

Gender mainstreaming the innovation system Skåne Food Innovation Network – a description and some reflections

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Summary

We are working as a research team of intermediates and researchers in supporting and initiating activities and processes within the Skåne Food Innovation Network (SFIN), aiming at implement gender mainstreaming in the activities, projects and initiatives taken by this innovation milieu.

Guided by feminist research on organisation, innovation and regional development our research project is structured as an action research project in which we closely collaborate with SFIN, in which learning and knowledge sharing processes are core activities.

Finding methods in how to support the project managers to let gender awareness and gender mainstreaming efforts trickle the network is a challenge. Working with gender equality and gender mainstreaming processes also craves for legitimacy and trustworthy.

To begin the work and getting access, we have come to start in the very processes run by the project managers of the SFIN. By starting in the everyday work of the project manager, we have been able to identifying processes, issues and questions of how to deal with gender equality. Below we reflect on these processes and the work being carried out this far.

Keywords: gender mainstreaming, learning, network, innovation, technology

Introduction

Engaged in gender equality issues, both within academia as well as working as project managers and specialists in business and bureaucracies, it has become evident to us, that development are tough and hard issues in general and success is not easily achieved. Adding gender equality, also brings prejudice, uneasy feelings of threat, (Gunnarsson et al 2007), which sometimes results in violent accusations and sometimes even in psychological and/or oral abuse.¹

It would be far too easy to draw the line between the sexes, claiming women in general to be sympathetic to gender equality development projects and men hostile. The Swedish historian, Yvonne Hirdman (1988, 2002), has made it perfectly clear, that the gender contract includes both women and men as active parts in keeping the balance of the gender system at status quo which disfavour women in general. This balance is kept by the way we behave as women and men and these behaviours are coherent to values and norms in society. Gherardi (Gherardi, 1995) argues in relation to organizations, that in this standardized form of gendered behaviour, women are made invisible within organizations.

Our paper² is an early draft of some of our findings in the applied research projects on gender equality within a science and technology innovation environment in Skåne in Sweden³ the Skåne Food Innovation Network⁴ (below SFIN). The paper is divided into four parts: it starts with the theoretical frame of this applied and action oriented project. Next, we give a brief description of the innovation network in order to contextualize the environment to the gendered Swedish labour market and education preferences by men and women. The third part is describing methods used and action taken within the projects with some critical reflections which are developed further in the concluding part where we also try to push some questions further. The empirical data is made up by interviews, document analysis, workshops, development dialogues, and meetings with stakeholders, the steering committee of the innovation network, the board and researchers within innovation policy research.

¹ Personal experience from working with gender equality within the academia.

² The paper is based on ongoing research which will end in September 2011.

³ The name of the project is *Gender and Power Relations in the Skåne Food Innovation System*

⁴ Skane Food Innovation Network is funded by the governmental organization Vinnova which is The Swedish Governmental Agency for Innovation Systems. www.vinnova.se 100816. During a ten year period, this innovation environment will be supported by 200 billion Swedish kronor as the triple helix partners are supporting the network additionally. Skåne innovation policy – A situation analysis. www.skane.se/ 100819

A Theoretical Framework

Organization theory

Applied research demands methods and theories somehow compatible to the kind of intervention the project is aiming at. Methodology will be discussed later on in relation to feminist research and applied projects. Here we would like to make some theoretical reflections on how we understand the innovation network and its organization and reflect on some difficulties we have come across in relation to the chosen model.

By using a variety of methods and data, emphasising learning and shared knowledge we have become influenced by the work by Joan Acker (1990) and her model of analyzing gendered organisations. Acker (1990) has developed a model for how to interpret in what different ways gender is done within organizational structures, identifying five arenas for doing gender; *gender segregation* i.e. women and men have different task assignments which position them differently within organizations and thereby in different subject positions; *symbolic and images* constructed to express and explain these divisions; *interaction* and spatial closeness between the sexes and within each category; creation of identity and finally; creating and conceptualizing *social structures* (Acker,Joan 1990:146-147). Gunnarsson et.al. (2007) has summarized these inputs to a model:

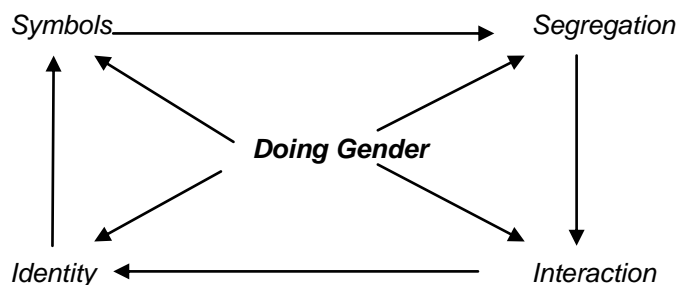


Figure 1. After Gunnarsson et. Al. 2007.

Ackers model has been useful in research done in innovation organisations as it pinpoints that gender is something being done (Candice and Fenstermaker (eds.) 2002) every day by everyone within the organisation (Gherardi, 1995; Gunnarsson et al. 2007,) and society in general. “Doing gender, involves a complex of socially guided perceptual, interactional, and micropolitical activities that cast particular pursuits as expressions of masculine and feminine “natures”. (West and Zimmerman 1987:126).

Gherardi claims that organizations do gender in quite distinguished ways which alters from doing gender in other social situations. “Doing gender in an organization therefore presupposes a set of already hierarchically normed interactions based on the sexual division of labour and on gender expectations...In producing goods and services, organizations also produce social beliefs about gender relationships and about their equity, and they provide settings in which to experiment with and alter these relationships. Gender relationships in organizations not only reflect the symbolic order of gender in society; they actively help to create and alter it, albeit with processes and logics entirely their own.” (p. 130) This is certainly true for food businesses where production, refining, research and consuming are loaded by ideologies (Lagnevik 2003).

The research above presented has been directed towards the “organization”, i. e. a well defined setting with a distinct structure which can be mapped into an organisational scheme. Andersson et. al (2009) acknowledges middle management as important in establish prerequisites for development projects, not at least when it comes to gender mainstreaming. The middle managers become

important agents in the organisation in order to carry out the mainstreaming project. The way we have designed our study, we have primarily chosen to work with the network organizer in order to promote gender equality. Our first attempt has been to try to make gender an aspect of, or condition to, the activities the SFIN are initiating or supporting. This starting point has put focus on the steering committee of the network as important actors in the making of the network and activities hosted by the network.

Gender and network

The SFIN describes itself as a natural hub initiated by industry for innovation and development within the Skåne food landscape. Networking has come to grow in importance according to literature on entrepreneurship and regional development, according to Nijkamp, (2003, cited in Hanson and Blake 2005). Complex structures, like networks, are difficult to overlook and handle. According to the SFIN, new contacts are constantly added to existing ones in various kinds of ways, the use of social media facilitates the processes. It becomes almost impossible to overlook processes, or who is responsible for initial contacts or original ideas.

However, feminist research on regional development in Sweden gives indication that networks not always are transparent and inclusive, but rather private and opaque, hard to enter unless you are invited (Forsgren och Lindgren 2010). The study carried out by the research team in Karlstad indicates that strong personal male gendered networks are highly influential in what is put on the agenda. In the findings the authors questions the idea of the innocent network as equal and open and instead they argues that networks are activated as both discrete and reactive. The discrete network is made up by men with political as well as economic influence in local and regional society; these networks are personalized and presuppose individual invitation in order to become a member. Reactive networks on the contrary, are founded in democratic movements and are open for membership. What Forsgren and Lindgren concludes is that discrete networks play a significant role in what is put forward as strategic development issues and how to achieve these goals (p. 37 ff).

Inviting into and organizing networks is one important daily activity by the project managers at SFIN. Hanson and Blake (2005) stress the importance to pay attention to what networks and what entrepreneurs this kind of activity foster: "networks might differ systematically for different kinds of people in different places" (p. 136) and gender plays a significant role in networks, since networks are about social interaction. Social interacting in networks also has impact on power relations. When women are described as absent from the network, it might just be that they are not acknowledged by the majority of the network (Gherardi, 1995) or have access to its partners (Forsberg and Lindgren 2007) or are constructed as trustworthy or reliable (Hanson and Blake 2009)

Gender mainstreaming

In Sweden, gender mainstreaming is the method to accomplish equivalent conditions between men and women, and the main goal is to gender mainstream all areas of society. This is the main message in Swedish gender equality legislation. Gender mainstreaming was adopted by the EU in 1996 and is the official method of enhance gender equality. Rees (Rees, 2005:560) defines gender mainstreaming as:

"...the promotion of gender equality through its systematic integration into all systems and structures, into all policies, processes and procedures, into the organisation and its culture, into ways of seeing and doing." It is, according to Rees a way to oppose institutional sexism (ibid).

Theoretically, gender mainstreaming is founded upon the "politics of diversity" (Rees, 2005, p.559) which also acknowledge similarity between men and women as well as difference among women and among men. Gender mainstreaming, thus, "moves away from accepting the male, or rather a

dominant version of masculinity as the norm. It needs to challenge systems and structures that privilege this dominant version.” (Rees, *ibid.*)

In our project we aim to promote gender mainstreaming by different actions and activities. Various methods and processes have been developed in order to promote the work and are summarized in the Swedish Governmental report on methods for gender equality (SOU 2007:15). Working with the SFIN the question has been raised if gender mainstreaming could be thought of as an innovation? Woodward (2003) mainly focusing policy production gives several examples of why mainstreaming can be considered as innovation:

“... First of all, it allows social issues to escape from marginal policy ghettos. It transforms the woman question from a vertical special issue to horizontal general concern. Second, mainstreaming is innovative, as it spurs the development of new policy instruments...means doing policy with varied citizens in mind...Continuous evaluations is one of the key demands of the mainstreamers which requires new policy tools such as gender equality indicators...Finally, gender mainstreaming links a revolutionary goal, ...the end of sexual inequality, to rational public administrative tools (Woodward 2003; 68-69).

Some of these issues might however even be transformed into industry and innovation networks. The embedded innovative aspect of gender mainstreaming is an interesting point of departure for our work within a programme aiming at creativity and innovation raising questions on gender equality as a mean to improve prerequisites for innovation.

Situating Skåne Food Innovation Network in relation to the Swedish labour market and gendered education preferences

The Swedish Government has for decades strived to establish equality between women and men. In some cases qualitative changes has been established, but still labour market is strongly divided by gender (Gonäs, Lindgren och Bildt (eds.) 2001). This might be explained by the size of the Swedish welfare sector which attracts women, but comparing the 30 largest professions in Sweden in which 58 percent of women and 35 percent of men are employed, only four are gender equal according to the definition 40 – 60 percent (SCB 2010; 57)⁵. Also in education, women and men are attracted to gender traditional choices. In universities women are in majority of students and dominate all subjects but technology. Despite women dominate university graduate courses and are examined almost twice compared to men, only 19 percent of women are professors at Swedish universities and 28 percent of women compared to 72 percent of men are running their own businesses and when it comes to CEOs in businesses quoted on the stock market only 3 percent are women.

The food process industry is the fourth most important business in Sweden according to value of production and numbers of employees.⁶ Nine percent of industrial employed in Sweden are working within the food process industry. The manufacturing industry is traditionally gender coded as male; food industry however is feminized characterized by low wages and lack of influence. In 2005, when the labour organisation LIVS, which organize workers within the food process industry had its congress, it was concluded that women held low paid and monotonous positions in industry which causes diseases and sickness leave. Women work more often out of hours and fewer hours than they would like to. “Feminism and socialism works hand in hand”, was stated in the political programme (p. 24).

⁵ These are administrator in public service, chefs, physicians and lecturer (Women and men in Sweden 2010 Facts and figures, Official Statistics of Sweden 2010).

⁶ Following is from the LI, the employers organization of food business industry in Sweden.

The SFIN was initiated by the industry, in 1994⁷ as a response to the upcoming Swedish membership in the European Union and a growing international competition. The network is formed as a triple helix constellation with representatives from research, businesses and public bodies. Today, the network is hosting a variety of activities where innovations and development are key instruments; business to business activities, matching business and research, creating an interest for food industry among young people and disseminating research and information on food businesses and innovations taken place within the network and its stakeholder and the regional food culture.

Designing a gender mainstreaming project

The main reason to implement a gender perspective in the activities initiated by the network is to broaden the opportunities to make business and strengthen the innovation system and “make unexpected things to happen.”⁸ The gender mainstreaming project is thought of as a tin can opener making it easier to open up for new products or services or whatever might be explored in this project. This ambition has left the floor open for the research team to develop and practice a variety of activities and interventions. It has been a strong emphasis on gender mainstreaming as a market opportunity more than egalitarian standpoints, which gives growth a somewhat superior position in relation to gender equality (Rönblom, 2009). Representatives from SFIN and VINNOVA have made explicit that innovations is about making money

The organizational framework of the applied gender mainstreaming project is best described by how the SFIN is set up. The network is run by a CEO and daily activities are managed by the secretariat and the steering committee through their commitments in various kinds of projects. One of the project managers in the steering committee is chairing the gender issues and also the manager of our project. He is an important gatekeeper to the networks activities, projects and relations to the stakeholders in the network. Below is a principle schema of the network:

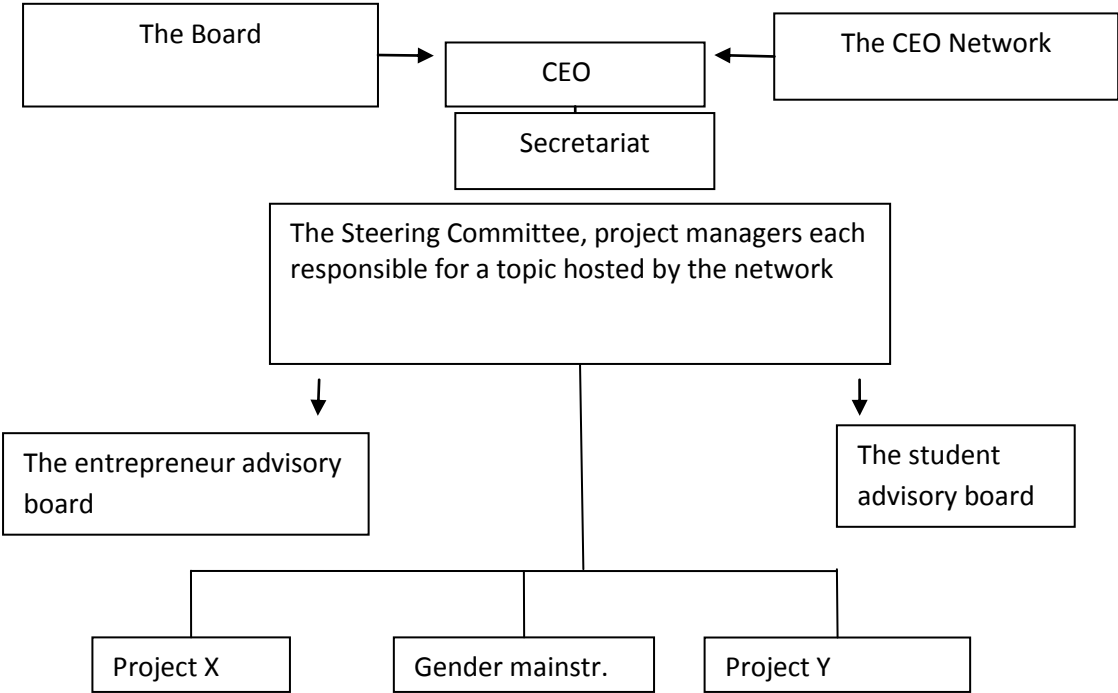


Figure 2. The Skåne Food Innovaton Network organization.

⁷ Following is based on the Skåne Food Innovation Networks homepage: www.livsmedelsakademin.se
⁸ Slogan of The Skåne Food Innovation Network.

The board has twelve members of whom two are women; one is the CEO of the network. The board is led by the county governor, who is a man, and the others represents the triple helix stakeholders; universities, businesses and public bodies. The steering committee is made up by sex project managers and the CEO. The work of the network is organized into six areas: career, meal improvements, innovative marketplaces, ideas and innovations, foresight and communication. One of the project managers is female and responsible for communication and career. The network has a student advisory board as a mean to spread information on food business related education and employment. Members of the student advisory board work as student ambassadors at fairs and give important feedback to the network on what issues are brought up among students. Today three men have been recruited to the advisory board which consists of twelve members. This is a result of the ongoing gender mainstreaming project.

There is also an entrepreneur board, to which entrepreneurs and business leaders might turn to in order to discuss innovations and ideas. The board consist of a mix of persons with entrepreneurial skills, scholars and project managers with experiences from advanced development projects in industry, management and research. The entrepreneur board has changed its representatives since the applied gender mainstreaming project started and today women are part of the group as well. The board is made up by three women and five men. The gender division in the SFIN organization is shown in the following table:

Table 1. The gender division within the SFIN

	The Board	The Steering committee	The Entrepreneur board	The Advisory board
Men	10	5	5	3
Women	2	1	3	9

The network CEO also organizes a network of representatives of CEOs in the Skåne food industry cluster. This is a private chamber where the members get to know each other, discuss general issues of interest for food industry business and research and creating a forum where common threats and challenges are identified. No information is given on the homepage on what businesses or what person are members. The CEO network is guarded by the head of the SFIN, and access to the CEO network is not allowed only invited persons, regarded as interesting for the network members get access.

Getting started

One standing question in the gender mainstreaming project group has been formulated in “How to gender mainstream an innovation network, which stretches from farming to dining, from shopping to research and development?” The innovative process in itself, but also the running of an innovative cluster, is a tentative business, informal and finding its contacts and ways along the road. We could early on see this as backgrounds condition disfavouring women. Women tend to be left out in informal organisations, but make better in hierarchical organisations with clear and outspoken rules (Sundin 1997). We had to find influential nodes in this loosely and changing environment. The management and project managers of SFIN were early identified as important actors within the innovation system. They were the gatekeepers we had to address in order to make change possible. As a network, organizing and supporting activities within the innovation system, the research group decided to focus on the leadership and tried to encourage them to learn more about gender equality and strive for improvements of what a gender perspective is about and how to adopt strategies and methods on how to ask for, support and work with gendered awareness within the innovation system.

From former gender equality research and other research groups within the Vinnova launch for applied gender research, we have learned that posing gender related questions and call for changes and

develop strategies often positions people in a situation of defence and resistance (Amundsdotter 2009, Andersson, Amundsdotter, Svensson 2009). Our experience is that gradually the project managers have become aware of themselves as “doing gender” and sustaining gender structures and thereby became uneasy on playing the head violin in the project. Initially, the networks steering committee was interested and participated in two workshops on what a gender perspective might contribute to. The research group was also dependent on the steering committee to formulate relevant problems.

After two workshops however, the method was evaluated and abandoned in favour of tutorial discussions on gender equality out of each project manager’s area of responsibility. These dialogues gave fruitful results on how to address gender equality, by identifying other strategies in recruiting competence to specific projects; how to develop PR-materials with gender awareness and how to build teams and design forms for applicants approaching the entrepreneurial board.

Lately, the steering committee has made points to the research team which could be counted for as some kind of resistance. By interrupting the research team from continue the work with the project managers at the SFIN they have questioned the focus on them, by describing themselves as unimportant, mere the glue that put the innovation system together. Several explanations on this shift may be offered; one is that by the workshops and the methods used to establish gender mainstreaming, it might have come to their knowledge that they themselves also are contributing to the gender system we all take part in, in accordance to the structures of gendered power relations? The other explanation is that the project managers and the management wanted to disseminate gender mainstreaming into activities initiated by the research group. The wish is more outward activities and useable tools to break the gender segregated working life within industry in order to create more innovation and growth. The SFIN is at the same time reorganizing, and the entrepreneurial board, one of the SFIN important decision council, has decided not to deal with jam- and lemonade businesses, as they describe it, but with advanced high-tech development projects and entrepreneurs who want to expand their businesses. This might be a natural standpoint for an innovation and development network, still as Hanson and Blake (2009) argues: innovation is about fulfilling a demand, and Rees (2005) is specific in not equalize innovation with high-tech, not always, at least. What becomes puzzling is that the network embraces a broad spectre of activities, also local food production, according to the SFIN homepage. By rejecting women and men in small scale and local food production systems from the entrepreneur board, the SFIN turns to a traditional masculine activity focusing innovation in a narrow sense based in a discourse of technology.

In our aim to be successful in our work and reach a larger part of the network members of the SFIN, we have thought of the steering committee as the mushroom and the various contacts and networks related to each focus area as the mycelium which needs to be addressed by the activities initiated and supported by the SFIN. The steering committee in this perspective is the guarantor with knowledge, interest and authority to initiate discussions on gender equality, to ask applicants to the entrepreneur advisory board if they have given the issue any thought and initiate programmes and development processes where gender equality is the point of departure. SFIN is the only operator within the innovation system that may enforce the gender mainstreaming development, because they have the legitimacy to promote models and methods supporting gender equality in this specific innovation system.

Below we have tried to draw a sketch on how input and output according to gender mainstreaming could be integrated into the SFIN and its activities:

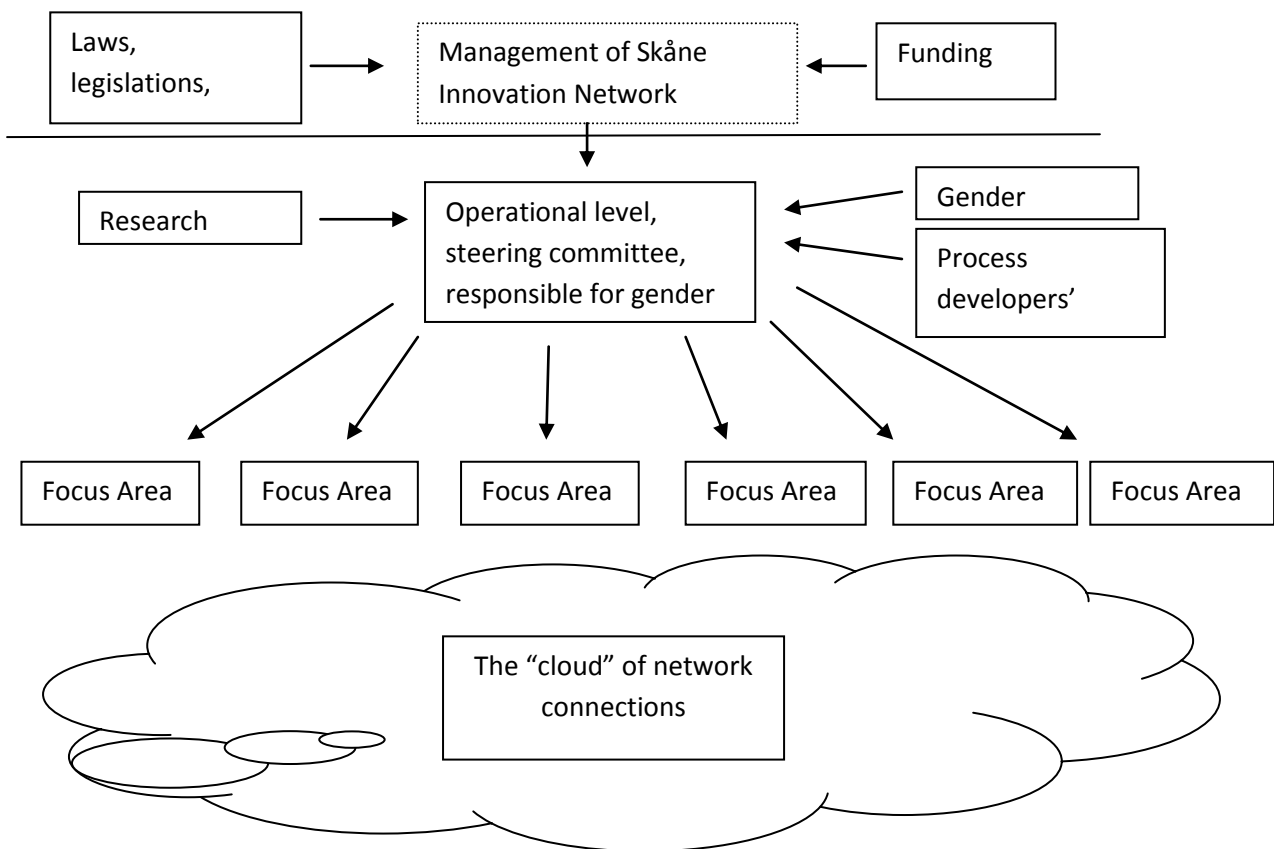


Figure 3. How to implement gender mainstreaming into the innovation network.

Laws, legislations and policies sets institutional frameworks of what should be done within the innovation system organized by a triple helix model. Funding, especially from the government, often have policy actions interwoven, like gender equality or multiculturalism. The management of the network has to develop strategies how to cope with these social sustainable issues within its activities. The steering committee put demands on their collaborators to implement gender mainstreaming in their activities and processes if they are to be supported by the network. To support these decisions, the steering committee and the project managers gets support from research, gender issues experts and process developers. By this model, the steering committee itself doesn't have to have all expertise, but they are aware of the issues and are competent to ask the questions to actors within their networks in daily activities.

Research approach

Feminist research has questioned traditional objectification of the world and the researcher as a non-embodied all-seeing eye (Harding 1986). Instead feminists have striven for close, partial, deep and contextual understanding (Haraway 1988). This applied gender research project is designed as an action research or collaborative research. The project design implies close connection between the "field" and the researchers. An action research approach also undermines a traditional relation between the researcher and the research subject. Traditional research position the researcher in a superior position towards the field and the researcher have solely the preferential right of interpretation. In action research, on the contrary, respect is given to all subjects' knowledge, participating in the project. VINNOVA, which is funding our research, also have outlined a model on

how to develop applied research teams for sustainable development (Fürst-Hörte, 2009) where researchers and intermediates collaborate in the projects. The intermediates are responsible for interventions within the project and the researcher is responsible for gender research expertise.

In this research design learning is a key issue and it became important to create arenas for sharing knowledge built on respect and trust (Södergren 2005, Johannisson, Gunnarsson and Stjernberg 2008, Swärdh och Stridh 2008). Action research helps to create “sustainable knowledge” and Hansson distinguishes three kinds of results from this kind of research design:

- Results that contribute to production of theories and to accumulated academic knowledge (*theoretical results*);
- Development of theoretical knowledge and practical competence related to the organisation as an effect of the dialogue-based interaction between researcher and practitioner (*practical knowledge development*);
- Concrete, practical results from the development process in form of interventions addressed to the referred organisation (*practical intervention*).

Södergren (2005) discuss the importance of learning in complex innovation systems, and so have Hansson, Stridh and Swärdh (2003). During our project we have discussed endless times of how to establish learning platforms, and models in order to make the knowledge on gender mainstreaming trickle into the innovation system. Södergren (s. 15) uses the term “situated learning”.⁹ By situated learning, Södergren emphasise the importance of context in the learning process. Hansson, Stridh and Swärdh involved in the Swedish krAft-programme¹⁰ describe the krAft model as follows:

“The krAft model is a unique bottom-up concept that is easy to understand. The participating companies themselves define their needs and get useful knowledge, which is different from traditional competence development, where experts have defined the needs and offer training/education.” (Stridh and Swärdh, p.6).

The model is sympathetic, but we have also come to understand when not working with organizations, that creating attractive inclusive learning environments for entrepreneurs and business leaders is hard. However, it might be achieved by attending all ready existing forums where representatives from important sectors of the food business innovation system meet. Learning becomes a central theme where learning by group activities fosters new and alternative models of solving problems. The goal is to establish a double loop learning environment (Argyris 1990, 1992 i Södergren 2005) where new ideas on how to manage problems are brought back to one’s organisation and thereby tested and evaluated. The learning environment also strives to make tacit knowledge explicit by supporting dialog and paying attention to details in members accounted problem descriptions. Without having a defined plan for the members in the steering committee on how to re-work their everyday activities out of what has come forward in the discussions, there seem to be signs on project managers trying to re-evaluate their activity procedures out of the results from these dialogues.

Activities

There have been several activities running parallel in the project. Early we mapped the sex distribution within the board and the steering committee of SFIN and made interviews with the members of the board in order to understand their argumentation according to the need of contributing to a gender mainstreaming project.

⁹ With references to Lave & Wenger 1991 and Wenger 2003.

¹⁰ A programme for strategic development in SME in interaction with university, launched by the national body The Knowledge Foundation, www.kks.se

We have then had workshops with the project managers and the CEO of the SFIN as a catalyst for improve knowledge on gender equality and gender mainstreaming methods. In these workshops, results from the interviews with the board and the analysis of the newsletter have been used as inputs to discussions. The analysis of the SFIN newsletters was a platform for discussing the SFIN self reproducing image from a gender perspective and we have organized development dialogues with the project managers of SFIN and stakeholders where experts have been invited to discuss development in a gender perspective. Below we present some of the findings from the interviews with the board, the analysis of the newsletter and the development dialogues.

Interviewing the board

Gender equality considers the structure of the SFIN and all focus areas within the network. The first activity in our project was to interview the members of the board both to understand their rationality for hosting the gender mainstreaming project and to come to grip with how they argued according to gender equality in the innovation network. By the time we made the interviews the board was represented by ten men and two women. None of the members were aware of the gender equality project, which they formally had accepted.¹¹

The importance of leadership and management to development processes such as gender mainstreaming projects is well documented by researchers (Andersson, Amundsdotter, Svensson, Däldehög 2009, Mark 2007). However, it became evident early that gender equality issues never been had been discussed properly by the initiators of the gender mainstreaming project among the project managers and the board on why a gender mainstreaming project should be carried through. This has implication for gaining approval within the SFIN, especially in relation to those stakeholders marked by traditional masculine identity. In the interviews, it becomes strikingly evident that women are defined as something different to men according to business and engagement in industry. Below are some quotes from interviews with members of the Board according to gender equality issues:

"Women's unwillingness to start businesses within this line of business, is the only concrete gender equality problem, as I recognize it" (Member of the Board)

"Det enda konkreta jämställdhetsproblem som jag ser i dom här branscherna är kvinnors obenägenhet att starta företag"

This quote is interesting for several reasons. First, the definition of business needs to be set. The Federation of Swedish Farmers (LRF) has given proof that women are not defined for as business leaders when they share their business with their husbands (2009). Business leadership and entrepreneurship are also gender coded as masculine (Ahl 2002, Pettersson 2002, Holmquist och Sundin (eds.) 2002) which excludes women by definition. For many years, women farmers also have been labelled "farmers wives" (Trauger, Sachs, Barbercheck, Kiernana, Brasier and Findeis 2008) and developing refined farmer products have been considered as a side activity, not the real farming or labelled innovation.

In the interviews with the members of the board, it also becomes clear that distinctions are made between men and women according to interest and the capability to become an entrepreneur or industrial leader. Research on innovation policy has put forward that innovation have strong connotations with technology, which is gender coded as masculine (Cockburn and Omrod 1993, Nyberg 2009). In policy construction men are described in terms of heroes (Pettersson och Saarinen

¹¹ The Board has changed its members since the interviews were conducted, the gender distribution is however the same as before.

2004) and as competent to run these growth initiatives. This discourse also spill over to who is considered as capable of running businesses:

"I think it will be different in the next generation. I have no scientific proofs, but I have experienced that women are less interested in taking responsibility for the workforce, leading assignments or this kind of stuff. They aren't as interested in advancement [as men are]"
(Member of the Board)

I nästa generation kommer det att vara annorlunda, tror jag, även om det finns ett jämställdhetsproblem att kvinnor faktiskt, utan vetenskaplig bas men erfarenhetsgrundat, är lite mindre intresserade av att ta ansvar för personal, ledande uppdrag eller den här typen. Man är inte lika karriärsugen"

This quote is an example of position women as "the other" within the discourse of management (Hirdman 1988). Unofficial benefit systems and networks and homo social recruitment to managerial positions (Holgersson 2003, Hirdman 1988, Whahl 1992) works towards women's possibilities to be acknowledged as competent and interested in senior positions (see Husu 2001).

Women's biological sex, by being the parent giving birth, is also circumstances that are preventing women from career opportunities:

"They can't be sick and they can't be on maternity leave. It is somehow natural that you can't. You aren't a business leader if you have to rely on all that security" (Member of the Board)

"Dom kan inte vara sjuka och dom kan inte vara barnlediga. Det ligger ju lite i naturen att det är så. Du är inte företagare om du räknar med all den tryggheten"

Women's biological sex and cultural construction of women as main providers for children and household and even as main targets to social security benefits such as parental leave, are held against women without reflections made if this statement should include men as well. Women become reduced to biology and body, a traditional patriarchal subject position feminists have defended since the days of the first feminist wave in the late 1900-century women's movement (Gemzöe 2002).

The Board had, though, in discussion with the steering committee decided to work with applied gender research. The main reason for working with this issue, according to the interviews with the members of the Board, was to create legitimacy towards the governmental funder who asked for gender equality measures. Another point made by one of the members of the board, was that it was an issue typical of the day.

The Skåne Innovation Food Networks newsletter in a gender perspective

The second activity we carried out was to picture the way the SFIN presented itself in the newsletter. The SFIN has its own newsletter in the journal Swedish Provisions¹², target groups are the food process industry and its stakeholders. Like most media it wants to report what activities is taking place and success stories. According to gender equality, one starting question according to representation is; whom is represented and in what way? This is important, because if people are excluded from the public scene, they become absent and thereby are defined as lacking (Pettersson, 2007).

¹² Svenska Livsmedel.

In the analysis of the newsletter, we have used a model by Hellspong and Ledin (2008). The text model is structured around context, structure and style with emphasis put on the content- and the interpersonal analysis. There are 19 newsletters examined, started with the very first one in 2005 stretching to the end of 2008. It turned out that women were mainly described as project members and Ph. D. students while men were presented as professors, entrepreneurs or business leaders and project managers. Male persons tended to be acknowledged in several issues, not for presenting new projects or results, but as a reminder of ongoing activities. The “lack” of women, initially described to us by the steering committee, might be understood by this first analysis of how The Skåne Food Innovation Network presented itself.

Table 2. Women and men in the newsletter. Number of hits in the text.

	Women	Men
Number of persons mentioned	48	95
Persons mentioned with an academic title	15	23
Persons mentioned as Ph.D students	8	2
Persons referred to as professors	5	8
Persons mentioned as project managers	6	11
Persons mentioned as senior manager/ CEO	2	13

The concluding remarks by this exercise, is that women are described differently from men and the aim with this mapping was not to designate scapegoats, but to give examples of how different subject positions are offered according to gender and why gender awareness is important. From this mapping, it is also easier to discuss how improvements might be enhanced.

The content analysis of the newsletters shows a high-education profile where technology advanced projects have been supported and developed by SFIN. The examples given in the newspaper on female entrepreneurs and sociological designed interventions highlights the focus on advanced technological improvements even more. Innovation is a concept which is coded masculine with its strong connection to science and technology (Hanson and Blake 2009, Lindberg 2007, Pettersson och Saarinen 2004). The feminist research claims that the concept of innovation and persons connected to innovations such as entrepreneurs and innovators needs to be challenged and filled with new interpretations (Hanson and Blake, 2005: 686).

The problem of ours and others concern is the identifying process of becoming an innovator or entrepreneur, what actions and outcomes that are described as innovations and by whom this judgment is given.

In comparing the Nordic countries innovation policies on how gender mainstreaming policies works Pettersson (2007) reach similar conclusions. In her concluding remarks she notes that gender is somewhat included in policy documents, but gender mainstreaming is absent in terms of producing side documents. In analyzing the representations in the innovations policies, the absence of the “other” results in a white middle class, educated man as norm for innovation policy:

These representations of people as lacking can be interpreted as producing an image of who is seen as an asset and as able in the innovative society – well-resourced men (Pettersson a.a. p.61)

Malin Lindbergs research on national funded innovation systems points to an important process in the making of strategic innovations and governmental supported triple helix constellations. In the paper

“The Swedish Innovation Policy – a question on gender and technology”¹³, Lindberg (2008) refers to former Vice President for the Swedish Federation of Business Owners, Gunvor Engström, who criticized the Government's priorities for industrial development and innovation by defining them as traditionally male. In her research, Lindberg analyzes the innovation systems that have been supported by governmental funding. Her conclusions are that technology plays an essential part in the social constructing process of what is acknowledged as an innovative milieu and that two branches are especially important in governmental supported innovation: industry related or classified as basic industry and modern IT and biotechnologies (Lindberg, a.a. p. 8). These are sectors in which women seldom are described as entrepreneurs and are constantly missing or left out in the compiles of innovations which are being supported by triple helix arrangements and governmental funds. This becomes somewhat paradoxically in relation to SFIN, where “food” is the buzz word, organizing all kinds of activities around it. Food hereby has to be deconstructed and analyzed in relation to what knowledge areas connected to various understandings and contexts related to “food”. The SFIN “food” is related to farming, i.e. animals and crops, consumer behaviours and preferences, education, packaging, technology and molecules, put simple into social sciences and science and technology. By defining the activities it is also possible to start asking questions about what parts of the “food” that draws attention, to where funding is allocating and what part is most prestigious.

Working through the project database on supported projects by the SFIN, a majority of support had been directed towards male project managers. We hereby conclude that SFIN despite the food process industry being marked by high portion of women labourer, the network until now at least, have been supporting a hegemonic masculine discourse on innovation and entrepreneurship.

Development dialogues

The result of this analysis was presented at a workshop with the steering committee. They became somewhat uncomfortable by the discrepancy between the steering committee's engagement in gender equality and the ignorance by the board. A second workshop on methods on how to work with gender equality measurements was conducted and after this it was agreed that new forms of collaboration was needed. One outcome of the second workshop was to invent new forms for further development of the different focus areas within SFIN, we call them development dialogues.

Appointments were made with each member of the steering committee. One by one during half a day, they were asked to describe inward and outward processes respectively to members of the research group who documented the conversation. In these meetings, it became evident to both the research group and the project manager that we do gender in daily life and by quite simple methods gender could be made visible, which is a necessary starting point in working with gender mainstream (Mark 2007). Examples on where gender was doing were in illustrations of people put on the homepage and in PR-materials and first hand contacts taken by the project managers when new ideas emerged.

The research group also became aware of what contexts the members of the steering committee was part of in daily work. By discussing the processes of each focus area where the intermediary lead the discussion out of a gender and gender equality perspective, ideas of how to promote gender equality started to develop. The recorded meetings were transcribed and illustrated by process schemas on what had been brought up in the dialogue. These schemas and summaries of the discussions have by then been brought back to the project managers and CEO for evaluation and/or further development. These discussions have had impact. The board of entrepreneurs have been re-designed out of gender and competence perspective, which has resulted in more women and new kind of expertise; former PR-materials is exchanged towards more gender equal; women's situation as middle managers in

¹³ Sveriges Innovationspolitik – en fråga om genus och teknik, presented at the Technical Museum.

food process industry has become an issue; and a syllabus on gender mainstreaming and gender equality is becoming compulsory in the trainee-programme organised by the SFIN. These are some examples on achieved goals. Gender equality is also going to be a measurable quality indicator in the review of the Boards fulfilment. The research group has also been asked to contribute in other initiatives taken by project managers of the SFIN as resources for developing gender equality into new projects.

These development dialogues have brought new insights to both to the project managers at SFIN and the research group to pose question differently and strive for examine other ways of identifying competence and participants in the open innovation gatherings and learning platforms initiated by the project managers or the research group. It has also brought insights to the research team on tenacious structures according to gender within academy, business and public bodies (Husu, 2001).

Gender mainstreaming and network organizations – some concluding reflections

With evidence from research on networks, entrepreneurship and gender (Forsberg and Lindgren 2010, Hanson and Blake 2009;35) trustworthy relations are of immense importance in sharing information and valuable knowledge in order to develop businesses, or in academia (Husu 2001). Embedded in the application of gender perspectives are fruitful insights to use in enhancing innovative processes (Woodward 2003). We find our work rewarding, and clearly to the point of being useful for the innovation system. Hanson and Blake (2009) stress the importance of establish oneself as a legitimate and trustworthy partner in becoming a member (p. 138 ff.). According to gender as situating women and men differently in society and in business life and academia, these differences also are marked by inequalities. Hanson and Blake sum it up: “Because gender is a marker not only of difference, but also of inequality and because gender saturate male-female interactions, the majority of such interactions take place in settings where men have higher status and greater power.” (p. 138).

We would argue that this also have bearings on how to work with science and technology environments in creating gender mainstreaming. As a research team focusing gender equality and mainstreaming processes, we have to establish ourselves as trustworthy and legitimate partners in relation to the network in order to create a working climate where development projects such as gender mainstreaming is possible at all. As Husu (2001) illustrates, academia and science are organized around metaphors built on ideas of universalism which should be based on meritocracy solely, rather personal attributes (174), but as Hanson and Blake above concluded, these settings are domains where men are superior to women.

Gender mainstreaming and gender research are areas which are hard to work with without proper skill or education, according to Woodward (2003). She also describes the kind of “radical transformation” this means to be lead by external experts, because of the need of learning and evaluation. “Otherwise, the departure of the expert will mean the departure of awareness.” (Woodward 2003;73). Initially this is true, which experiences from Fibre Optic Valley is a notably good example of. Our ambition, as is the team working in Hudiksvall, is to establish procedures and self-regulating systems in order to implement and sustain gender mainstreaming and gender equality after this project is ended. This ambition demands for access to the science and technology environment and its stakeholders built on trust and legitimacy.

In order to create this trustworthiness certain areas of interest for SFIN are made taboo, such as questioning the causal effect between growth and gender equality. The point of departure for working with this issue has to be growth, otherwise stakeholders of the network and the project managers of the steering committee have little interest in investing resources in this kind of time consuming work. Reports from Fibre Optic Valley are interesting in this perspective. Governmental agencies also have made efforts to support the rational between gender mainstreaming and growth and most arguments

are profoundly true. However, there are overwhelmingly amount of evidence from business that growth is possible even without gender mainstreaming. Other kinds of “strong” arguments have to be developed as well.

In the work being done this far, we have started a process together with the steering committee and the network CEO on what a gender perspective might contribute to. New areas of importance to support development and innovations have started to appear, such as women middle managers working life situation and work life environment issues, the need to re-evaluate established networks connected to the focus areas run by the project managers in the steering committee and the necessity of creating a learning environment in relation to gender research and gender mainstreaming issues. We still need to develop generic models of how to and why implement gender mainstreaming in the network. In this work, we have to establish ourselves as trustworthy, legitimate collaborators to the network at the same time as we produce feminist interventions for a more gender equal society.

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