

Women's Political Representation and Gender Quotas - the Swedish Case

Lenita Freidenvall

Working Paper Series 2003:2

The Research Program
on Gender Quotas

Quotas
A KEY TO EQUALITY?

Women's Political Representation and Gender Quotas - the Swedish Case

Lenita Freidenvall

The Research Program: Gender Quotas - a Key to Equality?
Department of Political Science, Stockholm University
www.statsvet.su.se/quotas

Women's Political Representation and Gender Quotas - the Swedish Case¹

Although highly controversial, recent years have witnessed the diffusion of a plethora of electoral gender quotas. Electoral gender quotas are today being introduced in an increasing number of countries around the world (www.quotaproject.org). More than 30 countries have introduced quotas for election to national parliament by constitutional amendment or by electoral law, most of them during recent years. In more than 50 countries quotas for public election is now stipulated in major political parties' own statutes, demanding that a certain minimum of the parties' candidates for election to national parliament must be women.²

In international literature on women in politics one finds the argument that women's political representation reached a historical and worldwide high in the Scandinavian countries - Denmark, Norway and Sweden - due to quotas (Phillips 1995:57). This is, however, not quite accurate. For instance, there have never been any constitutional quota requirements in the Scandinavian countries. Moreover, while almost all parties in Norway have quota provisions, no parties in Denmark use them. Furthermore, only some political parties in Sweden have introduced quotas for public election, whereas others have rejected the idea. The Center Party, for instance, has enjoyed the highest representation of women in the Swedish parliament, more often than any other party since the 1970s, without quotas or even recommendations on more women in politics. Most importantly, the political parties in Scandinavia first introduced electoral gender quotas during the 1980s, when women already occupied 20-30 per cent of the seats in parliament, at that time also the highest in the world. The real breakthrough for Scandinavian women parliamentarians occurred in the 1970s, before the introduction of any quotas.

There are also studies depicting the diffusion of quotas in Scandinavia, denoting that the

¹ This paper was presented at the ECRP conference in Marburg, Germany, September 18-21, 2003. I would especially like to thank Petra Meier, Vrije Universiteit, Belgium, Mona Lena Krook, Columbia University, USA, Eeva Raevara, University of Helsinki, Finland and Judith Squires, University of Bristol, UK, for insightful comments. Many thanks also to Drude Dahlerup and Christina Alnevall, Stockholm University, Sweden and Joyce Sandberg, Sweden.

² The website www.quotaproject.org is the first overview of the use of electoral quotas for women worldwide and is a joint project on the collection of global information on quotas between the Department of Political Science, Stockholm University and International IDEA.

Swedish political parties have actually not adopted quotas but rather affirmative actions measures for women (Caul 2001b). This is, however, not quite true either. As the mapping of strategies used by the Swedish political parties' will demonstrate, only three out of the seven political parties in parliament have adopted electoral gender quotas.

The aim of this paper is to identify various strategies the Swedish political parties have adopted to increase the number of women in politics and to analyze the parties' views on women's representation and quotas. Of special interest is the relation between how women's (under) representation is framed and the various solutions presented to solve the problem. It is argued that a competition between the Swedish political parties - to be modern, to get women's votes - trigger them to increase the level of women in the political party respectively. However, the fact that some parties have introduced party quotas, while others have preferred recommendations or just kept their strategies on the rhetorical level, highlight the importance of contextually based research regarding the translation of the discourse on women's representation into individual political parties and about the mechanisms behind the introduction of various strategies, such as quotas.

This paper is based on an empirical survey of Swedish political party documents during the period 1970-2000. The party documents consist of motions and propositions to the party congresses respectively (the highest decision-making body of the party), party documents and plans for gender equality, statutes and party programmes. The 1970s and onward witnessed a wide range of initiatives to increase the parliamentary representation of women, such as campaigns by the women's movement against male dominated assemblies and political parties (and women's sections within) beginning to suggest strategies to increase the number of women in politics. In the 1974 general election women's representation in parliament rose from 14 to 21 percent, which was the greatest increase ever. Thus, the 1970s represents the take off phase for women in Swedish parliament.

A modified strategic approach to women's parliamentary representation

Compared with national parliaments worldwide, Sweden enjoys the highest proportion of women parliamentarians. In the latest general election in Sweden in 2002, parliament consisted of 45 percent women, which is exceptionally high compared to the international average of 15 percent (www.ipu.org). Due to this high representation of women in politics, scholars and women activists have raised the question: How come? Why does Sweden (and

the Scandinavian countries) have such a high political representation of women? It needs to be emphasized, however, that the proportion of women in the Swedish and Scandinavian parliaments, increased very slowly in the beginning. In 1971, 50 years after women's suffrage was won in Sweden, women's representation in the Swedish parliament was only 14 percent. During the 1970s, however, women's representation started to increase. In 1988, it had increased to 38 percent. In the 1991 general election, it decreased for the very first time ever, to be increased again in 1994, 1998 and 2002. Some Scandinavian researchers have raised the question whether or not the limit might be reached, where the normative goals for a higher women's representation might have reached a state of saturation (Kjaer 2000, 2001, Freidenvall 2003). According to Kjaer momentum is not lost due to incidents in the selection or election process, but due to the fact that the potential for increasing the number of women in parliament is seen as having been capitalized. Thus, the breakthrough for women in Swedish politics is a phenomenon of the past 30 years, with the 1970s as the take off phase. Sweden therefore represents an incremental track, resting on a gradual increase in women's political representation (Dahlerup & Freidenvall 2003).

There are several factors explaining the development of women's representation in Sweden.³ First, institutional factors, such as electoral systems, district magnitudes, political party list characteristics, party ideology and party rules, impact women's parliamentary participation. Secondly, socio-economic factors such as women's labor force participation, women's educational level, and the development of the welfare system have a positive effect on women's parliamentary participation. Thirdly, cultural factors such as religiosity and attitudes toward gender equality are also stressed. The system of proportional representation (party list system) coupled with the early development of the Swedish welfare system, women's opportunity to study and gain employment, low fertility levels and secular/protestant religious affiliation are of great importance explaining the high level of women in Swedish parliament. However, the research community still falls short of providing an explanation for the difference in women's representation across countries and over time. Why, for instance, did women's representation in Sweden increase in the 1970s, at a time when the electoral system had been intact for more than 50 years? The empirical development in Sweden and elsewhere

³ Among others see Caul 1999, Duverger 1955, Hoecker 1998, Inglehart and Norris 2003, Kaiser 2001, Kenworthy and Malami 1999, Lovenduski and Norris 1993, Matland and Studlar 1996, Matland 1998, Nelson and Chowdhury 1994, Norris 1987, Reynolds 1999, Rule 1981, 1987, Rule and Zimmerman 1994.

during the last ten-fifteen years demonstrates extraordinary changes in the number of women in parliament - often in the absence of substantial changes with regard to institutional, socioeconomic and cultural changes).

This paper proposes a modified strategic approach as a complement to the institutional, socio-economic and cultural factors.⁴ It is hypothesized that women's political representation depends on whether or not political parties have a strategic incentive to promote women. As part of increased party competition, parties are obliged to recruit and promote women in order to adhere to the demands of the electorate, explicitly the female electorate. Special measures for the nomination of women candidates are adopted, such as recommended numbers of women on party lists or mandatory zipper systems alternating every other place on the list between women and men. Consequently, although the institutional, socio-economic and cultural factors mentioned are important, indeed, one has to consider efforts taken by the political parties in increasing women's numerical representation in the national legislature.

Theory on party competition, diffusion and translation

In my problematization of party competition theoretical insights can be drawn from theories of contagion. According to contagion theory it is suggested that traditional political parties will feel forced to nominate more women if one of their political competitors, usually a smaller party to the left, starts promoting women. Duverger suggested that a "contagion from the left" would occur among political party rivals, with Conservative and Liberal cadre parties being pressured to follow the Socialist parties by developing into mass membership parties not jeopardizing electoral gains (Duverger in Matland and Studlar 1996). Matland and Studlar (1996) suggest that as smaller rivaling parties, usually on the political periphery, begin promoting women actively, larger parties will follow suit.⁵ By nominating women, small parties demonstrate that there is no penalty in promoting women and larger parties will feel inclined to respond to these pressures by taking direct action in the support of women. This will explicitly hold for parties that are ideological neighbors to the parties initiating the launch of women candidates. These parties fear losing voters to the innovating party. Over time, as

⁴ Scholars exploring the role of the strategic approach are for instance Caul 2001a, Caul 2001b, Kaiser 2001, Lovenduski 1993, Matland and Studlar 1996, Opello 2002, Sainsbury 1993, Wängnerud 1999, 2002.

⁵ While Epstein (1967) argues that 'contagion from the right' would force leftist parties to apply measures used by right wing parties, Kirchheimer (1966) argues that parties tend to become 'catch-all' parties, distancing themselves from their ideologies respectively.

each party reacts to a felt threat from close political competitors on the issue of sending more women to parliament, the perceived need to nominate women will trigger approximately all parties in the political spectrum to comply with the new norms. Rival parties, consequently, follow suit in a chain reaction. It is then anticipated that all mainstream parties will finally begin promoting a greater proportion of women politicians to demonstrate their commitment to equal rights.

Matland and Studlar make a distinction between *macro contagion* and *micro contagion*, where the first occurs at the national/central level, and the latter at the local/electoral district level. Macro contagion, first, is defined as a process where a party responds to general political pressures from rival parties on the issue of women's political participation by increasing its promotion of women across constituencies, but not necessarily in the same districts where other parties nominate women. It suffices to be able to demonstrate consent to the idea of increasing the representation of women in politics by nominating a larger number of women. The effects of macro contagion enable a raise in the level of women's representation enabled across the constituencies. More or less all parties are estimated to be influenced, albeit with varied intensity. Micro contagion, second, is defined as district specific and occurs when a party's constituency candidate selection meeting decides to increase the number of women in safe/winnable seats, as a response to the nomination of women in prominent positions by rival parties in the district. Micro contagion is thus a response at the local district level to pressure emanating from the local level.

With this party competition creating a chain reaction, as a trajectory, I argue that the increased implementation of strategies to promote the numerical representation of women in parliament can be seen as an effect of macro contagion. Strategies such as electoral gender quotas, recommendation or even rhetorical outcries then affect women's representation. Once a party has implemented some kind of strategy, other parties will move to emulate it. As a consequence, parties with lower levels of women's representation, such as the Conservative Party and the Christian Democratic Party, will feel pressured by the high representation of women in other parties, such as the Social Democratic Party and the Left Party to follow suit. But instead of copying their strategies, they prefer other strategies, translating the discourse on women's representation into their ideological understandings.

The concept of contagion can be criticized for implying transference of ideas with modest space for actors. However, one could argue that there is an element of competition between parties. As an alternative to contagion, the concept of “diffusion” can be applied, defined as a process where a party responds to general political pressures, partly from the level of women’s political participation in rivaling parties, and partly from the women’s movement and the general electorate demanding more women in politics.

Processes of translation

According to processes of translation communication as the transference of new ideas can be regarded as the production and exchange of meanings. Perceiving strategies on women’s representation, such as quotas, as social constructions implies that they can be regarded as products of historically distinct social interpretation processes. Diffusion can consequently be redefined as a process where meaning is constructed by temporally and spatially embedded policy ideas from previous contexts and using them as models for policy change in new contexts (Johnson 2003). Policy translation can thus be regarded as processes of social interpretation, where implicit meanings built into the policy contributes to its explicit construction.

As a modified version of diffusion, translation of strategies for increased women’s representation puts a greater emphasis on an actor-dependent character of translation. The spread in time and space of innovative ideas - such as quotas - is in the hands of actors, who may act in various ways. If there are no actors, such as women’s organizations and political activists, neither will there be senders nor receivers of ideas. There will in fact be no policy transmission (Dahlerup and Freidenvall 2003).

Political parties, being challenged by rivaling parties in the quest for women votes, and being threatened by public opinion to include more women, internalize new ideas into their way of thinking and translate them for practical use. Policy translation should, as a consequence, be regarded as an activity where local actors play the main roles, staged in a local institutional and discursive frame, which sets the borders for the practical translation. Therefore, all processes of policy translation in time and space are always connected to local contexts, where actors internalize and conceptualize ideas, and adapt them to their understandings. Translation of strategies on women’s representation concerns how policy ideas derive their meaning in the local political context and how these ideas are adapted to, and limited by, the

given context.

To sum up, I argue that the Swedish political parties are involved in a competition on women in parliament, and in this competition they put forward various strategies to increase the number of women parliamentarians. Instead of just copying strategies that seem to be effective in order to increase the number of women in parliament, they come up with solutions depending on how the issue of women's representation is framed: i.e. is the question of women's representation important at all to begin with, and on what grounds should women be included or not, and what should be done to or not. Parties thus translate ideas of gender equality and women's representation and internalize them into their own ideological contexts. Actors are then constrained by (gender) ideological structures. According to the theories of new institutionalism, I argue in line with Krook (2003) that actors and structures operate at distinct and independent levels, but are implicitly interwoven since each incorporates the capacity to promote both continuity and change.

A note on methodology

My methodological approach could be described as feminist discursive analysis, inspired by the framework outlined by Carol Lee Bacchi (1999), i.e. the “what’s the problem approach.” Analyses guided by this approach have been increasingly popular among Nordic researchers recently.⁶

According to this approach all strategies always contain a diagnosis of what the problem is. Depending on how this problem is framed (what are the reasons behind the problem, who is responsible for the problem and who is not, etc.), various solutions are presented. An important part of all kinds of analysis of political strategies, consequently, is to assess how problems are presented, and implicitly how they are not presented. With regard the Swedish political parties' views on women's representation we might ask: what is the problem of women's (under) representation and what is it not, is it possible to solve the problem and who is then responsible for its solution (and who is not), what implicit understandings on gender and gender (in)equality is constructed, etc. Consequently, the framing of a problem has implications on what kind of strategies are adopted.

⁶ Among others Borchorst & Dahlerup 2003, Dahlerup 2002, Borchorst, Christensen & Siim 2002, Rönnblom 2002, Magnusson 2000, and Carbin & Holli 2002.

An understanding of women's representation based on the idea of equal opportunity puts the main responsibility on the individual, encouraging strategies such as political candidate schools, mentor programmes, and network activities. Another understanding might argue that equal opportunity does not exist just due to the removal of formal barriers. Direct discrimination and complex patterns of hidden barriers prevent women from attaining a fair share of political power and influence. The demand for special rights, as guaranteed representation in forms of quotas and other measures, for women as a group can be perceived as a compensation for structural barriers. Equality as a goal cannot be reached by formal equal treatment solely as a means. If structural barriers exist, compensatory measures must be introduced as a means to reach equality of result. In this understanding, strategies such as quota are not regarded as a discriminatory act towards men, but as a compensation for structural barriers that women might face in the electoral process. With this understanding the political parties are seen as responsible for actions taken, not individual women. The way the problem of women's political representation is identified and diagnosed in this process has significance for how groups or individuals are able to act politically, i.e. who can put issues on the political agenda, who can define and articulate problems and who is marginalized, and when.

This demand for special group rights, however, is a risky undertaking. By constituting women as a group in need of structural mechanisms, such as quotas, a definition of a "we" is established, which consequently implies the construction of a "them" - the constitutive "outside." By embarking on this voyage, we touch upon the very dilemma within feminist theory and practice: if women as a group are constructed to take advantage of their interests, one jeopardizes consolidating the very category one wants to dissolve. On the other hand, however, does the establishment of a "we" reflect on the very diversity within the "group." Thus, a certain way of framing the question of women's under-representation in politics, result in a certain solution, that might exclude aspects of women's subordination at large and the diversity among women with regard to class, ethnicity, sexual orientation or age.

The following empirical study consists of two parts. The first part is an empirical mapping of the party strategies adopted with regard to women's representation 1970 - 2000. In the second part I argue that the strategies presented by the parties respectively depend on their framing of the question of women's representation and their understanding of gender and gender

equality. Due to space limits only two parties will be discussed in this paper, the Conservative Party and the Social Democratic Party.

Strategies for improved women's representation

Strategies for the improvement of women's representation in politics are difficult to map since they can be of various strengths, such as formal and informal, mandatory and non-mandatory. Strategies also operate at various levels and arenas such as national or municipal/local level, internal level (in party organization) or external level (on party lists at election). Lovenduski and Norris (1993:8) differentiate between rhetorical strategies, positive or affirmative action and positive discrimination. Brown and Galligan distinguish between promotional strategies, active intervention and strategies aiming at upholding the status quo (1993:166-7). Lena Wängnerud operates with four categories: quotas, recommendations, goals and additional strategies (Wängnerud 2000, 2002). Wängnerud's categorization does not, however, distinguish between various kinds of quotas regulating different arenas in politics, such as internal party quotas and electoral list quotas. My categorization include quotas, targets and goals, following Wängnerud, but in line with Christensen (1999). I make a distinction between party quotas for internal office and candidate quotas for party lists, i.e. electoral candidate quotas. In order to falsify my hypothesis of party competition, I suggest a fourth category as well: non-action.

First some words on quota provisions in general. Quota provisions can be of various kinds, such as national legislative quotas, reserved seats, and political party quota.⁷ This paper deals with political party quota provisions as one of the strategies for increased women's representation being implemented by the Swedish political parties. Political party quotas, however, also appear in different shapes. In general, political party quotas are specific measures aimed at increasing the proportion of women among party candidates or elected representatives. Specific percentages, proportions or numeric range of the selection of women candidates are usually established, sometimes also the ordering of candidates on the party list. Political party quotas may also be phrased in various ways (gender neutral or gender specific), and sometimes just establishing the minimum or maximum representation of women or of either sex.

⁷ Azza Karam 1998, Dahlerup & Freidenvall 2003. Suggestions for further reading can be found on www.quotaproject.org.

Party targets, secondly, are closely related to party quotas, but they differ mainly by not abiding to the mandatory character of political party quota. Usually party targets function as recommendations, establishing a goal, with specific targets in percentage, proportion or minimum representation, and sometimes also with a specific time schedule for its completion. Goals, thirdly, are defined as parties' commitment to recruiting more women, but without any explicit suggestions of how, when and to what extent this will take place. Non-action, finally, is defined as parties' lack of any of the strategies mentioned.

Table 1. About here

As the table demonstrates, all parties have undertaken some kind of promotional activity to increase the number of women in parliament. No party has refrained from developing strategies, which strengthens the thesis that action matters. The table shows at least three important results.

First, quotas are primarily favored by parties to the left of the ideological spectrum, such as the Green Party, the Social Democratic Party and the Left Party. The Green Party first introduced quotas in 1981, followed by the Left Party in 1987. Upon its founding in 1981, the Green Party adopted a quota provision involving a minimum of 40 percent of either sex in boards and committees. This provision was extended in 1987 to include a minimum of 40 per cent of either sex on the electoral lists as well. In 1997, the quota provision was extended to 50 per cent, plus minus one person. In 1987, the Left Party implemented a policy of at least the same proportion of women on party lists as women members in the constituency. This strategy was extended to a minimum of 40 per cent of either sex in 1990. In 1993, the policy was revised to provide for at least 50 percent of women. The by far largest political party in Sweden, the Social Democratic Party has changed strategies from preferring party target to quotas. In 1987, the Social Democratic Party decided on a minimum representation of 40 per cent of either sex at all levels within the party. This policy was extended to "an equal representation of the sexes" in 1990. In 1993, the zipping system (*varvade listor, varannan damernas*) was introduced, according to which men and women are alternated on the party list (electoral ballot). What is crucial here, is who is on the top of the list.

Secondly, parties to the right and middle of the ideological spectrum have to a greater extent implemented party targets and goals. While committed to the goal of an increased women's

representation, they are divided on what strategies to use. While the Liberal Party and the Christian Democratic Party mainly use targets, general goals seem to be preferred by the Conservative Party and the Center Party. In 1972, the Liberal Party introduced a policy of a minimum of 40 per cent of either sex in internal board and committees. In 1974, the party recommended the constituencies to place at least one woman on a safe seat on the party list. In case the constituency just had only one safe seat to begin with, the party was recommended to place one woman on either the safe seat or the next place on the party list. In 1988, the Liberal Party extended its policies by recommending the zipping system, according to which men and women are alternated on the party list. While the Christian Democratic Party introduced a recommendation of a minimum representation of 40 per cent of either sex in 1987, the Conservative Party and the Center Party have made rhetorical statements on the importance of improving the number of women in parliament, but without any concrete suggestions on how and when to proceed.

A third result worth highlighting is the fact that parties have adopted strategies continuously throughout this thirty-year period. The Christian Democratic Party might be an exception, but here it is important to note that this party did not receive a seat in parliament until 1991. While goals and party targets were preferred in the 1970s, the 1980s demonstrates an increase of party targets and quotas, at the expense of goals. In the 1990s, finally, quotas have been the preferred strategy. Thus, there has been a radicalization over time with regard to adopting special measures to recruit women candidates. This radicalization over time is also apparent within the political parties respectively. The Social Democratic Party, for instance, first adopted general goals in the 1970s, followed by party targets in the 1980s and quota provisions in the 1990s. The Christian Democratic Party started out with goals in the 1970s, soon to be followed by party targets. The Left Party has moved from party targets to quotas, and also sharpened the quota provisions over time. The Green Party has also, as discussed, strengthened their quota provisions as well as the Liberal Party where party targets have been strengthened instead.

Thus, the results demonstrate that quotas as a strategy begins at the left ideological spectrum, with the Green Party and the Left Party as innovators, to be followed by the large Social Democratic Party. This result is in line with research on policy innovation studying processes of diffusion across political parties (Caul 2001b, Kaiser 2001, Matland & Studlar 1996). Matland and Studlar argue that sometimes policy innovation result in the diffusion of policies

to right parties as well, until almost all parties have adopted quotas. In the Swedish case, it appears that the Liberal Party might have started the policy diffusion with its recommendation on a minimum of 40 per cent of either sex in their party boards and committees. This leads me to the second part of the paper, where I discuss some explanations focused on diffusion among political parties and the parties' framing of women's representation as a problem.

A solution in need of a problem?

The political parties adopt various strategies to increase the amount of women in politics. The strategy chosen is very much connected to the understanding of women's representation as a problem in need of being solved. In the following passage, I will concentrate on two parties: the Conservative Party and the Social Democratic Party, which have adopted different strategies.

The Conservative Party - from women's problems to women's problems

What's the problem in the 1970s: Women's federations?

The Conservative Party has throughout the period 1970-2000 adopted general statements on the importance of women in politics. During the 1970s and 1980s the discussion on women's representation primarily centered on the organization and future of the party's women's federation, Moderata Kvinnoförbundet, MKF. At the party congress in 1975, it was argued that women's federations represent "an ideological relic" being both a load and a barrier for women and men's equal opportunity (Conservative Party, Motion nr. 22, 1975). The MKF is supposed to do "more damage than good" and in order to show the voters that the party promotes equal conditions and equal opportunity between the sexes the party needs to "state an example" and "show the voters that we (women and men) work side by side" (Conservative Party, Motion nr. 22, 1975). Another motion states that since there are no pieces of evidence of women having to fight for achieving the same status in politics as men, and that there is no proof of women being "deviant" as political creatures, the MKF should be closed down (Conservative Party, Motion nr. 23, 1975). Arguments such as women work more efficiently in separate organizations represent "an old thinking on gender roles" (Conservative Party, Motion nr. 23, 1975). Instead "the human species make contributions and should be valued regardless of her sex". In still another motion it is stated that "we have come so far that the women's federation has outplayed its role (...and) represents a barrier to

the aimed gender equality” (Conservative Party, Motion nr. 24, 1975). Instead women should engage themselves in the main party, where they may “assert themselves better” and “automatically” be regarded as a candidate for political assignments (Conservative Party, Motion nr. 24, 1975).

In the Conservative understanding of women’s under-representation presented in these motions and many others throughout the period, women’s federations are regarded as a problem. By the segregated character of these federations, women and men are prevented from “working side by side” in common endeavors for a better society. The articulation of the problem of women’s federations is connected to the construction of the problem of gender segregation. When women act in separate organizations, they act against the norm of gender equality, understood as working together “side by side.” By women’s involvement in these “ideological relic(s), “ ”old thinking on gender roles” is preserved. Women’s federations do not only cement old-fashioned gender stereotyped attitudes, they also prevent women from aspiring to higher positions within politics, limiting them to a certain sector of the party. Instead women should “assert themselves better” by integrating in the main party where they “automatically” will receive political positions. As a consequence, in this understanding women’s work in women’s federations is degraded as non-political, as well as the women’s federation is seen as responsible for women’s under-representation. Also, in this understanding a narrative of progress and linearity is suggested. Gender equality is regarded as something achieved or soon to be achieved, exemplified in the statements: “we have *come so far*, “ we have to break with “*old thinking on gender roles*, “ and MKF represents “ideological *relic*.” According to these perceptions of time and a continuous development, gender equality will be accomplished automatically, all by itself, disconnecting the party from any responsibilities to solve the problem.

The articulation of the women’s federation as a problem is related to the Conservative emphasis on equal opportunities. Women and men should be regarded as individuals, competing on the same premises, and not as collectives. Political representation deals primarily with individuals who should be granted the same opportunities for power and influence in society: individuals “should be valued regardless of her sex” (Conservative Party, Motion nr. 23, 1975). No one should be granted free rides or receive extra support and stimuli from the women’s federation.

All these motions, however, were turned down by the party congress, based on MKF's function as a center for support, education and recruitment of female party members. Contrary to the motions, the Party Board argues that "time is not ripe" for the destablishment of the MKF (Conservative Party, Party Board Statement, 1975). Instead the MKF is a source of strength, from where "their (women's) special questions are monitored" and where women get the opportunity to represent the party (Conservative Party, Party Board Statement, 1975). According to this understanding of gender equality as not accomplished, MKF is given the responsibility both for taking care of "women's special questions" (i.e. women's questions are then being deported from the main party to a co-lateral section) and granting women the space (i.e. then party does not have to include them).

What's the problem in the 1990s? Party image? Women's lack of education?

At the congress in 1993, several motions on women's under-representation are presented. Based on arguments such as it is a "democratic dilemma" that women are not represented in politics and that "women of today, our voters will no longer accept" party lists consisting primarily of men, the party's image is referred to as problematic. Since "women want to be represented by women, " the party has to act in order to attract the female electorate (Conservative Party, Motion nr. 282, 1993). Several arguments based on democratic reasoning are presented, such as women's political representation being a "cornerstone" in "our democratic tradition" and "more than half of the population consists of women." It is also stressed that "the low representation of women has an impact on the amount of women voting for the Conservative Party." In order to receive more votes, consequently, the party has to increase the number of women on party lists.

By attracting "women of today" the party constructs itself as modern and progressive. Today's women, in contrast to yesterday's women, are demanding: "they will no longer *accept*." In the competition for votes, the party needs to present a Conservative alternative to modern women, who knows what they want and have the capacity to demand it. In the competition for votes, the party also has to demonstrate that it is attractive to the general public: "in order to be credible, *our* party must, with greater clarity than today, state the importance that more women should have a seat in national, regional and local parliament (...). It's a race against time" (Conservative Party, Motion nr. 282, 1993). Again, an understanding of linearity, of time as a continuous process towards the best of societies, is an

underlying premise of the reasoning.

At the same time as action is called for, the party suggests no concrete strategies. To regulate the number of women on party lists, as some motions suggest, is not regarded by the party as a reasonable solution to the problem of women's under-representation in politics (Conservative Party, Party Board Statement, 1993). Although the promotion of women in politics is supported at large, it is up to the individual constituencies to decide upon the selection and ordering of their candidates on the party lists. The party board also points out that the Conservative Party represents "the party with *most* women" as chairpersons and governors at the municipal and local level, that the speaker of the parliament is a Conservative woman, that there are "*three*" women Conservative ministers, and that the party has "*more* female chairpersons in local government *than all other parties* put together." According to this understanding, the party has thus been quite successful and is heading in the right direction. The fact that the Conservative party has "the next lowest" share of women in parliament, however, could be explained by "women's own priorities." The underlying premise of this reasoning is the idea that women might not want to participate in politics. They abstain from politics by free will (Party statement, 1975). (Cp. Borchhorst and Christensen 1993, Dahlerup 2003).

Quotas are not regarded as a good solution, based on the conviction that competence should decide. According to the Party Board, quotas "always lead to the suspicion that a candidate could have been promoted, even if he would not sustain an independent assessment of his competence and merits." (Conservative Party, Party Board Statement, 1993). Quotas thus represent a free ride into politics, consequently obstructing the competition of political positions on equal terms. Quotas also infringe upon constituencies procedures for candidate selection, thereby representing a threat to internal democracy. Instead education is preferred, enabling women to become "more assertive and more competent in political positions" (Conservative Party, Party Board Statement, 1993). In the party's work for more women in politics, Action MKF (an education for potential women leaders arranged by MKF) is presented as an important educational strategy to "stimulate and develop more women to take an active responsibility for the party's overall activities." Strategies such as networking and mentor programmes are, beside education, the best ways to promote women. In a long-term perspective, however, general attitudes in society need to change, since traditional values are regarded as an explanation for women's problems in competing on equal terms.

Consequently, one of the reasons for women's under-representation, in this understanding, is their lack of crucial competences, their shortcomings compared to men. Women need to change. They must improve their skills, becoming more "assertive", more "competent" in order to take up the race with men in politics. Thus, Conservative women are not regarded as equally qualified as men.

The political candidates' own merits and individual assessments of his merit should permeate the selection process within the party. With this understanding, strategies such as quotas would both infringe upon the individual's rights to individual assessment and to the constituencies' right to decide for themselves. With the discourse of equal opportunities as an ideological framework, strategies such as quotas are difficult to promote. At the same time as are rejected, the importance to recruit more women is still apparent in order to attract voters: "The image of a party where women are successful is important for women's opportunity to become elected" (Conservative Party, Party Board Statement, 1993).

Individual solutions to individual problems

In sum, in the Conservative understanding of women's under-representation in politics, no measures that obstruct the idea of equal opportunities are to be instigated to solve the problem. Women should not be given any political shortcuts to power and influence, such as gender quotas, but rather compete on the same conditions, the same terms as everybody else (i.e. men). No measures are to disturb candidate's equal opportunity to run for parliament or obstruct with internal party democracy. However, in order to participate on equal terms in the political market women might need further education. According to this understanding, women lack crucial competences for political work and need to prepare themselves better. Consequently, individual problems should be solved by individual solutions, and women are made responsible for their under-representation.

The Social Democratic Party - from women's problems to men's problems

1970s - What's the problem? Discrimination? Attitudes?

At the Social Democratic Party's congresses throughout the 1970s, many motions stress the lack of gender equality in society. According to several motions presented, women are

responsible for caring for children and the home, and are exploited as a low paid reserves in the work force, contrary to the readings of the Social Democratic Party's Report to the UN regarding the status of women in Sweden. Due to this "discrimination" of women in society, the representation of women in parliament is also effected:

"Women's representation in government, parliament and local decision-making bodies is between 4 and 14 per cent. Also in other decision-making bodies women lack influence. Thus, it is men that possess the power to decide in society. Women lack this power" (Social Democratic Party, Motion nr. V2, 1972).

Compared to the Conservative Party, discrimination is explicitly articulated as a problem, as well as viewing men as the perpetrators. According to this understanding men should relinquish seats, in order for women to advance. Also the party board reflects on the problems of women's under-representation:

"After having been formally granted equal political rights for 50 years, women are still strongly under-represented in the political assemblies as well as in party organizations. This fact underscores the strong need for a penetrating assessment and discussion of traditional values. Having conducted such a insightful study increased attention may prevent a continuous routine like nomination of men to politically important positions" (Social Democratic Party, Party Board Statement, 1972).

According to the party board's understanding, however, women are discriminated against, but not due to men's acquisition of power at the expense of women, but rather due to "traditional values" that might prevail in some nominations boards. Traditional values in this perspective might be seen as unconscious attitudes that will disappear in the future and consequently be exempt from special attention. Also, since attitudes are individual, albeit traditional, the problem must be solved individually. By referring to "traditional values" and "routine like" (tread the beaten path) ways of nominations, men's responsibility is detached. The nomination committees, in charge of the nomination process, are regarded as distant, gender-neutral objects not to blame. A construction of the problem as a question of attitudes leads the party to offer solutions such as a study on the number of women in the party and to work out guidance for local party organizations to increase the number of women. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s the party proposes measures to improve women's conditions for political

participation. For instance, measures such as baby-sitting assistance, children's activities at conferences, and compensation for salary reduction are implemented.

There is, however, also a need to take up the race with other political parties on women votes. The Party Board reports that: "In our case it is also an electoral risk, since a party, that methodologically addresses women's issue, promotes their importance and tries to take measures for their inclusion, such as the Liberal Party's with their actions and motions... might win confidence and votes from the female electorate" (Party Board's Report, 1972). Not only women's attention is to be won, also admiration from the international community:

"Our party must, as we see it, plan conscious action, agitation and information in this question. We have such a binding declaration of principles, such as the Swedish Government's (Social Democratic Party) report to the UN on the Status of Women in Sweden" (Social Democratic Party, Party Board Statement, 1972).

The construction of the Social Democratic Party as having a special mission with regard to gender equality, is apparent in the following statement:

"In order to improve women's situation in the family, society and the work force, the Social Democratic Party must take the lead in the fight for equality and justice for women and to improve women's influence to participate in politics (...) It is solely by social democratic politics, aiming at equality between all people, that equality between the sexes can be accomplished (...) The right wing government (Conservative Party, Center Party and Liberal Party) politics counteract this development in society" (Social Democratic Party, Party Board Statement, 1972).

1990s What's the problem? Discrimination? Men? The threat of women as a collective?

While the party documents from the 1970s reflected a conflict within the Social Democratic Party with regard to women as victims of traditional gender stereotypes or as objects of structural discrimination, there is a shift in focus in the mid 80s and onwards towards women's structural discrimination and men's dominance in all aspects of life, including politics. In the report, *All of the salary - half of the power* (1993), the party board presents three urgent areas in need of improvement: the difference in women and men's salaries, men's

violence towards women, and an increased women's representation in the Social Democratic Party. In the introduction it is stated "women are inferior to men in all aspects of society - in the family, in the work force, in politics. This is not due to coincidence. The unequal distribution of power in society contributes to reproducing the male society."

In this problematization women suffer from structural discrimination in all aspects of life. In the demand for more women in politics, it is argued that "women have the same right to power as men", "women's competence and experience are needed in politics," and "men and women do not always have the same interests. Women must have the same opportunity as men to assert their interests". At the same time as women as a group is to be equal to men with regards to rights, women as a group is constructed as having specific traits, different from men, that are beneficial in politics. In addition to founding this demand on both democratic and resource arguments, the idea of women and men having different interests is raised, thereby also indicating a potential conflict between the sexes. We are thus navigating between the understanding of women being both alike and different concerning identity and discrimination. What is new here is the implicit threat of women whose collective interests are emphasized at the expense of individual rights (Cp. Edwards 2002). With regard to women's lack of power, discussed above, and women's specific traits, women are constructed both as an object (victim) and a subject (agent).

This construction of women as both an object and a subject is also apparent in the party's adoption of "the zipping system" ("varvade listor" or "varannan damernas"). In order to increase the proportion of women in the Social Democratic Party at large, both in its internal bodies and in parliamentary decision bodies at all levels the congress adopts the zipping system. According to the "zipping system" seats on the electoral ballot are alternated between men and women. Thus, both the proportion and the ordering of women and men are now formalized.

The introduction of the system was not without controversy. In the debate preceding the decision on a quota provision, it was stated that:

"it is principally correct having as many women as men representing us, but the word quota implies that women are not actually qualified, since they have to use quotas in order to be placed on the party list. If we call the system 'alternated lists' we will have a much more positive point of departure." In many of the motions to the congresses over time, the specific

quota system adopted by the Social Democratic Party was referred to as “varannan damernas” “or “varvade listor” to a greater extent than “quota” (Social Democratic Party, Party Debate to Motion nr. 352-359, 1993).

In Swedish the phrase “varannan damernas” refers to traditional dancing, where it is customary for men to ask women for a dance. Once in a while at dances, however, the order is changed for a short period of time, giving women the privilege to ask men for a dance, but just every second dance. Applying this system to politics would consequently imply a scenario where women are provided the opportunity to take part in politics (to dance), and although men are still in charge of the political agenda (men decide whom to dance with and when to switch partners), women are given the opportunity to take the lead in politics once in a while, for shorter periods (women may ask men for a dance until the normal order is restored). In this problematization, “varannan damernas” rests on the male norm. Törnquist (2003) suggests that “varannan damernas” also reproduces the heterosexual norm in politics.

The understanding of women having different interests, based on an underlying premise of a potential conflict between the sexes, is crucial for the adoption of the zipping system. The zipper system might not only be a reasonable solution for the problem of women’s under representation, it was also a convenient solution to the Social Democratic Party to act and react against the threat of a women’s party. In Sweden the feminist network *the Support Stockings* had threatened to establish a woman’s party if the established political parties did not take actions in increasing the number of women in parliament by the national election of 1994 (See Stark 199X, Ulmanen, 1998). The perceived threat from the potential establishment of a new woman’s party (and the threat of rival parties challenging the Social Democratic Party in this endeavor) is evident in many of the motions of the 1993 congress:

“Increasingly voices have been raised for an increased women’s representation, and there have even been discussions about the establishment of a woman’s party. This represents a serious lack of trust in the Social Democratic Party, which always has struggled for equality between the sexes. Now it’s time for the Social Democratic Party to present itself as an alternative to women and start working for their increased influence in politics and in society” (Social Democratic Party, Motion nr.358, 1993).

“Many women feel disappointed and restless. They perceive our party as not having confidence in them. Yet women have to a larger extent than men voted for the Social

Democratic Party, the party which is conceived as a guarantee for the social welfare system...Our party will not succeed without women's continuous support. We cannot risk losing them“ (Social Democratic Party, Motion nr. 356, 1993).

“We argue that the Social Democrats have to face this opinion by promoting the principle of the “zipping system (Social Democratic Party, Motion nr. 357, 1993)

(...) two parties use the principle of the zipping system on party lists, namely the Liberal Party and the Green Party” (Social Democratic Party, Motion nr. 358, 1993).

Fearing the “risk” of “losing” “disappointed” and “restless” women voters to the woman's party, the party has to act. It has to “face this opinion” and restore women's “confidence” and “trust,” otherwise jeopardizing an electoral success. The Social Democratic Party “which always has struggled for equality between the sexes” is the one party to act in favor of women; it is the party that represents “an alternative” to women. The immediate threat is apparent: “now it's time.” By the adoption of the zipping system, already in use by rival parties (albeit with a non-mandatory character in the Liberal Party), the zipping system is introduced as a solution to the problem. But what problem? - Women's under-representation or the threat from a potential women's party?

Collective solutions to collective problems?

The Social Democratic Party's adoption of gender quotas can thus partly be seen in the light of their framing the question of women's under-representation as a question of structural discrimination of women and men's domination. By adhering to the policy of the zipping system, the party demonstrates that quotas do not represent a discrimination against men, as in the Conservative case, but as a structural compensation for the barriers women might face in the competition for parliamentary seats. Thus, the idea of equal opportunity is transformed to the idea of equality of results. This idea blends very well with the Swedish discourse on gender equality where men and women are supposed to work together, in equal numbers, in the same arena. By introducing the zipping system, the structural discrimination of women in politics could be dealt with, while simultaneously limiting the proportion of women to 50 percent. By this provision, the risk of having too many women in politics was eliminated.

Conclusion

In this paper, I have outlined the major strategies implemented by the political parties in order to increase the proportion of women in parliament, and analyzed two of the major political parties' views on women's representation and quotas. There are many resemblances, but also differences between the party discourses. Apparent in both party discourses is the concept of two sexes working side by side. In the Conservative party's understanding, women's separate organization represents a problem, contradicting the idea of women and men working together. Women are neither allowed, in this problematization, to struggle as women, nor solely for women's rights. Instead of breaking the norm of gender equality by acting separately (the forbidden act according to Eduards), women should work as individuals together with men. In the understanding of the Social Democratic Party, on the other hand, women's subordinate position is stressed, being discriminated against in all aspects of life. Over a period of time this understanding of the discrimination of women is changed to men's discrimination of women, i.e. the man as an actor is singled out. However, when men's discrimination of women is a result of old fashioned values, it is difficult to argue for collective strategies, such as quotas. Quotas are necessary measures when there is an apparent threat of losing voters to rivaling parties, be they established or not established.

With regard to solutions implemented, the Conservative Party's ideological base in equal opportunity for all individuals connects easily to initially based strategies, such as educational programmes and mentor projects, for the increase of women in parliament. The Social Democratic Party, on the other hand, understands women's under-representation in politics as a structural discrimination, which hinders women to participate in politics on equal terms with men. Quotas thus represent a means to provide for equal opportunity. Quotas also, however, represent a means to restore the order. In general, when comparing all parties, there seems to be a shift from "women" as the problem, deviating from the norm, to "men" as the problem, albeit the focus is directed towards men's responsibility to act rather than men's blame for not acting. This supports the discourse of gender equality as a harmonious project between the sexes is being challenged. The fact that several Swedish political parties' have recently declared themselves feminists, beginning with the Left Party and the Green Party and followed by the Liberal Party, the Center Party, the Social Democratic Party and the Christian Democratic Women's Federation, seems to be in line with this argument. The pattern of diffusion of ideas and policy innovation seems to repeat itself.

References

- Bacchi, Carol Lee (1999), *Women, Policy and Politics*, London: Sage
- Bergqvist, Christina et al (1999), *Equal Democracies? Gender and Politics in the Nordic Countries*. Oslo: Scandinavian University Press.
- Borchorst, Anette and Drude Dahlerup (2003), *Ligestillingspolitik som diskurs og praksis*. Fredriksberg: Samfundslitteratur.
- Borchorst, Anette and Ann-Dorte Christensen (2003), "Konskvotering i SF og i forskerstillinger - diskursiv praksis og forandring" in Anette Borchorst and Drude Dahlerup, *Ligestillingspolitik som diskurs og praksis*. Fredriksberg: Samfundslitteratur
- Borchorst, Anette, Ann-Dorte Christensen and Birte Siim (2002), "Diskurser om kon, magt og politik i Skandinavien" in Borchorst, Anette (ed.), *Konsmagt under forandring*. Copenhagen: Hans Reitzels Forlag.
- Brown, Alice & Yvonne Galligan (1993), *Views From the Periphery. Changing the Political Agenda for Women in the Republic of Ireland and in Scotland. West European Politics*, Vol. 2:165-89.
- Carbin, Maria and Anne Maria Holli (2002), "The Meanings of Gender Equality, a Discursive Analysis of the Socialist Parties in Sweden and Finland," Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Nordic Political Science Association, Aalborg University, Denmark, August 15-17, 2002.
- Caul, Miki (1999), "Women's Representation in Parliament. The Role of Political Parties," *Party Politics*, Vol. 5, No.1:70-98.
- Caul, Miki (2001a), *Challenging the Organization, Changing the Rules. Women, Parties, and Change in Western Europe, 1975 to 1997*, Ph.D. dissertation. University of California, Irvine.
- Caul, Miki (2001b), "Political Parties and the Adoption of Candidate Gender Quotas: A Cross National Analysis," *The Journal of Politics*, Vol. 63. No. 4, 1214-1229.
- Christensen, Ann-Dorte (1999), "Women in the political parties," in Christina Bergquist et al (1999), *Equal Democracies? Gender and Politics in the Nordic Countries*. Oslo: Scandinavian University Press.
- Dahlerup, Drude (1998), "Using Quotas to Increase Women's Political Representation" in Azza Karam, etc. *Women in Parliament: Beyond Numbers*. Stockholm: International IDEA.

- Dahlerup, Drude (2002), "Er ligestillingen opnået? Ligestillingsdebattens forskellighed i Danmark og Sverige" in Borchorst, Anette (ed), *Konsmagt under forandring*. Copenhagen: Hans Reitzels Forlag.
- Dahlerup, Drude (2003), "Kommunal ligestillingspolitik som bagtrop?" in Anette Borchorst and Drude Dahlerup, *Ligestillingspolitik som diskurs og praksis*. Fredriksberg: Samfundslitteratur.
- Dahlerup, Drude and Lenita Freidenvall (2003), "Quotas as a 'Fast Track' to Equal Political Representation for Women - Why Scandinavia is no longer the model," Paper presented at the 19th International Political Science Association's World Congress, Durban, South Africa, June 29 to July 4, 2003, and at APSA in August 2003.
- Duverger, Maurice (1955), *The Political Role of Women*. Paris: UNESCO.
- Eduards, Maud (2002), *Förbjuden Handling - Om kvinnors organisering och feministisk teori*. Malmö: Liber.
- Epstein, Leon (1967), *Political Parties in Western Democracies*. New York: Praeger.
- Freidenvall, Lenita (2003), "Kvinnorepresentation - en mättad fråga? En analys av det svenska riksdagsvalet 15 september 2002," Stockholm: Stockholm University, Dept. of Political Science.
- Hoecker, Barbara ed. (1998), *Handbuch Politische Partizipation von Frauen in Europa*. Opladen: Leske and Budrich.
- Ingelhart, Ronald and Pippa Norris (2003), *Rising Tide: Gender Equality an Cultural Change Around the World*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Johnson, Björn (2003), *Polycyspridning som översättning*. Lund Political Studies 130. Lund: Lund University, Department of Political Science.
- Kaiser, Pia (2001), *Strategic Predictors of Women's Parliamentary Participation: A Comparative Study of Twenty-Three Democracies*. Ph.D. Dissertation. University of California, Los Angeles.
- Kirshheimer, Otto (1966), "The Transformation of Western European Party Systems" in *Political Parties and Political Development*, ed. Joseph La Palombasa and Myron Werner. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Kjaer, Ulrik (2000), "Saturation Without Parity: The Stagnating Number of Female Councillors in Denmark," in Nimala Rao, red., *Representation and Community in Western Democracies*, MacMillan, 2001
- Kjaer, Ulrik (2001), "Kvinder i kommunalpolitik - er graensen nået?" in *Kvinder, kon & Forskning*, Nr. 1, 2002.

- Krook, Mona Lena (2003), "Get the Balance Right!: Global and Transnational Campaigns to Promote Gender-Balanced Decision-Making." Paper presented at the International Studies Association Annual Convention, Portland, Oregon, February 25 - March 1.
- Lovenduski, Joni and Pippa Norris (1993), *Gender and Party Politics*. Thousand Oaks. Sage.
- Magnusson, Eva (2000), "Party Political Rhetoric on Gender Equality in Sweden," *NORA*. No 2.
- Matland, Richard E. and Donley T. Studlar (1996), "The Contagion of Women Candidates in Single-Member District and Proportional Representation Electoral Systems: Canada and Norway," *The Journal of Politics*, Vo. 58, No.3: pp. 707-33.
- Nelson and Chowdhury (1994), *Women and Politics Worldwide*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press.
- Norris, Pippa (1987), *Politics and Structural Equality: The Comparative Position of Women in Western Democracies*. Boulder: Lynne Rienne.
- Opello, Katherine (2002), *Ideas and Elections: Explaining the Timing and Nature of the French Socialist Party's Gender-Based Quota*. Ph.D. dissertation. New York: New York University.
- Reynolds, Andrew (1999), "Women in the Legislatures and Executives of the World: Knocking at the Highest Glass Ceiling," *World Politics* 51 no.4: pp. 547-572.
- Rule, Wilma (1981), "Why Women Don't Run: the Critical Contextual Factors in Women's Legislation Recruitment," *Western Political Quarterly* 34:60-77.
- Rule, Wilma and Joseph F. Zimmerman (1994), *Electoral Systems in Comparative Perspective: Their Impact on Women and Minorities*. Westport: Greenwood Press.
- Rönblom, Malin (2002), *Ett eget rum*. Umeå: Statsvetenskapliga Institutionen.
- Sainsbury, Diane (1993), "The Politics of increased women's representation: The Swedish Case" in Joni Lovenduski & Pippa Norris, eds. *Gender and Party Politics*. London: Sage publications.
- Törnqvist, Maria (2003), "En heterosexuell historia," *bang*, No 1, 2003.
- Wängnerud, Lena (1999), *Kvinnorepresentation. Makt och möjligheter i Sveriges Riksdag*. Lund: Studentlitteratur.
- Ulmanen, Petra (1998), *Sveket mot kvinnorna och hur högern stal feminismen*. Uddevalla: Atlas
- Wängnerud, Lena (2002), "Kvinnors röst: en kamp mellan partier" in *Rösträtten 80 År - en forskarantologi*. Stockholm: Justitiedepartementet.

www.quotaproject.org

www.ipu.org

Party documents cited:

The Conservative Party,

Motion nr 22, 1975

Motion nr 23, 1975

Motion nr 24, 1975

Party Statement to Motions nr 22-24, 1975

Motion nr 282, 1993

Party Board Statement to motion nr 282, 1993

The Social Democratic Party

Motion nr V2, 1972

Party Board Statement to motion nr V2, 1972

Party Board report, 1993 *All of the salary - half the power*

Motion nr 358, 1993

Motion nr 356, 1993

Motion nr 357, 1993

Party Board Statement to motions nr 356-358, 1993

Table 1. Political party strategies for increased women's representation

PARTY	STRATEGY			
	<i>No action</i>	<i>Goals</i>	<i>Targets</i>	<i>Quotas</i>
<i>Conservative party</i>		1978 1981 1993		
<i>Christian Democratic party</i>		1986	1987 1989 1994 1996	
<i>Center party</i>		1975 1977 1979 1995 1996 1997		
<i>Liberal party</i>			1972 1974 1975 1977 1980 1984 1987 1990 1993 1997	
<i>The Green party</i>				1981 1987 1993 1994 1995 1996 1997
<i>The Social Democratic party</i>		1972 1975 1978 1981 1984	1978	1987 1990 1993
<i>The Left party</i>			1972 1978 1981 1985	1987 1990 1993 1996

Working Paper Series

2003:1

Nordlund Taarup, Anja: International Implementation of Electoral Gender Quotas in the Balkans – A Fact-Finding Report.

2003:2

Freidenvall, Lenita: Women's Political Representation and Gender Quotas – the Swedish Case.

Quotas – a Key to Equality?

An International Comparison of the Use of Electoral Quotas to obtain Equal Political Citizenship for Women

A research program supported by the Swedish Research Council (Vetenskapsrådet).

This project is the first worldwide comparative analysis of the discursive controversies around quotas and of the actual implementation of various quota systems. Under this program we will study 1) the debates in various countries around the world, 2) the decision-making processes that led to the introduction of quotas, 3) the implementation of various types of legal quota systems or party quotas systems in different political systems and 4) the consequences of quotas, the intended as well as the unintended. Under what conditions do quota systems contribute to the stated goal, equal political citizenship for women and men? When do quotas contribute to women's empowerment?

Quotas represent a change in public equality policy, from “equal opportunities” to “equality of results”. But quotas also touches upon fundamental questions in democratic theory (e.g. social representation versus representation of ideas) and in feminist theory (e.g. the construction of women as a political category).

This program will also look at the influence of international organizations. Conceptual, we focus on the processes of "translation", e.g. how the women's movements in individual countries transform and make use of the new international discourse on quotas in their own national political process.

Research on quotas so far has tended to concentrate on the often vehement debates and on the actual decisions-making process. This program will widen the perspective, and also study the troublesome implementation of quotas and the effects of various forms of quota provisions. From single country studies we know, that the introduction of for instance a requirement of a minimum of 30% of women (or "each gender") on the electoral lists does not automatically lead to women getting 30% of the seats. Thus by comparing the use of various forms of quotas provisions in different electoral systems as well as possible sanctions for non-compliance, this project will illuminate when quota systems lead to a substantial increase in women's representation and when such decisions remain symbolic.

The project co-operates with International IDEA. The web site, www.quotaproject.org is a result of the co-operation between IDEA and this program.

The Quota Research Team at the Department of Political Science.

Address: Stockholm University, S-106 91 Stockholm, Sweden. Fax +46 8 15 25 29

Home page: www.statsvet.su.se/quotas

Drude Dahlerup, professor, leader of the program. drude.dahlerup@statsvet.su.se

Lenita Freidenvall, Ph.D. candidate, lenita.freidenvall@statsvet.su.se (The Nordic countries)

Christina Alnevall, Ph.D. candidate, christina.alnevall@statsvet.su.se (Latin America)

Anja Taarup Nordlund, research assistant, thenordlunds@telia.com (Balkan)

Emma Frankl, master student, emma.frankl@telia.com (Bangladesh)

International research network

For the purpose of cross-national comparison, this program has formed a network of international scholars who have conducted single country studies about the introduction of quotas. Together with International IDEA, the program also works to encourage new research on quotas around the world, especially in third world countries with newly introduced quota systems.



Department of Political Science
STOCKHOLM UNIVERSITY, SE-106 91 Stockholm, Sweden
Phone +46 8 16 20 00, Fax +46 8 15 25 29, www.statsvet.su.se