



Sida Baltic Sea Unit

Gender equality within the Baltic Sea Region collaboration

A study of projects within the EU Interreg Baltic Sea Region Programme 2007–2013

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A STUDY OF PROJECTS WITHIN
THE EU INTERREG
BALTIC SEA REGION PROGRAMME
2007–2013

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Foreword

Sida's mission in the Baltic Sea region primarily comprises efforts to strengthen the implementation of the EU Baltic Sea Strategy. This includes providing support for, and allocating resources to, appropriate projects, by sharing knowledge and experience and also by contributing methodological support for cross-border project initiatives (Interreg), in cooperation with the Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth and the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions. A 2008 survey of the customary approaches towards evaluating EU projects in the Baltic Sea region enabled us to identify some areas that we consider merit closer attention.¹ This involves dimensions of the project efforts neglected in such evaluations and analyses as have been conducted or commissioned by the EU. An important reason for this neglect appears to be that the EU collects almost exclusively quantifiable data on the projects, for example, how many participants attend a conference, although this gives no indication of its quality or for that matter, how it has contributed to creating or maintaining long-term networks, collaborations and common commitments. We would therefore like to highlight the qualitative dimensions of this cross-border project cooperation. In our view, what is important is that our analysis focuses on project implementation and daily, practical project efforts. Clearly, there are many lessons to learn from the accounts and experiences that the project workers possess, and this know-how requires systematisation to render it useful and understandable to a larger number of people. This study is one step towards fulfilling our intention in terms of methodology.

Gender equality between men and women is crucial to the success of the Baltic Sea Strategy. Studying this subject is very difficult as there are so many possible strategies and approaches, and there is the additional difficulty of isolating causal links and effects. Discussion often does not go beyond questioning the methods, which can impede any consideration of those problems of gender equality that can be observed, and their possible causes and consequences. We hope that this kind of qualitative and ethnologically oriented study may constitute a possible basis for a discussion of project implementation and its results, and also that you will find this study of value in your project!



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Head of the Sida Baltic Sea Unit



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¹ Sida [2008] Uppföljning och analys av gränsöverskridande samarbete i Östersjöregionen. Metodprogram Metodprogram 2009–2011. ([http://www.sida.se/Global/Partners/Baltic Sea/Metodprogram090318.pdf](http://www.sida.se/Global/Partners/Baltic%20Sea/Metodprogram090318.pdf)).



Notifications

This study is the result of collaboration between project manager Josefin Dahlander from Sida and Karin S. Lindelöf, PhD from Stockholm University (formerly at Södertörn University). Josefin has worked as project manager on behalf of Sida and Karin as a gender equality expert. The report is a joint effort, where Josefin has been responsible for those sections relating to Interreg as a concept and an organisation, etc., as well as the greater part of the survey based on project documents and web pages (i.e., Chapters 2 and 5), while Karin has been responsible for the gender theory sections, the methodology section and the interview study (Chapters 3, 4, 6 and 7).

Our thanks go to those project and sub-project managers who contributed so generously to the study by allowing themselves to be interviewed and by sharing project papers and application documents.



1. Introduction

The background to this study is some of the spontaneously recounted experiences by several Swedish female project actors and project managers of daily, concrete Baltic Sea cooperation, and in particular, efforts relating to Interreg. These accounts have been used as a source of inspiration for designing the study. Observations from conferences on general Baltic Sea topics, where Interreg has been an important aspect, also feature. One example is a major conference held in 2008 by one of several regional bodies engaged in Baltic regional development that strive towards getting their members to cooperate within the Interreg framework.² At this conference, forty-three of a total of fifty invited speakers were men. Among the seven invited women, three spoke on social issues and two on youth issues. Those weighty regional issues relating to transport, infrastructure and the environment, which account for a very large part of the Interreg budget, were thus represented by only two women at the conference, where a ten-minute film was shown by one of the member regions that gave a dynamic picture of its development. In it, a number of male researchers and managers speak about the contribution by universities and companies to regional development. Two women appear in the film, one of whom is shown having a baby in hospital, while the other is a secretary in an office. It is not unreasonable to imagine that this snapshot makes a general statement about both Baltic Sea and Interreg cooperation.

1.1 PURPOSE AND ISSUES

The purpose of the study is to chart, analyse and evaluate gender equality within a number of Interreg projects in the Baltic region, with the emphasis on daily project efforts. It focuses on individual women's experiences of project leadership within Interreg and a study of gender-equality through aspects relating to power, such as representation, resources and realia.³ These aspects are described in the methodology section.

² Since the planning is similar in many Interreg and Baltic Sea occasions we have chosen not to mention the conference's or the organizer's name.

³ P. 48f Åström, Gertrud (2007) *Det är alltid rätt tid och rätt plats att jämtegrera*. Länsstyrelsens rapportserie 19/2007. Luleå: Länsstyrelsen i Norrbottens län (http://www.bd.lst.se/publishedObjects/10001015/Ratt_tid_low.pdf).

1.2 TARGET GROUP

The principal target group of the study is those politicians and officials in public authorities, municipalities, regions, county councils and organisations, who in various ways are involved with regional development and Interreg in the Baltic Sea region.

2. Studying Interreg

The EU Interreg programmes can be studied in many different ways. They comprise both tools for actors who want to achieve a common solution to a problem or renew work methods, and they also represent those collaborative concepts that contribute towards spreading and consolidating the EU principles of territorial cohesion within, and among, regions throughout the Union. Here, we have chosen to describe Interreg primarily as a method and organisational form of transnational cooperation. We will consider it as an organisation and therefore employ this approach as a basis for a theoretical observation. We will also relate the organisational context to individuals' perceptions of the project efforts. We thus move from an organisational towards a micro level. Previous studies of Interreg typically involve a macro level where the results are often related to its organisation in terms of, for example, partnerships.⁴ The present study illuminates relevant qualitative dimensions of gender equality in Interreg cooperation, which, in simplified terms, means observing how the knowledge and the experience of individual women are manifested in Interreg efforts, with the focus on practical and everyday project operations. The effects of gender equality efforts in the context are very difficult to assess, at both project and programme level, and this dimension will therefore be omitted. It would be interesting to examine this in a longer-term perspective.

2.1 DOES THE REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT POLICY HAVE A MALE DISCOURSE?

Regional development policy primarily involves infrastructure, innovations and sustainable development, which are not infrequently viewed as classically “masculine” issues. Areas also considered as included in the policy field, but which must be regarded as peripheral in relation to the aforementioned ones, include health and social affairs, tourism and migration,

⁴ See for example, Sveriges Kommuner och Landsting (2008) *Nya dimensioner på regional utveckling – erfarenheter från gränsöverskridande samarbete. Om svenska aktörers medverkan i Interreg III B programmet för Östersjön under 2000-2006.* (http://brs.skl.se/brsbib/kata_documents/doc39208_1.pdf).

while youth issues may also touch on policy. Such areas are usually generally viewed as “feminine” issues, as women make up the overwhelming majority of the employees in these fields. The gender discourse of regional development policy must be assumed to affect its implementation in a variety of ways. According to prominent schools of thought on organisational theory, organisation is of crucial importance in understanding and estimating the results and effects of measures taken. Observation of how work is organised in terms of the freedom of action for different project actors and of the prevailing norms of the working groups, is an important step towards acquiring a picture of Interreg as an organisation, which by extension allows audits of performance and effect from a gender equality perspective.

2.2 EQUAL REPRESENTATION AND PARTICIPATION

Firstly, why one should observe representation and participation on a gender basis is a relevant question, which arouses a good many emotions and not infrequently leads on to more controversial questions as to whether, and in that case how, society should act to strengthen representation. Regardless of views as to measures, the point of departure must always be that an equal representation is a fundamental principle with regard to democracy, since gender equality is a central aspect of political equality. Several countries in the Baltic Sea region formally apply this principle, as does the EU. To strive for equal representation is therefore generally accepted in society and as such, it is indisputable. The Community Strategic Guidelines for Cohesion adopted by the European Council in October 2006 lay down principles and priorities for such measures as the Interreg programmes between 2007 and 2013.⁵ These guidelines also indicate what measures may need to be taken to achieve goal compliance. The member states have established their national strategies, and about four hundred and fifty operative programmes are based on these guidelines. With regard to the principle of gender equality between men and women, the guidelines state that the “... member states and regions ought to strive to achieve gender equality between women and men at all levels that involve the designing and implementation of programmes and projects”, whether this is done through specific measures or by taking into account the effects that the projects might have in this re-

⁵ *Fjärde rapporten om ekonomisk och social sammanhållning*, Meddelande från kommissionen den 30 maj 2007 [KOM(2007) 273 slutlig – ej offentliggjord i EUT].

gard. They should also “prevent all forms of discrimination based on gender (...) when financial resources from the funds are used”. The guidelines also lay down that by 2010 the member states shall raise the index for the integration of women into the labour market by sixty percent. Despite this, evaluations of the different Interreg programmes have, in principle, never studied gender equality issues.

2.3 INTERREG AS A CONCEPT

Interreg is a programme within EU cohesion policy that aims at European territorial cohesion. The EU currently has thirty-five different programmes for this type of cross-border, transnational and interregional cooperation. This study will observe projects from one of these programmes, namely the Baltic Sea Region Programme 2007–2013 (BSRP), which aims at cooperation among different societal actors such as public authorities, municipalities, regions, county councils and private organisations throughout the Baltic Sea region. Within the BSRP, projects can be implemented in the areas of innovations, transport, marine environment and sustainable urban development. In the Baltic Sea region there are a further two programmes covering different geographical units, i.e., the Central Baltic Programme, which finances projects in the areas of the environment, economic competitiveness and health and safety, and the South Baltic Programme which addresses economic competitiveness, education/training and labour markets, transport, the environment and energy, cultural heritage and also smaller local cooperative initiatives. The subject areas therefore vary somewhat from one programme to the other, but the purpose and likewise the overarching objective are the same, that of contributing towards territorial cohesion and economic and social development. The methods for achieving this objective are also similar in both programmes. The primary objective is to create conditions for future cooperation through networking and achieving common analyses and action plans. However, in this study, the focus is on the BSRP.⁶

We have chosen to describe Interreg as both an organisation and a method for creating policy networks around a particular subject area, which, on the basis of a from below perspective, will contribute towards territorial cohesion, and economic and social development within the EU. According to Rhodes, policy networks are created around specific topics or issues and these are usually characterised by the fact that

⁶ Information about the programmes is found at <http://www.centralbaltic.eu>, <http://south-baltic.eu>, <http://eu.baltic.net>, <http://www.spatial.baltic.net>.

actors are bound together by resource dependencies.⁷ The Interreg projects can be said to contribute towards highlighting the actors in these resource dependencies by raising an issue and focusing on it in terms of certain of the approaches defined by the EU Commission, while also ensuring that the description of the problem issues that these actors jointly identify and seek to resolve, is disseminated within society. One could say that a successful Interreg project ought to have contributed towards identifying the problems and establishing new forms of cooperation related to the resource dependency among the actors within the network, while also stimulating a heightened awareness in society of the specific problems highlighted and their possible solutions. According to Rhodes, a policy network includes authority/power, financial resources, legitimacy, information and organisation. Interreg includes all these components and the question here is, therefore, which of these it is most relevant to observe in order to illustrate those aspects of power that relate to gender equality. We have chosen to use the 3R method to illustrate the power aspects of the projects, which embrace representation, resources and realia.⁸ These can be translated as authority/power according to Rhodes' definition and it is therefore this aspect on which we will focus in the study.

2.4 INTERREG AS AN ORGANISATION

The study of gender equality within Interreg projects requires these to be initially observed in organisational terms, and a subsequent selection to be made of those aspects of the actual project organisation and its environment that are the most relevant ones on which to focus. Within organisational research, several different approaches are used to simplify and to contribute towards explanations of how organisations work, in which power aspects are key elements. The classic point of departure for the study of organisations as a phenomenon is provided by of Max Weber's categorisation of them as social structures/bureaucracies. According to him, bureaucracies comprise hierarchies of authority, division of labour and formal rules and procedures.⁹ Weber's description of organisations, however, implies a simple categorisation of rationalist nature, which has evolved in time towards features of ever in-

⁷ Rhodes, R.A.W., Bache, I. and George, S. (1996) 'Policy networks and policy-making in the European Union: a critical appraisal', i Hooghe, L. (ed.), *Cohesion Policy and European Integration. Building Multilevel Governance*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

⁸ See chapter 4.1.

⁹ Weber, Max (1947) *The theory of social and economic organisation*. Glencoe. Free Press.

creasing complexity and uncertainty, with a greater focus on decision-making, for example, as in Simon's description of slow and tentative decision-making with bounded rationality within organisations, as well as March and Olsen's focus on decision-making as irrational and unpredictable.¹⁰

One may ask how Interreg can be observed in terms of social structures/bureaucracies in the manner in which Max Weber categorised them, and which elements of limited rationality and irrationality can be found in the projects. One could say that there is a basic hierarchy of authority within Interreg in that one partner organisation is the lead partner, and is responsible for the project management secretariat, and also coordinates the various sub-projects (work packages) that make up the project. However, within each sub-project work is undertaken relatively independently, and thus the role of project management can be said to more that of a coordinator. Formal reporting obligations do exist for sub-projects with respect to project management, but also for project management vis-à-vis the European Commission as regards project progress. The division of labour is undertaken through these sub-projects, for which different countries are responsible. The sub-projects focus on different aspects of the project subject matter and the extent of the work varies among the sub-projects. Given the very clear European Commission guidelines for project objectives, structure and processes, one can speak of a clear goal-rationality in the projects. The cooperation between the actors within Interreg projects, however, is usually described as networking, but during the actual project period, the work is formalised to a very high degree. One can thus state that there are some hierarchical features in the Interreg structure, which is readily apparent in the European Commission goal formulations and reporting requirements. There are also reporting back requirements between the project management and the sub-projects that contribute towards the hierarchical structure. It is more difficult to find traces of uncertainty and irrationality in the decision-making processes that comprise parts of the project structure. Instead, these aspects must be observed specifically in the case of each project.

¹⁰ Simon, Herbert (1947) *Administrative behavior: a study of decision-making processes in administrative organization*. March, James & Olsen, Johan P. (1976) *Ambiguity and choice in organizations*. Bergen: Universitetsforlaget.

2.5 ENVIRONMENT OF THE INTERREG PROJECTS

In more recent organisational theory, the external environment is considered to be a very important influencing factor on the organisation, and the majority of the theories are based on this external dependency.¹¹ Modernist organisation theorists instead viewed the organisation and the environment as separate, although it was stressed that they affect each other through external demands for adaptation and the uncertainty of the organisation about how they can be met.¹² From a constructivist perspective, organisations can also be viewed as social constructs without clear boundaries with regard to the environment, which means that their impact on the environment is seen as an equally natural approach as the environmental impact on the organisation.¹³

Organisations of a network kind are often observed from a constructivist perspective, as network organisations are regarded as post-modern phenomenon and have more obviously fluid boundaries in relation to the external environment. Interreg projects can be viewed as typical networking organisations, but this does not mean that a constructivist perspective possesses the greatest degree of relevance to the observation of this phenomenon. Modernist theory may be appropriate for describing the environment in relation to the organisation, in order to subsequently observe in line with constructivist theory, how the boundaries are erased and how the environment and the organisation are thereby integrated in various ways. This is particularly relevant if one bears in mind the currently strong pre-eminence of the new institutional theories. This theoretical construct emphasises the norms that are spread through rules and procedures as major influencing factors with regard to the organisation.¹⁴ Here, this refers to the level of the organisation's "embedding" in an institutional environment that is constituted by the "myths about rationality" in the form of norms, and not by rational organisation. Behaviours, working models and solutions to problems that reflect ideas and ideals in the environment then shape the organisational structure. This is achieved through a normative pressure with regard to the organisation, which is made possible by its striving to maintain social legitimacy as a justification for its existence.

¹¹ Pfeffer, Jeffery och Salancick, Gerald R. [1978] *The external control of organizations: A resource dependence perspective*. New York: Harper & Row.

¹² March, James & Simon, Herbert [1958] *Organizations*. New York: John Wiley.

¹³ Berger, Peter & Luckmann, Thomas [1966] *The social construction of reality: A treatise in the sociology of knowledge*. New York: Doubleday.

¹⁴ Powell, Walter W. & DiMaggio Paul J. [ed.] [1991] *The new institutionalism in organizational analysis*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

The environment for the Interreg project must be said to vary greatly according to which actor is the lead partner. If the latter is a politically driven organisation such as a municipality, county council or regional association, the project organisation is more directly controlled by political requirements and priorities than is the case when it is a public authority. In cases where the lead partner is a university or private organisation, the realm of political influence is even more remote. A reasonable assumption is that these changing relationships to the external environment cause the project structure, implementation and outcome to vary. To our knowledge, this has not been specifically studied, nor will we go into this in more detail here.

The relationship with the EU Commission is formalised through a set of rules and routines, and it represents another step in external dependency. The projects must be adapted to EU Commission regulations and requirements for the project orientation and objectives, while politicians at local, regional and in some cases national level within the different countries will also have views on how the project objectives dovetail with their own priorities. As previously mentioned, the EU Commission has set certain requirements relating to gender equality within the projects, which, however, have been formulated without links to any specific instructions or possible sanctions, should they be disregarded. Otherwise, one must consider that the European Commission's far-reaching formalised requirements constitute a strong normative pressure on the projects and the intentions of its project support ought thus to have been met. It is very difficult to observe this possible link among intentions, formal structures and outcomes. Consequently, primarily simpler studies are undertaken where a specific factual issue is studied, such as how the project outcomes were applied by the participating organisations and other stakeholders at the end of the project period.¹⁵

In our estimation it must be considered most relevant to focus on the organisation's *decision-making system* when studying gender equality within Interreg. Choosing the decision-making system as the primary object of study makes it relevant to observe the power structure within the organisation itself, in order to focus on the gender aspects. External aspects obviously contribute towards the balance of power within the organisation, but here we choose to restrict ourselves to only highlighting them initially, in order to describe the context in which Interreg exists. The decision-making system concerns the relationships that exist between parts of an organised

¹⁵ See for example, COWI (2008) *Evaluation study on use of outcomes produced in the Baltic Sea Region INTERREG III B Neighbourhood Programme*; and Sveriges Kommuner och Landsting (2008).

whole, and it is relevant to observe the degree of centralisation, i.e., the level at which decisions are made, but this may prove difficult to determine because many kinds of decisions are taken within one organisation. The coordination mechanisms as well as the rules and procedures that exist are also relevant, as is how decisions are taken and work is performed. In our case, this involves a micro level close to the actor, where the project actors/project managers have themselves been asked how they experience Interreg efforts, including its decision-making processes.

3. Gender theory points of departure

The present study rests on a solid scientific foundation within the theoretical field that is alternately known as gender research and feminist research. This research field has developed since the 1970s in Sweden and internationally, and it is now an established scientific tradition, both within “older” disciplines and in the new subject of gender studies.¹⁶ This study will employ both such theories as can be grouped together under the designation of *feminist cultural theory*, and those developed within the research field of *organisation and gender*, while research into gender aspects of *regional development* also forms part of the theoretical framework for the study. The following describes these three areas of theory as they are used in the study. A common feature of the majority of research orientations with a gender perspective is a focus on *power*, how it is exercised, held, distributed, used and exploited, and what power produces, makes possible and limits in relation to gender, which is also the case in this study and is described in greater detail below.

3.1 FEMINIST CULTURAL THEORY

The gender order, i.e., what we call male and female, is one of the most enduring and dominant cultural patterns.¹⁷ Moreover, it is probably the one that is the most difficult to be recognised as such, as many people would rather explain the differences between men and women as something purely biological, anatomical, genetic and hormonal. Biological gender is used to legitimise women’s and men’s characteristics, positions and living conditions. For example, women, but not men, are so often seen as “naturally” suited to taking care of a home and family, despite the fact that the real reasons for this explanation are perhaps more likely to be social, cultural and economic than biological.

Naturally, one cannot ignore the fact that we are also biological and anatomical beings, and can be assigned to different categories on that basis. However, from a cultural studies perspective, it is the cultural meanings with which these ana-

¹⁶ Manns, Ulla, 2006. “På två ben i akademien. Om den tidiga kvinnorörelsens projekt”, i *Blad till Bladh. En vänbok till Christine*. Stockholm: Södertörn Studies in History, nr 4; HSV 2007. *Utvärdering av ämnet genusvetenskap vid svenska högskolor och universitet*. Rapport 2007:17R. Stockholm: Högskoleverket.

¹⁷ Hirdman, Yvonne [2001] *Genus – om det stabilas föränderliga former*. Malmö: Liber.

tomical differences are charged that are interesting. From this perspective, it really is a matter of them being charged with meaning, and a cultural attribution of meaning takes place relating to what female and male gender implies. Gender is thus not an inner core or essence that is expressed on the surface. We have to ask what culture “does” about the fact that women, but not men, bear children or about differences between them in body hair, muscle mass, fat deposition, voice pitch, etc. Human existence is gendered, in one way or another, everywhere and all the way through, i.e., it carries cultural meanings and significances based on the fact that we human beings can be assigned to gender categories. Moreover, these are usually placed within the framework of a normative heterosexual order and are thus expected to desire each other.¹⁸

Being aware of how gender structures human life, more or less in interaction with other factors, is what is termed having a sex or gender perspective on something. If one also has a power perspective on the gender order and views it as a hierarchy where some are superior and others are inferior, and the different gender positions are not of equal value, being aware of this and wanting to do something about it implies a feminist perspective. Gender awareness in itself does not thus imply a feminist analysis. The latter requires that one is also aware of the power aspect and questions the hierarchical gender system, whereby the man (and generally the white, heterosexual, middle-aged, middle class man) is the norm.¹⁹ A gender perspective is also not about only studying women and/or men, but it is instead in many cases what is seemingly gender-neutral, but is perhaps in actual fact gender blind that is in most need of gender analysis, for example, in organisations and their operations.

Gender is a process of continuous cultural creation. It cannot solely be understood as a noun (male/female) or an adjective (masculine/feminine), but in the highest degree as a verb, as something that transpires in social relationships.²⁰ Gender is not a cause of but an effect of different types of actions, a repetition of the “stylised acts” and mimicry of cultural ideas and norms about gender.²¹ The point of the gender concept in cultural studies is that 1) it separates biology from culture, 2) it underlines variability, and 3) it shows how gender relations are a primary social order and a power-impregnated system of meanings that consists of two distinct (and opposite) catego-

¹⁸ Butler, Judith [1990] *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York: Routledge.

¹⁹ Hirdman, Yvonne [1988] “Genussystemet – reflexioner kring kvinnors sociala underordning” *Kvinnovetenskaplig tidskrift* nr 3/1988.

²⁰ Elvin-Nowak, Ylva & Helene Thomsson [2003] *Att göra kön. Om vårt våldsamma behov av att vara kvinnor och män*. Stockholm: Albert Bonniers.

²¹ Butler [1990].

ries, women and men, in which we are all placed. This is also the overall theoretical framework for the study.

3.2 ORGANISATION AND GENDER

Sweden's leading researcher in the field of organisation and gender is Professor Anna Wahl and her research group Fosfor at KTH Royal Institute of Technology, Sweden. Jointly and individually, these researchers have produced a number of scientific articles, reports, books and studies in the field of organisation and gender with a particular focus on leadership.²² In its entirety, this research is an appropriate theoretical base, adapted to Swedish/Nordic conditions, albeit not yet to the entire Baltic Sea region, in order to study gender equality within the Interreg projects around the Baltic Sea and the conditions for women and men to act within these projects. The following account is therefore based mainly on these texts from Fosfor.

Structure, power and conditions are fundamental concepts when organisation and gender are studied from a feminist perspective, and thus also in this study. It deals with women's and men's positions, and relationships between the sexes, consequences of the proportion of women and men in an organisation, of segregation of the sexes in terms of positions and duties and also of a hierarchical distribution between the sexes in terms of influence and power. This perspective allows one to see how organisational structures tend to be gender-marked in various ways, with conditions and norms that are often constructed on the basis of the context of male life, which can lead to structural discrimination and other difficulties for those who do not comply with these norms.²³ Describing and analysing the gender structure²⁴ of the organisations mentioned above (numbers, segregation and hierarchy) also reveal differences between different organisations in terms of gender.²⁵

Within organisational research a cultural studies perspective is also used to study the cultural aspects of organisations, for example, the symbolic gender order within a particular organisation. Hence, the creation of meaning and significance can be examined with regard to gender, through, for example, myths, ceremonies, rituals, storytelling, jokes, norms, unwrit-

²² See for example Wahl, Anna (1992) *Könsstrukturer i organisationer. Kvinnliga civilekonomers och civilingenjörers karriärutveckling*. Stockholm: EFI; Wahl, Anna m fl. (2001) *Det ordnar sig. Teorier om organisation och kön*. Lund: Studentlitteratur; Höök, Pia (2001) *Stridspiloter i vida kjolar – om ledarutveckling och jämställdhet*. Stockholm: EFI; Holgersson, Charlotte (2003) *Rekrytering av företagsledare. En studie i homosocialitet*. Stockholm: EFI; SOU 2003:16, *Mansdominans i förändring. Om ledningsgrupper och styrelser*. Betänkande av utredningen om kvinnor på ledande poster i näringslivet. Stockholm: Fritzes; Linghag, Sophie (2009) *Från medarbetare till chef. Kön och makt i chefsförsörjning och karriär*. Stockholm: KTH.

²³ P. 59f Wahl and others. (2001).

²⁴ Wahl (1992).

²⁵ P. 85 Wahl and others. (2001).

ten rules, designations and ways of expressing oneself. The symbolic gender order in an organisation is part of the overall “corporate culture” that exists in the organisation in question.²⁶ It is created and recreated in a dialectical relationship with the organisation’s gender structure, i.e., structure shapes and influences culture and vice versa.²⁷ If, for example, men dominate in a particular field or position, gender-marked norms are created in relation to the field or position, i.e., a symbolic gender order, which also has a concrete counterpart in the organisation’s structure.

Tacit knowledge of the symbolic gender order “helps” us to read organisational cultures. That positions, duties, behaviours, professions and tasks, acquire a female or male cachet (at a certain time) is an expression of symbolism in organisations. From this perspective, it can be seen that women are often expected to tidy and keep clean, that femininity is seen as an extension of power, but not as power itself, and that discrimination, threats and sexual harassment increase when women encroach on men’s work.²⁸

A masculine gender marking of leadership, technology and other traditionally male-dominated fields may make women feel unwelcome and also make them involuntarily visible (and therefore particularly vulnerable) in the organisation. They also often risk being regarded as representatives of their sex, as a symbol of women in general, rather than recognised for their individual qualities and expertise. “I get more easily noticed and remembered, not as a competent engineer, but as a female one” responded, for example, one of the participants in Wahl’s thesis study of female civil engineers and business administration graduates.²⁹ Within the framework of the power relations of the symbolic gender order are also found the “master suppression techniques”, as they have been characterised by the Norwegian social psychologist and former politician Berit Ås. These include making invisible, ridicule, heaping blame on/putting to shame, double bind and withholding information.³⁰ Such techniques can obviously also be used by women or men against men, but have been observed as commonly used against women in male-dominated contexts.

The conditions of female bosses are very much a question of power, and women in leadership positions use different strategies to respond to the gender order and manage the ten-

²⁶ P. 133f a.a.

²⁷ P. 142f a.a.

²⁸ P. 144 a.a.

²⁹ Wahl (1992).

³⁰ For a description of these, see ROKS (u.å.) *De 5 härskarteknikerna*. Stockholm: Riksorganisationen för kvinnojourer och tjejjourer i Sverige.

sion between being a woman and a leader. Wahl describes them as 1) denying the gender order and trying to adapt (a gender neutral strategy), 2) downplaying the gender order and stressing the benefits of being a woman (a positive strategy) and 3) understanding their own situation from an awareness of the gender order (external strategy).³¹ Gender equality efforts within an organisation can contribute to an increased awareness of the gender order, which may lead to changes and improvements in conditions for employees of both sexes. However, there is often a discrepancy between rhetoric and practice that can hamper effective gender equality efforts.

On a rhetorical level, most people are sympathetic to gender equality, while the man is the norm in practice in the organisation. The discrepancy between talk and action can be interpreted in different ways, such as resistance or as part of the process of change. There may be a delay with regard to our habitual practical conduct in comparison with our conscious beliefs. It can be interpreted as non-existent in that in practice gender equality and gender equality efforts are not understood in ways that question the gender order. This discrepancy can also be interpreted as the practice being subordinated to the rhetoric, expressed by our perception of ourselves as equal through the ideal that is articulated, even though we are not.³²

Gender equality efforts can mean various things, ranging from the use of skills to the redistribution of power.³³ It also takes different forms in different countries, according to divergent pre-conditions in legislation and policies. The gender equality policy of the Nordic countries, has for example, been oriented towards structures, power and men, and has therefore had different results from countries where the orientation has taken a different form.³⁴ Since organisations interact with their environment, it is obviously relevant to consider this in studies of gender equality within Interreg. A theoretical concept coined by Anna Wahl and relevant to gender equality in organisations is “women as a power resource”.³⁵ It is used by Fosfor as a basis for processes of change and innovation, which is also what Interreg and other regional development efforts aim at.

[Women as a power resource] implies an understanding of women as subjects with right of final explanation, as legitimate interpreters of the organisation. There is an alternative to the usual

³¹ Wahl (1992).

³² P. 258 SOU 2003:16.

³³ P. 175f Wahl m fl. (2001).

³⁴ P. 193f a.a.

³⁵ Wahl, Anna (1996) "Företagsledning som konstruktion av manlighet" *Kvinnovetenskaplig tidskrift* nr 1/1996.

prevalent discourses on women as an inadequate or a complementary resource.³⁶

It is thus about the importance of utilising all the available resources within an organisation to obtain the best results as efficiently as possible, which is ultimately a question of power as well as results. Greater consideration of gender equality issues, including women's knowledge, ideas and interests, in brief, women as a power resource, could thus raise the quality and improve the results of Interreg cooperation around the Baltic Sea. At the same time, fundamental democratic values would be implemented, such as equal participation and women's and men's equal opportunities and power to shape society and their own lives.³⁷

3.3 GENDER ASPECTS OF REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Since Interreg deals primarily with regional development, the gender research undertaken into this policy area is important in understanding the conditions for equality within the Baltic Sea cooperation. Political scientist and gender researcher Malin Rönnblom at Umeå University has studied regional development efforts in Sweden, based on the partnership model imported from the EU (which is used for project cooperation in Interreg and elsewhere).³⁸ She notes that gender equality has become a self-evident aspect of established Swedish politics, including regional (development) policy, while the issue of power and gender has disappeared from the agenda.

As the concept of [gender equality] is used today, its importance is often a matter of course that can be compared to concepts such as freedom, democracy and justice. At the same time the notion of gender equality accommodates a mass of complex power dimensions, and gender especially is constructed in multiple and conflicting ways through the use of gender equality.³⁹

Gender mainstreaming is the strategy for greater gender equality that is used both in Sweden and within the EU, which implies that a striving towards gender equality is to be integrated into in all activities. Rönnblom asserts that this ad-

³⁶ *Kvinnor som maktresurs i förändrings- och innovationsprocesser*, Beskrivning av ett forsknings- och utvecklingsprojekt. Genus, organisation och ledning, KTH [e-resurs: http://www.kth.se/itm/inst/indek/avdelningar/genus/forskning_genus/2.1056/1.6780, collected August 6th 2009].

³⁷ SOU 2005:66 *Makt att forma samhället och sitt eget liv. Jämställdhetspolitiken mot nya mål*. Stockholm: Fritzes.

³⁸ Rönnblom, Malin (2008) "Var tog politiken vägen? Om regionalpolitik, jämställdhet och statens förändrade former." *Tidning för genusvetenskap Tema Välfärdsstaten*, nr 1/2008.

³⁹ P. 34 a.a.

mittedly laudable goal seems to have drained the issue of gender equality of its political force. Specific commitments to women's projects have been replaced by "substantially vaguer formulations" of social sustainability and the importance of integrating gender equality.⁴⁰

Rönblom claims that as political forms have been re-oriented towards partnership, deliberation and negotiation, the *dimension of conflict* so fundamental to politics has been lost. The partnership model is based on negotiations and consensus at lower levels, for example among the actors within a region. According to Rönblom, this working and decision-making method reinforces and reinstates *the consensus tradition*, which has long been established within Swedish politics, which in practice means that dissenting voices are marginalised and the politicisation of new issues such as gender equality, is impeded, because of the absence of mechanisms for dealing with antagonisms and conflicts.⁴¹ It is likely that this also applies to the partnerships within the Interreg framework. Rönblom also notes that there is a marked discrepancy between political intentions at national level and regional practice when it comes to gender equality and women's participation in the regional partnerships in Sweden.⁴² The same state of affairs is also likely to be observed between the European Commission directive and the actual outcome of individual Interreg projects.

A further problematic aspect is the focus on numerical gender equality and *representation* that has been stressed in many regional political contexts. Given this focus, gender equality issues in terms of the actual *content* of the regional development programmes have been pushed into the background. According to Rönblom, this engenders thinking about gender as a *complement*, rather than as confrontation, power dimensions and conflict.⁴³ In addition, regional policy has changed in the direction of an

overall emphasis on sustainable growth, which in the rhetoric includes all citizens and groups in a region and has their best interests at heart. This impeccable object risks the de-politicising of social contradictions⁴⁴

Swedish regional policy shares this description to a great extent with the regional cooperation efforts within the EU In-

⁴⁰ P. 41 a.a., also see Rönblom, Malin (2005) "Letting women in? Gender mainstreaming in regional policies." *NORA*, vol. 13, nr 3/2005.

⁴¹ . 42f Rönblom (2008), also see Hudson, Christine & Malin Rönblom (2007) "Regional development policies and the constructions of gender equality - the Swedish case." *European Journal of Political Research*, vol 46. nr 1/2007.

⁴² P. 41 Rönblom (2008).

⁴³ P. 45 a.a.

⁴⁴ P. 46 a.a

terreg Programmes, where sustainable growth is also one of the watchwords. It is also of interest to apply gender equality as a question of numbers or content to our study of Interreg cooperation in the Baltic region.

4. Method and materials

Based on available programme and project documents, we conducted a small survey of the gender structure of the Baltic Sea Region Programme (BSRP) overall as well as within four selected projects. This survey is both an independent fact base as well as a contextualisation for the second part of the study, which consists of interviews with project and sub-project managers within these four projects, as well as another project where we did not have access to written project material but were able to conduct interviews.

4.1 3R-ANALYSIS

At the programme level, we have studied the gender distribution of different positions within the programme/projects as a whole, based on data on the website of the Baltic Sea Region Programme 2007–2013.⁴⁵ At the project level, we have gone through project applications and websites and studied the details of men and women within the organisation (staffing, duties, responsibilities, etc.). This material has been analysed by what is termed the 3R-method, developed by gender researcher, gender equality expert and investigator Gertrud Åström for use in organisations working towards “gender mainstreaming”.⁴⁶ The 3R method is a clear and practical tool with which to survey and analyse gender (power) structures within organisations, a necessary point of departure for effecting their subsequent change. It is thus also well suited as a method for the study of gender equality and gender issues within the Baltic Sea Cooperation/Interreg. The three Rs stand for Representation, where the men and women are represented, Resources, how the resources are allocated between women and men, and Realia, how gender issues are taken into account in the actual content of activities, in what is actually being done. Together, these issues permit a methodical scrutiny of an organisation, both quantitatively and qualitatively. When applied to the Interreg projects in the Baltic region this may generate questions such as the following. In which positions/functions within the projects, and as users of the out-

⁴⁵ <http://eu.baltic.net>.

⁴⁶ See p. 48f Åström (2007); samt Åström, Gertrud (1998) "Kommuner med känsla för jämställdhet" i *Genus i praktiken – på hans eller hennes villkor?* Baude, A. m fl. [red] Vällingby: Jämställdhetsarbetsarens förening.

comes, do we find men and women, respectively? How are the project resources (salaries, operating funds, premises, titles, status, power and influence) allocated between men and women? How are gender equality issues taken into account in actual project efforts, with regard to ideas, issues, problem formulations, documents, reports, theories, methods, analyses, outcomes, plans and guidelines, planning, and implementation, etc.?

The second part of the study consists of interviews with project and sub-project managers within the selected projects. Its purpose is to survey the symbolic and discursive gender order in daily, practical project efforts, as they are experienced and described by the interviewees. Through the interviews with sub-project and project managers, we wanted to illuminate questions of the gender marking of leadership and its conditions within the projects, of the gender marking of the work processes and the conditions for men and women within the project organisation and in daily project efforts, as well as the degree to which gender equality is taken into account in practical project work, i.e., in everything that happens before the documents and the reports are published. Here too, the 3R method has been used, with the emphasis on the third “R”, Realia. How do the project managers perceive that they are treated in relation to their gender (and possibly other relevant factors such as age, functionality, ethnicity, sexuality, class, etc.)? How does this treatment affect their work situation and the potential for effective project management? What is the nature of the work culture/work climate? What unwritten rules are there? Who can /may (or cannot/may not) do what? What jokes are possible, understandable and accepted (or impossible, incomprehensible, and not accepted)? What stories and recurrent descriptions of reality and project efforts are there? Whose suggestions and ideas are accepted and whose vanish along the way? What are the effects (on the outcomes and also the ongoing efforts) of the fact that some, but not others, may play a part in influencing the work process?

The interviews were either held at the interviewees’ workplace or conducted by telephone and had an average duration of one hour. They were recorded on mp3 players and have subsequently been printed in a summary/referenced form, with passages of particular importance being reproduced verbatim. Both the audio files and the interview transcripts are held by the interviewer and, for reasons of anonymity, will not be made available to anybody.

4.2 DEMARCATATIONS

We have chosen to study only ongoing Interreg projects from the 2007–2013 programme period. The advantages of this were both that contact details, websites, etc. are current and that it has been relatively easy to get hold of the interviewees, and also that we have had the opportunity to highlight (and hopefully influence) gender equality within the project efforts as they proceed. The disadvantages are that, in the autumn of 2009 when the material was being collected, there were main project managers from only Sweden and Finland, and that it was not yet possible to say anything about the outcomes of the projects. If we had chosen instead to study only completed projects, from the programme period 2000–2006, we would have had the advantages of having had a large base of projects to choose from, with main project managers from a number of countries around the Baltic Sea, and we would also have been able to follow the whole project process, including the outcomes. The disadvantages, however, would have been both difficulties in getting hold of those interviewees after project completion,⁴⁷ and that we would not have had an opportunity to influence gender equality in the Interreg projects while they were in progress. The advantages of studying both programme periods would have been that we would have had access to a very large stock of projects and would have been able to say something about daily project efforts, while the interviewees had their hands full, as well as the benefit of hindsight in evaluating the outcomes and the projects. We would also have had the opportunity to interview main project managers from several countries. The disadvantages, however, would have been that this material would have been excessively patchy and sprawling, with limited comparability as a result. Such a study would also have required much greater resources than the present one does.

We also chose to interview only women. The advantage is that we have been able to focus on their conditions within the Baltic Sea Cooperation/Interreg, and also make the material more comparable between different countries. We have also chosen to focus on projects in the traditionally male-dominated fields, in order to make the contrast clearer. The disadvantage is that we will only be able to say something about gender equality in projects led by women, and also from the project manager's own perspective.⁴⁸ If we had chosen instead to interview both male and female project managers, the greatest

⁴⁷ Compare with p. 8f, 56, 60, COWI (2008).

⁴⁸ Which in itself does not need to be incorrect, but if anything gives a clear indication to women's terms on leading positions within the Interreg.

advantage would have been that we could have focused on the gender marking of the organisation/project cooperation itself, without once again making gender equality into a “women’s issue”, i.e., something that concerns only women.⁴⁹ Moreover, we could have pointed to any differences with respect to gender equality between projects led by women and by men, respectively. Even this, however, would have demanded more resources than those allocated for this study. One possibility of the current arrangement is that of supplementing the findings of this report in the future with a further study, focused on projects led by men.

4.3 RESEARCH ETHICS

Given that the selected projects are so few, they have not been named in the report. Since this is partly an evaluative study, it would have admittedly been positive to highlight specific, named examples, both good and not so good, of the consideration of gender issues and gender equality within the BSRP. Naming the projects studied would also have allowed an account of the written sources, i.e., project documents, in a scientifically correct manner. However, we have judged the anonymity of those interviewed sub-project/project managers to be a more important issue to be taken into account and have therefore had to ignore other aspects. In accordance with the research ethics recommendations on confidentiality of the Swedish Research Council, all the interviewees and projects have been anonymised. The greatest possible effort has been made to ensure this or at least hamper identification. We have therefore chosen to remove, or in some case, replace data that we perceive as having negligible relevance to the analysis. The interviewees have also been informed of their option to suspend their participation in the study at any time, even after the interview is completed, without this having any negative consequences for them. They have also received in advance both written and verbal information on the study aims and on those who will have access to the interview material and how it will be used. These measures thus comply with the ethical guidelines of the Swedish Research Council for research in the humanities and social sciences pertaining to the information, consent, confidentiality and utilisation requirements.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Compare with p. 139 Connell (2003).

⁵⁰ Vetenskapsrådet (u.å.) *Forskningsetiska principer inom humanistisk-samhällsvetenskaplig forskning*. Stockholm: Vetenskapsrådet.

5. The study of programme and project documents

The key programme documents for the Baltic Sea Region Programme, the Operational Programme and the Programme Manual focus on gender equality in a few passages. When EU horizontal policies are mentioned, ensuring equal opportunities including the gender perspective, is stated as an important principle for the programme.⁵¹ It states that the promotion of equal opportunities for women and men as well as the prevention of all forms of discrimination based on, for example, gender, ethnic origin, age or disability, will be assessed as a positive factor in project selection. The project owners are urged to integrate these factors into the projects or to “at least take into account the project’s influence on issues relating to equal opportunities”. Projects intended to implement activities that promote equal opportunity are to describe these in the application documents and also the results of the debriefings that are held. In the structure-building projects, what is involved is rather a description of whether men and women are equally represented in project planning, decision-making and the project target groups.⁵² However, the criteria that such a review ought to bear in mind are not defined, while a more detailed definition of what a structure-building project implies is not given either.

The Interreg projects have both one and two project managers for each work package and also one or two representatives for each project partner. The representatives are often heads of each respective organisation. An enumeration of the entire Baltic Sea Region Programme 2007–2013, which to date consists of forty-six projects (first and second application rounds) shows that of the contact persons for the lead partner, women comprise some 32%, and 47% of main project managers. No less than 70% of all information managers are women. However, it is only about half the projects that have such a designation in their programme database, while of the total number of contact persons for the various project partners (excluding the lead partner), women represent only 31%, or 193 of a total of 628 people.⁵³ Details of work package/sub-project

⁵¹ S. 34 *Operational Programme for the Baltic Sea Region Programme 2007-2013*, Final approved version 2.0, 22 December 2009.

⁵² S. 12f *Programme Manual for the Baltic Sea Region Programme 2007-2013*, Version 4.2, 25 January 2010.

⁵³ Calculations are based on information in the project database <http://eu.baltic.net>, the information was collected 2010-03-23.

managers, steering committee members, etc., are missing from this database and whether they are shown on each project website varies from project to project. It also proved difficult to access such information through the programme secretariat in Rostock, for which reason, we have not calculated this for the entire programme.

However, four projects have been examined in closer detail⁵⁴ and of these a very great preponderance of male representatives has been found, while the overall proportion of women is 33%. In one of the projects, the distribution is better than in the rest (61%), while in another it is considerably worse (23%). With regard to project managers for different project work packages, the situation appears considerably better, and here, 45% of project managers are women. In one project, there is a large preponderance of female project managers (71%), while in another the situation appears worse (20%).⁵⁵ It can thus be noted that the Interreg projects have shortcomings in terms of representation, the first of the three “Rs”. Men often hold leading positions in the organisations and are therefore primarily those who are allowed to represent the organisation in the project context, e.g., such as workgroup and steering committee meetings. In the context of project leadership for various projects, the gender distribution, however, remains relatively even. Women thus enjoy relatively great influence over the projects, but in general have less influence in terms of integration of the projects into the participating organisations.

For four of the projects we have also gained access to the application documents to the EU Commission and examined them from a gender equality perspective. The application form contains a special box where “the promotion of equal opportunities” in the project must be specified. The instructions for this box stress gender equality issues as a special item, even if “equal opportunities” also includes other equality issues. Two of the applications examined contain formulations to the effect that the project is “gender neutral” (a formulation that is taken directly from the Commission’s instructions), but that women’s participation at various levels and positions in the project is encouraged. One of the applications emphasises the fact that both the project manager and several of the sub-project managers, from different countries, are women, while the other presents a deliberate, long-term strategy to ensure a more even gender representation, for example, within the

⁵⁴ See chapter 4.

⁵⁵ Calculations are based on information about representatives in steering committees and sub-project managers from four of the five projects we have been observing. The numbers are found in the project database and on the project websites available via <http://eu.baltic.net>, the information was collected 2010-01-04.

steering committees and among conference speakers. There is also a very important addition to the description of this strategy, as follows.

However, the project will also show awareness that women are present to a lesser extent in the [main project field] than men are, which requires a particular openness to their participation in the project activities in order to achieve the desired gender balance.⁵⁶

Another project is described in the application as “neutral with respect to equal opportunities”, but on the other hand it does not mention gender specifically. Its description, however, states that its content/project objectives in themselves constitute a promotion of equal conditions and a striving towards a more egalitarian society at an overarching level. The fourth project application explicitly describes how both the participation of women in the project is actively encouraged, for example, in strategic or managerial positions, and active attempts are made to take account of the interests and needs of different groups (for example, on the basis of gender, age and ethnicity) in project activities and outcomes.

The extent to which these formulations are rather of a cosmetic nature and which ones have real content are naturally difficult to determine, but it is clear that two of the projects seem to have a clearer gender equality strategy than the others. Only one of the four projects, however, has allowed the gender issues to be expressed also in the realia of the project itself, i.e., what the Interreg project actually does. In the other two, these gender issues stop in principle at a representation level. One of the projects does not mention gender at all, which of course may be indicative of gender neutrality, but more likely of gender blindness, given that gender has been specifically singled out in the instructions from the European Commission.

In the other sections of the project applications examined, however, neither gender issues nor gender equality issues are mentioned at all, not even in the only project whose “gender box” indicated that it was intended to integrate these issues into the project activities. On the other hand, what emerges in one of the projects is a fairly unreflecting/gender-blind use of the masculine-charged term man-months instead of the gender-neutral person-months, for the unit in which Interreg counts human resources. This is an unfortunate formulation that helps (probably unintentionally) to re-create a masculine norm within the project activities.

⁵⁶ Out of the project application (anonymised).



6. The interview study

A total of seven project or sub-project managers (all women) within the Interreg programme BSRP 2007–2013 were interviewed. Three of the interviewees are from Sweden, two from Finland and two from the Baltic countries⁵⁷ (one of whom originally comes from another Baltic Sea Region country). Two of them are older and have extensive experience of both leadership and international projects, while the others are relatively young and have varying levels of experience. In the text they have been anonymised as far as possible, and all the details of no importance to the analysis have been removed or replaced. Sometimes it has been relevant to mention the country in which the individual in question works as well as some statements about other Baltic Sea Region countries.

6.1 PROJECT INITIATION AND THE SELECTION PROCESS FOR PROJECT MANAGERS

Project manager 1 has been partly involved since the inception, because she was working as a consultant in the partner organisation at the time of project initiation. She was later recruited to the position that she now holds and has been involved in drafting some parts of the application, primarily in her capacity as a technical specialist/expert. Originally, she was supposed to be the main project manager for the entire project, but after having been assigned new duties in the organisation, she has now become sub-project manager for the contribution to be made by her workplace. Instead, the project economist (a man) has been appointed main project manager, which she feels suits her better, as she sees herself more as a technical specialist than as an administrator. However, she will function as a support for the main project manager in terms of the factual issues and they will partly manage the project together.

Project manager 2 has been handpicked to lead the Interreg project, because she is “the only one “within her organisation who has experience of coordinating large international projects. However, she was not involved in initiating the

⁵⁷ Because of anonymity reasons this is not specified.

project idea, which was instead done “from above”. She will see to the administrative leadership, but when it comes to the factual issues, there is an external (male) consultant with specialist technical expertise who is in charge. “We are joint managers,” she says. The situation is thus about the same as in the case of number 1, but the other way round, with the difference, however, that number 1 does not have the formal responsibility for “deciding” on the factual issues, which this male specialist seems to have.

Project manager 3 was recruited internally during the preparation of the project application and was then involved throughout the entire application process. She had worked on similar projects previously, and she was already part of the organization but was not involved in the initiation of the project idea. Project manager 4 also had a position within her organization and was involved during the application process, and then became project manager right from the start. This Interreg project builds on a previous project in which several of the partners were involved.

Project manager 5 has been around since the start of the project. She was involved in a previous project and was later assigned, together with another person, to draft an application for a follow-on project, and then became project manager. Both project managers 6 and 7 came in at later stages of project preparation and have been project managers since then.

6.2 DOES THE PROJECT TAKE GENDER EQUALITY ISSUES INTO ACCOUNT?

A project manager says she tries to think about having equal gender distribution in work groups and steering committees, and among conference speakers and the like. She also tries to some extent to steer speaking time at meetings so that everyone has an opportunity to be heard. However, the project does not have any explicit gender equality approach. The project manager refers to the heavy pressure of time and space constraints during the application process, where everything you write must aim at pitching the project to the EU reviewers. She is also a bit disillusioned about what the actual purpose of the “gender box” in the application is, and she thinks that it is fairly pointless to include it, as the reviewers probably pay no attention to what it contains. “There is no point writing something really clever, because it isn’t this that decides whether you get the money or not,” she says. It is better to put all your

efforts into the other sections of the application, i.e., what the actual project idea is all about.

She is also disillusioned about gender mainstreaming on the whole, since she previously worked in a gender equality project and noticed how great the strain was on the project manager. She has read gender studies herself and is interested in these issues but does not want to be a project leader for such a project, at least not so early in her career, when she is young, new and inexperienced. She believes that it takes too much time and energy to seek to legitimise *why* one works with gender equality issues, with the result that the actual work on these issues suffers. Yet in her project they try at least, or rather she does as a project manager, to take gender equality issues into account to some extent, in any case in the actual work processes. “Why?” I ask.

Well . . . it’s a good question. How should I put it? Like, I think it’s more important to those of us who themselves belong to this category that is not always self-evident, so it like becomes more important for us to think about it, and that’s why I’m also always going on about this thing about age. It’s more important that we try to get everyone to feel involved and are listened to by several groups, when you yourself know how damn frustrating it is that you don’t always get ahead in those contexts you want to. On account of reasons that you can’t affect either.

Another project leader calls for guidelines for reviewers at the European Commission when it comes to gender issues, for example, when the choice lies between the two projects, you should approve the one that has the most even gender distribution. In the actual project description you can’t do much, she says, as everything is about getting the application approved. She still thinks the Interreg programme and its projects are in general quite equal, particularly in northern Europe. She is however thinking here about terms of representation, resources and the potential for influence by the individual participants rather than about how gender equality issues are taken into account in the project efforts, i.e., in the *realia*.

A third project manager speaks during the interview mainly about an earlier project that she led during the previous programme period, and she argues that since gender and gender equality were not the subject of the project, it was also not relevant to consider these issues. She does have the impression that even then it was expected that one would strive for gender equality in the project, but this is clearer in the guidelines for the current programme period. She believes that they have never had any problems with gender equality in any of her projects.

At least I cannot remember us having any incidents where these problems became evident. Most of our partners have participants of both sexes (...) and we've quite a few women among the most active participants. So we have not had any gender equality problems as far as I can remember.

One interviewee said that in the application for her project, both equality between women and men had been taken into account and also an effort to involve the younger generation. The latter issue is integrated into the actual project design, while the gender issues are considered more at the representation level, i.e., that the partner organizations should be represented in the project by both men and women.

And I think we've succeeded quite well in the project; we've relatively many women involved in the project activities. But then I've checked the representatives of the steering committee, and there's for example only one woman, so then it's not [equal].

She states at first that the composition of the steering group was something of a random process, but she then adds that they were mainly concerned about which persons from each partner organization it was relevant to have there, and then they happened to be mainly men. The composition of this project thus reflects (and reinforces) the lack of gender equality among the respective partners, which we believe could have been dealt with instead within the Interreg project if there had been a more gender-aware strategy.

And then we'll somehow try to take into account gender equality issues when we disseminate the project outcomes. But as the project's on-going right now, I've no clear idea of how this will be done in practice.

This person also has experience of a previous Interreg project and makes comparisons. There, there was also relative gender equality numerically, but otherwise gender issues were not notably taken into account. This time, she has thought more about these questions, especially because she is beginning to feel more familiar with Interreg projects and can therefore view things in a wider perspective. This time it is also more of an explicit requirement by the EU, which she thinks is good. She compares with the issues of sustainability, which must also be more clearly integrated now.

I think that sustainability is a bit easier, as you can integrate this directly in the project activities, for example by using less paper or trying to use video conferencing as much as possible and that, but gender equality is harder, because sometimes you have to choose people who are *relevant* in order to represent something.

And in some contexts, they are mostly men. Especially with regard to these issues.

Another project manager thinks that her project is far too recent for her to say something about how it works from a gender equality perspective, but she also thinks that considering gender issues is a sign that something is wrong. Normally, this is not necessary, she says, and compares with an earlier project she was involved in. “We had no such problems there and I hope this will not happen this time either,” she says. Yet another person thinks that her project is well balanced in terms of gender representation. Admittedly, it is a male dominated field, but there are still relatively many women and no one is discriminated against, “definitely not because of gender but certainly because of personal experience”, which can sometimes coincide with the underrepresented sex, she admits.

6.3 REPRESENTATION

One of the interviewees thinks that there are many older men and a number of younger women, but not so many in between, in the branch she works in. She feels that all project partners may not be so aware of gender equality issues, even on the representational or numerical level. When she talks about the project in general and the various partners from countries around the Baltic Sea, the stereotype of the Nordic countries as more equal is called into question in part, but not the stereotype of the countries of the “East” as less equal.

Like, it sounds a bit unlikely, but if I look at the people who are partners in our project, it is the Danes who are the worst; there it's only men who participate. And they're all probably over fifty. And then when you look at the Baltic states and ... well Russia isn't in our project, but they are in many others, and in the context in which we move, there's a very clear division with often older men as the managers and they often have young female assistants, who are then often skilled in English and can interpret for them. But at the same time, although they are the ones who understand what we're discussing, they're never allowed to make decisions. Instead, it often takes quite a long time, because it has to go like all the way to the top before a decision can be made.

Another project manager also thinks that there are very many men in her field. She is often the only woman, and usually the youngest as well. On the same day as her interview she had been at a meeting where she was both the only woman and the only person under forty. The respective family situations are also completely different; most of the others have

adult or nearly adult children, while she has young children who attend nursery school. In the project too there are so far considerably more men than women, but she believes that there may also be women “behind” the official representatives, whom she has not met since the project is still in the start-up phase.

A third interviewee thinks that there is pretty good gender distribution in the project, with about one third women and two thirds men overall, and even more so among those responsible for work packages/sub-projects. It is also evenly balanced as to who gets to have their say. “Those involved here are strong women,” she says. She does not believe that there are so many assistants and secretaries in the Interreg context, as there might have been previously in working life, but there are case officers of both sexes working on the project. On the issue of resource allocation with respect to who makes sure that there is coffee for the meetings and that all practicalities work properly, she replied as follows.

You do that yourself. Everyone does and helps out. And at the meetings, there is (...) *nobody*, let me tell you, and this is of course all the countries around the Baltic Sea, who behaves like that with respect to the men. In that way, thinking that so-and-so should help out. What we do show here when [at the workplace in Sweden] (...), it is that we have two hostesses here. (...) And that, there we could perhaps better ourselves, but that has nothing to do with the actual Interreg programme.

6.4 RESOURCES

One of the interviewed project managers does not have a project secretary but instead a male assistant project manager, and she tries to ensure that there are more than the two of them who share tasks such as making travel arrangements, and so on. She still however arranges somewhat too many things that are of a “service” nature, such as coffee, fruit and water for meetings. She has a nice office, which she however shares with another person. Her salary is also considerably lower than that of other project managers within her organization. Many of the “old men” though who have salaries several hundred dollars higher than hers, do not manage equally large and/or international projects, but often some smaller regional project with few partners and their own mother tongue as the working language. Instead of getting a considerable salary increase when she became project manager, she received increases of a couple to a few hundred dollars and then an additional supplement of two hundred dollars that will disappear when she is no longer the project manager. She still has a sig-

nificantly lower salary than other project managers, with the exception of another woman who became project manager after her, and who has the same salary scale. This is justified by the fact that these two women are the only ones to have been recruited internally; all others have come from outside and thus been able to negotiate a higher starting salary. Raising the salary of someone who is already inside the system, and is also permanent employed, is for some reason not possible.

Resources in terms of speaking time are also unevenly distributed between men and women in the Interreg context, she feels, and she refers to a conference where two female project managers had to share half as much time as the other (male) speakers had each been allocated, time that was also encroached on by the man who spoke before them and ran over his presentation time. “And these things happen constantly. That those who can behave like this are allowed to do so,” she says.

Another of the interviewees says that she has scanty knowledge about salary levels in general in the project, but in her own case, she can see that as a mature and experienced project manager, with a salary level that also depends on other leadership assignments within her organization, she earns twice as much as the girl who handles the project budget. She takes care to point out that she already had this salary before she became project manager for the Interreg project and that “because Interreg wanted me, I was the only one they could put there, then they just had to take that it costs so [much]”. Her salary has therefore really nothing to do with Interreg,” she states.

The other project managers also find it difficult to say something about gender equality in terms of how resources are distributed between men and women. In general, however, the bosses are men and the assistants and secretaries are women, but it is hard to say anything about the salary levels, as this comes under the responsibility of each partner organization and thus reflects the situation there rather than that within the Interreg project itself.

6.5 REALIA

One of the interviewees says that she is unsure if anything has been written about gender equality in the application, and if so, what this is. For herself, she is most familiar with the purely technical aspects, where there is nothing about gender. When it comes to the selection of partners and participants in the project, they have issued a very wide and open invitation and have not expressed any special requests related to gender.

However, she believes that there is something about gender equality written into the obligatory communication plan, i.e., those parts of the project involving dissemination of information, “how we communicate and with whom, and who our target groups are”.

When the project is under way, then we will of course disseminate information externally, outside the project. And then one can consider presenting things, or seminars in a certain way, to attract those groups that are our target groups. Whether they might be children or decision-makers or what. But that they don't differentiate, so that it's just like little boys who are interested in technology, without it being just as interesting for girls, or that.

Others also think it is hard to say what the gender equality issues in their projects could be. One of the interviewees admits that the politicians referred to as one of the target groups, are in her own mind represented by men. As the project operates within a traditionally male-dominated field, this is easily done, she says. “But I have not worked in the Cabinet offices so close to [those issues], and there may well be a whole lot of women there”. She cites a passage in the project description that relates to socio-economic aspects of the project subject area and says “yes, it may well be softer issues”. The very notion that gender (read women) is linked to what are termed *soft* issues, recurs both in the interviews in this study and in many other contexts, where traditionally male-dominated activities are to be gender mainstreamed. It is as if it is impossible to think about the “hard” technological issues in a gender perspective. Unfortunately, this risks reproducing an unequal social order and conventional gender norms, where technology is established as masculine and social issues as feminine.

Another project manager tells of a meeting, organized by a partner in the project, where the criteria for sustainable solutions within the project area of expertise were to be drawn up. There were scientists, politicians and civil servants of various kinds present and they were predominantly men, especially among the experts and the researchers. Among the politicians and officials, there were more women, but it was obvious that the expertise belonged to the men, and that they were the ones who dictated the conditions that defined sustainable solutions:

But it was not that we weren't listened to. But we ended up in various working parties and we wittered on as best we could. (...) These professors were mostly men, actually, and it sort of led to them heading these working parties. They're very, like *you* within this environment [university], you're very good at this, and so you are good at describing the background to the problems and stuff

like that that the rest of us can begin to look at and unravel, so yeah ... well, so the roles then turned out right, you might say. But I still think that the men who were at the meeting were perhaps more *knowledgeable* than us girls, about the actual issue. I felt they were one step ahead of us, but they listened to us, they did. But I suppose they wanted us to keep on at it a bit probably.

A further individual says that they have not included any gender issues at all in the project description, but have tried to reach out to all the individuals within the target groups that they have identified and which she describes as gender-neutral.

We have thought of them as groups, just like vegetarians are a group, I don't think of them as male or female, no. In the project itself, I don't think we've included any such aspect. I know from a previous project that they had a special section about women in this field. But this isn't the case here; the focus is actually on [these issues] and not on gender issues. I don't know if it's necessary to have separate ... I think it would split up the activities too much, and especially here in [a Baltic country] we're very happy if people come when we arrange a seminar, no matter what sex they are. And if we were to say only women or only men, we'd have major problems with the arrangement, or frankly, only two or three people might turn up, and that would also be a pity.

6.6 TREATMENT AND SCOPE FOR EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP

All the interviewed project managers in this study are active in male-dominated fields, which prompts the following questions. How do they feel that they are treated at work and in their role as project manager within Interreg? In what way do they feel that their gender affects their treatment? And to what extent does it affect their ability to perform their work and manage the project effectively? One of them says she no longer thinks of the fact that she is the only woman on the job in the same way that she did before.

Because I've worked so long, I know quite a few people in the field and that, and they know who I am, so it's no longer like it was the first time you met and they don't know who you are or what you can and that. But I must confess that I *always* think about "what meetings do I have today and how should I dress?" so that I don't make it more difficult than necessary to attend certain meetings. If I know for example that "today I'm going to a meeting, I'll meet people that I have not met before and they are men and I'm like ..." well, then I think about how I dress and that. So as not to ... eh, I don't *know* how important it is, but *I* might feel more comfortable in my role then, in some way.

She also thinks about being thoroughly prepared for the meetings. “So that I know what I’m talking about.” Neither her clothes or other preparations, such as having the right papers with her or reading up on something, do not really need to take that long, she says, but it is something she always makes sure to do, to avoid running the risk of being “wrong”. This is a common strategy among women in male-dominated contexts and in senior positions, i.e., in all contexts where the norm is a specific kind of masculinity.

Especially in the international context, as I don’t know the people, or they don’t know who I am and that, so this is how it is of course in this specific EU project, not the familiar home environment that I have here at [workplace] in my role. And sometimes it may be if I meet someone who is ... like, a supplier of equipment, technology, then maybe it’s like that no one really (sigh), takes you seriously or that they, what shall I say, it’s not a *problem* but it might have *happened* that it’s been like this, that it has taken a while before you were trusted. That you know what you’re doing.

She does, however, take some of the blame herself, and speculates whether it is rather the case that she herself does not *believe* that she is taken as seriously as a man. She thinks back to when she studied to become a civil engineer, which was also a very male dominated environment, and speculates about the feeling of low self-esteem and of not really fitting in that has remained with her ever since.

As for male master suppression techniques, there is a great degree of variation in the extent to which interviewed project leaders believe themselves to have been subject to this or to have seen others treated in this fashion. Usually, however, they want to attribute this to the workplace in general, rather than to the specific EU project. One of the older interviewees believes that this no longer “works on her” and also that today’s young women do not allow themselves to be subjected to this. “Master suppression techniques will not work once they have been stated and exposed,” she says. One of the younger women also does not believe that she has been subjected to this to any significant degree, although she has found herself in male-dominated environments, both in education and in employment. However, she states as follows.

Some of them who may be not so used to women being present at meetings and that, and so may have a certain jargon that men use among themselves. That they tell slightly sexist jokes or whatever you want to call it, or use certain words that they shouldn’t really. This might have happened. But here I believe, as I said, that when a young or mature woman turns up, they actually clean up their act (laughter), that those who might have known each other

for ages that they would tell such jokes or use a certain jargon, more so if it was only men. But things might have happened such as me having heard, it wasn't anything aimed directly at *me* but it was perhaps "*women*" in general, like. I can't come up with any specific examples, but ... (silent and thinking) Yes, it might have happened that you thought that that was a daft thing to say, in this context, or like "I didn't really need to hear that" (laughter). Eh, I think it says something about them, more than it does about me (laughter).

This particular approach appears in the interviews; the women trivialise sexist experiences and tendencies, and ascribe them to the "jargon" and that "it says more about them [the old men]" than about the women themselves.⁵⁸ It is also common, as we saw above, to ascribe this to a bygone age, both by saying that it does not affect them anymore, and that young women nowadays do not accept being treated that way. Comparisons between Scandinavia and other countries were also made by the Swedish and Finnish interviewees, with the subtext that gender equality is greater in the Nordic countries and less so in the Baltic countries and Poland.

Asked whether any special treatment she is given as a woman affects her ability to manage the project effectively, one of the project leaders ponders a long time and finally gives the following answer.

I don't believe it hinders me. I think it pushes me to get better. I want to believe that this is really an advantage, because it pushes me to get better and better and being prepared is like only positive and, no I don't think it's an *obstacle* for me, but what I'm saying is just that it's something I *think* about. It doesn't just wash over me unnoticed, like. Maybe not just when I'm in that meeting or meeting that person and that, maybe I don't think about it lots then, but I do think about it beforehand and sometimes I reflect *afterwards* (...), but there was nothing at the meeting that was any kind of obstacle for me or ... No, I don't think so, I think I may have an *advantage* sometimes. Eh! Like, people might perhaps *remember* you, that you're not one in the crowd (smiles) so that it may be an advantage.

Yet another of the younger interviewees voices the idea that it may sometimes be an advantage to be young and female, because you stand out and are more easily remembered. But she too feels that her expertise is not always valued as high as she believes that it would have been had she been a man, and just like the project manager in the previous example, she puts some of the blame on herself; that she *herself* does not place as high a value on it as she should.

⁵⁸ Compare with Könsneutral strategi: Wahl (1992), also see chapter 3.2 in this report.

I don't really always put myself forward when I feel a bit uncertain, because I think that "there are other experts here who know this better and I'm here to learn and ..." But how long should you be doing that? (...) So perhaps I too could get better at this, because I believe you can have some effect by being more of a taker. And then it gets, I've noticed, (...) that I have probably relied quite a lot on one man in the project who is an expert and a very big support for me at work. But sometimes it's easier for me to say "yeah, well, they listen more to you, can't you call and say this and this?" And it's like, I diminish myself by doing this, though perhaps it's the easiest way to solve the problem right then, in the long term it's not good to do it that way, like. So I ought to try to face these hurdles now myself more.

When asked how her treatment affects her ability to manage the project in an efficient manner, she replies as follows.

Like, it's obvious that it affects me. Perhaps I need to make a little more effort than an older man would need to do in the same job. I must do a little more, I must be a little better, a little more well-read, a bit better at English, like yes ... So, first, it affects me partly because I always want to be prepared before I do anything, I'm reluctant to improvise as then I feel like I'm just standing there and rambling, for example, during a presentation. Instead, I want to really feel that I, that this, now I know what I should say, like. And before I, before, if I'm sitting in a meeting and I know that soon I'll get a question about this, then I often sit and think through exactly what to say. I often write it down too. Because I don't want to end up in the situation that I like hesitate or that I can't really answer some question that I get and stuff like that. Then, of course, it also has an affect that I surround myself with people I feel safe with, naturally. And that I'm actually reluctant perhaps to participate in a meeting with people I don't myself feel I won't get any back-up from. It sounds like I always have my own staff around me, but I don't, I travel a lot myself too. But then it's often with the project partners and many of them I know so well, now that I've worked with them for so many years, so here I feel pretty secure, although there are some new ones that I'm getting to know now. But in other contexts, such as at major conferences and that, at times it feels more uncomfortable, like you're there as well, this bit of eye candy who's to join in a little here at this meeting.

She also feels that she generally has more difficulty winning support for her ideas than male (and older) project managers and she feels that it is more difficult for her to be an authority figure "like what I say is what goes." This project manager also informs us that she has been subjected to several master suppression techniques, i.e., *ridicule*, in that one of the "old men" at a meeting mimicked what she said or that she

has been called “ma’am” behind her back when they thought she was making too many decisions, and also *sexual harassment* in the form of photos of scantily clad women at the end of a PowerPoint presentation by a project participant from another country, *made invisible* by not being introduced at conferences during her time as a project secretary on another project, and the *double bind* that simmers beneath the surface and manifests itself through constantly recurring questions and comments about whether it is not time for her to start a family soon and “what will happen later on when you’re on parental leave?” She is upset and annoyed that everyone takes for granted both that she will have children and also that she will be on parental leave for a longer period, without anyone even asking her whether she wants to. The double bind here involves both being defined as abnormal if she, as a woman in her thirties, does not self-evidently want to be a parent or take parental leave, and also by taking her hostage by presenting her as “indispensable” at work, and legitimate concerns about the damage to her career during possible parental leave.

For when I look at how other people who have been on maternity leave here, what has happened then, as if they don’t count during that time. And then perhaps there’s an organisational change, or the position is filled, or it turns into a new project and stuff happens so that just “oops, what job are *you* going to do now?”

She does admit that she too has made use of suppression techniques, but perhaps mostly as a (counter) strategy or technique for confirming her ability to do her job and exercise her leadership.

Withholding information, I have definitely done, but I’ve done this as much to the old men as to younger people and that’s because I’m a bit egocentric, that is, if I see an opportunity, for example, that I can get the project into this and that, like, then it’s not like I go and broadcast this, as to say ‘have you heard, you can get various projects in here’, but then I make sure to get mine in first. So that’s what you do, unfortunately, a few dirty tricks. **(KSL: It is not always unfortunately)** No, maybe it’s also a strategy sometimes, but ... mm. Then I don’t know. Like, I also ridicule sometimes, but not in a group. But I do that when I get so bloody sick and tired of all the old men, like. And men don’t need to be above a certain age to be old, some can be old men at thirty, when they behave in a certain way. Then, like, you just have to vent your spleen, with people you know (giggles). **(KSL: But not on them?)** Well, I’ve done that too, one day when I was just fed up with a professor, among other things, I know I was so tired of him, so I said something, I don’t remember what it was. Eh, I was joking about something, so it was like ... I went too far. He was a

little thrown first, and just ... lost the thread and then he continued. For he was the sort who always has to be at the centre of attention, like. And it was that I was trying to interrupt, then, that there's a whole group of us here, but then he just kept going. But I remember very well that one ... woman boss from [a partner in another country] was sitting diagonally across from me and I saw her just (shows how she got a fit of the giggles and laughs a bit). She was probably quite pleased with what I said.

The two interviewees who are older and more experienced also testify that age is very important for their treatment as project managers and their ability to perform their duties effectively. One of them explains it as follows.

I think that because I am *older* you become, (...) more trusted, one has experience, huh. So I don't feel at all belittled by some [people], if I can't, or ... I think it's on account of my seniority so, I am very equal anyway, directly, with male, if it involves a bit more [technical issues] and that, I do think so. But ... I can imagine that if you are younger, maybe you are considered a bit more lightweight, it's possible. For I *notice* that when I got older, I was listened to much more in every camp. Not just in the male, but children, I mean *everyone* listens much more to me now. So like, it's this that I'm older I think, it's probably an advantage to be a professional woman and a little older. And I've noticed this, I've talked to several women in [another country], because I've been in different projects with Southern Europe as well, and they say the same thing.

Yet she still feels that there is a difference between her and the male (expert) project leader in that the women in the project seem to prefer to come to her with their questions, while the men mainly turn to her male colleague. This she connects, however, to the fact that they perceive it as being easier to communicate with someone of the same sex, rather than that the men reject her expertise and leadership. Another of the project leaders say that she cannot remember ever having been treated worse within the project because of her gender. However, she also believes that it is related to her own personality and attitude, that she simply does not expect this to happen, and therefore is maybe spared this, or she does not notice it when it does. She also believes that her extensive experience of meetings and seminars in different contexts and of having to deal with many different kinds of people can be a contributory factor to her being treated in an equal way.

But yes, there have been times that I've noticed that certain people do not think I'm a man (laughs). When you've lived as long as I have, this has of course happened, but in this project context it has been very, very rare ... I can't think of any good examples.

When she thinks about conditions for other women and men respectively in this or similar projects, she says that in many situations it can be difficult to determine what is related to experience and expertise and what has to do with gender. In the area where her project is active, the number of women has risen in recent years, including those at management level and in all the countries around the Baltic Sea. Nor has she noticed any male master suppression techniques within the project, but she says it may be because the chairperson is often a woman and that the balance of power has thus shifted. In the workplace in general, however, she has experienced such things, but not in the Interreg project. She believes that there are two main reasons: firstly, that there are relatively many women involved in the project, from many partners, and secondly, that much of the project work takes the form of research and development, which means that it is important to safeguard the participants and their ideas, regardless of gender.

Another interviewee compares with a previous project she led, when she *was* very young, and also *looked* very young, and also had very *little experience* of such large projects as Interreg and what they involved. At that time she did experience some problems with people not taking her very seriously, but she did a good job with the project, which gave her status as a number of the partners expressed satisfaction with her work and the way she managed the project. Her work thus gained her status and trust and appreciation from the project participants. All this has stayed with her during the current project, although there can sometimes still be a problem with people not really thinking that she is up to representing the project in certain formal contexts, and that this should preferably be done by the male head of her workplace.

But of course, a manager can be both a woman and a man, so it is more associated with status hierarchies in general. But I don't know ... if you do things well, you're appreciated and then it's no problem, even if you are a woman. But of course, in the beginning I should think, like, I don't know, I'm just wondering if maybe people would have treated a man more seriously from the start even though he was not so experienced. I don't know. Perhaps this is the lot of women, that we always have to earn our appreciation by *doing* things, and doing them well.

She too believes that male master suppression techniques are quite rare in the project, but that her perception of this is also because she is not a person who particularly cares about such things. "I don't pay so much attention to such details," she says, adding that she sometimes notices that some men ignore her, but that she tries to disregard this and instead carry

on being herself and do her job without allowing herself to be affected by this to such a great degree.

And I haven't noticed that it has caused any problems for my work or anything, but maybe it's something that you, like, don't notice just because you've become so accustomed to these things? I don't know. But in any case I haven't seen so much of it.

Another project manager does not think her gender seems to play any role in the treatment she receives in the project or for her ability to do her job well. She too points out, however, that this has to do with the fact that she does not care so much about what people think. "I mean, I ask the questions I want answers to and don't care if someone thinks it's something I should know already; I mean there are so many things I don't know, so frankly, I don't care very much". She is also quite young and thinks that maybe this is a positive thing, as she can permit herself to ask about "everything" that she wants to know. Moreover, she feels that when it comes to understanding new things and connections, she is often a little faster than her older colleagues, which gives her an edge in certain contexts. Overall, she thus does not think that either age or gender is a factor in how she is treated and dealt with. "I haven't had any problems so far. Or maybe it's that I don't see the problems," she says and laughs. When I ask her if she thinks that the conditions for women and men in the Interreg project differ, she replies as follows.

Hm .. it's a very difficult question, perhaps it is also ... with respect to the Nordic countries, it is quite clear that men and women are treated very much the same, as if there wasn't any difference, or I don't know how you feel about it (laughs), but it's at least what I've seen in the project. Maybe it's different for other partners. But it also depends on education, I think, because I know for example from a [a Baltic country] partner that the project manager is obviously a man. He is more experienced and has more education than the woman who assists him, so she is the assistant. But had it been vice versa [she had been more experienced and better educated] it would have been the other way round. I do think that it is so.

She also stresses, just like other interviewees, that the project managers and especially the sub-project managers often make travel arrangements and perform other routine administrative tasks, be they men or women who hold these positions. The internal project structure in most Interreg projects is like that, she holds. As for master suppression techniques, she says that they do not occur to any great extent within the project, and what there is, is not the preserve of any specific

gender but relates rather to other status hierarchies such as experience, formal rank and authority.

For example, if you're sitting in a meeting and there is a discussion about something and you already know what the moderator thinks. Then it's no use trying to steer the discussion in a different direction because you know they won't modify their viewpoint. So when I see this, I obviously stop debating, because it's pointless in any case.

Finally, one of the participants adheres to her position that there are no differences between men and women in the project, but that all are treated "normally" and equally. She also thinks she can manage the project efficiently without being influenced by any gender patterns.

6.7 THE SYMBOLIC GENDER ORDER – THE PROJECT CULTURE

A common feature of the project managers interviewed is that they perceive the project culture and work climate in their respective Interreg projects as very good. Words such as nice, cosy, open, respectful, committed and broad-minded crop up several times. The extent to which the project culture is gender-marked is a more difficult question. Unwritten rules, joking and jargon that are part of a symbolic gender order are difficult for the interviewees to pin down. Instead, they stress the "common fraternal respect" towards all the project participants, regardless of gender, nationality, religion or anything else. With regard to informal status hierarchies within the Interreg project, one of them, for example, is of the opinion that this is primarily related to the degree of responsibility on the part of the individual partners and people in the project. Moreover, the size (i.e., the budget) of the sub-project, of which the person in question is a part, is significant, where those who have a very small budget do not have as much say as those who have a large budget. The same applies to the partners who have been involved from the very beginning, when the project was planned, with respect to those who have come in later. However, she does not think that she sees any gender patterns. There are strong individuals who are good at getting acceptance for their ideas, but they can be either men or women. In her own organization, there are also a number of women in high positions.

Another of the interviewees, on the other hand, states that the social aspects of these projects are also quite considerable

and that it is clear that she as a woman has to be mindful what is actually permitted if, for example, she can accompany a male colleague from the project by herself, when he suggests a sightseeing walk in a new city. She has also noticed that status hierarchies differ somewhat among different countries, for example, in some countries, official rank is very important, and that it should be the boss who is the contact person for the project, whether this is a man or a woman. When asked what kind of jokes that are permissible or taboo in the internal project culture, she replies that they try to be careful not to joke at the expense of any particular nation or nationality, but that sometimes this still happens, and she then tries to gloss over these incidents. Nor are sexist jokes particularly common but she says that all the same, she has reacted several times to how some participants from other countries have discussed sexual scandals, or other subjects with sleazy details.

But sometimes you're taken aback; it might have been the same here, but I don't think that Swedish officials would sit like that in an open, at an open lunch, like, and just shrug this off. I think our conversations here are a little more discrete, we don't really tackle such things.

The same applies to the sexist images in the PowerPoint presentation.

Like I was just so taken aback that it did so at all, so after that then ... well, like it could that thing, when this was after all a talented researcher from a large university in [country], well then it can probably pop up anywhere, that's how it feels. (...) So it must occur in more places, that wouldn't surprise me though, even here in [country], that we think are good.

Regarding family status and the conditions for men and women in the project, one of the Swedish project leaders reflected on the fact that her fellow employees with young children are rarely on leave completely when their children are sick, but work from home instead. "But I haven't said anything, because I'm thinking it must surely be their decision, but it may well also be that I pile it on too much so that they feel they can't take time off properly to look after their kids."

With respect to status hierarchies in the actual project efforts, with regard to those who actually get proposals and ideas accepted, one of the interviewees believes that she and the assistant project leader hold the trump card, as they have drafted the project application and therefore know what must or can be implemented or not, with reference to what they have promised the EU. She thinks she might be a bit restric-

tive about accepting other people's suggestions but she believes that it is probably to do with the fact that she is new to the role and wants to be certain that they can honour their commitments. She is, however, aware that she evaluates different employees' proposals differently, and not always on an entirely factual basis but more according to feelings and trust, and that there can be different outcomes if she has consulted someone, or if the same person comes up with a proposal that is entirely their own. However, it seems that she reflects a lot on her leadership and why things are as they are.

As for the settings for meetings and informal social situations in connection with these, the interviewees believe without exception that these are relaxed and friendly and that everyone talks with everyone else. One of them says that if you want to feel a little bit comfortable, you generally sit in a national group so as to be able to speak your own language for a while, but she does not feel that there are any gender patterns in these contexts: "No, Interreg is probably pretty good from a gender equality perspective, I think. There aren't very many problems." Family and children are also a conversational topic that is close to hand during breaks and meals.

Like when you have a working lunch here, and a working day, then you don't get time to talk about this. But in the beginning, then when we got to know each other, then there were several people ... *yes!* there was one who showed overhead slides and it was so liberating. He happened to include a picture of his grandchild. And then everybody just *ran* up to him during the break: "do you have grandchildren, so do I! Blah blah blah blah ..." like that, huh. (smiles) Yes, it was very liberating, actually. Eh .. so, well, you're talking .. maybe ... in your spare time, when you have more .. you're sitting at some dinner one evening (...), then you get onto family and children and holidays a bit (...) And I also notice in this that people like this, talking about .. they don't brush it of with "private life is separate ..", they don't. It's just that I believe that there isn't enough *time* to raise these issues, so much. It's very rushed when you meet, but if you happen to meet in the evening, then it's there. It's there right away, like.

However, it is clear that the heterosexual norm is strongly entrenched in these contexts, and speaking about one's family from a homosexual context does not seem possible really. One of the Swedish interviewees stated that a former colleague sometimes felt compelled to conceal this in international contexts, while another Swedish interviewee says that it is difficult to live openly as a homosexual, especially in Poland and the Baltics, but also at Swedish workplaces. "It is still a little *too* private, I think."

One aspect of power and influence within the Interreg co-operation in the Baltic Sea Region that has repeatedly been highlighted as relevant by the interviewees, is the question of language, i.e., a knowledge of English. This is about the individual's opportunities to exert influence and about relations among countries within the region.

Like, you notice this already, if you look at the statistics on those who participate the most in [Interreg] projects. It's those who are traditionally good at English, i.e., Finns, Swedes, Danes, and Germans. The Poles are sort of beginning to catch up more and more, like. It's mega difficult to involve partners from Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Kaliningrad. Our ambition was to involve more partners from those, now this has resulted in a major overload of Swedes, as there were so many there who *wanted* to be involved. So you see it mega clearly; they quite simply do not participate in the projects and you can't get them to join, especially at local and regional levels, which we work with. It is not *there* where those who are good at English are, 'cos they get promoted to other positions. And then it's actually, this is probably a slightly different kind of age discrimination, 'cos it's often we who're younger who are better at English. And there are like many older men, even in Sweden and Denmark, who are not good at English and they like perhaps choose to not really join in. You often get the question "Will this meeting be in Swedish?"; just last Monday someone who was going to be involved with [a project task] called me "I see that the programme is in English, will there be information [in English] too..?". "Yes, it's meant to be that", like. So then they probably choose not to be there at all perhaps, those who are not brave and above all men of that age; they don't want to make fools of themselves, like. And there may well be other consequences, that .. it is unfortunately often the case that there are men of that age, and women too maybe, of that age who have the top positions, and then it can also be harder to get them to join in, which makes it harder to change things fundamentally. You may be able to implement the project successfully but to then push through fundamental changes is much harder when the bosses haven't been a part of the process.

The inverted age hierarchy, coupled with language skills, that the project manager is talking about here is interesting, because it shows how difficult and intimidating it can be when the norm is disrupted and those who are used to constituting the obvious power centre suddenly no longer do so. However, it is of course also alarming that the imbalance of power between East and West is strengthened by the fact that those countries that two decades ago were part of the Eastern bloc, are still not Interreg partners on the same terms as other countries around the Baltic Sea.

Like, it is a language issue this too. Those who sit and mumble aren't listened to. And perhaps you say '*please* speak up!' and the third time you say it and they don't anyway, I mean it's almost unnecessary that they come here then. We don't have very many like that, just a few, and when you tell them they usually sharpen their wits. But you notice that they do get left out, yes, they do. While the women we have here, they speak up like anything. The girls who are a part of this are really strong.

This project manager is keen to stress that this has nothing to do with gender, but rather with language skills and "temperament", where she believes that some nationalities in her project are better at being takers than others - both in the "East" and the "West".

6.8 GENDER EQUALITY IN GENERAL

All the interviewees were asked what gender equality meant to them personally. It turned out that they are generally able to express themselves very well on this issue, although some said that they had not given it much thought before. One of the Swedish project leaders made comparisons looking back in time, within her own family and in society at large, and said that the gender equality efforts that have been pursued over many years have paid off.

That girls have been allowed greater opportunities to do the same thing as boys. And perhaps my grandmothers and grandfathers didn't have this in the same way that *I* have had. It might not have been so self-evident that they would have studied engineering at degree level. I have never even needed to *consider* that it wouldn't have been on the cards for *me*, like it has been just as self-evident that *I* should do this just like my *brother* would. So in this way, gender equality is definitely important and for me gender equality is maybe that you have like the same opportunity to do what you want or, that. Yes.. without having to consider whether to impose gender quotas here or there, like. For like it's how to get there, that you should have the same opportunity. Then personally I might think that .. it can sometimes go to extremes, too. We are still different, men and women and you should maybe be allowed to be. If you as a woman, for example, think that children and a family are terribly important, that you shouldn't feel any pressure from society that it's not really *okay*. That you as a woman should also have a career, indeed, or ... it can go the other way. If I think that now that my children are small that it's worth it to me that I spend more time with them and that I want to work 80% of the time because of this, that I shouldn't have to have an inferiority complex because of this or I

shouldn't have to feel that I'm not equal or that don't do what I should and that, because I have *chosen* this, and this is because I *want* to, it's not because I am discriminated and that, as a woman, but it's purely my own will and that. And this should still be taken into account, in my opinion. It is perhaps to some extent to do with the fact that my job combines freedom with responsibility, and then you ... well, I suppose I am fortunate that I have the opportunity to choose pretty freely how I want things, and I haven't experienced any resistance.

She thinks that the Swedish society is very equal in some respects and definitely not equal in others. She says that in her family and social circle, everyone is highly educated and she wonders whether they are perhaps also more equal than people in other social strata. Structural factors such as class and level of education are thus touched on in her reasoning, but at the same time she thinks that gender equality is also about personal choices and about giving each other space as individuals, such as between a couple.

Yes ... [my husband] gives me freedom like to do what I want and I give him freedom and so I think we are pretty equal, then there's no need to measure this by how much you work, if you work a 100 or 80 percent. And if you get down to the little things about who does what at home then maybe we definitely see some kind of pattern, but eh, then we have chosen it, and as long as we're satisfied with that in some way (laughter). I don't know, it's difficult.

To talk in this way about oneself and one's own group as individuals who make free, personal choices and other groups and social strata as structurally controlled collectives is common, not least in terms of normative value issues such as gender equality. In this particular interview, it is also clear that the project manager is aware of these pitfalls and throughout she relativises her answers. It's *hard* to talk about gender equality when the norm relating to this is as strong as it is in Sweden.⁵⁹ Asked whether the view of gender equality that she thinks exists in Sweden is also reflected in the project, she replies as follows.

Right, well, if gender equality for me is rather like unbiased you should *have an opportunity to*, like, then I think that it is reflected in our EU project up to this point, when we've established it. 'Cos we haven't attached any *values* if it's male or female, or it's old, like .. they've been allowed to be *involved* and if they've got something to contribute then, like "hey, *great fun*, you're very welcome to join

⁵⁹ Compare with Martinsson, Lena (1997) *Gemensamma liv. Om kön, kärlek och längtan*. Stockholm: Carlssons.

us!”, like, we haven’t made any *distinction*. So if that’s gender equality for me, then I think it’s reflected in the project.

All the interviewees think that gender equality is self-evident, that is a matter of fairness and that it is about everyone being allowed the opportunity to have a career or become an expert in a particular field, irrespective of their gender or other characteristics that we as individuals cannot influence. Some also believe that it is about making use of different experiences and perspectives and that it is therefore of value to field a broader team. One of them goes a step further and also highlights aspects of ethnicity as an important factor.

It is mega poor, ethnicity really, in these contexts too, it’s only the fellow countrymen from around the Baltic Sea and then they’re happy that they have such a cultural mix, like. But had they dared to bring in [other people], then maybe we could have had a wider view. Now everyone has their perspective, like, set.

One of the Swedish project leaders think that the pre-conditions for gender equality in Sweden are decent, with good formal conditions in the form of laws, regulations and social security systems.

And then I don’t think we should be satisfied by a long shot. Like, it works very well in theory, but what it’s actually like in practice, we did touch on this earlier. I think offences are being committed at every workplace, several times every year when it comes to the Gender Equality Act.

In spite of this, she still thinks that the formal gender equality in Sweden is reflected in the Interreg project in which she participates, for example because of the fact that it is run by a woman, which she doesn’t think would be possible in all the countries around the Baltic Sea. When I ask her if she believes that the various project partners and partner countries can learn from each other in the area of gender equality, she answers in both a nuanced and reflective manner.

Yes, I do, right, definitely, and then it’s not just this colonial perspective we should have, that they should learn from us, but that we have certainly a lot to learn from them, even though we *think* that they’re not so equal. But then I think the best way to learn, it’s ..like, by you just, like that you work in this type of project is one way. That you see and that they get used to the fact that it’s women and that maybe we can find a way to relate better to their culture. But then I also believe that, like, experiences and that and like drumming things in is all well and good, but I think that legislation is many times the be-all and end-all. I think that’s why

we have come a pretty long way here in Sweden and I think that the other, all the countries ought to have some similar kind of legislation, and perhaps even better, but it will probably be many years from now before they have it there.

On the final question if there is anything she would like to add that it is important to include in a study on gender equality within Interreg, some of the interviewees respond that what is required above all, is a willingness by the EU and the programme secretariat to implement these issues, and clear guidelines on how this is to be done. One of the Swedes puts it this way.

We are so very steered in the actual application that we must sell it to the reviewers. So that if you want to get to the root of this problem like, it's not enough to look at those who are running the *projects*, but the guidelines prepared by the secretariat like, by each national representative, it's *there* that you must begin to change things, so that they also think that these issues are important (...). Like, I think it was like that in the previous programme period that in order to become a project manager you had to have a certain track record, for example, but this has been removed. You have to start right there, because we who draft the projects and then work in them, we are so dependent on their discretion, the guidelines, so we have to adapt to their references. You might miss this a little bit when it comes to other issues too. I think that on the part of Sweden they should, as a nation, put more pressure on the programmes and that.

Just writing that one should take gender equality between women and men into account, and leaving it at that, she thinks is meaningless, "you might as well just leave it", she says. Another of the interviewees talks about gender equality as being treated equally regardless of our gender, and that all are equal in value and help each other.

And that you have an identity of your own, both who you *are* and what you *can do*, of course. Both what you are and what you do. For what you are, that's one thing, that's what characteristics you have, and that. And then what you do is after all also what you, *I* do think that you should be ambitious and .. and work pretty hard anyway, with .. make an extra effort when the job demands it. (...) And it's important to keep your spirits up and that you can laugh and you can make an extra effort and you can help each other out and if necessary stay behind an extra hour and do this and that so you help each other *out*, without you sneaking off or your colleague tries to sneak off, but instead everyone like feels .. I like that and then (...) gender equality .. well, it's not just about gender, but about being equal in all things, in my opinion. Like this about being equal before the law and .. well, that you, well

you are .. nobody is worth more than anybody else, in my opinion. We're all worth the same.

When she looks at her own project from a gender equality perspective, she cannot see that there are any differences among the various partner countries either. Rank, status, responsibility; "they all vary", she says, while leafing through the project papers on the table in front of her. Her answer to the last question too, whether there is something that it is important to include in the study, focuses on the Commission and its guidelines, and as before, she focuses primarily on the *representation* of women and men within the Interreg projects.

The only thing that I think, that I can *see*, is that it is only the Commission that can do anything, if you're going to impose some kind of quota and that. It really depends on what you arrive at [in this study], if you arrive at that it's pretty equal, I really don't think you should *touch it* at all, because then you've bloody well ruined everything that might have once been achieved.

Another project manager, from Finland, expresses herself in a similar way, namely that equality is about everyone's equal value and that there is no reason not to treat people equally. She also feels that Finnish society is relatively equal, even though there are unequal areas, for example, top positions in business. She also thinks that gender equality can be seen in the project, at least among the Finnish partners. As for the other partners and partner countries, she says that generally speaking, she believes that the major differences are between, for example, the Nordic and the Baltic countries, but that within the project this is not very noticeable, as the project partners comprise a very specific kind of organizations and institutions, and likewise the individual project participants comprise a specific group, which does not significantly reflect society in general, but which may have more in common with organizations and individuals within the same field in other countries. With respect to the possibility of learning from each other in the field of gender equality, she says the following:

I suppose cooperation of this kind also affects these issues, but of course it can go very slowly and it is difficult to say whether any project, *a project*, has such a great impact, but *many*, many projects and *a lot of* cooperation does of course have an effect.

The second Finnish project leader believes that gender equality issues are indeed important, but it can also go to extremes and that the demand for gender equality may in itself

constitute a stress factor. However, she feels that gender equality is important from a creative perspective, in order to include different perspectives and because, in her opinion, women and men are good at different things. For example, women in her opinion are better at seeing things from different perspectives and men are better able to convince and inspire confidence. It is important to acknowledge these qualities and thus it is important to give men and women the same opportunities to exert influence in both Interreg projects as well as other contexts, she says. She also feels that there are major shortcomings in the area of gender equality in Finland, as most positions of influence are held by men, despite the fact that the president is a woman.

But after all it's not exactly the president who has influence over the issues at the practical level. (...) In the financial sector men pre-dominate, and this is the sector that has the greatest influence in our society. (...) So we really do need more women in top positions, still.

She does think, however, that the situation in the Interreg project is different, and more equal. She notices a difference between the partners and partner countries, however, and that is how hierarchical society and the organizations are in themselves. In Finland, for example, she believes that it is easy for people at different hierarchical levels to talk to each other and work together, while it is considerably more difficult in Poland, for example. Since it is still predominantly men who are found at the highest hierarchical levels in both countries, it will be automatically unequal if the decisions are made only there, without the involvement of other people. As regards the possibility of influencing, and learning from, each other in the field of gender equality, between partners and partner countries, she thinks that this could happen to a certain extent, but since these issues primarily involve cultural patterns and structures, within countries and organizations, she believes that it is both difficult, almost impossible, and takes an enormously long time. Like other interviewees, she also thinks that it is important that the funding body, the European Union, seriously addresses both gender equality and other equality issues such as those relating to age and generation.

If they want this to become visible and for something to really happen within the projects, there must be some, *more* guidelines. My proposal is, for example, that this could be addressed in more detail in the communication plans. That different projects should, in their communication plans there ought to be a section where they would reflect on how they view different genders and

gender aspects in presenting projects or providing information on them or disseminating results, and so on. But once again this requires guidelines, as it's difficult, it's a difficult question how to do this in reality.

One of the Baltic project leaders is also positive towards gender issues, but she too thinks that it is easy to go to extremes and “hype” gender and gender equality. She recalls an example from her training, where it was wholly self-evident that everyone learned to use certain male connotated technology and technical aids, but this is not something that she thinks she needs to go around and tell people at every possible opportunity. She says that she knows how to use it and does so according to need, but there's an end to it.

And I think this is the biggest problem with the whole gender thing, that women tend to stress that they can do the same things as the men, but I honestly think that this is natural. No need to apologise if you *can't*, 'cos not all men can either [use this technique], *no*. But you need not stress *that* you can do it either. (...) I don't go around telling everyone that “ok, do you know that I can [do this] and I can [use one of these] and I am pretty equal”, 'cos that is nonsense. And this is, I think, the problem [with gender hype]. I think it's important that you are treated as a person and not as a man or woman, but I don't think you should stress that “since I'm a woman and can still do this and this”. I honestly don't like that attitude.

She is also highly critical of phenomena such as always writing him/her in formal writing. It just makes it harder to read, she says, and “does not improve gender equality at all”, rather “it emphasises that there are differences”. This project manager thinks that the country that she lives in is very equal, largely thanks to its Communist past, where women held many leading positions in society. The different gender patterns that exist operate more on a ceremonial and cultural level of custom, a kind of *elegance* that she thinks is harmless.⁶⁰ She also thinks it is very equal within the project. That all the Nordic partners and the participants seem very equal, as do the Poles, “but this may well depend more on the people”, she adds. Asked if she believes that the various partners and partner countries can learn from each other in terms of gender equality, she answers as follows.

Yes, maybe, but the point is rather to see this as *normal*. But since this is not the project's real subject area, then ... I remember another project where a woman was talking about women in [this

⁶⁰ Compare with Lindelöf, Karin S. (2006) *Om vi nu ska bli som Europa. Könsskapande och normalitet bland unga kvinnor i transitionens Polen*. Göteborg & Stockholm: Makadam.

area] and it was, to this day I don't understand the point of it, why that should have been part of the project and what was to be the outcome, 'cos they analysed a trade fair and its visitors, how many men or women, and naturally there are more men. But well, I didn't understand the point of it and I don't think that this person analysed this, it didn't help at all, 'cos you can just say then that "ok, we've covered this in this here work package, so we don't need to worry about it then in the rest of the project".

Finally, the other interviewee from the Baltic states that gender equality is important for everyone to have the same opportunities to pursue a career in any field at all, that you should be treated equally within the family and so on. She says that she herself has never experienced gender inequality and therefore she thinks that the society in which she lives is very equal. However, she adds that other people may have other experiences that would lead them to express themselves in the opposite way. "But based on my experiences in my life, I can't say that I've been able to see anything like that. (...) I think everything is normal ". She concludes, however, by saying that she thinks it's very good that Sida is undertaking this kind of study.

7. Conditions for women and men in Interreg projects in the Baltic Sea Region

In general, the project and sub-project managers interviewed appear to think that the Interreg projects function in a relatively equal and egalitarian manner, that there is a pleasant ambience, a tolerant climate and everyone has their say. Some explicitly state that it is the ideas that are the focus of the project and if you have a good idea, people will listen regardless of the person putting it forward. It seems that the actual networking and collaborative concept within Interreg promotes equality on many levels. “We have so much to do that we do not have the time to get involved with that sort of thing” one of them says when I ask about unofficial status hierarchies, master suppression techniques and power games. At the same time, a picture emerges where in many cases women are nevertheless secretaries and assistants, who fix and potter with the practical things, and men are knowledgeable, the experts and steering committee chairpersons, who have the final say on how something will be implemented, who sign papers and represent the project in certain circumstances when presence and authority are required. Across the board, the interviewees also tend to trivialise their experiences of inequality and discrimination. “Huh, that says more about them than about me!” says, for example one of them when she speaks about a sexist and clumsy jargon among the “old men”. To decide that you do not care, that “that kind of thing has no effect on me” or “I’m not a person who notices such things” is a recurrent strategy among the women interviewed.⁶¹

Among the interviewees there are, however, also those who testify to a whole range of discriminatory situations, both those that they have experienced themselves and others that they have observed around them. What are termed male master suppression techniques or sexist and homophobic jokes are one aspect of this; another is how male norms are re-created in the Interreg context and the fields to which the projects belong, through how, for example, steering committees or lists of conference speakers are compiled. This testimony, however, is not associated solely with the Interreg project, but may to an equal degree relate to their own workplace or their experiences of working life in general. Since all project and sub-project managers interviewed are involved in projects within tradi-

⁶¹ Wahl (1992), also see chapter 3.2 in this report.

tionally male-dominated fields, there is, however, a considerable degree of overlap between the projects and their daily work situation. Their own organisation is, of course, also a partner, and sometimes the lead partner, in the Interreg project and thus the situation there also becomes relevant to the Interreg cooperation. The interviewees' attitude to the EU requirements for gender aspects to be considered also varies. Some think that this is terrific but call for clearer guidelines on how this is to be implemented at project level, how this can actually be taken into account, or at programme level, e.g., in the selection of projects that receive subsidies, while one person is sceptical as to whether this really has any effect, and a different person states that to consider gender issues is in effect a defeat, as this then indicates that *there are* problems with inequality. There are thus many examples of the kind of denial of the gender order that Anna Wahl terms a gender-neutral strategy.⁶²

Many factors also suggests that there are variables other than gender which can be quite as important to opportunities to exert influence within the Interreg cooperation, such as age, experience, expertise, formal responsibility, and, in this international context, not least, a knowledge of English! The interview material highlights English skills as an important difference between Nordic and Eastern European project participants, where the former are generally considered to be better equipped than the latter, who thus find it easier to express themselves in a convincing manner. Another trend in the material is that the project and sub-project managers interviewed have difficulties with a more integrated gender thinking, other than counting the number of women and men within the Interreg projects. Issues of influence and the potential to do so, resource allocation, norm creation, in short, the power to shape society (and one's own life) for both women and men, are largely not reflected upon and in many cases re-create traditional gender patterns. These are the same tendencies as in the project applications reviewed, and are related to the problems that have been evident in the context of regional development efforts in Sweden.⁶³ There is thus a risk of focusing on numbers and representation at the expense of power issues and gender equality aspects within the context of regional development.

There are also perceptions among interviewees that gender equality varies according to nationality, class and age. The Swedish and Finnish project and sub-project managers like to imagine that there is more gender equality in the Nordic countries than in Poland and the Baltics, but they also highlight specific examples from their own cooperation projects

⁶² a.a.

⁶³ See for example Rönnblom (2008).

that show the contrary. Perceptions that the degree of gender equality is linked to educational level, class background and generation are also present in the material. It is a common perception in society in general that both the educated middle class is thought to be more equal than the working class and that equality would increase more or less automatically with each generation. This is, however, not an obvious relationship in reality, even if the discourse is strong.⁶⁴ The unequal relationship between East and West seems also to some extent to be re-created in the projects, despite the fact that the Interreg cooperation around the Baltic Sea has the contrary objective. In the interviews with the Nordic project and sub-project managers, it is clear that the imaginary border between East and West, termed “the Berlin Wall in our heads” has still not been completely obliterated. The perceptions of the varying degree of gender equality in the different countries is one such issue, where the post-socialist countries are generally assumed to be less equal than the Nordic ones. This is however challenged by one of the Baltic project managers, who instead emphasises the importance of the Communist heritage for gender equality today. In Nordic, and especially Swedish quarters, the formal hierarchies are also perceived to be stricter in Poland and the Baltics, which is seen as negative because it can make decision-making cumbersome and time-consuming, when everything must “go all the way to the top”, as one interviewee puts it. Moreover, the differences in language skills, in the form of English, is an obvious power factor that benefits the Nordic participants.

Throughout, there is thus great potential for improvement in the Interreg cooperation with regard to the promotion of equal opportunities in general and the consideration of gender equality issues in particular. It is particularly important that the instructions and the requirements of the European Commission become clearer and more detailed, both in relation to the project owners and those who review the project applications. This requires that the “gender box” on the application form is perceived as relevant and decisive, and that there are expectations that what is written there should also be visible in other parts of the application. Concrete examples of how gender issues can be considered in the daily project efforts, i.e., gender mainstreaming with a focus on power aspects, also make possible gender equality aspirations in respective Interreg projects that extend beyond the level of representation and which could ultimately steer the gender order in the entire Baltic Sea region in a more equal direction.

⁶⁴ Compare with Wahl m fl. (2001).

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Gender equality within the Baltic Sea Region collaboration

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