

Why don't they practice what they preach?

A case study of equality policy implementation in human rights-based organization

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Abstract

This thesis is a single case study exploring how the need to help shapes implementation of equality policy. The case constitutes of the Swedish section of Amnesty International where interviews with employees and activists were conducted and complemented with a document analysis. The research is guided by a postcolonial theoretical framework that redefines the concept of ‘need’, which offers an opportunity to study the ‘needs’ motivating people to work in the human rights sector. This thesis applies the theoretical understand of ‘need’ to implementation of equality policy. The research concludes that the need to help shapes implementation of equality policy in three different, but interlinked, ways. First, through the responsibility as human rights professionals. Second, through the position of privilege. Third, through the awarding act of raising awareness. One key finding of this study is a ‘need’ in the organization and among actors implementing the policy that drives the implementation of the equality policy.

Key words: transformative equality policy; human rights, need to help; Amnesty International

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1. Introduction

In the last decade there has been several notable scandals of abuse within well-known international organizations, including Oxfam Great Britain, Save the Children, the United Nations, and Amnesty International (Vijfeijken, 2019). Both abuses between employees (employee abusing another employee) and abuses of beneficiaries (employees abusing the target group) have been reported, something that has shaken the perception of humanitarian and human rights organizations. Among the organizations that have faced accusations of abuse is Amnesty International, an organization based on human rights and international law, that seeks to promote equality. Amnesty international have reported cases of sexual harrasment, racism, and other internal abuse of power. Even as a human rights-based organization they have not been immune to social norms, organization cultures, and inequalities that can lead to discrimination and abuse (Vijfeijken, 2019).

Equality policies in different variations have been regarded an appropriate response to discrimination, abuse, and harassment based on social identity. Some equality policies have been produced and implemented as demand of legislations; others have been produced as result of internal call for change. Inequality is a widespread problem in society and likewise produced and reproduced in organizations among employees (Acker, 2006). Equality policies have, therefore, been a noticeable part of organizations policies in later years. They often highlight different dimensions of equality, for example class, gender, or race (Acker, 2006). As inequalities are still highly prevalent in human rights-based organizations, alike in other organizations, something is evidently lacking. Therefore, research on equality policy and implementation of equality policy is of relevance to understand what elements can hinder successful implementation of equality. As will be discussed in later chapters researchers have studied both equality policies and strategies of implementation to understand why organizations have not fully managed to overcome inequality (see 2.2).

Critical study of good intentions is just as important as critical study of phenomenon perceived as 'bad'. As Malkki (2015) describes it: "It is easier to develop a critical analysis of racisms that of antiracism's and easier to analyze the prosecution of war than making of peace" (Malkki, 2015: 99). Good intentions, such as implementation of equality policy, is just as complex as inequality itself and can, therefore, be critically analyzed as such. The primary

scope of interest in this study is the policy-implementation gap of equality policy at the Swedish section of Amnesty International, deriving from the tension of human rights-based organizations wanting to do good externally while not living up to their standards internally. The study will look at how the implementation of equality policy is perceived and incorporated by the actors implementing it and understood by the organization.

1.1. Research aim

The aim of this research is to get a deeper understanding of the factors shaping implementation of equality policy. Specifically, this research explores, through a postcolonial lens, how different dimensions of the theoretical concept ‘need to help’ shapes implementation of equality policy. This is done by analysing the document guiding implementation and interviews with employees. The selected case: the Swedish section of Amnesty International has been chosen for this study as it offers an interesting context being a human rights-based organisation with documented cases of inequality, in addition to strong efforts of implementing an equality policy. The research is guided by the following research question:

How does the need to help shape implementation of equality policy?

2. Background

The following chapter will present essential background of the case, the Swedish section of Amnesty International, including history of critique that has been directed towards the organization relating to inequality. This is done to represent a full picture of the case in the context of equality policy. In chapters 2.2 and 2.3 existing research on transformative equality policy will be reviewed to contextualize the research field.

2.1. Amnesty International

Amnesty international is a human rights-based organization, meaning that the universal declaration of human rights guides and directs all parts of the organization's external efforts. A central feature of Amnesty International's work is to investigate and expose human rights abuses emphasizing that 'no government is beyond scrutiny' (Amnesty International, 2022). The fundamental strategy of the organization is to campaign and lobby governments, companies, and other influential actors to follow international law, a strategy also referred to as 'naming and shaming' (Hendrix and Wong, 2014). The strategy includes naming human rights abuses and the actors who abuse them, and publicly condemn their actions to demand change (Hendrix and Wong, 2014). Amnesty International, thereby seeks to ensure equality with international law as its main reference. The organization was originally exclusively a grassroots organization but has evolved to also become an expert organization. This means that formation of campaigns, lobbying, and research is mostly done by professional employees at the secretariats, either employed at the international secretariat or at any of the national secretariats. Activists then engage in campaigning by raising awareness and collect signatures for a specific issue, which can be for example to demand the release of a prisoner of conscious or a law to change to follow international law (The Swedish Section of Amnesty International, 2022).

Amnesty international was established in 1961 by an Englishman, Peter Benenson, in reaction to the imprisonment of two students in the former totalitarian state of Portugal. The original strategy of influence was to let volunteers 'adopt' prisoners of conscious that they would campaign for until the case was solved. The approach of 'adopting' prisoners, which were often

people far away from the volunteers themselves, later faced critique for its Eurocentric and colonial connotation. This is one of several examples of critique that Amnesty International has faced for their eurocentrism over the years (Jackson, 2020). Majority of Amnesty International's members and thereby also a majority of its donors are based in the Global North. As a democratically run organization it was for a long time disproportionately influenced by the Global North, while primarily focusing on countries and communities elsewhere. After many decades and much critique, the organization introduced the Global Transition Programme (GTP) which sought to shift the approach to working 'with' instead of working 'for' people and communities whose human rights were abused. To summarize, Amnesty International has received critique for their external strategies, including which cases are chosen and how they are chosen. The response to this criticism has included the Global Transition Programme and other constructive initiatives, this does, however, not guarantee that all employees and activists are on board or sympathize with these new, less Eurocentric, approaches (Jackson, 2020).

2.1.1. Inequality at Amnesty International

In the last years Amnesty International has also faced criticism for internal affairs, such as organization culture and well-being of employees (Vijfeijken, 2019; Aquilonius, 2020). In 2018 two Amnesty International employees committed suicide within six weeks of each other, this generated a serious discussion of how the organization operated internally. The following year the international secretariat at Amnesty International ordered an independent staff well-being review (Avula, McKay and Gallans, 2019) in response to internal critique to how the suicides were handled by the organization. The staff well-being review reported some devastating results, reporting excessive work pressure and severe cases of bullying, discrimination, and exclusion among employees based on their social identities. The investigation documented discrimination and bullying based on factors such as sexual orientation and ethnicity (Avula, McKay and Gallans, 2019). Following this report, the Swedish section of Amnesty International had a similar independent review conducted to assess the well-being of employees at the three offices in Sweden (Stockholm, Gothenburg, and Malmö), this was done together with a survey mapping equality statistics among Amnesty activists in Sweden (Aquilonius, 2019). The investigation reported some cases of discrimination and a degree of excluding organisation culture, predominantly based on age and

ethnicity, including cases stating that the n-word was used by employees when speaking of people of colour (Aquilonius, 2019, 2020). The report was not published officially, and one to two years passed until it became a wide-ranging scandal on social media and among members. It was in relation to the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement in 2020, a movement that spread around the world raising awareness about police brutality against black people and structural racism, that people started commenting on Amnesty Sweden's social media about the reports of racism at the secretariat. A recurring feature of the criticism was a correlation to Amnesty International's human rights work and vivid support of the BLM movement (Aquilonius, 2020). In the process of investigating discrimination and handling the rising scandal the self-image of the organization was challenged, it had been exposed that many employees and activists did not believe the organization was capable of being racist or in any other way discriminating because of its human rights nature. The report and surveys showed a widespread thought of 'white saviourism', which is a term used to describe predominantly white organizations viewing themselves as 'the good' or as saviours (Aquilonius, 2020). This disclosure of discrimination at the secretariat and the scandal that followed eventually led to more serious work towards equality aiming to fully implement the equality policy endorsed in 2019.

The equality policy for the Swedish section of Amnesty International has five main themes that aim to guide the work for equality and ensure inclusive workplace culture (The Swedish Section of Amnesty International, 2019a). The first (1) theme is the equal value of all people, stating that no person should be excluded or discriminated, and everyone should have the same opportunity to proceed in the organization. The second (2) theme stresses that intersectional approaches should be applied throughout the organization taking in consideration how social norms and structures shape the work environment. Third (3) the organization should be characterised by accessibility, inclusion, and respect with the goal to challenge and change existing social norms that discriminate. The fourth (4) theme emphasises the personal responsibility to scrutinize oneself and be aware of the privileges one beholds. The last (5) theme states that equality should be consistently analysed, measured, and followed up systematically, and be prioritized and visible in employees' day to day tasks (The Swedish Section of Amnesty International, 2019a).

2.2. Implementation of transformative equality policy

This section presents a review of existing research and a critical assessment of the different approaches to equality policy proposed in the research field. This includes the main argument for why implementation of equality policy does not reach desired standards (see 2.2.1.) and the solutions that have been proposed by scholars in the field (see 2.2.2.). The equality policy of the Swedish section of Amnesty International has incorporated many transformative elements, therefore, the literature review addresses implementation of transformative equality policy.

Existing research on inequality in organizations repeatedly claim that there is a gap between equality policy and implementation, leading to lacking improvements and limited structural changes (Squires, 2005; Walby, 2005; Acker, 2006; Parpart, 2014; De Vries and Van Den Brink, 2016; Szablewska and Jurasz, 2019). A significant argument presented in the research field is that structural change for equality in organizations requires strategies with transformative elements and aims. In this thesis transformative equality policy is understood as policies that aim to challenge structures of inequality by changing deep rooted norms, assumptions, and behaviours that produce inequality (Squires, 2005; Walby, 2005; Parpart, 2014). Parpart (2014) reasons that transformative equality policies focus on deeper structures of oppressions instead of focusing on ‘personal change of individuals’ (Parpart, 2014: 391). Transformative approaches to equality policy have become a desired approach to tackle inequality and earlier approaches have lost parts of its support. Earlier approaches to equality policy can be divided into two stands, ‘sameness’ and ‘difference (Walby, 2005) and ‘integrationist’ and ‘agenda-setting’ (Squires, 2005). The strand of ‘sameness’ or ‘integrationist’ approaches aims to create formal equality, i.e., everyone is perceived the same on paper, this has resulted in policies that require people to adapt to current structures and expectations. The approach of ‘difference’ or ‘agenda-setting’ aims to commend differences between groups of people, creating agendas and policies that are aimed for specific groups, such as women or minorities. This approach has faced critique for applying generalized identities to people based on their social identities that does not accommodate for variance of individual needs (Squires, 2005; Walby, 2005). Even though the transformative approach to equality policy is largely understood as favourable in the research field there is a evident gap between policy and implementation (Squires, 2005; De Vries and Van Den Brink, 2016).

2.2.1. Interrupting the status quo

Some scholars point at the resistance towards the ‘transformative’ in transformative equality policy as significant feature of policy implementation gaps (Acker, 2006; Parpart, 2014; De Vries and Van Den Brink, 2016). As transformative equality policy essentially challenges the status quo by changing structures and assumptions of organization, resistance towards its implementation can be expected. De Vries and Van Den Brink (2016) argue that organization members perceive transformative equality policy as ‘scary radicalism’ because it interrupts the status quo, which primarily derives from different understandings of equality. There is a divide between theoretical understanding of equality and practical understanding of equality in the context of the individual organization. There is a difficulty to understand equality and how inequality plays out in the context of a specific organization, especially if employees are used to and comfortable with given structures (De Vries and Van Den Brink, 2016). Likewise, theoretical conflicts within equality policies can, according to Walby (2005), interrupt anticipated outcomes of equality. When revealing assumptions, norms, and processes to achieve structural change for equality ignorance of the many different definitions and practices of equality that exist can hinder policy implementation (Walby, 2005).

Other scholars highlight political factors of transformative equality policy that either legitimizes or de-legitimizes implementation within organizations (Acker, 2006; Parpart, 2014). Acker (2006) incorporates the dimension of class inequality and its legitimacy in organizations into the main argument why transformative equality policy targeting gender or race respectively fail in practice. Gender and race inequality is generally an accepted and legitimate issue to target in organization, but when coupled with aims targeting class inequalities, they seem to face resistance. Class inequality in organizations is understood as unequal power over and access to resources, which includes opportunities of promotion, access to workplace decisions, and other career benefits (Acker, 2006). Acker (2006) argues that class inequalities need to be delegitimized for equality policies to gain internal support and truly succeed in practice. Likewise, Parpart (2014) claims that policy has a significant political function and relies on social factors to succeed in practice. Policy obtains a function of legitimizing practice, rather than guiding practice, and can either maintain or create support of those accentuating it. Parparts (2014) argument emphasises that failure of not realizing that policy has a political function rather than operational function weakens the implementation and fails

to acknowledge prevalent resistance towards transformative equality policy. Previous doctrines of equality policy have focused on adapting people to existing structures to maintain status quo, thereby, transformative equality policy often face resistance from both people and institutions themselves. If transformative equality policy is implemented to fit existing institutions and structures the transformative element of equality is compromised (Acker, 2006; Parpart, 2014). The political dimension of transformative equality policy needs to be accounted for because without legitimization by relevant stakeholder implementation risks to fail (Acker, 2006; Parpart, 2014; De Vries and Van Den Brink, 2016).

2.2.2. Adapting transformative equality policy for practice

Scholars who have researched transformative equality policy have also suggested possible adaptations of transformative equality policies to limit the gap between policy and implementation (Squires, 2005; De Vries and Van Den Brink, 2016). Some scholars argue that implementation can improve by introducing practical interventions that work to legitimize and adapt policy to specific contexts. Squires (2005) argues that equality mainstreaming could contribute to structural change if coupled with inclusive deliberation. Equality mainstreaming entails, in short, to implement equality initiatives in all dimensions of an organization, a form of transformative equality policy. Squires (2005) suggests that inclusive decision-making can create policies and implementation practices that are legitimized and embraced by relevant stakeholders if all impacted actors deliberately come together to discuss their interest. De Vries and Van Den Brink (2016) emphasise the harsh reality transformative policies can face when implemented, transformative equality policies are often compromised to short-term intervention that miss the element of sustainable structural change. The proposed solution is a bifocal approach that utilizes integrationist approaches of personal individual change but for a transformative goal, i.e. the goal of structural long-term change by working context specific and awareness-raising (De Vries and Van Den Brink, 2016).

Additional suggested solutions found in the research field of transformative equality policy is to look to civil society movements and groups for inspiration on how to achieve transformative equality (Acker, 2006; Parpart, 2014). Acker (2006) suggests that strong social movements outside of work organizations are needed to legitimize transformative equality policy. There needs to be a change in society as whole to legitimize internal equality policy (Parpart, 2014).

Another recommendation is to draw from non-governmental organizations (NGO) and their external work for social change. NGOs can foster change for equality with small interventions such as changing perspectives by telling stories that have not been heard (Parpart, 2014). However, these suggestions presume that NGOs and human rights-based organization do not face the same challenge of internal inequality and it poses the question why there is an implementation gap in organizations facilitating these social movements (see Connors, 2019; Vijfeijken, 2019; Aquilonius, 2020).

By studying implementation of transformative equality policy in the non-governmental sector and more specifically a human rights-based organization (Amnesty International) this thesis contributes with a nuanced perspective of equality policy in an NGO. Furthermore, scholars tend to focus on one form of inequality at the time when studying equality policy, such as gender inequality in organizations and policies of gender mainstreaming (Squires, 2005; Walby, 2005; Parpart, 2014; De Vries and Van Den Brink, 2016). This study will contribute to the research field with an intersectional understanding of equality, incorporating all systems of oppression and an understanding of their intersections (Yuval-Davis, 2006).

3. Theoretical framework

This section of the thesis will present the theoretical framework guiding the analysis. The theoretical framework draws from contributions by Edward Saids (1979) study of the field of orientalism, Arturo Escobars contributions in *Encountering Development: The Making and Unmaking of the Third World* (1995), and Liisa Malkkis (2015) theory of the need to help in the field of humanitarianism.

3.1. Postcolonial theory

To conceptualize the need to help an account of postcolonial theory and its foundational elements is necessary. Said's (1979) contributions to postcolonial theory draws from an analysis of the field Orientalism, which emphasises the way the 'Orient' is described, imagined, and defined through the lens of the 'Occident'. It highlights the process of defining the 'others' constantly in relation to the self and defining the self in relation to the 'others'. Said (1979) argues that the assumption and actuality of Western superiority is constructed and reconstructed through the act of defining and describing the 'Orient' without the influence of the Orient itself. Escobar (1995) draws from this reasoning when analysing the field of development, arguing that development and knowledge of development is based on Western assumptions. The own cultural and ethnic origin is in centre of analysis when understanding other cultures and societies, which forms the base of development work. Both Said (1979) and Escobar (1995) emphasise the politics of language that constructs and reconstructs western dominance, through concepts such as 'the Occident' versus 'the Orient' and 'the developed world' versus 'the undeveloped world'. This dimension of postcolonial theory helps to understand critical nuances of the human rights sector and lays the foundation of the concept 'need to help'

3.2. The need to help

Liisa Malkki (2015) studies, through a postcolonial lens, what drives professionals and volunteers to work in the humanitarian sector. Even though there are considerable differences between humanitarian organizations and Amnesty International, Malkki's theoretical contributions are considered applicable because of the similar aims of being non-profitable organizations helping people in different ways. Malkki's (2015) central argument is that humanitarian aid workers are driven to work internationally, either from home or physically abroad, to help others mainly because of a personal need to help. This challenges the general perception of 'need', who is in need and whose need humanitarianism satisfies. Malkki (2015) looks at what drives people to either work professionally or volunteer to help people 'in need'. Helping others has long been perceived and represented as an act of self-sacrifice and selflessness, this turned out to be driven by a need, a need to be a part of something bigger, a need to assist those in need, and a sense of responsibility and obligation. The general assumption of 'need' and those 'in need' derives, according to Malkki (2015: 6-10) from the distinctions between 'the West', or the wealthy North, and the 'Global South'. What is considered 'basic needs' is perceived as not available in the Global South and something that the wealthy north can and ought to provide. It creates a sense of international obligation by the West to assist and help those not capable of helping themselves. This understanding of who is in need offers an opportunity to study the different sources of motivation for people working in the field of human rights. This, however, does not imply that humanitarian organizations or any other aid or human rights organization does not help people, it does show that there is a 'need' being satisfied at both ends of the operation.

It is according to Malkki (2015: 206) the personal circumstances and position that lead people to take on humanitarian missions, rather than the real suffering or needs of the people that they help. This need to help derives from different sources, according to Malkki (2015: 51-52), I will here outline three of these sources defined by Malkki's (2015) concept of the need to help. First the *professional commitment*, as people that have chosen professional career paths that aim to help people, a sense of obligation towards helping others is a motivating force to fulfill the professional commitment (Malkki, 2015: 24, 190-199). Second, the need to help derives not only from a sense of being 'a global citizen' with an international obligation, but rather derives from *subjective positions* ranging from nationality to social status. Third, the *self-transformation* of helping others, the sense of contributing to a change, whether an imaginative

change or a real change. The following three sub-chapters will dive deeper into these three sources of the need to help (Malkki, 2015).

3.2.1. Professional commitment

When committing to professions that aim to help people a commitment towards that aim is created, the need to help becomes a professional commitment (Malkki, 2015: 27-29). It has, however, been suggested that professionals in the field have a self-critical view of their profession and deny the notion of themselves as ‘people who save the world’ (Malkki, 2015: 27-29). Deriving partly from a realization through their profession that their contributions are small in comparison to the size of the issue at hand. They rather see themselves as professionals in challenging setting. Engaging in humanitarian work is suggested to be motivated by their own need to help and a sense of obligation to do what they can with their professional expertise (Malkki, 2015: 27-29). This commitment is on a larger scale related to a sense of responsibility and ethical obligation towards humanity. Even though the main commitment is not driven by a desire to save humanity there is a devotion to humanity through the professional commitment (Malkki, 2015: 24, 197-202).

3.2.2. Subjective positions

With the distinction between those who provide and those in need, the ‘giver’ and the ‘receiver’, it is crucial to contextualize the position of the ‘giver’. People working in the field of human rights or humanitarianism and fit the notion of the ‘giver’ stems from their own subjective positions that shape their motivation and approach (Malkki, 2015: 8). The sense of obligation that originates from the need to help can derive from different places, as highlighted by Malkki (2015), nationality and social position can shape this perception. Peoples’ social position can shape the need to help by the logic of needing to offer something of their abundance, a privileged social position becomes a motivating factor to help others ‘less fortunate’ (Malkki, 2015: 25, 202). Nationality, its history, and geopolitical position is another subjective position that shapes the need to help. The nationality can lead to a sense of obligation to help those who have been exploited. This feature is based on an identification with the ‘West’, identifying both the self and home country as part of the ‘West’ with a history of global

power and exploitation. The image of the nationality is therefore central in shaping the need to help. The nationality can also be seen as politically neutral and create a sense an obligation to help those 'in need' because of the position of neutrality in geopolitical conflicts (Malkki, 2015: 32).

3.2.3. Self-transformation

The third source that the need to help can derive from is the self-transformation connected to helping others. Working professionally or volunteering to help others offers an opportunity to develop as a person by seeing new places, getting to know new cultures, exploring new skills, or developing old ones. The need to explore something other than the usual can therefore become a driving factor to help others, helping others can also become a way out of the normal, an opening to explore something new (Malkki, 2015: 41-42). As mentioned by volunteers dedicated to help others, especially abroad, they sought a community and personal fulfillment when volunteering for a humanitarian organization: "helping brings happiness" (Malkki, 2015: 134). Engaging in humanitarian work can have the possibility to bring positive emotions even when the help is only imaginative. Malkki (2015) gives the example of aid bunnies, an initiative encouraging people to create handmade bunnies for children in need. In reality, the aid bunnies did not reach the children they were intended for both because of logistical reasons and because the children were not, in their situation, in immediate need of stuffed animals. The aid bunnies created a sense of contribution, imagined changed, and filled a need among volunteers to help rather than the needs of children in war. The thought of helping others can also bring about these positive feelings of making a change, i.e. one does not need to experience the real changes to be motivated to continue working, the imaginative change can be enough (Malkki, 2015: 9, 119). Experiencing new things, learning something new, or becoming happier are some factors of the self-transformative dimension of the need to help.

4. Methodology

The following section outlines the methodology of this thesis, describes the research design and methods chosen to explore how the need to help shapes implementation of equality policy, this also includes a discussion of sampling, limitations, and ethical considerations.

4.1. Research design

The research design constitutes of a single case study and aims to explore how the need to help shapes the implementation of equality policy, specifically in the case of the Swedish section of Amnesty International. This is done by utilizing the methods of document analysis and semi-structured interviews. All social research is heavily bound to its context, a case study does in this regard not seek to generalize a phenomenon but rather study a specific case to explore how the phenomenon functions in these specific circumstances (Robson and McCartan, 2016: 150-6). In this research a single case study is beneficial to understand and recognize the complexity and context specificity of equality policy implementation in an organisation working with human rights (Punch, 2014: 119-125).

4.2. Research method

This thesis utilizes a mixed methods approach drawing from the benefits of both document analysis and interviews. One guiding document has been analysed and three interviews conducted to answer the research question. By utilizing a mixed method approach the interviews seek to complement the analysis made of the document for a deeper understanding. This study will contribute with people's perception of the policy implementation, adding a complex nuance to the discussion of transformative equality policy because of the

interviewees' dual position as both targets and agents of the equality policy (The Swedish Section of Amnesty International, 2019b).

4.2.1. Document analysis

Documents can be rich sources of data for social science studies to understand, for example, features of society or other social contexts. Documents contribute with perspectives and representations documented by people or organizations for an intended audience (Punch, 2014: 158-159). For this thesis the strategy of equality published in 2019 by the Swedish section of Amnesty International is analysed as a fundamental element of the implementation of the equality policy (The Swedish Section of Amnesty International, 2019a). By including the strategy of equality, the analysis constitutes of both the position and standpoint of the organization and employees' experiences and perceptions, resulting in a more comprehensive conclusion (Punch, 2014: 158-159).

The initial plan of this thesis was to include the extensive internal investigation conducted on the state of inequality at the Swedish secretariat of Amnesty International, however, the published report is not intended for official use and is, therefore, only available for internal actors. The investigation and report will not be analysed or referenced in this thesis, although as an intern at the Swedish section of Amnesty International I have had the opportunity to access the report for a deeper personal understanding of the situation and its complex background. For the document analysis I will hence only analyse the strategy of equality (The Swedish Section of Amnesty International, 2019b) functioning as a strategic guideline for the implementation of the equality policy (The Swedish Section of Amnesty International, 2019a). The strategy of equality is thereby in this thesis understood as part of the implementation of the equality policy.

4.2.2. Interviews

A total of three interviews were conducted for the scope of this research. The amount of interviews was a compromise between the resources at hand, time and availability, and a representative sample size to fully answer the research question (Kvale, 2007). The

interviewees are representatives from the Swedish secretariat and the member base. I chose to invite people of the Swedish section of Amnesty International that work with the implementation of the equality policy in different ways. I wanted people with different relation to the secretariat and with different roles in the organisation, therefor focusing on factors such as duration of employment, specific responsibilities towards the equality policy, and experience of inequality at the secretariat. To ensure anonymity of the interviewees their role and experiences with the organisation will be left out of this section. When sampling interviewees, I maintained an intersectional perspective to get a diverse group of interviewees in relation to social identity to stay sensitive to the different experience that can bring. This has been maintained within the scope of time and capacity at hand. The final sampling ended up reflecting the secretariat with a majority of educated, middle-class women, which is important to keep in mind throughout the analysis.

Two out of the three interviews were conducted online through the meeting-application zoom, with access from my Lund University student account. The interviews were recorded with picture and sound, with the fully informed consent of the interviewees. The videorecording was not utilized in any later step of the research. Information about the thesis, interviewees anonymity, and emphasis on their ability to withdraw from the research at any time was given before the recording started, with an opportunity for them to ask questions off-record about the thesis and its formalities (Howlett, 2022).

The interviews followed a semi-structured approach with a set of main questions asking them to describe their experience of a specific topic (Robson and McCartan, 2016: 284-306). Another set of sub-questions were prepared beforehand and asked if they were not answered autonomously in connection to the main questions. Interviews were chosen as one of the main data collection methods to access the perception and attitudes of people with a role in equality policy implementation (Robson and McCartan, 2016: 284-306). The interviewees were not asked directly about their 'need to help' but rather about their perception of campaigns and activities of the organisation, their engagement and motivation to work within the field of human rights, and their perception and experience of Amnesty International's work in Sweden versus abroad. The main topics in the interview guide were: (1) their experience of working or volunteering for a non-profit and value-based organisation such as Amnesty International, (2) their perception and experience of the equality policy and implementation so far. See the extended interview guide in appendices 8.1.

4.3. Data analysis

When analysing the collected data thematic analysis was applied to both the document and the transcribed interviews. Thematic analysis is a method of data analysis utilized for qualitative research and is considered a foundational method for all qualitative research (Braun and Clarke, 2017). Thematic analysis is applied to this study because of its benefits as a flexible tool for data analysis. Thematic analysis can be applied to studies of different epistemological or theoretical position, hence not limiting the researcher to a specific epistemological or theoretical position (Braun and Clarke, 2017).

“Thematic analysis is a method of identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data” (Braun and Clarke, 2017: 79). For the analysis I followed a 6-step guide to organize and categorize the data set to interpret general and specific themes. The initial step was to familiarize myself with the data set and note initial ideas, this was done by repeatedly reading through both the interviews and the document. I then coded elements of the data that were relevant for the analysis and clustered the codes into themes based on similarities. Throughout this process I compared the themes to the codes and to the entire data set to ensure it stayed close to its original context. An identified theme in the data set is not dependent on quantifiable measures but rather defined by what it captures in relation to the data set and the research question. As argued by Braun and Clarke (2017) themes and codes do not appear from the data set, themes and codes are always subjected to the researcher. I analysed the data with this notion in mind and utilized an inductive approach when analysing the data set. I created codes and themes based on the research question and related thereafter the themes to the theoretical framework to draw conclusions. What makes thematic analysis a method of analysis is how the themes of codes from the data set is interpreted and related to theory (Braun and Clarke, 2017).

4.4. Ethical considerations

When conducting research involving people and people’s perceptions ethical considerations has to be reflected upon throughout the process to ensure the safety of participants and fair

representation of their participation (Robson and McCartan, 2016: 205-241). This chapter will present the main ethical consideration needed to conduct this study in an ethical and fair manner.

4.4.1. Reflexivity and positionality

As mentioned previously in this thesis (see 4.2.2.) participants of this study gave their informed consent to partake in one interview each, however, informed consent is not the only measure needed for ethical research (Robson and McCartan, 2016: 205-241). When conducting the interviews, the researcher is in a position of power, holding the power of how the information later will be used and interpreted. This has required efforts to build trust and create a safe environment with the interviewees (Punch, 2014). In qualitative research the researcher becomes an instrument in the data collection and analysis, thus the positionality of myself as researcher needs to be considered throughout the process. Since I am a white cis female there are many structures of oppressions that have not affected my life and as researcher, I am aware that there are experiences, assumptions, and patterns that might not be as visible to me because of my social identity. These are all attributes that might influence how the data is analysed and interpreted (Stewart-withers *et al.*, 2014).

4.4.2. Language and translation

The working language in the Swedish section of Amnesty International is Swedish, the interviews were therefore conducted in Swedish and translated by me. Swedish is my native language and with three years of higher education in English I am confident that I can translate the interviewees' answers and the document with considerations to the ethics of interpreting the translated interviews in a fair way (McLennan and Prinsen, 2014).

4.5. Limitations

As this thesis is based on a single case study the question of the study's generalizability is of interest. A case study should dive into one setting and context to understand the proposed

phenomenon in that setting, external generalizability is, therefore, not the primary aim of a case study (Robson and McCartan, 2016). The conclusions made in this thesis are bound to its context and seeks not to explain how the need to help shapes implementation of equality policy in all organizations. Internal generalizability has, however, been of interest when conducting this research by deliberately interviewing people with different experiences of the equality policy in the organization (see 4.2.2.). Generalizability should also be considered in relation to time, perceptions, assumptions, and values can change over time and the conclusions from this research represents the perceptions when the study was conducted (Robson and McCartan, 2016).

5. Analysis

In this chapter the results will be presented and discussed in relation to the theoretical framework, exploring how implementation of equality policy is shaped by the need to help in the human right-based organization Amnesty International, specifically the Swedish section.

5.1. Responsibility as human rights professionals

A central part of the interviewees narratives of why implementation of transformative equality policy is something they partake in and implement in their everyday work was a sense of obligation and responsibility. Because of their involvement in the human rights-based sector they described a responsibility to engage with internal equality initiatives following the recognized scandal of the 2019 report. The responsibility described was also declared as an obligation of the organization to implement the equality policy because of the human rights nature of the organization. Additionally, the interviewees described the responsibility of the organization to be a role model in the sector, while recognizing that inequality is not something Amnesty International nor any other human rights-based organization is immune to.

“...we must somehow be a good role model as well [...] there is nothing that says that we would be better than someone else just because we are a human rights organization, however I absolutely think that you can demand more [because we are a human rights organization]”

Interviewee C

One interviewee reported that they had not talked about nor worked explicitly with equality before the scandal in 2020, even though they declared that they had thought of it and incorporated equality in other ways than specified in the equality policy (Interviewee A). One reported reaction after the scandal was to immediately leave the organization but then choosing to stay because there was a need to do something about the problem of inequality. There was a

sense of need to incorporate the aims of the equality policy in order to continue their involvement with the organization. Throughout, the interviewees explicitly described the responsibility and obligation that follows being a human rights-based organization, the need to look inwards to justify scrutinizing and helping others.

“I cannot just tell everyone else how to do or how to be or what is right or wrong I must first look at myself”

Interviewee A

“I think we need to work at different levels all the time, also remember to look within our own organization, within our workplace, and our member organization because [equality] is also part of our, like, work for human rights”

Interviewee B

“It requires that we, just like we demand of others [in our external human rights work], demand it of ourselves as well”

Interviewee B

In this way the implementation of equality policy is approached with a logic similar to the professional obligation outlined by Malkki (2015), they have chosen to work with human rights in a human rights-based organization and therefore are responsible to implement the equality policy to continue the human rights work.

When analyzing the document, the strategy of equality, the same theme is evident. The organization describes an obligation and a responsibility towards its personnel, members, and beneficiaries to apply the human rights framework internally.

“In order to work for a truly equal society, we also need to look at our own organization”

(The Swedish Section of Amnesty International, 2019b: 1.1)

“As the world's largest human rights organization, it is our responsibility to work for the equal value of all people, in the world but also within our own organization. We want to be the change we want to see in society.”

(The Swedish Section of Amnesty International, 2019b: 1,1)

“We are the change we want to see in society”

(The Swedish Section of Amnesty International, 2019b: 1,1)

The last quote above is mentioned throughout the document and recited in various ways in the interviews. It highlights the responsibility towards the external that the organization carries because of their position in the world and because of the ‘good’ it does. According to the interviewees the quote also functions as a personal reminder in the work for equality. It is a reminder to scrutinize their own assumptions, behaviours, and privileges that can influence behaviours towards colleges and impact the external human rights work.

“There are so many people who forget it all the time and me too. We probably all do, but you need to be reminded that I cannot just tell everyone else how to do or how to be or what is right or wrong I must first look at myself. How do I react, what are my privileges and how can I use them? How do I use them or not [use them]?”

Interviewee A

The results show that there is perceived responsibility to implement the equality policy in the organization because of the human rights nature of the organization. Based on the descriptions, the interviewees approach the implementation of the equality policy as human rights professionals with an obligation to take the matter seriously and apply the external human rights framework internally. To be able to continue working for the organization and utilizing the

strategies of scrutinizing others and demanding change there is a declared need to incorporate the equality policy. Alike Malkkis (2015) description of professional commitment, the interviewees describe their position as obligated to act, rather than self-less saviours. However, it is connected to a need to fulfil the obligations and responsibilities they have taken on as human rights professionals to implement the equality policy.

5.2. Position of privilege

When faced with the scandal of discrimination of employees as Amnesty International, both at the international secretariat and at the Swedish secretariat, one interviewee described the dilemma of staying with the organization or leaving. To stay with the organization and do something about the inequality or to leave because of the inequality, the final decision became to stay with the organization because of the quote “if not you then who?”. A sense of obligation to stay and do something about the situation instead of running away from it. This was based on a conflict and discussion of personal position and privilege, with an initial thought to not get involved with the equality initiatives because of a self-image as the enemy or perpetrator as white and privileged.

“We felt very much that we are [several] white privileged people with higher education and a certain social class. We shouldn’t take this place. We are not the ones to stand up and talk about these issues or take this space in the organization.”

Interviewee A

“[The organization] has created an equality council [containing of only] white people. Then you felt like you wanted to vomit on yourself. It was just like this “Yeah okay, what will it look like now””

Interviewee A

Another interviewee also discussed the difficulty of facing the reality of inequality as a person that fits the norm and has not personally experienced the discrimination. This was both discussed in relation to the interviewee personally and the organization, there was an expressed need for a realization for people that fit the norm. Focus was also on the need for the majority to change their behaviours and attitudes to reach equality, something that was described as inherently sensitive and occasionally hard. However, at the same time necessary for the organization to continue with its human rights work as discussed in the previous section (see 5.1). This demonstrates how the personal position shapes the sense of obligation to help and be part of the change.

“Even if it’s like not something you would like to experience again, I still think [...] it was a bit like a revolution, if you look at it that way, it was probably a bit needed. We probably needed this shake-up a bit as well.”

Interviewee C

“It is difficult to avoid that it becomes sensitive and personal when it comes to inequality [...] as you must examine yourself and it is not like the attention is only at the minority and how vulnerable they are. It's about how the majority makes the minority feel”

Interviewee C

“[In] the beginning it was difficult for people, including myself, to understand what exactly we were talking about [when talking about inequality]”

Interviewee C

Similarly, the strategy of equality emphasises that everyone has a responsibility to stand up against discrimination and excluding behaviours, not waiting for those exposed to discrimination to react or complain.

“[...] have the courage to speak up and be equipped with tools that help us. This does not mean that we believe that it is only the victim's task to speak up, but that we strive for an organization where everyone has the courage to stand up for themselves and their colleagues and friends.”

(The Swedish Section of Amnesty International, 2019b: 3.1)

In contrast to Malkkis (2015) discussion of privilege as a source in the need to help, the interviewees also describe their privilege as a problem because they risk taking over the work for equality, silencing people who experience the consequences of inequality. However, the personal position of privilege is also described as creating an important starting point and responsibility to incorporate the equality policy. This is reported from the interviewees themselves, those who identify themselves as privileged, when they reflect on their responsibility, but also as a demand in the strategy of equality. The strategy emphasizes the responsibility of everyone, especially those not directly affected, to stand up against inequality. It relates to Malkkis (2015) description of the need to help based on subjective position and self-identification as privileged.

5.3. The rewarding act of raising awareness

The third dimension of the need to help in relation to equality policy in Amnesty International are the methods themselves. Many of Amnesty International's campaigns aim to spread awareness and inform others in order to help people access their human rights. Through the interviews it was evident that the different methods of doing campaigns were, alongside the results of the campaign, a motivating factor to continue working with human rights.

“[...] in a humorous way spreading awareness about the issue. And then it was like we were like a travel agency that offered trips to unspecified airports, it was

humorous but about a very serious thing, but brought attention to an issue that not at all got much attention in the public”

Interviewee C

This form of reasoning and driving factor was evident in the description of the equality work as well. The work involved with implementing the equality policy, including its methods and tools, was described as fun and engaging. This includes the part of implementation relating to spreading awareness about the equality policy and increasing knowledge about inequality with positive activities.

“I wish I could just stand and talk to [activists] for a very long time and there have been people contacting us afterwards wanting to get involved [...] that is exactly what makes you continue to get involved, that is, when you are at such meetings and feel the commitment and the passion”

Interviewee A

“With positive engagements I think it is important that we emphasise that everyone can be part of the change and that it should not be this tough, heavy, and hard process where we point fingers at each other”

Interviewee B

This demonstrates a desire to raise other people’s awareness of inequality, as with other human rights issues, as well as a personal gain of engagement and motivation when spreading awareness and knowledge. This relates back to Malkkis (2015) reasoning of self-transformation, emphasising the personal benefits of helping others by learning new things and experiencing positive emotions when helping others.

“To find these common grounds where we share this commitment and this work to create change and together the hope grows [...], when I personally get to work in a workplace and commit to change, the hope [for a better world] still grows a little”

Interviewee B

“I have to be involved and try to make a change, even if it only changes for one person in the whole world, I have done it and been involved in that work as well”

Interviewee A

6. Conclusion

The aim of this research is to explore implementation of equality policy in a human rights organization. Through a single case study, studying the Swedish section of Amnesty International, employees' perceptions and key document have been analysed to explore how the need to help shapes implementation of equality policy. By redefining the concept of 'need' it offers an opportunity to look at the needs motivating people to work in the human rights sector. The purpose of this research was to explore how the need to help is evident in the Swedish section of Amnesty International and how it relates to the equality policy implementation. This thesis is based on interviews with employees and activists with different experiences of implementing the equality policy and an analysis of the document strategy of equality. The interviews and the document were analysed using thematic analysis and interpreted through a postcolonial lens drawing from theoretical contributions by Edward Said (1979), Arturo Escobar (1995), and Liisa Malkki (2015).

As the result from this research shows, the three dimensions of need outlined by Malkki (2015), professional commitment, subjective position, and self-transformation, are in different forms apparent in the implementation of equality policy at the Swedish section of Amnesty International. This research suggests that there is a need to help evident in the implementation of equality policy, which leads to the research question: *how does the need to help shape implementation of equality policy?*

The need to help shapes implementation of equality policy through three different, but interlinked, approaches to policy implementation. First, with a sense of responsibility as human rights professionals the implementation of equality policy is approached as an obligation. It is a professional commitment made by the people involved and by the organization itself to work with human rights. It shapes the implementation by a logic of responsibility to apply the human rights framework used in external operations also internally. This derives from a notion that as a human rights organization it is their responsibility to adequately implement the equality policy to legitimately continue the human rights work done externally. Drawing from Malkki's (2015) reasoning, actively partaking in the implementation of the equality policy derives from a need to sustain the professional commitment made by being a part of a human rights organization. Second, people's subjective position of privilege shapes the implementation of the equality policy in a dual way. It simultaneously, generates a guilt creating an initial

resistance towards the implementation and an approach to take responsibility of the privilege they obtain. The initial resistance towards implementation deriving from the position of privilege is connected to a fear of taking attention away from those exposed to discrimination and lack of understanding of how exactly inequality takes shape in the organization. However, the shift of approach towards embracing the privilege at hand shapes the implementation by defining the position of privilege as a position of responsibility to implement the equality policy. The subjective position of people is a defining source for the need to help. In the case of the Swedish section of Amnesty International part of the need to implement the equality policy derives from the subjective position as privileged. Third, the rewarding act of raising awareness shapes implementation of equality policy by creating positive emotions when implementing the policy and spreading its purpose. Working in a human rights organization and implementing the equality policy creates a feeling of making a change for others and in society, the need to help thereby shapes the implementation as there is an experienced personal gain from raising awareness about the equality policy.

The key takeaway from this research is an evident need among people in Amnesty International and by the organization itself that drives the implementation of the equality policy. I have given an account of three ways the need to help shapes implementation of policy in the Swedish section of Amnesty International. To conclude, the need to help creates through responsibility and positive emotions a motivation to actively implement the equality policy. This study is based on people's perception and the organization's vision and does not account for impact in practice, future research has the opportunity to study the real impact and achievement of implementing equality policy. The case of the Swedish section of Amnesty International introduced the equality policy in 2019 and it is still in its initial stages, which means that implementation might change with time. As one interviewee states:

“The goal is not to be done, because we will never be, we will continue this journey and fight for as long as we can”

Interviewee C

Furthermore, the Swedish section of Amnesty International is far more and bigger than the secretariat and constitutes of a diverse set of perspectives and opinions that have not been included in this study. With more resources and time, future research has the possibility to study the implementation of the equality policy among activists and members of Amnesty Sweden.

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8. Appendices

8.1. Interview guide

Att arbeta i den idéburna sektorn

- Varför sökte du dig till just Amnesty?
 - Vad har gjort att du stannat kvar i organisationen?
 - Kan du berätta om något MR-arbete eller kampanj som väckt ditt intresse extra mycket?
 - Berätta om en Amnestykampanj som enligt dig varit/inte varit framgångsrik
 - Vad är, enligt dig, de främsta skillnaderna på kampanjer som Amnesty bedriver i Sverige kontra utomlands?
- Hur tänker du kring idealism i en idéburen och ideell organisation
 - Kan du berätta om en situation där idealism har varit fördelaktigt för Amnestys MR-arbete?
 - Kan du berätta om en situation där idealism har varit ett hinder för Amnestys MR-arbete?

Jämlikhetspolicy/strategi

- Berätta om din erfarenhet av jämlikhetsarbetet
 - Hur du blev introducerad till jämlikhetsarbetet?
 - Hur märker du av jämlikhetsarbetet i ditt arbete?
 - Kan du beskriva dina första tankar om jämlikhetspolicyn och jämlikhetsstrategin?
- Berätta om jämlikhetsstrategins främsta möjligheter och styrkor i praktiken?
- Berätta om jämlikhetsstrategin främsta hinder och svagheter i praktiken?
- Hur ser du på det interna jämlikhetsarbetet i relation till det externa MR-arbetet
 - Beskriva situation där det interna jämställdhetsarbetet (inte) överensstämmer med Amnestys externa MR-arbete och vision?
 - Hur tror du att det interna jämlikhetsarbetet kan påverka Amnestys externa MR-arbete?
- Hur uppfattar du mottot ”vi är den förändringen vi vill se i samhället” som används mycket i samband med jämlikhetsarbetet?

