

# Gender Equality and Meritocracy

Contradictory discourses in the Academy

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Doctoral Thesis

Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences

Uppsala 2016

Acta Universitatis agriculturae Sueciae

2016:17

ISSN 1652-6880

ISBN (print version) 978-91-576-8536-0

ISBN (electronic version) 978- 91-576-8537-7

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Print: SLU Service/Repro, Uppsala 2016

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### Abstract

This thesis examines how gender equality measures and discourses are reconciled with notions of merit in academia. Gender equality is often defined as equal rights for women and men and has become a widely accepted political goal and vision. Meritocratic principles build on the assumption that everyone, regardless of gender, class, race and sexuality, has the same opportunities to advance provided they are sufficiently hardworking and intelligent. Meritocratic principles thus build on the assumption that objective evaluations are possible. Along these lines, inequalities in academia are a natural outcome and not the result of discrimination. However, feminist studies have shown that meritocratic practices fail to reach these objective evaluations and that gendered norms influence who is considered merited and not. This awareness of discrimination leads to academic organisations being required to act upon inequalities and ensure that gender equality measures are taken, despite the strong conviction that meritocracy is already in place. Thus, we have two contradictory discourses that have to be reconciled in order to co-exist in academia. Through which processes does this reconciliation take place? With a view to answering this, I examine a gender equality project at the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, SLU. The material includes interviews, focus-group interviews, surveys, participant observations and literature reviews. The research methodology is based on action research and the analysis on relational and critical discourse analysis. The research finds that meritocracy and gender equality are reconciled through three processes 1) by creating the gender inequality discourse as a matter for the individual, not the organisation 2) through depoliticisation of gender equality where administration rather than inequalities are in focus and 3) through a process of decoupling where gender equality is separated from the permanent organisation. These processes make it possible for meritocracy and gender equality to co-exist as two important principles of academic practice, despite their contradicting values. However, this separation of discourses contributes to the persistence of inequality in academic organisations. Further, these three processes work to silence counter discourses on gender equality that have become visible in the Gender Equality Project.

*Keywords:* gender equality, meritocracy, academia, gender equality measures, projects, gender and environment

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# Dedication

This book I dedicate to Neil and to the bright future, Viktor, Joel and Scott

*I don't know where I am going from here. But I promise it won't be boring.*

David Bowie

*There is a crack, a crack in everything. That's how the light gets in.*

Leonard Cohen, Anthem



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## List of Publications

This thesis is based on the work contained in the following papers, referred to by Roman numerals in the text:

- I **Powell, S.** and Ah-King, M. (2013). A case study of integrating gender perspectives in teaching and in subject content at a natural science university in Sweden. *International Journal of Gender, Science and Technology*, vol. 5(1), pp. 53-61.
- II **Powell, S.**, Ah-King, M. and Hussenius, A. (submitted with revisions). Facets of resistance. Submitted to *Gender, work and organization*.
- III **Powell, S.** and Arora-Jonsson, S. (2015). The Ethics of Political Correctness. Book chapter in *Understanding Social Science Research Ethics: Inter-disciplinary and Cross-Cultural Perspectives for a Globalising World*, Routledge, Editors: Nakray, K., Alston, M. and Whittenbury, K., pp. 61-77.
- IV **Powell, S.** *Gender equality in academia. Intentions and consequences.* (manuscript).
- V Westberg, L. and **Powell, S.** (2015). Participate for Women's Sake? A Gender Analysis of a Swedish Collaborative Environmental Management Project, *Society and Natural Resources: An International Journal*, vol. 28, pp. 1233-1248.

Papers I, III and V are reproduced with the permission of the publishers.



## Acknowledgements

Hah! I have done it! I have written a PhD! And I have enjoyed it.

Doing a PhD has given me the luxury to concentrate on this one project rather than having to engage myself in billions of different income bringing small projects, running from one place to another. Even if, admittedly I could have skipped this last month and a half of 12 hours shifts at work.

I have learnt so much on this journey and I could never ever have done this on my own. I have had a premium, fantastic, smart and fun main supervisor, Seema Arora Jonsson. You have challenged me lots but always (at least so that I have heard it) believed in my capacity. I think she is simply the best main supervisor you can have! My two co-supervisors Anita Husenius and Hans Peter Hansen have shared their competences so generously and provided encouragement and support, thank you for being such lovely people. You three have made up my dream team and I wish all PhD students could be this fortunate.

In the Gender Equality Project there were many people who showed a great deal of engagement and put a lot of time into the work with the Project. I would like to thank you all, the reference group, the operational group, the teachers taking the course, the different committees and units who have let me in to ask questions and to listen to what you had to say. Especially I would like to thank Lena Andersson-Eklund who supported the proposal and Svante Axelsson who were incremental in making it happen. Malin Ah-King, my companion in the project. You were brave when I was not, and you always provided me with new perspectives on what we were doing in the project.

I have been very fortunate to have had two fantastic and well-functioning working environments during my four years; SOL (the Department for Urban

and Rural Development, SLU) and the Centre for Gender Research (Uppsala University). The everyday life of work is so important for one's wellbeing and ability to concentrate and develop. At both places people are kind, fun and interesting. I learn a lot from you all.

Some colleagues are closer than others of course and have been more involved in the development of my work. At the Centre for Gender Research I want to thank Anneli, for comments on my research and discussions on research ethics and for sharing my interest in SLU. Karin L. for being such an open, sharing and sporty person, I appreciate your positive spirit. Renita, who was part of the gender equality project early on as a lecturer and later as a colleague, you are an inspiration! Thank you Minna for invaluable comments on my 50% seminar. The rest of you at the Centre, I enjoy your company all of you and hope to get to spend my post-doc period with you sometime in the near future.

I have been at SOL since 2006 and some of the people here have become friends more than just colleagues. We have shared ups and downs, as life reveals itself. I have always felt at ease in these corridors with you.

Hanna, you are the best boss ever and such a great friend. Your ethical compass is so well tuned. Lotten, it is so much fun writing with you. Lars, sorry for tumbling into your room too often, staying too long talking about irrelevant stuff. I know you also have work to do. Helena, your sense of humour is much appreciated. We need to laugh more in life, right? Elin, my training companion, let's keep up the good work! Sri, on an early stage you gave me the best advice when you said: "Just put your head down and do it". I think that is the same as the Swedish "bit ihop", and we all need to hear that sometimes. The rest of the MK gang; Erica, Tadesse, Nicia, Camilo, Cristian, Elvira, Per, Sofie, Kaisa, Elin, David- thank you all for being such nice colleagues!

There are also other people at SOL who I would like to mention and thank for different reasons. Cecilia Waldenström, the Head of Department combine integrity with warmth and openness in such a nice way. Anni, you got the cover just right and the way I wanted it! Merci! Andrea, you are next! Thank you for reading parts of my texts Camilo, Erik, Camilla and Katarina. A pair of fresh eyes is precious when you are stuck. The rest of you, I cannot name you all but it is a true gift to have such a great place to work and you all contribute to the nice atmosphere at the Department- thank you SOL colleagues!

Mid way of my PhD we moved to Noosa, the Sunshine Coast, Queensland. Open arms, welcoming people, great coffee, chilled wine, beautiful beaches and surf and lovely friends and family. This is the number one place in the world to sit and transcribe and analyse your empirical material. Thank you Noosa friends!

200 meters from SOL is Friskis och Sveltis, what a great choice of location. This is where I get new energy. After an hour there I am fit to sit at my desk a bit longer still.

I am lucky to have many good friends to spend time with. My walking friends Camilla, Helene, Maria, we talk and walk. But Helene, I hold you responsible for making me buy a puppy at a totally wrong time in my life. My great gang of “Da junt”; Helena, Lotta, Emilie, Anna H and Anna J., you give me so much laughter and good discussions. Calle and Cecilia, Lena and Henrik you are our very special to me.

Anna Liljelund Hedqvist, the best friend anyone can ever have. The daily Skype-therapy chat, what would we do without that? Now we will travel, right?!

Mum and dad, Gudrun and Hans. I don't know where to start when saying how important you are to me. Your support and help with everything, your love and trust in my abilities. The knowledge that you are only a train-ride away if I need help with the kids and the dogs or just some company is a great relief.

Mormor Aina, a feminist at heart who always gone her own way. What about starting a career as a jazz singer at the age of 76?! You are an inspiration.

Erik and Ulli and the cutest little kids, you bring so much happiness to me!

And, last and most important of all, my closest people, my kids and Neil. Thank you for your unconditional love. When I am with you I know where I belong.



## Abbreviations

|       |  |
|-------|--|
| AR    | Annual Report  |
| CDA   | Critical Discourse Analysis  |
| CEDAW | Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of<br>Discrimination against women  |
| DJ    | Delegation for Gender Equality in Higher Education                             |
| EC    | European Commission  |
| EO    | Equal Opportunities  |
| EU    | European Union   |
| LTV   | Faculty of Landscape Architecture, Horticulture and Crop<br>Production Science |
| NJ    | Faculty of Natural Resources and Agricultural Sciences                         |
| S     | Faculty of Forest Sciences   |
| SLU   | Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences                                    |
| UN    | United Nations   |
| VH    | Faculty of Veterinary Medicine and Animal Science                              |

All Swedish texts were translated into English by the author.



# 1 Introduction

As this thesis is being finalised in January 2016, a new task<sup>1</sup> is presented to all Higher Education institutions in Sweden. The task is to present a plan to the government, by May 2017, for how gender equality perspectives are to be integrated into all activities and processes in the organisation (Governmental Directive, 2016). In light of this new Directive, this thesis shed light on some of the challenges and possibilities of working with gender equality in academic organisations. This thesis is a contribution to understand gender equality and meritocracy in academia and how the first appears to set the frames for how gender equality is practised in these organisations.

Gender inequality persists in academia (Fotaki, 2012; She Figures, 2015; UKÄ, 2015) and it manifests itself, for example, in the low number of women in the highest academic positions, as stereotypical prejudices influence who is considered to be excellent and merited and exclude people on the basis of gender, race or class (Mählck, 2013; Gutiérrez y Muhs et al., 2012). Further, daily discriminatory practices such as not being invited, cited or included create accumulative patterns of discrimination in academia (Husu, 2001). Inequalities persist even when gender equality policies are in place and measures are taken, and in this study I ask why this is the case. I examine this question through the lens of a Gender Equality Project and a course in gender and norm critical pedagogy at the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences (SLU). I relate the project to studies on gender equality policy and projects at other higher education institutions around the world.

A vast amount of research, from various fields of study, has addressed inequality and discrimination in academia and explanations as to why they persist range from low self-confidence on the women's part to hierarchical and patriarchal structures reproducing inequalities along the axes of gender, race and class (Husu, 2001; van den Brink and Benschop, 2011; Mählck, 2013;

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1. I have translated the Swedish word "uppdrag" to task in this study.

Acker, 2008; Hearn, 2004). Based on the extensive reading of academia and gender equality scholarship that I have carried out as part of this research process, gender inequality appears to be a global problem, even if there are local differences and variations in terms of disciplines (Le Feuvre, 2009; Silander et al., 2013; Mellström, 2009; and developed in publication IV).

Feminist philosophers of science have for example studied the conditions for women in academic organisations, but they have also examined how research methods and theories are influenced by gendered stereotyping (Keller, 1985; Harding, 1991; Haraway, 1988; Potter, 2006). As an example, Haraway (1988) has shown how stereotypical heterosexual gender relations are mirrored in studies on primates, where the behaviour of primates was compared with the behaviour of humans. Further, feminist philosophers of science have shown how science disadvantages women as knowers by denying them epistemic power and thus counting women's knowledge as less valuable than that of men (Potter, 2006; Harding, 1991). Essentialist ideas of what suits men and women, their different capacities and suitability influence how merit is valued and cause segregation and discrimination in academic organisations (Schiebinger, 1999; van den Brink, 2010).

Academia builds on a meritocratic ideology where the principle holds that resources, awards, pay and positions should be distributed along a system where performance is valued, regardless of other considerations such as "equality, need, rights or seniority" (Heneman and Werner, 2005:9; Alnebratt and Jordansson, 2011). According to this system, everyone stands the same chance of climbing the academic ladder as long as they excel and are sufficiently hardworking (Scully, 1997). The system (for example peer review of publications and tenure track evaluations in recruitment to academic positions) should ideally provide opportunities for non-discrimination in academia through the adoption of fair, transparent and objective indicators for evaluation. However, studies have shown that despite the good intentions, the meritocratic system fails to meet these expectations (Sandström et al., 2010; Wullum Nielsen, 2015a). For example, it has been shown that valuing merit and excellence is not a neutral matter, but is coloured by comradeship and prejudice (Wennerås and Wold, 1997) and that gendered biases influence who is labelled "excellent" and who is labelled "good" (Benschop and Brouns, 2003). Studies like these suggest that the assumed objectivity and neutrality of meritocratic practices are part of the problem of inequality in academia and I will expand this further later in this thesis.

In this thesis I ask why gender inequality persists in academic organisations even when efforts are taken to change the situation. I study this through a focus on the parallel discourses of gender equality and meritocracy in the context of

the Gender Equality Project at SLU. I am inspired by Bacchi (2005), when I study discourses in this research. This means that I study how gender equality and merit are written and spoken about in the organisation, how they are symbolised and acted upon and as meaning-making activities that create rules and structures that are taken for granted. I have formulated the following research question to guide my analysis:

- How are gender equality measures and discourses reconciled with notions of merit in the academy?

The question I pose here are relevant for wider discussions on gender and higher education, not only in Sweden and SLU. I see the local practices of gender equality and meritocracy as embedded in larger societal patterns which characterise global relationships that have relevance beyond this particular context.

## 1.1 Gender equality

As I speak about gender equality in this thesis, I am attentive to its contested notion within policy, civil society and amongst academics (Verloo and Lombardo, 2007; Magnusson et al., 2008). Gender equality means different things depending on context and purpose (Everline and Bacchi, 2005; Verloo and Lombardo, 2007). Gender equality has become a widely accepted political goal (Lombardo, Meier, Verloo, 2009) and a vision. As a political goal, gender equality leads to conventions being signed and administrative organisations being set up to follow the conventions and reach the goals (ibid). As a vision, gender equality takes account of the feminist idea of a society free from gendered oppression and domination (Verloo and Lombardo, 2007).

Gender equality is often, as in UN legislations<sup>2</sup>, EU strategies<sup>3</sup> and in Swedish regulations<sup>4</sup>, defined as equal rights for women and men. However, inequality (in academia and in society at large) extends the categorisation of men and women and is the result of discrimination based on grounds other than gender. The challenge is therefore for academia to address inequality in a way which includes, but is not exclusive to, gender. Along these lines, my understanding of gender equality in this thesis is inspired by the works of Honkanen (2008) and Liinason (2011), who shed light on discrimination not being a matter of a male-female dichotomy, but where sex, class, race,

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2. UNDP gender equality strategy 2014-2017.

3. The European Commission Strategy for equality between women and men for the period 2010-2015.

4. <http://www.regeringen.se/regeringens-politik/jamstalldhet/>.

sexuality and age overlap. These are all categories that influence, for example, the recruitment processes in academia; who is considered sufficiently merited to become a professor or who is supported to become a PhD student and on what grounds (Mählck, 2013; Gutiérrez y Muhs et al., 2012). Gender equality is thus a matter of social justice (Fraser, 1997).

## 1.2 Theoretical perspectives

The theoretical framework in this thesis draws mainly on four types of scholarship; gender and organisations, gender and academia, critical studies on gender equalities and project studies. Each of these four types of scholarship provides insights that are useful when studying discourses of gender equality and meritocracy in academia and I examine this through the lens of the Gender Equality Project at SLU (publications I-IV) and in relation to the field of Environmental Communication (publication V).

Gender and organisation scholars have shown how organisations are structured along axes of gender in ways that privilege men over women (Moss Kanter, 1977; Martin, 2004, 2006; Acker, 1990; Gherardi, 1994; Gherardi and Poggio, 2001). Acker (2006) suggests that being attentive to hierarchies in an organisation, how the organisation presents itself in pictures and symbols, how recruitments happen and what skills and personal traits are preferred, makes it possible to analyse how gendering is enacted in everyday organisational life (*ibid.*). On a similar track, Gherardi (1994) studies organisations as cultures with their own values, practices and norms. In order to study how gender is done in organisations, she suggests that it should be studied in situations when norms and values are challenged. These are, she argues, moments when we can recognise how gender relations and practices are legitimised in an organisation (*ibid.*). Studies on gender and organisations are valuable in this thesis in order to discuss the Gender Equality Project, how it was set up, who was involved and why and further, the norms and values that are associated with merit at SLU.

Studies on gender equality and academia have shown how excellence, merit and individual suitability are gendered (Wullum Nielsen, 2015a; Sandström et al., 2010). Meritocracy is the idea that the most excellent researcher is by way of example entitled to the most prestigious grants and tenured positions and that through employing meritocracy, discrimination can be avoided (Scully, 1997). Meritocracy is an important ingredient in many of the practices in academia where evaluations (recruitments, peer review processes, tenure track promotions) are to be carried out in an open and transparent way based on indicators that can be measured (Sandström et al., 2010). However, numerous studies suggest that meritocracy is difficult to realise (Wullum, 2015; van den

Brink, 2010; Wennerås and Wold, 1997) and that our biases influence evaluations and the decisions taken. Boyd (2012) has, for example, called the tenure process in an American Law School an inherently political process (ibid:277) where the recruitment is not only dependent on merit but also on reasons which are not likely to be defended openly, such as prejudice against people of colour (ibid). Further, valuing quality in research, Sandström et al. (2010) show, depends on what the evaluator puts into the word “quality”. Quality is not a neutral, but is highly subjective idea, and Sandström et al. suggest that evaluation needs to be as quantifiable as possible in order to avoid discrimination (ibid).

Other studies on gender equality and academia have revealed how daily practices in academia create larger patterns of discrimination (Husu, 2001; Treleaven, 1998). For example, Vázquez-Cupeiro and Elston (2006) have argued that homo-social relationships and networks amongst men in Spanish academia are preventing women from entering the highest tenured positions in the system (ibid). Scholarship with a focus on gender equality and academia helps me to attend to the particularities of academic organisations; for example the practice and values attached to meritocracy.

Perspectives on gender equality from the Nordic countries raise important questions about how gender equality is understood, implemented and reproduced in policy and research and what the implications are (Arora-Jonsson, 2009; Honkanen, 2008; Liinason, 2011; Mulinari and Neergaard, 2004; Molina and de los Reyes, 2002). For example, Arora-Jonsson has shown in her comparative study of a Swedish and an Indian forestry community how gender equality is a political matter in India but not in Sweden. The assumption, she finds, is that Sweden is seen as (and sees itself as) a modern, and therefore gender equal country, in contrast to India. In a similar vein, Mulinari and de los Reyes (2002) show how gender equality is used as creating an “us” (the Swedes) and a “them” (people with a national background other than Swedish) and how “we” are considering ourselves as modern (and gender equal) and “they” are not. I find that these critical studies are essential in order to make visible how discrimination and inequality in academia needs to be addressed at the intersection of gender, race and class. The way that gender equality is practised in academic organisations rarely addresses these complexities.

In addition to the critical perspectives on gender equalities that I introduced above, I am also interested in research that theorises the project format (Sahlin-Andersson and Söderholm, 2002; Jensen et al., 2013, Forssell et al., 2013; Engwall, 2002). Projects are often put in place to introduce change and feminist researchers have shown that gender equality is often carried out as

projects. They have called this a “projectification”, project trap, and side-lining of gender equality (Edenheim and Rönnblom, 2014; Eduards et al., 2012; Bacchi and Everline, 2010; Mulinari, 1996). These insights evoked my interest to deepen the understanding of what the implications could be for gender equality practice. The temporary nature of projects provides opportunities for new thinking and working in new constellations (Sahlin-Andersson and Söderholm, 2013), but at the same time also carries the risk of becoming parallel to the permanent structure of the organisation (Engwall, 2002). Being parallel, the possibilities of interactions between permanent and temporary structures are limited (Forssell et al., 2013). Another concern, also associated with the permanent-temporary dilemma, is that projects are often introduced as a means for change, while the problems they are set out to solve are often long term and deep seated (Forssell et al., 2013). Gender inequalities in academia are an example of a problem where short term projects are often implemented in an attempt to solve deep seated problems.

### 1.3 Examining gender equality at the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences

The empirical material for this study is a gender equality project at the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences (SLU) in Sweden. SLU is a mainly natural science university and carries out research and education on the sustainable management of natural resources (SLU strategy, 2013-2016). Issues of sustainability, health, production, forests, water and agriculture and future scenarios are addressed in interdisciplinary research programmes and in separate departments. Even though the larger part of the activities at SLU are natural science based, there are also established interdisciplinary and social science disciplines such as rural development, landscape architecture and the one to which I belong; environmental communication.

The Gender Equality Project<sup>5</sup> that I study in this thesis came into being in 2010 and I was employed to work in it. The project was funded by a governmental initiative (the Delegation for Gender Equality in Higher Education in Sweden, DJ) and was aimed at addressing discriminatory practices in education. There were different activities within the project, but the principal activities were a course in gender and norm critical pedagogy for university teachers (Powell, 2013a). The planning, implementation and follow up of the project, and the course; are what I examine here.

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5. From now on, when I refer to the specific gender equality project at SLU, I will refer to it as the Gender Equality Project, with capital letters.

## 1.4 Methodological framework

The methodological framework applied in this research is action research (Reason and Bradbury, 2001; Nielsen and Nielsen, 2006), and, following Arora-Jonsson (2013), I base my study on relational analysis that I describe below.

Together with my colleagues, I investigated what gender equality means at SLU and what the concerns with inequality and discrimination were at the time of the project. Central to action research is change, and as Nielsen and Nielsen (2006) have pointed out, “society can be understood as being created by human action and, therefore, it can also be changed by human action” (ibid:66). At SLU, our aims for the Gender Equality Project were, through the involvement of people working and studying at SLU, to develop knowledge about gender equality, inequality and discrimination in order to address these matters in a way that became relevant in this particular context. A principal idea in action research is that knowledge is not uninterested or objective and that it needs to involve those who are affected by its results (Brydon-Miller et al., 2013; Houh and Kalsem, 2015) in a democratic process (Nielsen and Nielsen, 2006).

Action research, collaboration and constructions of knowledge and knowers are also central approaches in the field of Environmental Communication; the field in which I am enrolled as a PhD student. One of the main concerns in environmental communication is to shed light on and critique dominant discourses in society (Milstein, 2009) through developing scholarship that aims at exploring environmental crises, conflicts, and governance related to processes of interactions between humans and ecosystems (Cox and Depoe, 2015). I will return to discuss environmental communication in light of feminist theory.

As the Gender Equality Project at SLU came to an end, and I started to analyse the empirical material, I adopted relational analysis (Arora-Jonsson, 2013). This means that I analysed my material in a three-step process. First, I “freeze time” and Arora-Jonsson (2013) explains this as: “I take as important that which was said and done at the particular time to explain the present” (ibid:11). I take this to mean that what was said and done (and not) at SLU in relation to the Gender Equality Project also has relevance to other contexts and other times, and are not necessarily the properties of specific people at SLU (publication II). Secondly, I “reverse the gaze”. Doing this, I understand gender equality and meritocracy in academia as constructed and practised in various locations and as embedded in larger societal patterns. For example, gender equality and meritocracy are ideas that are not exclusive to SLU. They are global principles influencing academic organisations around the world and I discuss SLU in relation to other academic organisations in publication IV. Thirdly, I adopt “critical subjectivity”, which means that I am transparent about

my own subjectivity as a researcher and project leader and how my experiences, values and ideas influenced the Gender Equality Project (publication III).

Across all five publications in this research, I study discourses and discursive practices. Therefore, the research builds on the idea that what we do and say, how we act and how we communicate are discursive practices that produce and reproduce our realities (Bacchi and Bonham, 2014). Discursive practices are historically and culturally specific sets of rules for organising and producing different forms of knowledge. It is rules that allow certain statements to be made and others not (Foucault 1972; Bonham and Bacchi, 2014), and along the lines of the feminist philosophy of science and their claim that there is no disinterested science and that sciences are deeply rooted in positivist thought, I examine this in relation to the responses received by the Gender Equality Project in this particular context.

I am enrolled as a PhD student in Environmental Communication and this is not a thesis typically found in this field. This is a thesis about gender and organisations but there are lessons to be drawn for environmental communication. In order to highlight this I include an article (V). I spend chapter 5 to discuss possible synergies between environmental communication and feminist theories. Beside studies on gender and organisations, discursive practices are also central to the field of environmental communication, where a central idea is that how we communicate about nature produces meaning and ideas which in turn have consequences for how we relate to the environment (Milstein, 2009). Bacchi and Bonham (2014) above draw on Foucault (1972) when they say that discursive practices are rules that decide what knowledge counts and in what context. I will use publication V in this thesis to discuss assumptions of neutral and value free organisations and knowledge and its implications for environmental management, and I will also draw on the insights from publication III to discuss normativity of research and researchers and the matter of speaking on behalf of others.

## 1.5 Thesis structure

This thesis has six chapters and five publications. After this first introductory chapter, I introduce the theoretical framework (chapter 2) which provides an understanding of how organisations are gendered and how academic cultures carry particular traits, practices and ideologies such as meritocracy. For this I look to studies of gender and organisations and gender and academia. Despite the aims of meritocracy to provide fair and objective evaluations of merit, studies show that inequalities persist based not only on the basis of gender, but

also race, class and sexuality. Nordic studies of gender equalities provide new perspectives challenging not only the woman-man dichotomy, but also suggest that gender equality in academia has become depoliticised. Depoliticisation happens for example when gender equality is enacted as administration rather than politics through projects and programmes. In order to examine this process, I present research on projects. Together, the studies on gender and organisations, gender and academia, Nordic studies on gender equality and project studies provide the framework for addressing my research question.

In chapter 3, I present and motivate my methodological positions of action research and how I went about the analysis. Action research aimed at identifying and challenging discriminatory structures, and questions research as disinterested and objective. A relational analysis (Arora-Jonsson, 2013) as an approach included freezing time, reversing the gaze and critical subjectivity. This analytical approach made it possible to analyse different aspects of the material from different stand points. In chapter 4 I also give a short summary of the methods I have used, and their benefits and shortcomings.

In chapter 4 I turn to the specific context of this research, and I present the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences (SLU) and discuss how gender equality is addressed here. In chapter 4 I return to discuss my research question which asks how gender equality and meritocracy is reconciled in academia. I identify three processes of reconciliation; through discourse (how gender equality is spoken about and practiced as a matter for the individual, not the structure), depoliticisation (how gender equality becomes administration rather than a political issue) and through decoupling (enacting gender equality as projects, separated from the permanent structure of the university).

As I am enrolled as a PhD student in Environmental Communication I devote chapter 5 to a discussion on how this thesis can contribute to environmental communication as a field of study. This research is therefore my contribution not only to the discussion on gender equality in academia, but also my contribution to introducing more feminist theory to environmental communication.

Chapter 6 provides a summary of the five publications in this thesis. The articles are linked to each other as they discuss different aspects of the Gender Equality Project at SLU and therefore provide insights in answering the main research question of this thesis.

In the light of the new task for all higher education institutions in Sweden to integrate gender equality in their organisations, my concluding remarks suggest a way forward for gender equality in academic organisations which includes scrutinizing meritocratic practices and the broadening of the discourse of gender equality.



## 2 Merit and gender equality in academia

It has been said that meritocracy and gender equality create a clash in academic organisations (Alnebratt and Jordansson, 2011; Egeland, 2001; Wullum Nielsen, 2015a). In light of this, I have formulated my research question as: *How are gender equality measures and discourses reconciled with notions of merit in the academy?* In order to answer this question, I require further understanding of how meritocracy and gender equality function; both as policy and practice, what they are taken to mean in different contexts and how they are practised in organisations (and in particular in academic organisations). Further, I need to know more about how organisations work and how gender relations play a part of everyday organisational life. For that, I draw on feminist organisational theory, studies on gender equality (as policy, practice, inside and outside academic organisations) as well as studies from the Nordic context that critically examine gender equality from a post-colonial and political scientist perspective. I also bring a discussion on the project format as a way of introducing change. What are the benefits and shortcomings of the project format and what does it mean for how gender equality and meritocracy co-exists in academia? I begin the theoretical section with an introduction to meritocracy.

### 2.1 Principles of meritocracy

Meritocracy is the principle by which resources, awards, pay and positions are distributed along a system where performance is valued, regardless of other considerations such as equality, need, rights or seniority (Heneman and Werner, 2005:9).

The concept of meritocracy was coined by Young (1958) in “The rise of meritocracy”, but the idea of distribution of power and resources based on merit was not new. Already in Confucian times in China, a meritocratic system based on virtue and honesty replaced the system of inheriting powerful

positions (Tucker, 2009; Kazin, Edwards and Rothman, 2010). Meritocratic ideas were put forward also by Aristotle, Plato, as well as by J.S. Mill in the late 1800s (Estlund, 2003). Selection and evaluation systems based on meritocratic principles thus aim at reducing favouritism and corruption.

According to a system of meritocracy, everyone stands a fair chance based on their individual merits (Scully, 1997; Young, 1994:xiii). A meritocratic system includes formal routines, procedures, testing and criteria to evaluate merit. The system is meant to be transparent and built on quantifiable measures so that biases and prejudices can be avoided. Built into the system of meritocracy is therefore an idea that merit can be evaluated objectively (Au, 2013). Merton (1942) was influential in defining a vision for academic practice and he developed a system where the four cornerstones were communism (there should be open access to scientific and intellectual property), universalism (everyone can contribute regardless of background), disinterestedness (science should not be carried out for personal gain) and organised scepticism (science must be critically scrutinised). At the time when Merton published his ideas, they were a reaction to how science was politicised by the Nazi government and Merton argued that science needed to be apolitical and separated from the interests of society (Tunlid, 2010). Based partly on the ideas of Merton, but also many others including Weber (1904), an academic culture developed in which science came to be regarded as neutral and objective, as well as independent of political values and motives.

In academia, meritocracy includes for example the peer review process, evaluation and distribution of research proposals and evaluations of tenure track promotions. These peer review evaluations are meant to be carried out using objective and transparent criteria in order to avoid discrimination (Sandström et al., 2010; Wold, 2002). It is believed that the best researcher should be awarded the most prestigious grants and positions, independent of gender, class or race (van den Brink and Benschop, 2012:509).

Jansson (2010) showed how arguments against gender equality measures such as affirmative action and quotas are considered to be in conflict with meritocratic principles (ibid:121). In her study of *The Confederation of Swedish Enterprise (Svenskt Näringsliv)*, one argument was that quotas undermine the idea that the most merited should be selected (ibid). However, contrary to this argument, Besley et al. (2013) find, in a study of the use of quotas in Swedish local politics, that the merits of men increased with the quotas while the merits of women remained stable (ibid). What happened was that when a quota system was introduced, it was the mediocre men that withdrew, which led to the most merited men remaining. Their results contradict the common assumption that when quota systems are used, merited men are replaced by less merited women

(Besley et al., 2013:33). It also contradicts the assumption that gender quotas are in conflict with ideas of meritocracy (ibid:3). Reskin and McBrier (2000) have shown, in a comparative study of organisations in the US, how formal recruitment processes benefit women in recruitment processes, as they limit the impact of informal networks on who is employed. The pool of people in informal recruitment processes is limited to the networks of people who are part of the recruitment process, and as Reskin and McBrier (2000) say, the “demographics in these networks tend to resemble one another” (ibid:226). Thus far, the studies show how meritocratic practices can bring equal opportunities, for example through the formalisation of recruitment processes that are to be objective and neutral. However, there are also other perspectives on meritocracy, for example Young (1994), who I mentioned in the introduction. Young’s intention was to present both sides of the coin; the positive (fighting nepotism and corruption) and the risks of a merit based system. Young painted a dystopian picture of the future of England where the elite (the merited) and the un-merited made up the new social stratification system. The most merited would rule and they were identified according to the formula “effort+ IQ= merits (Young, 1994:xiii). As risks, he saw, for example: “If the rich and powerful were encouraged by the general culture to believe that they fully deserved all they had, how arrogant they could become, and, if they were convinced it was all for the common good, how ruthless in pursuing their own advantage” (foreword to the reprint in 1994:xvi). As the term “meritocracy” was picked up by larger audiences, Young’s critical discussion of selecting people based on meritocratic principles had disappeared and it was associated with fairness and transparency, providing equal opportunities for all (Cole and Cole, 1973).

Lawton’s (2000) discussion on meritocracy sheds light on the critique of meritocratic practices in organisations. She says that meritocracy suggests that unequal outcomes are the product of lack of merit, not of discrimination. In this way, the individual is to blame for any failings and it is therefore, for example, a woman’s own choice whether or not she wants a career. Her career (or lack thereof) cannot be traced to discriminatory practices (2000:599). This argument is discussed in publication II in relation to my study at SLU. In this article, we show the presence at SLU of ideas such as that women, once they have a family, are not interested in an academic career. This way of rationalising around women’s careers puts the responsibility for the low number of female professors on women themselves and it is not seen as a structural problem. Interestingly enough, meritocratic values can also be undermined when women are in the majority. I discuss this in chapter 4, in relation to Veterinarian education, a program dominated by women.

In Lawton's (2000) analysis of what she calls the "meritocracy myth", she argues that to admit that race or gender matters in recruitment and promotion processes would undermine the conviction that meritocracy decides on success and also undermine the idea that we live in a world that is fair and just. She writes: "It is easier to believe that "the other", whether a black person or a woman, lacks the education, skills, talent, or motivation to succeed, than to believe that success is determined, at least in part, by accidents of birth: having white skin or male sex characteristics" (ibid:599).

Further, research show how the very conviction that meritocratic ideals prevail in an organisation increase the risk that discriminatory practices are ignored (Castilla and Benard, 2010). Castilla (2008) and Castilla and Benard (2010) have examined merit-based systems in relation to wages and promotion in the USA. Their analysis shows that in organisations where meritocratic principles are promoted, inequalities in pay between women and men paradoxically increase (2010:566). They explain this by linking it to the role of moral credentials (Monin and Miller, 2001). This is the idea that people are more likely to express prejudiced attitudes "when they feel like they have established their moral credentials as a non-prejudiced person" (2010:567). Along these lines of thinking, an organisation that is convinced it acts along meritocratic values develops a faulty view of itself as being unbiased. This faulty view leads to a situation where obvious prejudices expressed are not interpreted as prejudices. When people feel as if they are objective, they also believe their opinions to be valid, no matter whether these values are in fact not objective, but for example hold gendered stereotypes (Castilla and Benard, 2010:568).

To sum up, the studies in this section show how there are both benefits and shortcomings with meritocracy. The benefits are to erase corruption and nepotism and to aim for equal opportunities, transparency and fairness, while the shortcomings appear to be the inability to avoid prejudices even under the notion that meritocratic principles are embraced. I now turn to how meritocracy is practised in academic organisations, where its principles are well-established.

## 2.2 Practicing meritocracy in academia

I started this chapter by saying that the logic of meritocracy and the logic of gender equality contradict each other in academic practice (van den Brink and Benschop, 2012; Alnebratt and Jordansson, 2011). Alnebratt and Jordansson (2011) argue that it is particularly difficult to introduce gender equality in academic organisations due to values of academic freedom and autonomy (ibid:11). According to this way of thinking, academic organisations

themselves should make decisions about allocation of positions and funding (ibid). When governmental directives on gender equality are introduced in such organisations, there are tensions (ibid:23). As we have seen above, several other studies also focus on the intersection of gender equality and meritocracy and show that the way that merit is valued in, for example, recruitment and promotion, carries biases which lead to inequalities and exclusion (Rees, 2001; Husu, 2004; Sandström et al., 2010; Wullum Nielsen, 2015a). Van den Brink and Benschop (2012) explain this by saying that “due to the scientific ethos of meritocracy, the influence of gender practices in academic evaluation is largely denied (ibid:519).

Gender and excellence was the focus of an EU report from 2000 (Rees, 2001) and this study shows how “[m]any scientists, women included, are quick to maintain that science is gender neutral, that universities and research institutes are merit-driven, liberal institutions, that scientific objectivity cannot be gender biased” and that to argue against this and say that academia is coloured by gender biases “strikes at the heart of values of neutrality” (Rees, 2001:115). This is in line with what feminist philosophers of science have shown; that the doing of research is not a disinterested and value free activity, undertaken by objective scientists in impartial organisations. Traweek (1998) described academic practice as “a culture with no culture” (ibid:162) and Haraway (1991:581) compared science with a “god trick”. Both criticise the view of science and scientific practice as neutral and objective to the world, as if almost not done by human hand. Harding (1991) has said that science is politics and that science is an arena for political struggle over resources, technologies and prestige (ibid:11).

The 2004 EU report “Gender and Excellence in the Making” (EC, 2004) sheds light on the gendering of merit and excellence and shows how, for example, the mechanisms of evaluations and peer review processes are gendered (ibid). Similarly, when for example Sandström et al. (2010) examined why so few women received research funding from the Excellence Funds in Sweden, they questioned whether the evaluation system was neutral and fair. In their study, they exposed how men were rewarded large funding grants based not only on the quality of their work, but also based on their sex, their networks and how close their research area was to the research areas of the reviewers (ibid). Wullum Nielsen (2015a), in his thesis dissertation, found that the way the criteria for judging merit at a Danish university were established by the already powerful groups in academia led to an outcome where evaluation processes kept the already dominant perspectives in place and gender inequalities were maintained (2015a:ibid).

Another example of where meritocratic practices fail is presented by Benschop and Brouns (2003) in a study of the selection procedures for a grant for excellent young scholars in the Netherlands. It shows how even if the male and female applicants had the same academic score, many more men were labelled “excellent” and women were called “good”, spoiling every chance of winning the prestigious grant (ibid:205). As in Wullum Nielsen’s study (2015a) and the study by Sandström et al. (2010), the similarity to the subject of the reviewers influenced who was funded, and, as Benschop and Brouns (2003) and Husu (2004) show, men dominate evaluation committees and recruitment boards, which has implications for the women applying (ibid:72).

Some of the scholars who have critiqued the meritocratic system in academia still see it as the best available system, but in need of improvement (Wold, DN, 2002-04-16). Wennerås and Wold (1997) provided a strong critique for the way that in application procedures, the Swedish Medical Research Council were unable to overlook the gender of the applicants and thus awarded women fewer research grants than men. Despite this, they argued that fellow scientists are most suited to evaluate other scientists, but that the meritocratic system needs to function the way it is supposed to; objectively and without biases (ibid:343). Also, Sandström et al. (2010) pursue a similar line when they say that evaluations need to be more transparent and that the indicators for evaluating excellence must be possible to measure (ibid:25). This middle road (neither believing in nor rejecting meritocracy) would be to hold on to the idea that meritocracy can provide equal opportunities, and address its insufficiencies and in that way improve meritocratic practice.

To sum up this section, academic organisations build on meritocratic principles for evaluating research quality in order to select the best candidates. Still, studies display how gender, race and informal networks influence the outcome of the evaluations. Despite this, there appears to be a lack of research suggesting alternative approaches to meritocracy in academia. Instead, there are arguments for developing better and more transparent indicators in order to overcome prejudice and discrimination (Sandström et al., 2010; Wennerås and Wold, 1997; Benschop and Brouns, 2003).

## 2.3 Gender equality and academic organisations

Husu (2001:57, 2004:13-15) showed how academic organisations are discriminatory and that it is not only a matter of open discrimination, but of small daily practices. Her study of Finnish academia (2001) shows how the everyday practices, such as not being invited to give a seminar or speak at a conference, not being cited by your peers or not being appointed on

committees or other groups, make up patterns of discrimination (ibid). Treleaven (1998), studying Australian academia, showed similar results and stated that everyday discrimination of women creates the grounds for what she calls hyper-masculinist sites where inequalities between women and men are reproduced (ibid.). Other feminist researchers have shown how gendered stereotyping, norms and values influence daily life in academia and add up to discriminatory practices favouring some men over other men, men over women, white women and men over women and men of colour and so on (Wullum Nielsen, 2015b; Mählick, 2012; Gutiérrez y Muhs et al., 2012). In this way, certain types of scientists are preferred over others and this reproduces a pattern where already prominent groups in academia can continue to enjoy success, while individuals belonging to disadvantaged groups have to fight harder for their success (Gutiérrez y Muhs et al., 2012). Regardless of these findings, Mählick showed in her thesis from 2003 how academia is reproduced as non-discriminatory and neutral in everyday academic life. This neutrality is constructed both by women and men through the reproduction of meritocratic principles (ibid). As I present my work 13 years later, it is interesting (or worrying rather) to see that the question of gender inequality and meritocracy still remains unsolved and that inequality persists in academia. This strengthens my view and that of others (for example Lombardo and Mergaert, 2013), that gender inequality is not as much a matter of lack of knowledge, as it is a lack of attention to and interest in, changing unequal relations in academia.

A more recent thesis, which is similar to my work, is Wullum Nielsen's thesis from Denmark (2015). He, like Husu (2001, 2005), is interested in the cumulative disadvantages in women's academic careers. By studying recruitment processes in the light of meritocratic ideals, he shows for example how Heads of Department express views of women not being suited for academia due to its competitive nature, individualism and long working hours (Wullum Nielsen, 2015a). This is similar to the results in publication II, where we show how stereotypical ideas of women and their preferences, in terms of family responsibility and career, influence who is considered sufficiently interested to pursue an academic career at SLU. In one of the publications in his thesis, Wullum Nielsen also shows how recruitment processes, despite principles of transparency and meritocracy, take place behind closed doors, and with very few applicants to choose from (2015c). The cumulative effects of daily practices, which Husu (2001, 2005), Mählick (2003) and Wullum Nielsen (2015a) all address, can also be analysed with regard to homo-sociality.

The creation of male enclaves in organisations has been explained by homo-social relationships. The term homosociality has been defined by Holgersson (2003) as the "practices in which men orient themselves towards

other men within a patriarchal gender order” (ibid:456). Holgersson (2003) studied recruitment processes of top managers in Sweden and her study shows that competence is redefined so that the preferred male candidates for a position can be selected, even if the original criteria do not fit. Her study also demonstrates how competence being constructed as embodied by a certain type of man devalues women’s competence and also the competence of men who do not fit the criteria (ibid.). Interestingly enough, even though masculinity is often associated with rationality, Kinsey (2014) says that homo-social behaviour has little to do with rationality but rather with “bonding”, which is strongly associated with emotions and irrationality. She calls it “homosocial desire” (ibid:50). These studies suggest then that recruitment processes are based not on rational choice and meritocratic values, but on choosing someone who fits the group and who shares the norms and values of the group. All-male committees have been addressed by Wennerås and Wold (1997) and they show that male scientists tend to choose other men. Essed (2004) explains the male dominated academia as the “preference for sameness” (ibid:115), which suggests that male scientists feel most comfortable with and chose people they consider similar to themselves (c.f. Holgersson). Vázquez-Cupeiro and Elston (2006) studied academic organisations in Spain, and showed how the low number of tenured professor positions are gatekept by men in homo-social networks. They effectively stopped women from entering the positions and made sure that other men were appointed to these precious posts. A gatekeeping position is a position of power and as Husu (2004) points out, the gatekeeper can define, evaluate and develop scientific excellence (ibid:69). The gatekeeper is in a position to control and exclude but also to facilitate and provide opportunities (ibid).

In publication II, we discussed how stereotypical ideas, expressed by high level administrators and researchers, risk contributing to ideas within the organisation where women, on account of their gender, are considered insufficiently interested in or unsuited to an academic career at SLU. This, we argue, is a form of resistance to gender equality aims.

Thus far, the theoretical references I have presented have focused on meritocracy (pros and cons and middle-ways) and how it plays out in academic practice and in relation to gender equality aims. However, in order to understand how gender equality initiatives are introduced and addressed in a meritocratic setting, it is also necessary to know more about organisations from a feminist perspective.

## 2.4 Organisations from a feminist perspective

For a long time, studies on organisations were not reflected on from a feminist perspective and models for analysis were presented as gender neutral (Guttek et al., 1990; Mills, 1997; Alvesson and Billing, 1992). It was not until the 1970s that gender perspectives on organising and organisational theory developed (for example Moss Kanter, 1977; Acker and van Houten, 1974). Early feminist studies on organisations showed that they are not neutral and rational entities (Moss Kanter, 1977; Ferguson, 1984). Moss Kanter's study from 1977 on women and men in a large American corporation suggested that it was not being a woman or a man in the organisation that caused inequality, but the fact that women and men could be found in different positions in the organisation, that they were few in number, and as such were "tokens" (ibid:292). In the token roles, women were evaluated both on the basis of how they as women carried out their management role and how they as managers lived up to ideas about what it means to be a woman (ibid:385). Moss Kanter suggested that the reasons why women were underrepresented in managerial (power) positions were that they lacked the opportunity to advance, the power and autonomy to influence their situation and were in the minority, which made it even more difficult for them to advance (ibid:250). Thus, Moss Kanter (1977) shed light on male dominance in organisations and Ferguson, a few years later, argued that organisations were constructed through an abstract discourse of masculine rationality, rules and procedures (1984). Her suggestion was to develop an alternative to masculine rationality through an upgrading of what seemed to be typical feminine qualities (1984:189-192).

In 1990, Acker commented on the work of both Moss Kanter (1977) and Ferguson (1984). She questioned Moss Kanter's explanation of the discrimination of women in organisations with their position in the work place; that is to say, if they had different positions in the organisation, subordination would disappear. As for Ferguson's idea of valuing the feminine, Acker saw this as problematic, for building on stereotypical ideas of women as caring and men as not (1990:145-148). The new studies on organisations that developed within feminist studies around the 1990s took as a starting point gender as a social construction (Acker, 1990; P.Y. Martin, 1990; Calás and Smircich, 1992; Collinson and Hearn, 1994) and interpreted gender inequality and gender discrimination as the result of unequal and gendered relations within organisations.

Acker introduced the concept of "gendered institutions" in 1990. I find this concept useful for my study since it aims at understanding how inequality happens in the everyday life of an organisation. An elementary understanding in Acker's work is that "gender is present in the processes, practices, images

and ideologies, and distributions of power in the various sectors of social life” (1992a:567). She suggests that there are four processes that make organisations gendered and through which stereotypical ideas of masculinity and femininity create patterns of discrimination. These four processes are:

- Production of gender divisions
- Gendering as created by symbols, images and so on
- Gendering created in interactions between individuals in the organisation
- Internal mental work of individuals that contributes to the gendered structure of organisations

The first process refers to how the organising itself (in terms of job patterns, wages, hierarchies) produces hierarchies. Thus, the number of individuals in various positions is one way of identifying patterns of discrimination. The second process refers to how symbols and images of the organisation justify and explain gender divisions. This suggests that studying the pictures in, for example, written material or on the web shows gendered patterns in an organisation. The third process Acker’s analysis brings to attention is how the interaction between individuals in an organisation reproduces the organisation as gendered. The fourth and last process is the internal mental work of individuals where they, through interaction with others, construct a gender-correct persona in a particular organisation and how this persona is sensitive to developing gender appropriate behaviours and attitudes (1992:422). This suggests that individuals try to act and behave in ways that do not disrupt the gender status quo, and if a person does not obey but rather challenges these gendered norms, it will become detectable. Acker argues that by studying these four processes, it is possible to analyse the gendering of an organisation and the concept of gendered institutions is therefore central to my understanding of organisations in this research. As I examine the Gender Equality Project at SLU, I observe these processes and what is said and done in relation to merit and excellence and in the ways in which gender equality is addressed in the organisation. In publication IV, I ask the same questions of a number of studies on gender equality in academic organisations from different geographical and disciplinary contexts.

Thus far, the research has shown how organisations are gendered in terms of distributions of positions and in the way individuals interact. Beside those processes, Acker (1990) also suggests studying gendering processes in terms of symbols, images and how individuals create a gender correct persona that is sensitive to the suitable gendered behaviours in the organisation. In order to study how these processes occur, I now turn to research that studies organisations as cultures.

### 2.4.1 Organisations as cultures

In order to study norms and values and how they define and are defined by an organisation and the interactions between people in that organisation, I find it helpful to think of organisations as cultures. An organisational culture has been described by Strati (1992) as consisting

...of the symbols, beliefs and patterns of behavior learned, produced and created by the people who devote their energies and labour to the life of an organization. It is expressed in the design of the organization and of work, in the artefacts and services that the organization produces, in the architecture of its premises, in the technologies that it employs, in its ceremonials of encounter and meeting, in the temporal structuring of organizational courses of action, in the quality and conditions of its working life, in the ideologies of work, in the corporate philosophy, in the jargon, lifestyle and physical appearance of the organization's members. (Strati, 1992:1-2)

Academia is an example of an organisational culture (or rather, cultures). There are various ways in which we can establish that it is an academic organisation; the daily activities of teaching and doing research, the lecture halls and labs, the meritocratic system applied to appointments and recruitments, the peer review methods used for valuing academic publishing, rites of passage such as the defence of a PhD thesis, and the norms that define what is appropriate and non-appropriate behaviour in the daily life of an academic organisation. When Gherardi and Poggio (2001) added a feminist lens to the study of organisational cultures, they examined discourses, practices, norms, languages and values that reflected the socially constructed images of maleness and femaleness that define specific power relations between the members of an organisation according to their sexual membership (ibid:251).

A culture is always in flux and always changing (Marcus and Fischer, 1986). As a feminist with a change agenda, I am inspired by Gherardi (1994), who says that in order to change discriminatory practices in an organisational culture, we need to study norms and values when they are challenged in discursive practices. For example, what happens when someone does not follow the norms for the gender-correct persona in a particular context (c.f. Acker, 1992) or when a woman or a woman of colour enters an all-male or all-white setting? Or, as in the case under study here, the Gender Equality Project, what happens when gender and norm critical perspectives are introduced into a context where the gender equality discourse normally does not bring in perspectives that challenge norms and structures? Gherardi (1994) argues that it is in situations when norms are challenged that they become visible and a possibility for change emerges. When I apply this thinking to the examination of the Gender Equality Project at SLU, I am attentive to situations where

gender norms are contested or have become explicit. This is discussed in particular in publication II, where we study different types of resistance to the Gender Equality Project. In that publication we aim to understand the complexities of resistance that the Gender Equality Project met and to analyse what meanings and implications this resistance had on the project. Further, we analysed resistance as important in understanding gender equality and meritocracy discourses at SLU.

Gherardi (1994) has argued that when gender is discussed in an organisation, gendered relationships will be challenged. In the Gender Equality Project, this suggests that it created an opportunity for changing gendered relationships at SLU. By bringing up and making visible different aspects of how gendered norms affect the organisation, there are possibilities for changing discriminatory gender relations, even if this is only on a small scale and perhaps for a short period of time.

Next, I will present ways in which gender equality is addressed in policy and practice across Europe.

## 2.5 Gender equality policy and practice

The vision of a society of gender equality is shared by many countries and this vision is accompanied by a political will to act on gender inequalities when they are revealed. As a political field, gender equality is regulated in conventions and written into policies and strategies (such as the UN convention CEDAW, the EU strategy on gender equality and so on). The political decisions are then to be implemented in measures to realise the vision of gender equality.

Verloo and Lombardo (2007) have studied what gender equality policy is taken to mean in different parts of European policy and they show how there are different and competing understandings of gender equality depending on how the problem is constructed and by whom, who the target groups are, and who is created as the norm (2007:41). Based on a study by Walby et al. (2005), they show three main discourses of gender equality in Europe; equality as sameness, the approach of difference, and the vision of transformation (ibid). I engage with these three discourses when I examine the gender equality policies and strategies at SLU in chapter 4. Before that, I describe them below.

The first way of addressing gender equality identified by Verloo and Lombardo (2007:23) is equality as sameness. This is based on liberal ideas of individual choice and the responsibility of realising gender equality is left to individual women who should learn to cope within existing male structures (ibid.). When gender equality is understood in this way, measures such as

mentoring programmes and affirmative action are often used to come to terms with gender inequality. The approach has been criticised for the assumption that women are simply to be added to the existing structures (no need to change the existing norms) in order to achieve gender equality. The second approach that Verloo and Lombardo (2007:23) identify is gender equality as difference. This approach is based on the idea that women should be valued as women, and that the low status of associated characteristics should be enhanced (ibid). This approach can be traced back to Ferguson (1984), who argued along the same lines. Based on my reading of more contemporary studies on gender equality measures in organisations, this way of thinking seems less widespread today. Having said that, there are still traits like these to be found in present-day gender equality practice where women-only programmes are still implemented and where the idea of a strong female identity is pursued. In chapter 4, I discuss examples from SLU. The third approach to gender equality in European policy identified by Verloo and Lombardo (2007) is to achieve gender equality through transforming discriminatory structures. This approach to gender equality builds on the assumption that certain gendered relations in society lead to discrimination and, therefore, the focus of the transformative approach is to identify discriminatory patterns, both institutional and cultural, and attempt to change them (Verloo and Lombardo, 2007:23-24). Both Acker (1990) and Gherardi (1994), as I showed in the previous section, argue along these same lines. To transform structures in organisations is often, as I discuss in publication IV, associated with gender mainstreaming. Gender mainstreaming has, since the mid-1990s, been a widespread approach where the aim has been to integrate gender perspectives at all levels and in all activities in organisations. In order to achieve this, everyone needs to be educated about what it means to apply a gender perspective. As I discuss in publication IV, gender mainstreaming as an approach has ambitious goals, but it also builds on the problematic assumption that more knowledge will automatically lead to greater gender equality (Lombardo and Mergaert, 2013). Gender mainstreaming is associated with awareness raising activities, and therefore courses are often part of the package of gender mainstreaming (Winchester et al., 2006). Also in the Gender Equality Project at SLU, the main activity was in the format of a course. I will discuss the pros and cons of this format later in this chapter.

Other scholars besides Verloo and Lombardo (2007) have discussed the fluidity of the concept of gender equality. Bacchi and Eveline (2014), for example, have called gender equality an open signifier waiting to be filled with meaning (ibid:118). The openness of the concept increases the possibilities of acceptance of gender equality measures, but at the same time the risk is that the

possibility to transform discriminatory structures will be lost (ibid). We discuss this in further depth in publication III where we examine the way that the Gender Equality Project was presented at SLU in ways aimed at ensuring its acceptance. It was framed in language that made it easy for us to gain acceptance in the first phases of the project. Later on, as we show in publication II, the aims of the project in challenging and changing gendered norms were resisted. As we suggest in publication II, the resistance was evoked when it exceeded the frames for how gender equality could be addressed at SLU.

Even though there is an overwhelming consensus, not least in Sweden, about the importance of gender equality, there are also more critical voices to be heard. In the next section, I will turn to studies from the Nordic context which have in different ways problematised the concept of gender equality. These perspectives show how the idea of gender equality itself can create inequalities, depending on who is included in the gender equality discourses.

## 2.6 Nordic perspectives on gender equality

The Nordic countries repeatedly score highly on rankings such as the Global Gender Gap report. In the report of 2014, the first four countries were Iceland, Finland, Norway and Sweden. These countries all had, for example, strong family policies and many women in parliament (Global Gender Gap report, 2014). In Sweden, gender equality has since the 1960s been an important political field, and it is embedded in the national self-image (Rabo, 1997:109). To quote Arora-Jonsson, “A sense of uniqueness, of having come far in questions of gender equality, permeates Swedish discourses” (2013:192). Further, Arora-Jonsson says that the Swedish system is considered to be good as it is; the only thing that needs to be done is to add more women (2009:237). Thus, there is nothing wrong with the system; it is the women who are missing in order to make it perfect (ibid.). I return to this “add women and stir” understanding of gender equality as I discuss the gender equality discourse at SLU in chapter 4. In the following section, I present studies that are central to my analysis of the gender equality discourse at SLU as they challenge dominant gender equality discourses in Sweden. The studies come mainly from the Nordic contexts and are influenced by post-colonial thinkers such as Ang (2001) and Mohanty (2003).

### 2.6.1 Questioning the modern and equal Sweden

In post-colonial theory, categorisations of women, men and “others” are created through diverse representational discourses (Mohanty, 1988, 2003). Superiority and subordination are constantly created in complex processes on

axes of gender, race and class (Mohanty, 1988:61). Mohanty (1998) shows that when Western feminists describe women in other parts of the world as oppressed, they simultaneously label themselves as modern and liberated. (ibid:74-75). This process of “othering” or speaking on behalf of, Mohanty argues, assumes that they (“the third-world-woman”) cannot represent herself, and the Western feminist is consequently depriving her of agency (ibid.). Postcolonial discourses are created through cultural, historical, psychological, linguistic and economic relations that have been, and are being made, out of our colonial past (Molina and de los Reyes, 2002:310).

Post-colonial studies question the picture of Sweden as a modern, equal and humanistic place (Molina and de los Reyes, 2002; Arora-Jonsson, 2009). The discourse of gender equality in Sweden reinforces the idea of the superior, gender equal (neutral) and modern Sweden, where immigrants and non-Swedes are created as non-equal (“they oppress their women”) and unmodern (Molina and de los Reyes, 2002:306). Gender equality becomes a product that distances “them” from “us” (Arora-Jonsson, 2013:192). These North-South, modern-unmodern, equal-unequal dichotomies return also in Mulinari and Nergaard’s study from 2004 where they show how migrant women (from the “South”), living in Sweden, are “made different” in union organisations in Swedish workplaces; they are treated as less knowledgeable and in need of being educated about how gender equality works “here” (ibid). They write that the gender equality discourse has become a signifier of the Swedish national identity in a process of creating a “we” and “them”. Thus, by telling how others “are”, we are also saying something both about ourselves and others (“they are not like us”) (ibid:308-309). These questions are not taken into account in the Swedish gender equality discourse and do not influence the everyday gender equality practice (Liinason, 2011). Arora-Jonsson (2013) has shown, through a trans-local (Sweden-India) and post-colonial analysis, the interconnectedness of the local and global where terms such as development, empowerment and gender equality become important markers of modernity (2013:30). Those considered modern are also considered to be gender equal, which is exemplified in the Swedish community that she studies (ibid:196). Gender inequality, in her research, was ascribed to others, the older generation, rural women, women in developing countries (less developed than Sweden). Forming a women’s group in the Swedish community was not easy, since it was deemed unnecessary in gender neutral and equal Sweden. Forming a women’s group in India did not have the same constraints, as it was initiated by development donors, and since men in the community acknowledged the issue of gender inequality and discrimination more openly. Gender inequality is, as

Arora-Jonsson writes, “an issue” in India in a way that gender equality as a vision has made impossible in Sweden (ibid:194).

A critique of the concept of gender equality in the Nordic countries is how it corresponds to the white, middle-class and heterosexual subject (Honkanen, 2008), leaving out other grounds for discrimination. According to Honkanen (2008), gender equality discourses are sites where gender is reproduced and where the two-sex model of “woman” and “man” is negotiated and reinforced (ibid:212).

The studies I have referred to above suggest that gender equality policy and practice generate inequalities; Swedish women and men are made different (and more gender equal) from immigrant women and men. In the same way, Sweden is made different from other countries, for example India. Studies, not only Nordic, have shown how different structural demarcations intersect with gender (such as sexuality, race, and class) in organisations (Mählck, 2013; Mattson, 2010; Liinason, 2011; Bernal and Villapando, 2002) and I will now turn to these studies that discuss race/ethnicity in relation to gender equality policy and practice and in particular in relation to academic organisations in Sweden.

## 2.6.2 Silenced perspectives in gender equality in Sweden

Mählck (2012) argued that we need to address both gender and race as part of the power structures of academia. They manifest themselves, she says, in how different social groups; women and men, white Swedish people and “others” are constructed as different. This constructed difference results in a hierarchical order where men and white people are always at the top (ibid:27). This hierarchical order is a result of a process where whiteness is associated with scientific quality, leaving racialised researchers invisible (Mählck, 2013:65). Studies like these show how academia is structured along principles of both gender and race. Mählck sees a risk that higher education institutions will only focus on gender equality as being about women and men, with the growing likelihood that differentiation and segregation will increase if class and ethnicity are not part of the analysis (ibid). While Mählck addresses how academia as an organisation is discriminatory, Liinason (2011, 2014) reveals the questions and perspectives that can be researched within gender/feminist studies in Sweden. By doing this, she focuses on the interdependence between feminist knowledge construction, the state and the academy. The closeness between the Swedish state and gender studies has contributed, she says, to the strong position of gender studies within the academy. However, Liinason points out, it has also generated the paradoxical situation where the state is funding research which to its core should be radical to hegemonic practices, inequalities and discrimination (2006:120). She says:

...issues of sexuality or ethnicity are backgrounded or silenced, while a western and heterosexual feminism is foregrounded and made into the norm. As practices of inclusion and exclusion, this shapes a centre and a periphery in feminist knowledge production, marginalizing alternative or critical voices. (2011:126)

She shows how certain perspectives within the field of gender studies are favoured and how perspectives that are critical to the hegemony are marginalised (2014:78). As a result, it can be assumed that critical perspectives of gender equality are also marginalised in policy debates in Sweden (*ibid*).

The perspectives that I have presented in this section are relevant to my analysis of the Gender Equality Project at SLU, since they help me ask what questions were silenced in the Project and in the gender equality discourse at SLU. As I show in chapter 4, the gender equality discourse of SLU does not address race as an intersecting demarcation in discriminatory practices to a large extent. Further, the Gender Equality Project also failed to address race, class and sexuality. The introduction of norm critical pedagogy was an attempt to speak about race and class, but still, the overall thrust of the courses was on gender as the grounds for discrimination. As I discuss further in publication IV, the failure to include intersecting categories also appears to be common in other academic organisations around the world. I return to examine the discourse of gender equality at SLU in chapter 4.

Thus far, the critical perspectives on gender equality includes the questioning of the idea of the modern and gender equal Sweden and the lack of attention paid to other discrimination grounds than gender in policy and practice. As I will show below, one reason to why these critical perspectives are not attended to in policy and practice might be the depoliticisation of gender equality. Depoliticisation suggests that gender equality no longer is a matter of political struggle but of administration and management.

### 2.6.3 Depoliticisation of gender equality

The depoliticisation of gender equality has been discussed in Sweden in the last few years. Rönnblom (2011) has, for example, argued that the way that universities are managed along principles of corporate organisations leads to gender equality becoming a matter of administration rather than politics (*ibid*:50). Universities have to adhere to the requirements of economic growth, competition and innovation, and equality and diversity also take on these forms (Rönnblom, 2014; Schmitt, 2014). Carbin and Rönnblom (2012) show in their study with academics and administrators at three Swedish universities how gender equality should simultaneously create radical changes to the status quo (based on principles of social equity and democracy), and also function as a way

that universities can be more saleable, attracting more funding and students (based on corporate ideals) (ibid:92). This process, Carbin and Rönnblom argue, makes it difficult to discuss questions of power, distribution and justice from a more socialist feminist agenda (ibid:91). What is still possible within this management approach, they argue, is to discuss gender equality as a matter for the individual (ibid). Thus, gender equality in academia can be pursued because it has a liberal point of departure (putting the individual rather than the structures in focus) and academic practices do not need to be questioned. As I discuss in chapter 4, an administrative approach to gender equality reduces the possibilities for what can be done under the umbrella of gender equality at SLU. The use of indicators and statistics, even though important for revealing discriminatory patterns, limited gender equality measures to those of a kind that could be counted or that suited predefined indicators.

The transition of gender equality from being a political issue to something “everyone” agrees on is the focus of Törnqvist’s study from 2008 (cf. Arora-Jonsson, 2009 in the previous section). Törnqvist examines two influential political interventions in the 1990s; the Tham professorships and the “varannan damernas” (every second parliamentary seat for a woman), and asks why gender equality policy in Sweden went from being highly provocative to “the core of what most Swedes consider as a desirable political goal” in just a few years during the late 1990s (2008:75). The Tham professorships were introduced as a quota system to respond to the fact that there were so few female professors in Sweden in the 1990s. The “varannan damernas” addressed the problem of underrepresentation of women in the Swedish parliament. Both interventions resulted in an increase in female representatives in just a few years and what made this change possible, according to Törnqvist (2008), was the way that gender equality politics was framed; in non-controversial, consensual and romantic language. A discourse developed where women and men were described as complementary, as in a dance, and where desire for one another was fundamental (2008:81-82). The rationalisation for more women in parliament was that women would make politics more human, interesting and family friendly (ibid:83). Gender equality was not considered conflictive and the reciprocal relationship between women and men was not challenged (2008: 85). What happened in the study of Besley et al. (2013) which I introduced in a previous section, was that the quota system got rid of mediocre men and raised the competence level of the men who remained (ibid:33). Before the quotas were introduced, the mediocre men in local politics, in order to protect themselves, did not pick women (or competent men) for political positions due to the risk of being outmanoeuvred. When the numbers of women rose through the quota system, the “mediocre leaders may shift attention from protecting

their own survival (which may now inevitably be lost) to winning the election by raising the competence of male politicians.” (ibid). Based on both the study by Törnqvist (2008) and that of Besley et al. (2013), there is a suggestion that quotas can have a positive effect on the number of women, but that they also have unintended consequences. In the case of Besley et al. (2013), I see a close link to the way that homo-social relationships (Holgersson, 2003) are created and it would be interesting to know more about how the alliances between the competent and mediocre men played out in relation to the female politicians. As for Törnqvist’s (2008) study, I see how it provides insight for my research into how something that is inherently political can be transformed into an uncontroversial discourse and thus be accepted. As we show in publication III, framing gender equality as uncontroversial can be tempting and in the case of the Gender Equality Project at SLU, it provided an opening to introduce gender equality. At the same time, however, it also set very firm boundaries for how gender equality could be addressed and it did not challenge the discourse of meritocracy. Bacchi and Eveline (2010:131) talk about the “project trap”, where gender equality is mostly expected to fit into the current organisation rather than contesting organisational norms. Their interest is mainly gender analysis processes, but I see this as also being relevant in other gender equality interventions such as the Gender Equality Project at SLU.

The main point that Bacchi and Eveline make here is that gender analysis risks being an intervention which is “examining the possible *impact* of policies, *prior* to their implementation” (ibid:131). This would mean that the possibilities of what the intervention can actually achieve are already constrained before it starts (ibid.). In publication IV, when I review gender equality measures carried out in different geographical locations, I see that gender equality is often run as projects or programmes targeting individual women rather than structures. The format thus has an impact on what can be done in terms of gender equality and as I study a project here, I will now turn to studies on the project format.

## 2.7 Projects as a vehicle for change

The tension between the long term, deep seated and complex problems of gender inequality and the fact that gender equality is so often practised as projects is of interest in this research. I will return to discuss this tension in relation to the Gender Equality Project in the discussion chapter (4).

Projects and have a beginning, a middle and an end (Sahlin-Andersson and Söderholm, 2002:20) and has been associated with values such as being innovative, taking risks and breaking new ground (Eriksson-Zetterquist, Kalling

and Styhre (2015:356). It has been argued that projects are set up as parallel to the permanent structure in an organisation and build on a different logic of change and innovation as compared to permanent structures which, on the other hand, aim at stability, efficiency and routines (Sahlin-Andersson and Söderholm, 2002). The different logics of a temporary and a permanent structure can be difficult to combine. Jensen et al. (2013) write that “various organizational forms have different logics, and they are held accountable and evaluated in different ways. These differences will probably not cause any particular problems if they are kept separate” (ibid:134-135). This suggests that the project format is adopted when the objectives of the project depart from the ordinary tasks in an organisation and I will return to discuss the project format in relation to the gender equality discourse at SLU in the discussion chapter of this thesis.

Projects are often change oriented, and as such they are sometimes put in place to sort out long term and deep seated problems (Abrahamsson and Agevall, 2009; Jensen and Trädgårdh, 2012). Here the tension between the temporary and the permanent structure becomes visible. However, as Eriksson-Zetterquist, Kalling and Styhre (2015) point out, as projects become a more common way of working in organisations, the project form is no longer only associated with spectacular and high risk projects, but to a large extent routinised as a way in which an organisation carries out its ordinary activities (ibid:81). Along the same lines, Forssell et al.’s (2013) study of the use of projects in Swedish municipalities shows that the dichotomy of permanent-temporary structure is simplified. They say that projects on the one hand are run as external to the regular organisation, but on the other, the format itself becomes a permanent way for organisations to handle different demands that do not fit the regular structure (ibid). In this way, the project format becomes permanent and the organisation establishes a capacity to run different projects, even if the different projects come and go (Forssell et al., 2013:55). These studies thus suggest that the project format is a way for organisations to work with certain types of issues, but that this format becomes a permanent structure in itself.

Another aspect of projects is that they are often externally funded or funded by earmarked money within the organisation. This funding structure can be considered as an incentive for a project, but, as Forssell et al. (2013) say, when the earmarked funding runs out, so does the project (ibid). This was the case for the Gender Equality Project at SLU, and in publications II and V, I discuss the tension between the long term aims of gender equality and the short term structure of a project.

Further, projects are not isolated satellites, but part of what Forssell et al. (2013) call “a complex multilevel system” (2013:43) where external and internal driving forces meet. The question of why a project is initiated is thus of importance (Lundin and Söderholm, 1995). Forssell et al. (2013) show how

projects can for example be initiated and financed by an EU-initiative, which at the organisational level is taken up for political reasons in order to show action, flexibility and development. In a similar vein, the collaborative projects discussed in publication V and the Gender Equality Project at SLU are embedded in larger national and international discourses of gender equality and democracy, which influence the wish and will of organisations to do the “right thing”, i.e. show that they respond to outside demands (see also a discussion about ethics in publication III).

I return to a further discussion about the project format and the pros and cons in more depth in relation to the Gender Equality Project at SLU in the discussion (chapter 4). Before I go on to the next chapter, I wish to address studies addressing the logics of gender equality and meritocracy in relation to projects.

## 2.8 Meritocracy, gender equality and the project format

I will now wrap up this chapter by showing how gender equality, meritocracy and the project format can be discussed in relation to each other. I exemplify this through a Swedish study from Lund University on meritocracy and equal opportunities policy (Espersson, 2014).

To work with gender equality in project form can be seen as closely linked to what I mentioned in a previous section; that gender equality has gone from being a political issue attempting to address power relations to a matter of management (Edenheim and Rönnblom, 2012). Rönnblom (2011) states that when gender equality is implemented it becomes an administrative routine and if the problems that the administrative routines are set out to solve are not solved, it is blamed on routines not working as well as they should. In this way, gender equality has become an administrative problem rather than a political one (ibid:49). As Alnebratt and Jordansson (2011), Egeland (2001) and Wullum Nielsen (2015a) all show, meritocratic values and gender equality build on ideas that are difficult to reconcile. Espersson (2014) suggests that in order to “hide” or silence the contradictions between the two discourses, they are de-coupled and thus their contradicting values can be left unaddressed (2014:124-126). Decoupling can happen when contradictory demands are put on an organisation, for example when they are demanded to introduce a new practice (Seidman, 1983 in Boxenbaum and Jonsson, 2008:77). Decoupling can also occur if the actor who the puts new demands on the organisations are not trusted Kostova and Roth, 2002 in Boxenbaum and Jonsson, 2008:80). As Boxenbaum and Jonsson, 2008) say “...decoupling is often understood as pretence, i.e., by formalizing a structure, an organization pretends to do something that it does not actually do” (ibid:81).

Further, this decoupling can happen through a separation between “action” and “talk” (as the gap between policy and implementation). This is what Brunsson (2006) calls “organizational hypocrisy” (in Espersson, 2014). Espersson shows how the discourses of equal opportunities and meritocracy are kept separate, through the formal and informal structures and everyday practices. Organisational hypocrisy is not necessarily an intended strategy, but rather a result of the lack of capacity to act on contradictory demands, such as meritocracy and gender equality. This leads to a decoupling between the daily practices in an organisation and the demands on an organisation from politics or society at large (2014:127). In practice, this de-coupling is done by running equal opportunity work in project format, which helps to keep equal opportunities separate from the ordinary practice of the university. By working in projects, Espersson argues that equal opportunities are not integrated in the organisation (2014:138).

The theoretical framework I have drawn up here provides an understanding of how organisations are gendered and especially how this gendering process takes place in academic organisational cultures. Academic cultures have their particular traits and practices where meritocratic principles play an important role. Despite meritocracy, academia persists as unequal organisations. This suggests that meritocracy does not work as well as intended. Inequality in academia is based not only on gender but also race, age, class and sexuality. These intersecting demarcations are more rarely addressed, which leaves gender equality interventions in academia to focus on women’s subordination to men. Further, it has been argued that gender equality is also more or less depoliticised, meaning that gender equality is something which, to a large extent, has become administration. To practise gender equality as administration rather than politics is followed by a set of tools such as indicators, audits, projects, programmes and so on. It also appears as though this administration of gender equality accommodates the decoupling of meritocracy and gender equality. This way, critical questions about what gender equality means and who it is for can be left unasked, or are silenced. As I now proceed in this research, these theoretical perspectives make up the framework for my analysis.

### 3 Methodology

I am interested in discourses of gender equality and discourses of meritocracy in academia and what happens when these discourses meet in academic organisations. In this chapter I present the methodological points of departure for studying this. I start with my epistemological grounds, and my understandings of discourses, discursive practices and power. Thereafter, I turn to a description and discussion of the methods I used when conducting and analysing the empirical material; action research and relational analysis. In the last section of the chapter, I present the methods and finish by saying something about the shortcomings and benefits of my approach.

This thesis is grounded in a feminist approach. A feminist approach aims at changing discriminatory gendered structures and I see gender as structuring relations of power (Calás and Smircich, 2006:284; Gunnarsson-Östling, 2012; Eduards and Rönnblom, 2008:11). I use gender as an analytical category to study interactions between and among women and men. Gender as a concept originates from the need to analyse the social construction of women and men, masculinity and femininity, and as Zimmerman and West (1987) have argued, gender is done in everyday interactions between people (ibid). Everline (1994) analysed unequal power relations between women and men as “the politics of advantage” and Bacchi and Everline (2010) see power as a generative force which is captured in the term “gendering” (ibid:18). Gendering processes are thus done in everyday life; it is something we do in hierarchical social relations (ibid:292).

A feminist approach is transformative (Calás and Smircich, 2006:284) and my research focuses on discrimination in academia with the hope that my findings will contribute to a broader understanding of gender inequality in academia, where gender intersects with race, sexuality and class. This broader understanding takes its point of departure in an understanding of discrimination as structural problems, not as individual shortcomings.

After these introductory words, I will introduce discourse and discursive practices are central concepts in this thesis and hence they require a clarification as to how I define and consider them valuable in this study.

### 3.1 Discourse

Discourse is a widely used (too widely, according to Bacchi, 2005) concept with a wide range of meanings as a field of study, as language in use, and for critical theorists as a “set of propositions in circulation about a particular phenomenon” (Cameron and Kulick, 2003:16). Bacchi (2005) argues that the concept is used to mean almost anything, and that it has become shorthand for “talking about an issue” (2005:201), which loses sight of the power and possibility to discuss how hegemonic discourses work to limit certain meanings and accentuate others (ibid).

Foucault has defined discourse as “practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak” (1972:149). Thus, the Foucauldian definition is less about understanding texts than understanding rules and structures that make certain texts possible (Mills, 1997). To analyse discourse in this study is thus to analyse rules and structures that are taken for granted (as dominant discourses) in order to make visible discriminatory practices.

Bacchi (2005) is inspired by Foucault, and she suggests combining the traditions of discourse analysis (as patterns of speech) and analysis of discourses (“as the ways in which issues are given a particular meaning within a specific social setting”, (ibid:199). She argues that by adopting a dual focus, it is possible to both reflect on the discourses within which we work, and study the active “deployment of concepts and categories for political purposes” (2005:208). In the case of the present study of SLU, this would suggest that the ways in which gender equality and meritocracy are spoken and written about, symbolised and addressed in various situations by different actors are meaning-making activities. Thus, as we speak about, think about and write about gender equality at SLU, we also construct what it means in this particular context.

These meaning-making activities create discourses, and discourses are then: “what can be said, and thought, but also about who can speak, when, where and with what authority” (Ball, 1990:17-18). Ball continues: “Meanings thus arise not from language, but from institutional practices, from power relations, from social positions. Words and concepts change their meaning and their effect as they are deployed within different discourses” (ibid).

My interest here is in how gender equality and meritocracy are spoken about, thought and written about and by whom (in publication II), and what

consequences this has for how gender equality work is carried out in the organisation, and by whom.

### 3.2 Discursive practices

Closely linked to the concept of discourse are discursive practices. To discuss this I draw mainly on work by Bacchi and Bonham (2014), who elaborate on Foucault's concept of discursive practices.

As we have seen above, Foucault's definition of discourse is related to knowledge rather than language. As Bacchi and Bonham elaborate on this statement of Foucault, they say that discourse is formed in the "interaction of plural and contingent practices within different sites, each which involves the material and the symbolic" (2014:174). Further, discursive practices need to be analysed in their context and in relation to history; that is, how it is possible to say certain things, and how it is that certain things that are said are accepted as knowledge (2014:179). Thus, discursive practices are symbolic and material, as well as being linked to political processes (ibid). Therefore, as we practice discourse (as in the case of gender equality discourses at SLU) we also create how gender equality is understood and practiced in a particular context. This suggests that discursive practices are both what is said (the knowledge accepted as truth) and the rules and relations that govern this knowledge (ibid.).

Importantly, Bacchi and Bonham show how a Foucauldian analysis of discursive practices involves both the discursive and the non-discursive (the material) and argue that Foucault's intention was never to divide the world into the discursive and the non-discursive. As an example, they argue that Foucault's usage of the concept of "statements" is misinterpreted as being the same as speech acts (what is stated, or said). Instead, they argue, "statements" refer to how what is said is also linked to the material (2014:184). Things said have a bearing and a materiality. They are, according to Foucault, artefacts, that shape and are shaped by objects, subjects and places, and as such they have material effects (ibid). Accordingly, the discursive practices of gender equality and meritocracy (as carried out as discursive practices) have material effects on the people of SLU as well as on the organisation.

The usefulness of studying discourses and discursive practices lies in the fact that they show more than what is said; discourses shed light on power relations as they display whose knowledge counts as the truth. Ideas such as gender equality or meritocracy have shifting meanings depending on context.

Gendering and discourses are closely associated with power, and this is where I turn next.

### 3.3 Some words on power

Relations of power are important in the analysis of discourses and discursive practices. According to Foucault, power and knowledge presuppose each other as there is no power without knowledge and no knowledge that is not linked to power relations (Foucault [1975], 1995:27). Further, according to Foucault, power must be analysed as “something which circulates...” (in Gordon, 1980:98) and I interpret that as power being situated and produced in everyday interactions and situations. Along these lines of thinking, our daily practices, relations and interactions at SLU are sites of power. I understand this productive view of power as providing space for action and change in the challenging of dominant understandings of discourses.

As Nousiainen et al. (2013) have pointed out, seeing power as the same as oppression (as oppressive structures, individuals, and so on) suggests a view that this power needs to be replaced by “good” power. In publication V in this thesis, we discuss the participatory and collaborative turn in environmental management, from a feminist lens. Different approaches to achieving “good power” have been adopted (influenced by deliberative democracy and communicative action) in order to shift environmental management from the dominant, scientific discourse to a more democratic and participatory methodology. A feminist critique of interpreting power in this way argues that it is blind to uneven social status and resources to act within a particular deliberative or communicative process, suggesting that it is in reality blind to power relations (Fraser, 1997; I.M. Young, 2000). This is an important epistemological position in this thesis and one that is related to the ideal of meritocratic practices; communicative, deliberative and collaborative processes do not in themselves lead to changed power relations. We extend on this in publication V where we show how introducing collaborative approaches not necessarily change gender inequalities in an organisation, but can rather reinforce them. Lombardo, Meier and Verloo (2009) put it well as they say:

Power operates ... by limiting, through dominant policy discourses, those visions and voices that express different options for change and transformation, and make it difficult to challenge hegemonic groups and discourses. In this sense, the power of discourse especially affects the possibility for actors to challenge existing hegemonic discourses. (ibid:9)

In publication II, we argue that norms of merit and gender equality need to be challenged in order to develop the ways to work with gender inequalities in academia.

Following my argumentation about power in this thesis, I understand power as a practice being produced and reproduced in various discursive practices, setting the boundaries for how we can utilise our potential as human beings.

### 3.4 Discourse analysis

For the purposes of this thesis, I study discourse as both the way we talk about and create meanings around gender equality and meritocracy, and how these discourses are positioned locally at SLU, at national level and also beyond these geographical contexts.

The discourse analysis went through several stages. For example, during focus group interviews, we recorded the conversations, and Malin (the course leader) took notes. After the focus group, we would exchange notes and discuss what had been said and done and in order to see what we both had noticed, found important or simply wished to discuss further. This collaboration between the two of us became a way of carrying out a first step of analysis. Next we brought with us the main findings from the notes to the operational group for discussion, and thereafter we discussed the main findings in the reference group. These processes provided me with perspectives on the material that was not only my own; a sort of validation of what had happened in that particular situation and what the main issues had been.

When it was my turn to analyse the empirical material at my desk, I re-read and analysed the material closely. I categorised it into themes using colour pens, and I made mind maps to help me identify which ideas were reoccurring more than others, around which issues people talked, and how they described gender inequality as a problem, or not. Initially, I tried to use NVivo as a program for coding my material, but found that it caused me to feel too distanced from the material. I give an example of how I adopted critical discourse analysis in article II.

### 3.5 The Gender Equality Project

As I have mentioned previously, this study is based on a Gender Equality Project at SLU. The project is described in detail in publications I and II and here I simply give a short overview of the project and the type of empirical material I draw from in my research.

The Gender Equality Project ran from 2010 to 2012 and was organised as an action research project. It had as its main activity a course in gender and norm-critical pedagogy for teachers at the university.

The empirical data collected comes from three different phases: the planning phase (year 1), the implementation phase (years 1 and 2) and the follow up phase (year 3). This material included:

- Survey with students (900 students, 82 responses) at 3 programmes. Survey with teachers (80 teachers, 27 responses). Both surveys concerned gender equality and gender perspectives on education.
- Focus group interviews (2) with 5 students each (20-30 years old, 2 men, 8 women). Focus group with 6 teachers (25-60 years old, 1 man, 6 women). Audio-recorded and transcribed.
- Analysis of university reports and strategies.
- Participant observations of 3 courses (in total 48 hours audio recorded and transcribed) 39% of the participants in the course were men.
- 8 follow-up interviews with course participants (audio recorded, transcribed, 1-2 hours).
- Notes from 4 workshops
- Meeting notes. Reference group meetings (2), information meetings (3) and meetings with committees and units at the University (5).

In the surveys, the response rate was low, amongst both the students and the teachers. The survey went out to all year 1-5 students in 3 education programmes based on e-mail lists to students that were provided by the IT department. We received 82 responses from students. The teachers who were reached by the survey were attached to three education programmes<sup>6</sup> as lecturers, course convenors or directors of study. We put together this e-mail list ourselves. Twenty-seven teachers responded to the survey. A more detailed overview of the material can be found in article II.

The article further draws from empirical material from a previous study (Powell, 2008) which includes meeting notes and one survey with Heads of Department, official SLU documents such as Annual Reports, strategies for research and education, gender equality and equal opportunities plans, surveys on the study environment for graduate and post-graduate students, protocols and other types of published and unpublished material available on the SLU website.

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6. The Veterinary program, the Landscape architecture program and the Animal husbandry program.

## 3.6 How I did the research

In this section I will first present the methodology and then present the methods I used in order to collect the empirical material. I start by discussing action research, which was the research approach for the Gender Equality Project (the phase of developing empirical material) and continue with relational analysis (the methodology I adopted at the later stages of the research).

### 3.6.1 Action research

The Gender Equality Project was inspired by action research methodologies (Reason and Bradbury, 2001). A central idea in action research is to disrupt the notion of knowledge production as objective, apolitical and democratic (Brydon-Miller et al., 2003:13). In order to disrupt these ideas, the research needs to involve those who are affected by the research (Houh and Kalsem, 2015). Kurt Lewin has been credited as the person who coined the concept Action Research, and he did this during the Second World War as a way to develop democratic social science (Aagaard Nielsen and Steen Nielsen, 2006:67). Action research in its most basic understanding suggests that you as a researcher engage in the context that you are examining. Importantly, however, action research builds on the notion that society is created by human action and can therefore also be changed by human action (Aagaard Nielsen and Steen Nielsen, 2006:66). Action research therefore involves the aim of addressing and changing discriminatory or social structures in a democratic manner (ibid). The concern is, however, the extent to which democratic processes can be carried out without co-option or creation of new authoritarian relationships (ibid) and this is something that I also address in chapter 5 in this thesis in relation to environmental communication, and that I discuss in relation to matters of representation in publication III.

As we set up the Gender Equality Project, it was important that it provided opportunities to, in collaboration with teachers, students, administrators and other actors at SLU, explore what concerns there were in the organisation with regard to gender inequality and discrimination. These turned out to be for example unequal treatment of students, gendered prejudices and gender segregation in education. More about how this was organised can be found in publications I and II. These concerns and experiences were then to guide the design of the Gender Equality Project in a way that responded to these experiences. Through this process, it was also important to build up commitment to action and the hope was that action research would increase the chances of that happening.

I was the project leader and worked closely with Malin Ah-King, who was appointed course leader, employed from the Centre for Gender Research,

Uppsala. An operational group was set up, which other than me and Malin, also included the pedagogical leader at the VH-Faculty (who had been involved in the application process for the project) and the director for the Centre for Gender Research (the idea was to develop collaborations with the centre as part of the Project). The four of us met every month during the first year, 2011. Linked to the project was a reference group that consisted of representatives from the student body, teachers from three education programmes<sup>7</sup>, leadership representatives from the highest levels and the head of the Division of Educational Affairs, the Head of the Division of Communication, the Director for Gender Research, Uppsala University, a gender researcher from the Department for Urban and Rural Development and another researcher from the same department with experience of setting up and running collaborative educational programmes (15 people in total).

The planning and design phase took almost one year (2010-2011). During this time, we had different planning activities. Malin (the course leader) and I designed two initial surveys, one with teachers and one with students (see appendix I) with the aim to learn about how gender equality was understood at SLU and what experiences of gender perspectives on education the teachers and students had. We conducted focus group interviews, and had meetings with education committees, equal opportunity committees and different teaching groups. In article I, we elaborate on the benefits of setting up a Gender Equality Project as an action research project. The strength of this is that it makes it possible to contextualise rather than blueprint gender equality projects, since it becomes possible to relate the activities to the local context and concerns.

Action research methodologies sometimes promise representation and democracy (Eikeland, 2006), but representation often happens through a few individuals and their participation as representatives of a larger community or group of people (Eikeland, 2006). This was also the case at SLU. The members of the reference group were selected based on them already being interested in gender equality in one way or another. The teacher representatives had a director of studies role or similar. The students were the representatives on education committees for their programmes at Faculty level and thus were already involved in concerns related to their education. The leadership representatives were chosen based on their positions as those responsible for education and further education at SLU.

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7. The Veterinary Programme, the Landscape Architecture Programme, the Animal Husbandry Programme. The Project was extended to all staff at SLU, as discussed in publication II, after half a year.

The project planning phase ended and the activities in the project started in September 2011. The three courses were given between September and March of the following year, and the three workshops (which were part of the Project) were also held during this period. I undertook participant observations at the courses and administrated these courses, and conducted information-meetings in order to attract participants to the course.

At the point when I started to analyse and write about the process of the Project, the activities had just finished. As I entered the phase of contemplation, I turned to a relational analysis.

### 3.7 Relational analysis

Once the Gender Equality Project came to an end, I turned to apply relational analysis, as developed by Arora-Jonsson (2005, 2013). In what follows, I will discuss this approach and how it is relevant to my research.

#### 3.7.1 Freezing time

In article II, I “freeze time” and the project at SLU is analysed at a specific moment in time. To freeze time means to study a particular moment in time; what is said, done (and not) and important also beyond that particular moment. As Arora-Jonsson puts it:

The focus is on the action that was taken and the words that were used at that particular moment as exemplars and acts that solidify meanings and indicate underlying assumptions or the structures of meaning rather than being properties of specific people. (2013:11)

It is assumed here that how gender equality was spoken about at SLU at that particular moment in time was determined by, and determined, the discourse of gender equality. For example, during the project we met a lot of resistance to the gender equality aims of the Project, or perhaps the resistance was due to the fact that gender equality was for a time on the agenda in a more explicit way. By “freezing time”, in publication II, we asked what that resistance could tell us about the gender equality discourse at SLU. Through examining resistance in this way, we were able to see the complexities of resistance; what it meant, who was resisting what, why there was so much resistance even though gender equality was well anchored in university policy and so on. The analysis shows how the particular resistance evoked at SLU can be understood in light of the responses to similar projects in other contexts. By “freezing time”, I argue that what is said in that particular context, at that particular time, has meaning also beyond that situation.

### 3.7.2 Critical subjectivity

In the book chapter (III), I analyse my own role as project leader and researcher as “critical subjectivity”. To do critical subjectivity is to locate yourself as a researcher in the text (Arora-Jonsson, 2013:1, as developed from Reason, 1994). In this research, it includes critically thinking about my own relations, ideas, assumptions and wishes for the project in order to make them transparent.

I had dwelled on the double role of researcher and change agent for a long time and I address it in the book chapter on the ethics of political correctness (publication III). Seema Arora-Jonsson (my main supervisor) was asked to contribute to a book project and asked if I could take it on as an opportunity to address the ethics of my double roles. This was initially a difficult process, but eventually, in the procrastination of trying to write about this, Seema suggested that we worked in a way where she asked me questions with me responding to them. She read and questioned, and so we went along. This way of working pushed me to really think about my own role, why I had done as I had and what the implications had been. I dared to be more open and self-reflexive than I believe I would have been without this format of working. A fair amount of trust between me and Seema was essential.

Inspired by postcolonial perspectives, I analysed my own position and could address issues of representation and of making use of a politically correct discourse around gender equality in Sweden in order to get the Gender Equality Project accepted. Acting within, and making use of the fact that gender equality was the ethical thing to do at SLU, turned out to have implications later on in the process when the borders for the politically correct became apparent and resistance to the project emerged.

### 3.7.3 Reversing the gaze

In article IV, I “reverse the gaze” (Arora Jonsson, 2013). I examine literature on gender equality measures from around the world in order to reflect on Swedish gender equality projects in the academy. Following this approach I look at projects from other countries in order to make visible how the assumingly “unique” gender equality in Sweden is embedded in global discussions on gender equality. Thus, I question conventional assumptions of gender equality where Northern principles are the reference points.

To reverse the gaze involved taking the concept of gender equality in academia beyond the specific micro-politics of SLU and the national context of Sweden in order to study how the same issues were constructed in other academic organisations in other geographical contexts (Arora-Jonsson, 2013:12). As I scrutinize the idea of the gender equal and neutral Sweden, I see in my analysis that many of the same or similar problems of gender inequality

in Sweden also returns in literature from countries such as Australia, USA, Netherlands, India, the UK and Spain as well as in the Nordic countries. Even though contexts differ both in terms of disciplines and geographical locations, the review lifted the gaze beyond the local to the global to identify the interconnectedness. This is discussed in publication IV.

In the following section, I will turn to a discussion about the methods I used to bring together the empirical material.

## 3.8 Methods

The approach I used in the first part of my research, as mentioned above, is based on an action research approach. There was a desire to work in collaboration with various actors at SLU in order to explore issues of gender equality and gender inequalities. The outcome of this process was, in the first stage, the project activities (the course and the workshops) and in the second stage, the analytical and theoretical discussion of the empirical material.

Below I will describe how I worked with the different methods and why I found them useful in my research. I will also describe how I applied critical discourse analysis.

I sum up the section with a discussion of the pros and cons of methods that I used.

### 3.8.1 Literature review

In this thesis, I have worked closely with texts of different kinds; academic articles and books, reports, policies and strategies, official governmental texts and web-based information. My methods for analysis of these texts have been critical discourse analysis, and I will return to that as I present methods of analysis below. First I will describe literature review as a research method.

The literature review provided me with the necessary theoretical and methodological frameworks needed to analyse my empirical material from the Gender Equality Project at SLU. For the theoretical framework, I reviewed literature from a feminist philosophy of science, gender and organisations, studies on gender and academia, post-colonial and feminist studies on gender equality from the Nordic context, studies on meritocracy and research on the project format. The review of this literature aimed at positioning my own research in relation to other studies in the field and it also opened up possibilities for my own methodological, theoretical and practical contributions. As I reviewed these studies, I kept my research question in mind, in order to relate my study to how other scholars have studied the same, or similar topics, in Sweden and in other parts of the world.

The literature that I have read is rooted in cultural, historical, social and political contexts and is therefore also part of creating the discourse of gender equality and meritocracy. Inspired by close reading (Liinason, 2011), I tried to go beyond what it said to explore connections between texts, material effects and social orders (ibid:93). Publication IV is a literature review on the topic of gender equality in academia and there I describe in more detail how I went about the literature review.

### 3.8.2 Surveys

A quantitative survey is conducted to gain statistical data (Henn, Weinstein and Foard, 2009) in order to obtain as much information as possible at the same time. However, the low response rate of the surveys made it impossible to obtain valid statistics. Instead, we treated the responses as getting insights (snapshots) of how gender equality was perceived in education at SLU.

The questions in the two surveys were similar but took into account the different positions and roles of students and teachers. Analysing the responses suggests that those responding were people who had already given gender equality some thought, either as being important or as being unnecessary. For example, the surveys displayed both comments on how female and male students were addressed differently in the classroom and that women were discriminated against. However, they also displayed comments suggesting that since SLU is a natural science university, gender perspectives on teaching and research are irrelevant. As we sent out the surveys, we also asked for volunteers for focus group interviews.

### 3.8.3 Focus group interviews

We conducted three focus group interviews; one with teachers and two with students. In the focus groups, which took approximately 2 hours, I acted as moderator and the course leader in the project acted as observer and took notes. The focus groups were recorded and transcribed and sent to the participants for comments.

A focus group interview is a qualitative research method where a group of people have a discussion about a pre-set topic under the guidance of a moderator, which is commonly the researcher as in our case (Kitzinger and Barbour, 1999; Tursunovic, 2002). For a focus group to work well is it important that the participants wish to speak about the theme introduced and this is why the focus groups ought to be voluntary (Tursunovic, 2002).

The choice of focus group interviews as a method at this stage was to deepen the understanding of gender inequalities and discrimination in the classroom and how the participants viewed gender equality. The strength of a

focus group interview is for example that it provides the opportunity to gain an insight into how other people experience a matter or a situation in an environment where confidence is created between the people involved (Morgan and Kreuger, 1993:15-19). Hylander (2001) has pointed out that people sometimes need to listen to others in order to formulate their own ideas and in a focus group, the interaction that makes this possible is created (ibid.:20). However, it is the very advantage of the focus group method that also risks being the limitation. Just as a group can be a safe space for discussion, there can be a dynamic in the group that can hinder the dialogue, where some dominate and steer what is taken as the “right” thing to think and say. Further, the researcher (moderator) can also influence the research results (Frey and Fontana, 1993).

#### 3.8.4 Semi-structured and unstructured interviews

I conducted semi-structured and unstructured interviews after one and a half years had passed in the project, after the course in gender and norm critical pedagogy. Information about the number of interviews and who took part in the interviews can be found above.

I interviewed participants in the courses in order to gain an insight into what the interviewees experienced in terms of what they had learned on the course, whether their view of what gender equality means to them had changed since before the course, and how they could think of applying these perspectives in their daily practice at the university in the future. I was also interested in what they thought was necessary in order for gender equality to be addressed at SLU. I asked them to describe their experiences from daily academic practice in terms of gender equality and what their ideas were about the future of gender equality at SLU. I conducted eight interviews and they took 1-2 hours. All were recorded, transcribed, anonymised and sent to the participants for comments.

Semi-structured interviews are helpful in deepening one’s knowledge about an issue and to listen to and allow a person to expand on a topic (Henn, Weinstein and Foard, 2006). Semi-structured interviews follow a pre-set guide which can include questions or themes that the researcher has developed beforehand. Unstructured interviewing on the other hand has been described by Bernard (2000) as follows: “you keep the conversation focused on a topic, while giving the respondent room to define the content of the discussion” (2000:216). The interviews I conducted were of both types, depending on the situation with the interviewee.

When we met for interviews, I had a number of open-ended questions around which I wanted us to talk. However, the relationship between me as a researcher and the person in the interview seat undoubtedly influenced the

interview. The interviews therefore differed. Some interviews were more unstructured, while others stayed closer to the questions I had prepared. People also differed in how comfortable they were talking to me. My assumption was that this had to do with being questioned by a researcher about gender equality, which is a sensitive topic.

During the interviews, I was both interested in the issues that were brought up independently from my questions as I was in obtaining answers to my prepared questions. If the interview took another direction than I had expected (or that the interview guide proposed), I allowed that to happen. I saw the new input that was brought up in the conversations as being important input to the issues at hand. The consequence was, for example, that one interview turned out to be about issues of men and gender equality, while another concerned how female students and their perceived lack of self-confidence related to the culture of the university. Neither of these two aspects was something that I had prepared questions about, but the discussion turned out to give valuable insights into how gender equality and inequalities can be filled with different meanings by different people.

As in the case of the surveys, I did not see the interviews as giving generalisable answers or statistical results (Ward-Schofield, 1993).

### 3.8.5 Participant observations

To adopt participant observations as a research method means that you as a researcher not only observe, but participate in a situation or context (Borofsky, 1994). I conducted participant observations during the courses in gender and norm critical pedagogy, as well as during workshops and meetings. I recorded the lectures and discussions at the course, transcribed them and took notes. In my notes and in my later analysis, I paid special attention to the interaction between participants and what happened in the room as gender equality, norm critical perspectives and gender and feminist perspectives were discussed.

As an anthropologist by training, this method had been taught to me as the most appropriate way of gaining a deep understanding of context. I had not learnt so much about how to do participant observations in one's own organisation however, which raised questions.

I have been employed at SLU since 2006, and I also worked here in 1998-2000. SLU is a well-known organisation to me. This means that I both have valuable pre-knowledge and understanding and probably also prejudices that influence my interpretation and analysis of situations (as reflected on in publication III).

### 3.8.6 A reflection on methodology

I start by making an obvious but necessary point. The material that I have examined here is rich and spans the years 1994 to 2015. Nevertheless, however thorough I have been, I will have missed information which would have been important to my understanding and analysis in this research. Despite this, I argue that the material collected is so substantial that it tells us something important about how we work with gender equality, not only within SLU but also within academia in general. The patterns that I can see in my material has grounds in thorough reading, analysing, theorising and thinking and I have related it to other studies on similar topics from Sweden and beyond. I will now turn to the research quality.

The combination of methods made it possible to validate the outcome of the research. For example, a survey gives a very superficial picture of a situation, while an individual interview gives a more limited view if one, as in my case, has a limited number of interviews. A focus group interview, on the other hand, provides the opportunity to, in interaction, develop thinking that is not possible in the same way in an interview situation. Participant observations give the opportunity to observe a large number of interactions and reflect on them. A combination of these methods gives a broader as well as a deeper understanding.

As a qualitative study, this research raises questions about method with regard to validity, reactivity and reliability (Henn, Weinstein and Foard, 2006). Can the results from the qualitative research methods that I used here, such as interviews and focus groups, achieve a valid version of the “truth”? I maintain that this question can be posed to both qualitative and quantitative research. In both cases, the quest for a “truth” is coloured by the researcher, her questions, her interest, and the interaction between the researcher and those involved in the research as respondents or co-researchers. Furthermore, results are analysed by human hand, and not by anonymous, neutral researchers without values, interests, experiences that colour their research process (Haraway, 1991). In this way, qualitative research methods could be seen as being more honest (at best) and reflexive. This has been my aim.

Doing qualitative research evokes reactivity in the sense that I as a researcher influenced the people I met with my questions, my responses and my body language. As the theme of gender equality in Sweden is surrounded by consensus, the likelihood was also that the people I met tried to give a positive view on it (as the ethical thing to be agreeing with, as discussed in publication III). On the other hand, I argue that the risk might have been greater had the participants been selected in a different manner. The participants in focus groups, interviews and in the courses all participated on a

voluntary basis, which suggests that they already had a positive view on gender equality and saw it as being important.

My feminist position as a researcher requires attention. This is on two levels, first as being a researcher with a feminist change agenda and secondly in the way that this position influenced how I interpreted the material. First, I see it as a strength of the research to be open with one's political or normative agenda. Being transparent with the feminist point of departure makes it possible to read and understand the study on these premises, as opposed to when the normative position is unclear, or the researcher him/herself is invisible in the text. However, there is need for caution. According to Alvesson and Billing, feminist researchers risk being caught in looking for discrimination. That is, they might interpret things as discriminatory which might not be interpreted as such by others and from other perspectives (2011). This is something that we considered, especially in the process of writing article II on resistance. As project leader of the Gender Equality Project, I was probably extra attentive to reactions to the project that I interpreted as resistance. These reactions thus needed to be discussed with colleagues and related to the organisational scholarship on resistance before the final analysis was carried out.

As a feminist researcher, my focus was to identify and challenge matters of discrimination and inequalities. Being both a change agent and a researcher is something I reflect on in the book chapter (III). In this chapter, I scrutinise my own position and how it affected the project and the people involved. In particular, I am critical of the way that female students were subjectified in the project and how I, in my role as project leader, took the role of representing them, as if they were one mass of people, incapable of giving a voice to their own issues, rather than the complex and diversified group I knew they were. As my understanding of power here is that power and power relations are unavoidable (Gordon, 1980), I am myself part of these relations. Speaking on behalf of others is an act of power, even if it was an act taken with the best of intentions.

## 4 Examining gender equality and meritocracy at SLU

This chapter presents and discusses the empirical and theoretical findings from this research. In the first section (4.1), I provide a short history of SLU before I turn to presenting how gender equality is organised at the university through the Equal Opportunities structure. In section 4.2, I then turn to describe the discourses of gender equality that I have found when analysing the material. These three discourses are too few women and gender segregated education programmes, helping women to advance and women and natural sciences. In the following section 4.3, I show what type of measures have been taken in order to address gender inequalities, including mentoring, gender integration, gender projects and courses, studies and surveys. In section 4.4, I present some alternative views on what constitutes gender equality at SLU that were brought up within the Gender Equality Project, including class, urban-rural relations and ethnicity. In 4.5, I analyse the first section of the chapter and argue that the reconciliation of gender equality and meritocracy at SLU occurs through three processes: through discursive practices, depoliticisation and by decoupling. I finish the chapter with some concluding remarks where I also look to the future and suggest ways for SLU to approach the new Governmental Directive (2016) requesting all higher education institutions to develop a plan for gender integration by May 2017.

### 4.1 The Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences (SLU)

The Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences (SLU) was founded in 1977 through the merger of three separate colleges of forestry, agriculture and veterinary medicine, all three with links going back three hundred years (Almåns et al., 2006:33). SLU differs from most other universities in Sweden as it is administratively located under the Ministry of Enterprise and Innovation

instead of under the Ministry of Education and Research like most other Swedish universities. The reason for this is that SLU has a role as a “sector university”. The sector role means that SLU works in collaboration with actors (private, civil and corporate) linked to agriculture, forestry, landscape, animal health and management, environmental management, food chains, spatial planning, bio-energy and bio-tech. The sector role also includes the mission that research and education at SLU should be developed so that it can benefit the sectors (Styrdokument för samverkan, 2010, SLU).

Over the years, the focus and aims of SLU have changed and even as the sector role is strong, there is also an orientation towards more classical scientific cultures where the focus is on how scientific quality is secured through referee procedures such as peer review of articles (Almås et al. 2006:15-16). Today, SLU brands itself as: “...one of Sweden’s most research-intensive universities” (SLU, AR, 2012:5).

Also, thematically, SLU has changed and a shift happened in the mid-1990s when the production and effectivity of the green sectors was complemented with a focus on sustainability and environmental management (Bothmer et al., 2012:206). This became visible, for example, in the change of slogans from “SLU- a natural science university” in the early 1990s to the present motto “SLU is a world-class university in the fields of life and environmental sciences”<sup>8</sup> with the mission to: “use biological natural resources from forests, soil and water without exhausting them and while preserving welfare for humans and animals alike” (www.slu.se, 2015-07-22). This new way of interpreting the task of research and education at SLU to also include themes such as sustainability and welfare opens up for new perspectives. Almås et al. (2006) examined the sector role of SLU and saw how these perspectives differ from both natural science and sector-oriented research. The new perspectives belong with researchers who are interested in, for example, ecological agriculture and environmental assessment but also social science and humanities (anthropologists, historians, sociologists, and so on) (ibid:16). The integration of these new perspectives (which are stated as important in SLU policy) at the university has not been unproblematic. Interdisciplinary and social science disciplines do not share the same epistemological grounds as natural sciences at SLU and this is one reason to the closing down of an interdisciplinary and international master program at SLU in 2009, according to N. Powell, and Klocker Larsen (2013).

It is also mainly within the social science or interdisciplinary disciplines, such as rural development, that gender theoretical approaches at SLU can be found (Powell, 2008).

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8. <http://www.slu.se/en/about-slu/>

SLU has 36 departments located under four faculties; the Faculty of Landscape Architecture, Horticulture and Crop Production Science (LTV, based in Alnarp in the south of Sweden), the Faculty of Forest Sciences (S, based in Umeå in the north of Sweden), the Faculty of Natural Resources and Agricultural Sciences (NJ, based in Uppsala, central Sweden) and the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine and Animal Science (VH, also based in Uppsala). Each faculty has a Dean and a vice-Dean. The Vice Chancellor's and the Pro-Vice Chancellor's office are at SLU in Uppsala where the rest of the administration of the University is also located. The university offers programmes in for example Biology, Landscape Architecture, Environmental Communication, Rural Development and Soil and Water Management. At SLU you can study to become, for example, a veterinarian, agronomist or bio-chemist. In 2014, the university had almost 3,000 full-time staff, almost 4,000 full-time students and 700 active doctoral students<sup>9</sup>.

After this brief overview of SLU, I will narrow my focus in the next section to how gender equality has been organised at SLU over the years.

## 4.2 Organising gender equality at SLU

The organisation of gender equality was, up until 2006, organised so that there was one administrator with particular responsibility for these matters at the central level and the body responsible at SLU for gender equality was the "Samverkanskommittén" (the committee for working environment and related concerns). Two of the faculties, Forestry and Natural Resources, had their own gender equality committees at the time, while the other two faculties addressed gender equality through their faculty boards. At departmental level, gender equality was addressed in the "samverkansgrupp" or equivalent (AR, 2005:33). All departments at the university are obliged by law to take active measures against gender inequality (Discrimination Act, 2008:567). This includes drawing up a gender equality plan every third year, and documenting all the measures needed at the workplace with regard to the working environment, recruitment and salaries (ibid).

In 2006, the Equal Opportunities (EO) organisation was launched at SLU. The aim with the new organisation was to take an overall view of diversity, gender equality and equal opportunities (2006:45). Equal opportunities included all discrimination grounds (gender, transgender identity or expression, ethnicity, religion or other belief, disability, sexual orientation and age) and each of the four faculties has EO committees. Other than their meetings at faculty level, the representatives of the four committees meet every year in what has been named

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9. <http://www.slu.se/en/about-slu/more-about-slu/facts-and-figures>

“Ordförandekonferens lika villkor” (Conference for Equal Opportunities) The equal opportunities structure consists of SLU employees and students at SLU sharing an interest and engagement in these issues.

At the HR unit at central administrative level, there is one person working 20% FTE<sup>10</sup> with all the discrimination grounds. There is no office for Equal Opportunities at SLU, but there is one person employed at 50% FTE working with equal opportunities at the S-Faculty. At the Division for Educational Affairs, there is one person responsible for supporting students who are in need of assistance. This division also give courses in pedagogy for teachers, of which gender perspectives are a constituent part.

As I have examined the activities that go on at the four faculties with regard to EO, it seems as though the levels of activities and engagement differ between the faculties. The NJ-faculty appears to have been most active during the period I have studied based on a reading of EO plans and the faculty websites, (1994-2015), and they have also increased their activities over the last two years (2013-2015). The S-faculty also has an active gender equality committee. Due to the male dominance in the forestry sector, the faculty has external (governmental and from the sector) commissions to pursue activities that can lead to a gender balance in the forestry sector (prop., 2007/08:108). The Faculty of Veterinary Medicine and Animal Science (VH), as well as the Faculty of Landscape Architecture, Horticulture and Crop Production Science (LTJ), show a less active EO work than the NJ- and S- faculties. It would require additional research in order to identify why the levels of engagement are lower at these two faculties. An assumption is that both faculties have education programmes that are dominated by women, leading to thinking that the faculty defines gender equality as a matter of the number of women. This reflection is strengthened by responses from the small e-mail survey I conducted as part of a study I undertook in 2008 on gender equality at SLU (Powell, 2008; discussed in publication II). In two instances, the Heads of Department commented that as there was already gender balance in the department, they saw no need to work with gender equality. One person said:

If we, for example, already have an equal distribution between men and women at the Department, it can hardly be particularly important that we try to improve the distribution, even less that we say we are doing it. (2008-02-18)

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10. Full-time equivalent.

According to this way of rationalising, the goals of gender equality are reached when the numbers of women and men in the organisation are more or less the same.

In this section I have given an overview of how gender equality is organised at SLU and in the next section I give an examination of the official discourses of gender equality at SLU.

### 4.3 Discourses of gender equality at SLU

In order to identify the official gender equality discourses at SLU, I examined Annual Reports (from 1994/95-2012), gender equality plans, equal opportunities plans, university research and education strategies, student and PhD student surveys. As I show in the theory chapter, the importance of gender equality is strongly pursued in Swedish national and international politics (Mulinari and Nergaard, 2004; Arora-Jonsson, 2013) and as we discuss in publication III, it is also the ethically correct thing for an academic organisation such as SLU to address in policy and practice. SLU is, for example, required by the government to ensure that 42% of all newly appointed professors are women (Governmental Appropriation Directions to SLU, 2014<sup>11</sup>) and they also have to provide statistics for women and men in research and education. The most recent Governmental Appropriation Direction (2016) that I mentioned in the introduction to this thesis requires SLU to develop a plan on how to integrate gender in all instances in the organisation, and further how to address the gender segregated education programmes and the low number of female professors (ibid). Beside the demands from the outside, SLU also has its own visions and goals for gender equality and equal opportunities in the organisation. In my reading, I found the following discourses on gender equality at SLU 1) too few female professors and gender segregated education programmes 2) helping women to advance 3) ideas about women and natural sciences. I now proceed to show how these discourses come across in the material.

#### 4.3.1 Too few female professors and gender segregated education programmes

In the first annual report (AR), I analysed (1994/95) the stated goal of gender equality was to increase the number of women in higher positions within the university and to address segregated education programmes (SLU, 1994/95:47). A segregated education programme is defined as a programme where more than 60% of the students are of the same sex. An education

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11. Governmental Appropriation Directions are directions to the universities from the government.

programme with a gender balance is considered to be achieved when the proportions of male and female students are within the 40-60% intervals. These two goals are mentioned in all ARs from 1994/95 onwards, and are exemplified with three recurring cases; the low number of women in forestry oriented education programmes, the high number of women in animal oriented programmes and the low number of female professors at SLU. The animal oriented programmes at SLU still have a strong majority of women, while forestry programmes are male dominated (2016-02-04). In 2006 and 2007 there were attempts, through affirmative action, to increase the number of male students in the veterinary programme (ARs). However, the attempt was short-lived, as SLU was taken to court by 44 women who had higher grade point averages than the men who were admitted. SLU lost the case and had to pay compensation to the women (Centrum för rättvisa, 2009).

Over the years, the number of female professors at SLU has increased, from 2% in 1977, to 12% in 1997, 18% in 2004 and rising to 28% in 2014. Even if there has been an increase in the number of female professors over the years, it is still mainly men who are appointed as professors (72% in 2015). The 28% female professors at SLU are unevenly spread out over the university (information from the HR-division, 2015-03-26). The faculty of Forestry Science has only 6 female professors compared to 51 male (excerpt from SLU statistics, 2015). The female dominated education programme of Veterinary Medicine (92% female students) has 31 male and 26 female professors. The faculty of Landscape Architecture, Horticulture and Crop Production Science has 18 male and 16 female professors. The largest faculty is that of Natural Resources and Agricultural Sciences, with 73 male and 27 female professors (ibid). This means that the low number of female professors is mostly a problem for the NJ- and the S- faculties.

Summing this section up, the questions of too few professors and gender segregated education programmes return over the period that I study. The problem of too few professors appears to be a problem in two faculties (NJ and S) while gender segregation is a problem for the S- and VH-faculties. I will now show how the problem of too few women is connected to an idea of helping women to advance.

#### 4.3.2 Helping women to advance

As a response to the low number of women in higher academic positions at SLU, there are attempts to help women to advance. For example, at SLU few women apply to become professors compared to men (AR, 2009, 2010). During 2001-2006, 45% of the recruited professors were women, but only 18%

of the promoted professors were women<sup>12</sup> (AR, 2009, 2010). A survey was carried out at SLU in 2006 (AR, 2007) to shed light on why so few women applied to be promoted to professors. The responses suggest that potential female professors need support and encouragement. The results from the survey suggested that women do not see themselves as having the merits necessary for promotion, while men generally thought that their merits were sufficient. Both women and men regarded low self-confidence (not discrimination) as the reason behind women devaluing their own merits (AR, 2007:40). In relation to research on meritocracy, this way of arguing is closely linked to the idea that inequalities are a matter of individual failure, rather than structural discrimination (Lawton, 2000:599).

There have been different attempts at SLU to help women to advance in the system or to make women stay in the academy and I discuss these attempts in the next section. Here I will just mention a recent effort to increase the number of women in higher academic positions at SLU: the Diamond Cutters course. In a blog post from the Vice Chancellor on March 9, 2015 she says: “Hopefully the course will contribute to an increase of the recruitment to higher positions at the university”. This can be interpreted in different ways. One way is to say that the course could provide tools for women to help them write successful research proposals or to increase their confidence to apply for positions and funding. Another way of interpreting it is that there are as yet not enough women sufficiently merited to be part of the recruitment base for higher positions and that the course will teach them how to become merited. This is a position that is not shared by one of the external evaluation committees of SLU in the KoN evaluation in 2009, as they stated: “Recruitment should be based on excellence and not gender, but there are excellent women out there” (2009:40). This comment implies that excellent women are “hiding” in the organisation.

Another aspect of the low number of female professors at SLU is the fact that the university is a mainly natural science university and there is an assumption that women are not interested in these areas of study and research to the same extent than men. This is where I turn next.

#### 4.3.3 Ideas about women and natural science

There is one sentence that returns in the ARs between 2000 and 2005: “SLU is a university mainly concerned with natural sciences. It is therefore a welcome development that the education programs at SLU attract women” (2000:12;

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12. A senior lecturer or an associate professor can, if and when the person is sufficiently merited, apply to become a professor, and thus a promoted professor. A recruited professor is the same as a chair professor; that is a professor who has applied for an advertised position as professor.

2001:11; 2002:14; 2003:9; 2004:13; 2005:33). In addition, the internal evaluation referred to in the AR of 2008 expresses the following:

The [evaluating] group notices the high number of women in the Veterinary Program and recommends SLU to develop ways for recruiting men to the program. At the same time, the same group points to female dominance sometimes being a useful resource which can be used in order to increase the interest in natural science in general amongst girls. (AR, 2008:25)

There is an inbuilt contradiction here, where on one hand it is said that there are too many women and on the other, that it is a welcome development that women are attracted to natural science education. In terms of the discourses of gender equality, the first comment above can be interpreted as suggesting that natural sciences are not the obvious choice for women and that SLU likes more women to be interested in natural science. The second comment suggests that there are too many women on the Veterinary programme, but that this can be drawn upon as a resource to attract even more women. Gender equality measures developed along this way of reasoning build on the assertions that 1) there are too few women at SLU (in some parts of the university), 2) there are too many women at SLU (in some parts) and 3) natural sciences do not interest women as much as they do men, and that has to be changed. At the same time, in 2014, 76% of all new students at SLU were women (AR, 2014). 57% of the PhD students at SLU were women (AR, 2014). These numbers suggest that there are many women who are interested in pursuing education and research studies at SLU, but that the problem is that segregation exists within different fields of study and higher up in the academic hierarchy.

To sum up, there are three dominant formulations of the problems of gender inequality at SLU: too few women, gender segregated education programmes, and ideas of women and natural science. In order to act on these inequalities, initiatives have been taken and measures have been implemented, and I will present these now.

#### 4.4 Gender equality measures taken at SLU

As I have examined the annual reports, the gender equality and the equal opportunity plans and also research and education strategies at SLU, I see that gender equality measures at SLU can be sorted under the following categories: mentoring programmes, gender integration, giving courses, holding projects and giving seminars and commissioned studies.

#### 4.4.1 Mentoring programmes

During the period of 1994/95 to 2004, mentoring programmes for women were recurrent at SLU. The programmes had as their goal to increase the number of women in high academic positions through, for example: “an understanding of the differences in women and men’s cultures at universities and industry, to identify and make visible obstacles that female PhD students and doctors meet” (AR, 1994/95, 2000). Here there is an assumption that there are different cultures in the organisation for women and men in line with Ferguson (1984), who argued that there was a need for upgrading what was considered typically feminine. Acker (1990), as I mentioned in the theory chapter, argued that this was problematic since it was building on stereotypical ideas of what it is to be a man and a woman. Gherardi and Poggio (2001) suggest, through a feminist lens, studying organisational cultures where practices, norms, and values reflect the social construction of maleness and femaleness. A feminist lens could then reveal power relations between the members of an organisation according to their sexual membership (ibid:251). In 1998 (AR), the goal of the mentoring programme was described as making it easier for female PhD students to carry out their doctoral studies in a male dominated environment. Here, the language has changed from separating male and female cultures to instead addressing how women can be helped to navigate in male dominated environments. What is still there is the idea of women in need of help to advance. Leadership is introduced in the mentoring programmes for women at the beginning of the 2000s, and in 2004 the mentor programme has the goal of increasing the number of female Heads of Department (AR, 2004).

One of these mentoring programmes put in place to help women’s advancement in academia was PUMA. It focused on leadership and gender and each programme took one year to complete (Lorentzi, 1996; Eriksson and Petersén, 2001:7). The project opened up for men at a later stage and 11 men undertook the programme (ibid). A follow up of the mentoring programme showed that the aims of the programme: “increased self-perception, increased self-confidence, strengthened identity as a woman, exchange of thoughts and ideas in the mentor-relation, support for the future professional roles” (ibid:44) had been successful, but that only 10% of the women who had taken the course wished to stay on at SLU (ibid). The authors said that with regard to this, the goal of the programme to increase the number of women in higher academic positions at SLU had not been fulfilled (ibid) There is no clarification as to why women did not wish to remain at SLU, but based on what we know from feminist philosophers of science and gender and organisation scholars, a possible reason could be discrimination against women in a male dominated

academic environment. In the following section, I show how SLU introduced the integration of gender in its gender equality plan in the year 2000.

#### 4.4.2 Integration of gender equality at SLU

Integration of gender equality is introduced for the first time in the Gender Equality plan of 2000 as the way to work with these issues in the organisation (AR, 2000:54). The idea is that gender equality should be a natural part of the planning process at all units at SLU through education of key people in the organisation and by including gender equality perspectives in the pedagogical training for teachers (2000:54). Since then, integration of first gender equality, and later equal opportunities, return in the annual reports and strategies. In 2007 for example, it is said about equal opportunities that:

... the work is not primarily taking place as temporary measures but to a large extent as activities which are done in an ongoing nature and as routines in the organisation. One example of such an ongoing activity is how equal opportunities are always addressed in the pedagogical courses for teachers. (2007:38)

Reading the annual reports, gender equality plans and later the EO-plans, the integration of gender equality and EO at SLU occurs mainly through education, in the pedagogy courses, in the courses for PhD supervision (a requirement to become an associate professor) and in leadership courses. Thus, as I discuss in publication IV, gender equality through mainstreaming rests on the assumption that increased knowledge and awareness leads to reduced inequality; that knowledge necessarily leads to changed behaviour. As I discuss in publication IV, the correlation between knowledge and change of behaviour is not necessarily obvious.

#### 4.4.3 Giving courses and holding projects

My examination of gender equality initiatives and measures suggest that the problem with gender inequality has mainly been described in terms of the number of women and men. As a consequence, gender equality measures have focused on trying to address this. For example, in the EO-plan for 2015 it is stated that SLU should include gender equality indicators (“jämsällhetsdata”) in the organisation (2015), something which was developed and introduced at the central Equal Opportunities Committee meeting<sup>13</sup> in 2013 (SLU, protocol 2013-12-04)

Different education activities have been held at SLU under the umbrella of gender equality and equal opportunities. As mentioned above, the integration

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13. Ordförandekonferens Lika Villkor.

of gender equality and EO perspectives takes place to a large extent through courses given by the Division of Student Affairs, where further education for teachers and other academic staff at SLU is carried out. The courses in pedagogy (both the basic courses and the continuation courses) include gender perspectives, sometimes delivered by in-house staff, with external resources being brought in on other occasions.

Besides the pedagogical courses, there have also been other courses that focus on gender equality or equal opportunities. For example, PUFF was one such programme- a collaboration programme between five Swedish universities where male supervisors attended a course in order to develop gender perspectives on supervision to increase their awareness of and reduce discrimination against female PhD students. Two men participated from SLU and the hope was that they would return to SLU in order to help motivate courses in gender for research supervisors (Lorentzi, 1996). There were no visible effects with regard to the organisation from these two men participating in the course, since the initiative was not followed up at SLU (Powell, 2008).

In the 1990s, the courses “Kvinna i forskningen” and “Kvinna i organisationen” (“Women in research” and “Women in the organisation”) were held. The courses developed as a response to the Research Bill 1993/94:147, where women’s power positions were central as well as increasing the number of women in higher academic positions (ibid). The courses had as their themes economy, power and morals, infrastructure of the university, personal image and the future of the university (AR, 1995/95:47). The course thus targeted women in order to both increase awareness about the structure and organisation of the university as well as elements related to their personal image as female leaders.

The Diamond Cutters course was initiated at SLU in 2014 through the initiative of a female researcher at the University. The course targeted new female doctorates and the goals were to increase the women’s knowledge about the formal and informal structure at the university, to develop women’s skills in project leadership, to teach the writing of successful research applications, to enable women to develop a career plan and to strengthen each woman’s professional network. The choice of Diamond Cutters as a name for the project is explained in the invitation letter:

The name Diamond Cutters symbolises the diamond maker’s creation of something very beautiful yet constant- and that diamond cutters have, if needed, a tool to use to break through the so-called glass ceiling. (Diamond Cutters invitation letter, 2014)

As part of the Gender Equality Project, there were also two workshops held with the aim of learning how to analyse information material from a gender

and norm-critical perspective. As part of these workshops, there was a discussion about how information material can include and exclude individuals, and make them feel as if an education programme or a profession is “not for them”. One example from these discussions was how the animal oriented programmes were to a large extent associated with care, which was seen as something that was putting men off. A suggestion that was put forward in the discussion by one of the participants was to focus on the more medical, scientific part of the profession in order to attract more male students. One of the photos which illustrates how education programmes can be gendered is this photo from the Research and Education strategy (SLU, 2013-2016) which is accompanied by the text “I want to increase awareness for misunderstood animals” (ibid:38).



Photo: Carla Karlsson

Photos like these are interesting in light of Acker’s (1990) suggestion that one way in which gendering occurs in organisations is through images and symbols.

In order to increase the number of female students in forestry, collaboration between SLU and the “Jälla naturbruksgymnasium” (a high school with a focus on agriculture, forestry and environment located in the village of Jälla, just outside Uppsala) resulted in a one-year women-only course in preparation for the forestry programme. The women who took the course had priority for the programme (AR, 2002:12). The result of the first year was that the percentage of women on the forestry programme increased from 10% to 25%. The percentage decreased as the preparatory programme closed down (Powell,

2008:18). A forestry course for women is given by SLU each summer in order to attract more women to the forestry sector. Again, this can be analysed in light of the idea of fixing women (Verloo and Lombardo, 2007) but it can also be interpreted as women needing safe spaces in order to explore forestry without the influence of the male dominated environments. I return to this below as I present the student satisfaction surveys with students and PhD students at SLU.

In 2010, the Vice Chancellor of SLU took the initiative to launch a leadership programme at SLU. This programme included a number of courses with both academic and more administrative leadership focus. The courses are ongoing at present, and so far 62% of the participants have been women, suggesting that women at SLU are interested in leadership positions in academia (personal communication, 2016-01-25).

Also, the Gender Equality Project, on which this research study is based, had a course as its main activity. The project was launched in 2010 and I examine different aspects of this project in publications I-III. In the call for projects, the applicants could choose from one or more of the pre-set themes for working with gender equality in the organisations. These themes included, for example, how to create gender equality in doctoral education, mechanisms for gender equality in academic organisations, gender segregated education programmes. The aim was to address inequalities in education. The course targeted university teachers and the theme was gender and norm critical pedagogy. The course (taken by 55 university teachers, 39% men) focused, from a gender and norm critical perspective, on: the role of the teacher, the dynamics in a classroom, society and working life and identification of patterns and breaking discriminatory norms. The aim was that the course would give the opportunity to reflect on educational contexts through innovative methods such as forum theatre, which the teachers themselves could make use of in their daily practice. The lecturers were all external to SLU and the teachers who participated on the course came from all four faculties. The driving force was that, through the course, awareness would be raised and practices changed. Parallel to the Gender Equality Project, a project financed by the DJ was implemented at the Faculty of Forestry. This project aimed at developing methods to decrease gender segregated education choices in forestry education at SLU. The project also addressed norms and practices in the forestry sector, for students and teachers, as well as for the leadership of the faculty, mainly through educational activities (Wickman et al., 2013).

During the 2000s, SLU took part in the nationwide programme, IDAS. IDAS (Identification, Development, Advancement, Support) was a competence programme that aimed at increasing the number of women in higher academic

positions. SLU participated in the activities and networks together with other Swedish universities (AR, 2005:35; Heikkilä and Häyrén Weinestål, 2009). Again, it is not possible to identify the effects of SLU's participation in IDAS based on the material I have reviewed. However, based on the ideas of Gherardi (1994), who has said that that when we speak about gender equality we also change gendered relationships, I would say that SLU's participation had an impact on the organisation. Being part of a national network develops contacts, and can inspire new ideas and ways of addressing gender equality also at SLU. Again, I suggest that small acts matter, even if their effects cannot necessarily be measured.

Beside projects and courses, another recurrent way of addressing gender equality and equal opportunities at SLU is to arrange seminars and lectures that are open to employees and/or students. These seminars and lectures appear to be arranged mostly at the level of Equal Opportunity committees, and not as initiatives from a central level. At the Faculty of Natural Resources and Agricultural Sciences in Uppsala, 12 seminars and workshops have been held from 2013 to 2015 on norm critical approaches, racism, sexuality and salary revisions from a gender perspective. These seminars provide a broadening of topics for EO at the NJ-faculty. The latest event was a seminar on the situation for foreign students and staff at SLU in order that they can share their experiences (2016-01-27).

The different measures and initiatives I have presented above can seem like ad hoc activities, but as Forssell et al. (2013:43) argue, projects are embedded in multilevel systems with internal and external driving forces. The measures at SLU have so far been the result of individual initiatives as well as outside demands on SLU. This will become even more obvious as I present a number of studies on gender equality at SLU.

#### 4.4.4 Studies on gender equality at SLU

Around 2005, there appeared to be a shift in the gender equality discourse at SLU and both qualitative and quantitative goals for gender equality were introduced (2005:33). This shift brings with it a number of studies at SLU. This is when the structure around gender equality changed and the equal opportunity organisation was launched. Around this time, there was a change of staff at the HR office and a new person took over responsibility for EO (personal communication, 2015-11-26). A new professor in Rural Development was appointed in 2006 and this reinforcement of the social sciences at SLU suggests that more people were now potentially concerned with gender perspectives, as gender is a social science concept. In the same year, 2006, Lisa Sennerby Forsse was appointed Vice Chancellor at SLU. There were organisational changes at the

university, and the new Discrimination Act was adopted in Sweden (2008:567). It is not possible to show exactly how these changes affected the change in approach to gender equality at SLU, but my assumption is that it certainly had an impact. One indication was that I was commissioned by the Vice Chancellor in 2008 to carry out a study. The aim was to map out the research and education with a gender focus at SLU, but also to address matters of gender equality in the organisation (Powell, 2008). The study was the result of the meeting set up between the new Vice Chancellor, the new professor in Rural Development, Seema Arora-Jonsson (researcher with a gender focus at the Department for Urban and Rural Development and also at the time at the centre for Gender Research at Uppsala University) and the Director of the Centre for Gender Research at Uppsala University. The meeting was set up in order to discuss gender studies at SLU. During the same period, initiatives were taken by Gun Lidestav at the S-faculty to address gender perspectives on forestry as well as gender equality. Thus, it can be argued that the report came out of a number of small acts from within SLU during this period.

In the 2008 report, we found that gender perspectives on teaching and education existed, but to a limited extent, and there was room for development. We also found that the gender equality policies were well written and extensive, while the gender equality practice was ad hoc and not well supported at the University (Powell, 2008). The study is discussed in publication II, but one of the key messages was the need for a better structure around gender equality at SLU. A suggestion in the report was that SLU should support gender perspectives in research and education as they were considered by the reference group to be of high relevance for the tasks of the university to do research and education with a focus on the sustainable management of natural resources (Powell, 2008).

The Swedish government has set a political goal for the forestry sector to work with gender equality and a report from SLU in 2011, commissioned by the government, aimed to develop methods to achieve this (Lidestav et al., 2011). The report stated that the forestry sector is a masculine environment and socially homogeneous. The suggested actions were for example that education in gender and diversity related to the forest were to be included in the forestry programmes, that information campaigns were to be undertaken and that the forestry employers should reward an equal outtake of parental leave for both men and women (2011:3-4).

In another study, the working situation for the PhD students at the faculty of Forest Sciences is the focus. In the study undertaken by three psychology students from Umeå University (Agnemo, Carlsson and Jakobsson, 2014) they confirm Lidestav et al.'s (2011) view that the faculty is dominated by

male ideals. The study shows further that female PhD students are made invisible by their male colleagues and that the environment is permeated by “gubbighet” (bloke-like attitudes) (2014:28). The environment is seen as negative for women and several of the people interviewed express that they do not want to stay in the organisation after they have finalised their PhD studies. This can be understood in relation to, for example, what Husu (2001) has shown in that the small daily acts in an organisation make up discriminatory patterns for women in academia.

Further, Agnemo, Carlsson and Jakobsson (2014) say that despite the work on gender equality that is done at faculty level, the interest belongs with women in the organisation, and not with the people with the most power (the men) (ibid). Thus, there is a feeling amongst the PhD students that the organisation, despite the policies, is unwilling to change (ibid:32). Another point that the authors make is that gender inequalities in the faculty are referred to as a problem mainly for the older generations at SLU, something that is expected to change once this generation has retired and been replaced by new people (ibid:33). Arora-Jonsson (2005) also shows in her study of a forest community in Sweden that gender equality was considered to be irrelevant to them (as modern working women) and rather something that belonged to older generations. The authors argue that this way of formulating the problem is tempting, since it does not require action from the organisation (Agnemo, Carlsson and Jakobsson, 2014:33).

An article in Resurs<sup>14</sup> (2015-06-17) shows how, when the situation for female PhD students at the Department of Ecology had been addressed in a small study, one finding was that women with children did not see themselves as staying in academia. This is not associated with discrimination of women, but with women having children (ibid). It is suggested in the article that there is no proof that women are systematically discriminated against in recruitment processes, when publishing in academic journals and in the evaluation of research proposals (ibid). Several studies show that the opposite is true (for example those of Wennerås and Wold, 1997; Sandström et al., 2010; Husu, 2001 and Wullum Nielsen, 2015a). The most frequent explanations as to why there is gender inequality and segregation at SLU are that women do not want an academic career once they have a family and that women have low self-esteem or are not yet sufficiently merited. This assumption is in contrast with the fact that 62% of the leadership programmes at SLU, so far, have been undertaken by women (personal communication, 2016-01-25).

As publishing is an important part of an academic career, it is also a part of evaluating academic merit. Häyrén's (2015) study of the recruitment processes

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14. This report is discussed in an article in the SLU personnel magazine.

at the NJ-faculty suggest that women are discriminated against in recruitment processes also at SLU. The study was initiated by the faculty of Natural Resources and Agricultural Sciences after practically no women applied for two of the most recent professorships at the faculty, and the question was “why?” In Häyrén’s study, family and children are a reoccurring theme in discussions as to why women do not apply for professorship positions. The impact of these assumptions on a woman’s academic career is something that we discuss in publication II. We argue that these kinds of assumptions hinder women’s possibilities to advance as they influence women’s academic careers not only in the recruitment process for a professorship, but all the way from the start of their academic career. As Husu (2001) has shown, it is also the hidden discrimination (including what does not happen) that has an impact (not being invited, cited and so on) (ibid:15). There were nine announcements for higher positions studied in Häyrén’s report (2015). In four cases, the advertisement was written in such a way that there was reason to believe the recruiters already had a person or a certain kind of person in mind (Häyrén, 2015:19). The report suggested that both the advertising and the way the selection process unfolded might lead to a favouring of male over female candidates (Häyrén, 2015). A working group is now tasked with developing ways for the recruitment processes to become less biased<sup>15</sup>.

Common to these studies that I have mentioned so far is a focus on gender equality and discrimination as a matter for women and men. In the study by Lidestav et al. (2011), the focus is on women in the forestry sector and about the masculine norms that prevail. In Powell (2008), the focus is also on women and men in the organisation. In Häyrén’s study of recruitment processes at the NJ-faculty, the discussion is whether women are discriminated against when higher academic posts are appointed. As Liinason (2011:127-128) shows, gender equality in Sweden is a consensual idea associated with a dual-sex model. Also, Törnqvist (2008) shows how gender equality is made into a non-controversial idea and we discuss this in relation to the Gender Equality Project in publication III.

Thus far, there are no studies that broaden the perspective on discrimination at SLU. The only study that opens that particular discussion to a certain extent is the study on internationalisation (Prage, 2008) where he claims that SLU has a very strong Swedish focus and that perspectives from students from outside Sweden risk being considered irrelevant to SLU (ibid). He argues that the strong association at SLU with the sectors and the “land” has brought with it a strong Swedish focus (Prage, 2008:23). The study identifies a discrepancy

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15. <http://www.slu.se/sv/om-slu/fristaende-sidor/aktuellt/alla-nyheter/2015/12/den-ojamstallda-rekryteringsprocessen-vid-slu-en-genusanalys/>

between SLU's own view of itself and the view that the outside world has of SLU. As an example, Prage shows how in an interview, he asked how SLU could become better at internationalisation, and got the response: "What do you mean? We are international and open to non-Swedes and their ways of being" (2008:23). Prage's comment is "If we do not manage to self critically reflect on this view we risk ending up in self-righteous navel-gazing" (2008:23). He thus sees a risk that the communication with students ends up as one-way action, dismissing that which is not considered Swedish (and therefore right) (ibid). When it comes to the number of undergraduate students who are born outside of Sweden, or in Sweden to foreign parents, SLU came last of all Swedish universities in 2007 (Urank, 2007). In the 2014 ranking, SLU was at place 27 of 28 in terms of the criteria "social indicators". These indicators include number of first generation students, students with national background other than Swedish, and gender balance in education programmes (Urank, 2014). At the level of PhD students, the situation is the opposite; SLU is the university in Sweden with the most non-Swedish PhD students (72%) (personal communication, 2016-01-22). These statistics suggest that there is a need to broaden the gender equality discourse at SLU beyond gender to see how it intersects with other categories, such as race, as SLU has a large proportion of students at PhD level who were not born in Sweden. Mählck, for example, has argued that race matters for how academic merit is valued (2013), which suggests that it is also linked to how academic careers develop for different scholars. As we will see next, these are perspectives that are brought up in student satisfaction surveys with undergraduate and post-graduate students at SLU.

#### 4.4.5 Student Satisfaction Survey- undergraduate and postgraduate education

One way of finding out more about the situation for students at SLU is to undertake student satisfaction surveys<sup>16</sup>. These are undertaken regularly at the university in order to find out whether students are content with their education and their study environment and if they are not, what their concerns are. Based on surveys from 2008 and 2014, it appears that students at SLU are satisfied with both their studies and their study environment. However, as I am interested here in matters to do with gender inequalities and discrimination, I will focus on what the surveys show in that regard.

The surveys reveal that students find that the environment bears the stamp of male jargon, both amongst students and teachers. There is low tolerance for homosexuality and a low number of students with national backgrounds other

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16. Student satisfaction surveys with students, 2008 and 2014. Student satisfaction surveys with PhD students, 2009 and 2011.

than Swedish (Surveys, 2008, 2014). In the most recent survey with students (2014), discrimination due to sex was reported by 24% of the students who responded to the survey (1,600 students in total) (ibid.). The comments in the survey include, for example, calling a person names related to the person's disability, grabbing of the female students, inappropriate comments and "jokes" about women. In the same survey, 190 students (13%) had experienced discrimination due to ethnicity. This latest survey includes perspectives on ethnicity, opinions and sexuality which had not been included to the same extent in previous surveys (ibid:5). A new perspective that is brought up is the homogeneity of the student groups and that the socio-economic backgrounds of students are not addressed in the organisation (2014:19). In the 2008 survey, there is a comment on the large percentage of students with academic parents (2008:11) and this returns in 2014 where discrimination can also be due to "relative poverty"; that is to say, when students cannot partake in the social life of the university to the same extent as their fellow students due to their economic situation (2014:9).

Aside from the surveys with undergraduate students, there are also surveys aiming to learn about the situation for PhD students. In 2009, the pattern was that women with a Swedish undergraduate degree were the least satisfied with their studies at SLU, while the most satisfied with their studies were the male students with a foreign degree (2009:10-11). The least satisfied PhD students were the women at the faculty of Forestry Sciences (ibid:12).

The survey from 2009 and the following survey from 2011 both show that men planned to stay in academia to a larger extent than women (42% of men in 2009, 25% of women, 48% men in 2011 and 28% of women) (PhD surveys, 2009, 2011). In a discussion about why this should be the case, the 2009 survey report suggests that this is partly because women have a lower self-esteem than men and are more stressed (2009:20). The survey shows that women are less satisfied with their situation as a PhD student, with opportunities to take part in scientific discussions at their department and the progress of their studies, and they report shoulder and neck pain and harassment to a larger extent than men do (2009:19). The fact that women are less satisfied with their PhD studies than men is explained by the report in the conclusion that women have different goals than men with their PhD education, and therefore expect different things, and thus become dissatisfied (ibid:19).

There is, as far as I have found, no social environment study in which the situation for the international master's students at SLU is addressed, and there are no statistics available at the university. Such a study, I suggest, would bring valuable insights on the study situation for all students at SLU. SLU has international master's programmes, many foreign PhD students and also PhD

students who are involved in their studies as “sandwich students”. The programmes with sandwich students are funded by Sida (Swedish International Development Agency) and PhD students share their time between their host universities and their home universities. Countries involved in this programme are for example Mozambique, Ethiopia and Tanzania (Felleson and Mähleck, 2013). Felleson and Mähleck presented a study about this programme in 2013 and they show that 21% of the students have experienced discrimination due to race. The students also experience difficulties of isolation and not being included in their Swedish host departments. The sandwich programme also has gendering effects, since male students in the programme have fewer family responsibilities at home, stay longer periods and thus have the opportunity to proceed faster and integrate better than the women from other countries. The conclusion that the authors make is that international mobility is not gender neutral (Universitetsläraren, 2015-12-15; Felleson and Mähleck, 2013:18). This study sheds light on aspects of gender and race that are relevant also for SLU as a university hosting many doctoral students from countries other than Sweden. In the next section, I will show, by drawing on findings from the Gender Equality Project, how alternative voices with regard to gender equality came across in this process.

#### 4.5 Transcending the discourse of equality as women and men – perspectives from the Gender Equality Project

As we have seen above, official documents to a large degree focus on the numbers of women and men in the organisation, but in the focus groups with teachers and students at the Veterinary programme, the Landscape Architecture programme and the Animal Husbandry programme (all of which have a large proportion of female students), the discussion about gender equality and discrimination was broadened. The students and teachers brought age, urban-rural relations and ethnicity to the discussion of inequality.

In the focus group with teachers, one participant said:

I would rather focus on working on the attitudes that men are more important than women. Because that is what it all comes from. I would rather that SLU focus on that than to polish in order to have more men here and there and then I don't think it is particularly fun for the 80% of veterinary students who are women and who are so incredibly good and who have worked so hard to get into this education to always hear: “We need more men, we need more men”. As if they are not enough here either. Of course they get stressed. (Focus group, 15 April, 2012)

In the focus group interview from 29 March, 2011, I asked if there were any students with a non-Swedish background in their education programmes. One of the veterinary students answered that:

It is scary, really, really bad. And you could feel very much excluded. We had a guy from Iran, yes both a man and from Iran, he changed quite quickly to study to become a medical doctor. It is difficult to feel as if you are included if you are different from the rest. Yes, sure there are some exceptions. We have a guy from Germany now; that is as exotic as it gets.

In the focus group with teachers, there was a discussion about how the lack of older students and students from a non-Swedish background affected the landscape architecture programme in a negative way (15 April, 2012). The discussion went like this:

Teacher: This, I reckon, the homogeneity or whatever you call it, is a greater problem, both when it comes to age, nowadays the older students have disappeared. And with them the experiences and perspectives they might bring to the profession ... And also ethnicity, more that I think ... we really miss that part of Sweden in our profession which is about creating environments for all people. And then those voices are not there at all.

This quote displays a concern that the task for landscape architects to create environments for all citizens will be difficult when the students are such a homogeneous group. In the experience of this teacher at the Landscape Architecture programme, the lack of students with national backgrounds other than Swedish was problematic, since it meant that important experiences and perspectives on planning were missing.

In the same focus group, there were two teachers from the Veterinary programme and they said that the programme was, besides being female dominated, also dominated by Swedish students and students from an urban setting. The students from urban settings lack experience working with farm animals, which is a problem since not everyone can work with cats and dogs. There have to be veterinarians for cows and pigs as well, they said.

Thus, the discussions in the Gender Equality Project brought up segregation in the education programmes as extending to class and urban/rural and Swedish/non-Swedish backgrounds. These perspectives come across in student surveys as well, however, the official way of addressing gender inequalities and discrimination at SLU is still by counting the numbers of women and men. Inequalities are relevant beyond gender categorisations and the Nordic gender equality context is dominated by discussions of white, middle-class men and women (Honkanen, 2008; Liinason, 2011). Broader intersecting perspectives that bring in questions of sexuality, race and class are to a large extent silenced

at SLU. This silencing happens for example by confining gender equality measures to being about helping women advance. The equal opportunities policies address all discrimination grounds, but this is not realised in practice. At SLU, the statistics on gender equality address only sex, yet there are many non-Swedish-born researchers and students at the university. The surveys with undergraduate and postgraduate students show that there is discrimination based on sexuality, race, class and age. The focus groups in the Gender Equality Project also raised these questions. These discrimination grounds are likely to intersect with gender in daily practice, but these perspectives are to a large extent silenced.

To sum up this overview of SLU, it becomes obvious that gender equality and equal opportunities are on the agenda at SLU on a policy level and that over the years that I have studied, many different initiatives have been launched. At the same time, various studies also show that despite these efforts, gender inequality still persists. As I now move to the discussion, I will focus on three ways in which the contradictory discourses of gender equality and meritocracy are reconciled in academia; firstly through making gender inequality into an individual rather than structural problem, secondly through processes of depoliticisation and thirdly by a decoupling of the two discourses. Lastly, I will discuss the counter discourse of gender equality which became visible through the Gender Equality Project.

## 4.6 Discursive practices, depoliticisation and decoupling

In this discussion, I return again to my research question “how are gender equality measures and discourses reconciled with notions of merit in the academy?” My analysis suggests that the reconciling happens through three parallel processes at SLU: through discursive practices, depoliticisation and decoupling. In the following section I will address these three Ds and finish with a discussion about counter discourses.

### 4.6.1 Discursive practices

As a reminder, discursive practices refer to how we act and how we communicate, produce and reproduce our realities (Bacchi and Bonham, 2014). Discursive practices are specific to culture, history and context and allow certain accounts to be made and others not (Foucault 1972; Bonham and Bacchi, 2014). Based on the studies and reports from SLU that I have examined that address gender equality in different ways, I see that the official discourse on gender equality at SLU is dominated by a discussion about too many women (as in the Veterinary programme), too few women (as in the

Forestry programmes or in the highest academic posts) and women in need of being fixed. This discourse of too many/too few women has been constant at SLU for more than twenty years.

Too few women in higher positions at SLU is explained in the official documents by women's low self-esteem, or that women are not sufficiently merited or that they prioritise family and therefore lag behind in their academic careers. The problem with gender inequality is thus to be solved by "fixing women". This reasoning puts the responsibility for gender inequality at an individual level and has consequently been followed up at SLU by measures such as mentoring and courses (PUMA, Diamond Cutters) put in place to help women advance. Women are to be taught, supported and encouraged so that they can also navigate the academic environment in a more successful way. This is a response that is not unique to SLU, as it can be seen also in other academic environments. Egeland (2001) shows how the low percentage of women in high academic positions in Danish academia was explained by women's lack of ambition, or inability to combine a happy family life with an academic career (ibid:60) and Benschop and Brouns (2003:202) have presented the same scenario for the Netherlands. Wullum Nielsen (2015a, ch.9:8) showed how women at his university in Denmark are thought to be ill-suited for the long hours and dedication required by an academic career.

As with "too few women", "too many women" is also discussed as an individual problem for women. For example, bringing down the status of the Veterinary profession (something that was brought up in several instances in the surveys with students in the Gender Equality Project), that the women are "too many" and thus men are excluded (even though the admission system is based on merit) and that women have made the wrong education choice (based on care and love for animals). Interestingly enough, the same discourse is not used for "too many men" in the discussion about the gender segregated forestry programmes. Rather than being about men being too numerous, again the discourse is about women: women are to be educated about forestry (in safe spaces on a women-only course) in order to be able to make the right choice (again, women lack the knowledge and need to be fixed). There are no "men-only" measures in order to attract more men to animal oriented programmes. This shows how both "too many women" and "too few women" are matters described as individual issues for the individual woman.

When gender inequalities are constructed as an individual problem rather than a matter of structures (e.g. Krefling, 2003; Meyerson and Fletcher, 2000; Egeland, 2001; Verloo and Lombardo, 2007) discussions about discriminatory structures and practices are silenced. As Lawton (2000) has argued, this way of rationalising about inequalities does not challenge meritocratic practices and

leaves discrimination untouched. Further, Lombardo and Mergaert (2013) have argued that gender inequality is not a problem of lack of knowledge but rather a lack of interest in changing unequal relations in academia (ibid). Along this way of reasoning, discrimination at SLU are not likely to change through mentoring programmes or courses for women. Rather, in order to change norms and values, new approaches are required that can challenge norms and values in the organisation (Gherardi and Poggio, 2001).

#### 4.6.2 Depoliticisation

The second process of reconciling meritocracy and gender equality that I have identified is depoliticisation. With depoliticisation, I refer to a process where gender equality is no longer a matter of social justice and redistribution, but a matter of administration (Rönnblom, 2011:50).

The depoliticisation of gender equality at SLU happens through processes where gender equality is addressed as a matter of administrative procedures; as statistics and through various courses and mentoring programmes.

SLU is required by the government to present figures concerning the number of women and men in terms of professorships and statistics of women and men in education (Governmental Appropriation Directions to SLU, 2014) and these figures are presented in annual reports. SLU has also developed what is called “jämsällldhetsdata” as part of the administrative system at the university. The figures can tell us about the patterns of segregation in the organisation and where measures need to be taken. They can thus be a tool for initiation of change efforts. Other than that, the statistics tell us nothing about the reasons behind the numbers.

Gender inequality at SLU is addressed in policy and strategies and through various measures such as mentoring programmes, courses and studies. Measures at SLU have mainly focused on helping women to advance (e.g. PUMA, Diamond Cutters) and thus made gender inequality a problem for the individual rather than a problem that can be traced back to discriminatory patterns in daily academic life (Husu, 2001) or discrimination in recruitment processes (Wullum Nielsen, 2015c) or in the distribution of research funds (Wennerås and Wold, 1997; Sandström et al., 2010; Benschop and Brouns, 2003).

To address gender equality as administrative measures targeting the individual is thus the second process that I identify of reconciling meritocracy and gender equality in academia. The approach of doing gender equality as administration is not questioning whether the basic fundamental principles of meritocracy (that it does not matter who you are, as long as you are sufficiently merited) works as well as it is intended, and through formulating gender

equality practice as a matter of fixing women, there is no need to ask that question either.

Another aspect of gender equality as administration at SLU is related to the fact that there is no central office for gender equality (nor for equal opportunities) at SLU. I described the organisation of equal opportunities committees in the previous section. Other than the committees, the organisational support at the university is not well built out. The Division of Educational Affairs includes equal opportunities in their pedagogical courses for teachers, the S-faculty has a person employed at 50% FTE and at the central HR office there is one person working at 20% FTE with EO. There are individuals within the organisation who pursue these issues (such as the woman initiating Diamond Cutters) but from an organisational point of view, expanding gender equality beyond administration must be considered difficult to achieve.

Through measures such as mentoring and courses, gender equality is even aligned with meritocratic ideas that more knowledge leads to better merits. Next I move to the third process; that of decoupling of gender equality from the core activities of the university (education, research and collaboration).

#### 4.6.3 Decoupling

As a reminder, decoupling is the process when an organisation responds to contradictory demands by separating the core activities of the organisation from activities that might contradict, oppose, challenge or simply not fit well (Boxenbaum and Jonsson, 2006:60; Seidman, 1983).

Decoupling manifests itself in different ways, one of which is through projects. I find that one way of reconciling gender equality and meritocracy at SLU is to address gender equality as projects. The short term format of a project might not be the most suitable way of addressing long term and deep seated problems (Abrahamsson and Agewall, 2009; Jensen and Trädgårdh, 2012) such as gender inequality in academia. At SLU, the result was that as the Project came to an end, there was no longer an organising structure that could ensure the learning from the Project was not lost. A project such as the Gender Equality Project therefore risks becoming an isolated outpost in the organisation. The idea of a network following the project was not carried through and I see that one reason for this was that there was no natural place for such a network within the permanent structure. In line with Brunsson's (2006) concept "organisational hypocrisy", when the Project came to an end, it could be ticked off the "list"; and the university could show that they were active in addressing gender inequality. The project format thus is a way of decoupling gender equality from the core activities of a university and again, the discourses of gender equality and meritocracy can be reconciled. At SLU, I

have argued that the Gender Equality Project was constrained by its own format and formulation (publication III). The project took place in a space of political correctness. Doing gender equality was the right thing to do, and doing it in project format was suitable in order to keep it separate from the regular organisation.

The policies and strategies for addressing gender equality at SLU are far reaching and include all discrimination grounds, but as far as my analysis goes, they do not appear to match practice. This gap between policy and implementation can be interpreted as the separation between action and talk; organisational hypocrisy (Brunsson, 2006 in Espersson, 2014). Further, the gender equality policy and practice, can, as Boxenbaum and Jonsson, (2008) have pointed out, be interpreted as the formalisation of a structure in order to appear as if is doing something it actually is not doing (ibid: 81). Again, this decoupling can be interpreted as a result of the limited organisational support at SLU for seeing gender equality policy through to practice, but also as a lack of political will to act more convincingly on gender inequalities in the organisation.

An example of how the decoupling of gender equality from the rest of the organisation can happen is the decentralisation of gender equality to the EO committees. Above, I argued that due to limited human resources to work with gender equality at SLU, it is difficult to extend gender equality beyond administration. Under these circumstances, the four EO committees at faculty level are left (or free, depending on how you see it) to develop and run their own gender equality measures. The level of activity at the four Equal Opportunity committees at the faculties differs. The committees are dependent on the engagement, competence, and time availability of its members. In this way it is a vulnerable organisation. Without central support, I can see a risk that there is a lack of overview and follow up of the activities to make sure they meet the requirements of the university policies. On a positive note, the decentralisation of the EO committees to faculty level makes it possible to develop gender equality measures that are tailored to the needs of that particular faculty, rather than adhering to central directives.

Even though I see the project format as a way of decoupling gender equality from the permanent university organisation, I also see benefits with the format. The temporary principle of the project format gives the opportunity to work in new constellations and in new ways with tasks that might not fit the permanent structure (Sahlin-Andersson and Söderholm, 2002). At SLU, this included collaborating with the Centre for Gender Research at Uppsala University and employing a course leader with gender competence for the project. It also made it possible to organise a cross-faculty reference group and include both students and staff in this group. We

were able to set up a course run outside the course programme ordinarily offered at the university. The course introduced a norm critical perspective that was not part of the gender equality discourse at SLU at that time. This attempt to expand the gender equality discourse at SLU was made possible by the project format. Further, the Gender Equality Project made it possible to broaden the discourse on gender equality at SLU to also, as I show above, discuss age, race and urban/rural relations. Thus, the project format provided the opportunity to go outside the official gender equality discourse of women and men, and beyond the matter of simply counting bodies.

#### 4.7 Concluding remarks

How then is meritocracy and gender equality reconciled in academia? I show that it happens through three processes 1) by creating the gender inequality discourse as a matter for the individual 2) through depoliticisation of gender equality and 3) through a process of decoupling. These three processes make it possible for meritocracy and gender equality to co-exist as important principles of academic practice, but they also contribute to the persistence of inequality in academic organisations. Further, these processes also work to silence counter discourses on gender equality that have become visible in the Gender Equality Project and which were also revealed in the surveys with students.

The first process is related to how gender inequality is spoken, written, visualised and acted upon as an individual rather than organisational problem. This allows meritocratic principles to remain unaddressed, as the problem is moved from organisational practices (such as recruitments, valuing research quality and so on) to individual shortcomings. In the path of this process there are courses and mentoring programmes that target women and aim to teach them what they need to learn in order to achieve in academia. It is formulated as a question of lack of knowledge, which also does not contradict the basic ideas of meritocracy.

The second process of depoliticisation takes place through the way that gender equality policy and practice are mainly formulated and carried out as statistics, as indicators, as audits and so on. In this way, the organisation can claim that gender equality measures are being taken, and they can respond to outside demands from for example, the government, to present gender figures. This takes away time, energy and resources (which can be limited as in the case of SLU) from attempting to deal with more tricky and difficult issues with regard to inequality in academia.

The third process, the decoupling, means that the activities of meritocracy and gender equality are kept separate. This happens, for example, in the way

that gender equality is so often run as a separate project or programme in academia. The project format becomes a way of decoupling the discourses of meritocracy and gender equality.

To conclude this research, I wish to make one finalising point related to how the official gender equality discourse at SLU through these three processes can silence other grounds for discrimination such as race, class and sexuality. The upcoming governmental mission for all higher education institutions is to develop a plan for how to integrate gender in their organisations (Swedish Governmental Appropriation Directive, 2016). Based on the results of my research, I see the challenge as being to present a plan that does not fall into the trap of thinking that more knowledge (courses, mentoring) leads to gender mainstreaming (or integration) without also attempting to identify and change discriminatory structures. It is because these matters are not mainstream that they need specific attention (Ahmed, 2007).

Another challenge is to address gender as one of several intersecting grounds for discrimination, not only on paper, but in practice. Up until now, there has been a gap between the broad equal opportunities policies at SLU in which all discrimination grounds are included and the practice, which to a large extent focuses on women as a group in need of help. Integration of gender equality and later equal opportunities into all activities at SLU has been part of the plans and policies since the year 2000, but it is unclear to what extent this integration is taking place, apart from equal opportunities being addressed in the pedagogical courses.

I would argue that without in-house competence at SLU to develop this massive and long term task, there is a risk that gender equality will remain a matter of administration (followed by short-term courses and projects) rather than addressing discriminatory practices on the basis of gender, race, class, sexuality and age. Further, even though these types of outside political demands on universities are important as they put pressure on universities to act on something which they might not have otherwise, they can also result in institutional hypocrisy; where more effort is put into appearing to be doing the right thing than actually trying to do it. There is a need to develop a long term and stable central support structure that can make institutional learning possible.

The Gender Equality Project had its imperfections, and I have discussed them in publication III, but there were also potential openings in the project. A norm critical approach focuses on identifying discriminatory norms beyond gender/sex in order to challenge and change them. An action research approach aims at democratic practice which can serve as a platform for change. A post-colonial and feminist perspective lifts the gaze in order to also make visible discriminatory grounds other than gender. At SLU, the Gender Equality Project

provided, for a short time, the opportunity to think about gender equality in a way that was different from the official gender equality discourse at SLU.



## 5 Environmental communication and feminist theory- unexplored synergies

Environmental Communication (EC) is an emergent field of studies located at the intersection between communication and ecosystems and natural resources (Alarcón Ferrari, 2015; Hansen and Cox, 2015). As EC scholarship aims at exploring environmental matters related to processes of interactions between humans and ecosystems (Cox and Depoe, 2015), I argue in this section that EC would develop further theoretically by integrating feminist theory. Here, I will take the possibility to contribute with my perspectives on how EC research and practice can advance by taking into consideration insights from the theoretical framework of this thesis.

Thus, the unexplored synergies between EC and feminist theory are the focus of this section of the thesis and I do this by discussing article V, which focuses on the gendered nature of environmental governance and organisations in light of some of the discussions stemming from the other publications in this thesis, in particular publications II and III. My intention is not to cover all potential areas in which EC research might benefit from including feminist theory, but to focus on the two areas closest to my own empirical research, which are 1) the gendered structure of organisations and what implications this has for how everyday tasks are carried out and by whom, and 2) turning the gaze towards ourselves as scholars in order to shed light on our normative positions with regard to questions of representation (speaking on behalf of others) and knowledge. These two areas are supported by scholarship on gender and organisations and post-colonial studies (as presented in the theory chapter) in order to develop my arguments.

This section is structured as follows: First I give a short overview of EC as a field, its history and some of the important streams of debate. Next I give some examples of how gender is referred to in EC literature presently. Lastly, I turn to a discussion of how I think that EC can develop by introducing post-colonial

studies when discussing representation and our own roles as researchers and also from feminist theoretical perspectives on organisations and change.

## 5.1 Environmental Communication - a short odyssey

EC emerged as a new field of study in the late 1980s and early 1990s when there was also a greater interest in environmental matters from the social sciences (Alarcón Ferrari, 2015). At the same time, as natural resource management was no longer a matter solely for the natural sciences, collaborative and participatory approaches gained more attention in national and international policy (cf. European Union Water Framework Directive, 2000; Swedish Government 2001). These approaches strive to include different types of knowledge in their management processes, not only perspectives from science, but from social science and humanities as well as from society at large (Wondolleck and Yaffee, 2000; Berkes, 2009; Parkes et al., 2010). In addition, climate change policy and debates grew stronger and opened the environmental arena also, for example, to political scientists, media and communication scholars interested in matters of policy and rhetoric (Alarcón Ferrari, 2015).

As a “young” field of studies, there are ongoing attempts to pin down the theoretical core of EC. The field has attracted scholars from a wide range of disciplines, which is something that contributes to the challenges of framing EC. Different scholars within the field are engaged in this task (Milstein, 2009:345) and one of the most recent attempts is the Routledge Handbook of Environment and Communication (Cox and Depoe, 2015). In this handbook, Cox and Depoe suggest seven major research questions and emerging fields and controversies that are key areas of EC. The questions move between communicative practices and environmental matters as discursively constructed and as such reproducing dominant systems of representation, and how different types of knowledge contribute in different ways to our understanding of environmental phenomena (2015:15-16). As a general description, EC scholarship aims at exploring environmental crisis, conflict, and governance related to processes of interactions between humans and ecosystems (Cox and Depoe, 2015).

Taking the two words Environmental and Communication separately allows us to identify what the field of study focuses on: Environmental refers to studies conducted with regard to environmental processes, ecosystems, natural resource management, environmental governance, human-nature interaction and so on. Communication refers to the assumption that the way we communicate about the environment matters, and that these discursive practices produce meaning, values, and ideas which in turn have a material

effect as we relate to the environment. Milstein (2009) tells us that the ways in which we communicate about the natural world have far-reaching effects at a time of largely human-caused environmental crises (ibid:344). The insistence that communication is part of creating discursive meaning can easily be related to feminist studies, as I will discuss further below.

The normative aspects of EC stem from a wish to make research useful in order to solve environmental problems. This is a position exemplified by, for example, the work of Oepen and Hamacher (2000) and Daniel and Walker (2004). Here, EC can be seen as a tool for solving problems, and hence EC scholars are problem solvers of environmental crises. Milstein says that amongst EC scholars, there is a claim that EC has an ethical duty to help change society; the same society that caused the ecological collapse in the first place (2000:348). The task is then not only to understand and explain but also to develop responses that are useful and applicable for society at large (Maesele, 2015). The normative position is a discussion that is also relevant to feminist studies sharing the political stance and wish for change with EC. The discussion to which I will return later is that on representation and change.

Other EC scholars argue that there is more to EC than its normative and applicable sides and see it as worthy of a theoretical field of its own. Alarcón Ferrari, for example, shows in his comparative study of Swedish and Chilean forestry how EC needs to be addressed in relation to core communicative concepts such as ideology, discourse and hegemony in order to analyse social divisions, conflicts and antagonism (2014:116). Milstein sees how EC scholarship sheds light on and critiques dominant discourses in society. These dominant voices can be identified as belonging to, for example, mass media, large corporations, and humans in general (at the expense of nature, which is then represented as a mute object) in narratives where humans are separate from, but also superior to and controlling nature (2009). This is also where feminist theory and EC seem to have met up until now, under the umbrella of eco-feminism.

## 5.2 Feminist perspectives in Environmental Communication up to now

Feminist and gender theoretical perspectives on EC are rare and build mainly on eco-feminist theories developed by, for example, Shiva (1988) and Merchant (1996). A search in the *Environmental Communication* journal as well as a request sent out to international EC colleagues resulted in a number of studies that build on or include gender and feminist theoretical perspectives. Examples from the EC journal includes De Onis (2012), who analyses climate

justice as related to reproductive justice, Sowards (2012), writing on environment and social justice and Rogers (2008), studying commercials and showing how meat is linked to a crisis of masculinity, using eco-feminist points of departure. Other key references include Bullis' chapter in the book *The Symbolic Earth* (1996), Peterson and Peterson (1996) in *Ecology: Scientific, Deep and Feminist* and Hunt (2014), who analyses the Green belt movement from an eco-feminist perspective.

Thus, the research I have found with regard to EC and feminist theory is concerned with relations of humans and nature. Of central concern are the connections and intersections between the historic domination and exploitation of the environment by humans and the oppression and exploitation of women by men (MacGregor, 2010). Also important in eco-feminist thinking is solidarity and striving for alternatives to domination, control and hierarchy (Haraway, 1988). It has been argued that the lack of feminist work on environmental matters, or rather the late blooming of this type of work, is due to certain segments of eco-feminism with which some feminists wished to avoid association (Banerjee and Bell, 2007). These segments have put forward ideas such as that women are closer to nature than men and therefore also know how to respond better to environmental crises (Merchant, 1996; Shiva, 1988). MacGregor writes: "Ecofeminism...has been plagued by a negative reputation as being spiritualist, essentialist, and downright 'fluffy' and so arguably has kept feminist-environmental scholarship confined to a ghetto" (2010:126). Still, as Bullis (1996) has suggested, eco-feminist perspectives, as a way of focusing on gender as well as "others", has the potential of challenging dominant environmental discourses. This view, I would argue, does not have to be labelled eco-feminist. It can rather be said to be a general feminist approach and as such relevant for EC research.

In my search for studies in environmental communication with a feminist/gender theoretical perspective, I have not come across research that asks how the gendered nature of environmental governance and management matters. These are areas where I consider that EC as a field would develop theoretically through a closer synergy with feminist theory. As EC aims at exploring environmental matters (crisis, conflict, and governance) related to processes of interactions between humans and ecosystems and the governance of natural resources, as well as having an explicit aim of challenging hegemonic practices, there are several possible openings for feminist theoretical perspectives that concern representation, power, resources, organisation and knowledge.

### 5.3 Feminist and postcolonial perspectives and environmental communication - suggested synergies

Using two examples, I will now discuss how EC can benefit from feminist theory and I will discuss the gendered nature of organisations and the implications of this for environmental governance and the normative position of researchers and the matter of representation. Central questions are: who decides on environmental governance, and through which institutions in society is this done? These are, I argue, central questions for the aims of democracy in environmental governance.

#### 5.3.1 Speaking on behalf of others

One of the matters where I see a link between EC and feminist theory is the question of representation. Within EC, this has been discussed in terms of objectivity, social constructivism and the role of EC scholars as spokespeople for nature. For example, Peterson, Peterson and Peterson (2007) deliberate over how EC becomes a spokesperson for other humans, but also for birds, land, fish, trees and so on. As many scholars, also from EC, have noted, science and knowledge is not an objective matter (Harding, 1991; Keller, 1995; Hekman, 2010). What we know or think we know about society is embedded within relations of power and has contemporary and historical roots.

As post-colonial scholars have shown (and as I have discussed in more depth in the theory section in this thesis and in publication III), questions of representation and questions of modernity reveal power relations (Ang, 2001; Bhavnani, 2001). Mohanty (2007) points to how Western feminism takes the liberty of speaking about, and for, “third world women” and that this practice is a kind of colonialisation as our scholarly practices (whether reading, writing, critical or textual) are inscribed in relations of power which they counter, resist, or even perhaps implicitly support. This is why Mohanty says that “there can, of course, be no apolitical scholarship” (2007:334). These are relevant perspectives to EC because as Peterson, Peterson and Peterson (2007) point out above, EC scholars and practitioners sometimes act as spokespeople for other humans and for nature. Cox and Depoe (2015), in listing seven major research questions for EC in the future, add as number seven: “How do local or indigenous cultures understand ‘nature’ or ‘environment’, and how do such cultures form or convey these understandings in everyday life?” In the formulation of this question, there are underlying assumptions of “us” and “them” and that “we” have a different understanding of nature than “them” because they are labelled “indigenous”. This is what Mohanty (1988, 2003) and other post-colonial scholars call “othering” (see theory section) and the discursive construction of “others” has effects on policy and practice. This

practice of “othering” happens to a large extent to women in relation to the environment and this “othering” also takes place in agencies responsible for environmental management, as I will show below.

### 5.3.2 Feminist theory and organisations

What role should EC play in challenging and forming the way environmental governance takes place? There are different opinions about what role EC should play, but a strong position is that EC scholars should contribute to better environmental management.

As Mohanty (1998, 2003) has argued, there is no apolitical scholarship suggesting that it is central to be attentive to what type of change EC research and education is proposing and pursuing. Along these lines, I would like to emphasise that this normative and political position needs to be transparent and I suggest that feminist post-colonial perspectives can contribute with theoretical perspectives on representation and power. As Milstein (2009) argues, one task for EC scholarship is to make visible and critique dominant discourses in society. She describes dominant voices as for example mass media, large corporations, and humans in general (ibid). I would argue that the last category “humans in general” needs further deconstruction. We show this in article V where the Swedish County Administrative Boards, with their mainly natural science administrators, are highly gendered, which has implications for who is doing what and why. As we show in article V, a gender theoretical lens is helpful in uncovering and discussing why the task of collaborative approaches to environmental management fails to meet expectations. We show that participation and collaboration are cherished concepts within the environmental policy debate, but still, top-down and scientific solutions to the complex environmental matters at hand tend to be prioritised. Similar to the discourses of gender equality and meritocracy discussed in this thesis, the discourses of collaboration and expert-driven environmental management coexist, but are given different status, in environmental organisations. We show in article V how the collaborative tasks are given to women (preferably young) in the organisations, and in our analysis we argue that the tasks are both feminised and devalued. Similar to the meritocracy and gender equality discourses, there is gendering of tasks and skills that have actual outcomes in who runs these types of project, on what grounds and with what mandates for change.

## 5.4 Summing up

The aim of this section was to explore synergies between feminist theory and environmental communication. The first example is publication V, where the focus is on how environmental governance in Sweden is gendered with regard to who does what in the organisation. The second example I address here is the matter of representation and where the relationship between different actors sheds light on positions of knowledge and power. In publication III, we bring up questions about how we, as researchers, are embedded in ethical dilemmas that have to do with who we speak for, being transparent and reflexive on our own political and normative positions as agents of change. Both these stands open up for future synergies between feminist theory and environmental communication.



## 6 Summary of articles

In this section, I summarise the publications that are part of this thesis; two published articles, one published book chapter, one article submitted after revision and one manuscript. At the end of the chapter I provide a table giving a visual overview of the publications. Each of the five articles sheds light on different aspects of the Gender Equality Project, and I discuss this further in the methodology chapter.

### 6.1 Article I

**Powell, S.** and Ah-King, M. (2013). A case study of integrating gender perspectives in teaching and in subject content at a natural science university in Sweden. *International Journal of Gender, Science and Technology*, 5(1), pp. 53-61.

The first article in this compilation thesis is a case study. It describes what the Gender Equality Project set out to do and what it actually did. It reflects on the pros and cons with the methodological approach adopted; action research. Further, it identifies that one of the weaknesses with the project was the format (project and externally funded) which did not respond to the goal of initiating long term change. In addition, it points to the passive role of leadership representatives as an obstacle for the project to become integrated in the organisation. The strengths with the project, and its action research approach were the sharing of experiences, and the possibility to build the project on a deep understanding of the context. The engagement of the teachers provided an opening for change in the organisation, even though this opening was rather forcefully turned into closure as the project came to an end.

## 6.2 Article II

**Powell, S.**, Ah-King, M. and Husseinius, A. (submitted with revisions, December, 2015). *Facets of resistance. Submitted to Gender, work and organization.*

The second article has a focus on resistance. The project was in a seemingly contradictory situation where gender equality was agreed on in policy at SLU, but where there was still resistance to the project on its enactment. The strategies of gender equality at SLU are far reaching and when the Gender Equality Project was initiated it fitted well with these policies. Still, there was resistance from within the organisation. This resistance was changing with contexts and within contexts, between actors and with the same actor, over the project period. The article aims at discussing and analysing these complexities. First we ask about the nature of resistance; how, who and when. Then we analyse the resistance as a discursive practice and see it as a key to understanding why inequality resists in academia. Lastly, we ask how further knowledge of the complexities of resistance can be useful when implementing gender equality measures in the future. The article builds on theory of change processes in organisations and on studies on resistance to gender equality and diversity measures. Further, its analysis builds on critical studies on gender equalities, mainly from the Nordic countries. The article builds on all the empirical material from the project and was analysed using a critical discourse analysis approach. We find that through analysing the complexities of resistance met by the project, it is possible to identify the core and side-lined activities in the organisation. The apparent contradiction between what is said and what is done is exemplified through acts of resistance and as the gender status quo was challenged, this resistance was evoked. Resistance reveals dominant discourses around gender equality.

## 6.3 Publication III

**Powell, S.** and Arora-Jonsson, S. (2015). The Ethics of Political Correctness. Book chapter in *Understanding Social Science Research Ethics: Interdisciplinary and Cross-Cultural Perspectives for a Globalising World*, Routledge, Editors: Nakray, K., Alston, M. and Whittenbury, K., pp. 61-77.

The book chapter is part of a publication on ethics in social science research and our entry point to that is what it means, ethically, to make use of a politically correct discourse (one of which you yourself are also critical) as a way of selling an idea (in this case to have a gender equality project at SLU). The chapter describes the process of obtaining project approval, and how the

project was framed in a way that was non-threatening, and a view of gender equality as something which is a good thing for everyone; that is to say, using de-politicised language. As the project developed, this way of anchoring the project turned out to be problematic when trying to reach further than the pre-set frames. The project was launched as a win-win project but when we wanted to introduce norm-critical perspectives to the organisation and challenge structures and introduce gender competences beyond the project time, there was closure. I scrutinise my own role as a project leader in this chapter, and I discuss, based on postcolonial thinking, who I was representing and the ethics behind this. The chapter is self-reflexive and builds on a conversation between my supervisor and I. The conclusion is that the project was depoliticised even though the aim was the opposite. This was partly due to the politically correct GE discourse in Sweden, but also because of the activities themselves in the project. Through courses and workshops, ideas of GE being about women-men was being reproduced even though the aim was to challenge this. Also the students, for whom the project was designed, were silenced.

#### 6.4 Publication IV

**Powell, S.** *Gender equality in academia. Intentions and consequences.* (manuscript).

The fourth publication is a review article. Up to this point, the focus had been on SLU and on the project. With this article I lift the gaze beyond this immediate context to review literature on gender equality measures around the world, asking why gender equality persists in academia and attempt to do something about this. As a review article, it is based on a selection of publications (<120) which takes its starting point in the reading list for a PhD course on gender and academia. The review process kept the questions close at hand and thereby categorised how the literature described gender equality initiatives, their strengths and weaknesses and the problems that were seen as the roots of gender inequalities. The article comes to a number of conclusions. Firstly, that gender equality is subordinated to meritocratic ideals in academia and these ideals conceal inequality practices. Secondly, that gender equality measures reproduce the idea of inequality as being about women and men. Thirdly, naturalist assumptions about care and reproductive capacities of women persevere as an explanation for inequality in academia. The article concludes that there is mention in the reviewed literature about the importance of taking into account intersecting

categories of, for example, class, race and sexuality, but it seems as if this intersectional approach to gender equality fails in practice.

## 6.5 Article V

Westberg, L. and **Powell, S.** (2015). Participate for Women's Sake? A Gender Analysis of a Swedish Collaborative Environmental Management Project, *Society and Natural Resources: An International Journal*, vol. 28, pp. 1233-1248.

The fifth article in this thesis draws on a different set of empirical material than the other publications and it is an example of how theories of gender and organisations and feminist theories on science are relevant to the field of environmental communication. The article came out of the need to introduce gender perspectives to studies on environmental management organisations in Sweden. This is something which had not previously been done, and our focus was to study why collaborative approaches in environmental management have limited traction. The article is based on interviews and literature reviews analysed through critical discourse analysis. We claim in the article that collaborative approaches have lower status than expert, scientific approaches. At the same time, the skills for collaborative projects are coded feminine in the CABs and this becomes a chicken or egg dilemma: We see that collaborative approaches are claimed to be a suitable task for women. Why? Is it due to collaborative approaches having lower status than top-down, expert driven approaches in the organisation or, is it that they receive a low status because they are being feminised? Based on feminist theories of bureaucracies and science, we claim that collaborative approaches to environmental management are not considered as core activities in the organisation. This idea is reproduced by the projects being given to young women to run and in the way that personal characteristics rather than expertise and skills are considered necessary to run these projects.

Through a gender theoretical lens it was possible to reveal how norms around collaborative approaches to environmental management are reproduced within the organisations, and it adds further understanding to the question of why these approaches have such limited traction in practice, even though they are high on the policy agendas.

Below is a table in which the five publications are presented in terms of points of departure, method, theory and findings/contributions. The table reflects the theoretical frames for the analysis and the topics of interest. The fifth article stands out as it is not based on the same empirical material. It is brought into the thesis as an example of how gender and organisations literature sheds light on previously

“untouched” grounds for feminist research in Sweden; those of environmental governance practice. The article draws on the same body of literature as I use in the kappa, in the article on resistance and the review article. It is also of interest in relation to the book chapter where we discuss the role of the researcher in change processes.

|            | Points of departure   | Method and analysis   | Theory   | Findings and contribution  |
|------------|---|---|--|--|
| Article I  | Need to describe the project in order to discuss shortcomings and benefits with the way the project was set up.   | Case study description.<br>Action research (AR) methodology.                | Gender equality in organisations.  | Strengths of project were its AR approach providing a platform for experience sharing, the thorough understanding of the context and the openings created at the level of teachers. Weaknesses identified were the project format and the external funding which did not ensure long term change. The passive roles of leadership were also problematic for reaching the project goals.                                  |
| Article II | Need to understand the contradiction between the general description of GE as an important discourse in society and why it is still resisted when enacted.                          | "Freeze time",<br>Discourse analysis<br>of empirical material.              | Organisational theory on change processes.<br>Critical studies on gender equalities. | Through analysing the complexities of resistance to the GE project, it is possible to identify what are considered as 'core' and side-lined activities in the university.<br>The contradiction between GE policy and GE practice becomes visible when studying the resistance evoked when challenging the gender status quo.<br>By analysing resistance it is also possible to identify existing dominant GE discourses. |
| Book       | Need to understand how gender equality as a consensus ideology in Sweden frames the openings and closures for the GE project.   | "Critical subjectivity",<br>Conversation<br>between student and supervisor. | Theories on social science ethics.<br>Critical studies on gender equalities.         | The project was depoliticed even when the aim was the opposite. This is partly because of the politically correct GE discourse in Sweden, but also because of the activities themselves in the project. Through courses and workshops, ideas of GE being about women-men were being reproduced, even though the aim was to challenge this. Also the students, for whom the project was designed, were silenced.          |
| Article IV | Review literature in order to understand why gender inequalities persist in academia and ask what gender equality measures say about this matter.                                   | "Reverse the gaze",<br>Literature review.                                   | Theories on gender equality.   | Gender equality is subordinated to meritocratic ideals in academia and these ideals conceal inequality practices. Gender equality measures reproduce inequality being about women and men. Ideas of care and reproductive capacities of women seem to persist as an explanation of why inequality persists in academia.  |
| Article V  | Need to introduce gender perspectives to studies on environmental management organisations. Analyse why collaborative approaches in environmental management have limited traction. | Discourse analysis<br>of interviews and participant observations.           | Gender and environmental management research.<br>Gender and organisation theories.   | Collaborative approaches have lower status than expert, scientific approaches. At the same time, the skills for collaborative projects are coded feminine in the CABS. Norms are reproduced, creating these projects as exceptions to the rule.<br>Adopting a gender/organisational perspective on participatory approaches made visible power structures within the organisation.                                       |

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As part of my empirical material I have drawn on material available on [www.slu.se](http://www.slu.se) and I have also asked for statistical excerpts concerning numbers of students and staff.

# Appendix I

## Genus och jämställdhet i SLU: s utbildningar- vad tycker du?

### Enkät med studenter

Just nu pågår ett projekt på SLU för att öka jämställdheten och genusmedvetenheten på tre av utbildningarna. Lärare från de tre programmen ska gå en fortbildning och det är viktigt att den fortbildningen är kopplad till hur studenterna upplever sin utbildning i dag. Därför ber vi er att fylla i den här enkäten och låta oss ta del av era erfarenheter och tankar.

Stort tack för hjälpen!!

Stina Powell

### Frågor

Upplever du att undervisningen präglas av medvetenhet om genus och jämställdhet? Ge exempel

Nej

Ja

Kommentarer

Upplever du att innehållet i undervisningen problematiseras ur ett genusperspektiv?

Nej

Ja

Kommentarer

Är den kurslitteratur som används fri från uttryck för sexism, homofobi och rasism? Om Nej ge exempel.

Nej

Ja

Kommentarer

Beaktas genus i kursutvärderingar?

Nej

Ja

Kommentarer

Beskriv ett tillfälle när du upplever att genus har haft betydelse i undervisningen.

Vilka frågor som är relaterade till genus och jämställdhet tycker du är viktiga att ta upp till diskussion i utbildningen/undervisningen?

Har du kunskap/idéer om hur ett genusperspektiv kan anläggas på ditt ämne och/eller om hur

## Enkät med lärare (Survey with teachers)

Hej lärare! Under 2011-2012 har SLU tilldelats finansiering från Delegationen för jämställdhet i högskolan för en satsning på en mer jämställd studiemiljö på SLU. Tre program på SLU har valts ut för att få delta i en fortbildning av lärare och det är Veterinärprogrammet, Agronomprogrammet Husdjur samt Landskapsarkitektprogrammet. Det långsiktiga målet med fortbildningen är att lägga grunden för ett långsiktigt jämställdhetsarbete med ambition att nå SLU: s utbildningsverksamhet som helhet: • SLU:s lärare ska ha goda kunskaper i genus- och jämställdhetsfrågor och ska kunna omsätta denna kunskap till en könsmedveten pedagogik. • SLU:s undervisning och studiemiljö skall vara inkluderande och jämställd. Studenterna ska vara så väl rustade för arbetslivet att de kan medverka till att arbeta för jämställdhet på sina kommande arbetsplatser. Nu gör vi en lärarenkät för att vi vill veta vad du som lärare har för erfarenheter och synpunkter om frågor relaterade till genus och jämställdhet och som du tycker är viktiga att diskutera i utbildningen/undervisningen. Mer information och förfrågningar angående programmet ställs till projektledare Stina Powell, tel. 672509, [stina.powell@slu.se](mailto:stina.powell@slu.se) Vänliga hälsningar, Stina Powell, Malin Ah-King och Svante Axelsson. Projektgruppen Ett jämställt SLU.

**Syfte** Vad är genus? Kvinnligt och manligt beskrivs i genusteoretiska sammanhang som sociala och kulturella fenomen, föränderliga i tid och rum. Genus är en term för de sociala och kulturella processer som skapar föreställningar om både kvinnor och män. Genus skapas i en ständigt pågående social process i vilken individ-, organisations- och samhällsnivån samverkar. Maktrelationen mellan könen är central för förståelsen av genus, samt att maktordningar baserade på till exempel kön, sexuell läggning, klass, etnicitet, religion och funktionshinder samverkar. (Köns-/)Genusmedveten pedagogik = Formerna för undervisningen. Detta handlar om hur genus beaktas i undervisningssituationer. Vem känner sig välkommen på utbildningen, vilken jargong används, hur fördelas talartiden, hur bemöts frågor från olika personer, hur ser examinationen ut och vem undervisar? Genusperspektiv = Innehållet i undervisningen. Det innebär att stoffet problematiseras ur ett genusperspektiv / att undervisningen presenterar den genusforskning som finns inom det aktuella ämnet. Genusvetenskap är ett tvärvetenskapligt forskningsområde och det finns genusforskning inom allt från litteraturvetenskap och teologi till medicin och fysik. Vetenskap präglas, i likhet med resten av samhället, av föreställningar om kvinnligt och manligt vilket påverkar exempelvis undervisningens former och innehåll, samtalston, språkbruk och hur forskning bedrivs.

1. Har du reflekterat över din och studenternas roll ur ett genusperspektiv? Utveckla gärna  
Nej  
Ja  
Kommentarer
2. Försöker du bedriva en genusmedveten pedagogik och i så fall hur?  
Nej  
Ja  
Kommentarer
3. Har du fått någon utbildning avseende genusperspektiv i undervisning och genusmedveten pedagogik?  
Nej  
Ja  
Kommentarer
4. Har du med ett genusperspektiv på ämnet i din undervisning?  
Nej  
Ja  
Kommentarer
5. Beskriv ett tillfälle när du upplever att genus har haft betydelse i undervisningen.
6. Beaktas genus i kursutvärderingar?  
Nej  
Ja  
Kommentarer
7. Vilka frågor som är relaterade till genus och jämställdhet tycker du är viktiga att ta upp till diskussion i utbildningen/undervisningen?
8. Har du kunskap/idéer om hur ett genusperspektiv kan anläggas på ditt ämne och/eller om hur undervisningen kan göras genusmedveten?

## **Intervjufrågor med deltagare i kursen**

### **(Interview guide with participants in the course)**

*Syftet med intervjun är att ta reda på mer vilka tankar deltagarna har kring möjligheten att integrera genus och jämställdhet i sin undervisning, efter att ha tagit kursen. Jag vill veta om de har utvecklat nya tankar kring varför genus kan vara relevant på ett universitet som mest sysslar med naturvetenskap. Jag vill få en bild av hur de intervjuade upplever klimatet för genus och jämställdhet på universitetet, om de upplever stöd för sitt engagemang eller ej. Jag är också intresserad av att höra mer om hur de tror att det skulle vara möjligt att arbeta mer aktivt med olika delar av organisationen med de här frågorna.*

#### **Individ:**

- Varför anmälde du dig och gick den här kursen?
- Hur tänkte du kring begreppet genus innan kursen? Hur tänker du nu?
- Vilka nya infallsvinklar till din undervisning har du fått, om några, efter kursen?
- Är genus relevant för ditt ämne? Kan du se genusperspektiv på ditt ämne?
- När du/om du tar upp genus och jämställdhet med dina undervisande kollegor på din institution, vilka reaktioner möter du? Vilka attityder möter du hos studenterna?
- Vad tänker du om lärarna som förändringsagenter på SLU?

#### **Organisation och strukturellt stöd:**

- Vilka ämnesområden tycker du har högre och lägre status på SLU? Hur vet du det? Upplever du att det finns en hierarki mellan ämnena på SLU?
- Hur tänker du dig att SLU skulle kunna arbeta med genusperspektiv och jämställdhet? Tror du att det skiljer sig från andra universitet? Varför? Varför inte?
- Vad är hindren som du ser det och vad är möjligheterna? För dig personligen och på universitetet och i samhället i stort?
- Hur talar SLU:s ledning om jämställdhet och genusfrågor?
- Känner du stöd av dina chefer, från avdelnings, institutions till högsta ledningen för universitetet att engagera dig i frågorna? Om du får stöd, hur ser det stödet ut? Om inte, varför? Hur skulle det stödet kunna se ut?

## **Diskussionsguide till fokusgruppsintervjuer med lärare (Guide for focus group interviews with teachers)**

*Introduktion:* Berätta om vad vi ska ha materialet till, och vad är en fokusgrupp.

Vilka är era erfarenheter från SLU i relation till jämställdhet?

Beskriv hur ett jämställt universitet ser ut och fungerar.

Beskriv undervisningen ur ett jämställdhetsperspektiv.

Finns det några åtgärder som SLU bör prioritera inom jämställdhetsområdet?

Har du kunskap/idéer om hur ett genusperspektiv kan anläggas på ditt ämne och/eller om hur undervisning kan göras genusmedveten?

Beskriv ett tillfälle när du upplever att genus har haft betydelse i undervisningen.

Vilka frågor som är relaterade till genus och jämställdhet tycker du är viktiga att ta upp till diskussion i utbildningen/undervisningen?

Finns det genusnormer som styr val i utbildning och yrke och vad kan man i så fall göra åt det?

Vill ni lägga till något?

## **Diskussionsguide fokusgruppintervju med studenter (Guide for focus group interview with students)**

*Introduktion:* Vad är en fokusgrupp och vad ska materialet användas till

Vad är ett jämställt universitet för er? Hur ser det ut? Hur fungerar det?

Vilka är era erfarenheter från SLU i relation till jämställdhet?

Om vi går över till själva undervisningen, hur föreställer ni er att en jämställd undervisning ser ut och fungerar?

Vad tycker ni att SLU borde satsa på när det gäller jämställdhet?

Har du några idéer om hur ett genusperspektiv kan anläggas på ditt ämne eller idéer om hur undervisningen kan göras mer genusmedveten?

Har du erfarenheter av att genus har haft betydelse i undervisningen?

Vilka frågor som är relaterade till genus och jämställdhet tycker du är viktiga att ta upp till diskussion i utbildningen/undervisningen?

Vill ni lägga till något?