will be on interviews with three professional workers within the municipality. The material in this article is from the first workshop held in the municipality aimed to create policies for the specific group of foreign-born women (however, as will be discussed, this was challenged by the participants) and is, therefore, a good point of departure to explore how governmental policies are implemented and challenged.

The main material in this article, however, consists of governmental and municipal policies and media texts presented in relation to debates on foreign-born women and the introduction of ES. I have chosen this material in an attempt to grasp how foreign-born unemployed women are represented and how this representation is embedded in the creation of ES.

Labour studies scholar Robert Pereira (2014) argues that critical occupational research should engage in the use of the 'what's the problem' (WPR) approach in order to expand 'research into politics, policies, and systems of governance and how they influence everyday occupation, participation, and inclusion of individuals, communities, and populations' (Pereira, 2014, p. 399). According to feminist political scientist Carol Bacchi (2009), a 'what's the problem represented to be?' approach to policy is a method for exposing the meaning involved in policy. A central argument by Bacchi is that governments and, one could argue, municipalities (in dialogue with or in contradiction to governments and private actors), do not 'address' problems but that they identify, name, and shape problems in specific ways that are embedded in and mirror societal power relations. In her own words:

> How the 'problem' is represented or constituted, matters…because the way in which the 'problem' is represented carries all sorts of implications for how the issue is thought about and for how the people involved are treated and are evoked to think about themselves. (Bacchi, 2009, p. 1)

To grasp how migrant women are represented, we need to explore how 'the problem' with migrant women is defined within the unemployment debate as the definition of 'the problem' shapes the labour and gender politics developed to confront it. While both Bacchi and Pereira stress the need to analyse documents, one of the first challenges of my research was the lack of written material at the level of the local municipality on the topic. While the 'unemployed foreign-born woman' was created as a national problem, there was a lack of documentation defining what the problem really was. Paradoxically, there is well-established public discourse on foreign-born women and underemployment that is rather coherent and similar regardless of political sympathies.

In this article, I have therefore mainly used governmental material when talking of the unemployed foreign-born woman and the introduction of ES in relation to this group to explore how the problem is represented on a national political level and has influenced the ways in which local municipalities need to work. In the first section of the analysis, the tension between the local and the state political debate is explored and how local actors try to translate the national problem to a local level. In the following section, the analysis focuses on the central meaning that is embedded within the figuration of the unemployed foreign-born woman.

2.3. The Workshop: Creating Consent

The government's focus on foreign-born women has had direct implications for the municipality where I conducted my research. The managers of the Labour Department gave one of the municipality employees the assignment to 'do something in relation to foreign-born women' (personal communication, March 5, 2018). What she was asked to do was rather vague, but it was clear that the municipality needed to signal that they take the 'problem' seriously. She continues:

> As there were no documents or analyses of what they thought the problem was for foreign-born women, I asked what the focus should be, what do you think is the problem? You need to know what the problem is if you want to find a solution. (Personal communication, March 5, 2018)

The employee was critical of the term foreign-born women because she found it 'discriminatory' as, in her own words, 'it placed the focus on migration and not on other issues'. She, therefore, invited key actors in the non-profit sector to a workshop with the title 'Vulnerable Women in the Labour Market' instead of a workshop called 'Unemployed Foreign-born Women'. In the translation from the national to the local level, there was a reinterpretation of the problem, which challenged the figuration of the unemployed foreign-born women.

The invitation to the workshop described the event as offering inspiration 'to reflect on how the municipality and the non-profit sector can co-operate in supporting vulnerable women in the labour market' (invitation folder). Over 50 people participated in the workshop, 40 from non-profit organisations and 10 from the municipality's Labour Department. I was initially asked, in my role as a researcher, to give an introduction describing the position of migrant women in the labour market, but as so many people attended the meeting, they decided that the focus should be on the discussion.

We were divided into groups around tables with large sheets of paper with Post-It notes on them. We were told to draw a big tree on the paper. On the roots, we wrote 'causes', on the tree trunk we wrote 'problem' and on the tree crown we wrote 'effects'. After a presentation, our first assignment was to discuss who was included in the category 'vulnerable women in the labour market'. The groups defined as vulnerable by the workshop participants were numerous and included women living in social and economic vulnerability, older women, single mothers, women with poor education, women with part-time employment, women addicted to drugs and criminalised in different ways, *and* foreign-born women. It seemed that the municipal employee responsible for the workshop had managed to move beyond the focus on foreign-born women and through the term ‘vulnerable women’ made visible the fact that many women today share a precarious situation in the labour market.

The second task for the workshop participants was to identify the causes of unemployment, and here, suddenly, something happened. What was identified as structural and institutional causes of vulnerability for single mothers or barriers for women working part-time with small children were not present when foreign-born women (who are often single mothers) were discussed.

The vulnerability of foreign-born women was explained by their culture and traditions and the patriarchal power of their men. And, contrary to all of the other groups, it was stressed that their unemployment status, because it was caused by ‘cultural differences’, could be passed on from generation to generation. Therefore, it was argued that creating jobs for foreign-born women was not only important for the women, but also for their children. Some participants made serious efforts to challenge the prevailing discourse. In particular, two young women with migrant backgrounds tried to question this division. One of them argued that migrant women did not need to be depressed because they were out of paid work. I later interviewed her:

> When they said that one inherits one’s mother’s unemployment, that made me angry. My mother has always worked at home, and look at me—I am working. She was the best role model, and she has always pushed me to study. (Personal communication, May 2, 2018)

The other woman, who I also interviewed after the workshop stressed the problem of not discussing the structural causes of unemployment. Working in a woman’s shelter, she often met women, she explained, whose main problem was that they could not find a room of their own:

> Structural homelessness—that is what I would like to discuss. The problem is that many women do not have a place to live and if you don’t have that it is impossible to have a job. And if you do not have a job, you cannot pay your rent, and even if you have a paid job, during a couple of hours they take your social security directly, and then you cannot even afford to work a little. The system is inflexible while, at the same time, as they always say, that foreign-born women need to be flexible. (Personal communication, May 2, 2018)

There were no responses to the two women’s reflections. In the end, despite the efforts of the municipal employee responsible for the workshop, two clear-cut categories of women emerged: women whose labour market problems evolved from the gender-unequal society and labour market and foreign-born women whose vulnerable position in the labour market was explained by their traditional/patriarchal culture. The latter group’s unemployment was defined as a problem for them and their children. While the interpretations surfacing from the workshop, to some extent, were similar to those produced by the national government and broadly published in national and social media in the previous few months when debating the ‘problem of unemployed migrant women’, it is important to stress that initially there was a more complex picture emerging that linked the situation of different precarious groups of women to one another.

However, this complexity is difficult to uphold as the municipality is given special funds to target foreign-born women, already defining them as a special problem group. In the next section, I will discuss the central components embedded within the figuration of the foreign-born woman.

2.4. The Woman Far Away

One of the central arguments often repeated in the workshop was that migrant women, in the words of one of the participants, ‘come from cultures where women do not work’. Can there really be countries where women do not work? If we are to believe the Swedish political social-democratic leadership on foreign-born women, the answer is yes. In the words of the Labour Market Minister, Ylva Johansson, foreign-born women have higher unemployment rates. ‘It is also about cultural difference since it takes time for many of them to adapt to our gender-equal society where both men and women work’ (Karlsson, 2017).

While cheap migrant female labour in the last few decades has been the solution to the crisis of social reproduction in the Global North (Farris, 2017), and cheap migrant female labour has been at the core of the success of the Swedish model (de los Reyes, 2001), migrant women are still represented not only as women who have never worked but also as migrating from countries where women do not work. These countries are defined as being ‘far away’ from Sweden, both culturally and socially. In the application to the ESF, targeting foreign-born women, the municipality writes:

> Sweden has a higher amount of foreign-born outside of the EU28. A high share comes from underdeveloped countries, which linguistically and culturally are far from Sweden. The foreign-born women to a higher degree come from countries where women do not work to such a vast extent. (Malmö Stad, 2016, author’s translation)

In her analysis of parenting courses in Holland, Van den Berg (2016) analyses how space and time are central concepts in the ‘legitimation of policy interventions into citizens’ private lives’. Foreign-born citizens, she argues, are depicted as ‘lagging behind’, using a metaphor to move women to the centre via parenting courses. Van den Berg reflects on the aspect of activity, stating that 'raising five children without professional guidance, for example, is not "active", while volunteering in the neighbourhood is' (Van den Berg, 2016, p. 22). The author argues, then, that space-time is central as a strategic move in the processes of 'othering'. To be far away is also something, as Van den Berger argues, that is linked to time. Announcing an investment of 135 million SEK to 'facilitate the access to paid work for foreign-born women', the Minister of Finance Magdalena Andersson declared:

> The big difference between foreign and domestic-born women in the labour market is not acceptable. There are still women in Sweden that are waiting to make the journey that so many others did in the 50s, 60s, and 70s, a journey towards freedom and autonomy. (Government Press Release, 2017b, author´s translation)

In relation to the labour market, I would argue that by referring to foreign-born women as lagging behind in time and space, labour market activation is depicted as a means of moving towards the future, towards democracy and gender equality. The idea of paid work as a means of achieving gender equality has been central to Swedish labour movements and part of feminist movements (Carbin, Overud, & Kvist, 2017). The higher rate of unemployment for foreign-born women is, therefore, defined not only as a problem for them but for the nation at large:

> If foreign-born women would participate in the labour market in the same manner as domestic-born women, the GDP level is expected to be 1.5% higher, unemployment levels 1% lower and public finances would be strengthened by approximately 37 billion SEK. (Government Press Release, 2017b, author's translation)

Migrant women are not only represented as a threat to reaching gender equality but also as a financial problem and an economic burden. As the figuration of the foreign-born woman is that of one in need of labour market salvation in order to be free and equal, labour market activities are portrayed as charity work. Some of the municipal employees whom I talk to use terms such as 'helping them', 'breaking their isolation', and 'giving them hope', leaving the impression that the municipality is rescuing foreign-born women from their oppressive culture and their patriarchal men.

The idea of salvation, I would argue, is an important part of the creation of what Farris labels a regular army of reproductive labour as it legitimises the creation of a group of employees for which labour market participation is depicted as a feminist act of liberation, and opposing these activities is evidence that one is 'far away' and gender oppressed. The idea that the municipality and the whole Swedish nation is helping foreign-born women in order for them to gain power and autonomy also places higher institutional demands on them to participate in these integration/labour market projects.

2.5. From Victims to Villains

Minister of Labour Ylva Johansson, commenting on the investment of 141 SEK for the establishment of foreign-born women declared: 'The former government introduced the right to paid work for the newly arrived; we have added the obligation to participate' (Svensen, 2018). Researchers have argued that foreign-born women within the unemployment complex are often depicted as victims (McGlinn, 2018; Vesterberg, 2015). According to Farris, this is a central aspect of what creates a convergence around femonationalism. I would argue that we are witnessing a trend towards a representation as victims of their cultures but also as villains in relation to the Swedish welfare state. The unemployed foreign-born women are portrayed as women who exploit the parental and social security system and therefore are in need of obligations, rules, and clear-cut demands. When it comes to migrant women, the demands are often articulated as concerns for their gender equality, their children's wellbeing and the nation's gender equality, hence the removal of social rights is often described as a feminist measure. Among the measures implemented, especially targeting migrant woman, is the restriction of parental benefits and the demand that one continues with SFI, even when one is home with small children. Minister of Labour and Establishment Ylva Johansson declared that social assistance can become a 'trap', and therefore, for instance, demands on education are introduced in order to get social assistance 'that will clarify the individual's responsibility for the knowledge needed to get into work' (Social Democratic Party, 2018a) as well as a restriction on the right to parental leave for parents who come to Sweden with children for better establishment of foreign-born women in the labour market (Social Democratic Party, 2018a).

In a debate published just before the Social Democratic Party's congress, Prime Minister Stefan Löfven and Finance Minister Magdalena Andersson wrote an article with the headline 'Newly Arrived Women Cannot Be Locked in Their Homes'. A central argument was that the high levels of unemployment among foreign-born women 'are unacceptable in a gender-equal county'. Gender equality is defined as something that exists in Sweden. One of the proposals from the government was that the 'social orientation course' for the newly arrived should focus less on practical issues and more on issues of Swedish norms and Swedish values, for instance, 'gender equality between men and woman and freedom of speech' (Olsson, 2018). Foreign-born women are represented as victims of patriarchal cultures but at the same time as exploiting the gender-equal system, for instance, by taking too much parental leave. Therefore, some investments are made to restrict migrant women's possibilities of utilising the benefits that the feminist movement has gained, such as day-care and parental leave, as it is implied that migrant women are trapped by them. In defence of the proposed reduction of parental leave for migrant parents, the Minister of Social Security declared: "For our part, it is primarily an important gender equality reform. It's about shortening the time for foreign-born women to enter the labour market" (Aftonbladet, 2017).

What is defined as a feminist victory, the right to parental leave, when it comes to unemployed migrant women is suddenly defined as an obstacle to their fulfilment of being gender equal.

The higher demands placed on migrant women are also legitimised as something that will 'rescue' the women's children. Ylva Johansson stresses that it is important for the foreign-born woman to work so she can 'influence and be a good role model for her children' (Karlsson, 2017). The notion that it is negative for foreign-born women's self-confidence and wellbeing to be isolated in their homes has been a central argument for the restriction of parental leave for migrant parents. Social rights such as parental leave that were created to increase gender equality are suddenly described as 'gender traps' when these rights are acted upon for foreign-born women; to abolish or restore them is considered an intervention of a 'feminist' government. As discussed earlier, the entanglement of labour market policy and social policy has become stronger as the municipalities are the ones implementing demands that restrict social assistance in different ways. For instance, the government presented the demand that people who want access to social assistance must participate in SFI: "If you speak bad Swedish, than it's an obstacle to getting a job. I think it's reasonable to ask you to learn by going to SFI" (Holmqvist, 2018).

Nikolas Rose and Peter Miller´s book *Governing the Present: Administering Economic, Social and Personal Life* (2008) and their concept of advanced liberalism have been central in analyses of how governments and municipalities understand and govern the unemployed. A central argument is that unemployment during this era is not defined as a social problem but as an individual problem. The individual problem can be solved if the unemployed participate in different activities and, in the case of migrants, in becoming 'Swedish' (Vesterberg, 2015). The authors argue that one effect of the processes in transforming unemployment from a social to an individual problem is a fragmentation of the unemployed, where different groups are addressed and targeted in different ways, creating, on one hand, new professions with specific knowledge about 'groups' and at the same time making it more difficult for groups to create solidarity bonds between them. For instance, in separating the migrant woman from the domestic-born woman, many of the issues defined as gender issues, such as lower salaries, unequal distribution of time and wealth, and unequal access to representation and influence, disappear from the municipality agenda in relation to migrant women.

The entanglement between a gendered cultural racism, emphasising the need of salvation for migrant women through employment, and an individualistic approach placing the causes of unemployment on the individual (and their culture) gives room for the definition of a problem, the foreign-born woman, who can bring those extra hands to the public sector.

2.6. Bringing that Extra Smile

I usually arrive at my current workplace, in the municipality of Malmö, at 8:30 am. In the coffee room, there is already coffee in the thermos. The dishwasher that was full yesterday is now empty, as is the sink that, yesterday, was filled with cups. In the corridor, I am, by the permanent professional municipal staff, told that I should not put away dishes from the washing machine or make my own coffee in the morning because those are 'their jobs', and 'we should not take the jobs from them if we want to help them'. All these employees whom we should 'allow' to work (as if their labour was not necessary compared to the labour of the municipality staff) are dressed in black shirts with the inscription 'NORA'. There are around 40 of these people, employed as cleaners, restaurant workers, and janitors. Most of the NORA workers are migrants suffering racialisation, and many of them are migrant women. The workers, who clean, move furniture, carry things, make coffee and so forth, are all employed under the reform measure of ES, a labour market reform aimed at decreasing the levels of unemployment, especially among newly arrived migrants and people who have been unemployed for a period of more than two years. The municipality's goal is for over 5000 people to be employed through ES. Today, the municipality employs in total 22,000 people.

ES has been described as a reform that not only helps the unemployed into the labour market but also gives workplaces a 'silver lining':

> Extra Services means meaningful task assignments for the individual with salaries according to collective agreements. Extra Services helps to improve quality in, for example, health care, school, and elderly care by making it possible to perform tasks that would otherwise not be performed. At the same time, an unemployed person gets the opportunity to move into the labour market. (Social Democratic Party, 2018b, author's translation)

Malmö is one of the cities where unemployment levels are high and therefore one of the cities where ES is seen as an important 'way' into the labour market. Most of the ES employees are working within the municipality (day-care, schools, elder care). While many of the labour market activities I participated in focused on learning the Swedish language and developing 'social skills', the government and the municipality of Malmö have made important financial investments in the creation of ES. In Malmö, migrant women occupy half of the 1,000 ES positions. The focus of the ES employee is to do things in the workplace outside the scope of regular employee tasks.

> We know that many co-workers in schools, in care have a difficulty in fulfilling their tasks within the planned time. By supporting them, more elderly people get a chance to go for a walk in the sun, and teachers can get help with administration and in creating peace and quiet in our schools. (Government Press Release, 2017a, author's translation)

In the information provided by the Labour Department, it is argued that 'through Extra Services municipalities, county councils and non-profit actors in the welfare area are provided the opportunity to get an extra resource that can support the core activity of the institution' (Department of Labour, 2017). This is the framework through which Finance Minister Magdalena Andersson reads the creation of ES: 'We want to continue to guarantee the quality in the welfare system, without it leading to extensive raises in municipal taxes' (Persson, 2017). Therefore, the new ES will be used to make working conditions for permanent workers better without employing new workers with formal salaries and full labour rights. After years of cutbacks and New Public Management transformations (Selberg, 2012), the exit of white Swedish women from the care professions has been identified by both academic and public debate regarding the municipality's difficulties in recruiting new groups of workers. The Prime Minister and Minister of Finance have declared a special investment towards 'unemployed foreign-born woman' and argue that ES is an important investment:

> There is also a need for easier access to the labour market, especially for those with little or no educational background who are a bit older. Therefore, Extra Services in the public sector must be established. They strengthen well-being and serve as an entrance into the labour market, especially for foreign-born women. It may be an extra adult in the classroom, at break or at lunch, which relieves teachers with tasks that need to be done but are not always included. There may be more employees in retirement homes that have that extra time for conversation or for a walk, which increases the well-being among the elderly. (Andersson & Löfven, 2017)

In contrast to Farris's ideas, foreign women are not to be employed as care workers, but as workers that enable the regular workforce to continue to function despite cutbacks and the neoliberal management of professional care work in the public sector. People in ES are not only precariously positioned but also have a total lack of autonomy and a total dependency on their employers. Furthermore, as they are not offered education during these years and cannot include the years as practice, they are not academically trained to obtain professional care work positions in the future.

This frame provides the municipalities with cheap and often state-subsidised labour while at the same time creating paid work for many Swedish-born (white) women responsible for 'activating' foreign-born women and creating better working conditions for Swedish-born (white) women within the public sector. Farris stresses that ideas regarding gender equality are central to legitimising labour market activities. However, the centrality of this idea does not seem to be getting women directly into paid care work; instead, in Sweden, it seems to be creating a non-professional labour force that can bring that little extra to public organisations in neoliberal crisis.

Contrary to many other neoliberal-inspired reforms of labour market activities, ES provides employment with stable salaries and work tasks that are socially needed, so in many ways this reform provides workers with higher levels of security and well-being than, for instance, FAS 3, where people were forced to work without financial remuneration and often in jobs that were not experienced as meaningful. However, still, with ES, (migrant) workers are not given opportunities for career paths that would open for stable employment within the public sector, running the risk of creating a specific fraction of service workers, especially as they are not given the possibility of education in their field of work even though demands on formal education in the public sector are high. The paradox is that while high investments are made in the reform of ES, there is an enormous need for workforce in the public sector.

3. Conclusions

The figure of the unemployed migrant woman is at the core of labour market policies at the level of the municipality. Scholarship on these policies, particularly how they are operationalised in diverse 'labour integration projects', has shown that they often tend to reproduce colonial and racist discourses on migrant women, create jobs for municipality-employed white Swedish women, and are seldom successful regarding employment possibilities for migrants suffering racialisation. Central to my argument is that, contrary to what is asserted by the social-democratic leadership, these policies not only do not open paths towards stable employment but create a specific gender and racialised labour force that ameliorates the tensions created by the introduction of new public management in publicly financed organisations such as health and education.

My study sheds light on how these discourses are reproduced, despite the efforts of the municipal employees themselves to challenge them, and, more specifically, how they are operationalised through the ES labour policies that aim to integrate migrant women into the labour market and are also understood as measures promoting gender equality. The study identifies a shift in the discourse, where, while migrant women continue to be represented as victims in public discourse and social policies, they are also represented as being lazy and unwilling to work, qualities that legitimate the need for more repressive interventions towards the group. I have shown how these processes of inclusion and also of serious repression are not conflicting with one another; on the contrary, combined, they legitimate relevant cuts in social and labour rights in the name of the progress of Swedish gender equality. The focus on the employment of migrant women in private care, which has often dominated gender research, needs to be complemented by an analysis of how state and municipality practices are creating a service class within the public sector, whose aim is to 'serve' both workers and citizens in a public sector highly slimed by austerity politics and New Public Management.

With regards to the workshop at the municipality, for a couple of hours, with a focus on the vulnerable woman, rather than on the 'foreign-born woman', the contours of a shared experience of exploitation in an unequal labour market (and an unequal responsibility of the reproductive work) took shape. In many ways, this challenged the femonationalist assumption that migrant women are in need of special demands, and on the contrary, showed that woman share experiences that could be more actively used to create unemployment policies.

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Conflict of Interests

The author declares no conflict of interests.

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COGITATIO

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Article

Women's Coalitions beyond the Laicism–Islamism Divide in Turkey: Towards an Inclusive Struggle for Gender Equality?

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Abstract

In the 2010s in Turkey, the ruling Justice and Development Party's (AKP) authoritarian-populist turn accompanied the institutionalization of political Islam. As laicism was discredited and labeled as an imposed-from-above principle of Western/Kemalist modernity, the notion of equality ceased to inform the state's gender policies. In response to AKP's attempts to redefine gender relations through the notions of complementarity and *fıtrat* (purpose of creation), women across the political spectrum have mobilized for an understanding of gender equality that transcends the laicism–Islamism divide yet maintains secularity as its constitutive principle. Analyzing three recent attempts of women's coalition-building, this article shows that, first, gender equality activists in the 2010s are renegotiating the border between secularity and piety towards more inclusive understandings of gender equality; and second, that struggles against AKP's gender politics are fragmented due to different configurations of gender equality and secularity that reflect class and ethnic antagonisms in Turkish society. The article thereby argues for the need to move beyond binary approaches to secularism and religion that have so far dominated the scholarly analysis of women's activism in both Turkey and the Nordic context.

Keywords

authoritarian populism; feminism; gender equality struggles; laicism–Islamism divide; piety; secularity; Turkey; women's coalitions

Issue

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1. Introduction

Recent contributions in gender studies scholarship have widely documented, in Western and non-Western countries alike, the tension between politicized religion and gender equality struggles (e.g., Dhaliwal & Yuval-Davis, 2014; Jeffreys, 2011; Razavi & Jenichen, 2010; Tadros, 2015). Simultaneously, feminist movements in many contexts seek strategies to reclaim gender equality while challenging the divisions between secularism and religion (e.g., Cuesta & Mulinari, 2018; Martinsson, 2016; Moghadam, 2017). In Turkey, the consolidation of political Islam under the rule of the Justice and Development Party (AKP) has recently coupled with all-out discrimination against secular social groups (Eligür, 2010). As I argue in the following, this has inclined gender equality activists (feminist and women's and LGBTQ rights activists of various political persuasions) to organize beyond the laicism–Islamism divide and to build more inclusive struggles for gender equality.

After a decade of EU accession-oriented gender equality reforms in the 2000s, Turkey's gender regime is undergoing significant changes in line with the AKP's authoritarian-populist turn (Akçay, 2018; Esen & Gümüşçü, 2016; Güneş, 2017). In the institutional framework of politics, gender equality is being replaced by the Islamic notions of *fıtrat* (purpose of creation) that attributes differential natures to men and women, and gender complementarity which designates the family as "the only institution within which women's sexuality can rightly be expressed and their sanctified role, motherhood, realized" (Özyeğin, 2015, p. 197). In 2017, three significant initiatives of women's coalition-building set out to challenge Turkey's changing gender regime as shaped by AKP's authoritarian populism: the "Don't Mess with My Outfit!" (*Kıyafetime Karışma!*) campaign, the Equality, Justice, Woman Summit (*Eşitlik, Adalet, Kadın Zirvesi*), and the "Women Are Strong Together" (*Kadınlar Birlikte Güçlü*) campaign. All still ongoing, these initiatives have several common features. First, they defend gender equality with secularity as one of its core principles. Second, despite being organized largely by women who identify as feminist, they avoid the use of the controversialized concept of "feminism" in their political framing to form broader alliances. Third, they address "all women", including pious women, with the prospect of mobilizing them against AKP's gender politics. In this article, I analyze these coalition-building initiatives based on ethnographic research conducted online between March 2017 and June 2018, as well as an examination of the media coverage of gender equality activism in the given period. In the case of the third initiative, "Women Are Strong Together", I also integrate the informal exchanges between me and the organizers of the campaign, which took place in March 2018. Analyzing the political dynamics of these initiatives, I show that, first, gender equality activists in the 2010s are renegotiating the border between secularity and piety; second, that struggles against AKP's gender politics are fragmented due to different configurations of gender equality and secularity that reflect class and ethnic antagonisms in Turkish society.

There is a widespread tendency in gender studies scholarship to treat the "laicist" and "Islamist" sections of women's activism as homogenous, binary categories (e.g., Çaha, 2013; Turam, 2012). Contrary to this tendency, some recent studies employ the categories "secular" and "pious" in a non-binary (but still co-constitutive) fashion (e.g., Frank & Çelik, 2017; Kandiyoti, 2011; Özyeğin, 2015). Building on these studies, I argue that the latter approach allows to better understand the dynamics of coalition-building which reflect the ways in which women articulate gender equality based on their differential political belongings. Following Saba Mahmood, I differentiate between political secularism and secularity, where "[t]he former pertains to the modern state's relationship to, and regulation of, religion, while the latter refers to the set of concepts, norms, sensibilities, and dispositions that characterize secular societies and subjectivities" (Mahmood, 2016, p. 3). In Turkey, political secularism took the form of laicism (*laiklik*), which entailed that the religion was not removed from, but rather interpreted, overseen, and administered by the Turkish state (Davison, 2003). Since the rise of political Islam in Turkey and globally in the 1980s, laicism has been discursively reconstructed in binary opposition to Islamism. Instead, I suggest an analysis that builds on the concepts of secularity and piety in a mutually inclusive manner. As Deniz Kandiyoti has stated, "[t]hose wishing to use religious arguments to achieve [a] more progressive reading of women's rights are de facto members of secular spaces since feminists—of whatever persuasion—have little to gain from a closure of public deliberation" (quoted in Tadros, 2015, p. 664). In the concluding section of the article, I reflect on how such an analysis can also contribute to feminist strategies in the Nordic context.

2. Laicism–Islamism: A Gendered Divide

Since the foundation of modern Turkey in 1923, laicism has been one of the key principles that informed Kemalism, the founding ideology of the Republic. More than a simple separation between the state and religion, it functioned as a means to national sovereignty against religious authority and a scientific approach that enabled modern social organization (Çelik, 2006). Kemalist laicism shaped gender relations through a series of reforms in education (in 1924), attire (in 1925), civil rights (in 1926), and language (in 1928). The 1926 Civil Code outlawed polygamy and brought gender equality in the matters of marriage, divorce, child custody and inheritance, thereby strengthening women's position within the family and enabling their public participation in greater numbers. Laicism-related reforms, notwithstanding their ambiguous and not always advantageous results for lower-class women (see Kocabicak, 2018; Makal & Toksöz, 2012), changed women's social status and involved them as active subjects in nation-building processes. Kemalists thought that women were oppressed because of "backward" traditions and "reactionary" interpretations of Islam, and laicism would ensure gender equality between men and women. Yet, in the Kemalist project, laicism was intimately linked to modernism/Westernism and Turkish nationalism. This limited the public inclusion of those women who could not keep up with the modernization/Westernization and Turkification efforts of the new regime. Although Kemalism eliminated religion from the political sphere, it favored a certain interpretation of Islam that was carried out by the Directorate of Religious Affairs (hereafter *Diyanet*) established in 1924, and maintained the Sunni-Muslim identity as the desirable moral and behavioral dimension of Turkish citizenship (Atasoy, 2011). Through a strategic use of the modern-traditional binary, the non-Turkish and non-Sunni Muslim populations (e.g., Kurds, Alevis, Arabs) were provided with less access to the Kemalist public sphere, as they were labeled "backward" or "reactionary" subjects in need of modernization. The modern-traditional binary also divided women into the categories "covered" and "uncovered" (see Göle, 1996; Yeğenoğlu, 1998), associating laicism with a lifestyle defined by the adoption of Western attire and mixed-sex socialization as opposed to veiling and gender segregation. Laicism's association with lifestyle rendered gender equality reforms important means to maintain the

Kemalist imaginary of a classless society. As the modern-traditional binary evolved into the laicism–Islamism divide over the decades, women's attire remained having a central role in discussions around laicism, gender equality, and women's public participation.

After Turkey's transition to a multi-party regime in 1946, right-wing parties in power articulated Islamic beliefs and practices into the official ideology as components of Turkish culture, making it possible for Turkish nationalism to become more widespread than it had previously (Brockett, 2011). Following the 1980 military coup, the 1982 Constitution defined Islam a constituent of the official ideology under the label "Atatürk nationalism". The cultural sphere became subject to strict state surveillance together with the introduction of compulsory religious education and the adoption of the "Turkish-Islamic synthesis" as a dominant educational narrative (Keyman & Kancı, 2011). Throughout this time, despite the compromises in the implementation of the laicism principle and conservative politicians' increasing emphasis on women's role as mothers and wives (Sancar, 2012), covered women remained excluded from the public sphere and gender equality activists (back then mainly Kemalist and socialist women) did not tackle the problematic relationship between laicism and gender equality. Since the late-1980s, Islamism's gender project has drawn on a modern interpretation of political Islam in which the covered, educated Muslim woman posed a challenge to Western/Kemalist modernity (Çakır, 2000) and to the Kemalist narrative of women's rights. An increasing number of covered women organized against their exclusion from education and civil service. Their active participation in the Islamist civil society and political parties destabilized the proposition that laicism was the precondition for women's public inclusion. At the same time, the laicism–Islamism divide, now a grand narrative into which all other social antagonisms would be articulated (see Kandiyoti, 2012), infiltrated gender equality activism (this time including feminist women), showing itself in the disputes over the headscarf issue (see Çağatay, 2017).

3. AKP's Authoritarian-Populist Turn and Turkey's Changing Gender Regime

Coming to power in 2002, the AKP distanced itself from the anti-Western discourse of the previous Islamist parties and supported globalization and Turkey's EU membership while adopting the protection of the family and traditional values in its "Conservative Democracy" program (Coşar & Özkan-Kerestecioğlu, 2017; Ilkkaracan, 2017). In its first two terms in office (2002–2011), in line with Turkey's EU accession prospect, the party enabled significant improvements in women's rights by incorporating the notion of gender equality in the Constitution (in 2004 and 2010), the Penal Code (in 2004) and the Labor Code (in 2003), and by establishing an Equal Opportunity Commission in the Parliament in 2009 (Aldıkaçtı Marshall, 2013; Müftüler-Baç, 2012). In the 2010s, however, the notion of equality ceased to inform the state's gender policies as the AKP discredited laicism by labeling it as an imposed-from-above principle of Western/Kemalist modernity. Starting with the then Prime Minister Tayyip Erdoğan's declaration that he did not believe in gender equality (Cumhuriyet, 2010), *fıtrat* and complementarity gradually became dominant themes in Turkey's gender regime. In 2011, the State Ministry responsible for Women and the Family became the Ministry of Family and Social Policy (Ministry of Labor, Social Services and Family as of June 2018), reflecting the party view on women as primarily mothers, wives, and daughters. In 2015, the Constitutional Court decriminalized religious marriage unaccompanied by civil marriage, abolishing a legal measure that was adopted in 1936 in order to protect the rights that women gained through civil marriage (Kuyucu, 2016). In 2017, the Parliament passed a bill (the so-called Mufti law) that allows muftis (religious civil servants) to perform civil marriages despite the widely held view that this would encourage child marriages and further polarize Turkish society along the laicism–Islamism divide. In the same year, the 2010 prime ministerial circular, issued to increase women's employment and ensure equal opportunities, was revised. In the new draft of the circular the word "equality" was omitted, together with the previously adopted measures of equal pay for equal work, inspection of the establishment of crèches and daycare centers to support women's employment, and inclusion of women's organizations in decision-making processes regarding gender equality at work (Women's Labor and Employment Initiative [KEIG], 2017).

These changes in Turkey's gender regime are not stand-alone developments but crucial to the AKP's authoritarian-populist turn. Since the party came to power, part of its populist strategy has been to deepen the laicism–Islamism divide by building on a discourse of an "omnipotent Kemalist state repressing the weak society" (Alaranta, 2015). The pre-AKP Turkey was narrated as "a land of military tutelage and elitism where secular republican elites oppressed believers with their top-down policies of modernization and betrayed their own Islamic roots with their Westward-looking reforms" (Kandiyoti & Emanet, 2017, p. 873). Through government-dependent trade unions and civil society (including women's) organizations, the party formulated what was in fact an intra-elite conflict over state power as an antagonism between the people and the elite (Akçay, 2018; Yabancı, 2016). In so doing, the AKP mobilized support for a Muslim nationalism, presenting Turkey as an alternative civilizational center to Europe and nourishing neo-Ottomanist aspirations of becoming a dominant player in the Middle East (Alaranta, 2015; Işıksal & Göksel, 2018; White, 2013). In the 2010s, challenged by events such as the Gezi-inspired protests of 2013, clashes with the Gülenists (members of a politically powerful Islamist order) within the state, termination of the peace process with the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), and the failed coup d'état of 2016, the AKP embarked on increasingly authoritarian ways of ruling to remain in power. The failed coup and the ensuing state of emergency—declared to purge the Gülenists from both state and private institutions—gave the government a valid excuse to increase the political violence directed towards the social opposition as a whole. In the meantime, AKP's post-coup alliance with the Nationalist Action Party (MHP) further consolidated the nationalist dimension of its authoritarian turn and elevated Erdoğan to the status of the leader of the right-wing electorate (Türkmen & Küçük, 2016). In all these developments:

> Gender norms and specifically women's conduct and propriety play a key role in delineating the boundaries between 'us' (God-fearing, Sunni, AKP supporters), and a 'them' consisting of all political detractors and minorities, cast as potentially treasonous and immoral. (Kandiyoti, 2016, p. 105)

Accompanying AKP's authoritarian-populist turn is the introduction of various mechanisms that privilege (and further impose) a Turkish-Muslim identity. In this, the *Diyanet* acts as the key institution to realize the party's repeatedly stated mission to raise "pious generations". *Diyanet*'s role in reframing social relations, including gender, is most remarkably observed in changes in the educational system. In the 2010s, religious (*imam-hatip*) as well as private schools were prioritized over—and at times replaced—secular public schools, reproducing not only the supremacy of the majority sect but also the economic interests of the AKP-favored group of elites (Bayhan, 2017). During this time, the notions of *fıtrat* and complementarity have entered the school curricula through school books deeming marriage with atheist people or people belonging to other religions unacceptable, associating premarital relationships with adultery, and defining woman's obedience to her husband as a religious duty performed in return for the husband's responsibility over the family economy (Cumhuriyet, 2017).

Yet, privileging a Turkish-Muslim identity in itself does not hinder women's public participation. Covered women, already homogenized and utilized by Kemalists and Islamists alike, played an important role in AKP's populist appeal as the party assumed the role of representing Muslim women's rights. Under the AKP rule, the laicism–Islamism divide kept being reproduced over women's bodies but the link between laicism and women's public inclusion further diminished as covered women participated in the public sphere in greater numbers. In the 2000s, drawing on the EU's human rights framework, the party framed the headscarf issue as a matter of individual rights and freedoms. Covered women became visible in the highest ranks of the state, first as wives of the AKP elite, then as bureaucrats and politicians themselves. The rise of an AKP-supported bourgeoisie (Gümüşçü & Sert, 2009) and the advancement of the Islamist women's movement (Aksoy, 2015) supported their upward class mobility. Between 2011 and 2016, the ban on the headscarf was removed in public universities, the Parliament, courts, primary education (both for teachers and for girls from age 9), the police department, and various other fields of civil service. Today, nearly 4.5 million women have membership in the women's auxiliaries of AKP (AK Parti Kadın Kolları, 2017). An increasing number of female civil servants are hired in the *Diyanet* and the Ministry of Labor, Social Services and Family (Ministry of Family and Social Policy until June 2018), institutions responsible for redesigning gender relations according to *fıtrat* and complementarity (see Adak, 2015; Maritato, 2017). AKP's ideal of "strengthening the family institution" does not correspond to women's confinement in the familial sphere; unlike the Kemalist assumption that Islamism and women's public participation were incompatible, the latter proved to be inherent to the AKP's social engineering program.

4. Repositioning of Gender Equality Activists: Towards an Inclusionary Feminism?

Alongside the AKP's authoritarian-populist turn and the retrogression in women's rights, several other factors led gender equality activists to reposition themselves vis-à-vis AKP's gender politics and to seek broader alliances to challenge its rule. First, since the beginning of AKP's third term in office (2011–2015), women's organizations that had achieved considerable success in shaping Turkey's gender politics during the EU-oriented reform period were excluded from decision-making processes (Çağatay, 2018; Doyle, 2018). This pushed gender equality activists who previously pursued gender politics in platforms facilitated by Turkey's EU candidacy and the global gender equality regime (Kardam, 2005) into the counter-public sphere, including not only Kemalist, egalitarian, and Kurdish feminists but also Islamist women's rights activists. Second, in this period, "feminism" got discredited, especially by Erdoğan who portrayed feminists as Western agents acting against national interests, "women who did not belong to Turkish-Muslim culture and civilization" (Bianet, 2015). During the post-coup all-out attack on the social opposition, feminist journalists, writers, and activists got arrested; academics who supported women's and LGBTQ rights were purged. Kurdish feminists received a disproportionate share of state violence. Politicians (including members of the Parliament) were jailed, women's organizations and news agencies were shut down, municipality-run crisis centers available for women in the Kurdish region closed (Baysal, 2017; Gülbahar, 2017), showing clearly how Islamism and anti-feminism intertwined with Turkish nationalism. Third, during the AKP rule, feminism got "side-streamed" (Alvarez, 2014) thanks to feminists' successful awareness raising campaigns as well as their active involvement in various sites of oppositional politics. Opposition parties, particularly the pro-Kurdish People's Democratic Party

(HDP) and the Kemalist Republican People's Party (CHP), not only participated in the Parliament with feminist MPs but also adopted feminist terminology and analysis in their program (Kabasakal Arat, 2017). Fourth, both the experience of collective action during the Gezi-inspired protests and AKP's populism increasingly dividing people into "us" and "them" encouraged oppositional actors across the political spectrum, including feminists and the pro-Islamist left, to position themselves in an (albeit loosely defined) anti-AKP front. This positioning, together with the side-streaming of feminism, made gender equality a potential pivot point around which demands for equal citizenship could be built.

Finally, yet importantly, the political differentiation between different groups of covered women became visible. The AKP, in the legal processes it initiated to lift the headscarf ban, did not consult with the Islamist women's rights activists, who have been experts on this subject (Aksoy, 2015, p. 161), as these women were involved in gender equality activism. Furthermore, some covered women who were among the AKP's co-founders were later excluded from the party ranks upon criticizing the government's anti-democratic policies. In the post-coup period, Islamist women who were associated with the Gülenists got arrested, lost their jobs, and faced different forms of state violence. Meanwhile, an increasing number of pious women, especially those belonging to the upper classes and younger generations, found a "feminist vein" in themselves through which they "develop[ed] a critique of the masculine understanding and interpretation of gender relations in Islam" (Özyeğin, 2015). Such a feminist vein has also led to political organizing based on a new pious female identity like in the case of the *Reçel* (jam) Blog or the Muslims Against Violence Towards Women Initiative (see Akyılmaz & Köksalan, 2016; Özinanır, 2016). As more and more covered women raised their voices against the AKP rule, they became plausible actors for coalition-building against the party's gender politics. Taken together, these factors inclined some gender equality activists to go beyond the laicism–Islamism divide in challenging AKP's gender politics, which made possible the coalition-building initiatives I analyze below.

4.1. Don't Mess with My Outfit!

Initiated by the left-feminist "We Will Stop Femicide" Platform (KCDP), the "Don't Mess with My Outfit!" demonstrations took place over the summer of 2017 in Istanbul, Ankara, and Izmir. They were a reaction to the increasing physical and verbal attacks on women who did not cover or dress 'modestly' in public, carried out by men who seemed to have been encouraged by the negative views high rank government representatives and state officials express on the secular lifestyle. That the perpetrators of these attacks were not charged or condemned by government officials strengthened the impression that women who did not adopt a pious lifestyle (thus dress code) were not worthy of state protection. Protestors who gathered at the demonstrations declared that women will not remain silent on the "increasing attacks on women's lifestyle, dress and modern rights" (Bianet, 2017a). Linking these attacks to state policies and the widespread violence against women, they emphasized that the dress and lifestyle-related impositions on women come back to them as violence and murder. Remaining loyal to the KCDP's main agenda, the demonstrations treated violence against women as a universal common ground (see Grewal, 2005) where activists with differential political belongings could meet.

The "Don't Mess with My Outfit!" campaign brought together an array of gender equality activists. Members of the LGBTQ community joined after the Istanbul Pride March was deemed "against public morality" and banned by the authorities (The New Arab, 2017). Kemalist feminists participated in defense of a laic state and against inegalitarian gender politics (Hürriyet, 2017). A young covered woman held a placard that said, "Don't mess with my shorts or my headscarf!", exemplifying how the lifestyle argument appealed to both groups of women. The demonstrations grew into Women's Councils in several cities in Turkey under KCDP's leadership. On March 11, 2018, the Women's Council of Turkey gathered in a meeting in Istanbul, bringing together more than 500 women from 25 different cities. At this meeting, where covered women were a small but visible minority, participants agreed to not allow interventions in women's clothing and discussed how to resist the "outrageous" attempts to regulate women's behavior according to strict gender roles (Deutsche Welle, 2018).

The campaign was a powerful attempt at coalition-building because it drew attention to the instrumentalization of women's attire by governments in the name of political projects of belonging and, as such, it addressed "all women". Yet, the campaign's framing of the relationship between gender equality and secularity primarily as a lifestyle issue is problematic because it limits the differences between women to the cultural/religious sphere, overlooking how women's experience of lifestyle-based discrimination differ based on their class position. Since the 2000s, women's increased participation in public life went hand-in-hand with an overall transformation in the relations of production and reproduction through neoliberal policies that deepened the class divisions between women (see Akkan, 2018; KEIG, 2013). Urban, educated, upper-class women who had the financial means to outsource their housework and care work responsibilities could participate in public life on more equal footing with men. But lower-class women's employment in low-paid, flexible, insecure jobs, which were thought to be the continuation of their natural roles as mothers and wives (i.e., based on their *fıtrat*), left them economically dependent on the men in their families or the state (see Alnıaçık, Altan-Olcay, Deniz, & Gökşen, 2017; Kılıç, 2008). Thus, it is lower-class women who, because of their higher dependence on access to state services, suffer from lifestyle-based discrimination the most. For example, women seeking shelter from male violence might receive aid from the municipality depending on whether they cover (Ilkkaracan, 2017, p. 82), or divorced women might not receive state protection against violence because they "willingly" remain outside the family institution (Özar & Yakut-Çakar, 2013). Babül's (2015) research on the evaluation of the worthiness of rights seekers show that policy makers' "[p]ortrayals of women and children as innocent, depoliticized victims in need of care and protection…narrows the category of rights bearers by excluding groups who do not conform to the image of the helpless victim" (Babül, 2015, p. 116). In this case, KCDP's homogenization and universalization of women as victims of male violence in relation to lifestyle-based discrimination might not challenge but assist the changing gender regime under the AKP rule, whereas integrating a class perspective would contribute to the de-naturalization of *fıtrat* and complementarity-based arguments.

4.2. Justice, Equality, Woman Summit

On November 30 and December 1, 2017, the Equality, Justice, Woman Summit brought together 363 civil society organizations and around 900 women from 48 cities. It was organized by the initiative of Gülseren Onanç from the Kemalist CHP, who gathered an organizing committee of feminist academics and public figures and the logistic support of a CHP-led municipality in Istanbul. The summit was mainly a joint event of egalitarian and Kemalist feminists, but it also hosted a number of left feminist and Islamist women's rights activists. The summit organizers formulated women's struggle for equality and justice as constitutive of a broader oppositional agenda. They drew attention to the loss of impact of women's organizations on gender policy-making in a political atmosphere dominated by violence, militarism, and authoritarianism. All those having democratic demands, regardless of their political belonging, ethnic identity, and sexual orientation, were invited (Kadın Zirvesi, n.d.).

The summit title was strategically chosen to counter the pro-AKP women's agenda to replace "gender equality" with "gender justice". In the 2010s, as women's organizations who previously participated in the EU-oriented issue-based platforms were repositioned in the counter-public sphere, AKP-established anti-feminist GONGOs (government-organized non-governmental organizations), such as the Women and Democracy Association (KADEM), took over the role of representing Turkey at transnational feminist processes such as Beijing+20 or the GREVIO (Çağatay, 2018; Doyle, 2018). KADEM, involving both covered and not covered women in its body, advocates for the reorganization of gender relations based on *fıtrat* and complementarity under the brand name "gender justice", arguing that this notion transcends the Western notion of "gender equality" (Hürriyet, 2015). Against this argument, the CHP-supported Equality, Justice, Woman Summit manifests that, without equality, there can be no justice.

Considering the predominant presence of Kemalist feminists as organizers and participants, the lack of any reference to laicism, Kemalism or feminism in the framing of the summit was striking. The CHP leader Kılıçdaroğlu's denunciation of the headscarf's instrumentalization in politics and admission of his party's responsibility in deepening the laicism–Islamism divide (CHP TV, 2017), followed by a panel on "gender equality and egalitarian interpretations of Islam", was a clear invitation for pious women to join the summit. The organizers' intention to form a broad coalition for gender equality was noticeable in the calls they made for organized solidarity among women and the wide range of women's and LGBTQ issues discussed at the summit, including problems in paid employment, access to state services, gender-based violence, participation in politics and decision-making, and the backlash against universal rights (Kadın Zirvesi, n.d.).

Yet, a similarly inclusionary attitude was absent when it came to the topics of nationalism, peace, and the Kurdish conflict. These were addressed neither in the panel topics nor in the final declaration of the summit, an otherwise comprehensive document comprising a set of demands regarding "equal opportunities for citizens of different gender, language, religion, sexual orientation, and political belonging" (Bianet, 2017b). Feminist initiatives that work for the peaceful resolution of the Kurdish conflict, such as the Women's Initiative for Peace, were not invited to participate in the summit. The exclusion of topics related to nationalism and peace from the summit agenda and of pro-Kurdish gender equality activists from the list of invited speakers can be partly explained by the AKP's criminalization of the public support for pro-Kurdish politics as an "act supporting terrorism" and the summit organizers' unwillingness to take the risk of defaming their initiative. But a more accurate explanation seems to be sheer nationalism. Since the 1990s, Kemalists' refusal to coalesce with secular pro-Kurdish actors as equal partners against the rise of Islamist gender politics—despite the importance of Kurdish feminists as allies in articulating gender equality with secularity—has been a constitutive dynamic of the laicism–Islamism divide (Çağatay, 2017). Similarly, the summit organizers' unwillingness to tackle Turkish nationalism and express open support for the peaceful resolution of the Kurdish conflict casts a shadow on their otherwise inclusive coalition for gender equality. Notwithstanding, in May 2018, the summit curator Gülseren Onanç launched the Equality, Justice, Woman Platform that aims to bring together Turkey's gender equality activists in an online platform. Both the participation of the pro-Kurdish HDP representatives in the launch ceremony of the platform (Bianet, 2018) and the focus on issues related to peace and conflict resolution in the platform website (esitlikadaletkadin.org) hint that for Kemalist and egalitarian feminists a more open engagement with the Kurdish conflict and willingness to coalesce with Kurdish feminists might be forthcoming.

4.3. Women Are Strong Together

The "Women Are Strong Together" campaign was initiated by a group of feminist and women's rights activists in January 2017. Women involved in the campaign organized simultaneous demonstrations in Istanbul and Ankara in January 2018 against the *Diyanet*'s intrusion into everyday life practices. In the 2010s, *Diyanet*'s weight in shaping gender relations increased as the institution gained more administrative power through its nation-wide Family and Counseling Bureaus and joint projects with the Ministry of Labor, Social Services and Family and the Ministry of Education. Alongside running educational programs on "strengthening the family institution", the *Diyanet* releases fatwas propagating the notions of *fıtrat* and complementarity, such as labeling feminism as immorality; allowing for men to divorce their wives via email, SMS, or phone call; or approving nine-year-old girls' eligibility for marriage according to Islamic rules (BBC, 2018). Although fatwas are not legally binding, they still have the discursive power to shape social attitudes towards gender. It was the latter fatwa, together with the so-called Mufti law that allowed muftis to perform civil marriages and potentially encouraged child marriages, which urged the "Women Are Strong Together" initiative to react. Organizers of the well-attended demonstrations denounced *Diyanet*'s fatwas that legitimized sexual abuse of young girls and stated that no state institution can express support for sexual crimes. Pointing at the disproportionately big state budget allocated to the *Diyanet*, they claimed that the taxes collected from women were invested in restricting their lives (Evrensel, 2018).

The demonstrations thus created a common ground for "all women" to unite for equal citizenship rights, without state-imposed restrictions on gender relations. Addressing the state, instead of the AKP government, is an inclusionary strategy of coalition-building because, by pointing to the patriarchal nature of the state as an institution that seeks men's interests, it goes beyond not only the laicism–Islamism binary but also the pro-AKP versus anti-AKP socio-political divide. Since the late-1980s, feminist movements in Turkey have challenged Islamist gender politics from the perspective of patriarchy. In the feminist view, the labeling of the headscarf by Kemalists as "anti-laic", while Islamist men occupied high positions in state institutions, showed how laicism and national identity were constructed by and through women's bodies. Feminists supported covered women's struggle to participate in public life as a demand of equal citizenship but at the same time criticized the conservative, Sunni-Muslim female role model defined by her familial responsibilities. This made it possible for feminists to pursue gender politics without taking sides on the laicism–Islamism divide. Similarly, in the demonstrations targeting the *Diyanet*, framing gender equality as an institutional alongside a lifestyle issue and demanding the secularity of state organs from the perspective of equal citizenship denounced the privileging of the Turkish-Muslim identity without associating the practice of covering with Islamist politics.

When its agenda is evaluated as a whole, the all-encompassing character of the "Women Are Strong Together" campaign comes to light. Gender equality activists involved in the campaign have so far organized a series of events and demonstrations that challenged not only the laicism–Islamism binary but also Turkish nationalism, neoliberalism, and heterosexism. Its flexible organization in the form of issue-based action allows for the participation of feminists of different political persuasions as well as LGBTQ and Islamist women's rights activists, with a changing composition depending on the topic at hand. In terms of women's coalition-building, this flexibility bears potentialities as well as limitations. The strategy to simultaneously address the multiple forms of inequality that disadvantage women without reducing them to AKP's authoritarian populism offers an intersectional political framework for organizations such as the Muslims Against Violence Towards Women Initiative or the Women's Initiative for Peace to articulate their single-issue agendas into a broader struggle for gender equality. As such, the "Women Are Strong Together" campaign comes closest to formulating an inclusive notion of gender equality. Yet, the very flexibility of the campaign hinders the potential to develop its wide range of gender equality demands into a more coherent political program. The antagonistic political belongings of the campaign's participants, such as those of Kemalist and Kurdish feminists, can only be contained, but not transcended, in a loose form of organization that does not provide much space for political deliberation.

5. Conclusions

From the early years of the Republic in the 1920s until the end of the 2000s, gender equality and laicism have been constitutive—although instrumentalized—elements of Turkey's official ideology. In the 2010s, AKP's authoritarian-populist turn initiated shifts in the gender regime based on the notions of *fıtrat* and complementarity as part of a Turkish-Muslim social engineering program. This period also saw the disintegration of the relationship between laicism and (covered) women's public participation, political differentiation among covered women, the side-streaming of feminism, and the articulation of gender equality as a potential pivot point around which to build demands for equal citizenship. This conjuncture mobilized gender equality activists to build coalitions that maintained secularity and piety in a mutually inclusive manner.

In this article, I focused on three such initiatives of women's coalition-building and discussed their political dynamics. These initiatives commonly address "all women", including pious women, and aim to mobilize them against the AKP's gender politics. Organizers of these initiatives do not refer in their political framing to feminism and laicism but instead to gender equality and secularity, as a tactic to avoid both confrontations over contested topics that might be detrimental to coalition-building and being labeled as marginal, anti-national, Western agents. In this framing, they also refrain from publicizing their political affiliations, adopting instead broad titles for their initiatives that can serve as blanket terms. In fact, looking at the constituents of the "Don't Mess with My Outfit!" and "Women Are Strong Together" campaigns and the Justice, Equality, Woman Summit it is clear that various groups organize and/or attend to multiple initiatives of coalition-building simultaneously, making it difficult to draw clear lines of division between gender equality activists' political affiliations. These ongoing initiatives of coalition-building are promising attempts to build solidarity among women beyond the laicism–Islamism divide and to raise demands for equal citizenship. They indicate, as Özyeğin argues, that pious and secular subjects "can no longer perceive one another in terms of rigidly defined anonymous social categories that carry information about each other's moral status and views" (Özyeğin, 2015, p. 224). At the same time, actors who articulate gender equality with secularity are not a uniform 'equality front' but divided from within due to their differential political belongings. Specifically, Turkish nationalism and the Kurdish conflict constitute a major line of division among women's groups; class inequalities are not fully incorporated in gender equality agendas; and LGBTQ issues are only superficially addressed in political framings.

Recent developments in gender equality struggles, some of which I examined here, bring a scholarly need to shift our analytical lens in the study of women's activism away from binary approaches to secularism and religion. Such a shift might be useful in the Nordic context to destabilize the "mythical mantra of gender equality" and to highlight the affinity between the state, nationalism, secularism, and dominant understandings of gender equality (Martinsson, Griffin, & Giritli Nygren, 2016; see also Liinason, 2018b). There is a striking similarity between the Turkish and Scandinavian models of gender equality in their emphasis on the secular state and identity posed in opposition to traditionalized religion (Berg, Lundahl, & Martinsson, 2016). Including southern perspectives in discussions within the north, as Kabeer, Stark and Magnus (2008) suggest, can shed light onto the large amount of work to be done with regards to gender equality in Scandinavia by "reversing the gaze". This work includes countering the appropriation of gender equality by racist and right-wing movements as a strategy to portray the migrant Muslim population as a threat to Nordic gender equality (see Mulinari, 2016) as well as identifying the processes of inclusion and exclusion inscribed in gender equality struggles due to antagonisms based on class, ethnic, religious, and national belonging. Addressing the differences in terms of access to resources and power between not only men and women but also different groups of women would, in turn, enhance Nordic feminist strategies that advocate for a plural notion of feminisms and the constructive co-existence of diverse positions regarding gender equality (Cuesta & Mulinari, 2018; Liinason, 2018a).

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Article

When the Personal Is Always Political: Norwegian Muslims' Arguments for Women's Rights

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Abstract

For almost two decades, the public debate about Islam in Western Europe has been dominated by concerns about the lack of gender equality in the racialized Muslim population. There has been a tendency to victimize "the Muslim woman" rather than to encourage Muslim women's participation in the public debate about their lives. This contribution to the study of discourses on Muslim women is an analysis of arguments written by Muslims about women's rights. The data consists of 239 texts written by self-defined Muslims in major Norwegian newspapers about women's rights. I will discuss two findings from the study. The first is an appeal to be personal when discussing issues of domestic violence and racism is combined with an implicit and explicit demand to represent all Muslims in order to get published in newspapers—which creates an ethno-religious threshold for participation in the public debate. The second finding is that, across different positions and different religious affiliations, from conservative to nearly secular, and across the timeline, from 2000 to 2012, there is a dominant understanding of women's rights as individual autonomy. These findings will be discussed from different theoretical perspectives to explore how arguments for individual autonomy can both challenge and amplify neoliberal agendas.

Keywords

European Islam; feminism; Hannah Arendt; individualism; neoliberalism; Norway; public debate; traditional media; Wendy Brown; women's rights

Issue

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1. Introduction

"It is at this point a political action to tell it like it is, to say what I really believe about my life instead of what I've always been told to say", writes Carol Hanich (1970, p. 24) in her essay with the iconic title *The Personal is Political*. The year is 1969 and Hanich is writing about the women's movement consciousness-raising meetings. Giving political and social problems their proper name was part of the success of the women's movement. The rhetorical move of making the personal political has been a dominant strategy for several political movements, where counter-publics have been used to give idioms, notions, and narratives and raise the consciousness of marginalized groups in society (Andersen, 2014; Brown, 1995; Fraser, 2000). Thus, it is not surprising that the present analysis of Muslims' arguments for women's rights in the Norwegian media sphere show that "I" was frequently used and the use of personal anecdotes and narratives was a dominant rhetorical strategy to address racism and women's oppression. What is more surprising is that, across different positions and religious affiliations, from conservative to nearly secular, and across the timeline, from 2000 to 2012, there is a dominant understanding of gender equality as individual autonomy.

For two decades the western public debate about Islam has been dominated by concerns about the lack of gender equality in the racialized Muslim population. There has been a tendency to describe "Muslim women" rather than encourage participation by the women who are under scrutiny (Abu-Lughod, 2013; Ahmed, 2011; Göle, 2013; Scott, 2007; van Es, 2016). Studies of the Norwegian and Dutch media discourse of migrant and Muslim women have found that the growing attention paid to "Muslim" women's perceived lack of emancipation and the accusation that Islam oppresses women have turned "being oppressed" into a stigma (van Es, 2016). The discourse of the oppressed Muslim woman creates a counter stereotype of the "Western woman" as modern, progressive, secular, highly educated and active in the labour market (Benn & Jawad, 2003, pp. 1–17). This juxtaposition indicates that the discourse of the Muslim woman in the Norwegian and Western-European context forms the general public discourse about gender equality and women's rights (Scharff, 2011).

The data for my research is every text written by self-defined Muslims in op-eds or in the debate section in major Norwegian newspapers about women's rights between 2000 and 2012. The archive consists of 239 texts. In this article, I have focused on two findings from a larger study of topics concerning the controversies about women's rights and Islam in the media debate (Helseth, 2017). The main aim is not to cover all arguments and topics concerning women's right in the text archive, but to discuss the rhetorical use of the personal narrative when arguing for women's rights and the topos of individual autonomy.

This article is divided into six sections, including this introduction. The second section is a description of the methodology. The third section shows that Muslims are being personal when they argue for women's rights through their use of experience, family background and anecdotes and that, simultaneously, they are met with both explicit and implicit demands to represent Muslims as a group. I argue that these two factors—being personal, almost private, and representing a collective—create an ethno-religious threshold in the Norwegian media debate. In the fourth section, I show that individual autonomy is an important topos in arguments for women's rights. In the fifth section, I discuss how the tendencies towards individualization of the public debate and the topos of personal autonomy can both challenge and amplify the neoliberal agenda. Finally, in the sixth section I make some concluding remarks.

2. Methodology

I have analysed texts written by Muslims about women's rights that were published in national or regional newspapers between 2000 and 2012. Through the use of a Norwegian media database, Retriever, I have collected texts using five criteria: (1) the texts are written by a person who claims to be a Muslim or represent a Muslim organization. Thus, I apply a broad definition of "Muslim". There is no objective definition of being a Muslim, and the boundaries of the definition are one of the contested issues in the discussion of the category Muslim (Leirvik, 2009; Roald, 2004). (2) The 239 items are written texts. This criterion excludes interviews and participation in TV debates because I want to analyse arguments as close to the writers' own words and agendas as possible. (3) The texts are published in a regional or national newspaper, which means an editor before publication has approved them. (4) The topic of the text is women's rights, as the writer understands them. If the writer claims to be arguing for women's rights, the text is part of the sample. The topics of the texts include, for example, honour-killing, forced marriage, critiques of the media stereotype of the "Muslim" woman as oppressed, patriarchal social control, racism, Islamic feminism, arguments for Islam as a women-friendly religion and arguments that perceive Islam as oppressive. There is great heterogeneity in the material. (5) The texts were published during the timeframe of 2000 to 2012.

Following these five criteria, I have constructed an archive of 239 texts. On the one hand there are substantial advantages in creating a body of data because it makes it possible to be quite specific about how Norwegian Muslims argue for women's rights in the media sphere. On the other hand, it limits the perspective. This is not a study of the totality of the media debate about Islam, women's rights or the multicultural society. And the archive is not representative of all Norwegian Muslims' views on women's rights. Rather, the archive consists of Muslims' arguments for women's rights that the mainstream media was willing to publish, and this makes it possible to analyse what could be seen as both implicit and explicit demands in the media debate.

The text was coded using qualitative software to reveal patterns of idiom and argumentation. There are several methods to analyse texts in the social sciences, and the reasons here for applying a version of discourse analysis inspired by Carol Bacchi's question "what is the problem represented to be?" (Bacchi, 2009), the WPR approach, and classical rhetorical theory (Aristoteles, 2006/340 BC; Kjeldsen, 2006; Rosengren, 2008) are based on the data material and my research interests. The texts as a genre are rhetorical, and a rhetorical theory gives the opportunity to preserve the writer's intention ("ethos") and the emotional investment and intensity of the argument ("pathos"), while giving a social context to the arguments by an analysis of "topoi". Topoi are the plural form of topos, which translates from Greek as "place". In the analysis, it is used as the mental place that gives arguments their authority. Topoi can be understood both in terms of which persons and ethos have a legitimate right to participate in the discourse, which arguments (logos) are valid and which normative ideals are seen as unquestionably good. The possibility of persuading somebody depends on you agreeing on something, and this something is "topoi". Aristoteles (2006/340 BC) states that there are three modes of persuasion, through ethos, pathos and logos. In this article, the topoi of ethos arguments are particularly relevant. Ethos is the speaker's trustworthiness; the performance, the mode of speaking, but also the social background, clothes and dialect. An ethos argument presupposes that the speaker understands what is convincing for the audience to whom she is speaking. Studying patterns of ethos arguments, of how the writers position themselves in the texts, signals what the readers presumably find convincing. An examination of which arguments seem convincing reveals demands on ethos, on who she needs "to be" in order to be heard and what she needs to say to convince the group to whom she is speaking. Thus, the analysis has the potential to reveal social structures and hierarchies in the society where the speaker performs her arguments.

Carol Bacchi's (2009) WPR approach presupposes that we are governed by "problematisations". Thus, to analyse what the problem is represented to be is a way of understanding the underlying discourses of what is seen as a political or social problem. These "problematisations" form the imagined and implemented political solutions in society. Thus, by analysing the problem representations in the arguments, we gain clarity about the dominant discourses that form the ways in which we speak or think about what is a good and just society.

In conclusion, I have used a rhetorical analysis of topoi and an understanding taken from Bacchi's WPR approach to analyse the dominant ethos in the arguments, the politics of the personal, and the topos of personal autonomy. In the following sections, I translate all quotes from the texts.

3. The Politics of the Personal

There are several indications that point to individualization when Muslims argue for women's rights. Firstly, the analyses of the timeline show that the classical multiculturalism argument (Modood, 2011), which assumes that cultural traditions and practices should have special protection because they are a part of a minority culture, disappears in 2004. This indicates that the struggle for rights as a minority group is not central to the argumentation after 2004 and that the individual is the preferred entity to argue for rights. Secondly, 239 texts are coded in qualitative software that gives the opportunity to do word counts, and "I" was used 1307 times. Literally, this is to take words out of context, but it is nevertheless an indication that the use of first-person narratives is important in the texts, and this leads to the third point. The analyses of argumentation show that first person-narratives and personal experience are used to highlight racial discrimination and women's oppression. Personal biographies, family relations and religious beliefs seem like significant parts of the arguments' topoi (Helseth, 2017, pp. 151–164). They must to some degree have the legitimate right to speak. I will give one example. Ambreen Perez (2010, p. 23) writes about social control by the ethnic majority in Norway:

> I have experienced sarcastic comments like: "It would have been better to see you in a mini-skirt than with that cloth on your head", "You are not western anymore, now you are one of those "*gardinfolka*" ("curtain people"). "Paki-whore" is another example that ethnic Norwegian women who convert to Islam have heard.

The frequent use of "I", the disappearing argument of classical multiculturalism and the use of personal experience together signal an individualization of the Norwegian multicultural debate. But there is also a tendency to implicitly and explicitly indicate that the "I" represents Muslims as a group.

One of the criteria for the text archive is, as mentioned, is that you are a Muslim and write from a position of being part of the Muslim community. Some of the writers use this positioning to legitimize a critical stance towards their own group. Lily Bandehy (2009a, p. 47) argues for a hijab ban and writes:

> I am a refugee from Iran who grew up in a Muslim family. Islam is a part of my identity and it is a part of me, and nobody can accuse me of suffering from Islamophobia. But both many modern Muslims and I wish to ban the hijab in the public sphere in Norway.

Bandehy signals her Muslim identity to legitimize her ethos as a speaker for the group. She uses this ethos to represent "modern Muslims" and to indicate that she is an insider and knows what the group wants. She also uses the ethos to avoid accusations of "Islamophobia". The group identity is not only used to criticize Islam in the text archive, but also to defend it from generalization, par example when Shabana Rehman (2009, p. 10) writes: "I am a radical Muslim" as her, answer to a claim that Islam in itself is destructive. Bushra Ishaq (2010, p. 56) describes the stigmatization and discrimination she has experienced because she is a publicly well-known Muslim.

In addition to these examples of group representation, there are two modes of argumentation that reveal the problem with the ethos of representing Muslims as a group: the accusation of speaking "with two tongues" and to be a "coconut".

Walid al-Kubaisi (2006, p. 2) claims that Muslim spokespersons "speak with two tongues", one in which they praise acts of terror for their own group and a public voice that condemns the same actions. Shabana Rehman (2002, p. 4) accuses Pakistani men of "double standards". Again Bandehy (2009b, p. 40) accuses the politician Abid Raja of participating in a "dangerous double game". Through delegitimizing other writers' ethos, they are highlighting an ethos of truth. The use of the adjective "double" to describe the others' position makes sense as long as there is a mistrust of the Muslim group ethos in the public debate. Accusations of being duplicitous can be warranted by the lack of trust between Islamic organizations and the Norwegian media public.

The other accusation that also concerns belonging to a racialized group are the label "coconut" used by Iffit

Quershi (2006, p. 4). Being a "coconut" implies that one has the wrong ethnic loyalty, and the argument attacks the ethos of the speaker and not the logos. The warrant of the argument as racialized is that, if they criticize their ethnic group for such things as lack of gender equality, they do it because they have internalized the negative views held by the majority society.

Both of these arguments have a questionable way of placing the emphasis on group loyalty, and that what you are is more important than what you say. The supposition is that both arguments are connected to the writer's ethnicity, or more specifically to their ethno-religious background. The reason why both labels are valid is that the accused writer has a Muslim background.

Together, the combination of the distinctive use of a personal narrative to be given a voice and an explicit and implicit demand to represent all Muslims creates what I have labelled an ethno-religious threshold for Muslims who participate in the public debate about women's rights. This threshold is unjust because it prevents parity of participation and hinders an opportunity to have a voice about matters that concern your life. White feminists who participate in the debate about violence against women are not necessarily met with demands to talk about their personal lives, and their views are not interpreted as the views of all white women, but are often seen as individual views on the situation.

The intertwining of the personal narrative and the political issue may cause and increase a particular form of argumentation by which, if the writer's personal narrative (ethos) is questioned, the political issue can also be undermined. This could lead to a self-reinforcing negative spiral, where an attack on the ethos becomes more central than what the writer is actually arguing, the logos.

Feminist and postcolonial critics have targeted the fact that some people's situated knowledge has been reduced to being singular and particular, but others' voices, perspectives and experiences have been understood as universal (Beauvoir, 1997; Mohanty, 2003; Ortner, 1972). The criticism can be summed up like this: if a person writes, talks and experiences from a marked position as an "other", then that position is seen as exceptional and one that cannot represent the human condition or universal human experience. Here, the marked position as a Muslim indicates that you should be more personal than others and at the same time seem to represent a collective identity.

4. The Topos of Individual Autonomy

Through the use of Carol Bacchi's (2009) methodology of asking "what is the problem represented to be?" I found that in almost all of the 239 texts the political problem was represented to be a lack of individual autonomy (Helseth, 2017, pp. 117–139). The text archive consists of a variety of positions and opinions. But whether the argument is for wearing the niqab, questioning the status of the hijab, arguments against forced marriage or against postcolonial paternalism, the problem is represented to be women's lack of individual autonomy. The writers disagree on what hinders women's individual autonomy, but they all use the same topos.

The first group of arguments describes the problem to be the lack of critique of patriarchal collective culture in the minority community, which hinders women's personal autonomy. The second group of arguments describes the problem to be the labelling of Muslim women as oppressed, which hinders personal autonomy. The first group of arguments is founded on the binary opposition between individual freedom and a collective-oriented culture. Shabana Rehman in particular gives voice to the fight against the collective-oriented culture "where the individual barely exists" (Rehman, 2005a, p. 47) and young people pay "with their own blood" (Rehman, 2005b, p. 4) in the fight for "individual freedom"(Rehman, 2005b, p. 4.) In this group of arguments, gender equality is defined as liberation from collective-oriented culture and religious norms. The definition of individual autonomy is the act of liberating yourself from an oppressive background.

The second group of arguments describes the binary opposition as between the right to be seen as an individual with agency and being labelled as oppressed. Ali Athar (2002, p. 34) states that for "many youths, among them girls, the opportunity to live according to their own beliefs, traditions and to be different within Norwegian society is a problem". In arguments for the right to wear the hijab, the most central is individual agency (Akran, 2004, p. 50; Alghazari, 2012, p. 23; Hassan, 2010, p. 13, 2011, p. 16; Khan, 2009, p. 22; Mahmood, 2009, p. 22; Pervez, 2010, p. 4; Raja, 2009, p. 38; Rafiq, 2002, p. 51; Tajamal, 2009, p. 3).

There are four different ways to validate the argument: (1) that women's choice of clothing is a private issue as opposed to a public concern; (2) in terms of the right to personal autonomy over your own body; (3) as a phenomenon that the majority society has problems to see as a free choice; and (4) as clothing that the writers themselves have chosen to wear.

The right to value and perform cultural and Islamic traditions is framed as a question of personal autonomy. The right to choose a way of life that contrasts with the dominant majority culture is described as a token of individual autonomy. Both groups of arguments frame the problem to be collective cultural norms. In the first group, they target patriarchal cultural and religious norms and in the second group they target the cultural norms of the majority.

5. Neoliberal Individualism and Feminism

In the previous three sections, I have presented the methodology of my study of how Norwegian Muslims argue for women's rights, along with two empirical findings: the ethos of the personal narrative combined with collective representation and the topos of individual autonomy. In this, section the findings will be discussed through the lens of how the individualization of the political discourse can both amplify and challenge a neoliberal agenda. A common understanding of neoliberalism is as a political economic system that:

> [P]roposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets and free trade. (Harvey, 2005, p. 2)

Even though this is a definition of neoliberalism that targets economic policies affecting a large number of citizens across the world, it is not the economic agenda that I wish to discuss here. Therefore, Wendy Brown's (2005, 2015) definition of a neoliberal rationality is more appropriate. Brown poses the question of what is new in neoliberalism and answers that it is deploying a form of governmentality "that reaches from the soul of the citizen" (Brown, 2005, p. 39). She describes neoliberalism as a form of rationality that is "extending and dissemination market values to all institutions and social action" (Brown, 2005, p. 40). Central to her definition is the notion of homo œconomicus; the embodiment of market rationality which also becomes the gold standard for human behaviour in every sphere of life. The neo in neoliberalism is, according to Brown, a change in morality, whereby all human actions, policies and political rhetoric are measured against a standard of profitability, a neoliberal economization (Brown, 2015, pp. 28–35). She states: "Within neoliberal rationality, human capital is both our "is" and our "ought"—what we are said to be, what we should be, and what the rationality makes us into through its norms and construction of environments" (Brown, 2015, p. 36).

Brown describes a rather grim vision of the future of the liberal democracy where homo œconomicus has replaced homo politicus. When liberty is relocated from political to economic life, the purpose of participating is not to develop moral autonomy and gain insights into your own views and desires; your desires are predefined by the logic of the market. Neoliberal individualism is the right to participate in a market, but without the possibility of changing the rules of competition, the goal is profit and by earning you are doing the right thing. Brown's context is the USA and she argues against the economization of every sector of society. The Norwegian context is different in the sense that we have a welfare state, even though the rhetoric of the market is having a great impact, for example, in the sphere of higher education (Hessen, 2017). However, I find her concept of neoliberal rationality and normativity fruitful in the discussion of my findings of how Norwegian Muslims argue for women's rights. I start with a discussion of the topos of individual autonomy.

Self-realization, individuality and modernity are intertwined entities, and it is tempting to suggest that Muslims who argue for women's rights are part of the zeitgeist of modern societies when they emphasize personal autonomy. As part of the project of modernity, your personal choices reveal your individuality and tell the story of who you are (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2002; Giddens, 1997; Gullestad, 2006). As a consequence, there is also a battle for who can be understood as a subject of free will. This battle has a particular colonial history, as Gayatri Spivak (1988/2009) shows in her influential essay in which she discusses whether there is a possibility for the subaltern to speak. Spivak describes how the British colonial regime uses the powerful discourse of saving the brown women from brown men to legitimize their occupation by banning the tradition of widow burning, sati. In consequence, the Indian woman is an object. On the other hand, the Indian nationalist argument is that Indian women are willing to die, and the self-sacrificing woman is described as a subject, a token of Indian nationalist nostalgia. Since saving the Muslim ("brown") women is still used within an imperialist and racist agenda (Abu-Lughod, 2013; Ahmed, 2011; Göle, 2013; Scott, 2007; van Es, 2016), it is understandable that Muslims in the Norwegian public debate argue for their right to agency, to be seen as modern individuals with free will. But this raises two questions: who defines what agency is? And agency over what?

Wendy Brown is critical of the dominant understanding of choice in the western hijab debate. In this debate, there is a false dichotomy between morally autonomous western women and Muslim hijab-wearing women.

> The idea that Western women choose while Islamic women are coerced ignores the extent to which all choice is conditioned by as well as imbricated with power, and the extent to which choice itself is an impoverished account of freedom, especially political freedom. (Brown, 2012, p. 10)

Saba Mahmood (2005) criticizes the Eurocentric views of agency that are relentlessly tied to the political goal of personal autonomy in western feminist philosophy and studies. In Mahmood's study of conservative Egyptian Salafi women, "the western feminist" understanding of agency does not apply. Mahmood states that the desire to submit to God and undermine your own desires is not possible to understand in the feminist vocabulary of agency, which has personal autonomy as its supreme goal. These religious women want to form their selves within a collective religious frame—and this process is not deterministic but situated. The Norwegian anthropologist Christine Jacobsen (2011) uses Mahmood's thinking in her analyses of young Norwegian Muslims' self-understanding. These young women interpret and bend religious norms and demands into a vocabulary of choice, autonomy and authenticity, in ways that mix their demands for personal autonomy with religious norms. Jacobsen's use of Mahmood can contribute to contextualizing the demand for personal autonomy. The ideal of personal autonomy can be framed as a colonial idea that makes it difficult to understand Muslim women's actions and views as self-determined by using Western women's lives, experiences and ideas as an unquestionable standard against which every woman is measured. This is a valuable critique, but it does not give answers to what role personal autonomy should have in a feminist agenda for a just society.

In Anne Phillips' (2007) *Multiculturalism without Culture*, she states that persons have rights, not cultures or religions, and tries to formulate universal standards for a just multicultural society. Her three norms are: to protect minors from harm, to prevent physical and mental violence, and to ensure that men and women are treated as equals (Phillips, 2007, p. 34). Personal autonomy, according to Phillips, is not sufficient to ensure gender equality. She thinks that there is an embedded tension between personal autonomy and equality because people have a tendency to make choices that sustain hierarchies. The opportunity to choose has to be seen in relation to how the sum of the gender-conservative choices conforms to and amplifies gender norms and hierarchies. Choices are conditioned as well as imbricated by power, as Wendy Brown describes, and Phillips would add that they are always made within a cultural context—a context that is not static or unchangeable, but still forms our desires and the choices we make.

In the text archive, the dominant topos is individual autonomy; even the most conservative Muslims use the right to choose as a central argument. The topos of personal autonomy can be used to amplify a neoliberal agenda and can be seen as part of the tendency labelled "choice feminism" (Thwaites, 2017). Rachel Thwaites critiques the use of the choice narrative in feminism. The topos of "choice feminism" is that a woman should be able to do whatever she wants. Thus, choice feminism strives to be inclusive and not condemn individual women's choices. The problem, according to Thwaites (2017), is that this is also part of the pervasive neoliberal rhetoric of choice and it hinders a necessary political discussion of the cultural norms, political practices and economic inequalities that inform our individual choices. Even though Thwaites writes about women who choose to take their husband's name in Britain, her discussion is informative for an understanding of the topos of personal autonomy when Muslims argue for women's rights in Norway. When the topos of personal autonomy is used to understand women's rights, one needs to ask: who has agency, and agency over what? This leads to a further discussion of how feminism is understood in relation to neoliberalism in the Norwegian public debate and probably in other countries in the Global North. However, individual autonomy should not be abandoned or delegitimized as a political goal, and it could also be essential to challenge the neoliberal agenda, as I will show in the discussion of the next finding.

In Section 4, I make an argument that there is an ethno-religious threshold that is unjust because Muslims are met with demands to be both personal and at the same time seen as representing a collective. This normative judgment is based on an ideal of everyone having a right to moral autonomy. In 1944 essay *We Refugees*, Hannah Arendt writes about the paradoxes of being an individual and also part of the collective of Jewish refugees: "If we are saved we feel humiliated, and if we are helped we feel degraded. We fight like madmen for private existences with individual destinies" (Arendt, 1943/1994, p. 114).

In Arendt's agonistic individualism, which has also been labelled "democratic individualism" (Kateb, 1994), one can first appear as an individual when one recognizes the reciprocal right of others to do the same. "The end of the common world has come when it is seen only under one aspect and is permitted to present itself in only one perspective" (Arendt, 1998, p. 58). Arendt explicitly defends the individual voice, and what makes her theory and reflections particularly relevant to this article is that she defends the individual voice in relation to a marked identity as Jewish (Scholem & Arendt, 1964). Her ideal for public debate is for everyone to have the opportunity to speak with a personal voice, to speak one's truth, doxa, while simultaneously being part of a collective identity as Jewish, and to claim what is universal, what should be true, good and right for all. And everyone should be able to move between these modes of argument. Arendt's individualism is far from the neoliberal rationality that has reduced a normative standard of moral autonomy to a narrow understanding of self-interest. As Arendt writes elsewhere:

> As Jews we want to fight for the freedom of the Jewish people, because "If I am not for me—who is for me?" As Europeans we want to fight for the freedom of Europe, because "If I am only for me—who am I?" (cited in Butler, 2007, p. 27)

Arendt's moral autonomy is an individualism that is dependent on the social context and the collective identities that "one merely belongs to" (Scholem & Arendt, 1964). Arendt's ideal of public debate makes it possible to examine what is wrong when racialized individuals are held responsible for the collective and are presumed to have a certain kind of loyalty to their own group. And at the same time, we must not abandon the moral responsibility to fight for freedom. In Arendt's ideal of public debate, one should be able to represent a difference without being reduced to that difference, and I argue that she can be a starting point for developing an individualism that challenges the neoliberal agenda.

6. Conclusion

In this article, I have presented two findings from a study of how Norwegian Muslims argue for women's rights. The first finding is that an ethno-religious threshold is created in the debate by the demand that Muslims have to both be personal and at the same time represent a collective, and the second finding is that the dominant foundation of the arguments for women's rights is individual autonomy. I have used Wendy Brown's definition of neoliberal rationality as a starting point for the discussion of the findings. If the topos of autonomy is not subjected to critical scrutiny of who is seen to have agency, and agency over what, it could both amplify discrimination and lead to an impoverished academic and political discourse. But, the critical scrutiny should not lead to an abandonment of the norm, but to a better understanding of the topos of individual autonomy in the public media debate about Islam and women's rights. I make an argument that Hannah Arendt's "democratic individualism" can emphasize the right to simultaneously be an individual voice, be part of a collective identity and argue for what is universally good for all. The rhetorical tool of making the personal political, as Carol Hanich (1970) argues, is a necessary and powerful political tool that has proved to be especially important for marginalized groups within society. It is crucial in the struggle for a more just society that the marginalized find their voice, but the ways in which they are given a voice and what it is possible for them to claim needs critical discussion. Hopefully, this article can be a contribution to this dialogue.

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Article

Solidarity in Head-Scarf and Pussy Bow Blouse: Reflections on Feminist Activism and Knowledge Production

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Abstract

The author of this article discusses the ways in which gender equality and intersectionality are understood and enacted in two recent feminist campaigns in Sweden that use similar techniques to mobilise support for different causes. The first campaign is the so-called Hijab Call-to-Action, a solidarity action that took place in 2013 in which women in Sweden wore a hijab (the Muslim headscarf) for one day in defence of Muslim women's rights. This campaign manifests the ways in which the notion of gender equality brings with it a norm of secularity, but also how the equation of equality and secularity is contested. The second feminist campaign discussed is the so-called Pussy Bow Blouse manifestation that aimed at taking a stand in the controversies surrounding the Swedish Academy as a result of the Metoo campaign in Sweden. The author looks at the political and discursive processes enfolded in these campaigns as a sort of collective learning processes that connect feminist activism and scholarship. A key concern is to critically analyse a binary model of powerless versus gender-equal or feminist women that figure in both debates. Further, the author shows that both campaigns appeal to solidarity through identification, but at the same time underscore the contingent and coalitional nature of identity in the act of dressing in a scarf or a blouse to take on a (political) identity for a day.

Keywords

gender equality; headscarf; feminism; Metoo campaign; Muslim; pussy bow blouse; religion; secularity; solidarity; women

Issue

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1. Introduction

As recently demonstrated by a group of Swedish feminist scholars (Martinsson, Griffin, & Nygren, 2016), Sweden's self-image as the most gender-equal nation in the world, what has critically been labelled Swedish "exceptionalism", is being challenged from various angles. Firstly, the notion of perfect Swedish gender equality clashes with the current situation in the country in which victories won in gender equality are threatened by the political effects of a shrinking welfare state, the expansion and strengthening of neoliberal politics and values, and the rise of the right-wing populist party the Sweden Democrats (Mulinari, 2016). Secondly, with its narrow focus on an ideal, white, heterosexual couple, the Swedish norm of gender equality fails to encompass the wider political goals of intersectional feminism; instead it reproduces a range of norms that intersectional feminist activism and scholarship seek to deconstruct (Martinsson, 2016; Martinsson et al., 2016).

I share with these scholars the view that the role played by the notion of gender equality in feminist politics and scholarship needs critical discussion, something which, as Martinsson et al. (2016) stress, does not imply that feminist projects tied to this notion should be abandoned. In this article, I will tie into this discussion by looking at the ways in which gender equality and intersectionality are understood and enacted in two recent feminist campaigns in Sweden that use similar techniques to mobilise support for different causes. The first campaign is the so-called Hijab Call-to-Action, a solidarity action that took place in 2013 in which women in Sweden wore a hijab (the Muslim headscarf) for one day in defence of Muslim women's rights. This campaign actualises a discussion of the ways in which the notion of gender equality brings with it a norm of secularity, but also how the equation of equality and secularity, and the related religious-secular divide, is now being contested and what this entails for feminist politics and scholarship. The second feminist campaign I discuss is the so-called Pussy Bow Blouse manifestation that aimed at taking a stand regarding the controversies surrounding the Swedish Academy as a result of the Metoo campaign in Sweden. I will look at the political and discursive processes enfolded in these campaigns as a sort of collective learning processes that connect feminist activism and scholarship. A key concern is to critically analyse a binary model of powerless versus gender-equal women that figure in both debates. Can these cases of activism show ways out of the Swedish "exceptionalism" referred to above?

I write from the perspective of being a Swedish anthropologist and gender researcher, working in the Euro-American tradition that dominates these fields. I work at the Gender Studies department at Stockholm University, with research interests in gender and religion, culture studies, feminist theory, and activism. I have conducted fieldwork in Sweden, Portugal, Spain, and France in Catholic and Protestant contexts and, therefore, draw most empirical examples from European contexts. I do not practice any religion but have participated in different sorts of activism over the years in feminist, international solidarity, and syndicalist contexts.[1]

2. Feminism Donning the Veil

I will start by discussing the Hijab Call-to-Action in solidarity with Muslim women that took place in Sweden in 2013 (see also Gemzöe & Keinänen, 2016) that addresses gender equality and intersectionality in various ways. The event further illustrates how the religious-secular divide is being contested in current feminist activism and knowledge production. Similar actions take place in Europe and beyond, and in Sweden they have since then become part of the struggle for Muslim women's rights. It started with an incident in a suburb of Stockholm when a pregnant mother of three was physically assaulted by a man who was unacquainted with the victim. He grabbed her hijab, the Muslim headscarf, shouted "people like you should not be here," and bumped her head against a car so hard that she lost consciousness. The incident prompted five women to launch a Hijab Call-to-Action (hijab-upprop in Swedish), exhorting "all co-sisters in Sweden—religious and non-religious" to veil themselves (cover their heads) for one day to show solidarity with all Muslim women who endure violence and harassment (Osman, Doubakil, Rouzbeh, Abdul Fattah, & Libre, 2013). The call received a massive response and social media was flooded with images of women from different backgrounds, among them several politicians, wearing a hijab. The activists who initiated the call managed to get attention from both media and responsible authorities and could communicate their demand that stronger measures be taken to tackle the discrimination directed toward Muslim women in Swedish society. The responses to the call included critical voices expressing the view that the veil is a symbol of women's oppression and, therefore, using the veil in defence of women's rights would be contradictory. These critical voices continue to be heard, suggesting that wearing a veil to manifest solidarity with Muslim women risks normalising the practice, which stands for an objectification and sexualisation of women (Ögren, 2018). Another critique was that the protest was misguided as it did not involve those who were directly affected, predominated as it was by white, middle-class women who wore the veil for a day with no cost for themselves (cf. Delshad, 2014). The group of activists who launched the call-for-action used the media's attention to stress the differences between Muslim women; not all faithful Muslim women wear a hijab, the reasons for wearing it vary, and most importantly, it should be the right of every Muslim woman to choose freely and neither be forced to wear it, nor discriminated if she does.

The call-to-action speaks to a political situation that Sweden shares with the rest of Europe, where Muslim minorities, often symbolically represented by the veiled Muslim woman, have become the main target of racist and anti-migration forces in Europe. As political scientist Birgit Sauer (2016) shows, although few countries have prohibited the use of the Muslim headscarf in public spaces, negative interpretations of the cloth have spread in European countries, interpretations that associate the veil with the notion that Muslim women stand outside modernity, caught in patriarchal and religious fundamentalism. It is the veil that proves the foreign values and behaviour of "the others", which makes it impossible for them to become truly French, Austrian—or Swedish. Since the solidarity action with Muslim women took place in Sweden, the support for the Sweden Democrats, according to the polls taken during the spring of 2018 ahead of the forthcoming elections this year, has increased. In the same period, the Swedish government, a coalition between the Social democrats and the Green party, has introduced a restriction of immigration policies as a response to the wave of refugees who fled to Europe in the fall of 2015. Although from a comparative,

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[1] The declaration here of not practicing any religion does not imply that I regard my position as a neutral, secular one from which to study religious others. One of the important insights generated in the 'post-secular turn' is that what is understood as the secularity of Euro-American academia is entangled with the Protestant religious tradition, something which shapes the approaches also to gender and religion in 'secular' academia (Beattie, 2005; Jakobsen & Pellegrini, 2008).

European perspective, Sweden qualifies as a "tolerant" country regarding headscarf politics as the country's jurisdiction clearly supports Muslim women's right to wear the hijab in public, the existent Islamophobic racism in the country is manifested in hate crimes like mosques set on fire, or the one that triggered the Hijab Call-to-Action. Taken together, these developments have, in recent years, effectively torn down Sweden's image as a prime example of international solidarity—the Swedish "exceptionalism" in this area cannot be maintained.

The Hijab Call-to-Action and the image of the veiled Muslim woman it evokes are brought to feminist activism in Sweden by a young generation of Muslim feminist activists, illustrating the point made by Martinsson quoting Irene Molina, Swedish professor in human geography, saying that:

> Swedish society should not be too quick to give itself credit for the advanced anti-racist discussions going on in Sweden. Rather, many people with a background in other countries who have struggled for change in Sweden should be recognised for their work. (Martinsson, 2016, p. 204)

The Hijab Call-to-Action elucidates the limitations of a narrow model of gender equality as it poses the question: how can there be gender equality in Sweden if women in headscarves cannot walk the streets without risking assault? In bringing this issue to an arena of feminist struggle in Sweden, the Hijab Call-to-Action connects this struggle to a global political and scholarly debate in which the veil controversies have served as a nodal point.

3. Gender Equality and Colonial Feminism

A year after the Hijab Call-to-Action in Sweden, Sarah Delshad (2014), freelance writer and initiator of the Muslim Feminists think tank, wrote about the event and its possible effects on the image of the veiled Muslim woman in Swedish media. She describes the event as one of the few occasions when the debate shed a light on those Muslim, veiled women who see their religious identity as something non-complicated—as opposed to the commonly expressed views that the veil oppresses women. As her own mother figures in the reports on the event as a friend to the victim, reading about it again makes her particularly emotional and she thinks about the mother's life in Sweden. Of the many things her hard-working mother handles in her daily life, Delshad (2014) thinks of the belittling stereotypical image of the veiled Muslim woman that she is constantly confronted with, an image that depicts her as a woman without self-determination.

Delshad's (2014) critique of media representations of veiled Muslim women representing them as powerless addresses what has been at the centre of feminist theoretical debates about veiling, gender, and religion for the last decades. A key point in these debates is that researchers need to find ways to represent women's lives (religious or not) in terms that break down a binary model of the powerless woman versus the gender equal (or feminist) woman. The commitment to such a theoretical task became acute in the political moment when feminism came to play a part in the ideological confrontations between the Western and the Muslim world following the 9/11 terror attack in New York in 2001. The "war against terrorism" launched by the US government was explicitly linked to a project of restoring gender equality in the Muslim world. In the words of Laura Bush, the first lady at the time: "The fight against terrorism is also a fight for the rights and dignity of women." (Abu-Lughod, 2002, p. 784). Feminist anthropologist Lila Abu-Lughod, whose classical text *Do Muslim Women Really Need Saving?* was developed as a response to this political discourse, points out the deep colonial roots of these ideological constructs and the widespread use of the woman question in colonial policies, which has been labelled "colonial feminism" (Abu-Lughod, 2002, p. 784; Ahmed, 1992). For instance, colonial history is full of examples of colonisers focussing on the veil as a sign of oppression, whereas they at the same time opposed women's suffrage back home. This way of combining colonial feminism with opposition to feminism in the West is repeated in the contemporary veil debates. French feminists have pointed out that the same politicians that systematically oppose any reform concerning women's rights in France, in debates on the veil celebrate 'gender equality' as one of the key liberal values of the French nation. French feminist Christine Delphy commented on this irony declaring that this was how she learnt that gender equality existed in France (Scott, 2007).

The Hijab Call-to-Action, and writers like Delshad (2014), bring forth this whole context when they call attention to the stigmatising effect of the image of the Muslim woman as a woman without self-determination, and through Delshad's (2014) emphasis, the importance of refuting this image also in feminist knowledge production is highlighted. It shows how it is crucial to offer a critique of the image of the Muslim woman as a passive receiver of a patriarchal ideology, widespread not only in political propaganda but also in public debate and academic writing. Scholars working in the field of feminist anthropology specialised in women's lives in Muslim communities have repeatedly emphasised that veiling should not be confused with, or seen as equivalent to, lack of agency. Instead, feminist researchers need to work against "the reductive interpretation of veiling as the quintessential sign of women's unfreedom" (Abu-Lughod, 2002, p. 786). In her ethnography of a Bedouin community in Egypt (based on fieldwork in the late 1970s and 1980s), Abu-Lughod (1986) describes how "pulling the black head cloth over the face in front of older respected men is considered a voluntary act by women who are deeply committed to being moral and have a sense of honour tied to family." She stresses their self-determination in this respect; the Bedouin women decided for whom they felt it was appropriate to veil (Abu-Lughod, 1986, 2002). In a similar vein, Saba Mahmood (2005) discusses in her ethnography based on fieldwork in the 1990s in an urban context in Egypt, how middle-class women who joined the mosque movement of religious revival chose to wear the hijab, a form of covering associated with modernity, as an expression of piety. The forms of agency involved, Mahmood suggests, constitute ways of inhabiting norms that cannot be captured in a binary model of oppressor/oppressed.

The lines of argument in the well-known work of these two anthropologists emphasise the importance of refuting interpretations of the veil as simply a sign of oppression and lack of self-determination, which is the negative counterpart of gender equality.[2] To grasp these women's lives, theoretical notions that go beyond the dichotomous understanding of equality versus powerlessness are needed. The ethnographies of Muslim women contribute to the consciousness that Delshad (2014) calls for as they show that veiling carries many meanings and that the practice does not exclude self-determination.[3]

The cultural heritage of a colonial past and its presence in Sweden's political life is further brought to the attention of the public in the Hijab Call-to-Action through its emphasis on the physical violence in the assault on the veiled woman. Osman et al. (2013) pose the question "what is so frightening about a heavily pregnant veiled woman that makes a full-grown man beat her unconscious?" It is a question that points to the veil's capacity to evoke emotional and violent reactions in western societies. These reactions reveal a deeply sexual, and sexist, dimension of the western obsession with the veil. In her analysis of the 2004 ban on the veil in France, rooted in the country's colonial past with its heritage of discrimination of the French Muslim population, Joan Wallach Scott (2007) recounts numerous examples of French emotional responses to the veil. The responses range from sadness when deprived of the sight of female beauty to outward sexual aggression. The element of sexual aggression as a response to veiling is captured by the psychiatrist Frantz Fanon in a description of male colonisers' attitudes to veiled women in Algeria: "This woman who sees without being seen frustrates the coloniser. There is no reciprocity. She does not yield herself, does not give herself, does not offer herself." (Fanon, 1965, pp. 43–44; Scott, 2007, p. 160). Here, the veil stands for sexual unavailability, an interpretation that, according to Scott (2007), played a crucial role in the contemporary veil controversies in France. In numerous debates, male powerholders and debaters roundly expressed the view that the veil is a kind of aggression that denies men their right to regard and openly desire women in public spaces. In the French debate, the (heterosexual) play between the sexes came to signify a particularly French view of sexuality that was associated with (French, secular) gender equality. Gender equality became synonymous with sexual liberation, which in its turn became synonymous with the visibility of the female body (Scott, 2007). Ripping off Muslim women's veils is the logical companion to this line of thinking. In the summer of 2016, after the terror attack in Nice, French police forced a Muslim woman to undress on a beach in southern France. The police acted on a local prohibition (that later was declared illegal) on wearing the so-called burkini, a full body covering used by some Muslim women on beaches.[4] Once again Muslim women's bodies became targeted in the western "war against terrorism."

4. Solidarity in Headscarf: Contesting Gender Equality as a Secular Value

It is important to note that the Hijab Call-to-Action campaign managed to gather support for the side in the European political landscape that takes a stand against racism and Islamophobic discourses, defending instead migrant's rights to belong without assimilating to nationalist norms regarding religion or clothing. In doing so, Osman et al. (2013) open for an understanding of feminism as implicated in struggles and knowledge projects that tie together gender, sexuality, religion, race/ethnicity, and national belonging.

A solidary action in which Swedish feminists and politicians dress in a hijab, I suggest, goes beyond a mere call for solidarity with migrant communities; the call was for solidarity between "religious and non-religious sisters" and in this way, it seeks to break down the religious-secular divide. Further, it questions the notion of equality as a secular value and puts forward the view that veiled Muslim women can be bearers of equality. The discussion of how gender equality as a concept has been used to legitimise power relations—and warfare as discussed earlier—actualises a critical reappraisal of this notion in feminist theory. The implications of Western feminism's self-understanding as part of a wider Enlightenment discourse in which "equality" is identified with the secular are far-reaching (see Jakobsen & Pellegrini, 2008). An urgent feminist task has been to show how the discourse of secularity constructs different categories of women as opposed to each other so that the similarities of the structures of power that constrain them are concealed. As pointed out by Birgit Sauer (2016), the politics of belonging that European nations articulate in the headscarf controversies that are based on a dichotomous understanding of the religious and the secular and seek to exclude (some) women from citizenship, are but another version of the historical exclusion of women from citizenship in European democracies. In addition, the discourse of secularity is now including equality of sexualities as a sign of modernity, as homosexuality is moving from a negative status in secular-liberal societies to a celebrated one, so that to be accepting of homosexuality becomes "a marker of civilization" too (Bracke, 2012, p. 249; Page, 2016). It should be stressed that the strong identification of equality with the secular is not just an abstract notion that needs to be deconstructed. In a recent study of young religious women in the United Kingdom, Sarah-Jane Page (2016) shows how the notion of equality as a secular value affects the lives of these young women profoundly. A common concern for the women in the study, who differ in terms of religious orientation and sexual identity, is the need to negotiate their religious identity in relation to the perceived secular norm of equality—in ways that are not imposed on non-religious young women.

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[2] The academic literature on the practice of veiling, its regional and historical variations, and significance in the Muslim world (see Hannan & Gabriel, 2011) as well as the literature on the veil controversies in the Western world is huge. I quote the texts by Lila Abu-Lughod and Saba Mahmood as they have become important to (Western) feminist theory in bridging the gap between the ethnographic understanding of women in Islamic contexts and secular, feminist academia.

[3] It should be underlined that the view that the practice of veiling belongs to the past and hence cannot be used in defence of women's rights is held not only by Westerners but has been common in a range of Muslim countries historically and today, as well as among migrants from Muslim countries residing in Europe (on anti-veiling campaigns in the Muslim world in the interwar period see Cronin, 2014).

[4] Feminist scholars and debaters have questioned the dichotomised understanding (in the French debate as elsewhere) of the covering of the female body in the public sphere as more oppressive than the display of the female body prescribed by fashion in the West.

The critical scrutinisation of (gender) equality as a secular, western value is part of a larger critical project engaging with these issues. The historical moment when feminists don the veil as a political gesture corresponds to a parallel theoretical move in feminist academia undertaken in the last decade (Gemzöe & Keinänen, 2016). The turn to religion as a topic of study in gender studies is part of the so-called post-secular turn in the academy at large. The post-secular turn refers to a reorientation of theories and worldviews that implies a questioning of earlier (Western) convictions that religion would gradually disappear and that the whole world would follow in Europe's footsteps on a path towards secularity and modernity (Asad, 2003; Casanova, 1994). Theorists of secularisation have abandoned their earlier thesis and shown that it is not even valid for America and Europe, which are supposedly the heartlands of secularity and progressivity (Casanova, 1994). The critics of secularisation theories maintain that earlier theories have misrepresented the role and impact of religion historically and point out how religion continues to be a major social force in contemporary societies.

To feminist theory, the post-secular turn is integral to its commitment to intersectionality, as it entails that religion becomes one more "difference" that needs to be accounted for in politics and theory. The Hijab Call-to-Action expresses such a political standpoint when a minority group of women facing discrimination due to their "difference" in relation to the native majority calls for solidarity.

To include religion in intersectionality theory, alongside categories like race, ethnicity, sexuality, class, ability, and citizenship entails not only a recognition of the complex political issues involved, as illustrated in the headscarf controversies, but also an inclusion of knowledge regarding this "difference" in the feminist tradition. Recognition of religion as something that divides women requires a deeper engagement on part of feminist studies with gendered, religious subjectivities and with empirical studies and theorising of the ways in which religion (and secularism) function in contemporary societies. The debates that initiated the post-secular turn, and the political reality of solidary actions like the Hijab Call-to-Action in Sweden, make it clearer than ever that feminism needs a global outlook in its theorising. Furthermore, the post-secular turn directs attention to Western feminism's identification with a secular tradition. Intersectionality theory has posed several challenges to Western feminism as each "intersection" has required a critical look at the ways in which feminist thinking itself is marked by the norms it wants to criticise, such as maleness, whiteness, heterosexuality, middle-class belonging, ability, etc. A critical view on the norm of secularity makes visible symbolic structures that work at equally deep levels of thinking, such as the oppositional pairs of hierarchically ordered values like traditional–modern, enlightened–superstitious, progressive–conservative that serve to categorise people and uphold social hierarchies within and between nations. These symbolic structures are important in order to understand the earlier blindness to religion in the Western, feminist academy and the marginalised position of the sub-field of feminist studies of religion and of feminist theology it entailed (King, 2005; for a discussion of the implications of the marginalisation of Religious Studies in secular academia see also Beattie, 2005).

The oppositional pairs referred to above imply an opposition between religious, oppressed women and secularised, gender-equal women, a view that explains, at least partly, why feminist studies of religion prior to the post-secular turn were perceived as concerned with questions of limited relevance to main-stream Western feminist studies.[5] This position allocated to the sub-field of gender and religion has shaped the field profoundly. A key theme throughout its formation has been to reject the image of religious women as completely powerless and to explore the different forms of agency they deploy. In other words, the line of argument brought to feminist theory in analyses of the veil is not new to feminist research on religion.[6] On the contrary, feminist researchers have shown how the image of the subdued, passive Religious Woman, indeed the stereotype that Delshad (2014) did not want her mother to be associated with, dominated in (gender-blind) studies of religion, as well as in early feminist research. This was partly due to a conflation of religion as a patriarchal symbolic system with the actual role played by women in religious contexts. In Sered's (1999) words, for a long time, Woman-as-symbol in male-dominated religious world-views overshadowed real women's involvement in religion. The response by feminist scholars was to emphasise and give weight to the ways in which women across cultures displayed and elaborated forms of agency (even though researchers might use different theoretical language for this purpose). Only by deconstructing the trope of the subdued Religious Woman and refuting the prevailing notion of religious women as lacking in agency could the field of gender and religion be presented as relevant to a secular, feminist academy.[7] Feminist scholars researching the Christian tradition have struggled with the same image of the subdued Religious Woman that figures in the debates on Muslim women, and its relevance as a theoretical frame has been rejected over and over again (Bynum, Walker, Harrell, & Richman, 1986; Dubisch 1995; Jantzen, 1995). In my own ethnographic study of Catholic northern Portugal (fieldwork in the 1990s), not only theoretical positions surging in the growing sub-field of gender and religion, but perhaps, even more, the interaction with Portuguese, Catholic women led me to a focus on agency. The self-assertiveness, confidence, and creativity of the women of different ages and classes that I interacted with—indeed the way they presented themselves as religious actors (Gemzöe, 2000)—deconstructed the image of the docile, obedient, and submissive religious woman better than any cultural critique. When my interlocutor and friend, Senhora Marilia, explained to me why she attended mass but did not receive communion, by declaring "I do not kneel in front of a priest to confess my sins, this is between me and God", or when one of the catechists of the community said: "Put me in front of the pope and I will say what I have to say", referring to a heated discussion she had with the priest of her parish, these women made it clear that submissiveness was not a quality they wished for nor felt obliged to cultivate. The class-based anticlericalism of this region was embraced also by pious women. When the Church, implementing the reforms after Vatican II, gave women of this community more space to manoeuvre in the Church, they were quick to use it, expanding in this way their already strong, and to some degree recognised, religious authority and expertise (Gemzöe, 2000, 2009). Yet, women in Catholic cultures devoted to Mary and the saints have hardly been conceived of as bearers of agency, let alone of cultural resistance in feminist contexts (on the Marian cult globally see, for instance, Hermkens, Jansen, & Notermans, 2009. These blind spots in feminist theorising have to do with the persistence of the binary model of the powerless woman versus the gender equal woman discussed earlier that continues to limit the understandings of religious women's lives.

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[5] Feminist conferences and journals responded to the post-secular turn with the same exclamations of "How could we be so blind?" as the rest of the academy. The *Feminist Review* points out that the 2011 issue was the first to address the subject of religion in the journal's thirty-year-long publishing history. Likewise, the European Feminist conference in 2006 chose religion as its main theme for the first time, and so on.

[6] As discussed elsewhere, in her influential discussion on Muslim women's agency, Mahmood (2005) seems to dismiss earlier feminist studies putting forward similar interpretations of women's religious agency (Gemzöe & Keinänen, 2016; Woodhead, 2016).

I suggest that the study of culturally diverse, gendered religious practices, including religious traditions and alternative spiritualities in the presumably secularised west, form an important part of the necessary theoretical reorientations prompted by the post-secular turn, an approach that should be integrated with feminism's theorising of difference.[8] A turn of attention in empirical studies to Christianity in the West and worldwide as part of a global outlook (although not aimed at excluding attention from other faiths or practices), would further permit a rupture with the exoticisation of the Muslim woman that the Western obsession with the veil has entailed. The focus on the workings of power and agency in research on gender and religion opens for fruitful theoretical encounters with dominant themes in feminist theory—encounters that would allow for a theorising of power that does not distinguish between religious, economic, social, or cultural systems.[9] An equally important reorientation would involve a reassessment of the place of religious feminism in the history of (Western) feminism, notably what Sands (2008) refers to as "the largest shift in feminism's relation to religion," which is the shift from the religious inspiration of much of first-wave feminism to the secularism of the second wave. But religious feminists need to be made visible in other ways too; the role of religion in the writings of American black feminists (for instance the work of bell hooks), which plays such a crucial role in anti-racist feminism today, needs to be recognised, the work of feminist theologians, whom might be thought of as "religious others" in a secular academy need scholarly attention.[10] Those religious feminists, be they Goddess feminists, Muslim feminists, or feminist clergy in the Church of Sweden are actually part of a feminist, activist community in need of recognition, not least in Sweden where feminism is perceived as firmly rooted in a secular, political tradition.

The activists launching the Hijab Call-to-Action have, I suggest, initiated and connected the feminist struggle in this area to a global debate and shown that Swedish gender equality, or the struggle for this equality, cannot be an exception to what happens in the rest of the world, it needs to be transnational.

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[7] The feminist academic response to studies of religion has been described by scholars of gender and religion in texts, conferences, and network meetings, as ranging from mere lack of interest to expressions of ridicule or even aversion, sometimes with claims that the topic does not belong in feminist studies. The responses can largely be explained by the sharp boundaries between religion and a secular, intellectual tradition in which feminism is inscribed (see Beattie, 2005).

[8] In Sweden, such a reorientation, in research or at the level of teaching, would require some work as the curriculum of gender studies programs may well exclude the topic of religion altogether.

[9] See, for instance, Linda Woodhead's concepts of "strategic" and "tactical" religion elaborated to study the interplay and dynamics of power between the level of religious practice in which religious subjectivities are shaped and the institutional level (Woodhead, 2014).

[10] The relative lack of interaction between theology and gender studies contributes to the absence of feminist reflection on the Christian tradition and its relation to feminist theory. Vuola (2016) argues that there is a theology blindness in (feminist) studies of religion. See also Walton (2016) for an autoethnographic account of teaching feminist theology.

5. Symbols of Solidarity in the Political Sphere

Returning to the Hijab Call-to-Action, it can be noted that the features of the campaign break down some elements in the Western understanding of the political, public sphere as fundamentally different from the sphere of religion, one of the reasons why it is believed they should be kept apart. Whereas religion deals with rituals and symbolism—symbols being the "the currency" of religion as noted by Sered (1999), the political sphere is allegedly governed by rationality. This distinction is evidently contradicted by the many appeals to symbols in political life, the act to show solidarity by donning a veil is one, and as I will turn to in the following, dressing in a pussy bow blouse is another.

The two solidarity campaigns I discuss here are examples of social media activism, a political phenomenon that has expanded rapidly in the recent decades, in Sweden as elsewhere, not least in feminist and anti-racist activism.[11] Although the campaigns also involved encounters in-real-life, such as marches or the activists appearing at work in the veil or the blouse, the solidarity action can be manifested simply by dressing in the garment, taking a selfie and sharing it on Instagram. The fact that the solidarity action is performed by putting on a garment one does not usually wear, which changes one's physical appearance and is all that is needed to participate, is congruent with the digital culture of Facebook or Instagram, where selfies, photos, or other visual messages are used for a constant updating to the world of events in one's life.

The efficiency and speed with which the Hijab Call-to-Action could spread in (parts of) Swedish society depended on the impact of its visuality in an already established digital culture. Images of Swedish women wearing a hijab are powerful expressions of solidarity, of bridging the religious and the secular: in an instant, the action puts the Swedish woman in the place of the veiled Muslim woman facing harassment and seems to say: "I am willing to share your vulnerable position and to stand up for your rights." The fact that it "seems to say" something is crucial; the visual message uses the polysemic language of symbols to communicate and must be verbalised to become a political statement with an exact meaning. The call-to-action merges meanings and symbols that have been kept apart or seen as almost antithetical; the symbol of the subordinated, "other" religious woman and the Swedish secular, gender-equal woman. By connecting the feminist and the religious woman, the visual message of the Hijab Call-to-Action opens for a discussion of the relationship between the two. As the image of a veiled woman appears in a feminist campaign, the veil also becomes associated with political agency.[12] The image of the veiled feminist politician could also be interpreted as a promise to formulate a political, feminist agenda that would seek to take religious rights and identities into account. However, such interpretations of the call-to-action remain an open question, and here lie the limitations of a politics of symbols regardless of the techniques employed to spread the message; paying attention to "religion" as a difference in a feminist politics requires a deep engagement with religious subjectivities and worldviews, something which requires more time and resources than the spreading of photos of women in hijab in social media (which was also one of the critical opinions raised in following debates, as noted earlier). On the other hand, if we look at the campaigns primarily as collective learning processes, it is precisely the images' polysemic nature that makes the actions work. The image manages to communicate different, conflicting meanings that generate further debate and engages more people, in other words, they are excellent triggers of debate and knowledge production. As noted earlier, the issues raised by the Hijab Call-to-Action entail a need of reorientation in the feminist academy to bridge the gap between the religious and the secular in knowledge production. One way of handling this is to stop separating the fields of debate and knowledge from each other. By keeping the two solidarity actions I address here together in one discussion, I seek to take a step, however small it may be, in that direction. So, I now turn to a recent solidary action in Sweden with no reference to religion, but in which another item of clothing, the pussy bow blouse, played a major role.

6. Feminist Solidary Action in a Pussy Bow Blouse

The Pussy Bow Blouse manifestation that took place in the spring of 2018 concerns one of the dramatic outcomes of the Metoo campaign in Sweden, namely the crisis it has entailed for The Swedish Academy, the institution in charge of distributing the Nobel Prize in Literature. The events started with a publication in Sweden's largest morning paper, *Dagens Nyheter*, of 18 women bearing witness to sexual abuse by a man who was linked to the Academy in various ways, and whose cultural work has received economic support from the Academy for more than two decades (Gustavsson, 2017). When these circumstances became public, the Academy was split into factions that disagreed on how to face the crisis. The recently-appointed head of the Academy, Sara Danius, professor of literature and the first female in the position, advocated for a policy of complete openness to handle the crisis, a line of action that did not win the support of a majority in the Academy, and she was forced to resign. The response to her resignation was a massive public protest, which included several researchers at the universities and cultural workers manifesting support for the resigned head. The public protests also included a feminist manifestation in which protestors gathered outside the building where the Academy holds its weekly meetings, all wearing the kind of blouse that had become symbolic of the public figure Sara Danius, the former chair: the pussy bow blouse.

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[11] So has research in the field; see, for instance, recent Swedish studies of transnational social media activism by Dahlberg-Grundberg (2016) and Lindell (2011).

[12] The veil as a symbol of resistance is not new, as discussed by Scott (2007) in the context of the Algerian liberation war from the French colonial power, and reiterated in Muslim migrant communities all over Europe, where donning the veil might express an independent identity in relation to the dominant culture.

Once again, and similarly to the Hijab Call-to-Action, social media were flooded with images of well-known feminists and politicians, among them several of those who wore a hijab for a day some years earlier, now posing in a variety of pussy bow blouses. And just like the Hijab Call-to-Action offers interpretations of veiling that contest the notion of the veiled woman as lacking in self-determination, the Pussy Bow Blouse manifestation initiated a process of interpretation of this garment that would change its meaning in several ways. Before I discuss the implications of this event further, I will give a brief background of the Metoo campaign based on Swedish, and international, media's coverage of the events, my aim being to reflect on the themes mentioned above.[13]

The Metoo campaign in which women bear witness to how they have become victims of sexual harassment and assault in their workplaces started with a tweet by American actress Alyssa Milano, after accusations of sexual harassment and assault had been levelled against film-producer Harvey Weinstein by Hollywood actresses (Garcia, 2017). Milano urged her followers to answer her tweet with the words "me too" if they had been victims of sexual abuse or violence. The hashtag Metoo ignited a firestorm on social media, as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and other accounts were flooded with support and testimonies from victims of sexual abuse, initiating what would turn into a forceful demonstration of the power of social media activism. However, ten years before Alyssa Milano launched the hashtag Metoo, a non-profit organisation to help victims of sexual abuse was founded by Tarana Burke, who named her movement Me too. In the first days of the media storm that followed Alyssa Milano's tweet, it was brought to media's attention that the long-time effort by Tarana Burke, who is black, had not received support over the years from prominent white feminists. In the days that followed, Black, Latino, and other women of colour started their own campaign as they saw a disparity in how women of colour were treated when they reported abuse and to use it as a "peaceful moment to say that feminism should be intersectional," in the words of digital media strategist April Reign (Garcia, 2017). Two days after Alyssa Milano sent out her tweet, she publicly thanked and credited Tarana Burke as the founder of Metoo (Garcia, 2017).

The circumstances of how Metoo started in the US show how the campaign can uncover deep cleavages in societies, whereas at the same time it enables solidarity across these divides. As the campaign has spread from country to country, it has developed differently in different national contexts, and discussions of these national differences have been initiated by journalists, debaters, and researchers. Also in Sweden, the Metoo campaign started in professional sectors of the cultural elite, and as it unfolded in the case related to the Swedish Academy, the effects of the Metoo campaign in privileged sectors have been at the centre of the Swedish debate. The campaign started among actresses at the national theatres who bore witness to the sexual harassment and coercion they had been subjected to, revelations that caused scandals and crises within these institutions.[14] Thereafter, the campaign spread to a wide range of professional groups, from academics and artists to the construction industry and hospitals, to women in criminality and prostitutes, all under the name of hashtags related to their occupation. In the spring of 2018, the Metoo campaign comprised testimonies from almost all sectors of working life, and further included calls-to-action for children, for non-binary gendered persons and for a range of voluntary associations, such as sports movements and Christian churches. In March 2018, 65 Metoo groups presented seven political demands aimed at ending sexism, sexual harassment, and abuse. Commentators have called it the most important women's movement since the struggle for the vote and remark that its mode of organising is characteristic of feminist movements historically: non-hierarchical and spontaneous, spreading from woman to woman who share and speak out about experiences of patriarchal oppression with the contemporarily significant feature that social media is crucial as a tool of consciousness-making and mobilisation. The movement is linked to the wave of feminist activism in the 1970s when the different manifestations of sexual oppression in the heterosexist, patriarchal society were made visible and laws affecting the workplace started to change attitudes and the underlying structures of power that made this oppression possible.[15] However, one of the distinguishing features of the Metoo campaign in comparison to early activism against sexual oppression in the second wave is its embedment in workplaces and associations. Anna-Klara Bratt (2018), the chief editor of feminist journal *Feministiskt perspektiv*, has suggested that the high level of gainful labour among Swedish women is one of the factors accounting for this development of the campaign.

Still, the Metoo campaign in its form and content resembles the radical feminism of the 1970s in that its principal message is that women across boundaries of class, sexuality, race or nation, share a condition of being victims of sexual abuse and violence; it is the massive witnessing of this shared form of oppression that accounts for the political force of the campaign. The emphasis on a shared oppression has been accompanied by the concern among activists and researchers that feminism should be intersectional. A main issue in this respect has been whose voices are heard in the campaign, and whose narratives are given attention. Since the campaign started among the actresses there have been various efforts to make visible the long-time work of voluntary organisations, among them the centres who assist victims of rape and abuse (kvinnojourer in Swedish), and of social workers, lawyers, and researchers. For instance, debater and feminist activist Alexandra Pascalidou (2017), who collected different voices of the campaign in a book, partly motivated by a wish to transform the testimonies on social media into a more permanent form, claims to also give voice to those who might not feel addressed by the Metoo movement (see also van Luik, 2017). In this collection of texts, testimonies from well-known feminists of the cultural elite are published together with texts by women who have been working with victims of sexual abuse for a long time, among them the association Terrafem, which assists women in migrant communities. Similarly to what happened in the US, these efforts seek to link the Metoo campaign as represented in conventional media, with its attention to white women of the cultural elite, to the work of voluntary organisations targeting less privileged women.[16] However, as the events unfolded, the cultural elite continued to be at the centre of the debate related to the Metoo campaign in Sweden as the focus shifted to the crisis of the Swedish Academy and the Pussy Bow Blouse manifestation in the spring of 2018.

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[13] The Metoo campaign and its aftermaths are still ongoing processes that continue in new directions and researchers have only begun to document and analyse them. At Stockholm University, the Gender Academy, a network for cross-disciplinary collaboration on gender research, has initiated discussions on how to research Metoo.

[14] The campaign started when hundreds of Swedish actresses in theatre and film published narratives of their own experiences of sexual abuse in a collective letter and online with the hashtag "silenceaction" during the fall of 2017.

[15] In Sweden, one key feminist action was a protest in 1976 that gathered all feminist and women's organisations against a suggestion to change the jurisdiction on rape in a sex-liberal direction that considered the behaviour of the victim (Thomsson, 2000).

What meanings were attached to this solidary action and how is gender equality and intersectionality actualised? The similarities with the Hijab Call-to-Action due to their shared features as social media activism using selfies should be noted. The campaign spread rapidly and received a great deal of attention in social and traditional media, many politicians, both female and male, dressed in the pussy bow blouse. Critical voices soon questioned whether politicians, including ministers, should take a stand in favour of one of the factions in the Swedish Academy—if this was what they meant when dressing in the blouse. The symbolic gesture of dressing in the blouse could, similarly to the symbolic use of veiling for a day, be interpreted in a variety of ways. The critique that ministers should not take a stand in the Swedish Academy's internal affairs was directed at the Minister of Culture Alice Bah Kuhnke from the Green party, whose selfie in the pussy bow blouse the morning after Sara Danius' resignation became widespread and commented on. However, she refuted the critique and interpreted the act of dressing in a pussy bow blouse, not as taking a stand for or against any member of the Swedish Academy, but for the larger feminist goals at stake. Her selfie was accompanied by a text[17] saying that "the feminist struggle happens every day....One step back yesterday means at least two steps forward today" (Khunke, 2018). This was one of the many ways in which the Pussy Bow Blouse manifestation initiated debate and added further meanings to the blouse. The Swedish minister's selfie in a white pussy bow blouse and her text linking it to feminist struggle spread in international media and contributed to the transformation of the pussy bow blouse into a symbol of feminist resistance.

The issue of whether donning a pussy bow blouse could count as a feminist statement was one of the controversies that the campaign gave rise to—much in the same way as the issue of whether donning a veil can serve to defend women's rights. The difficulties in the pussy bow blouse campaign were not only the polysemic qualities of the garment, but that so little was known about the reasons for Sara Danius' resignation because of the secrecy of the Swedish Academy's internal affairs.

The feminists who had organised the pussy bow blouse manifestation, however, argued that there was enough knowledge to take a stand.[18] They pointed out the deep irony of the fact that the result of the events was that the woman who had taken on the task of sorting out and taking responsibility for the part played by the Academy in what had happened to the 18 witnessing women had been forced to resign, whereas the men in the Academy who had worked against her stayed on.[19] The protestors pointed out that, once again, a powerful woman who had ascended to leadership over men in society's upper hierarchies had to leave, this time when trying to work against sexual discrimination and 'expressions of the denigration of women,' as Danius wrote in a statement after her resignation (Holmqvist, 2018). The pussy bow blouse was the perfect symbol for this message, carrying meanings that immediately evoke gender and power. The feminist history of the blouse, as it was referred to in media, was widely spread in the aftermath of the manifestation (Tidningarnas telegrambyrå, 2018). This history told about how the pussy bow blouse, which became fashionable when women started to use it as a female counterpart to the tie when they entered white-collar professions in offices and institutions in the 1950s and onwards, speaks of the history of women's struggles to adapt to a male-dominated professional world. The next generation of women, some of them joining the women's movement of the 1970s, did not dress in pussy bow blouses, associated as they were with the conventional, adaptive femininity of the generation of their mothers who dressed in what was sometimes called "secretary blouses." In the 1980s, the blouse's associations did not become more appealing to feminists as it was associated with ruthless career women, being a favourite outfit of Margaret Thatcher. In the aftermath of the manifestation in 2018, experts and fashion researchers pointed out how, in the last decades, the pussy bow blouse has been re-evaluated, partly as the result of prominent designers' updating of the blouse, making it fashionable again. In Sweden, Sara Danius' use of the blouse in her position as the first female head of the Swedish Academy contributed to turning it into a symbol of women breaking the glass ceiling and entering previously male-dominated centres of power.

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[16] Historians Klara Arnberg and Helena Tolvhed (2019) relate the Metoo campaign to other social media campaigns in feminist, anti-racist activism, such as the hashtag "svartkvinna" (black woman).

[17] The entire text published on the minster's Instagram reads as follows: "En ny dag gryr. Den feministiska kampen sker varje dag, det vet vi så väl. På bussen, i korridoren på skolan, i mötesrummet på jobbet. Ett steg tillbaka igår, betyder minst två steg framåt idag [A new day breaks. The feminist struggle happens every day, we know that so well. On the bus, in the corridor at school, in the meeting room at work. One step back yesterday, means at least two steps forward today]" (Khunke, 2018, my translation).

[18] The manifestation arranged on Thursday, April 19, 2018, gathered around 2,000 people. Several feminist politicians were present (Nilsson, 2018).

[19] The gender dimension of this turn of events was complicated by the fact that the accused man is married to a female member of the Swedish Academy and that there were women (and men) on both sides of the split. The feminist approach to the handling of accusations of sexual harassment, however, was led and defended by women, the former head Sara Danius, and the author Sara Stridsberg, who also resigned later.

The Pussy Bow Blouse manifestation illustrates one of the immediate political effects of the Metoo campaign in Sweden and elsewhere, namely its capacity to move from the issue of sexual harassment at the individual level to the larger structures of power at workplaces, or to society at large. The manifestation further accentuated the focus on working conditions that the formation in professional groups of the Metoo campaign in Sweden entails. In this way, it drew together two feminist struggles; the message of putting an end to sexual harassment and abuse, and the demand to end patriarchal power structures in all workplaces—such as the so-called glass ceiling, structures that impede women from reaching top positions of power. At the same time, the usage of the pussy bow blouse as a symbol to capture these two feminist demands served to contest and reinterpret patriarchal notions of working women. The "secretary blouse" associated with submissive working women lacking agency is turned into a feminist symbol of working women challenging male power. The feminist interpretation of Sara Danius' resignation was questioned at the time of the Pussy Bow Blouse manifestation and had to be defended by those organising it. Four months after her resignation, Danius gave her own account of the crisis of the Swedish Academy and the Metoo-related events in a radio broadcast in which she emphasised the feminist significance (Danius, 2018). By pointing to the fact that women are more likely to report being victims of sexual crimes if there are women in leading positions in their work-places, she emphasised her own role in contributing to the charges pressed against the man related to the Swedish Academy by one of the victims in the time after the manifestation. Her contribution to the debate thus reinforced the association of the pussy-bow blouse with women's agency and resistance. This interpretation of the events was further strengthened in the fall of 2018 when the charges against the accused man led to a conviction for rape. The conviction was largely interpreted as a victory for the long-time struggle by feminist activists, lawyers, and researchers in Sweden to change legislation and attitudes towards sexual crimes and to a victory for the whole Metoo campaign. In the words of journalist Björn Wiman, the conviction was "written proof of how the Metoo movement changed the world" (Wiman, 2018). An appeal has later been lodged against this conviction. Sara Danius' recent appearance in a fashion show (fall 2018) dressed in a pussy bow blouse designed by her and decorated with the women's movement's symbol further links the pussy bow blouse to a feminist tradition of struggle and resistance in ways that will be hard to contest.

7. Gender Equality and on Being a Victim

Sweden's self-image as exceptional when it comes to gender equality has, it goes without saying, been severely damaged by the force and magnitude of the Swedish Metoo campaign that gathered 70,000 signatures in the fall of 2017 (Bendjelloul, 2018). In one blow the campaign delegitimises any self-assumed task of saving women in the rest of the world from patriarchal oppression. This implication of the Metoo campaign in Sweden gained the attention of international media, which gawked in surprise by the way the campaign sent shock-waves through Sweden, shaking the country's position as allegedly the world's most gender-equal country led by a feminist government (Silverberg, 2017). In this way, the Metoo campaign actualises the need to break with the worldview with roots in colonial feminism, as discussed earlier. There are further parallels with the Hijab Call-to-Action regarding the ways in which the notion of gender equality is addressed, as I will discuss in the following. In the feminist struggles and learning processes that the Metoo campaign initiated, the trope of the (secular), Swedish woman enjoying full gender equality seems to stand in the way of knowledge about real women's lives in equally powerful ways as in the case of the image of the subdued Religious Woman.

If the academic study of gender and religion needed to refute the prevailing images of religious women as lacking in self-determination and agency, the Metoo campaign is about the opposite: it shows that, contrary to prevailing ideas of an achieved gender equality, Swedish women in many cases have not had the capacity to exercise agency and say no to sexual oppression. The presence of a feminist discourse in Sweden seems to have added to the shame of being harassed or coerced; taken for granted that Swedes live in gender equality made it impossible to talk about certain realities. This is illustrated in the narratives concerning the man related to the Swedish Academy as the shame over not being able to say no was one of the reasons that kept the women silent for so many years. Only those women who could tell a story of how they hit back or stood up for themselves chose to appear with their names in the published narratives in the morning paper. As Swedish author Johannes Anyuru (2018) remarked, the testimonies of the 18 women are painful to read because they manifest, to varying degrees, a vulnerability that existing (patriarchal) power relations made easy to exploit and, in some of the cases, a lack of agency (although Anyury does not use this word)—even of what in a theoretical language would be referred to as minimal agency, i.e., the capacity to be a cultural and political subject, and not a passive receiver of a culture defined by others. However, if for some, listening to and recognising the experiences expressed in testimonies like these is what the Metoo campaign is all about, other commentators have questioned such a reading. This latter view can be summarised as a questioning of adult women assuming an identity of victim, precisely as a person without self-determination.

I suggest that these debates reflect the same tensions that are shown in the veil controversies and that they point to one of the important knowledge projects that the Metoo campaign addresses. They have to do with the fact that feminism, at times, in different contexts, continues to be trapped in the binary model of the oppressed woman/the victim versus the gender-equal, or feminist, woman. There are similarities between the young religious women in the United Kingdom in Page´s (2016) study referred to above, and the Swedish women coming forward about sexual harassment. For both categories of women, a discourse of gender equality and feminist consciousness seems to stand in the way of a true apprehension of their realities, generating shame instead of giving support. In this way, the activists of the Metoo campaign challenge a feminist academy to theorise further, or anew, experiences of victimisation, of agency, and resistance. An interview with Tarana Burke, by journalist Brockes (2017), offers food for thought. Brockes points out that even with the wave of testimonies brought forward by the Metoo campaign it is "still not exactly cool to out yourself as a victim of sexual violence." In the interview, Tarana Burke stresses that Metoo is about "the inherent strength in agency." I would like to align this knowledge project of the Metoo campaign with the theoretical discussions of women's religious agency. Theorising these fields together, which bring different perspectives to the table for discussion, would profit from, and contribute to, the further deconstruction of the binary oppressed/gender equal, a theoretical endeavour relevant to the entire field of intersectional feminism, and beyond.

8. Solidarity and Intersectional Feminism

The discussion of two recent solidarity campaigns in this article was framed in relation to a critique of what has been called Swedish exceptionalism, the notion that Sweden stands out as an exceptionally gender-equal country. Further, a point of departure was that the notion of a Swedish, perfect model of gender equality clashes both with the current situation in the country and with the wider goals of intersectional feminism. In my discussion, I asked how gender equality versus intersectionality was expressed and how they relate to the idea of Sweden as exceptional in this regard.

The collective learning processes triggered by these actions suggest that the idea of Sweden as exceptional needs to be abandoned—something which does not mean denying or abandoning the defence of what has been achieved in terms of gender equality up to the present. The Hijab Call-to-Action draws attention to the fact that Muslim women's possibilities to live gender equality in Sweden are constrained by racist, anti-migration and sexist attitudes that are part of a transnational political landscape, and intensely debated in academic feminism. The scope and force of the Metoo campaign, as manifested in the Pussy Bow Blouse manifestation, shows that quite contrary to the ideal gender equality in workplace policies and legislation, the basic right not to be subjected to sexual violence is not respected in Sweden. Furthermore, taking a stand against sexism in the workplace signifies challenging deeply ingrained power structures that continue to shut out women from real power. Similarly to the Hijab Call-to-Action, the transnational character of the Metoo campaign sets Sweden in relation to other countries, not as exceptional, but as one of many.

The Hijab Call-to-Action further sheds light on the location of the notion of gender equality in a secular progress narrative, which is problematically linked to what has been labelled colonial feminism. In this narrative, gender equality is caught in a binary form between the gender equal woman (the Western "us") and the oppressed woman (religious/colonised "others"). I tried to show that such a binary is still at work in academic thinking and public debate and actualised in the Metoo campaign. Martinsson et al. (2016) remark that gender equality often works as an empty concept, it is never defined but presupposed that everybody knows what it means. This, I would suggest, lies behind the ways in which the concept lends itself to tactical or polemic usages.

The activists of both campaigns urge feminist knowledge projects to go beyond the binary view of equality/oppression and recognise the complexities involved in each case. This entails for feminist knowledge projects a need to theorise powerlessness, self-determination, agency, and resistance further, with detailed, nuanced attention to each case in its social, cultural, and religious context.

The similarities in form between the two actions are related to their political content. Both the veil and the pussy bow blouse carry meanings that associate them with negative, patriarchal views of femininity, as submissive, passive, less worthy, less self-determinant, and not suitable to move in the public sphere on the same terms as men. At the same time, these patriarchal associations are precisely what enable the garments to turn into vehicles for protest: when joined with a feminist message, they were transformed into symbols of agency and resistance. The techniques of social media activism, including the established practice of sharing photos or selfies, made these campaigns particularly apt for mobilisation and for triggering debate.

At the core of both campaigns, it would seem, is the contestation of women's status as powerless or as victims in different contexts. However, this does not suggest that the actions represent a narrow view of gender equality—both actions speak to intersectional feminism in various ways. The Hijab Call-to-Action shows that gender, sexuality, race, religion, and global power relations all affect Muslim women's possibilities for equality—and for the conditions of the feminist struggle in Sweden generally. Further, it makes visible a norm of secularity, and challenges feminism to look at its own location in secular world-views critically.

The Metoo campaign brings with it the possibility of listening to as many voices as possible, not letting one category of women (or gender) be the sole testimonies to sexual abuse. This includes listening to the victims not only of heterosexual, male perpetrators, but to those who have been harassed or assaulted by non-heterosexual men or women who have held positions of power in their workplaces or associations (Holmberg, 2018). Furthermore, I would argue that the Metoo campaign's capacity to link the message of ending sexism and sexual abuse to the wider demand to change patriarchal and unjust power structures in all workplaces, as the protestors in the pussy bow blouse manifestation explain, creates a potential for fighting for change that goes far beyond the events related to the Swedish Academy.[20] It opens a path for activism related to economic exploitation, work, class, ethnicity, and ability—forms of activism that would point directly at the actual state of gender equality in an intersectional perspective in Sweden today. The two campaigns discussed here address key areas of Swedish society and formulate concrete suggestions for political change, thus forcefully demonstrating that adopting policies of gender equality is not enough to respond to the reality of gender in the country. Further, both campaigns unequivocally show that feminist struggles do not relate only to "gender equality"—they intersect with a range of social and political struggles, and with wider knowledge projects. In fact, the similarity in form and technique of the two campaigns seem to suggest ways in which feminist identity politics open for such wider, intersectional struggles. The campaigns engage in feminist identity politics through a usage of the politics of clothing; garments that have been imbued with patriarchal notions of femininity—the Muslim headscarf and the pussy bow blouse—are reinterpreted and bestowed with new meanings that represent female bodies, their agency and relation to power in new ways. Both campaigns suggest, and the ways they enfold show, that the representation of female bodies in the public domain is heavily politicised, and not restricted to the clothing of Muslim women.[21] By inviting people to take a stand in the political issues involved in the campaigns through the symbolic act of donning a scarf or a blouse, the campaigns invite identification with a harmed party, but at the same time suggest that the struggle does not regard support only for the category of woman that the garment allegedly represents; the symbolic act initiates a collective learning process that seeks to spell out the social and political issues at stake. So, whereas the Hijab Call-to-Action represents a form of feminist identity politics protesting against the violence, discrimination, and misrepresentation of Muslim women in Swedish society, the campaign speaks to the political struggle against racism and xenophobia, in defence of migrants' rights and religious rights, violence towards women generally, Swedish feminism's relation to religion and so forth. The Pussy Bow Blouse campaign protests the handling of accusations of sexual abuse related to one institution but addresses the hierarchies of power in workplaces and institutions at large, and the right to freedom from sexual violence and abuse in all its width and complexity as it is raised in the Metoo campaign. The campaigns exhort activists to gather around the image of the veiled woman or the woman working in a male-dominated workplace to form a political coalition that includes people who do not belong to the categories of women allegedly represented in these images—a strategy to mobilise that proved to be effective in various ways.

To join the mere act of donning the garment was enough; men or feminist activists who did not own pussy bow blouses tied a bow around their neck to take a stand. Swedish women, many of whom Muslim, who do not wear hijabs in their daily life took any scarf they had to participate in the Hijab Call-to-Action. One could say that the techniques used in these campaigns reflect interplay between (feminist) identity politics and the workings of intersectional coalitions, as recently discussed by Hill Collins and Bilge (2016). These authors highlight that an understanding of identities as not fundamentally fixed and unchanging is important for seeing how intersectional coalition building can work. If identities are seen as strategical essentialist, in Gayatri Spivak's famous wording, the identities mobilised in political struggle can be understood as a "political practice whereby an individual group foregrounds one or more aspects of identity as significant in a given situation." (Hill Collins & Bilge, 2016, p. 133). This enables the creation of a platform around which individuals or groups can gather. Hill Collins and Bilge further point out the advantages of seeing identities as already coalitional, a linking of identity politics and coalitional politics already present in Kimberley Crenshaw's work on intersectionality (Carastathis, 2013; Crenshaw, 1991; Hill Collins & Bilge, 2016). If identity politics “take place at the site where categories intersect” (Crenshaw, 1991, p. 1299; Hill Collins & Bilge, 2016, p. 134), the forming of groups based on identity is the result of a coalition between individuals (Hill Collins & Bilge, 2016, p. 134). The feminist campaigns discussed here can be seen in line with this analysis: activists form a coalition around a platform of a temporary, unfixed identity represented by the woman dressed in a headscarf or blouse and invite others to form a wider, intersectional coalition with them. The inherent force in identity politics is used in the campaign appealing to solidarity through identification, but the contingent and coalitional nature of identity are highlighted in the act of dressing in a scarf or a blouse to wear a (political) identity for a day.

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[20] The activism related to Metoo and the Swedish Academy has further resulted in the creation of an alternative Academy that will distribute a literary award as an alternative to the withdrawn Nobel Prize in 2018.

[21] The rise of the Sweden Democrats has brought about a new anti-feminist discourse in Swedish political life (Mulinari, 2016). In the electoral campaign of 2018, the Sweden Democrats suggested restrictions in the right to abortion, rupturing the political consensus in parliament on this issue.

Finally, I would like to stress the fact that the two campaigns are strongly linked to international debate and transnational, feminist activism, not generated in an isolated Swedish struggle for gender equality. This brings hope; in this sense, the campaigns show a way out of Swedish exceptionalism and look for other ways of relating to and being in the world.

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Conflict of Interests

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Article

Feminism as Power and Resistance: An Inquiry into Different Forms of Swedish Feminist Resistance and Anti-Genderist Reactions

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Abstract
This article explores how resistance and power are intertwined within the field of mainstream Swedish feminism, by analyzing some of its more visible expressions and strategies. These feminist resistance strategies could be described as circulating resistance (e.g., the #metoo campaign), public assemblies, the more subtle "disciplinary resistance", and state feminism. The article illustrates how these different forms of resistance fuel different reactions from movements that reiterate different discourses of "anti-genderism". In addition, some forms of feminism (state feminism and feminist disciplinary resistance) sometimes develop into, or overlap with, different technologies of power.

Keywords
anti-genderism; feminism; gender; popular assemblies; power; resistance; Sweden; state feminism

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1. Introduction

This article explores how resistance and power are intertwined within the field of mainstream Swedish feminism by analyzing some of its more visible expressions and strategies. These feminist resistance strategies could be described as circulating resistance (e.g., the #metoo campaign), public assemblies, the more subtle "disciplinary resistance", and state feminism. The article demonstrates, among other things, how these different forms of resistance fuel different reactions from movements that reiterate different discourses of "anti-genderism". In addition, some forms of feminism (state feminism and feminist disciplinary resistance) sometimes develop into, or overlap with, different technologies of power.

Research on resistance often addresses more organized forms of resistance/social movements or demonstrates more individual or everyday resistance practices. In the latter case, the concept of everyday resistance is often suggested as a concept that differs from or complements research on organized resistance (Lilja & Vinthagen, 2018; Scott, 1990, p. 198). However, when looking at feminist resistance, the resistance takes different expressions that indicate an assemblage of resistance practices that interact with each other. Overall, this resistance is performed by different subjects in different contexts through large organized groups as well as by individuals. Feminist resistance manifests itself through public assemblies, circulating discourses, by state feminism, or in a more disciplinary manner. Different practices of feminist resistance are related to other practices of resistance and the discourses of feminism. These discourses of feminism are not homogeneous, but often conflicting. Furthermore, feminist resistance sometimes transcends into more dominant forms of knowledge—such as in the case of state feminism. The Nordic model of state feminism has, as we will demonstrate in the next coming sections, both contributed to some important feminist achievements but also fallen short at certain times.

Moreover, feminist resistance itself not only profits on, or challenges, but also generates different power relations. Today different forms of feminism interact with various xenophobic, often right-wing, political movements. Roman Kuhar and David Paternotte (2017) suggest the notion of the "anti-gender" movement to describe mobilizations and campaigns that target gender and sexual equality (Kuhar & Paternotte, 2017, p. 253). These movements reiterate and build upon binary notions of different social categories and their struggles are against reproductive technologies, anti-discrimination policies, gender mainstreaming, sex education, transgender rights, and so on (Kuhar & Paternotte, 2017, pp. 258–259).

This article studies feminism as resistance to and exercise of power through an analysis of different forms of feminism and anti-genderism. As indicated above, different forms of feminist-inspired resistance exist simultaneously and are performative of and intertwined in other forms of feminist resistance. It is noteworthy that so far relatively few scholars have elaborated on the multitude of resistance and the inter-linkage of shifting forms of resistance in general, as well as how acts of individual, everyday, or discursive resistance entangle with more organized and sometimes mass-resistance activities. This article seeks to respond to this challenge by exploring how the multitude of and relationships between different forms of resistance are intertwined in power.

2. Some Notes on Methodology, Methods, and Material

Methodologically, this article draws upon discourse analysis as a way of unpacking the taken-for-granted and demonstrates the different discursive struggles, the multitude of forms of resistance, and the discourses that underlie, motivate, and oppose feminist struggles. Discourses, which are constructed through language, produce social life and inform who we are, how we should act, they define our place of existence and are essential for understanding resistance. (Gee & Handford, 2012, p. 1; Peeples, 2015). Language here is embraced in a broad sense including both the linguistic as well as the extra-linguistic, and hence practices, images, sounds, words, sentences, and writings are all seen as representations of different discourses.

In social science, resistance has been embraced in its complexity. We have reviewed and synthesized some of the diverse uses of the term *resistance* with the aim of identifying some of the important themes or resistance practices that can be observed in the literature. These themes or resistance practices have served as a point of departure for coding our data. Inspired by Butler's (2015) notion of *public assemblies*, Halley, Kotiswaran, Rebouché and Shamir's (2018) notion of *governance feminism* and Foucault's (1981, 1991) notions of *disciplinary power* as well as *resistance as repetitions*, which undermine the force of normalization, we have analyzed the feminist discourses and practices in today's Sweden and outlined four different feminist strategies: circulating resistance (e.g., the #metoo campaign), public assemblies, the more subtle "disciplinary resistance", and state feminism. We are aware, by following the works of James Scott (1990), that there is probably also feminist resistance, which is more hidden than the themes elaborated above. However, this resistance is not covered in this article as we have not collected data that demonstrate these more hidden strategies of resistance.

Inspired by the previously-mentioned elaborations of political struggles, this article analyzes the discourses that revolve around gender and feminist-inspired resistance and power. We have drawn on secondary material in the form of books and articles that have been both inspirational and informative in helping us to identify feminist political actions; these include different scholarly documents and media texts, such as debate articles. Together with different Facebook pages and/or Facebook notifications, these have provided us with rich and differentiated material with competing and contradictory stories, from which we have identified/constructed the four feminist resistance strategies addressed in this article. In particular, we searched for and analyzed debate articles (from the last two years) that revolve around different gender issues that were written for the Swedish newspaper *Svenska Dagbladet* (SvD). Lately, this newspaper has given space for different opinions (for example, Yvonne Hirdman and Ivan Arpi) in regard to gender equality issues.

3. Feminism and Anti-Genderism on the Rise

Today, white and non-white cis women, trans-women, bisexuals, and homosexuals are experiencing numerous, often intersecting, forms of oppression involving, for instance, low-status, reductive images, narrow images of identity, lower salaries, sexual abuse, and violence. These material and visible expressions of power are grounded in different discourses that essentialize, grade, naturalize, and marginalize these groups in different ways and to different degrees. Thus, the power relations that are opposed by feminist forms of resistance are both discursive and material in their character. At the same time, the neoliberal destabilization of certain status orders has offered a transgressive framework for the emancipation of certain segments of these groups (Fraser & Jaeggi, 2018, p. 200). While economic inequalities are steadily worsening, some researchers claim that cultural oppression—which has direct material effects—is actually decreasing (Nilsson & Nyström, 2018). Hence, neoliberalism makes some struggles for equality easier, while others appear to be more distinctly in conflict with the economic order.

While different forms of feminism, in general, refer to the belief that humans, no matter what their gender is, deserve equality of opportunity, treatment, respect, and social rights, this belief is formulated, promoted, and understood in various ways. Some stress the intersectional character of all forms of oppression and argue that "women" should be embraced in the crossroads between different forms of categorization or discrimination. Others emphasize the rights of those who perform identity positions that are related to LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) issues or embrace class differences, or promote a more liberal form of feminism. Different approaches to matter also distinguish and separate different feminist strands. Feminist resistance is thereby often formulated from specific comprehensions of, for example, identity, power, and matter. In line with this, feminist resistance is diverse, conflicting, interlinked and takes different expressions due to its relations with other forms of feminism.

Moreover, feminist-inspired concerns about equality and the practices carried out to reach such equality, give rise to—especially when successful—various backlashes (Faludi, 1991; Fraser & Jaeggi, 2018) and not only challenge power relations, but also provoke them. Kuhar and Paternotte, for example, conclude that anti-gender movements often present themselves "in opposition to clearly identified actors such as feminists, LGBT activists, specific elites and others" (Kuhar & Paternotte, 2017, p. 256). This, as we will see in the below analysis, is the case in Sweden, where different feminist-inspired movements and practices seem to fuel different reactions in terms of anti-genderism. This makes it reasonable to conclude that the discourses and practices of anti-genderism should, among other things, be analyzed in relation to—and partly as a reaction to and interlinking with—the manifold and messy forms of feminism.

Kuhar and Paternotte argue that despite national specificities there are many similarities in the rhetoric of anti-gender activists across Europe. Common patterns in the mobilizations can be identified across borders (Kuhar & Paternotte, 2017, p. 256). This includes shared discourses and a similar repertoire of actions and strategies. It is these new forms of activism that are against, among other things, "gender ideology", gender mainstreaming, and gender studies (Kuhar & Paternotte, 2017, pp. 258–259). Overall, the movements' target issues are related to the control over one's physical body. They also question the potential for self-realization through one's identity and (non-heteronormative) partnerships (Kuhar & Paternotte, 2017, p. 256). More specifically, rights and issues that are under attack from these movements include: reproductive rights, LGBT rights, gender studies, sex and gender education, and democracy issues related to these (Kuhar & Paternotte, 2017, p. 256; Peto, 2016).

Different reactions to feminist resistance should be contextualized in order to understand why feminism sometimes fuels anti-genderism. Nancy Fraser has—in an argument that fits well with the research of Nilsson and Nyström (2018)—convincingly argued that mainstream feminism has been able to use the neoliberal destabilization of the social order (with its paternalistic and protective traits) in order to liberate certain groups of women, while other groups (particularly white working class men) have lost some of their privileges due to this destabilization of the existing order. The hatred towards women, LGBT people, and others—whose subordination is partly, but not only, connected to status—could, therefore, be understood as a reaction to this partial loss of power and status (Fraser & Jaeggi, 2018, p. 200ff.). From the perspective of having lost previous privileges, feminists are understood as the ones being in power and therefore severely threatening male supremacy.

By following the works of Kuhar and Paternotte, anti-genderism in Europe not only includes angry white men, but also complex networks of different actors, anti-abortion groups, religious groups, family associations, nationalists and populists, far-right groups, and others (Kuhar, 2015; Kuhar & Paternotte, 2017, p. 259; Peto, 2016). In addition, and most importantly, the discourses of gender and sexual equality seem to mobilize people who, in their everyday lives, are active on internet forums, in Facebook groups, and on the editorial pages of newspapers, thus spreading the messages of the anti-gender movement. Together, not only the movements themselves but also the individual followers make the anti-gender discourse grow.

In Sweden, the anti-genderism and the emotional regime of hate towards feminism, as well as towards females embodying feminist agendas, is increasingly connected to anti-immigration sentiments. At the same time, racist and anti-immigration arguments often emphasize and make use of gender equality norms. As Diana Mulinari points out in her research on women voting for the nationalist party the Sweden Democrats, the party—though in a paradoxical manner—actually argues for the formal equality of men and women (Mulinari, 2016, p. 147). Moreover, Mulinari identifies similarities between the rhetoric of the Sweden Democrats and hegemonic Swedish feminism (Mulinari, 2016, p. 157).

However, the "progressive" feminist discourse of anti-immigration movements in Sweden can be understood to be on the decline. One example would be that the Sweden Democrats, who in their political campaign prior to the 2010 election put forward various "pro-feminist" arguments, yet their campaign before the 2018 elections voiced that sentiment to a much lesser degree—it contained proposals of a more restrictive abortion policy and less gender pedagogy within the Swedish education system (Sverigedemokraterna, 2017). One way of understanding this change would be that the Sweden Democrats, due to the increasing support they enjoy, do not need to use hegemonic arguments (such as female emancipation) to legitimize their politics. Overall, the connections between various feminist struggles and anti-feminist/racism are complex and make use of norms and borders between us and them, and men and women (Lilja & Martinsson, 2018).

4. The Crossroads between Power and Resistance

As stated above, as “anti-genderism” grows stronger it becomes relevant to discuss current feminist politics, its forms and expressions, as well as the ways in which it interacts with and contests anti-genderist discourses. Feminist-inspired resistance involves the gathering of bodies, but there are also more subtle forms of resistance where the aim is a transformation of norms. Overall, resistance and power entangle, and different forms of power give rise to specific expressions of resistance (Lilja & Vinthagen, 2014). Power can, for example, be depicted by Robert Dahl’s notion of decision-making power, which focuses on those who have “more” power by studying concrete and observable behaviours (Dahl in Lukes, 1974, pp. 12–13). This kind of power generates particular resistance strategies, including demonstrations, concrete vetoes, or boycotts.

Other forms of resistance, however, revolve around norms and the advancement of subversive truths. Resistance, here, often builds on the possibility of a repetition that undermines the force of normalization (Butler, 1997, p. 93). The categories and vocabularies of the dominating force or superior norm are contested through reiteration, re-articulation, or repetition of dominant discourses with a slightly different meaning (Butler, 1995, p. 236). Subversive repetitions can be described as resistance that is played out in or forming a network of mobile points of resistance. Or, in the words of Foucault:

> Just as the network of power relations ends by forming a dense web that passes through apparatuses and institutions, without being exactly localized in them, so too the swarm of points of resistance traverses social stratifications and individual unities. (1990b, p. 96)

Other forms of feminist-inspired or provoked resistance can also be distinguished when analyzing Foucault’s outline of bio- and/or disciplinary power. Biopower is a technology for managing populations which incorporates certain aspects of disciplinary power (Sharp, Routledge, Philo, & Paddison, 2000, p. 17). Biopower is about managing the births, deaths, reproduction and illnesses of a population; it functions to “incite, reinforce, control, monitor, optimize and organize” (Foucault, 1976, p. 136). It is a power that is “taking charge of life” (Foucault, 1976, p. 143; Johansson & Lilja, 2013). State feminism, as will be displayed below, can be understood as management of lives through biopolitical strategies.

In addition, feminist attempts to establish discourses of gender equality are sometimes understood as involving disciplinary elements. Some forms of knowledge are considered the optimum norm. Those who advance other forms of what is considered low-status knowledge sometimes are exposed to examination, detailed surveillance, as well as a complex system of punishments and rewards in order for them to rehabilitate and normalize according to the right knowledge. The idea is that nonconformity with the norm is punishable and to be different is to be inferior (Baaz, Lilja, & Vinthagen, 2017; Foucault, 1991, pp. 177–184; Lilja & Vinthagen, 2014). Disciplinary technologies are understood as a tool to advance gender equality discourses as a norm. Thus, power techniques are used in the moment of resistance.

Overall, resistance might be parasitic on, nourish, as well as undermine power. Power is, for example, sometimes created or recreated exactly through the very same resistance that it provokes (Lilja & Vinthagen, 2014). Among other things, different feminist movements seem to strengthen anti-gender ideas.

5. Circulating Resistance

As stated above, some forms of resistance build on the possibility of a repetition that undermines the force of normalization. Through reiteration, re-articulation, and repetition of new notions, dominant discourses are challenged. Subversive repetitions can be described as resistance that circulates and forms a network of mobile points of resistance. This kind of resistance produces new truths and norms.

The #metoo campaign is an international movement against sexual harassment. Starting in the US, it spread virally across the world during 2017 and is an example of how repeated notions can establish new discourses. The campaign, interestingly, shows how not only power, but also resistance can be transmitted in a “net-like” mode that involves signs, and the recognition of signs, as well as different emotions (intensities). It is resistance that should be analyzed as something circulating among those who share the experiences of bodily suffering and/or fear of sexual abuse and those who, more generally, recognize those experiences as disempowering. Resistance inspires, provokes, generates, encourages, and sometimes discourages, resistance. Circulating resistance works through narratives that inspire new narratives. The narrating appears as an unstable process, whereby discourse can be both an instrument and an effect of resistance. These narratives produce as well as constitute resistance.

One Swedish newspaper described #metoo as the following: “The campaign is now sweeping through Swedish social media. On Twitter, Facebook and Instagram, women actors, journalists, artists and private individuals witness sexual abuse and harassment at the workplace” (Aftonbladet, 2017, our translation). The #metoo campaign is an umbrella concept for a repetition of similar stories that (re)appear as people recognize the stories of the campaign, reflect upon them and the feelings that they provoke in relation to their own embodied experiences—i.e., it is resistance that circulates.

Nearly 80% of the women in Sweden have been subjected to sexual harassment or abuse, according to an opinion poll conducted by Demoskop for the newspaper *Expressen* (2017). Thereby, recognition plays a central role in the #metoo movement. Acts of sexual abuse are being *recognized*, became intelligible, and created an affinity between people (Butler, 2004). Recognition, here, refers to the identification of a narrative from previous encounters or knowledge—an identification that makes it possible for subjects to recognize themselves (or not) in the subject position (Lilja & Martinsson, 2018).

As Ninni Carlsson (2009) has shown in her research on narratives of having experience of sexual abuse, one precondition for recognition of and the success in mobilizing a political question is a certain discursive preparedness. To be recognized, a group must already have a certain influence and power over the dominant discourses. In this sense, the #metoo campaign could be understood as being a result of feminist discursive power as well as of female subordination. Interestingly, the #metoo resistance is productive in the sense that it produces new—but still comprehensible and discursively anchored—narratives and new "truths" about men, masculinity, and gender, thus challenging previous hegemonies and cultures of silence. Here, the Swedish self-image—connected to the Nordic model of gender equality—of being a nation that promotes feminism and equality could be understood as an important precondition enabling the campaign. Without this self-conception, the testimonies during the #metoo campaign would probably not have had the same political force since not listening to these claims would be compromising. At the same time, the campaign poses a threat to this very self-image, which might explain the ambivalence that the campaign has met in Swedish media.

Circulating resistance is also effective in its production of a larger "we". The emotions involved in #metoo make people stick with others who are aligned with the movement. This can be illustrated by the narrative of a young Swedish woman stating that: "#metoo reduces stigma and shame about sexual abuse. As more dare to choose to come up with their stories, a community is founded in shared experiences. Survivors become less lonely and it is often easier to stand for something together with others" (Thulin, 2017). The quotation reveals how emotions of shame contribute to creating a "we" and recognition of joint bodily experiences. Thus, emotions are performative—they do things, they direct bodies and create practices. Emotions are at the very core of loyalties, attachments, humour, and bonds (Ahmed, 2004; see e.g., Scheff, 1990, on social ties, and Goodwin, Jasper, & Polletta, 2001, on social movements; Foy, Freeland, Miles, Rogers, & Smith-Lovin, 2014).

As mentioned above, "circulating resistance" demonstrates how not only power but also resistance, can be transmitted in a net-like organization. In this, the #metoo has effectively succeeded to counter the "cultures of silence". By being so effective in revealing abuses and exposing various wrong-doings, currently many are mobilizing against the movement, branding the victims as "complainers" and defending the male harassers. In Sweden, this became evident, for example, when #metoo was blamed for the death of Benny Fredriksson, who took his own life in March 2018 after resigning from his position as head of the Kulturhuset Stadsteatern, Stockholm's arts and culture center. Fredriksson was accused of having pushed a woman into having an abortion, and for running the city theatre as a dictator. Reporter Cissi Wallin, however, wrote an article to counter the critique against #metoo, stating that:

> People argue that the #metoo lies behind Fredriksson's death. I have seriously received emails and comments during the last days where I am blamed ("and other hysterical feminists") for Benny Fredriksson death. It is said that "metoo went too far". But what has actually been going on for too long is the culture of silence. Throughout #metoo, I've been breaking the culture of silence and relieving the vulnerable of the debt burden they experience. (Wallin, 2018, our translation)

The quotation reveals the anger that the #metoo campaign has spurred and how "feminists" are pictured as "hysterical" and irrational. Women are pointed to as "bad women", who by revealing sexual abuse have hurt "innocent" men. Thus, the whole #metoo seems to have caused a strong counter-reaction from emotional men, who now raise their voices as a part of the anti-gender movement.

Another critique has been that #metoo is run by powerful and elitist women (Svensson, 2017). Here, feminists are understood as powerful and therefore not legitimate political subjects. This accusation is, as those who have followed the movement in Sweden know, not well-grounded since the movement contains plenty of initiatives from groups that are far from privileged. The critique is nevertheless interesting since it could be partly understood in relation to Fraser's analysis of the resentment triggered by the emancipation of certain women within a neoliberal context. The political power that certain women manifest seems to be provocative.

Overall, the above text shows resistance as constructive of new norms. However, as will be elaborated on below, feminist resistance not only produces narratives and practices by circulating signs as in #metoo, but it also takes the form of public assemblies, state feminism, and as "disciplinary resistance" (as well as other forms that will not be discussed here).

6. Feminist Resistance as Public Assemblies

Lately, Judith Butler has turned her focus towards the phenomenon of public assemblies. Representations of violence, poverty or other forms of local and global inequalities have made people rise with moral outrage against actions and events that have happened on the other side of the globe. This outrage is not grounded in physical proximity but in solidarity, which emerges across space and time. Images can make suffering at a distance seem very close while distancing what is proximate (Butler, 2015, pp. 100, 103). Still, what happens "here" now—as we watch the image—happened "there" before (in previous times when the image was taken). The "time-lagged" images impact on our comprehension of reality and ourselves in relation to other "nows" and encourage resistance. Images of suffering create "proxy resistance"; that is, acting out resistance on the part of "subalterns" (Butler, 2015; Lilja, 2017). Active listening, reflexivity, and empathy enable individuals and groups to explore the vulnerability of others, which, in turn, enables proxy resistance (Baaz, Heikkinen, & Lilja, 2017, 2018).

In Sweden in 2017, as well as in other places, a solidarity act of feminist activists and supporters was to get a "pussy hat" and gather to sing in support of their "sisters" in the US, and elsewhere, against the sexism of Donald Trump. In Washington DC the movement started when over 60,000 women showed up in knitted "pussy power" hats to announce their opposition to Donald Trump's election. The hat was designed as a strategy to, and most importantly, make women *visible*. The idea was also to, as it started in the US, wear the pussy hat in order to make a unified statement against Donald Trump and protest against his policies towards women, the LGBT community, Muslims, immigrants, and other minorities. Still, both the #metoo and the "pussy hat" movements have been criticized by black women, women of color, and the black and brown LGBT community, who argue that the campaigns are an attempt of white feminists that fail to include non-white cis and trans-women, thus pinpointing the "pussy hat" as being an artefact that is to be seen as "exclusionary, inappropriate, white-centered, and transphobic" (Gordon, 2018).

Even so, the "pussy hat" movement has spread transnationally and provoked mass-mobilization. Huge gatherings of bodies have been vocalizing their opposition to sexist policies and—due to their embodied, coordinated actions—the demonstrations have signified something in excess of what has been said at different events (Butler, 2015). By virtue of occupying public spaces, the bodies at the demonstrations have been politically "speaking" in a way that is not just vocal or in written language (Butler, 2015, p. 83). Angry, frustrated, touched, or sad bodies gather together to struggle against sexist attitudes, gendered discourses, and marginalization. It is the bodies that convey emotions to other bodies while receiving and forwarding intensities (emotions) themselves. Emotions are forwarded by the subjects of resistance to the readers of these bodies (Lilja, 2017).

In addition, emotions have the tendency to become more intense as they circulate (Ahmed, 2004). When hundreds of women in pink pussy hats met at the International Women's Day in 2017 at Götaplatsen in Gothenburg, the physical settings, the singing, and the multitude of bodies evoked different emotions. Political actions, protests, and demonstrations are spaces where emotions are generated and circulate. Thus, as we decide to visit the setting, we are managing our emotions, which in turn might fuel different resistance acts (Hochschild, 1983).

As revealed above, the #metoo movement as well as the artefacts of pussy hat are materialities and forms of resistance that have travelled transnationally, affecting people in new venues and thereby being recognized, assumed, made sense of, performed, as well as sometimes rejected in these venues. This kind of resistance is glaring resistance that protests against visible and direct expressions of power. Public assemblies unite humans, and it is a place where resistance becomes scaled up and emotional. Cultural products, such as pink hats, unite people who recognize themselves in each other. Still, this resistance does not seem to evoke any grand counter-movement of backlash. When Googling various internet pages (such as flashback), virtually no comments address or question the "pink hats". Are they not challenging enough? Are they not targeting men in Sweden, but rather subalterns in far-away locations, thus not becoming "dangerous"? One clue could be that the movement, due to its lack of concrete demands, does not endanger the social order of subordination that anti-genderism could be understood to protect. While #metoo actually resulted in concrete losses, due to social and economic punishments, the pussy hat "movement" did not. To appear does not seem to be enough to destabilize male-privilege and, by implication, it is not the target for anti-genderist discourse. Far more reactions are evoked by the disciplinary resistance described below, which takes place within discourse. Disciplinary resistance aims to establish certain discourses while, according to anti-genderism actors, forbidding those which are understood by feminists to be racist, sexist, or homophobic statements.

7. Disciplinary Resistance

Establishing new alternative "truths" that oppose dominant gendered norms seems to be a feminist practice, which is less glaring, rather hidden, and subtle. Stereotyped notions of men and women are often questioned in Sweden and new notions about gender are constantly established and (re)established. For example, a new word "hen" (she/he) has been established lately to dissolve the divide between she and he and open up for other identity positions. The establishing of new "politically correct" words and truths are by some groups, however, interpreted as a disciplinary practice. They experience that a discursive struggle is being played out in which different subjects make different "claims" about the shape of social reality. From the perspective of these groups, their political agendas and ideas are understood by the political elite as less compelling, less politically correct, and less legitimate than different feminist claims (Johansson & Lilja, 2013).

To analyze this further, it might be worth returning to Foucault and his outline of the discursive production of truths. Foucault argues that the production and maintenance of discourse is organized by a number of procedures; the best known being the prohibition of certain ideas. Some statements are excluded from the discourse since they represent the dangerous, false, or forbidden (Foucault, 1993). In short, these processes of ranking and exclusion define what knowledge is true and desirable, and what should be regarded as forbidden or disqualified truths. In today's Sweden, where a discursive struggle is taking place between different groups/individuals who are articulating their claims, some men comprehend their narratives to be judged as less legitimate and less qualified than other more feminist claims. A few men have openly opposed what they comprehend as an oppressive feminist agenda, by advancing other truths. Among these, Pär Ström and Ivan Arpi, who claim—among other things—that social science and gender researchers, famous Swedish journalists, established authors, and cultural personalities have formed a mob in order to suppress them and others who do not believe in feminism. This was addressed by Pär Ström as he, reluctantly, decided to withdraw from the debate on gender and equality:

> After five years, I have come to the conclusion that it is impossible to stage a serious debate about gender and equality in Sweden. That's because a debate, by definition, requires at least two opinions, and in regard to gender only one opinion is allowed. If you do not accept feminism, you are not accepted as a debater. (Ström, 2013, our translation)

Pär Ström describes himself and his position as subordinate and argues that today feminist views are normsetting. Ström's and others' statements are kept out of the discourse since their knowledge represents the false or forbidden (Foucault, 1993, pp. 7–9). Thus, from his perspective, feminist discourses are no longer to be regarded solely as subaltern, marginalized discourses but also as disciplinary tools (Eriksson, 2013; Johansson & Lilja, 2013). The same kind of arguments have been promoted by Ivan Arpi, a political writer and right-wing debater who loudly protests that "gender-studies has become a kind of church at Swedish universities" and that "gender theories are becoming increasingly dominant in Swedish universities and in many other areas" (Arpi, 2017). Arpi also concludes that other views are becoming marginalized, criticized, and hard to promote.

From Ström's, Arpi's, and others' perspectives, feminism has moved from the margins to the center and is currently established and maintained with various disciplinary means. The feminist discourses silence other views, which are then marginalized, removed and placed outside the public discourse. Maria Eriksson summarizes this position by describing the phenomenon of a "wronged white man": "a man who, in spite of belonging to the upper stratum of society, feels powerless and silenced and who takes these feelings as signs that society as a whole has become a feminist project that is oppressive towards men" (Eriksson, 2013).

How widespread Arpi's and Ström's views are in Sweden is difficult to say; however, they seem to be advancing. According to Maria Sveland, a famous Swedish feminist writer, Ström has the ability to mobilize men around different anti-gendered themes. She argues in her blog:

> Per Ström has contributed to set the tone in the vulgar debate filled with hatred and threats that he now says he shunned. He was one of the first who was hanging out and naming the women who reported Julian Assange for sex crimes. His blog, which in recent years increasingly served as an epicentre of the anti-feminist movement, has coordinated several drives against various public feminists, including Turteatern's female employees who received both hate emails and death threats when performing SCUM Manifesto. The mob started when Pär Ström wrote a furious blog, which was thereafter followed by hundreds of men who posted aggressive comments. (Sveland, 2013, our translation)

A complicated network of power and resistance emerges in cases where, as it seems, gender inequalities are met by a feminist resistance, which in turn strengthens the very power it protests. Multiple entangled relations of power and resistance reinforce and nurture each other. Or, returning to Arpi and Ström, there is a discursive struggle where a feminist critique and anti-genderism emerge and challenge one another, in an unstable process that has the aim of establishing certain discourses. A similar struggle also takes place within academia, where feminist researchers have demonstrated the different ways in which gender studies comes to be formulated as a threat to gender equality (Fahlgren & Sjöstedt Landén, 2014).

The discursive struggles between feminist viewpoints and an anti-gendered discourse are to be seen as points of power and resistance, where discourses of power and resistance seem to produce and fuel each other. Making claims about causality in social movement analysis is always difficult. Even if different feminist and antigender discourses seem to interact, is hard to prove that there is an exclusive link between anti-genderism and disciplinary resistance. Thus, how feminist-inspired resistance is intertwined in anti-genderism in a Swedish context needs further exploration.

Ström and Arpi both seem to be provoked by the culture of silence, which feminism, according to them, advances. From their perspective, feminist resistance punishes, ranks, and excludes disqualified truths—thus it involves disciplinary technologies. If that is the case, this would mean that some forms of feminist resistance are contaminated by power or are pursued through, what is usually thought of as, disciplinary techniques of power.

The above could be discussed through Chantal Mouffe's theories of democracy and antagonistic struggles. According to Mouffe, a prerequisite for the emergence of a vibrant democratic sphere and for it to be sustainable is to turn antagonistic conflicts into agonistic conflicts. This means that within the "we"—which constitutes the political community—the opponent is not considered as an enemy but rather she or he is seen as a legitimate adversary whose right to defend his or her ideas is never questioned. Agonistic confrontations instead of representing a danger to democracy are, in reality, the very condition of its existence (Mouffe, 2005). If we fail to turn antagonistic conflicts into agonistic conflicts, violence, ruptures, and struggles will occur. Thus, according to Mouffe, we must also be open to other competing stories and not discipline people into silence. Today, feminists feel silenced and questioned by the anti-gender movement, while the latter experience feminism as hegemonic, and silencing of other viewpoints. Does this mean that the lack of agonistic conflicts has created an antagonistic conflict, which fuels anti-genderism?

Another alternative would be to embrace the discursive hegemony that has been won by feminists and is acknowledged by Arpi and Ström, in understanding—as Wendy Brown does—politics as the exercise of hegemonic power and quest for ideological domination (Brown, 2001, 18ff.). The reactions from anti-genderists such as Arpi and Ström could, from this point of view, be understood as a sign of the need to strengthen the feminist hegemony rather than the opposite.

8. State Feminism

Above, we have elaborated different feminist-inspired forms of resistance that often come "from below" and the resistance that this feminist resistance encounters. However, a recently published book by Halley et al. (2018), *Governance Feminism: An Introduction*, vividly shows how feminist notions also exist within states. In places, such as Sweden, feminism and feminist issues, such as child sexual abuse, sexual harassment, pornography, sexual violence, anti-prostitution and anti-trafficking regimes, and prosecutable marital rape, are feminist justice projects that are no longer just grass-root struggles but are moving into the state. Governance feminism is globally distributed and there is also feminist resistance to the power of governing feminism.

In Sweden, the Swedish Social Insurance Agency (Försäkringskassan) is one site where *governance feminism* is played out. As a matter of policy, the Swedish Social Insurance Agency mainstreams gender issues into all its various practices and documents. Or in other words, it incorporates a gender equality perspective in all policies at all levels and at all stages of its policy-making processes (Swedish Social Insurance Agency, 2013). Through bonuses, policies and gender mainstreaming processes, the Social Insurance Agency organizes human subjects as a population by methods that "reinforce, control, monitor, optimize and organize" (Foucault, 1976, p. 136; Johansson & Lilja, 2013). For example, between 1993 and 1996 there was a series of rule changes that could be understood as feminist state policies. Among other things, a father's quota (or "daddy quota") was introduced, which reserves a part of the parental leave period for fathers. These "daddy days" have turned out to be important in organizing people's lives, their subjectivities and world views (Riksförsäkringsverket, 2002). Another example of the "feminist strategies" of the Swedish Social Insurance Agency is the institution's equality bonus, which has encouraged parents to share parental leave. If the parental leave is split between the parents then a monetary bonus will be automatically deposited into their account(s) (Johansson & Lilja, 2013). The state apparatus has incorporated feminist aims or a feminist resistance, to the extent that gender equality strategies have become attached to governmental techniques. Feminist resistance is becoming entwined with state power to create a complex web of power and resistance.

This pattern has, however, been criticized recently within the Swedish debate, in which Swedish feminism has been accused of being nothing but incorporated into a liberal bureaucratic policy that is designed to give women and men the same opportunities in a given system (Blomberg & Niskanen, 2013; Johansson & Lilja, 2013). Among the researchers who have raised critical objections against governance feminism of Sweden, Sara Edenheim and Malin Rönnblom, for example, state that "issues of power and conflicts have been replaced by administrative systems and quality assurance projects" (Edenheim & Rönnblom, 2012, p. 22). Gender equality strategies in today's Sweden seem, in Edenheim and Rönnblom's opinion, to have become primarily a matter of producing report after report (Johansson & Lilja, 2013). Maud Eduard, Maria Jansson, and Maria Wendt similarly argue that issues of feminism should be about confrontation, dialogue and knowledge exchange, rather than a consensus between the political parties with regard to gender equality (see also Johansson & Lilja, 2013; Östergren, 2008, p. 183). Thus, feminist issues that have been moved into the state have informed or fueled other forms of feminism; not least within academic venues where feminist scholars write and protest against the governing feminism (Johansson & Lilja, 2013).

In addition, LGBT activists have raised their voices arguing that equality struggles around, for example, LGBT issues have not been dealt with by the Swedish state feminist discourse. When the Swedish Gender Equality Act—a law that specifies the circumstances in which transsexual and intersexual persons may change their legal sex status—was introduced in 1972, it included a requirement for the patient to be sterile, both in order to be allowed to change legal sex and to undergo sexually corrective abdominal surgery. The law, which was the first of its kind in the world, provided no medical reasons for this requirement. Since the law was introduced in 1972, more than 500 transsexuals have been forced to be sterilized in order to change their sex in Sweden. Researcher

Signe Bremer has investigated how transsexuals experienced the law. One of her respondents said: “They want to assure, in every way, that freaks as us cannot reproduce ourselves” (Bremer, 2013). It was not until the early 2000s that the practice began to be questioned, initially by RFSL (Riksförbundet för homosexuellas, bisexuellas, transpersoners och queeras rättigheter [The National association for the rights of homosexuals, bisexuals, trans people and queers]) activists. This can be read as state feminism has not embraced gender equality questions beyond the couplet of men and women. Lena Martinsson, Gabriele Griffins and Katarina Giritli Nygren further argue that Swedish gender equality builds upon and produces nationalist and racialized positions (Martinsson, Griffins, & Giritli Nygren, 2016, p. 1).

Apart from being criticized by other feminists, state feminism has been the target of many actors within the anti-genderist movement. Arpi, as discussed previously, describes gender studies in terms of a “state religion” (Arpi, 2017). Here, he implies that the Swedish state is ruled by a certain feminist academic agenda. As in the case of #metoo, feminism is here accused not of being marginalized but of being hegemonic; feminism is accused of having power while claiming to be powerless. By implicitly describing critics of feminism as underdogs in the feminist state of Sweden, Arpi legitimizes his anti-genderist critique.

9. Concluding Discussion: Resistance and Power Intertwined

This article has explored different forms of feminist resistance by discussing some of its more visible expressions, and how they interact with “anti-genderism”. Among other things, the article has shown how resistance sometimes develops into, or overlaps with, different technologies of power. For example, different resistance practices transform, support, or hybridize with disciplinary and state power.

In Foucault’s work, some of the main forms of resistance are discursive resistance (including the idea of “reverse discourses”), “counter-conducts”, and other anti-authoritarian struggles, which interact with different techniques of the self (Foucault, 1981, 1988, 1990a, 2007, 2009). Similarly, as pinpointed above, feminist resistance can also be described as practices against authorities and the power effects of authoritarian relations (for example, the resistance against the Trump administration) as well as being composed of discursive struggles—as points of resistance that interact with power and which appear as repetitions of signs across time. For instance, as a reaction to the constant separation of the categories of she and he, the word “hen” is currently repeated in Swedish society, which produces a new subject position that can be used. This constructive or productive resistance builds upon the repetition and circulation of signs, which inspire the repetition of new similar signs.

What we can see from the above is a complex network of different forms of resistance that confirm, inspire, and are in conflict with, or create each other. Four different forms of resistance have been discussed above: circulating resistance, disciplinary resistance, state feminism, and feminist resistance as public assemblies. The latter sometimes revolves around cultural artefacts, such as the rainbow flag (pride) or pussy hats. Also, Muslim hijabs have sometimes been artefacts around which feminist-inspired resistance has been mobilized in Sweden. For example, in 2017 people assembled in Gothenburg to fight for the right to wear hijabs and the right to work (Lilja & Martinsson, 2018).

Different forms of feminist resistance compose different representations of feminist-inspired resistance, which are performative of (sometimes conflicting) understandings of feminism in Swedish society. While being performed, the feminist resistance not only reproduces and re-enacts a set of meanings that are under negotiation, but the resistance practices, as part of different feminist discourses, become targets for anti-gender campaigns.

As implied above, feminist resistance is sometimes small-scale and circulating, yet grand in its character. The #metoo campaign is as an example of this kind of resistance, appearing as many small points of resistance, which coalesced to become a widespread form of resistance. The resistance is inspired and made reasonable and legitimate by other resisters, thus resistance is an engine for resistance. The resistance has opened up the possibility of there being a backlash in the form of hate from “angry white men”. What is understood as disciplinary resistance by the anti-gender movement also attracts hate and frustration from many anti-gender activists. Public assemblies, on the other hand, are not repeated on an everyday basis and sometimes target the suffering of faraway subjects. As such, it does not seem to raise any visible anti-gender reactions. State feminism is under attack from angry men as well as giving rise to other forms of feminist-inspired struggles, such as LGBT rights or more radical forms of feminist resistance.

Overall, LGBT related resistance often condemns what is considered more traditional and excluding forms of feminist resistance. As a reaction to this, a number of researchers and activists want to bring back feminism to the categories of men and women. For example, Yvonne Hirdman, a well-known feminist researcher, argued in *Svenska Dagbladet* in 2018:

> Why only two sexes—why not three, four, five? So, it has recently been argued for in the gender debate. But with #metoo we finally got back to the basis of feminism: the relationship between men and women. (Hirdman, 2018, our translation)

The above quotation demonstrates struggles that are not between different forms of resistance, but rather between different feminist viewpoints or due to loyalties with different precarious groups. Another example of this is how feminist-inspired struggles often address both gender inequalities and different forms of racism. However, some argue that these two aims have undermined the gender part of feminist struggles. Ann Charlott Altstadt argues in *Svenska Dagbladet*:

> Anti-racism has collided with radical feminism and left the latter in ruins....Sexual crimes are increasing significantly, and in some areas in Sweden, women do not dare to go out after dusk. Previously, this had been a feminist issue in Sweden, but people on the left of the political spectrum in Sweden dare not address the problem for fear of being accused of racism. (Altstadt, 2018, p. 20, our translation)

The above indicates that different feminist-inspired struggles may not only support, but sometimes undermine each other. However, as Butler pinpoints, feminism could make alliances and struggle against different forms of inequalities in a concerted manner. She states:

> What is astonishing about the alliances…is that several feminist organizations have worked with queer, gay/lesbian and transgendered people against police violence, but also against militarism, against nationalism, and against the forms of masculinism by which they are supported. (Butler, 2011).

Thus, to embrace and challenge different forms of inequalities must not lead to these struggles undermining each other.

As feminist and resistance researchers, we would say that (feminist) resistance mostly challenges, but also creates and strengthens different power relations, and that this is part of the resistance. This is, we would argue, the reason why different camps within the feminist debate criticize each other. The internal criticism between different forms of feminism is important and could contribute to more effective and inclusive forms of feminist resistance. Different practices of feminist resistance should, constructively, be evaluated, analyzed and (re)constructed. Still, when being too harsh the critique risks questioning and/or weakening other forms of feminist resistance.

This article gives an interpretation of the current state of feminism today (at least in Sweden), which we hope to, with the help of others' input and perspectives, develop in future texts. In order to represent the current state of feminism, choices inevitably had to be made in selecting some forms of feminist resistance. These choices are not grounded in any ultimate truth about what qualifies as the most important feminist resistance at present. The choices mirror our current understandings, which are ultimately based on our own (previous) inquiries and our current knowledge base.

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Article

"Sweden Has Been Naïve": Nationalism, Protectionism and Securitisation in Response to the Refugee Crisis of 2015

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Abstract
Fake news, disinformation campaigns, xenophobia, political resentment, and a general backlash on equality issues mark the current political climate. In this context, the idealism of the Swedish welfare state has gained a specific symbolic value. This article investigates how the idealisation of Sweden as a modern and gender-equal country was articulated as a focal point in the establishment of threat and crisis narratives in the political debate of the refugee crisis of 2015. The article shows how progressive and egalitarian ideals were viewed as outdated and naïve, but at the same time put forward as core values worthy of protection. The title refers to the statement made by the Swedish Prime Minister in 2015 stating that "Sweden has been naïve" and serves as an example of how the myth of Sweden as an exceptionally modern, secular, and equal society was evoked in processes of securitisation, nationalistic protectionism, and normalisation of xenophobia. The article concludes that the articulation of Swedish exceptionalism in the establishment of threat and crisis narratives may reproduce and enhance social inequality and polarisation.

Keywords
gender; migration; neoliberalism; protectionism; refugee crisis; risk; securitisation; Sweden; welfare state

Issue
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1. Introduction

The idealisation of Sweden as the most secure, modern, and gender-equal country in the world, expressed in the metaphor of "the people's home", is a powerful discourse (Martinsson, Griffin, & Giritli Nygren, 2016). It works as a form of path-dependency (Cox, 2004) that limits national policies as well as influencing foreign policy, for instance, expressed in the current government's acclaimed feminist foreign policy. Critical studies have raised concerns about how the construction of a form of Swedish exceptionalism needs to be examined as a form of power struggle, calling attention to how it contributes to the silencing and normalisation of racist and gendered power asymmetries and excluding practices (de los Reyes, Molina, & Mulinari, 2002; Habel, 2012; Martinsson et al., 2016; Schierup & Ålund, 2011). In this article, I want to address how the idealisation of Sweden as secure, modern and gender-equal tends to gain a certain symbolic function in narratives of crisis. When Donald Trump stated "look what happened in Sweden", the idea of Swedish exceptionalism was used to evoke a sense of alarmism. This form of rhetoric is not unique to Trump but has also gained influence on the political discourses in Sweden. During the most dramatic events of the so-called "refugee crisis" in autumn 2015, liberal and right-wing politicians and commentators evoked the scenario that Sweden was facing a "system collapse" (Martinsson & Reimers, 2017; Scarpa & Schierup, 2018). The sense of collapse was dramatically charged with xenophobic discourses on migrant men sexually harassing women and supposedly being unable to adjust to the assumed gender-equal Swedish society (Rogberg, 2016; Stiernstedt, 2016).

These forms of alarmism were reinforced and gained legitimacy in November 2015 after the Swedish government presented the dramatic decision to stop migrants at the border. The title of the article, that "Sweden has been naïve", refers to the statement made by the Swedish Prime minister Stefan Löfven, leader of the Social Democrats, at a press conference due to the increased terrorist threat against Sweden on 19 November 2015 (Kärrman, 2015). The security police had just decided to raise the terrorism threat level and the Prime Minister argued that the security police had to be given an extended mandate of surveillance. The statement came just a week after the change in the Swedish refugee policy, which went from liberal to radically restrictive. At this specific press conference, it was stated that there were concerns that a terrorist had crossed the border into Sweden and that this fear must be taken seriously.

The aim of this article is to elaborate how the idealisation of Sweden as a modern and gender-equal country is articulated in current processes of securitisation. I am interested in how crisis situations provide opportunities to launch dramatic changes that may violate the very same ideals that it claims to be defending. The statement that "Sweden has been naïve" is considered as an example of how the myth of Sweden as an exceptionally modern, secular, and equal society is used to gain legitimacy for securitisation, nationalistic protectionism, and normalisation of xenophobia.

The article takes builds on ethnographic research (see Acknowledgements) carried out by professionals that work in the field of societal crisis preparedness and crisis management in public authorities in Sweden. This research focuses on how gendered norms inform crisis management, especially how masculinity constructions are reproduced and challenged through notions of protection and risk. It focuses on how professional expertise in this field is gendered and informs what area of risks is articulated as central reference objects in this kind of work (Ericson, 2017a, 2017b). The research has been carried out in relation to the last couple of years' dramatic events in Sweden in terms of terror attacks, wildfires, potential military conflicts, and the so-called refugee crisis of 2015. In this article, I want to specifically discuss the aspect of the refugee crisis in the political debate since this case stands out as a rather unsettling or silenced matter in interviews and observations. Migration could not as easily be used in making claims on protection and security in comparison with terror attacks, wildfires, or potential military conflicts. I became curious about why the dramatic events of 2015 were seldom mentioned in interviews and observations as a useful reference object. When mentioned, it rather served as an unsettling event that dramatically exposed the limited scope of crisis preparedness work (Ericson, 2017b). In this article, I will discuss this unsettling dimension, but also focus on how the refugee situation of 2015 influenced the political debate and how gender equality served as a focal point in the establishment of threat and crisis narratives in relation to this situation.

The article begins with a presentation of theoretical approaches to securitisation and masculinist protectionism, followed by two sections targeting how securitisation and masculinist protectionism influence the political debate on migration in Sweden. The first focuses on how threats to the gender-equal and secure Swedish society were established in relation to the changes in the Swedish government's migration policy in November 2015. The second focuses on how the imaginary defense of the gender-equal and secure Swedish society justified a form of necropolitics where some lives were rendered ungrievable. The article then ends with a section that draws out the article's main conclusions.

2. Securitisation, Risk Management, and Neoliberalism

Securitisation is a concept used and theorised in widely different fields of research (Balzacq, 2011). The process of securitisation is sometimes described as a specifically important political regime and as a new world order following the aftermath of the September 11 attacks (Agamben, 2005; Butler, 2004; Puar, 2007). However, theoretical works on the concept of securitisation and the societal processes that it designates go further back than this, not least the so-called Copenhagen School (Buzan, Wæver, & de Wilde, 1998). As Neocleous states, it is also problematic to restrict securitisation to a new form of new world order since "the distinction between war and peace has always been blurred" and that the discourse on securitisation risks reproducing the liberal myth that "the state exists in order to realise this 'liberal peace' within civil society" (Neocleous, 2010, p. 9).

In this article, I view securitisation as a concept that addresses specific elements of how power asymmetries gain legitimacy in neoliberal forms of governance, fostering a "political culture of danger" (Foucault, 2008, p. 66). Securitisation signifies how discourses of security gain hegemony in relation to, for instance, social policies or human rights. In *The Administration of Fear*, Paul Virilio states that:

> States are tempted to create policies for the orchestration and management of fear. Globalisation has progressively eaten away at the traditional prerogatives of States (most notably the Welfare state), and they have to convince citizens that they ensure their physical safety. A dual health and security ideology have been established, and it represents a real threat to democracy. (Virilio, 2012, p. 15)

Securitisation would, from this perspective, suggest that neoliberalism does not simply hollow out the state through privatisation and marketization, but rather that "one of the few aspects of the capitalist state actually reinforced under neoliberalism is the security apparatus" (Neocleous, 2008, p. 159). Studies of the neoliberal reformation of public services, often referred to as New Public management, describe how government agencies are turning into various forms of “risk bureaucracies” (Hood, Rothstein, & Baldwin, 2001) and that risk assessment has become a kind of universal remedy to recover the legitimacy of almost any organisation or sector (Power, 2004). Procedures of assessing and managing risk tend to obstruct and replace the core activities in many areas (Brown & Calnan, 2010; Power, 1999; Rothstein, Huber, & Gaskell, 2006).

As Methmann and Rothe (2012) describe, the political culture of danger rests on a somewhat paradoxical dynamic. The focus on security issues draws attention to politicians’ and authorities’ responsibilities and provides them with agency. At the same time, expectations are disclosed as unreasonable. “In the face of the apocalypse, politicians seem to be too small and ‘human’ to resolve the dawning crisis—hence, responsibility is handed over to the arcane and obscure practices and rationalities of risk management” (Methmann & Rothe, 2012, p. 337). The inability to resolve the situation does not so much add up to a legitimacy crisis, but rather becomes a source of credibility in its own right. A similar paradox is described in Mirowski’s (2013) work on the economic meltdown of 2008 in the US. Mirowski asks how it is possible that neoliberalism not only survived but even gained legitimacy. Although this crisis demonstrated the destructive forces of marketisation, it did not lead to a political debate on neoliberalism or risk orientation. Rather, marketisation and risk orientation were manifested as inevitable, only deepening the cult of neoliberal ideology. Mirowski suggests that confronting crisis and risks do not make the elephant in the room apparent, but may rather have the opposite effect. In a similar vein, I suggest that the seemingly paradoxical situation where a government presenting themselves as feminist launched conservative and masculinist forms of protectionism, may, in fact, be viewed as claiming political legitimacy.

3. Masculinity and Protectionism

The article relates to theoretical elaborations of the relation between securitisation and masculinity construction. It draws on the feminist critique of the state and security that stresses how protection works as a form of power relations permeated by masculinity construction. Security concerns articulate patriarchal logics where “a real man” is defined as the protector who must “suppress his own fears, brace himself and step forward to defend the weak, women and children” (Enloe, 1990, p. 12). As Stiehm points out, protection must be viewed as a relationship of power, where the protector may “control the lives of those he protects—in order to ‘better protect’ them” (Stiehm, 1982, p. 372). These mechanisms are activated not only in states of war but also when society is confronted by terror attacks, crisis situations, and hazards (Butler, 2004; Gilson, 2014; Puar, 2007).

In her critique of the new security politics following the attacks of September 11, Young (2003) formulates a theory of masculinist protectionism drawing on Foucault’s notion of pastoral power. She argues that, in the face of risk and looming threats, existing mechanisms provide legitimacy to paternalistic state powers and traditional patriarchal forms of masculinity. Young defines masculinist protectionism as a powerful discursive logic of distinguishing between those who can provide protection and those who are rendered passive and in need of protection. These positions are gendered, as providing protection is associated with masculinity while being vulnerable and unable to protect oneself is associated with femininity. It also rests on racist agendas, positioning white men as the “good” men that protect women from “bad” and “foreign” men. Young especially emphasises that the position of being vulnerable is circumscribed by a demand on being grateful and loyal to their protectors:

> Public leaders invoke fear, then they promise to keep those living under them safe. Because we are afraid, and our fears are stirred by what we see on television or read in the newspaper, we are grateful to the leaders and officers who say that they will shoulder the risk in order to protect us. The logic of masculinist protection works to elevate the protector to a position of superior authority and to demote the rest of us to a position of grateful dependency. Ideals of democratic equality and accountability go by the wayside in the process. (Young, 2003, p. 13)

Following Young, it is possible to draw attention to the more subtle ways that masculinity is constructed in the process of mobilising resources, evoking agency and gaining legitimacy through claims on providing security. Another important aspect in relation to Young’s (2003) elaboration of masculinist protectionism is the subject of vulnerability. Masculinist protectionism rests on the claim of being in a vulnerable state that must be reduced at any cost. For instance, Ahmed (2004) and Hochschild (2016) describe right-wing nationalist agendas to be legitimised by evoking and taking advantage of vague and diffuse feelings of a society or a nation vulnerable to harm. In terms of masculinity construction, it is also possible to, as Carroll states, “consider the various strategies by which white masculinity has transformed the universal into the particular as a means of restaging universality” (Carroll, 2011, p. 10). Masculinity is thus constructed not just by distance to vulnerability, since claims on being recognised as vulnerable may also be central to how masculinity is constructed in neoliberal times. This form of masculinity construction assumes a negative and reductionist view on vulnerability, considering it to be a dangerous and passive position that must be reduced in accordance with neoliberal ideals of the responsible, self-sufficient citizen (Gilson, 2014). Being able to seize and handle vulnerability could be considered as a central form of masculinist, heroic achievement that responds to and reproduces neoliberal ideals.

4. Staging Migration as a Security Problem

The idealisation of Sweden as the most secure, modern, and gender-equal country in the world has been challenged over the last decades due to growing inequalities and social conflicts (Schierup & Ålund, 2011). For instance, suburban riots and attacks on police and firefighters have gained recognition in international media as disturbing signs to the disarray of the Swedish welfare state (Ericson, 2014). In the current political debate, this destabilisation is frequently associated with migration, rather than the neoliberal social reforms of the past decades (Mulinari, 2016; Scarpa & Schierup, 2018). This association was articulated in the autumn of 2015 as the number of migrants passing the borders of European nations increased dramatically. Despite previous reports of migrants drowning when attempting to cross the Mediterranean Sea, migration only gained a broader public recognition when increasing numbers of refugees reached the ferry-terminals and train stations in southern Sweden. Another important factor was the publication of the haunting image of the young boy Alan Kurdis's lifeless body washed up on the beach in Turkey on September 2. By September 10, the national agency of crisis preparedness in Sweden, the Swedish Civil Contingency Agency (MSB), held a first national collaborative meeting of agencies, county boards, companies, and non-governmental organisations to address how the Swedish society was affected. From this point, MSB would hold a central position regarding the national management of the situation, supporting the involved actors, and collecting information presented to the government.

The alarming situation for the migrants brought about a massive manifestation of civilians, who provided clothes and food to migrants arriving at train stations in larger cities. Some support was organised but, in many cases, people's efforts where spontaneous and mobilised through Facebook, Twitter, and using Swish. At the beginning of these events, the government officially supported the civil society. When 15,000 people gathered in Stockholm at a manifestation under the banner "Refugees welcome", on September 6 2015, the Prime Minister held a speech asserting that Sweden would do everything in its power to assure that "Europe stands up for inviolable human dignity and rights" and that "we [the Swedes] will continue to be a country that carries solidarity as our greatest value" (Government Offices of Sweden, 2015a). However, two months later, the progress of the situation and the political conflicts within the EU forced the government to embark on a radically different path. By November 12, the Prime Minister from the Social Democrats and a minister from the coalition party, the Green Party, held a press conference to launch a dramatic change in Swedish policy regarding migration. Rather than openness and solidarity, it was claimed that the circumstances demanded Sweden to stop migrants at the border and adjust to the most restrictive migration policies possible within the EU.

The response to this decision was dramatic since it strongly challenged the spirit of being a nation that "carries solidarity as our greatest value". It also seemed to adjust to the alarmist rhetoric that had been repeated over the last couple of weeks by right-wing nationalist and conservative parties stressing that the "naïve" idealisation of solidarity would cause a "system collapse" (Berg, 2015; Martinsson & Reimers, 2017; Scarpa & Schierup, 2018). Although officials from MSB had previously stated that there was no substance in claiming that the society was facing "a system collapse" (MSB, 2015) the government has now stated that the dramatic decision was based on information provided not only by the security police, but also by the MSB. It was declared that "the national status report produced by the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency…points to major strains on several vital public services" (Government Offices of Sweden, 2015b). Based on this information, the Prime Minister and the minister of the Green Party, literary in tears, proclaimed that "Sweden is in need of breathing space". The metaphor of "breathing space" has received much criticism as a profoundly cynical way of describing the situation, considering that migrants were fleeing terror and sadistic killings, as well as defying the high probability of drowning while crossing the Mediterranean Sea.

The decision was a devastating blow to the mobilisation of civil society in support of migrants, as well as to the general spirit of Sweden as a country that would stand out and serve as an exception to the cold-hearted nationalist and xenophobic mentality sweeping through Europe. It exposed the image of Sweden as a secure, modern, and gender-equal country to what Lauren Berlant (2011) has described as the "cruel optimism" of being confronted with "the dissolution of objects/scenarios that had once held the space open for the good-life fantasy" (Berlant, 2011, p. 3). The spirit of being able to stand out was exposed as a form of naivety which, for the moment, had to be abandoned, thus taking a "breathing space" in an effort to handle the alarming situation. In line with what Methmann and Rothe (2012) describe, it seems that politicians were positioned as central actors, while at the same time staging as unable to resolve the situation and forced to pass over responsibility to secure the authorities' administrative procedures. Their position as protectors was enhanced through claims of being in a dramatically vulnerable position, expressed as being unable to breathe.

Rather than becoming a blow to the confidence in politicians, especially a government of Social Democrats' ability to resolve the situation, the memory of these events has now become a sign of a vigorous political ability to take charge. The events provide a form of masculinist protectionism, staging politicians as brave defenders who were forced to make difficult and unpopular decisions that may seem or "feel" wrong by the "naïve" general public. In one of the posters presented to be used for the election 2018, the Social Democrats stated that "We take charge of Sweden's security—The Swedish model shall be developed, not dismantled". The text was illustrated with an image of border police officers on a train engaged in checking the identity papers of the passengers, thus carrying out the demand of stopping migrants at the border.

5. The People's Home Becoming Unfamiliar

The events of autumn 2015 brought an escalating awareness that the influence of international security forums and policies of the EU—such as the Dublin regulation and Schengen agreement that would supposedly guard against violations of human rights and the surge for totalitarian political regimes—was deteriorating. This was not a specifically Swedish phenomenon. But in the Swedish case, the demands on re-imagining politics, the EU, and international relations must also be viewed in relation to the national idealism of imagining Sweden as a role model of a modern and gender-equal society, where the state guarantees the wealth of the population. The "people´s home" became violently unfamiliar and this intrigued the surge for restoration and manifestation that this "home" was still there, somewhere. It just needed to catch its breath for a while.

In her ground-breaking work on ghosts and haunting, Avery Gordon (2008) argues that we need concepts and theoretical models that describe the power that is manifested as a form of present absence, as for instance in events when we become aware of or are unable to disregard that something is missing. The things or people that are not present can become a dramatic presence due to their absence and the very fact of their non-attendance can have a powerful influence on social relations. In the second edition to the book, Gordon states that her project may have seemed obscure in the 1990's, but that the elaborations made much more sense in relation to the aftermath of the September 11 attacks and the global war on terror. At this point, the figure of ghosts was evoked as a means of warfare, such as in the cases of "ghost-airplanes, ghost prisons, ghost 'detainees'" (Gordon, 2008, p. xix). The theoretical elaboration on hauntings and ghostly matters help to explain elementary aspects of how securitisation evokes a form of liminal space or state of exception. In relation to the subject of this article, the term *haunting* can help to conceptualise the lingering anxiety arising as the self-acclaimed feminist Swedish government would not only challenge the image of Sweden as an exception, but also use this image so as to make claims that closing the borders for migrants was the only way to secure the traditional "Swedish model" of a modern and gender-equal society. This ideal of Sweden evolved as a powerfully haunting image, in line with what Gordon describes as those "instances when home becomes unfamiliar when your bearings on the world lose direction" (Gordon, 2008, p. xvi).

In the Swedish context, the refugee situation became specifically haunting since it did not just consider the legitimacy of the EU or international infrastructures such as the UN, but also challenged the idealisation of Sweden as a role model when it comes to social and gender-equal policies. It exposed the self-conception of Sweden as a nation that "carries solidarity as our greatest character" as a castle in the air. But rather than doing away with this idealism, it seems that there are many efforts to rework the notion of solidarity so as to declare that, in fact, the idealism was defended. To do this, some forms of lives were rendered unaccountable or, following Butler (2004), ungrievable. The idealisation of Sweden as the most secure, modern, and gender-equal country in the world adheres to a form of necropolitics, forcing citizens to develop their ability to grieve the lives of those who contribute to the welfare system (by working, consuming, paying taxes, and living according to gender-equal values) while at the same time developing the ability to stay cold-hearted in relation to those others who are positioned as tearing or plaguing the system.

In the aftermath of the acute events during the autumn of 2015, the Swedish government has intensified the search for migrants who refuse to leave the country after having their application for asylum rejected by the Swedish Migrations Agency. This situation has especially escalated as a consequence of the terror attack in Stockholm on April 9 2017. The man driving the truck down a pedestrian street in central Stockholm, killing five people, was positioned as an illegal migrant who remained in the country after his application for asylum had been rejected. The Prime Minister has stated that in an effort to prevent these types of attacks in the future, more forceful routines of deportation and policing of migrants was required as a continuation and reassurance of the government's orientation of being tough on migration (Government Offices of Sweden, 2017).

6. Conclusions

In this article, I have touched upon the conflicting ways in which the idealisation of Sweden as a modern and gender-equal country was articulated as a focal point in the establishment of threat and crisis narratives in relation to the dramatic events of the refugee crisis in 2015. Sweden's association with gender equality and a modern welfare state was positioned as a trait to be powerfully defended, but also as a form of weakness that made the society vulnerable to threats. First of all, when the Swedish government was forced to adjust to the recent years' political orientation of antiterrorism and restrictive immigration policies, it required that Swedish exceptionalism be reformulated as constituting a form of naivety, by claims that this was not the time for idealism but rather a realist approach. The statement on being naïve expressed that the ideals of the "people's home", with its values on solidarity and gender equality, had to be abandoned in an effort to hold on to the prophecy of regaining its former glory in the future. At the same time, it silenced that the welfare state system had been dismantled by the neoliberal reforms that have dominated Social Democratic politics since the 1990's (Mulinari, 2016; Scarpa & Schierup, 2018).

Second, staging a nation, in this case Sweden, as having been naïve, effectively changed the legitimate reference object of the welfare state from vulnerable people to the authorities' vulnerability and urgency of regaining control. Thereby, authorities were able to make claims on legitimacy which they would not otherwise have been able to make. Citizens were asked to trust the authorities and not directly engage with vulnerable groups, thus depoliticising conducts and routines by the authorities that entailed racial profiling and violations of human rights. It also drew attention to increased demands on authorities to be more determined in taking actions against migrants that had had their asylum application rejected. At the same time, NGO's and activists that support migrants where positioned as a security threat. The issue is then no longer the abandonment of Swedish exceptionalism, but rather how Swedish exceptionalism was reclaimed through securitisation. As I have argued, one expression of this was how the Social Democrats used securitisation in the promotion for the election in 2018. In these processes, vulnerable groups who were not able to "manage their risks" were positioned as tearing on the "system" and rendered ungrievable.

In *The Cultural Politics of Emotions* (2004), Sarah Ahmed asks: "How does a nation come to be imagined as having a 'soft touch'?" She takes the example of right-wing nationalist rhetoric where politicians are stated to have failed to protect the nation by becoming soft on policies regarding immigration, equality, and egalitarianism. The target of this rhetoric was the so-called "political correctness" that had supposedly made the nation vulnerable and open to being "injured by these others, who are taking what is yours" (Ahmed, 2004, p. 1). This way of ascribing a soft skin to the nation, and the looming apocalyptic gaze that it performs, is very similar to the manner in which securitisation discourses were circulating in the Swedish context. But it does not just concern the form of blatant xenophobia that Ahmed describes, where the "others" were portrayed as robbing or swamping the nation. Rather, it could also entail a banal and lingering sense of loss. In the Swedish case, this connects to a form of confrontation with the present absence of the modern, secure, and gender-equal society, which paves way for a general surge of, or incitement for, political narratives that promise to be able to regain Swedish exceptionalism. As I have suggested in this article, this promise may enforce a "culture of danger" and securitisation that further extends the political hegemony of neoliberal reforms as well as the disciplining mechanism of masculinist protectionism that demands citizens to subject to the protectors' superior authority and accept a passive position as grateful dependants. The surge for reassuring Swedish exceptionalism merges with securitisation, suggesting that citizenship is exclusive for those who "do well" while vulnerable groups, as well as political activism, become associated with security threats. In this case, the articulation of Swedish exceptionalism, in the establishment of threat and crisis narratives, may prove counterproductive and rather reproduce and increase social inequality and polarisation.

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Conflict of Interests

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