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Gender Mainstreaming: Just an Empty Slogan?

On the Norm Diffusion of the Gender Equality
Concept from the EU to the Local Level

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Abstract

Gender mainstreaming is currently the main gender equality approach of the EU. This concept differs from former gender approaches since it is cross-sectional and applicable to every governmental level and all kinds of organisations. Considering gender mainstreaming as a norm, the aim of this study is to trace the process of the norm development from the EU to the local level in order to suggest how to precipitate and improve socialisation. The analysed and compared cases are the municipality of Malmö in Sweden and the municipality of Essen in Germany. Socialisation theories with a focus on social movement and social learning approaches provide the theoretical framework. This study analyses and compares the municipalities according to the *norm life cycle* suggested by Martha Finnemore and Kathryn Sikkink and scrutinises which mechanisms impel socialisation. After tracing the process it transpires that gender mainstreaming is more internalised in the Swedish case because of the more frequent appearance of the mechanism *normative suasion*, which features an interactive discussion without manipulation between the actors. However, in the German case the mechanism *role playing* is more apparent, which is related to the wish for conformity in order to avoid conflict with the community. Nevertheless, gender mainstreaming is not deeply internalised in either of the discussed municipalities.

Keywords: Gender mainstreaming, European Union, Sweden, Germany, municipality, norm.

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Executive Summary

The overarching theme of this study is tracing the process of the norm candidate gender mainstreaming, which was sent by the EU in the context of the Amsterdam Treaty in 1997. The idea of gender mainstreaming is to include a gender perspective in decision-making processes in order to avoid disadvantages related to gender. It is applicable at every governmental level and in all kinds of organisations, thus it has a completely different focus than former feminist approaches since it is cross-sectional. The traditional women's policy machinery attempts to support women's disadvantaged position in the society whereas gender mainstreaming aims to unveil hidden unequal relations between the genders. Hence, both genders are included in the debate, which widens the perspective and possibilities.

Most research on gender mainstreaming has focused on the implementation at the EU or the national level. Furthermore, the theoretical definitions are often somewhat imprecise since gender mainstreaming is often just described as strategy, concept or task. However, this study focuses on the reactions and responses at the local level and regards gender mainstreaming as an international norm candidate. The analysed cases are the municipality of Malmö in Sweden and the municipality of Essen in Germany. The countries were chosen because of their traditionally different attitude towards gender equality policies, i.e. Sweden as innovative and Germany as conservative. The municipalities are interesting since there is the chance that the norm candidate of gender mainstreaming is internalised because of their size, financial resources, innovativeness and the need for such measures due the diverse populations.

This study features both a theoretical and an empirical aim. While adopting a social constructivist perspective, the theoretical aim is to merge different socialisation approaches of the social constructivist camp in order to suggest a theory, which can precipitate socialisation and deepen internalisation in the context of gender mainstreaming. On an empirical level, this study aims to explore the norm-building process of gender mainstreaming from the EU to the local level with a focus on the reactions and responses in the municipalities of Malmö and Essen.

I present socialisation theories that are associated with both rationalism and social constructivism. I show in the analysis that rationalist argumentative structures are not beneficial for promoting the idea of gender mainstreaming. However, the social constructivist frameworks social movement and social learning theory offer

more suitable approaches in this context. That is, when tracing the norm-building process of gender mainstreaming, I apply Martha Finnemore and Kathryn Sikkink's (1998) model of a *norm life cycle* to empirical data, which is composed of policy documents, articles, press releases, speeches and interviews. Furthermore, I scrutinise which socialisation mechanisms have impelled the norm-building process of gender mainstreaming in each case.

The mechanisms that I discuss in this study are *role playing* and *normative suasion*. The former is related to social movement (Finnemore, Sikkink 1998) and means that actors internalise a norm candidate since they wish to conform to the community rules. In other words, social pressure impels socialisation. *Normative suasion* (Checkel 2001) is an interaction that involves the aim of reaching a mutual understanding based on reasoned consensus. Accordingly, actors try to convince each other without manipulation.

In terms of the norm-building process of gender mainstreaming I argue that the mechanism *normative suasion* is crucial since participants are more active and reach a deeper understanding of the idea. Gender mainstreaming is simple on the surface but complex and ambiguous in detail. It is easy to understand the need to include a gender perspective in decision-making process but it is difficult knowing how to do so. As a consequence, possible norm followers need a deeper understanding of the idea in order to internalise it. I argue that if the mechanism *role playing* has been apparent, actors just superficially internalise the norm in order to avoid conflict with the community members since they do not reflect on it.

The mechanism *role playing* can impel socialisation so that an idea becomes an unsettled norm. But for deep internalisation, including a taken-for-granted attitude, i.e. settled norm, *normative suasion* is necessary in the norm-building process.

In terms of methodology, this comparative case study is divided into two analytical parts. The former is the main part and includes policy documents, articles, press releases, speeches and media reportage. The latter focuses on interviews with local politicians from Malmö and Essen. The interview section aims to control and back up former investigations and not to pose new questions. Checkel's (2005b) approach of *process tracing* serves as the main analytic tool in this study.

The comparative case studies demonstrate that the international norm candidate of gender mainstreaming is deeper internalised in Malmö than Essen. When tracing the process by applying the empirical material to the particular steps of the *norm life cycle*, i.e. norm emergence, norm cascade and internalisation, it is striking that both the national government of Sweden and the local government of Malmö have discussed the possible norm with other actors in order to convince them. This endeavour is related to the mechanism *normative suasion*. The German case,

however, has basically presented gender mainstreaming as a concept that has to be implemented due to the EU framework, which is associated with *role playing*.

While applying Risse's (2000) preconditions for communicative action to *normative suasion*, that is, a common life world, openness of the debate to other participants and equality between the actors, I demonstrate that the first two aspects are recognisable in Malmö. However, in Essen just the common life world of the actors is striking. As a consequence, the openness of the debate, in other words media exposure, is a vital aspect in the norm-building process of gender mainstreaming.

With regard to media coverage, I also emphasise the role of the national level when the implementation of gender mainstreaming on the local level is concerned. The Swedish government actively promotes the idea of gender mainstreaming while there are degrees of mistrust in Germany. The attitude towards the norm candidate at the national level clearly influences the development at the local level. Both discussed municipalities are active in terms of gender mainstreaming but do not receive the same support from the national government. As a consequence, local politicians and civil servants whose official responsibilities are not related to gender do not take the idea seriously.

The interview section backs up the analytical part in so far as gender mainstreaming is internalised deeper in Malmö than in Essen. However, there are differences in terms of settled and unsettled norms. According to the first analytical part gender mainstreaming is a settled norm in Malmö and an unsettled norm in Essen. With respect to the interviews and the local politicians' personal experience, it is rather an unsettled norm in Malmö and not internalised at all in Essen. The idea officially exists in both cases but is hardly translated into local practises.

As a result, Malmö and Essen understand, interpret and prioritise gender mainstreaming in different ways whereas there are still problems with implementation in both municipalities. The socialisation mechanism *normative suasion* has turned out to be more beneficial and effective for promoting and internalising gender mainstreaming. Considering concrete measures, workshops, extended media reportage and quotas would impel the socialisation of gender mainstreaming, and thus make the norm more robust.

Workshops offered by gender experts to politicians and civil servants will spread the idea of gender mainstreaming and clarify the concept. Due to the higher level of acceptance in the Swedish case, workshops in Malmö should be more detail-focused and explain tools whereas the ones in Essen should provide basic knowledge first in order to reach acceptance. The extended media coverage is crucial since gender mainstreaming is to a great extent an academic topic, especially in Germany. However, gender mainstreaming has to become public so that decision-makers know about it, which can also increase acceptance and

deepen internalisation. Quotas are important since gender mainstreaming is a top-down strategy, i.e. the top of an organisation has to introduce and promote the idea. In other words, the success of the gender equality concept depends on those in leading positions, which are male dominated. Gender mainstreaming is a concept that mostly revives the interest of women since they are the disadvantaged and so would profit from the concept. Consequently, more women have to be in leading positions so that gender mainstreaming is actively promoted.

Finally, this study refers to the implementation of gender mainstreaming in other cultural and historical contexts such as in Eastern Europe. I question whether the concept can be successful there since it was developed and adopted according to Western European ideas and problems. The new EU member states have different problems that cannot necessarily be solved by gender mainstreaming.

List of Acronyms

EU
European Union

German Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth
(Bundesministerium für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend)
BMFSFJ

Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions
(Sveriges Kommuner och Landsting)
SKL

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1 Introduction

1.1 Problem of the Study

The promotion of gender equality through various equal opportunity laws, policies and approaches has enormously increased in the Western world over the last twenty years. Both nation states and international institutions have realised that the support of gender equality is a crucial aspect where democracy and economic competitiveness are concerned. “[...] [T]he EU is rapidly emerging as one of the most progressive polities on earth in terms of its promotion of equal opportunities for men and women” (Pollack, Hafner-Burton 2000: 452). It is the leading platform for improving women’s rights and a unique scene for combined actions in enhancing their participation in the decision-making process (Gromek-Broc 2006: 418). Even from a less optimistic perspective, it is striking that the EU is a more active promoter of gender equality than many states and other organisations in Europe.

Currently the main approach of the EU equal opportunity agenda is the concept of gender mainstreaming. It was adopted in the context of the Amsterdam Treaty in 1997 and “calls for the systematic incorporation of gender issues throughout *all* governmental institutions and policies” (Pollack, Hafner-Burton 2000: 434). Even though gender mainstreaming is a concept that is applicable to all governmental levels, it was mostly implemented at international institutions such as the European Commission or at national governments. However, the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR) launched the *European Charter for Equality of Woman and Men in Local Life* in 2006, which directly asks municipalities to incorporate gender mainstreaming in decision-making processes (CEMR 2006: 8).

Generally, the idea of gender mainstreaming has enjoyed rapid and almost universal acceptance entering the political discourse of organisations (Beveridge, Nott 2002: 299). Nevertheless, there are enormous differences regarding the understanding of the concept, which can be related to its open definition and interpretability. The result is that everyone understands the idea but only experts know what it requires in practise. In particular tools and goals seem to be unclear.

Due to this lack of clarity, the understanding of gender mainstreaming and its practise widely vary in the EU. Often it is just a continuation of previous gender equality methods (Behning, Pascual 2001). “[Gender] mainstreaming is so elastic,

it is easy to make a claim to be doing mainstreaming” (Daly 2005: 439). It is even possible to ignore the idea.

Gender mainstreaming is often loosely defined as a concept or strategy. Lombardo and Meier (2006:152) even consider the gender equality concept as an “open signifier” that leaves too much space for interpretation, and thus misunderstanding. In order to make the concept clearer and more effective, a more precise definition and theoretical embedding of gender mainstreaming is needed.

1.2 Purpose and Aim of the Study

Previous research on gender mainstreaming has mainly stressed the EU as a sender of the idea or the implementation at the national level. Furthermore, the theoretical definition of gender mainstreaming has been somewhat vague and unclear. However, this comparative study embeds gender mainstreaming in a norm theoretical discussion, i.e. the concept is not just considered as a process, which leads to more gender-sensitive norms in organisations but even as an idea that is supposed to become a norm in organisations on its own. In addition, this study focuses on municipalities as recipients of the idea and the application at the local level. The aim is to explore the reactions, responses and translations into local practises of the municipalities of Malmö and Essen, which are situated in the EU member states Sweden and Germany. These municipalities offer interesting case studies since are modern, diverse and similar in terms of size and population.

This emphasis on the local level is due to the *European Charter for Equality of Woman and Men in Local Life* and the lack of research a useful contribution in the debate of gender mainstreaming. However, gender mainstreaming is a top-down strategy, which implies that a comprehensive discussion requires relating it to the particular national context, Sweden and Germany, who provide the frame for socialisation at the local level. Thus, the diffusion of the norm candidate gender mainstreaming is considered from the EU to the local level.

This study mainly explores the socialisation and internalisation of the norm candidate gender mainstreaming and to a lesser extent the origin and take-off of the idea. My expectation is that gender mainstreaming is not internalised as a settled norm at the local level, which would include a taken-for-granted attitude. Therefore I also intend to suggest possibilities on how to deepen the internalisation of gender mainstreaming on a theoretical and empirical level. On a **theoretical** level, this study aims to combine Finnemore and Sikkink’s (1998) *norm life cycle* with Checkel’s (2001) approach on *social learning* in order to suggest a method, which can precipitate the socialisation and deepen the internalisation of gender mainstreaming in order to make the concept more robust and effective. On an **empirical** level, this study aims to trace the norm-building

process of gender mainstreaming from the EU to the local level with a focus on the reactions and responses in the municipalities of Malmö and Essen.

Accordingly, the **research questions** are:

- What are the reactions and responses of the recipient municipalities Malmö and Essen?
 - How do the Swedish and the German municipality interpret gender mainstreaming?
 - In what way is gender mainstreaming internalised and translated into local practises?
- How can the norm-building process of gender mainstreaming theoretically and empirically be precipitated, and thus internalisation be deepened?

1.3 Outline of the Study

Firstly, I will present the concept of gender mainstreaming and its normative context in the EU, Sweden and Germany. Secondly, I will map out previous research on this topic. Thirdly, I will outline the theoretical framework of this study, which is based on socialisation theories related to rationalism and social constructivism. The focus will be on Finnemore and Sikkink's (1998) social movement approach of a *norm life cycle* and Checkel's (2001) ideas on *social learning*. Fourthly, I will motivate my case studies, reflecting on the material, while presenting and advocating the methodological approach *process tracing* and map out why and how I conducted interviews. Fifthly, I will analyse Swedish and German policy documents, press releases, articles and speeches in the context of the norm-building process of gender mainstreaming. My expectation is that solely rational and social movement approaches can hardly transfer the concept of gender mainstreaming from an idea to an unsettled norm. I suggest that elements of Checkel's (2001) social learning approach are vital in order to impel the socialisation of gender mainstreaming. The sixth part discusses interviews conducted with local politicians from each municipality in order to explore how gender mainstreaming is understood and translated into local practices. Finally, in the conclusions I will combine and summarise the results and suggest possibilities for further research.

2 Background: the Idea of Gender Mainstreaming

2.1 Gender Mainstreaming in the EU

Governments and organisations across the world including the EU, signed the Beijing Platform for Action on gender equality at the *UN conference on Women* in Beijing in 1995. Gender mainstreaming was identified as the most important instrument for achieving gender equality (Moser, Moser 2005: 11). The idea has its origin in development studies where researchers realised that initiatives and projects failed due to a missing gender perspective (Cook 2000: 39; Frey 2004). In the course of the Treaty of Amsterdam in 1997, gender mainstreaming officially became the main equality strategy of the EU.

It was the third step of the Union's equality agenda (Pollack, Hafner-Burton 2000: 432; Locher, Prügl 2008: 4). The first step, equal treatment, is defined in Article 119 of the EU Treaty, which maintains equal pay for men and women and equal treatment at the workplace. Hence, it exclusively focuses on women as workers. The second step, positive action, was popular during the 1980s and early 1990s and "involves the adoption of specific actions on behalf of women, in order to overcome their unequal starting positions in a patriarchal society" (Pollack, Hafner-Burton 2000: 433). Accordingly, it tackles concrete problems with concrete means regarding gender inequality.

Gender mainstreaming is completely different compared to the former approaches since it widens the perspective from a women to a gender focus. The category "gender" implies a historical constructed asymmetrical relation between women and men. "It transforms the women question from a vertical special issue to horizontal special concern" and it encourages the development of new policy instruments (Woodward 2003: 68). Thus, it can alter gendered social structures and does not try to include women into the "male-stream". Moreover, the idea of gender mainstreaming is applicable in every kind of organisation, e.g. schools, universities, and thus leaves the purely political arena.

Nevertheless, this promising idea also involves various risks. It is not a law but a non-binding legal instrument, which means that non-compliance cannot be sanctioned. Moreover, its definition is somewhat vague and leaves space for

interpretation and misunderstandings. It is also said that there is the possibility that the special women's policy machinery will be eliminated, which was of course not the purpose of gender mainstreaming (Woodward 2003: 69). Generally, the success depends on many factors such as institutional culture, political commitment and the location of gender responsibilities (Woodward 2003: 71).

Most EU institutions, e.g. the Commission, accepted the idea and officially embedded the concept. However, Braams (2007) claims that gender mainstreaming has increasingly lost importance in the European arena due to declining international political pressure. She asserts that gender mainstreaming has created gender awareness in the EU but a real implementation and application is still missing.

2.2 Gender Mainstreaming in Sweden and Germany

Gender mainstreaming is officially embedded in Sweden and Germany at the national level although Sweden has been more active. It started implementing the concept in 1994 and is the only EU member state where all committees of inquiry are required to analyse their proposals from a gender perspective (Sternier, Biller 2007: 13). Rubery (2002: 509) claims that there has been a "strong development" and refers to the great amount of resources Sweden has put into gender mainstreaming and its official implementation. Daly (2005: 446) even states that Sweden is unique since "gender mainstreaming, understood as an approach to address structural inequalities, is deeply embedded and widely dispersed as a practise".

The federal government in Germany adopted the concept in 1999 and recognised gender mainstreaming as a constant guideline in decision-making processes. Furthermore, with the support of the newly founded *Interministerial Working Group on Gender* all departments of the federal ministries were required to involve the concept in their work (Sternier, Biller 2007: appendix 8). Rubery (2002: 607) summarises that there has been "steady progress" in Germany since 1999. Weber (2008) emphasises that in particular the health care policies in North Rhine-Westphalia have been successful.

2.3 Previous Research on Gender Mainstreaming

Since gender mainstreaming was adopted in the Amsterdam Treaty in 1997 various researchers have offered affirmative and critical studies on the topic. As a basis for gender mainstreaming discussions most researchers (e.g. Beveridge, Nott

2002; Lombardo, Meier 2006; Lombardo 2005; Verloo 2005) refer to Jahan (1995) who makes a distinction between integrationist and transformative mainstreaming. Integrationist approaches aim to promote women's position within the existing policy paradigms whereas transformative approaches involve the reorientation and complete change of the existing policy structures. Gender mainstreaming is a transformative approach since the aim is to alter and not to modify existing social structures.

Walby (2005) is somewhat sceptical that gender mainstreaming is purely transformative and relates it to discourse and power. She discusses various forms and understandings of gender mainstreaming, which are related to the state, the political arena and democracy since the state is the "contested arena, with a mix of coherence and contradiction among a set of core institutions and complex linkages to other political and non-political domains" (Walby 2005: 338). She summarises that mainstreaming is constructed, articulated and transformed through discourse, which is related to power.

Being less critical towards gender mainstreaming, Woodward (2003) explores "promises and pitfalls" of gender mainstreaming. She claims that the concept is innovative due to its horizontal concern on gender instead of focusing on marginal women's perspective. However, she also warns of misunderstanding and elimination of the special women's policy machinery. She explains that the success of gender mainstreaming requires a fundamental commitment of those in power (Woodward 2003: 84). Nevertheless, she optimistically asserts: "Gender mainstreaming has the potential to permanently transform the language and images of policy making to become more inclusive and sensitive beginning with sex" (Woodward 2003: 84).

Verloo (2005) elaborates this discussion of power and enhances problems related to theory and understanding. She claims:

[...] [T]here are fundamental theoretical problems with operationalizing strategies of displacement and empowerment, most importantly problems related to its understanding of power as enabling and constraining, and its understanding of gender equality as multilayered power dynamics (Verloo 2005: 361).

As a result, she claims that the general problem is that the goal is unclear.

Numerous scholars discuss this wide range of interpretability. Lombardo and Meier (2006) suggest including a feminist framing regarding the EU equality concept. They consider gender mainstreaming as an empty and open signifier leaving too much space for misunderstanding and interpretation (Lombardo, Meier 2006: 152, 154). A feminist reading, which involves aspects of intersectionality, could sharpen the concept. Daly (2005) discovers in a cross-national study of eight EU member states that countries have a common core understanding of gender mainstreaming but completely different applications, which mostly are just continuations of former methods. She states that the concept

is underdeveloped, in particular the aspect of mainstreaming. “Scholarship must go beyond the fuzzy and technocratic nature of gender mainstreaming and work toward elaborating the concept and approach as part of coherent intellectual and policy endeavour” (Daly 2005: 449). Similar results are obvious in a study on national employment practises in twelve Western European countries conducted by Behning and Pascual (2001). They allege that integrationist gender policies are still more common than transformative ones.

Hafner-Burton and Pollack (2000) focus on the EU and analyse the Commission’s implementation of gender mainstreaming with respect to structural funds, employment and social affairs, development, competition and science and research and development. They refer to social movement theory and explain the success of gender mainstreaming with political opportunities and mobilisation. Additionally, they stress the importance of strategic framing.

A further problem in the debate of gender mainstreaming is that new gender norms struggle with existing traditional norms of organisations even though they are not directly opposed (Elgström 2000). Therefore negotiations, and not just the simple adoptions of policies, are crucial for the internalisation.

Gender mainstreaming and the reactions and responses at the local level are rarely discussed. However, Guenther (2008) compares the reactions of feminists in two German cities and draws the conclusion that the political and historical contexts as well as the discursive opportunities are crucial when it comes to adoption or rejection of the gender equality concept.

In summary, it is striking that nearly every scholar presented above discusses the problems of vagueness, ambiguity, interpretability and misunderstanding while calling for new possibilities to transfer and implement the idea more effectively. In order to provide new and more structured possibilities of diffusion I will relate the debate of gender mainstreaming to Finnemore and Sikkink’s (1998) and Checkel’s (2001; 2005a) approaches on socialisation. Accordingly, in this study gender mainstreaming is not an open signifier but a norm candidate. Furthermore, I will extent the debate by a local focus, which is important due to a lack of research on this topic, especially in the German context (Döge, Stiegler 2004: 142-143), and the *European Charter for Equality of Women and Men in Local Life* (CEMR 2006). This charter directly encourages municipalities to implement the concept of gender mainstreaming. Therefore it will be necessary to extent the debate about gender mainstreaming at this stage.

3 Socialisation Theories

As previously mentioned the aim of the study is, firstly to explore the reactions and responses of the recipient municipalities Malmö and Essen to the EU concept gender mainstreaming, and secondly, to suggest how to improve and precipitate the norm-building process.

In order to address these questions, this chapter defines the key concepts and outlines the theoretical framework that the socialisation theories *social movement* and *social learning* provide. The purpose of this study is to explore a process, namely the diffusion of gender mainstreaming from the EU to two municipalities. Local reactions to international norms are the central aspects. Socialisation theory covers these aspects and therefore it is an appropriate framework for this study.

3.1 Defining the Key Terms

“**Ideas**¹ are considered as the foundation for norm building [...]” (Björkdahl 2002: 60). They are the first appearance of a new and unconventional perspective or way of thinking, which the public mostly criticise, doubt or even reject in the beginning of the debate. In other words, an idea represents an alternative point of view and it is somewhat revolutionary. “[...] [Ideas are] more likely to be selected if perceived as morally and theoretically appealing as well as feasible i.e. possible to translate into practice (Björkdahl 2002: 60, citing Finnemore 1996: 141; Kingdon 1995: 131). Furthermore, I suggest that an idea is not conceptualised in formal written documents.

Following Finnemore and Sikkink’s (1998: 897) description of cognitive frames, a **concept** is the next step of a norm candidate on its way of becoming a norm. It is an idea that is elaborated, worked out, framed and summarised in written documents, which can then be presented to an organisation or legal institution.

Norms are the final product of this process, which implies that they are socially constructed and evolve with changes in social interactions (Björkdahl 2002: 61). In other words, they are not static but dynamic social phenomena that slowly but constantly change. Regardless of the dynamic nature of norms, they

¹ My bold.

simultaneously embody “a standard of appropriate behaviour for actors with a given identity” (Finnemore, Sikkink 1998: 891).

Norms can be internalised in two ways. On the one hand, they can be settled, meaning they are legally embedded and taken for granted. These socially shared ideas are considered neutral. As a consequence, settled norms are just “visible” if someone neglects them. So particularly norm-breaking behaviour is recognised and often socially sanctioned since individuals only know what is appropriate by reference to the judgements of a community or society (Finnemore, Sikkink 1998: 892).

On the other hand, norms can be unsettled, meaning they are legally embedded but not taken for granted. Sometimes norm followers only superficially abide them due to social pressure and attempts to avoid conflict. “ [Generally] norms embody a quality of ‘oughtness’ and shared moral assessment and raise questions of how many actors must share a certain assessment before it can be called a norm” (Finnemore, Sikkink 1998: 892).

Socialisation is the process, in which new social concepts gain greater acceptance. Following Risse *et al.* (1999: 11), I regard socialisation as “the process by which principled ideas held by individuals become norms in the sense of collective understandings about appropriate behaviour, which can lead to changes in identities, interests, and behaviour”.

The aim of the discussed socialisation process is the norm of **gender mainstreaming**. The Council of Europe devised the most cited definition in the European literature. It says:

Gender mainstreaming is the (re)organisation, improvement, development and evaluation of policy processes, so that a gender equality perspective is incorporated in all policies at all levels and at all stages, by the actors normally involved in policy-making (Council of Europe 1998: 15).

I extend this open definition and regard gender mainstreaming from a norm theoretical perspective, i.e. it can become a norm candidate in all kinds of organisations at all levels (international, national, regional and local). In other words, it is not just a method, which can increase gender-sensitive awareness, and thus alter gender norms, but a possible norm in organisation on its own. The norm of gender mainstreaming would imply that decision-makers in organisations always consider and analyse their decisions with “gender lenses” in order to make sure that gender can no longer be a category of disadvantage.

3.2 Rationalism and Social Constructivism

The general topic of the theoretical framework in this study is socialisation and the mechanisms that impel this process. Rationalism and social constructivism are the fundamental ontologies on which socialisation theories are built. The former emphasises utility-maximising action and the latter rule-guided behaviour in order to explain decision-making processes. Basically, socialisation theories attempt to explain in which contexts and under which conditions people comply with new social rules. Checkel (2001) bases his overview on socialisation approaches on rationalism and social constructivism and refers to various mechanisms. “Mechanisms connect things; they are ‘recurrent [social] processes linking specified initial conditions and a specific outcome’” (Checkel 2005a: 808, citing Mayntz 2003: 4-5).

3.2.1 Socialisation and Rationalism

Socialisation from a rationalist perspective implies an individualist ontology, which is characterised by cost/benefit choices (*logic of consequences*). *Strategic calculation* is the mechanism that impels socialisation, i.e. the greater benefit individuals expect the more likely is socialisation and the internalisation of norms. Accordingly, the preferences of the individual and the collective outcome are the central criteria in decision-making processes. That means that the question of efficiency is fundamental since it determines if an individual supports or neglects an issue. Rational choice approaches treat the interests and preferences of actors as mostly given during the process of interaction (Risse 2000: 3). As a consequence, culture and social background do not influence decision-making.

Scholars such as Waltz (1979: 127-129) or Moravcsik (1997) advocate this perspective. They consider individuals as instrumentally rational and refer to given and fixed core properties. Most rationalist scholars neglect the role of language and communication, and consider these components as a “black box” around the interaction from which decisions to comply emerge (Checkel 2001: 556).

Schimmelpfennig (2005) for instance, adopts a typical rationalist perspective when he explains the international socialisation of Central and Eastern Europe to liberal human rights and democracy norms. He claims that the effectiveness of socialisation depends on the balance between the international and domestic costs and benefits of compliance. Accordingly, his analysis is output oriented whereas the interaction that leads to compliance is strategic exchange among egoistic and self-interested actors (Checkel 2001: 556).

3.2.2 Socialisation and Social Constructivism

The next two approaches are based on a social constructivist framework. Scholars of this camp such as Wendt (1992), Checkel (2001; 2005a), Finnemore and Sikkink (1998; 2001) or Risse (2000; 2004) assume that individuals act according to a *logic of appropriateness*, i.e. norms and values of the distinct culture the individual lives in influence their decision-making process and not rational calculations. Social constructivists criticise rationalist scholars for considering social reality as given (e.g. Risse 2004: 160). They argue that reality is socially constructed, and thus always exists in a special context with the consequence that gender roles cannot be taken for granted. Therefore social constructivists do not treat the interests as exogenously given as it is in rationalist approaches (Risse 2004: 161). Scholars of this camp open the “black box” and explain decision-making processes with norms and values of the distinct culture.

Social constructivism includes several sub-strands such as conventional constructivism, which focuses on “the role of norms and [...] identity in shaping international political outcomes” (Checkel 2006: 4), or interpretative constructivism, which “explores the role of language in mediating and constructing social reality” (Checkel 2006: 5) or critical approaches who deal with the unveiling and de-construction of hidden power relations (Checkel 2006: 6). This study relies on the first two sub-strands due to the norm focus and the emphasis on language and mediation in the analysis of the empirical material.

3.2.2.1 Social Movement

Socialisation with a focus on social movement means that, “domestic actors such as nongovernmental organisations (NGOs) and trade unions, in cooperation with transnational organisations and networks, exploit international norms to generate pressures for compliance on state decision makers” (Checkel 2001: 557). The fundamental mechanism is *role playing*, which means that agents (individuals or states) adapt socially accepted rules in order to avoid conflict and conform with community norms. “Individuals and states take on roles because it is easier socially, as opposed to only always acting strategically and instrumentally” (Checkel 2005a: 811). These roles may be internalised and will be taken for granted, which means that agents do not reflect on them anymore (Checkel 2005a: 811).

The idea of social movement is related to Finnemore and Sikkink’s (1998) approach of a *norm life cycle*, which generates propositions about three aspects of the emergence of new norms, namely their origins, the mechanisms by which they exercise influence and the conditions under which norms will be influential.

Finnemore and Sikkink (1998) understand the *norm life cycle* as a three-stage process involving norm emergence, norm cascade and internalisation.

The fundamental mechanism of the first stage, norm emergence, involves the persuasion of norm entrepreneurs who try to convince the critical masses. These norm entrepreneurs emphasise issues or even create new ones by using (re-) interpreting and dramatising language in what is called “framing” in the social movement literature (Finnemore, Sikkink 1998: 897). The construction of frames is crucial for showing alternative forms of behaviour and assessment since new norms never enter a normative vacuum, and hence must be able to compete with other traditional or former perceptions of both appropriateness and interest (Finnemore, Sikkink 1998: 897). Moreover, norm entrepreneurs need an organisational platform, often NGOs, from which they can act and spread their ideas. In order to gain influence, it is important that the organisational platform secures support of various state actors, employs experts on the particular issue and has an organisational network providing information and access to important audiences such as media and decision-makers.

If norm entrepreneurs are successful they can convince the critical masses of their ideas. This moment is called “tipping point” (Finnemore, Sikkink 1998: 895) and leads to the second stage of the *norm life cycle*, the norm cascade. Here, an increasing amount of actors begin adopting the norm. At this stage the actual socialisation process takes place, i.e. actors redefine appropriate behaviour in order to proof their belongingness to the social environment since they want to enhance (self-) esteem and avoid sanctions connected to embarrassment, anxiety, guilt or shame. In short, actors want to conform to the growing masses in order to avoid conflict.

The last stage of the *norm life cycle* is called internationalisation. “[...] [N]orms may become so widely accepted that they are internalised by actors and achieve a ‘taken-for-granted’ quality that makes conformance with the norm almost automatic” (Finnemore, Sikkink 1998: 904). If norms actually reach this stage they become extremely powerful since they are no longer questioned and instead regarded as natural.

3.2.2.2 Social Learning

Scholars such as Checkel (2001; 2005a) and Risse (2000) criticise the aspect of determination in the context of norms and rule-guided behaviour. Risse (2001: 1) claims that truth seeking, which is characterised by “processes of argumentation, deliberation and persuasion”, can also impel socialisation.

According to Checkel (2005a: 807), “socialisation can also begin via a process of social learning, in which state agents learn new roles and interests from the start

and in the absence of social mobilisation”. This approach is methodologically less individualist orientated and suggests “a process whereby interests and identities are shaped through and during interactions” (Checkel 2001: 561). Both approaches refer to a great extent to Habermas’ (1984: 86) *theory of communicative action*, which says:

[Actors] seek to reach an understanding about the action situation and their plans of action in order to coordinate their actions by way of agreement. The central concept of interpretation refers in the first instance to negotiating definitions of the situation which admit of consensus.

In other words, actors present arguments and try to persuade and convince each other whereas their interests and preferences are open for redefinition and their aim is consensus.

This mechanism is called *normative suasion* in the social learning literature (Checkel 2005a: 812). In other words, the mechanism is able to cause preference change without manipulation since it is interactive and tries to internalise new norms through arguments and debates. In contrast to *role playing*, the actor actively internalises new understandings of appropriate behaviour, which increases the legitimacy of a norm.

Risse (2000), referring to Habermas, names various preconditions for communicative action, from which, in my opinion, three aspects can also be related to social learning and the mechanism *normative suasion*. Firstly, actors need to share a common life world. That is, they need to share collective interpretations of the world and of themselves, which is provided by a common language, history and rules perceived as legitimate. Secondly, actors need to recognise each other as equals including equal access to the debate. Thirdly, the discourse must be open to other participants and public in nature (Risse 2000: 10-11).

3.3 Application to the Study

3.3.1 The Overall Theoretical Approach

Considering my research questions, which deal with reactions and responses of the recipient municipalities Malmö and Essen and possibilities how to impel, precipitate and deepen the norm-building process, I want to demonstrate that rationalist argumentative structures are inappropriate for convincing individuals of the idea of gender mainstreaming. The weakness of rationalist argumentative structures will be especially obvious in the analytic parts in the German case.

Generally, I claim that rationalist approaches are somewhat unsuitable in the context of gender equality issues since they emphasise cost-benefit calculations and disregard the influence of the society on the individual. This perspective implies that gender roles and their involved power relations are taken for granted and so a discussion about concepts of how to alter them is pointless. Therefore, I adopt a social constructivist perspective when tracing the process of the development of the international norm candidate of gender mainstreaming.

This study involves the basic assumption that norms are dynamic phenomena since they are under the continuous influence of social and historical parameters. This implies that norms are not fixed and cannot be taken for granted. These aspects, i.e. culture, change and the construction of meaning, are fundamental in the social constructivist literature. These approaches are able to provide in-depth explanations, which are crucial in a discussion about norms. Norms are immaterial dynamic social phenomena and so difficult to describe in a positivist framework. I will present various social constructivist argumentative structures in the norm-building process of gender mainstreaming and relate it to Finnemore and Sikkink's (1998) approach of a *norm life cycle* as overall approach. Furthermore, the mechanisms *role playing* and *normative suasion* will be included in order to scrutinise which mechanism is more effective concerning the norm-building process of gender mainstreaming.

3.3.2 An Expanded *Norm Life Cycle*

Finnemore and Sikkink's (1998) idea of a *norm life cycle* is a useful model in this study since it reflects the development of the norm candidate gender mainstreaming. Norm entrepreneurs such as the *European Women's Lobby* promoted the idea of integrating a gender perspective during all decision-making processes. The signing of the Amsterdam Treaty can be interpreted as a first step towards the tipping point, which provokes socialisation dynamics. However, I find *the norm life cycle* too simplistic and one-dimensional in the context of the socialisation and internalisation of gender mainstreaming. I question in particular Finnemore and Sikkink's (1998: 904) claims that ideas can become settled norms through the mechanism *role playing*. In particular norms that are related to deeply entrenched gender roles cannot be altered because of international political pressure and the wish to conform to the community. I do not ignore that the mechanism *role playing* influences the norm-building process of gender mainstreaming but I argue that this mechanism only has the power to make ideas unsettled norms but not settled norms.

On the one hand, the idea of gender mainstreaming is clear and easy to understand on the surface since it simply suggests applying a gender perspective in decision-making processes. On the other hand, the actual implementation of the concept is difficult and complex because it involves lots of details and requires knowledge.

As a consequence, possible norm followers might have implemented the concept on the surface in order to avoid conflict with the community (*role playing*) but do not really implement it in practise. They claim that they apply a gender perspective but they actually just check very briefly if a proposal discriminates against one of the genders. Consequently, discussions and exchanges of ideas are needed for bringing the complex concept of gender mainstreaming closer to the possible norm followers. The gender equality concept has to be understood in detail so that norm followers can really implement it. A norm cannot become powerful and robust if its principles are not clear. In other words, it cannot become a settled norm.

As mentioned above, discussions are the key factor to bringing the concept closer to the possible norm followers, and thus impel, precipitate and deepen the norm-building process of gender mainstreaming. I claim that the mechanism *normative suasion* is a necessary instrument since it implies that actors present arguments and try to persuade and convince each other, whereas their interests and preferences are open for redefinition and their aim is consensus. It impels a process “whereby agent interests and identities are shaped though and during interaction” (Checkel 2001: 561).

My plan is to extend the *norm life cycle* of the social movement literature by the mechanism *normative suasion* of the social learning literature. Checkel (2001) presents these approaches as somewhat competing camps whereas I attempt to combine them in order to increase the robustness of gender mainstreaming. Furthermore, I will include the above-presented preconditions of *normative suasion* in the analysis in order to scrutinise the socialisation of gender mainstreaming in both cases and, if necessary, make suggestions on how to precipitate and deepen the process.

Elements of social learning are even more important in the context of interactions between the EU as the sender and municipalities as the recipient since there is a “greater distance” between these institutions compared with for instance the EU and the member states. Generally, municipalities are less directly confronted with EU regulations so the political pressure is lower. They probably rather conform to the regional community norms than the international ones. This means that the mechanism *role playing* is less effective in a local context than in a national context considering the norm-building process of gender mainstreaming.

3.4 Reflections

I agree with Björkdahl’s (2002: 58) note that the *norm life cycle* is probably not “a one-way street”, i.e. the process of norm development is not straightforward. Norm candidates can become less influential or even lose their significance, and thus never become a norm. In particular in the context of gender mainstreaming,

this aspect is noticeable. Braams (2007) describes the recent development of the equality concept as backlash whereas Woodward (2006) even asks: “Too late for gender mainstreaming?”.

I am also aware that the *norm life cycle* is just a model whose application to empirical findings can be difficult, particularly in terms of the different stages described above (Björkdahl 2002: 58). To decide if a concept is already a norm or still a norm candidate can be a tricky task. Hence, the analysis in this study is characterised by my subjective viewpoints. However, this is not a problem in this study since my general perspective is social constructivist, i.e. neutrality in science is an unachievable goal due to the construction of the world and its meaning structures.

4 Methodology

4.1 The Study of Norms

This qualitative comparative case study deals with norm diffusion and the reactions of the recipients. It covers to a lesser extent the emergence of ideas but emphasises socialisation and internalisation, in particular the question of how unsettled norms can become settled. A further focus point is the distance between the international and the local level.

In general, the study of norm development is a challenging project since norms are immaterial facts, meaning that they cannot be summarised in clear statistics with clear results as in quantitative studies. Moreover, norms are associated with dynamics (Risse *et al.* 1999: 7), making analyses even more complex since not the explanation of a special moment is the central interest but to trace a process. In order to study such an intangible phenomenon like the process of norm diffusion and adoption, this chapter offers a methodological framework for the following analytical parts.

4.2 A Comparative Case Study

A case study can yield a lot of detailed information but it is somewhat difficult to establish generalisations from the results. The sample of case studies is minimal due to its emphasis on certain phenomena or representatives. As a consequence, various factors that can also be important are eliminated. However, case studies offer in-depth insights in social phenomena that could not be achieved in studies with wider perspectives. Even if time and financial criteria allow an in-depth study with a great sample the results will be complex and unclear because of the huge amount of data (Gomm *et al.* 2006: 107). So it is more beneficial to focus on a smaller sample.

My purpose is to obtain in-depth information about the reactions to the diffusion of the EU equality concept gender mainstreaming including a focus on the local level. My purpose is not to establish generalisations in a wider context but to question the mechanisms being used in the norm-building process of gender mainstreaming. Besides, this study is about two ambiguous, dynamic and complex phenomena, i.e. norm diffusion and gender mainstreaming, so it requires a

focused perspective. Otherwise the amount of data will be incompatible with issues of time and manageability.

This clear focus implies that I neither use an inductive nor a deductive explanation model since their aims are based on generalisations (Alvesson, Sköldbberg 1994: 41). However, I will implement abductive explanation strategies, which are frequently used in order to explore case studies (Alvesson, Sköldbberg 1994: 42). This means that a case is explored and interpreted with a hypothetical comprehensive model, and additionally the interpretation is emphasised and extended by new observations (Alvesson, Sjöldbberg 1994: 42). The hypothetical comprehensive model is the theoretical framework presented in part four of this study, while policy documents, speeches, media reportage and interviews are the sources where the new observations will be obtained.

4.2.1 Some Thoughts on Generalisations

“A frequently mentioned aim of science is prediction and control. But prediction and control cannot be accomplished without something on which to base predictions or formulate controlling actions” (Lincoln, Guba 2006: 27). In other words, science seeks to present generalisations about phenomena or base assumptions on them. Case studies are often considered as inadequate because the results are too limited, and thus they are not a suitable basis for generalisations (Lincoln, Guba 2006: 36).

However, I question the usability of generalisations since they are always inductively underdetermined as well as temporally and contextually related (Lincoln, Guba 2006: 33). Following social constructivist arguments, I am aware of the fact that every discussion and result is embedded in a certain social background and point of view making it impossible to pretend a “God’s trick” and describe social phenomena neutrally “from above” (Haraway 1988: 582). Therefore generalisations are not the aim of this study.

4.3 The Cases

The cases I explore are the municipality of Malmö in Sweden and the municipality of Essen in Germany. Both municipalities are encompassed within the European Union, implying that the concept of gender mainstreaming should be implemented at all levels, i.e. national, regional and local. The cases were chosen namely because of their different approaches to achieving gender equality in the last decade. The political and cultural environment, as well as the social and historical background, influence whether gender mainstreaming has a realistic

change of being deeply internalised (Woodward 2003: 73). In short, context matters. Therefore, when motivating and analysing my cases, I provide background information about the municipalities and their respective countries.

4.3.1 Malmö – Sweden

Sweden is often described as the world leader where gender equality and reducing gender discrimination are concerned. In terms of gender mainstreaming, the political and cultural preconditions seem to offer a promising framework for a successful internalisation of the norm candidate.

For instance Sweden is one of the few countries in Europe featuring a Ministry for Integration and Gender Equality. This ministry is responsible for coordinating the government's gender equality policy while each minister is responsible for gender equality in his/her own respective areas (Swedish Institute 2007: 1). Consequently, the Ministry for Integration and Gender Equality also coordinates the implementation of gender mainstreaming. The connection to an institution with political power is an important factor that impels the norm-building process of gender mainstreaming. Experts and knowledge are concentrated so that non-experts know who to ask if there are problems or misunderstandings. A further advantage of being embedded in a ministry is that the issue has greater access to the media than it would from many non-governmental organisations, which makes the concept more public and accepted.

Sweden has adopted gender mainstreaming as the main gender equality method since 1994, even before the EU promoted the concept. According to Rubery's (2002) cross-national study on gender mainstreaming Sweden is the most innovative and active in implementing the concept in all of the explored fields (active labour market policies, tax and benefit policies, lifelong learning, entrepreneurship, working time flexibility and work reorganisation). Daly (2005) has similar results. She even asserts that the systematic use of gender mainstreaming and its analysis tools in the design and implementation of all policies is the signature of Sweden's contemporary gender policy. In practice this means that all public, private and voluntary organisations such as ministries, public authorities, private firms and voluntary associations are actively practising the concept (Daly 2005: 436). Guenther (2008: 589) even claims that Sweden and the Netherlands are the only EU countries where gender mainstreaming is used in municipalities.

In Malmö gender mainstreaming is not directly mentioned in the gender equality plan of the central district for 2009 but the document says that gender equality aspects should be included as a natural part in the municipality (municipality of Malmö 2009a: 5). The Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SKL) (2009a) also requests municipalities to implement gender mainstreaming.

The association is supposed to represent the interests of the regions and municipalities and to offer service and support. Accordingly, Malmö as a municipality in one of the most innovative places in Europe in terms of gender mainstreaming, should have implemented the concept.

Furthermore, Malmö is Sweden's third largest city so it is more likely that the concept is implemented there than in any of the numerous villages in the country since there are greater financial resources and better connections to gender experts.

The municipality of Malmö also provides an interesting case for this study since it is very diverse city where 28 percent of 286,535 inhabitants were born abroad (municipality of Malmö: 2009b). I find in such a diverse city concepts like gender mainstreaming are even more important than in more homogeneous cities because the chances are higher that inhabitants with foreign backgrounds do not have the same opportunities like people born in Sweden.

Generally, I think Malmö is an interesting case to study since the conditions indicate that gender mainstreaming is implemented and so the norm internalised. If not, it has to be asked if the norm candidate gender mainstreaming has a chance to be internalised in municipalities where the pre-conditions are not so promising.

4.3.2 Essen – Germany

Germany generally has more conservative viewpoints on gender roles and advocates a more traditional gender equality approach, which focuses more on the integration of women into the “male-stream” than on to restructure social roles. Therefore it is not surprising that Germany has a Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth (BMFSFJ) and not a ministry for gender equality. Due to these miscellaneous areas of responsibility it is striking that the topic of gender equality has politically lower priority than in Sweden, and hence less media exposure.

Döge and Stiegler (2004: 135) even maintain that Germany hindered gender policies in the EU context until the beginning of the coalition between the Social-Democratic Party (SPD) and the Green Party (Bündis 90/ Die Grünen) in 1998. Furthermore, they explain that gender mainstreaming is embedded in several policy documents but the concept has not been successfully implemented yet. However, during the coalition between the Social Democrats and the Green Party (1998-2005), Germany increasingly tried to stress gender equality. For instance in 1998 the cabinet decided that gender equality should be a continuous principle and referred to the Amsterdam Treaty and gender mainstreaming (Döge, Stiegler 2004: 136).

The situation in the municipalities is quite heterogeneous. On the one hand, there are municipalities that have some experience with gender mainstreaming and on the other hand there are some that have not even had a discussion yet (Döge, Stiegler 2004: 135). Essen is one of the largest cities in Germany and the second largest cities in the region of North Rhine-Westphalia. Like Malmö, it is a culturally diverse city where 18 percent of its 575,996 inhabitants are of a foreign background (municipality of Essen: 2009). Furthermore, Essen is a modern and innovative city of North Rhine-Westphalia, which was one of the first regions to start the implementation of gender mainstreaming in 2002 (Döge, Stiegler 2004: 142).

In other words, the municipality of Essen has both the need and the right environment to start with gender mainstreaming, which makes it an interesting case study. Its political and cultural environment could allow the concept of gender mainstreaming to become a norm yet gender mainstreaming has generally not been accepted at the local level (von Wrangel 2003).

I consider Malmö and Essen as similar and comparable cases because both municipalities are diverse, modern and belong to the largest cities of their region, which implies that there are realistic possibilities for the norm candidate gender mainstreaming to be accepted and implemented.

4.4 Material and Time Frame

Two ambiguous and dynamic concepts, namely the development of norms and the concept of gender mainstreaming, are the focus of this study. Therefore various types of material are included. The material of the first analytical part consists of policy documents, press releases, public statements, articles and speeches. Since international (EU and European Council) and national (Sweden and Germany) institutions influence the norm-building process on the local level documents from each are included. The time frame of the analysed documents is 1994 until today. 1994 features the introduction of gender mainstreaming in Sweden.

However, I find it insufficient in a discussion about norms and socialisation to just include formal documents since they might reflect a different picture than to what exists in practice. For this reason, the second analytical part deals with interviews conducted with local politicians from the municipalities of Malmö and Essen. The interviews can provide more in-depth results since they can pick up questions that are not mentioned in the formal documents, back up previous claims or highlight contradictions and misleading statements.

4.5 Methodological Approach: *Process Tracing*

This study is concerned with tracing the process of how the idea of gender mainstreaming becomes a settled norm at the local level. Therefore a methodological approach that focuses on dynamics is necessary. Checkel's (2005b) approach *process tracing* seems to be most suitable because it focuses on norms as dynamic phenomena.

The process-tracing method attempts to identify the intervening *causal process* – *the causal chain and causal mechanism* – between an independent variable (or variables) and the outcome of the dependent variable. [...] Process tracing forces the investigator to take equifinality into account, that is, to consider the alternative paths through which the outcome could have occurred, and it offers the possibility of mapping out one or more potential causal paths [...] (Checkel 2005b: 5, citing Bennett and George 2005, 206-07).

In other words, the researcher looks for a series of theoretically predicted steps and traces the operation of the causal mechanisms at work in a specific situation. The process will be outlined and the extent to which it matches with the hypotheses drawn from a theoretical framework will be explored. Possible data could include historical memoirs, interviews, press accounts and documents in general (Checkel 2005b: 6).

As mentioned above, mechanisms are the main focus of *process tracing*. Mechanisms are interactions between individuals that can alter their interests or even identities, and hence can be considered as motor of socialisation processes. Various scholars (Checkel 2005b: 4; Hedström, Swedberg 1998: 32-33; Hovi 2004) define mechanisms as “a set of hypotheses that could be the explanation for some social phenomenon, the explanation being in terms of interactions between individuals and other individuals, or between individuals and some social aggregate”. Checkel (2005b: 4) even argues that mechanisms increase the reliability of the theory by providing more “fine-grained explanations”.

In this study I focus on the mechanisms *role playing* and *normative suasion*. The former is related to conformity and the latter to interactions that involve changing attitudes without coercion, pressure and manipulation. I argue that norm diffusion in the context of gender equality is more effective if *normative suasion* is the mechanism apparent in the socialisation process.

Generally, the fundamental advantage of *process tracing* is that it focuses on *how*-questions and interactions, which is important in a study about dynamic phenomena such as norms. Moreover, the researcher avoids sticking to their favoured theory too much since a number of predicted theoretical intermediate steps are executed. These steps serve as mini-checks because the researcher has to think continuously about the connection between theory and empirical data (Checkel 2005b: 15).

However, Checkel (2005b: 17-21) also summarises several difficulties. Firstly, it is not a helpful method if the researcher aims to establish generalisations. As previously mentioned, generalisations are not the aim of this study so this point is not relevant. Secondly, the researcher has to rely on proxies, which entails in this study that I do not see real socialisation processes but just descriptions of them. I think that this is a general problem in science and so have to accept it. Thirdly, *process tracing* is time intensive and requires enormous amounts of data and information. In order to manage this difficulty, I draw a clear focus concerning the material, i.e. policy documents, press releases, public statements, articles, speeches and interview data.

Nevertheless, I regard *process tracing* as a suitable method since it emphasises dynamic phenomena, which are of central interest in this study.

4.6 The Interviews

4.6.1 Advantages

The purpose of the interviews is to fill in the information gaps from the formal documents, in order to obtain in-depth results and to enhance how gender mainstreaming is actually translated into local practises in Malmö and Essen. Hence, their function is to control and extend the analysis but they are not the main resource. The idea was to interview one politician of each party of the local parliaments of Malmö and Essen. However, just two politicians of each municipality responded to the interview request.²

Not all interviewees are gender experts, which is an important detail. Gender mainstreaming is a norm candidate that is supposed to reach everyone in an organisation. The role of gender experts is just to introduce the approach and its possible tools. The idea is that gender experts give starting aid but local politicians (and civil servants) should automatically implement the concept on their own in decision-making processes after some time. Gender mainstreaming is considered an innovative gender equality approach since it also includes non-gender experts, which has never been the case before. Therefore it is important to explore the differences between gender experts and non-experts regarding knowledge and conviction towards terms of gender mainstreaming. For this reason, I interviewed both local politicians who are gender experts and local politicians with different backgrounds.

² The low turnout of the interview request will be discussed in the analysis of the interviews, see part 7).

The interviews are structured in a *semi-standardised* manner, which basically means that the subtopics during the conversation are introduced with open questions and ended by confrontational ones (Flick 2006: 156). In other words, the interviewer has certain guidelines with subtopics but the interview should be as open as possible. The overall topic of the interviews is the common understanding of gender mainstreaming and how it is translated into local practises. Additionally, the questions are theory-driven and hypothesis-directed to make the interviewees' implicit knowledge more explicit. Thus, the theoretical background of the questions is socialisation theory and the above discussed mechanisms *role playing* and *normative suasion*. My hypothesis is that *role playing* is a less effective mechanism than *normative suasion* in the norm-building process of gender mainstreaming.

4.6.2 Difficulties and Limitations

Basically, interviews are useful in the context of tracing processes and the study of dynamic phenomena since they provide detailed information, and hence in-depth results (Björkdahl 2002: 36; Checkel 2001: 565). Moreover, *semi-standardised* interviews offer a possibility to study everyday knowledge such as norms. The interviewees have a complex stock of knowledge, assumptions and opinions about the topic, which the interviewer attempts to map out and analyse (Flick 2006: 155). Here, I intent to explore the interviewees' knowledge of gender mainstreaming and how they implement it in everyday decision-making in municipalities.

However, due to the huge amount of data that interviews yield, the sample is much smaller than in a quantitative study (e.g. a survey). Consequently, generalisations cannot be drawn from the results. But, as previously mentioned, this is not the aim of the study so it is not relevant. Another common criticism is that interviews only reflect subjective viewpoints, which creates somewhat random results. In general, I consider every study as just one perspective, which is embedded in theoretical and/or empirical evidence. No one is able to leave this subjectivity – even not the most ambitious quantitative researcher. So I do not regard subjectivity as problematic because every study is characterised by the researcher's personal viewpoint even if many try to hide it and offer the pretence of objectivity.

It is an important part of the study to handle dynamic phenomena and to obtain detailed information. Interviews can tackle these problems and therefore it is beneficial to include them.

5 The Norm-building Process of Gender Mainstreaming in Sweden

5.1 Norm Emergence

Norm emergence is the first stage in the norm-building process, i.e. an idea starts its way of becoming a norm. Various studies emphasise the importance of human agency, indeterminacy, chance occurrences and favourable events in this early stage of the norm-building process (Finnemore, Sikkink 1998: 896, citing Kowert, Legro 1996; Price 1995). The most essential constituents for the development of critical ideas are, however, norm entrepreneurs and organisational platforms.

Regarding the norm candidate gender mainstreaming and its development in Sweden, it can hardly be ascertained who the norm entrepreneurs were, i.e. which persons or organisation promoted first the idea to consider every decision-making process through “gender lenses”. Since the 1970s Sweden has a comparatively long tradition in promoting gender equality and adopting respective political measures. Accordingly, gender mainstreaming did not signalise a turning point or a completely new way of thinking in Swedish politics when the idea appeared in the early 1990s.

The first gender mainstreaming strategy was already adopted in 1994 (JämStöd 2007: 7). It was more a further development in the long-term project of abolishing gender inequality rather than a totally new endeavour. This attitude is striking in the government bill “Gender equality policy: shared power – shared responsibility”³ (Swedish Ministry of Health and Social Affairs 1994). For instance various gender equality policies were implemented during the 1980s focusing on equality in the labour market, decision-making positions, education and family. Furthermore, it says that gender equality politics should be continued (Swedish Ministry of Health and Social Affairs 1994: 14-15). In other words, there was already a certain level of gender awareness when the discussion on gender mainstreaming began in 1994.

In an international context it can even be claimed that Sweden was one of the norm entrepreneurs and driving-forces spreading the idea of gender mainstreaming. As previously mentioned, Sweden officially implemented the concept in 1994, i.e. before the Beijing UN conference on Women in 1995 when

³ My translation.

states and organisations for the first time officially debated and committed to gender mainstreaming on an international platform.

Sweden's innovativeness in terms of gender mainstreaming can be explained by ethical and altruistic arguments ("everybody should be equal"), international expectations towards the country, and with respect to power. Regarding gender equality, Sweden is known as the leading nation in the world. Accordingly, states expect Sweden to be a driving-force in this context. The Bildt government endeavoured to meet the expectation to be a role model, when it states

Sweden and the other Nordic countries are often considered as forerunners in an international perspective in the work of achieving equality between women and men. [...] Even though the direction of gender equality policies are thus a national issue it is important and desirable that Sweden also tackles issues on equality between women and men in a European perspective (Swedish Ministry of Health and Social Affairs 1994: 18).⁴

Moreover, power issues probably also motivated Sweden to adopt gender mainstreaming first. The country was about to join the EU and could reinforce its reputation as the world's leader in terms of gender equality, which ensured Sweden had power and influence in the EU due to its expert knowledge on the topic.

5.2 Norm Cascade

If norm entrepreneurs have convinced a vital part of the critical masses, "a different dynamic begins" (Finnemore, Sikkink 1998: 902). More and more actors officially adopt the norm, i.e. they express their commitment in an international treaty for instance. The turning point between norm emergence and norm cascade is described as the "tipping point" in the socialisation literature (Finnemore, Sikkink 1998: 901).

Regarding gender mainstreaming in Sweden, the adoption of the government bill "Gender equality policy: shared power – shared responsibility" can be considered as the tipping point. It was an important policy in the context of Sweden's gender equality strategy since it changed the perspective from a women's to a gender focus. On the other hand, I find the term "tipping point" slightly misleading because, as mentioned above, this was not the introduction of a totally new strategy but more an upgrade of traditional gender equality measures.

It is out of question that the mechanism that impelled the socialisation process of the norm candidate of gender mainstreaming could have been *role playing*. There was no international political pressure and therefore no need to conform to the

⁴ My translation.

international community that could have influenced Sweden's decision. However, the mechanism *normative suasion* is obvious in different situations and stages.

I find the basis for introducing norm candidates is a common understanding about the key terms of the concepts. At the *Conference Gender Mainstreaming at governmental level in the EU*, Papp (2007) argued that "the term gender is problematic [...] [since it] implies very different things to different people". Some languages, such as German, do not even have a translation for the term making the possibilities for a norm candidate to be internalised extremely low. In other words, it is questionable that a norm candidate find acceptance if the possible followers do not understand its content.

Sweden made a simple but important step to provide a basis for the debate on gender mainstreaming, so that the concept would not only be enforced: It was translated into Swedish (*jämställdhetsintegrering*) and commonly used at different levels and in different institutions (SKL 2009a; SKL 2002; Ministry for Integration and Gender Equality 2007b; Olsson/ *Svenska Dagbladet* 2005; Sabuni, Knappe/ *Dagens Nyheter* 2007). Following the socialisation literature, the constructions of frames is a necessary part in the beginning of norm-building process because norm candidates never enter a normative vacuum and so must be able to compete with the existing norms. An understandable key term is a first and necessary step in the framing process since it facilitates further discussions.

A further indication of *normative suasion* is the fact that gender mainstreaming has not been used equally at every level but has been attuned to the particular needs of each institution from the beginning (Ministry of Health and Social Affairs 1994; Ministry of Industry, Employment and Communications 1999). The tools and methods that the government and the ministries have used are not compatible with needs of the municipalities. As a consequence, the concept has had different foci and measures on the local and regional level in order to make the norm candidate gender mainstreaming more appealing for regions and municipalities. This can be considered as a compromise in the norm-building process of gender mainstreaming in Sweden, which is a typical element for the socialisation mechanism *normative suasion*.

Another important aspect regarding the socialisation process of gender mainstreaming in Sweden is that it has never been considered as a dogma to be blindly followed. According to JämStöd⁵ (2007), it has been fundamental that everyone in an organisation understands the concept and that a great share of people supports it. In other words, gender mainstreaming has not been treated as a concept that just addresses the head of an organisation. This attitude is obvious in an interview with county director Anders Granat who emphasises the importance of involving the whole organisation in the implementation of the concept.

⁵ An institution financed by the government in order to support organisations with the introduction of gender mainstreaming.

People must find [...] [gender mainstreaming] attractive, a source of satisfaction [...]. There must be a tolerant atmosphere so that people dare to say what they think, to discuss openly how the job can be improved [...]. Since values are involved, he says, there is no point in the stuff adopting new approaches simply because that is what the person at the top wants. Rather, it is something that each individual must arrive personally (JämStöd 2007: 18).

Johan Quist, researcher at the service research centre, similarly argues in an interview about gender mainstreaming when he claims: “You can’t just take over a concept and trust that everything will be better” (JämStöd 2007: 21). These two examples indicate the ambition to discuss the concept in order to find consensus.

Moreover, gender mainstreaming is a common topic in the mass media creating possibilities to discuss the concept (e.g. Svenska Dagbladet 2005; Dagens Nyheter 2007). As previously mentioned, *normative suasion* is a mechanism, which is able to cause preference change without manipulation since it is interactive and tries to internalise new norms through arguments and debates. Accordingly, actors present arguments and try to persuade each other whereas interests and preferences are open for definition and their aim is consensus. In order to make a topic a matter of discussion, it is an important step in the norm-building process to discuss it in the mass media. They function as a platform from which norm entrepreneurs and possible norm followers can interact and debate.

Following Risse’s (2000: 10-11) preconditions for *normative suasion*, two of the suggested aspects are striking in the Swedish case. First, actors share a common life world. Gender mainstreaming is applicable in organisations and I argue that there is a supply of collective interpretations of the world provided by language, a common history and culture, and thus a common life world in organisations. Moreover, the discourse about gender equality and gender mainstreaming is open to other participants due to the media. However, actors do not recognise each other as equals due to the male dominance in leading positions (Eurostat 2008: 60, 66, 76), which is definitely hinders the socialisation process of gender mainstreaming.

Nevertheless, various examples demonstrate that the dominant mechanism in the norm-building process of gender mainstreaming in Sweden has been *normative suasion*, which increased the robustness since the concept was not just taken over. The above-discussed arguments apply to the national, regional and local level. As previously mentioned, the adoption of gender mainstreaming started at the national level so that in this study, where tracing a process is the main endeavour, the national level cannot be left out of any attempts to understand the dynamics at the local level.

5.3 Internalisation

Internalisation implies that norms are widely accepted. In contrast to Finnemore and Sikkink (1998), I consider internalisation as a two-stage process, namely in terms of settled and unsettled norms including different levels of robustness and power (see definitions 3.1).

There are various indications that gender mainstreaming is internalised as an unsettled norm at all governmental levels in Sweden. The term gender mainstreaming or the Swedish translation *jämställdhetsintegrering* can be found in official documents at all levels (Ministry of Integration and Gender Equality 2009a; Region Skåne 2007; Länsstyrelsen Skåne 2006; SKL 2009a; Municipality of Malmö 2006). Of course the official adoption of gender mainstreaming and the appearance of the term do not prove its actual usage, but it does indicate expectations to automatically implement the concept in decision-making processes, and hence increases its robustness and power.

Apart from the frequent appearance in official documents, it is striking that gender mainstreaming is an important and seriously-taken instrument in Swedish politics since the country often directly reacts and responds to recommendations from international institutions. One example is the recommendation of the Council of Europe (2007) to member states on gender mainstreaming in education. Here, one of the basic assumptions is that there are still “excessive disparities between boys and girls, women and men, in our societies with respect to school and social practises, educational and career guidance, training, employment and participation in society in general” (Council of Europe 2007). Gender workshops held by experts should be offered to teachers where they can learn how to bring questions of equality and diversity into various areas of the teaching process, in particular with respect to the production, reproduction and transmission of knowledge (Council of Europe 2007).

Sweden reacted to this recommendation at both the national and local level. The current government decided to invest SEK 110 million in gender equality in schools and SEK 60 million at universities. “The investment includes among others the establishment of a delegation for gender equality, in-service training for teachers, strengthened student health and to invest in more male teachers” (Ministry of Integration and Gender Equality 2009d).⁶

The municipality of Malmö (2008) also responded to this recommendation and invested SEK1.5 million in gender equality in schools. As a consequence, four gender pedagogues were employed to support schools with the introduction of gender mainstreaming and other gender equality issues (municipality of Malmö 2008). This investigation also involves gender workshops for headmasters to increase gender awareness in schools. The gender workshops include discussions

⁶ My translation.

about the importance of gender mainstreaming in municipalities and explain methods for gender analyses.

Almost all EU member states offer workshops to raise gender awareness and knowledge in the administration. However, Sweden's programmes are more comprehensive and ambitious than the ones of the other EU states so that they are considered as good examples (Sterner, Biller 2007: 15). The Swedish analysis method (*Gender Equality Analysis*) is also more comprehensive and in-depth than in the remaining member states (Sterner, Biller 2007: 16).

The recommendation of the European Council was surely not the only reason why the Swedish government and the local government of Malmö decided to embed gender mainstreaming in education policies, but I find there is a clear dialogue between the international, national and local level. The European Council recommended how to implement gender mainstreaming in a better way and the municipality of Malmö immediately reacted to this suggestion. This direct response without questioning indicates a strong conviction of the idea of gender mainstreaming.

Moreover, the municipality of Malmö adopted a gender equality plan in 2001, which says: "Gender equality is an issue for everybody regardless of where one works in the organisation" (municipality of Malmö 2001: 1).⁷ The aim is to include a gender perspective in all activities, which means to implement gender budgeting and describe the consequences for both genders in the basic data for decision-making (municipality of Malmö 2001: 4). Furthermore, all administrations are asked to write a yearly gender plan for their department including goals and measures. In other words, civil servants and local politicians must implement a gender perspective in their work. The question is how professionally and intensively they pursue the matter. For instance the gender equality plan of the central district of Malmö for 2009 is rather short and superficial (municipality of Malmö 2009a). One of the goals is to provide possibilities for all civil servants to be active in gender equality issues (municipality of Malmö 2009a: 5). I find this is a very open aim, which definitely needs further explanation, e.g. how to manage that.

However, gender mainstreaming can be described as internalised in Malmö – at least as an unsettled norm. Firstly, the municipality employs experts who are responsible for the introduction of the concepts. Secondly, the gender equality plan impels local politicians and civil servants to work with the idea. Thirdly, recommendations in terms of gender mainstreaming from international institutions are taken seriously.

⁷ My translation.

I find this positive attitude towards the concept in Malmö is related to the efforts of the national government. In other words, the national government provides the general conditions, in which municipalities can act.

In December 2007, the Government decided to allocate SEK 125 million for support to the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions for 2008-2010. The funds have [...] been allocated to develop gender mainstreaming efforts in municipalities and county councils. These efforts may include training of key persons in the organisation, setting up a web-based knowledge bank for the continuous circulation of knowledge and developing management systems (Ministry of Integration and Gender Equality 2009c).

Apart from allocating financial resources, the government also provides scientific and moral support when they organise international projects and conferences on gender mainstreaming (Ministry of Integration and Gender Equality 2007a). Generally, Sweden presents itself on international platforms as the forerunner in the norm-building process of gender mainstreaming and so as an important actor in the diffusion of the concept. Nyamko Sabuni (2007), Sweden's Minister for Integration and Gender Equality, mentioned at an international conference on gender mainstreaming: "Sweden took the initiative in this project". Moreover she said that the country is on the frontline. However, this attitude is not only characteristic for the current government. The former government also stressed Sweden's leading position in the context of the gender equality concept when it says:

The strategic gender equality efforts at the national level also contribute to strengthened gender equality efforts within the EU. Sweden continuously focuses on a gender equality perspective in the consultations groups and in negotiations within the different political fields of the EU (Swedish Ministry of Industry, Employment and Communications 2005: 36).⁸

In summary, the norm gender mainstreaming is, according the above-discussed documents, is somehow internalised at the local level, which was possible because of the support of the national government. Woodward (2003: 79) even claims that gender mainstreaming has been implemented in Swedish municipalities for many years. As the analysis has shown, I do not doubt that the gender equality concept is adopted. Nevertheless, I do doubt that the concept is really implemented at the local level.

An assessment of the concept at the governmental level in 2005 showed that in 2004 only 20 of 41 relevant government bills contained a complete gender analysis (Stenman 2006: appendix 4: 6). It was criticised that time and financial resources were too demanding. Financial resources are more limited in municipalities so it is questionable if the concept is really taken as seriously as often asserted. This question will be followed up in the interview section.

⁸ My translation.

6 The Norm-building Process of Gender Mainstreaming in Germany

6.1 Norm Emergence

As mentioned in the foregone part on the norm-building process of gender mainstreaming in Sweden, norm cascade is the stage when norm entrepreneurs, mostly acting from an organisational platform such as NGOs, spread their ideas and try to convince the critical masses of their alternative form of thinking and appropriate behaviour.

Considering the norm-building process of gender mainstreaming in Germany, it is conspicuous that the EU and the European Council were the decisive institutions that initiated and impelled the discussion. Before the adoption of the Amsterdam Treaty, including the commitment to the introduction of gender mainstreaming, Germany solely focused on special women's policies instead of including a male perspective in discussions on equality. The aim was to improve women's situation in the society, i.e. include women in the "male-stream", and not to re-structure the whole society. Even this special women's policy machinery was legally a relatively new field in Germany in 1997 when gender mainstreaming was introduced at EU level. Before 1994, men and women were considered as equal in the constitution but there was no mention of the country's obligation to abolish gender inequalities, and thus to actively support gender equality (BMFSFJ 2009a).

A further difference is also that gender equality became a more mainstream topic in political discussions. Before the introduction of gender mainstreaming, feminists, who were the only ones who dealt with gender issues, did not want to belong to the mainstream in Germany. However, with the introduction of gender mainstreaming at the governmental level in 1999, the topic left the radical feminist sphere (Roth 2004: 46).

The Amsterdam Treaty added important and vital impulses to the debate of gender equality in Germany. Already in 1999, the government decided in the government programme "Woman and Career"⁹ (BMFSFJ 1999) to support gender equality as a continuous leading principle of their work. In order to achieve this

⁹ My translation.

aim, gender mainstreaming is supposed to be the main strategy (BMFSFJ 1999: 7-9). Furthermore, gender mainstreaming was included as a central theme in the government programme “Modern State - Modern Administration” (Ministry of the Interior 1999) and in the rules of internal procedure of the ministries (Gender Competence Center 2009). Additionally, a new gender equality law was adopted, which was based on the strategy of gender mainstreaming in 2001 (Gender Competence Center 2009).

Early reactions to gender mainstreaming in Germany show that the EU and the Amsterdam Treaty are the dominant reference points for explaining and defending the adoption of the concept. The government programme “Woman and Career” says for instance in the beginning of the paragraph on gender mainstreaming:

Because of the World Conference on Women in Beijing and the Amsterdam Treaty (article 2, 3 paragraph 2 TEC), Germany is bound to introduce gender mainstreaming as strategy and method (BMFSFJ 1999: 7).¹⁰

The following parts of the government programme describe the principles of gender mainstreaming but avoid a discussion about democratic improvements. The title of the government programme, “Woman and Career”, and its content clearly focus on gender equality from an economic perspective when it says:

Women are more qualified today than they have ever been before. Their qualification potential, their special skills and experiences are an enormous economic potential. No economy that wants to compete internationally can renounce that. Therefore, the occupational equality of women is not just a question of justice but in particular an economic necessity (BMFSFJ 1999: 5).¹¹

On the one hand, the national government and several governments of the federal states (e.g. Niedersachsen, Saxony-Anhalt and North Rhine-Westphalia) actively reacted to the norm entrepreneurs in Brussels. On the other hand, I doubt that these early reactions are first indications of serious agreement and conviction to the concept, and hence the beginning of a norm-building process. The dominant arguments in the governmental documents refer to economic effectiveness and the obligation to introduce this EU concept as a member state of the Union while they neglect discussions about increased democracy and the normative aim of achieving gender equality (e.g. BMFSFJ 1999; North Rhine-Westphalian Social Democrats & Green Party 2001).

I believe this focus on EU compliance and economic gain is too narrow in order to introduce a norm candidate that aims for gender equality, a field that includes more facets than inequality in the labour market. The consequence of this narrowed argumentative structure is that possible norm followers just believe in the concept as long as it is beneficial and promoted by the EU, which can hinder an in-depth internalisation of the norm. Speaking in socialisation theoretical

¹⁰ My translation.

¹¹ My translation.

terms, the German government tried to convince possible norm followers with rational arguments (*strategic calculation*). In other words, argumentative structure focused on international competitive capacity and greater benefits, which is related to cost/benefit choices. The German government obviously assumed that the greater benefits individuals expect in the context of gender mainstreaming, the more likely is socialisation and the internationalisation of the norm.

A clear indication that the first reactions to gender mainstreaming in Germany aim to avoid conflict with the EU rather than further development of the norm-building process, is the statement of Chancellor Gerhard Schröder during the swearing-in ceremony of his government in 1998 when he described women's policies as "fuss"¹² (Musall/ *Der Spiegel* 2008). If the most powerful political person in Germany ridicules gender equality topics in public it is unlikely that gender mainstreaming will be taken as seriously as it seems in the early official reactions.

6.2 Norm Cascade

An increasing amount of actors accept the norm within the phase of norm cascade because a vital part of the critical masses has been convinced, which expedites the dynamics of the norm-building process. At this stage the actual socialisation process takes place.

The above-described adoptions of gender mainstreaming and in particular the decision of the cabinet in 1999 were important basic measures for a further development of the norm candidate. A vital part of the critical masses, the government and the ministries, were at least on the surface convinced of the alternative way of thinking, which means in the context of gender mainstreaming to include a gender perspective in decision-making processes. Accordingly, the decision of the government to adopt and include the EU concept can be considered as the tipping point since different dynamics began afterwards. As a consequence, other organisations also acted and introduced the concept.

In 2001, the first German trade union, ver.di, embedded gender mainstreaming in its rules of internal procedure (ver.di 2009; Gender Competence Center 2009). Furthermore, every government has included the concept in the coalition agreement since 2002 (Gender Competence Center 2009) and several political parties such as the Social Democrats (SPD 2007: 40) and the Green Party (Bündnis 90/ Die Grünen 2002: 44). The BMFSFJ founded the research facility Gender Competence Center in 2003, which should support public administration institutions in implementing gender mainstreaming.

¹² My translation.

The motivations for embedding gender mainstreaming of the above-mentioned organisations are similar to the government's in the beginning of the norm-building process (see 6.1). The main reason is clearly the wish to conform to international and national regulations and so avoid conflict. The trade union *ver.di* for instance clearly refers to the EU when they explain why the implementation of gender mainstreaming is necessary. It says: "In 1996, the European Union embedded these policies in the Amsterdam Treaty. That means that the member states are legally bound to implement the policies of gender mainstreaming in national policies" (*ver.di* 2009).¹³ Accordingly, the mechanism *role playing* is a crucial factor in the socialisation process since the above-mentioned organisations want to conform to the international and national policies in order to avoid conflict.

Moreover, a dominance of market economic argumentative structures is conspicuous, like in the foregone documents of the government. The BMFSFJ (2009b) summarises advantages and effects of the concept and refers to reduction of costs, more qualified staff, increasing motivation and the possibility to work more goal-orientated. I find these arguments somewhat weak since gender mainstreaming is cost-intensive in the beginning due to the need for qualified staff (gender experts) for instance. Possible new followers will quickly realise this disadvantage with the consequences being that they will regard gender mainstreaming as unrealistic and never seriously start believing in the norm. As a result, rationalist arguments are inappropriate in the context of the norm-building process of gender mainstreaming.

Intensive and regular media coverage is an important aspect in a successful norm-building process. The media coverage of gender mainstreaming has been somewhat poor in Germany. If newspapers report on the topic at all they are generally critical. Explanatory articles about gender mainstreaming do not exist in the big broadsheet newspapers *Süddeutsche Zeitung* and *Frankfurter Allgemeine*. As a result, it seems that gender mainstreaming is still a topic of the academic world. That is an extreme disadvantage in the socialisation process of this norm candidate since it is a top-down concept that addresses everyone in decision-making positions. There is a lack of knowledge (Sterner, Biller 2007: 23), which means that there are several experts who understand the concept but the transmission to politicians and policy-makers, who are not gender experts, has not been achieved yet.

As previously mentioned, a crucial step in the socialisation process of the norm candidate gender mainstreaming is framing since the term is unclear to many possible norm followers. Therefore a translation into the national language of each country is essential in order to provide an understandable basis, which is extremely important for public discussions and debates. Almost every German official document starts with longer explanations about the concept, which

¹³ My translation.

indicates that the term is hard to understand as it is. According to the Federal Agency for Public Education (*date of publication n/a*), German organisations retain the English version since it is not possible to translate it and because of the international frame, the EU. Thus, the topic is not framed, although it is common for official terms to be translated and framed in Germany. Particularly in a discussion about an ambiguous and complex concept such as gender mainstreaming it would be extremely beneficial in the norm-building process if the term had a German equivalent.

Going back to Risse's (2000: 10-11) preconditions for *normative suasion*, just the aspect of a common life world is striking in the German case due the focus on organisations, which share a common culture and a common system of norms and values. However, actors do not consider each other as equals because of the male dominance in leading positions (Eurostat 2008: 60, 66-68, 76), which is the level where discussions on gender mainstreaming should be started. Moreover, the discourse is not public due to a lack of media coverage. As a consequence, *normative suasion* does not have a chance to be apparent.

In summary, the dominant mechanism that impels the socialisation process of the norm candidate gender mainstreaming has been *role playing* underlined by rational argumentations, i.e. Germany accepted the norm in order to conform to the EU regulations. However, the mechanism *normative suasion* could not be identified.

6.3 Internalisation

As previously mentioned, a norm is internalised when it is widely accepted. The more it is accepted the more it is taken for granted, and thus a settled, powerful and robust norm.

Gender mainstreaming is a topic that has not succeeded in leaving academia because it lacks direct translation and framing, which is a necessary basis for discussions, and because of low media coverage. Nevertheless, the term gender mainstreaming appears in official documents at every political level in Germany (Döge, Stiegler 2004: 136-146). The norm is also apparent in the municipality of Essen, with the German municipality actually taking similar measures to those of Malmö.

First of all, the municipality features a department for gender equality (*Gleichstellungsstelle*) with gender experts whose task and aim it is to support the realisation of gender equality in the administrations of the municipality. It is conspicuous that the idea of gender mainstreaming is embedded in the title of the department since, in contrast to various other German municipalities, it suggests a gender perspective and not a sole focus on women. In that sense, Essen is farther

in the norm-building process than many other German municipalities where gender mainstreaming has not even been a matter of discussion (Döge, Stiegler 2004: 135).

The department for gender equality has continuously impelled the norm-building process of gender mainstreaming so that important elements such as sex-disaggregated statistics are officially embedded in Essen today (Gleichstellungsstelle Essen a).¹⁴ The decision to implement the concept is, however, just one step in the internationalisation process. It is just as important to define the concept and the political aims of the municipality (Döge, Stiegler 2004: 143-144).

The department for gender equality meets this need and offers its own definition of gender mainstreaming which, like the definitions at the national level, is strongly related to the EU: “Gender mainstreaming is a modified EU policy for asserting equal opportunities and became binding upon all member states in 1997” (Gleichstellungsstelle Essen b).¹⁵ Moreover, the department for gender equality emphasises: “In the context of the directive and broad discussion about gender mainstreaming at the EU, national and regional level, a new access was opened to the topic of gender equality between women and men” (Gleichstellungsstelle Essen c).¹⁶ In other words, the EU and the national level constitute the depended variables in the norm-building process of gender mainstreaming in Essen since the whole debate is related to these institutions. If the interest of the EU or German government in gender mainstreaming declines it is expected that the concept will also be less supported in the municipality of Essen. This dependence on the development at EU level extremely weakens the norm candidate even though gender mainstreaming is officially adopted. In short, it is not advantageous if there is such a strong focus on the EU since it can become a barrier for further developments and own dynamics.

Although there is a strong dependence on what is happening at the EU and national level, no dialogue between these institutions is apparent. For instance there are no reactions and responses to the previously discussed approach to implement gender mainstreaming in education suggested by the European Council. The topic gender mainstreaming in education has often been discussed in German academia but it has not been implemented in practise (Hoppe, Nyssen 2004: 241).

Coming back to the definition, the department for gender equality (Gleichstellungsstelle Essen b) in Essen provides in its comprehensive definition a translation of the key term, which is in contrast to many other German institutions. Gender is explained as the social constructed and changeable gender

¹⁴ Dates of publication are not available regarding all sources of the department for gender equality in Essen.

¹⁵ My translation.

¹⁶ My translation.

roles and mainstreaming as the daily political, organisational or economic decision-making processes in a municipality. Furthermore, gender mainstreaming is translated into “Gemeinschaftsaufgabe Geschlechterdemokratie”, which literally means “common task gender democracy”.

I believe the provision of a definition and translation is a necessary basis for a successful internalisation of the norm candidate gender mainstreaming since it is impossible to believe in a concept without understanding its content and meaning. Gender mainstreaming is a concept that targets every member with decision-making power in an organisation, which involves a wide range of people with different social and educational backgrounds being able to understand and implement it. In other words, the term should be as simple as possible without losing its actual meaning.

It is discussable if the translation suggested by the department of gender equality meet these requirements and if the translation “common task gender democracy” mediates the same content and meaning as the original term “gender mainstreaming”. Particularly the word “democracy” could be misleading since it could be interpreted as a solely political concept. Gender mainstreaming, however, also covers administrative, economic and cultural fields of application. Private companies could for instance interpret the concept as only applicable to political parties and other governmental organisations, i.e. organisations that are directly related to the field of politics. I suggest that “common task gender equality” (Gemeinschaftsaufgabe Geschlechtergleichstellung) would be both a broader and more concrete translation since it includes more fields of application and highlights the general aim of gender mainstreaming.

Following Checkel’s (2001) approach to *normative suasion*, which is an interactive mechanism in the socialisation process, a common understanding of the key ideas is crucial for internalisation. The translation provided by the department for gender equality in Essen is a step away from the idea of simply following a norm only because the EU suggests it, which is associated with the mechanism *role playing*. It can be regarded as a vital element of the socialisation mechanism *normative suasion* since the translation aims to provide the basis for a common understanding of the term “gender mainstreaming” in Essen. However, I believe the suggested translation can be improved.

Generally, the term “gender mainstreaming” needs further explanation in Germany in order to be more credible. The norm candidate is relatively new so it cannot be expected that every decision-maker will take it for granted (settled norm). Nonetheless, it can be expected that the chancellor knows what it stands for since the government was the first institution in Germany that adopted the EU concept, and thus has in some way the function of a role model. Angela Merkel (2007), German chancellor and former women’s minister, mentioned in a speech in the context of the conference *Women’s Economic Empowerment as Smart Economics: A Dialogue on Political Options*:

I don't want to hide that there have been linguistic changes considering the term "gender mainstreaming" between the time when I was women's minister – from 1990 until 1994 – and the 21st century. If it has been an improvement for the general understanding of gender equality policies, who knows? I realise that I begin to get used to the term [gender mainstreaming]. However, it will probably take a while until it is commonly known in this country.¹⁷

This statement indicates that Merkel neither understands the concept nor is convinced by the idea. Gender mainstreaming is a top-down strategy and if the head of a state admits problems with understanding the content and doubts its worth it is somewhat unlikely that it will enjoy any credibility at other levels and possible fields of application. Furthermore, Merkel's rather dismissive attitude towards gender mainstreaming makes the internalisation of the norm candidate even more difficult because of her important position in the government and in the media. In short, it seems that gender mainstreaming is far away from being internalised. Therefore it is not surprising that gender budgeting, a method to include a gender perspective in financial concerns, was rejected by the national government due to various ambiguities in 2007 (Gender Competence Center 2009).

There are obviously basic problems regarding a common understanding of the term "gender mainstreaming" so that the norm-building process is slowed down. Therefore the department for gender equality in Essen organised several workshops on the concept and implementation of gender mainstreaming in daily decision-making processes in the municipality of Essen. The aim was to make the concept more public and so reach new possible norm followers. The focus of the workshops was gender equality in health care, city planning, language, working life, leading positions and IT (Gleichstellungsstelle Essen c).

Essen also adopted a support plan for women in 2002, whose aim was to implement gender equality in the administration of the municipality (Gleichstellungsstelle Essen a). However, as the titles suggests, the plan solely focuses on supporting women while it neglects to involve the unequal relation between gender roles in the society. Accordingly, the plan is a typical example of the special women's policy machinery and not a measure of gender mainstreaming, which tries to imply the different situations of both men and women.

In summary, there are attempts to spread the gender equality concept and so impel the socialisation process but there are also various problems that hinder a further development in the norm-building process. Firstly, there is a clear focus on the EU as a sender of the norm. As a consequence, if the EU promotes gender mainstreaming less then the interest and belief in the norm candidate also decreases at both the national and local level.

¹⁷ My translation.

Secondly, the economic focus and the argument that gender mainstreaming is cost effective make the concept misleading since gender mainstreaming is cost-intensive especially in the early phase when experts are needed to explain the strategy. Gender mainstreaming is cost effective in a long-term perspective but to promote it solely with financial arguments will disappoint possible norm followers when they realise that the concept is rather expensive in the beginning. In other words, it is rather adversarial to try to impel the socialisation process of gender mainstreaming with rationalist arguments since its implementation is not beneficial in the beginning.

Thirdly, the socialisation process is hindered due to a lack of support from leading institutions such as the government. Gender mainstreaming is a top-down strategy, whose success, i.e. the internalisation as a settled norm, depends on people in leading positions. It cannot reach decision-makers in an organisation if the top is not convinced of it. The local department for gender equality in Essen is very active but it does not receive the necessary support or financial resources from the national government. According to a survey with the representatives of the EU High Level Group on Gender Mainstreaming, there were no specific “resources in form of money or personnel for implementing gender mainstreaming” in Germany (Sterner, Biller 2007: 18).

Fourthly, and probably the biggest problem, is the lack of common understanding regarding the term “gender mainstreaming” so that further discussions are not possible. Gender mainstreaming is a widespread and accepted term in academia but otherwise it is somewhat unknown or misunderstood. Accordingly, the socialisation process is still in the beginning phase. The mechanism *normative suasion* cannot be found since the basis for discussions and debates, a common understanding about the key words, is not existent, which can be related to the missing general framework that the government should provide.

The analysis has shown that gender mainstreaming is somehow internalised in the municipality of Malmö and that there are several barriers that hinder internalisation in Essen. The next part of this paper will provide insights in the transference of gender mainstreaming into local practises in order to determine if the experience of local politicians conform to the picture illustrated through official documentation.

7 The Interviews

7.1 The Turnout of the Interview Requests

As previously mentioned, the purpose of the interviews with local politicians is to obtain an insight if the norm candidate gender mainstreaming has the same status that the documents analysed above (e.g. government bills) and other researchers (e.g. Guenther 2008; Sterner/Biller 2007) maintain. Of course, four interviews cannot provide a comprehensive picture of the status of the norm candidate, however, the interviews can offer an insight concerning the implementation of the concept in each municipality.

The idea was to interview one local politician from each party in Malmö and Essen. However, in both cases just two local politicians responded to the request, namely the Moderate Party (Moderaterna) and the Left Party (Vänsterpartiet) in Malmö and the Social-Democratic Party (SPD) and The Green Party (Bündis 90/Die Grünen) in Essen. Even though the interviewees are from four different parties, the interviews are comparable since the parties have similar responsibilities and positions in each municipality.

The Moderate and the Social-Democratic parties are amongst the bigger political parties in Sweden and Germany, and they are both currently in opposition in their municipalities. The Left Party and the Green Party hold the majority in Malmö and Essen and they are responsible for gender equality issues. The Left Party is officially responsible for gender equality issues in Malmö whereas The Green Party is rather traditionally the party that impels discussions about gender equality in Germany (Roth 2004: 42).

I believe that the low turnout for interview requests provides the first insight into the general attitude towards gender equality policies. Only a few local politicians feel comfortable talking about the topic even though the request clearly emphasised that expert knowledge about gender equality is not necessary. The other parties may not feel responsible for the topic leading to interview requests being repeatedly ignored. The low turnout can also be interpreted as a lack of interest in the topic. Naturally these assumptions cannot be proved but they indicate a general lack of importance attached gender equality issues.

A German study about gender mainstreaming in municipalities features a similar result, i.e. an extreme low turnout (Döge, Stiegler 2004: 143). Gender

mainstreaming is a cross-section approach, which means that every department in an organisation is supposed to embed it its statutes and implement it. The turnout of the interview requests somewhat indicates that it is still a specialised topic that catches the interest of only a few.

7.2 Insights into the Use of Gender Mainstreaming in Malmö

Sweden is one of the very few countries in Europe that has implemented gender mainstreaming at the local level (Guenther 2008: 589). Jalmert (2004: 195) maintains that it has been the main gender equality approach since the mid 1990s. The general picture of Sweden in terms of gender mainstreaming is that the norm candidate has been accepted, implemented and internalised. However, the interviews conducted with local politicians in Malmö offered a slightly different view on gender mainstreaming in Sweden.

I have never heard exactly these terms [jämställdhetsintegrering or gender mainstreaming] but if it involves that you have a gender perspective, of course, we have that. For instance regarding city planning and education (Sonesson / Moderate Party 2009).¹⁸

Philipsson (Left Party) (2009) explained that gender mainstreaming was officially adopted in 2001 in Malmö but there have been various problems with the implementation.

[Gender mainstreaming] was something that we decided on a high political level but now the result is, when we look back, that we probably haven't given the support that would have been needed so that civil servants maybe could have managed it. They haven't received a tool to work with it. So we as voted politicians should have given more support regarding that topic. [...] It was a good idea that we obviously couldn't manage to continue appropriately.

Furthermore, Philipsson (2009) explained that the debate about gender mainstreaming received new impulses in the context of the *European Charter for Equality of Women and Men in Local Life*, which the parliament decided to sign. "We will do gender mainstreaming. But we don't do it now" (Philipsson 2009).

Regarding the tools of gender mainstreaming, Sweden is often considered as innovative, experienced and progressive due the long-term usage of the 3R-method (Council of Europe 2004: 30 BMFSFJ 2002: 41; Woodward 2003: 79), which strives to include representation, resources and reality in decision-making processes. In other words, "who gets what on which terms" in a municipality (SKL 2002: 4). Malmö is the third biggest city in Sweden so it is one of the municipalities where the 3R-method should be known and used if it really is as deeply entrenched as it is often claimed. However, Philipsson (2009) explained:

¹⁸ My translation considering all interviews.

There is surely somewhere some administration where someone uses it but I think that it is someone who is personally active and who impels it at work but it's not common to do that. There's a network for civil servants who work with gender equality issues. People from every department meet and discusses gender equality issues [...]. There you can surely find a department that works with the 3R-method.

In other words, the 3R-method is, at least in the municipality of Malmö, nowhere near as well-known and implemented as it is often maintained. Due the Malmö's size it can be expected that it is one of the more innovative and active municipalities in terms of gender equality approaches. Since the 3R-method is, according to Philipsson (2009), not very wide spread it is questionable if smaller municipalities really use it or if it is even known about.

Both politicians support gender mainstreaming, although to a different extent. Whereas Philipsson (2009) advocates to expand the concept to more departments and administrations of the municipality and to offer workshops on gender mainstreaming for local politicians and civil servants, Sonesson (2009) promotes the statues quo.

We are working actively with gender equality, we have the *European Charter for Equality of Women and Men in Local Life*. It shouldn't become too much. Gender equality can't be a topic in every issue. It should be included where it is needed. And I think we do that. [...] Of course, there should be possibilities to learn more [about gender mainstreaming] in this municipality. For instance teachers have that possibility. I think that's maybe enough (Sonesson 2009).

Gender mainstreaming is innovative and more beneficial than most approaches of the special women's policy machinery since it tackles the problem that gender inequality is apparent everywhere in the society. It is a cross-sectional approach, which is applicable in every organisation, department and company and not just in a few fields. Accordingly, the idea of gender mainstreaming is not to restrict its implementation to several political, administrative and social issues.

Speaking from a norm theoretical perspective, it is relatively obvious that gender mainstreaming is far from being taken for granted as a settled norm in the municipality of Malmö, at least according to Philipsson (2009) and Sonesson (2009). Both local politicians also admitted that the term is used very rarely in discussions and that most members of the local parliament and civil servants are probably not familiar with the details and tools.

In summary, so far the idea of gender mainstreaming is officially embedded and accepted in the municipality of Malmö but there are problems with the application and implementation. It exists "on paper" – but probably only "on paper".

7.3 Insights into the Use of Gender Mainstreaming in Essen

Elements of gender mainstreaming are embedded in the position paper of the municipality of Essen and the concept has touched several political fields such as labour market and health care (Gleichstellungsstelle Essen c). Moreover, the department for gender equality in Essen organised workshops to give the local politicians and civil servants an understanding of the concept and its advantages. Even though gender mainstreaming is not as officially established as it is in the Swedish municipality it seems that the idea is at least accepted in the municipality of Essen. However, Schmutzler-Jäger (Green Party) (2009) asserts in the context of reactions to the concept in the local parliament:

Nobody is interested in these issues. When the women's report is presented twice a year, people fall asleep, go outside or read the newspaper. [...] And there are the same results in the women's report every year. No changes. No improvements. [...] When I mentioned Gender Budgeting in the parliament for the first time there was a broad laughter.

Additionally, she claims that only approximately 60 percent have heard the term "gender mainstreaming" while almost nobody really understands what it is about.

Paß (Social-Democratic Party) (2009) describes the situation in a similar way: "[The term gender mainstreaming] is rather unknown! The term was used several times when we had a debate on it. But I have to admit, that it isn't included in our local party programme for the next parliamentary term." He also concedes that the topic is rarely taken seriously, in particular in intern discussions. Even various female local politicians and civil servants reject gender mainstreaming since they feel insulted by it. According to Paß (2009), they are of the opinion that they can manage a successful career without any gender equality approaches therefore every other woman can do the same.

Consequently, it can hardly be maintained that gender mainstreaming has gone all the way of the socialisation process and is now a settled norm if there is not even wide acceptance. It is definitely still an expert topic with few followers, who are mostly feminists with an academic background in gender studies. Regarding gender, age and political orientation, Schmutzler-Jäger (2009) alleges that only women between 40 and 50 from the political left are interested in gender mainstreaming. Therefore it is not surprising that the proposal for gender budgeting in sport failed.

Considering the question of whether the municipality should invest in either more gender experts working with special abuses or in more workshops on gender mainstreaming for non-experts to spread the idea, Paß (2009) and Schmutzler-Jäger (2009) are not of the same opinion. Whereas Paß (2009) regards it as important to form awareness for gender mainstreaming, Schmutzler-Jäger (2009) sees no possibility to change the general negative attitude towards gender

mainstreaming among local politicians and civil servants in Essen, and thus prefers the latter.

In summary, these insights in daily political activities indicate that there is a huge gap between academic debates and what actually happens on the ground. The concept is partly implemented in Essen but very few people really accept it and trust it. Consequently, the idea of gender mainstream is far away from being a settled norm and unsettled norm since local politicians and civil servants often directly reject or ridicule it. In other words, they do not even superficially follow the norm to avoid conflict, which enormously reduces the chances of the norm candidate gender mainstreaming to continue the socialisation process.

8 Results of the Written and Oral Data

The analysis of the diffusion of the norm candidate gender mainstreaming sent by the EU and the European Council has shown that it is neither internalised as a settled norm in the Swedish municipality of Malmö nor in the German municipality of Essen. It can be argued that fifteen years is not enough time for an idea to become a settled norm. In particular in terms of gender equality issues where traditional social structures are deeply entrenched, researchers might allege that it is not surprising that gender mainstreaming has not been taken for granted yet.

However, there is a comparable norm candidate that was also sent by the EU but enjoys greater popularity at the local level, according to all interviewees (Paß 2009; Philipsson 2009; Schmutzler-Jäger 2009; Sonesson 2009): environmental issues. This field is also often considered as new and rather left-wing “soft politics”. Furthermore, both issues are embedded in daily routines. Accordingly, if environmental issues are taken seriously it can also be expected that gender equality issues be given the same priority.

Even though gender mainstreaming is not internalised as a settled norm in either of the analysed municipalities, there are differences in terms of its status as an unsettled norm. Gender mainstreaming can be considered as an unsettled norm in Malmö since the parliament has officially adopted the concept. There have been problems with the implementation and mediation to civil servants but the discussion has received new impulses in the context of the *European Charter for Equality of Women and Men in Local Life*, which the local government decided to sign (municipality of Malmö 2007). It is an unsettled norm because local politicians and civil servants in Malmö know about the concept and believe in it. However, gender mainstreaming is complex with the consequence being that there is a lack of knowledge, i.e. local politicians do not know how to implement the tools. Accordingly, further workshops are needed to increase awareness, and thus deepen the internalisation of the norm.

Gender mainstreaming is far from being a norm in any way in the municipality of Essen. The fact that the idea is considered as something absurd and ridiculous indicates that the critical masses are yet to be convinced. Regarding the national level, gender mainstreaming is at least internalised as an unsettled norm since it has been implemented in the last two coalition agreements, as well as several government programmes such as “Modern State, Modern Administration”, and it is embedded in the internal rules of procedures of the ministries (Gender

Competence Center 2009; Ministry of the Interior 1999). According to these documents, the Gender Competence Center (2009) and the BMFSFJ (2009a), gender mainstreaming is used and accepted. Whether it is internalised as a settled norm at the national level or not cannot be answered in this research project since the information of the empirical data cannot be backed up with interviews. However, this is not the purpose of this paper.

The municipality of Essen partly implemented the concept as elements of gender mainstreaming are embedded in the position paper of the municipality. But otherwise it is rather a loose slogan promoted by a group of gender experts. Gender workshops that can convey basic knowledge in order to convince local politicians and civil servants of the importance of gender mainstreaming are still needed. In the context of Malmö, what is needed are workshops on a higher level that focus on implementation and detail questions.

Another difference is that governments, in Malmö and other municipalities of Sweden, react to recommendations of international organisations such the EU or the European Council. After the recommendation of the Council of Europe (2007) to include gender mainstreaming in education, the Swedish government invested SEK 110 million in gender equality in schools (Ministry of Integration and Gender Equality 2009a: 3) and the municipality of Malmö (2007) spent SEK 1.5 million on gender training for school headmasters (municipality of Malmö 2008). There is a dialogue between supranational, national and local institutions about gender mainstreaming that impels the norm-building process.

Regarding Germany, there are indications of a dialogue between the EU and the national level but the ideas of the EU are not common knowledge at the local level yet, which hinders the norm-building process of gender mainstreaming in Essen. Furthermore, the national government is not very supportive with distrust towards gender mainstreaming being publicly mentioned by political leaders, such as chancellor Merkel.

A further decisive difference in terms of the mediation of the concept is the translation of the key word into the Swedish term *jämställdhetsintegrering*. This was a necessary step since it provided an understandable basis for discussions. Both German politicians Paß (2009) and Schmutzler-Jäger (2009) emphasised that the term gender mainstreaming appears somehow “exotic and hard to understand” for most local politicians and civil servants, and that it definitely differs from the usual vocabulary in the municipality of Essen. This lack of elaboration and the repeated reference to the EU indicates that Germany and the municipality of Essen count on *role playing* as socialisation mechanism. In other words, it is expected that possible norm followers internalise the norm candidate gender mainstreaming only because the EU promotes it.

I find it is somewhat unrealistic to expect gender mainstreaming, a concept that aims to alter deeply entrenched gender roles, to be internalised just by *role*

playing. Sweden, however, focused more on the socialisation mechanism *normative suasion*, since there have been discussions in the media and within the organisations where the concept is implemented. Sweden has admittedly an advantage in terms of time since it implemented gender mainstreaming five years before Germany. However, I find this advantage alone cannot account for such a difference in results. The more determinant factor is that the idea of gender mainstreaming has been promoted more actively in Sweden.

Nevertheless, even though gender mainstreaming is more internalised in Malmö than in Essen it is clear that it has not reached the status of an unsettled norm in daily decision-making processes. In order to impel the norm-building process I think two measures are crucial, both of which are related to Risse's (2000: 10-11) preconditions for *normative suasion*.

Firstly, the debate on gender mainstreaming has to be open to other participants and public in nature. Accordingly, the media has to report more on the concept so it loses its status of being an expert topic. Of course, not everybody is supposed to become a gender expert but it is important that decision-makers obtain a certain level of knowledge so that they can work with the gender equality strategy. Therefore further workshops on gender mainstreaming are also necessary.

Secondly, actors have to recognise each other as equals, which implies that more women have to be in leading positions in order to introduce the concept. Therefore it is necessary to introduce quotas in more fields, which, in Germany in particular, is rather uncommon. A disadvantage concerning gender mainstreaming is that it is a top-down strategy, which means that people in leading positions have to introduce and embed the concept in an organisation. Since women are disadvantaged in most gender issues they are the ones who generally promote gender mainstreaming. However, the people who are in leading positions are, to a large extent, men. Accordingly, quotas have to ensure that more women can reach leading positions so that gender mainstreaming can be better promoted.

Schmutzler-Jäger (2009) mentioned that a quota system was introduced for the speaking list in the local parliament. As a result, the share of women speaking in the parliament increased and new impulses were added to debates. This development is also apparent at the national level. During the coalition between the Social-Democratic and the Green Party (1998-2005), the Green Party campaigned for quotas in the government. This government had the highest proportion of female ministers ever with the consequence that for the first time gender mainstreaming became a central aim (Roth 2004: 45).

In summary, media discussions, quotas, a clear and simple wording of the key terms to facilitate discussions and further workshops would enormously impel the socialisation process of the norm candidate of gender mainstreaming in both municipalities.

9 Conclusions and Outlook

9.1 Different Interpretations and Translations

This study has shown that the impact that gender mainstreaming can have on a generation for a more gender-equal society depends on the way in which it is interpreted. Accordingly, it generally conforms to Lombardo and Meier's (2006: 152) study on gender mainstreaming. Regarding the first research question of this study, it is striking that Malmö and Essen interpret gender mainstreaming in different ways yet both municipalities consider the concept complex and difficult.

Malmö understands gender mainstreaming as a political strategy that should be naturally included in all decision-making processes in an organisation (SKL 2009) whereas Essen considers it as a political task (Gleichstellungsstelle Essen c). In particular the words "natural" and "task" reflect the results of this study and indicate that gender mainstreaming is considered as a possible norm in Malmö. In Essen, according to both interviews, the gender equality concept is often regarded either as a ridiculous and unnecessary instrument or as something too difficult to achieve. The result is that most local politicians and civil servants prefer to defer this task to gender experts or avoid it completely. Even though there have been problems with the implementation of gender mainstreaming in Malmö, in contrast to Essen, it is an accepted approach and not just an expert topic.

This study also looks for evidence for the translation of gender mainstreaming into local practises. In Malmö the field of application is mostly education and in Essen there were attempts to include the gender equality concept in labour market policies and sport. There have been problems with the implementation in both cases, which is due to a lack of knowledge in Malmö and a lack of interest on behalf of non-gender experts in Essen.

Another aim of this study is also to suggest how the norm-building process could be improved and precipitated. Theoretically, the norm candidate gender mainstreaming can be deepened if gender experts focused more on *normative suasion* as socialisation mechanism instead of *role playing* since the aim of gender mainstreaming is to alter gender roles. *Role playing* entails conforming with norms in order to avoid conflict with the community and I doubt that deeply entrenched gender roles can be changed just because actors want to avoid conflict. The result is, in particular in the case of a complex concept such as gender mainstreaming, that the norm is only superficially internalised, which means that

the norm is officially embedded but possible norm followers ignore it in practise. *Normative suasion* implies that actors present arguments and try to persuade and convince each other while their interests and preferences are open for redefinition and their aim is consensus. In other words, possible norm followers discuss the norm candidate and therefore need knowledge about it. Discussions arouse interest because people are more involved in the whole socialisation process, which deepens the norm in the end and makes it more robust. Furthermore, this mechanism makes the norm-building process more democratic since more individuals are involved in decisions.

Checkel (2001) describes *role playing* and *normative suasion* as different approaches. While the first is taken from the social movement literature, the latter comes from the social learning literature. I suggest that both approaches can be combined in order to precipitate and strengthen the power of a norm. Considering the empirical data, the analysis of the norm-building process of gender mainstreaming in Malmö and Essen shows that gender mainstreaming is more internalised in the Swedish case where the mechanism *normative suasion* has been more obvious. There are surely other variables that have also influenced the socialisation process, such as the advantage in time that Sweden has, but media reportage, a clear wording of the key concepts and workshops (all indications of *normative suasion*), have been of great importance.

These measures should be extended in both municipalities to impel the socialisation process of gender mainstreaming. However, the first step should be to introduce more quotas so that more women are in leading positions as gender mainstreaming is a top-down strategy.

9.2 Gender Mainstreaming in Other Countries

Gender mainstreaming is a challenging and complex norm candidate, and thus there have been several problems with its internalisation in the municipalities of Malmö, Sweden and Essen, Germany. It is expected that the gender equality concept is deeper internalised in these two countries than in various other EU member states since they have greater financial resources to tackle such issues than, for example, many Eastern European states.

Furthermore, it can be argued that gender mainstreaming is not advantageous in the Eastern European member states due to a different social, economic and political history. For instance Poland is a former communist state while at the same time staunchly Catholic. It could claim one of the world's highest female employment rates during the 1980s while at the same time an extreme gendered division of labour (Fodor, Glass 2007: 340). The years of transition were characterised with an enormous decrease of the female employment rate (Zachorowska-Mazurkiewicz 2007: 456). The problems are different – maybe too

different to implement the same gender equality concepts. So far there have been almost no indications of the implementation of gender mainstreaming in Poland (Choluj, Neusüß 2004).

Finally, I want to emphasise that this study considers the way of the norm candidate gender mainstreaming from being an idea to being a norm and to a lesser extent its quality. Gender mainstreaming does not deconstruct gender such as Butler (1999) advocates. It can even be argued that it reinforces gender roles since the idea is to embrace the different needs of women and men in decision-making processes in organisations. For example in practise this means that a municipality invests the same amount in typical female activities as they do for typical male activities. This assumption implies that gender roles are somehow accepted and maintaining the status quo should not be the aim gender policies.

The purpose of this study is not to assess the quality of gender mainstreaming in detail but the concept involves, like every approach in science, some disadvantages. Nevertheless, I believe that gender mainstreaming is a necessary and fundamentally correct step in the pursuit of gender equality since it considers the topic from a completely new angle and includes a greater amount of actors.

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