

## Interview of Inger Lovrkrona, Professor emerita of European Ethnology, Department of Arts and Cultural sciences, Lund University, Sweden

Inger Lovrkrona is an ethnologist. She raised 3 children during her PHD studies (obtained PhD 1982) and after this (1986-1991) she was granted a assistant professor position at Umeå University. During the five years in Umeå she carried out research on gender and sexuality in the pre-modern Swedish society. « *There were not so many studies about the cultural conditions of the people at that time of history. But you can learn a lot from them.* »

Feminism has a long story in Sweden. Swedish women got the right to vote in 1918. In Belgium, it was 30 years later... In parallel with her PHD studies, she got engaged in the Swedish feminist movement, that was established in 1979, together with a group of young female PhDs, forming a feminist academic movement. This movement laid the ground for the departments of gender studies in all Swedish universities, in the early 1990th. According to Inger, 68 was also an important moment in Sweden in terms of cultural revolution. But the expression of this movement was held mainly by men. « *Women were there to make copies and serve coffee.* » **Group 8** (in Swedish: *Grupp 8*) was a feminist organization founded by eight women in Stockholm in 1968. The slogan of the organization was: *The Private is political*, meaning that women's struggles deserved recognition. Group 8 took up various feminist issues such as: demands for expansion of kindergartens, 6-hour working day, equal pay for equal work and opposition to pornography. Local groups were founded throughout the country. Although Group 8 dissolved in the early 2000s, their influence on feminism in Sweden is still prevalent.<sup>1</sup>

In Sweden, women university professors are appr. 25%. Male researchers still get more research grants than women researchers (11% compared to 13%). Inger became a professor in 2001. « *I got my tenure track position for one reason only: very hard work. I accepted all the duties that were offered to me: Faculty representations, juries, supervisions, committee memberships, ... and it took much longer for me than for my male colleagues. They climbed the ladder faster, about 10 years faster. Also the fact that I was aware of the obstacles helped me to overcome them.* »

About **work-life balance**, the regulations in Sweden, as well as in Norway and Finland, are progressive. The conditions in Denmark are much less propitious. The parental leave is considered as a whole- 16 months in total - and can be divided between both parents, and spread over several years, which makes it a quite flexible system. Parents can alternate, for instance 3 months for one, 3 months for the other, so that none of them loses the contact with his/her professional environment. Mothers have to take minimum 3 months leave, fathers minimum 3 months. 20% of the Swedish men take the maximum of 9 months. Men want to be good parents too. They want to take their share, but there is an economic factor: men's salaries are higher, so it is harder for the family to live if the father is on leave.<sup>2</sup> Some universities in Sweden compensate each parent with an additional year per child to finalize their PHD or postdoc.

This system allows flexibility. But in the reality the repartition of roles has not changed so much. There is still a dominance of the masculine values in our societies. And the care functions are still mainly assumed by women. The patriarchal system is still prevalent worldwide.

Another difference between Denmark and the 3 other Nordic countries is the attitude towards prostitution. In Denmark it is not penalized to buy sexual services, as it is in Sweden. « *Whether the penalization of byers has positive effects is not yet clear. Certainly it is less visible but a large part*

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<sup>1</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Group\\_8\\_\(Sweden\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Group_8_(Sweden)) consulted on 31/05/2018

<sup>2</sup> <https://sweden.se/society/gender-equality-in-sweden/>

*moved from the streets to internet. But a positive element is that it changed the cultural norm : for Swedes it is clear that prostitution equates to violence against women. »*

In Sweden and Norway there is a state feminism, it is not only a social movement, it is a part of the political system. The Danish feminist movement is not so strong, there is a cultural difference.

The approach of Sweden towards gender and diversity is based on antidiscrimination. There are 7 types of discrimination to be countered: sex, transgender identity or expression, ethnicity, religion, disability, sexual orientation and age. The **antidiscrimination law** is very detailed and there is a complaining mechanism. This Swedish model had a strong influence on the EU legislation. The Swedish fight against gender-based violence (sexual but also economic and psychic violence) has influenced the UN and WHO, and is now codified via the Istanbul convention.

*« The Baltic countries are very different. Their priority is economic growth, and their authorities believe that this will lead to equality. I think that they must do both at the same time : strive for wealth and equal opportunities at the same time. If Baltic women do not fight the old-fashioned paternalist model (galanterie) they will not get equality before a long time. In the Baltic countries (certainly in Lithuania, where I worked for some time) a lot of women are working in research ...but in lower positions. »*

**Mobility** is a difficult issue, because both men and women work and have good positions. Therefore, mobilities are often done alone, leaving the other parents and the kids behind. This is true for both men and women researchers. *« In Lund we do not focus on mobility, it is taken care of by the hosting institution. » « In Sweden the mobility of researchers is mainly encouraged and funded by the national research councils, and not by the universities. »*

**Quotas** : *« I am in favour because it is easier to change the culture if you have more women. »*

In Sweden, each university has a gender equality plan in accordance with the Discrimination Act. And there is financial support in order to implement them. This is how the AKKA programme was funded. At Lund university, there is a policy for gender equality, equal opportunities and diversity since 2011. It covers 6 areas : equal opportunities, recruitment, promotion, leadership, salaries and terms of employment, gender and intersectionality. A Management Group for gender equality and equal opportunities is in charge of its implementation. For the students the rules about harassment are clear and well-known, but it is not the case for the staff.

*« I prefer to use the term double discrimination, rather than intersectionality, because this concept is not clear to everybody. »*

There are approximately 5000 academic staff in Lund university, of whom 800 are professors. The AKKA leadership programme was offered for senior academics and was followed by 130 members, about 2/3 of which were women and 1/3 men. This had an influence on the culture of the organization as a whole, the gender awareness among leaders raised considerably. After 5 programmes (1 year each programme with monthly sessions), the **AKKA programme** was closed and decentralized at the Faculty level. And unfortunately that was about the end of it – so far.

*« To ensure participation of the professors, we made the programme attractive : we invited prestigious guests, high-level speakers from the university board and management, the national agency for HE (high education) and prominent researchers from universities in Sweden. The sessions were held at the most prestigious university venue, the Old Bishops house. Thanks to this, the participants realized the importance attributed to the programme from the university. »* In Zurich, the CHESS is going to implement a certificate in advanced studies about leadership<sup>3</sup>. Inger is invited to share her experiences from the AKKA leadership programme.

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<sup>3 3</sup> <http://www.caslg.uzh.ch/de.html>

The Faculty of Science at Lund University is currently offering a gender integrated **Mentoring programme** for postdocs, a pilot programme with group mentoring. The programme is designed by Inger with inspiration from the AKKA programme. *« We have 14 mentees and 3 mentors. This programme has, to our surprise, attracted only 2 native Swedes and 14 postdocs from abroad. The programme will start in August 2018. »*

But there is resistance to change, in Sweden just as in the rest of the world. For instance, Gendermainstreaming is in force in Sweden since the 1990th, real efforts to implement it at the HE institutions have recently been taken by the government.

*« The swedish government created a governemental agency for gender equality in January 2018, that is responsible for the gendermainstreaming implementation. This work was previously tasked to the Swedish secretariat for gender research (founded in 1998), that currently serves with information and is project-oriented. »*

It is important to get men to take interest in this issue of gender equality, because this is not a responsibility for only women, but also for men. However, few men are so far involved in active gender equality work in HE. *« My colleague Tomas Brage is one exception and a role model. He was the project manager for the Core Values Project at Lund University and together we edited the report Core values work in academia – with experiences from Lund University (2016). In this report we present the examples of methods and programmes developed in various projects at the university, such as the AKKA-programme, the gender certification project, See the Human Beyond – an anti-discrimination training programme, etc. »*

Interview with Brigitte Ernst on 24-25 May 2018, in the University of Liège, Belgium

