

Lund University
Department of Political Science

HT22
Tutor: Elsa Hedling

Feminist Approaches to Self-Representation & Political Storytelling
A Modern Strategy of Nation Branding in the West

Nicodemus Adsersen

Abstract

This essay sought to investigate the extent to which two Nordic Prime Ministers performed their leadership on Instagram in accordance with a feminist leadership theory during the Covid-19 crisis. It then inquired into those performances' potential consequences. In the initial section of the analysis, the essay identifies the narrative that the self-reported images as a stand-alone product produced through strategically constructed political storytelling. It finds that Stefan Löfven fails to create a narrative following the essay's operationalisation of feminist leadership, whilst Mette Frederiksen does so successfully. In the following section of the analysis, this essay establishes that after looking at the immediate intertextuality, namely caption and Instagram features, as well as their countries' national circumstances, both of the Prime Ministers' political performances fit under the category of feminist leadership. It also claims that these performances might improve their countries' relationship with other Western countries, and it is argued that feminist leadership is a modern nation branding tool. In the final part of the analysis, it is contrarily claimed that this constructed leadership and the narrative produced might worsen the countries' relationship with non-Western countries whose culture is based on distinct cultural repertoires consisting of different values, moral judgements, and narratives.

Key Terms: Feminist leadership, Nation branding, Constructed self-representation, Political storytelling, Western identity

Words: 10000

Table of Contents

1. Introduction.....	4
1.1 Background.....	4
1.2 Research Questions.....	4
1.3 Contribution, Relevance, and Purpose.....	5
2. Literature Review.....	7
2.1 Constructing leadership through strategic rhetoric and storytelling.....	7
2.2 Performing leadership through narratives.....	8
2.3 Nation Branding in Nordic countries.....	10
3. Theoretical Framework.....	12
3.1 Feminist Leadership.....	12
3.2 Nation Branding.....	15
4. Analytical Method.....	18
4.1 Visual Narrative Analysis (VNA).....	18
4.1.1 The Picture Itself: How to discern the images' narrative.....	19
4.1.2 Contextualisation: Relating the images to intertextuality and the broader policy context.....	19
4.1.3 Contestation: Different narratives in different places.....	20
4.2 Limitations.....	21
5. Units of analysis.....	23
5.1 How to sample units.....	23
5.1.1 Critical Cases?: Most Likely-Principle.....	23
5.1.2 Strategic Sampling: avoiding Path Dependency and Bias.....	25
6. Strategy for Collecting Data.....	26
6.1 Self-representation: The use of Instagram during the outbreak of Covid-19.....	26

7. Material.....	28
7.1 Stefan Löfven.....	28
7.2 Mette Frederiksen.....	29
8. Analysis.....	30
8.1 Interpreting the images as a stand-alone product.....	30
8.1.1 Stefan Löfven.....	30
8.1.1 Mette Frederiksen.....	32
8.2 To put the Prime Ministers' narratives into a broader context.....	34
8.2.1 The case of Stefan Löfven: Intertextuality & National circumstances.....	35
8.2.2 The case of Mette Frederiksen: Intertextuality & National circumstances.....	36
8.2.3 The case of the Western World: Broader Policy Environment.....	38
8.3 Contesting Narratives.....	39
9. Conclusions.....	42
10. Bibliography.....	44
11. Appendix.....	49

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

This research design emanated from an interest in how Western leaders are expected to appear as feminists to gain political legitimacy in numerous contemporary political contexts. The notion that the adoption of liberal, cosmopolitan, democratic, and progressive values in the West (Hedling et al., 2022: p.2) changes how political leaders construct their leadership is not an unreasonable concept. However, particularly relevant is how this transpires and the contemporary and future consequences of this construction. With this backdrop, the essay intends to expand on the literature that's already been written under the topics of constructed leadership through rhetorical devices and storytelling, as well as narrative performances of leadership. It also drew inspiration from the literature on branding competitiveness in the Nordic region. Ergo, this essay studies the degree to which two Prime Ministers from two Nordic countries, Stefan Löfven and Mette Frederiksen, performed their leadership in accordance with a feminist theory postulating feminist leadership during the international crisis Covid-19 and considers the consequences of those performances.

1.2 Research Questions

This essay probes the following questions:

1. How did Nordic Prime Ministers perform their leadership on Instagram during Covid-19?
2. What are those performances' social, cultural, and political consequences?

1.3 Contribution, Relevance, and Purpose

The contribution this essay aims to offer combines two theories that previously appear to have been held apart in different disciplines, namely a feminist theory derived initially from areas such as business management and teaching (Batliwala, 2011: p.9) and the 'Nation Branding'-theory deduced from disciplines such as marketing and branding (Dinnie, 2016: p.3). As such, this essay claims to have a theory developing ambition (Esaiasson et al., 2017: p.43) as it offers a new perspective on nation branding considering the fact that although gender-equal symbolism has been discussed alongside branding efforts previously, none of the literature encountered centralises the leader's role in feminist states. The essay introduces the idea that feminist narratives from political leaders might be a modern way of branding one's nation to gain social, cultural, and political legitimacy and advantages.

Before proceeding, this essay shall briefly introduce its extra-scientific and interdisciplinary relevance (Teorell & Svensson, 2007: p.18). The interdisciplinary relevance arises when accounting for the logic in the previous paragraph and the fact that this essay might contribute to a previously neglected area in the discipline. The extra-scientific relevance, however, emerges from the fact that these political performances affect the political leaders' reputation and their countries' international relations with various actors. Furthermore, this essay claims that political self-representation is a particularly riveting area of study during a global crisis such as the Covid-19 pandemic. The fact that two countries that are participating in some form of nation-branding competition regarding

whose more progressively superior, see section 2.3, adopted such different policies in response to a universally prevailing crisis increases the extra-scientific relevance of this study as it might mean that their leadership consequently are performed differently as well. Additionally, Nordic countries' brands have traditionally been dependent on their role as being revolutionary in gender equality for international recognition and admiration (Larsen, 2021: p.14-15), which means that this, in all likelihood, is something they wish to maintain.

2. Literature review

2.1 Constructing leadership through strategic rhetoric and storytelling

A vital starting point when further developing the field of self-representation and gathering additional material on how to communicate political messages through political storytelling is to garner knowledge on how this is said to be done in the first place. One well-developed technique of constructing the presentation of one's self discussed within the subject of political science is what has come to be referred to as 'strategic rhetoric' (Madestam & Falkman, 2017). The literature on this topic also intensified due to the increased social media usage in our new digital age (Rose, 2016: p.10). It is necessary to recognise that when politicians are active on social media, or the internet as a whole, and visibly interact with political content, it is a form of political participation (Madestam & Falkman, 2017: p.300). However, this participation is not neutral nor objective but subjective in its very essence. Politicians can present themselves in specific ways to affect different audiences' perceptions of them and to legitimise certain political acts on these uni-directional platforms (ibid.: p.301).

Two conventional ways for politicians to use social media as a tool for communicating a particular type of leadership, and cohesive required policy actions, is either by personalising themselves to different degrees by constructing a specific image through rhetorical depiction and, as such, affecting how they generate authority, or by appealing to the audiences' fantasmatic logic. The latter is often discussed with reference to desire or appeal and refers to when a political image or vision is designed to appeal to a viewer's beatific dream and fulfilment

or a horrific nightmare and unfulfillment to legitimise and support political decisions (Freistein & Gadinger, 2020: p.223). In practice, a politician could use their social media to communicate a coveted dream for the future or a future nightmare scenario that threatens the stability of society, which in turn strengthens their claim to comprehend the rightful path in which to reach that dream or to avoid that nightmare without them having to propose verifiable policy action (Glynos & Howarth, 2007: p.145-146). There are inherently rhetorical dimensions to this phenomenon.

Nevertheless, it is perhaps regarding the first-mentioned technique in which strategic rhetoric is most palpable. Using different rhetorical tools, such as opening up and allowing audiences to see the politician's "real" and personal life, drastically transforms the relationship between the previously considered 'elite' and the 'people' (Madestam & Falkman, 2017: p.301-302). Phrased differently, many modern politicians revel in the growing possibilities of constructing themselves in a certain medialised way and following the political goals they wish to achieve, which consequently impacts political audiences (ibid.: p.307).

In closing this section, this essay further draws on the insights of Madestam and Falkman's (2017) article "Rhetorical construction of political leadership in social media" in which they found that this insurgent use of social media when constructing one's leadership is very interconnected with the rhetorical virtue of 'ethos' (ibid.: p.301-302). In other words, self-representation with the use of interactive and participatory platforms enabled by the internet has increasingly been used by political leaders to create a sense of credibility and trustworthiness, including with the employment and aid of the previously introduced techniques. This essay will draw upon this logic in the analysis.

2.2 Performing leadership through narratives

Initially, political leaders utilise storytelling to uphold, induce and preserve authority and their legitimacy as figureheads (Freistein & Gadinger, 2022: p.1).

This storytelling is, in part, communicated through visual imagery, and these images contribute to a specific narrative. A narrative can be understood as a technique of sequencing several events in a specific order to produce a particular story (Thomas, 2016: p.2-3). Narratives transform events into plots and actors into characters, and it can be considered a simplified description of what's happening that's highly interconnected with moral judgements (Freistein & Gadinger, 2022: p.8). It is noteworthy that narratives highlight certain information whilst concealing other information, and there are inherently context-embedded power dimensions in this fact (Harding & Norberg, 2015: p.2).

Nevertheless, the primary importance in the context of this particular essay would be how leadership is performed through these narratives. The very foundation of this essay rests upon how political leaders can utilise digital communication to create an environment that contributes to one specific way of seeing the world and its events (Freistein & Gadinger, 2022: p.9-10). Once a particular actor has established a specific worldview or a certain narrative, they can consequently present themselves as a capable leader befitting the challenges or obstacles arising in that world through strategic self-representation or so-called performances. However, the construction of such narratives isn't uncontested or straightforward. Narratives are consistently opposed in different magnitudes in different places and are constantly being re-produced and negotiated (ibid.: p.6-7). Moreover, the actors who wish to contribute or establish a particular narrative must do so with respect to the cultural repertoire of accepted norms and virtues accepted by a specific audience (ibid.: p.15). The efficiency of the narrative's effect depends upon the sociocultural foundation on which it is received (Freistein & Gadinger, 2020: p.222). This can, however, also be understood as an effective tool for political leaders as it enables them to evoke emotions by adhering to a story in which events deemed unacceptable by an audience's cultural repertoire takes place and proposing ways to combat these events and, as such, establish themselves as a suitable forerunner in politics.

In wrapping up this section, this essay highlights the opportunity to employ visual communication to appraise a specific narrative and how this

became a common practice during the pandemic of Covid-19, as exemplified by the cumulative literature on the topic of visual diplomacy and the contestability of self-representation regarding cross-border concerns (Danielson & Hedling, 2022: p.246). Images are distinctive in their capabilities to include many layers of understanding while simultaneously consolidating or disputing certain narratives (Freistein & Gadinger, 2022: p.8-9). As such, images are also significant material to study when identifying different narrative performances in different contexts.

2.3 Nation Branding in Nordic countries

This study was also inspired by the learnings from Eirinn Larsen's (2021) book *Gender Equality and Nation Branding in the Nordic Region*, considering its focus on Nordic Prime Ministers with the abetment of a feminist framework and the theory of nation branding. In this volume, it is implied that the topic of equality is one where Sweden and Denmark, which are otherwise very similar, compete and differentiate concerning their international branding (Larsen, 2021: p.69). This could, in turn, implicate that constructed leadership conceivably might be one of the areas where our units of analysis supposedly differ. At any rate, due to the countries' shared extensive history of being branded as gender equal through constant reframing and visual performances (ibid.: p.32), they traditionally participate in a similar trend of turning to history in their narrative construction (ibid.: p.14-15). However, from a contemporary perspective, they seem to be interested in diverging from the others and establishing themselves as better, as exemplified by Sweden's attempt to develop an identity of "progressive now" and not merely in terms of history (ibid.: p.19). Phrased differently, there is a modern rivalry between Nordic countries in which they attempt modern branding strategies to gain competitive advantages over the others. There's a variation in approaches towards the shared commitment to appearing equal (ibid.: p.39-40). This essay claims that this literature strengthens the theoretical need to examine

the similarities and differences between Denmark's and Sweden's political storytelling and their connection to feminist leadership.

3. Theoretical framework

3.1 Feminist Leadership

This essay intends to build its theoretical framework on two bodies of literature; the initial one augments feminist leadership. Before proceeding, it appears expedient to point out that this body of work is relatively novel within the academic field of political science and that the knowledge of the matter has primarily been discussed in other disciplines, such as business management (Batliwala, 2011: p.20). With that being said, literature within political science is increasingly discussing gendered tendencies in leadership practices, for example regarding populist leadership (Beinhart, 2019: p.14) and foreign policy (Smith, 2020: p.132). The field is also further emphasising that political leadership is interconnected with resolving gendered issues (Hudson, 2012: p. 157). Nevertheless, this essay utilises Batliwala's (2011) article "Feminist Leadership for Social Transformation: Clearing the Conceptual Cloud" to construct a theoretical framework where the units of analysis can be placed. This section henceforth considers how feminist leadership can be defined, what elements constitute this type of leadership, and the attributes and practices possessed or employed by leaders who utilise it (ibid.: p.15).

Feminist leadership as a concept is not undisputed or universally embraced. The many different definitions to which the concept has been designated are also divided in what they encompass, either the leader's characteristics or leadership characteristics as a process (ibid.: p.17). After reviewing tenths and tenths of different definitions, this essay highlights two in particular, which can be fully read in Appendix (1) and (2). The first definition highlights two premises where one can discern desired attributes in both leaders

and leadership processes. These are that good, feminist leadership serving society as a whole is “inclusive, participatory, and horizontal” (Eisenberg & Vaziri, 2001: p.1-2). This definition also directs attention to the fact that feminist leadership recognises the potential of all societal actors and successfully utilises that potential through effective communication and cooperation (ibid.: p.131). The essay's second definition underlines similar attributes, specifically that feminist leadership as a process is “more circular, bottom-up and less male” than its traditional counterpart (Batliwala, 2011: p.20). Much like the aforementioned definition, this, too, is focused on exercising society's full potential in a more holistic way than what traditionally has been the case, where the entire focus rested on the leaders themselves. Deriving from these two definitions, this essay emanates from a view in which feminist leaders are inclusive in their processes, actively open up for participation and harness the potential of different societal groups, and exercise a responsive approach towards differentiating expertise and criticism. Again, this is not a comprehensive review of every definition imposed upon the concept, merely the definitions that encompass the general thinking recognised by most definitions, according to this essay.

Batliwala hereafter develops the different elements of feminist leadership by highlighting four essential factors of the phenomenon: power, principles or values, politics or purpose, and practices (ibid.: p.32). The first, power, emphasises the need for feminist leadership to strive towards shared power in society and the distribution of opportunities between various actors to give rise to horizontal development and progress (ibid.: p.33). This, in turn, signifies prioritising a bottom-up approach above a hierarchical one. However, although power is one of political science's most essentially contested concepts (Lukes, 2004: p.30), this essay avoids inquiring too deeply into this topic. What is important to note is that feminist leadership dispenses not only visible power but hidden power as well and makes sure not to exert influence informally or formally to create unwarranted power imbalances (Batliwala, 2011: p.35-37). The second element, principles or values, accentuates the need for feminist leadership to strive towards feminist values such as equality, human rights for all, democracy

and transparency, transforming practices of power, honouring diversity, and freedom from violence (Batliwala, 2008: p.11-12). Moreover, it is essential to incorporate those values in policies and practices (Batliwala, 2011: p.50). The third, politics and purpose, refers to the political goals one who interweaves feminist leadership into their organisation shall attempt to strive towards, such as public good and gender equality. These politics or purposes are often referred to as having a transformative agenda (ibid.: p.51). The final and fourth element, practices, clarify how one should go about realising the work feminist leadership aspires to work towards. This includes, but is not limited to, communication work, strategic work, and managerial work (ibid.: p.53-54). However, the most pertinent work for this essay to focus on, not to mention contribute to, is what's referred to as political work, which in sum refers to the process of assessing the political context in which feminist leadership emerges, as well as evaluating and anticipating the impact that such leadership might have on political relations.

In closing, this essay lists the skills and attributes a feminist leader should adopt according to this framework (Batliwala, 2011: p.69-70). These serve as the operationalisation of the concept:

Skills:	Attributes:
1. Receptive / Open-minded	1. Self-conscious / Locus of control
2. Empowering	2. Credible / Reliable
3. Cooperating	3. Empathetic
4. Embodying feminist norms and values (See above)	
5. Inspiring	
6. Engaging /	

Passionate	
7. Morally authoritative	

(Figure 1. Operationalisation of Feminist Leadership)

3.2 Nation Branding

The second part of the theoretical framework will be based on the extensive body of work regarding the ‘Nation Branding’-theory. In essence, nation branding refers to when nations or states try to formulate and communicate a certain brand, or image, to be internationally recognised in a certain manner with the hopes of becoming attractive destinations for investments, trade, tourism, and the like. In other words, this is perpetrated, in part, to gain a competitive advantage (Dinnie, 2016: p.6-7). As such, one often refers to the power exercised through nation branding as “soft power” (Ohnesorge, 2020: p.93).

This branding effort is engineered multidimensionally, but one might claim that there are two fundamental steps to establishing a specific brand (Dinnie, 2016: p.40-41). This essay will hereafter refer to the first step as “positioning”, which entails active choices regarding the type of nation one wishes to communicate to the international community (ibid.: p.42). Moreover, this includes deciding upon the ‘codes of expression’ one utilises to communicate the nation's brand, as well as the narrative identity of that brand (ibid.: p.36). The focus on narrative identity strengthens this essay’s belief that this theory is well-suited for the analysis it wishes to conduct. Regardless, positioning is done by conveying that position to a target audience by highlighting specifically selected aspects of the state, such as its art, history, landscape, and, most importantly here, the political regime. Furthermore, symbolism transmitting gender-equal ideas has been used to brand one's nation in the past (Aggestam & True, 2021: p.396-397). This construction combines the concepts of national

identity, including but not limited to a nation's music, language, ethnocentrism, "imagined community", and articles of this nature (Dinnie, 2016: p.118-122), and country-of-origin, a theory drawn from the literature on consumer behaviour that refers to how a product's origin affects consumer attitudes towards that product, to create the concept of nation branding (ibid.: p.89-90). In combination, they utilise national stereotypes, ethnocentrism, individualism contra collectivism, and expressions of culture traditionally cohesive with the nation to communicate a particular image or brand (ibid.: p.140-141).

The second step of this process is to decide how this brand is intended to be communicated to the "right audience" and what techniques one shall adopt to succeed (ibid.: p.41). There are different approaches to this branding. The first would be an integrated approach with a certain degree of institutionalised coordination, in which nations cooperate with various inter-agencies to communicate a preferred brand (ibid.: p.253). The second approach focuses on contextualisation, which is perhaps the most relevant approach for this essay's research questions. This approach refers to the scenario in which a nation designs its brand in a certain way to satisfy the demands of the context intended to be met (ibid.: p.253). This involves looking at the targeted audience's values and constructing the nation's brand to appease those values. This is highly applicable in the forthcoming analysis of this essay's material, in part because its focus lies on the external assets of the 'nation brand equity'-scale, which includes focusing on assets such as the different perceptions of the country's image, the country's portrayal in popular culture, and the need for brand ambassadors (ibid.: p.71-72). Contrarily, internal assets are focused on iconography, emphasising assets such as art, landscape, nurtured resources, and different commodities of this nature (ibid.: p.68-80). Either way, the third approach is what's been referred to as the organic one. This approach highlights the fact that for a brand to garner a solid stronghold, it must not merely rely on the efforts of official authorities and a fixed scheme but be allowed to grow organically by empowering citizens to communicate an image through planned and unplanned actions (ibid.: p.254). The final approach accentuates the need for innovation and novelty in branding. Adherents to this

approach believe there's much to gain in today's world stage by creating new national narratives (ibid.: p.254). This is coherent with the belief that Nordic countries are trying to develop new branding techniques, as established in section 2.3.

In closing, it should be noted that one of the challenges for a nation's branding in today's digitalised age is the fact that a myriad of new actors has been introduced to branding platforms, namely social media users (ibid.: p.250). However, this is not to be seen as something that hinders the employment of this essay but something that increases the further need for empirical gathering on the subject and, as such, increases the extra-scientific relevance prescribed to the research (Teorell & Svensson, 2007: p.18).

4. Analytical Method

4.1 Visual Narrative Analysis

This essay will utilise visual narrative analysis (VNA) to answer the research questions. In doing so, it will consider three different steps of visual analysis, and each one will be processed in three distinct instalments of the analysis. The first step (4.1.1) and the interpretation it requires will be presented in section 8.1, the second step (4.1.2) will be analysed in-depth during section 8.2, and the third step (4.1.3) will be considered in section 8.3. These three steps are an altered version of the methodological framework introduced in Freistein's and Gadinger's (2020) article "Populist stories of honest men and proud mothers: A visual narrative analysis", in which they propose four steps of VNA. They refer to this technique and its four steps as layering (Freistein & Gadinger, 2020: p.219), which is descendant from the technique's attention to different layers of understanding images' impact. I will simultaneously introduce the framework's steps and how this essay interprets them to fit its research goal throughout sections 4.1.1 to 4.1.3.

However, before proceeding, it is crucial to understand that the fundamental logic upon which this strategy is based accentuates the requirement of deliberating narratives and different customs of storytelling with its performative dimensions to gain knowledge on things such as identities in political communities, gender stereotypes, societal hierarchies, and other phenomena connected to constructs of identification and differentiation (ibid.: p.220). In other words, this essay and its method adhere to a poststructural, and in part constructivist, epistemology (Bergström & Boréus, 2018: p.28). It is consequently claimed that images are vital indicators of narratives due to their ability to interweave storylines, configure narratives, and communicate moral

judgements as well as attributes of political actors (Freistein & Gadinger, 2020: p.225). Virtually, this essay assumes an iconological approach in combination with the more obvious narratological one, which in sum refers to when one accounts for the social, cultural, and historical anchoring of images to generate knowledge regarding the narrative that is being produced and circulated (Heck & Schlag, 2013: p.899).

4.1.1 The Picture Itself: How to discern the images' narrative

The first step introduced by the article rests its focus mainly on the image in itself as it considers the performative nature of the image by looking at things such as composition, aesthetics, symbols, and the actual content of the image to extract the narrative character and moral judgements that are being communicated through that specific product (Freistein & Gadinger, 2020: p.226). This appears kindred with the framework put forward by Gillian Rose (2016) through its connection to her “site of the image itself”, in which the formal components that contribute to what one can see in a picture are the subject of investigation (Rose, 2016: p.32-33). By looking at these standard components, one aims to discern the narrative being suggested, albeit what type of character is inherited by the individual(s) depicted or the plot being proposed (Freistein & Gadinger, 2020: p.222). This essay intends to follow the same structure as suggested in the methodological framework regarding this step.

4.1.2 Contextualisation: Relating the images to intertextuality and the broader policy context

In the forthcoming section of the analysis, the essay combines the second and third steps suggested by the methodological framework. This is done partly due to

their shared focus on context but primarily to establish a coherent line of analysis throughout this essay's sections.

Nonetheless, the second step encourages an accounting for the intertextuality of the image. It considers things such as social media features, written texts in connection to the image, and other notions of intertextuality that limit plausible interpretations and emotional responses (ibid.: p.225). With aspirations of understanding this interpretive closure, it is claimed that it is vital to study how the performative dimensions alter when introducing immediate contextuality to human understanding. Considering this essay's examination of Instagram posts (see 6.1), the natural addition to the analysis is the captions of the studied visual products.

The third step amplifies this contextualised approach and considers the broader policy environment in which an image is produced and audienceed (ibid.: p.226). This includes pondering over how different pictures are related to one another, the potential audiences and their potential cultural repertoire, the fantasmatic logic that seems apposite in a specific domain, and in broader terms: the political and cultural context on a national level. This essay intends to consider the intended audiences of the images, the political and cultural context in the countries cohesive with our units of analysis, the history and political anchoring of those units, as well as the images' connection to the other images appearing on the same feed and if they (re-)produce or (re-)stabilise a particular narrative in cohesion or if they contest one another.

4.1.3 Contestation: Different narratives in different places

The fourth step within this methodological approach opens up a more comprehensive discussion regarding this essay's second research question. This step focuses on polyphony, which can be considered a contestation between narratives and highlights the challenge between different stories in political storytelling (Koschorke, 2018: p.11). The focal point concerning this step is

contesting narratives. Correspondingly, this step urges one to consider how various local cultural repertoires affect the contestation in different locations and how local traditions might determine the morally recognised narratives (Freistein & Gadinger, 2020: p.227). Derived from that logic, this essay discusses how the identified narratives performed by the units of analysis might be less well-received by different audiences, the consequences that this might bring about, and hypothetical contesting narratives due to alternative values. As one can distinguish from the theoretical framework, feminist leadership and the theory of nation branding are both concerned with contextualisation and broader involvement. Due to this, this essay would argue that although the literature related to the two topics has been separated, there are common grounds in which the possibilities for development are tangible.

4.2 Limitations

As with all methods, visual narrative analysis consists of dimensions that might require extra attention to avoid overestimating its capabilities. Firstly, the analysis solely depends on interpretation, which puts the researcher's ability to be intersubjective to the test (Teorell & Svensson, 2007: p.54). It is of utmost importance to be transparent, reflexive, and directly address issues where the researcher's interpretation is operative to be as pragmatic as possible. If not, the research could potentially be accused of driving the hypothesis unnecessarily far and consequently lose parts of its academic legitimacy (Esaiasson et al., 2017: p.23-24). Additionally, as a researcher, it is important to be intuitive regarding the fact that one's presumptive ideas and conjectural narratives might alter one's interpretation of the material (Bergström & Boréus, 2018: p.242-243), and communicating this to the reader is an integral part in the effort of increasing the credibility of one's research. Moreover, this communication must be clear and

decisive since this research method lacks the ability of reproductivity that a quantitative method more likely inherits (Teorell & Svensson, 2007: p.280-281).

Furthermore, to increase the legitimacy of narrative analysis, a very segregated analytical approach, it is of paramount significance to be reflexive concerning the analysis' coherence, both internally and externally (Bergström & Boréus, 2018: p.244). This includes ensuring that the argumentation and interpretations are rational, consistent and in harmony with existing theories in a cohesive manner. Additionally, this essay intends to keep the interpretations simplified, direct, and clear in hopes of increasing the precision and clarity of the resonating logic (ibid.: p.242-243).

5. Units of Analysis

This research paper intends to study Stefan Löfven, the Prime Minister of Sweden between the years 2014 and 2021, and Mette Frederiksen, the current Prime Minister of Denmark since 2019.

5.1 How to sample units

The Prime Ministers were chosen based on their belonging countries' ranking on the "Gender Development Index" put forward by the *European Institute Of Gender Equality* (Eige, 2021), in which Sweden is the highest ranked and Denmark the runner-up. This choice was made by deriving rationalisation based on the logic of the 'most likely'-principle, the principle of strategic sampling, and the literature summarised in section 2.3. As such, the essay uses a strategic cluster sample accounting for regionality, including the presumption that Denmark and Sweden conduct their politics similarly, and levels of equality (Teorell & Svensson, 2007: p.85). Henceforth, this essay problematises these choices in sections 5.1.1 and 5.1.2.

5.1.1 Critical Cases?: Most Likely-Principle

In sum, a decision based on the logic of a critical case refers to when one decides upon units of analysis based on their likelihood to produce a certain outcome (ibid.: p.154). The logic, in this case, is that the essay would choose leaders from countries where one can expect the reigning constructed leadership to be

comparable to a feminist leadership, considering that the countries are believed to strive towards equality which section 3.1 discerned as one of the characteristics of feminist leadership. Moreover, Stefan Löfven's government was the first to ever refer to itself as a feminist government (Regeringen, 2014). The strength of applying this principle to the method of sampling is that it generates the most favourable conditions for the essay to identify a patterned way of behaving (Esaiasson et al., 2017: p.162), namely whether the Prime Ministers are adopting the style of leadership described within the theoretical framework, which this essay claims to be justified due to the novel nature of its research questions and the study's theory-developing ambitions. An additional strength is that this sample inherently fulfils the principle of 'economy of scale with preserved validity'¹, which in this case refers to when one, with preserved validity, decide to consider the units of analysis that are most likely to be upfront with their feminist leadership, which in turn would be labour-saving and allow one to spend more resources on the actual gathering and interpretation of material instead of the searching for material (ibid.: p.202-203). With all that being said, the approaches towards performing equality might still differ between the countries, as established in section 2.3. In that essence, the essay claims that this is a selection based on a principle of most likely cases as well as the principle of illustrative cases (ibid.: p.163). If this essay's conclusions appear fruitful and feminist leadership logically can be considered a modern way of nation branding, it would be interesting to test that conclusion in less favourable conditions.

However, as with all sampling strategies, this also gives rise to the need to reflect on one's choices. One disadvantage, or at the very least difficulty, with choosing based on a preconception of critical cases is that it can be hard to know whether or not a case is most likely or least likely to procure a specific outcome (Teorell & Svensson, 2007: p.156). However, following the logic introduced above and seeing as the choice is made based on an internationally recognised list, it is not to be considered a fatal problem with this particular design.

¹ Directly translated from Swedish ("principen för stordriftsfördel med bevarad validitet")

5.1.2 Strategic Sampling: avoiding Path Dependency and Bias

Moreover, an additional advantage of the sampling strategy is that it does not select units based on the dependent variable and, as such, lowers the likelihood of bias in the conclusions (Geddes, 1990: p.24). Instead, this strategic sampling method selects units of analysis based on their associated countries' variable value on an independent variable, namely gender equality. This alleviates the research from a scenario where its conclusions are dismissed or disregarded using a path-dependent argument. Instead, it compels the analysis to make persuasive interpretations anchored in a clear theoretical framework.

To conclude, the ideas introduced above would also result in a scenario where the essay samples units it expects the slightest variance between, which could result in negative and positive repercussions (Rose, 2016: p.89-90). Positive in that one could account for less material in one's research and still generalise for the cluster of cases. At the same time, it would be negative considering that different materials possibly would show different results. Consequently, the essay has to limit its generalisability to, to its extent, Nordic leaders. As such, this design is relatively meagre in its generalising capabilities. To reiterate, it would be interesting to put the conclusions reached to the test by applying the same method and research design to political leaders from other countries in which alternative narratives are more likely to appear.

6. Strategy for Collecting Data

6.1 Self-representation: The use of Instagram during the outbreak of Covid-19

This essay will collect data by extracting images from the Prime Ministers' Instagrams. However, before introducing the way of doing so and the chosen timeframe, it appears pertinent to clarify why Instagram offers good source material and deliberate the implications of that choice. Initially, this essay obtains its images from Instagram because it can be argued to be one of the more accessible mediums for various audiences, including international ones. Moreover, Instagram is very visibly attentive, and all posts are visual. Secondly, one should be aware that it might very well be strategic communicators and PR teams that govern the politician's social channels (Edwards, 2022). However, this essay claims that this poses no threat to the logical coherence of its interpretations and argumentation as the images still contribute to a narrative construction that the Prime Minister endorses.

This essay's strategy for collecting data will comply with the logic of the 'total coverage'-principle during a specific timeframe (Esaiasson et al., 2017: p.208). In practice, this essay intends to assemble the entire "feed" of images (Hedling et al., 2022: p.4) that were self-reported by the two Prime Ministers during the period between the 11th of March and the 11th of April in 2020 as this was the first month of Covid-19 being classified as a pandemic (WHO, 2020). After that, the segment of analysis will explore patterns and strategically select images to consider more in-depth to exemplify the interpretations being made.

Stefan Löfven published 48 posts during the period, while Mette Frederiksen published 34.

Before proceeding further, it is essential to note that the chosen material was produced during abnormal circumstances considering the global nature of the Covid-19 pandemic. Yet, this essay will proceed with this time frame for two reasons. Firstly, political leaders are likelier to self-report images for international audiences during international crises (Boin et al., 2010: p.706). As a result, this essay argues that this timeframe brings about advantageous conditions for the theory development it intends to achieve. Secondly, it is of utmost importance to have a clear timeframe and choose material based on consistent logic in all research to ensure intersubjectivity through researcher independence, meaning that the results aren't affected by the researcher's values and preconceptions (Esaiasson et al., 2017: p.25). It is, however, still advisable to keep in mind that this selection might eschew the performative narrative.

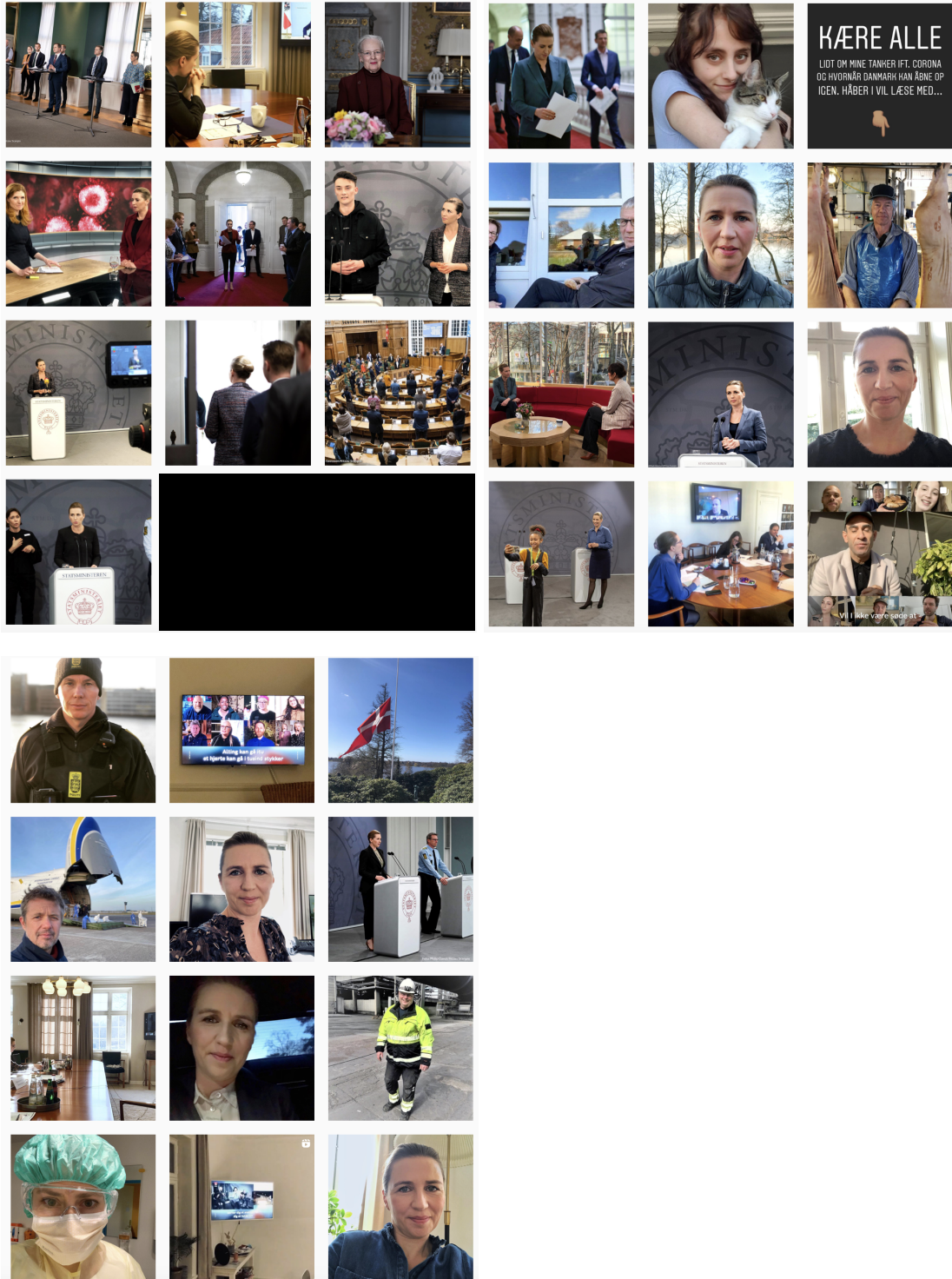
7. Material

7.1 Stefan Löfven



(Stefan Löfven's Instagram feed between the 11th of March and the 11th of April 2020, captured the 10th of November 2022.)

7.2 Mette Frederiksen



(Mette Frederiksen's Instagram feed between the 11th of March and the 11th of April 2020, captured the 10th of November 2022.)

8. Analysis

8.1 Interpreting the images as a stand-alone product

In this section, the essay will look at the leadership being performed through Instagram systematically and as objectively as possible to make sense of the narratives being conveyed. Reiteratively, this first section, 8.1, will focus entirely on the image itself. In contrast, upcoming sections will incorporate context and contestation and offer a more extensive view of fantasmatic logic's role and potential impact. Initially, this section will make interpretations as to whether or not the Prime Ministers are inheriting the skills and attributes listed in *Figure 1*. Subsequently, this will be related to the different components of feminist leadership in a more in-depth manner by looking at this essay's interpretation of the power, principles or values, politics or purpose, and practices that are being accounted for and rhetorically underlined in the visual performances. Finally, the images' performance will be related to and contrasted with the two definitions of feminist leadership examined earlier in this essay.

8.1.1 Stefan Löfven

When considering the Prime Minister of Sweden's Instagram, the general impression of his feed appears actor-centred, with a clear and decisive head of state as the bedrock. This is interpreted as a result of the somewhat monotone

depiction of Löfven as the sole individual with a stern facial expression in most images. An example of this can be found in image three (Appendix, 3). This surface-level interpretation with disregard to context appears in disputation with three of the skills introduced in the theoretical framework, namely the skill of cooperation, empowerment, and an embodiment of feminist values such as the need for changing practices of power, honouring diversity, and decentralisation of traditionally masculine power structures. This interpretation rests upon the logic that visualising different societal groups on this platform would be interconnected with positive effects, such as empowerment and political recognition (Brighenti, 2007: p.335). In many images depicting more individuals than the Prime Minister himself, exemplified by image four (Appendix, 4), Löfven is consistently depicted with a facial expression that seems intolerant and almost hostile, at least when considering the image as a stand-alone source of narrative understanding. This is in direct contrast to the first skill within this essay's theoretical framework: receptivity and tolerance (Batliwala, 2011: p.69).

Although, in a few images, this narrative of one strong leader appears less prudent. In image five (Appendix, 5), he appears to utilise the potential spotted in both surrounding men and women by presenting a united front. The narrative communicated here is more in line with the previously lacking three skills. In image six (Appendix, 6), one might argue that other skills are also being articulated. This essay claims that through this image in isolation, Löfven successfully conveys a narrative in which he appears inspirational and engaging. This is partly due to the appearance of him conferring with people who wouldn't be considered part of the elite at first glance and without contextual information (Domhoff, 2001: p.2). By handing over a bag, a sense of help, comfort, or even guidance emerges, and this could most certainly be considered a constructed rhetoric to perform feminist leadership.

However, when considering the attributes, the overall expression of Löfven's feed appears inadequate yet again. For example, in image seven (Appendix, 7), he appears neither empathetic nor self-conscious but insensitive and elitist as he looks down at someone with a cold facial expression. This

appears to be the general theme of the studied feed, partly due to the representation's focus on Löfven not as a fellow, personalised human but as this independent, formal elite. Nonetheless, the second attribute, namely the reliability and ethos contributed to the leader, might be logically reigning when looking through another theoretical lens due to the professionalism of the Prime Minister's performance (Sullivan, 1990: p.191). However, he doesn't fulfil the criterion of ethos when looking through the lens of this essay's framework since there is a discrepancy between everyday people and the powerful elite. Hence, when considering the overriding narrative and story being formulated, Stefan Löfven fails to integrate the skills and attributes elucidated in section 3.1.

Moreover, this essay claims that through a stand-alone interpretation of the images, one might say that all the components of feminist leadership remain scarce. In regards to power, it remains very much centralised. No feminist values are accentuated, political goals such as a gender balance in authoritative positions are not upheld, and the practices of engaging in one-way communication without unidirectional possibilities are not confirmative with the desired practices. The leadership relayed through Löfven's Instagram does not fulfil the criteria presented in the first definition of feminist leadership (Appendix, 1), as the performance fails to be inclusive, emphasise participation, or consider the need for horizontal cooperation and heeding the words of the many. The same can be said for the second definition (Appendix, 2), in which the leadership looked for is circular, bottom-up, and less male. As performed by Löfven, the leadership contrarily appears top-down and linear. However, when depicting more than one individual, there's an equal representation of women and men (Appendix, 5).

8.1.2 Mette Frederiksen

At an initial glance, Frederiksen appears to embody the skills and attributes of feminist leadership that Löfven is less diligent in communicating or performing. Throughout the majority of performances within the timespan this essay studies,

Frederiksen utilises the skills put forward by Batliwala in the literature of feminist leadership. The Prime Minister of Denmark is depicted as learning from others, empowering others to spread messages they care for, and utilising others' expertise and potential to develop the best course of action. For example, in image eight, she metaphorically hands over the mic and uses her platform to give people with unique knowledge a voice (Appendix, 8). The performances Frederiksen constructs throughout her self-representation also accentuate the need for cooperation in society and the empowerment of different groups within that society, interpreted from the many images depicting different societal groups, such as construction workers, the police, and farmers, positively. It appears as though she wishes to highlight their worth through aesthetically pleasing constructions. For examples, see images nine through eleven (Appendix, 9-11). As such, this essay consequently claims that it is logically coherent to maintain the belief that Frederiksen wishes to produce and circulate a narrative story that honours diversity and a horizontal practice of power which, as previously established, is believed to be feminist values within the political dimension.

Additionally, the Prime Minister is committed to inspiring her audience by adhering to a narrative highlighting the commonality and shared aspects of mortality during the Covid-19 crisis. This is, for example, executed by posting pictures “geared up” in facemasks and Covid-equipment, see image twelve (Appendix, 12). This, alongside many images of her socially distancing, could also be an attempt to comply with a morally authoritative position. By posting these images, she furthermore showcases how Covid-19 has affected her personally and how passionate she is about battling the pandemic. Throughout the period, Frederiksen makes a rather apparent effort to personalise herself and to invite the audience into her private sphere (Madestam & Falkman, 2017: p.301-302), as interpreted by the many selfies posted of her during her everyday activities, such as daily strolls, as depicted in image thirteen (Appendix, 13).

By continually making an effort to showcase her receptivity towards science, highlighting her empathy for at-risk groups of society, such as in image fourteen (Appendix, 14), and accentuating the need for cooperation, Frederiksen

exhibits apparent signs of the attributes put forward in section 3.1. As such, this essay is confident enough to declare the leadership communicated through Frederiksen's narrative and politically performative storytelling as a feminist one, at least per the above definitions. Regarding power, Frederiksen thoroughly appeals to a horizontal development with inclusion at its core. She strives towards feminist values in honouring diversity and adopting a unidirectional practice of power and keeps the feminist goals of public good close to the presented narrative. Additionally, she incorporates the work presented in the fourth element, such as increasing communication between groups, by posting visual products where different group representatives can contribute to national debates (Appendix, 15).

In sum, this essay would claim that on a surface-level interpretation, Mette Frederiksen successfully transmits a story of feminist leadership to the audience through self-representation. Concerning the first definition of feminist leadership (Appendix, 1), the narrative conveyed through the images seems coherent with what is being requested. More precisely, this essay has argued for an interpretation in which Frederiksen's leadership is inclusive, participatory, and horizontal. Moreover, the following definition (Appendix, 2) also appears fitting. In this section, there has been a clear interpretation of how the leadership communicated is circular and bottom-up.

8.2 To put the Prime Ministers' narratives into a broader context

In the forthcoming sections, 8.2.1 through 8.2.3, this essay shall try to contextualise the images introduced in section 8.1. The two initial sections are committed to making sense of the different responses one might expect as a reaction to the publication of the Instagram feeds. It shall do so by considering the images' immediate intertextuality, such as caption and the technical features of

Instagram, as well as the national constraints, such as history and broadly accepted values on a national level. The closing section, 8.2.3, will expand on this contextualised approach by considering the broader cultural worldview and political context in the EU and how the interplay between the Prime Ministers' countries and the European audience might have affected how the units of analysis performed themselves in the first place. This will be done with a backdrop in the theory of nation branding introduced in section 3.2.

8.2.1 The case of Stefan Löfven: Intertextuality & National circumstances

While the images themselves failed to exhibit the skills and attributes the essay based its theoretical operationalisation on, the intertextuality of those same images tells a somewhat different story. Consider images three and four (Appendix, 3 & 4). In section 8.1.1, it was established that the actor-centred performance of Löfven as this monotone, lone, and unresponsive leader was in contrast with the attributes and skills searched for in feminist leadership. However, this interpretation becomes more challenging to uphold once you add intertextuality. In both of the images exemplified in this context, the Prime Minister of Sweden heeds the need for societal cooperation, empowers the people to act and care for one another, and is receptive to the voices of others in the captions. This is discerned from the fact that Löfven uplifts people who assist others in the caption of image three and mentions that Löfven and the Minister of Civil Affairs are engaging in active conversation with actors that symbolise the decentralisation of power, such as municipalities and regions (Pierre, 2010: p.105-106), in the caption of image four. All of a sudden, one can argue for the fulfilment of the skills of empowering, cooperation, embodying feminist values, inspiration, and engagement. One also reaches a verdict as to the fact that Löfven showcases a locus of control as well as an empathetic approach. These are two of

many examples in which Löfven refutes the conclusion reached in the previous section. Furthermore, when considering intertextuality Löfven showcases passion and engagement in upholding the prosperity of Sweden when he urges people to help small businesses (Appendix, 6). There are many similar patterns in which Löfven displays the skills and attributes illustrated in *Figure 1*.

Moreover, when considering the national circumstances of Sweden, a country placed at the top of the previously mentioned Gender Development Index and that has a recognised history of feminist incorporation in politics (Gad, 2014) in combination with the fact that Löfven stayed in power for seven years and came to that power through one of the more progressive-leaning political parties in Sweden called *Socialdemokraterna* (Socialdemokraterna, 2022), the idea that the Prime Minister would be in direct opposition to the feminist leadership as described in section 3.1 appears foolish. Yet, one must ask oneself what this would mean for an international audience and, as such, Sweden's international relations. If we take for granted that Löfven wishes to narratively perform the feminist leadership he alludes to in the captions, is he succeeding with this effort when one must take the caption written in Swedish and Sweden's political history into account? Due to Instagram's translation feature, the answer to this question might be yes. However, due to Löfven's lack of visual enactment, this construction might not be as successful as Mette Frederiksen's.

8.2.2 The case of Mette Frederiksen: Intertextuality & National circumstances

As concluded, the Prime Minister of Denmark constructed the performance of a feminist leadership very persuasively through the visual elements of her Instagram. This performance is further consolidated when considering the captions. Consider images ten and eleven (Appendix, 10 & 11) in which Frederiksen empowers and inspires her audience by highlighting the contribution

of two different groups of society and accentuates the fact that stability would malfunction without the power they possess and, in doing so, promotes a horizontal structure of power in which cooperation is an integral aspect of societal durability and safety. This appears to be the general theme of Frederiksen's entire feed.

Like Sweden, Denmark has a long history of incorporating gender equality amidst its most central policies and has been a forefront runner in achieving feminist goals (Eige, 2021). As such, feminist values are more likely than not a part of their collective identity. This could explain why, and if, feminist leadership is accounted for in the nationally accepted narrative surrounding good leadership (Freistein & Gadinger, 2020: p.220). With this in mind, the Prime Minister's apparent and decisive narratively construction of a feminist leadership performance could be a way of adhering to the national audience's cultural repertoire. It might partly explain her reelection in 2022, in which Frederiksen's party, *Socialdemokratiet*, received an impressive 14.22% more of the total votes than the runner-up party (Folketinget, 2022).

Furthermore, one can explain the initial differences in visual strategies by applying the lessons presented in section 2.3, claiming that Nordic countries are segregated in their branding strategies when it comes to being viewed as gender equal going forward. Additionally, it is worth noting that considering the national history of both Sweden and Denmark, the performance of a feminist leadership can play into the audiences' fantasmatic logic, as explained in section 2.1. By underlining feminist values when communicating with an audience in which these values are considered dignified, one produces a limited repository of emotional responses and increases the likelihood of coalescing with the shared beatific dream of gender equality and dissociating with the horrific nightmare of an increased gender imbalance (Freistein & Gadinger, 2020: p.223). This applies to both of the units of analysis.

8.2.3 The case of the Western World: Broader Policy Environment

To answer the second research question, the main focus lies on how these joint performances and political stories influence, determine, or fully transform the possibilities of upholding sustainable relations with other international actors, such as states or NGOs (Besson & Marti, 2018: p.505). Phrased differently, this essay explores how these constructed narratives might generate responses from various audiences. Due to the learnings of section 3.2, the section surveying the theory of nation branding, this essay argues that performances interconnected with feminist values in all likelihood affect international relations with European actors positively. This is derived from the idea that feminist values have been incorporated into the broader narrative of what constitutes "good leadership" in the Western world; it has become a part of the "European identity" (Hülse, 2006: p.398). Moreover, as the Prime Ministers actively try to position themselves in a certain way by strategically constructing a particular narrative character in their visual products (Dinnie, 2016: p.36), one can discern a direct connection between these performances and the establishment of a specific brand. As these performances amalgamate the national and European identities, joint negotiations and international accords become easier to reach based on a shared cultural starting point. This, in turn, would mean that feminist leadership is a modern tool for nation branding because it is a constructed strategy utilised to achieve a competitive advantage.

Furthermore, this is believed to be the case after a Western adoption of progressive ideals encompassing values such as caring, equality, and remasculation (Hedling et al., 2022: p.10). As such, it is scarcely a reach to claim that such ideals, values, or approaches are desirable in Western policy discussions and therefore affect the relationship between actors taking place in those discussions favourably granted that they manage to uphold those ideals and values. Again, this results from a collective identity, an imagined community, and

the belief that other international actors and oneself can find common ground in shared expressions of culture (Dinnie, 2016: p.140). As such, the approach to branding adopted by the Prime Ministers appears to be the second one, as hypothesised in section 3.2. To reiterate, this approach describes the scenario where one constructs one's narrative performances following the demands and values of the audience one intends to affect, primarily, in this case, to create the desired perception of oneself. Social media offers the Prime Ministers the possibility of playing into the conventional narratives and, through strategic rhetoric, delineating the images' interpretation and emotional response using performances and captions. As both countries are highly reputable in international communities, at the very least in the West (Valet, 2019), there appears to be no indication that the Prime Ministers have failed to do so following the reasoning proposed in this section. However, this essay is undoubtedly restricted in the variables it considers, and other variables might reveal different conclusions.

8.3 Contesting Narratives

In the previous section, this essay attempted to logically appraise the reason as to why the two Prime Ministers performed their leadership in the way they did, and it was suggested that this was a way of increasing the leaders' and their belonging countries' social, cultural and political capital in the Western world. However, this raises one crucial question: what about the rest of the world? In countries where liberal, cosmopolitan, democratic, and progressive values (Hedling et al., 2022: p.2) are contested or shunned and in which the cultural repertoire is assembled from values that the West would avoid (Freistein & Gadinger, 2020: p.221-222), that performed leadership won't be met as affectionately. This can partly be derived from the idea that such countries, for example Russia or Brazil, have gone untouched by the fourth feminist wave that the West is believed to have been engulfed by, commonly referred to as "western feminism" (Evans & Chamberlain,

2015: p.405). Consequently, they have remained stagnant in masculine traditions that some Western actors might say belong to the past, such as hierarchical power structures. This, in turn, would mean that the reason why performative leadership is approached differently in different places would be the moral judgements and values that dominate in the accepted narrative in that specific location (Freistein & Gadinger, 2022: p.8). That said, feminist leadership might be an exclusively Western phenomenon. However, as this essay only studies Nordic Prime Ministers, this reasoning is a hypothetical claim based on the learnings of previous literature.

Either way, the question then appears to be whether these different cultures and polyphonic narratives are an issue. This essay will henceforth claim that this most certainly could be the case. Suppose that the narratives being conveyed in different places result in political clashes due to an experienced discrepancy in the producing actors' sense of reality. In that case, this can affect their cultural, social, and political resemblance, resulting in adverse approaches to cooperation between states, policy discussions, and international accords (ibid.: p.7-8). This is somewhat tangible when considering the relationship between Russia and the EU, for example, as Russia openly condemns pro-LGBTQ+ efforts in the EU, which in turn makes them hostile to cooperation therebetween altogether so as not to harm their own culture, accepted narratives, and sense of reality (Rettman, 2014). Thereto, the Prime Ministers' constructed performances and narratives are likely to be poorly encountered in countries where the 'ethos of masculinism', the belief that the differences between the sexes, heteronormativity, and the natural male dominance can be explained by referring to human nature (Nicholas & Agius, 2018), generally run rampant, consequently affecting Sweden's and Denmark's opportunities to reach international treaties in the future with those countries for the worse due to disadvantageous postulates.

In closing, this essay concluded that the social, cultural and political capital assigned to the two countries increased with the West. As such, this narrative storytelling does more than simply harm the countries' opportunities for

international cooperation. This essay does not claim whether or not this is a favourable trade-off.

9. Conclusions

In the first section of the analysis, this essay concluded that at first glance, and with the help of surface-level interpretations that accounted for the image as a stand-alone product, Mette Frederiksen embodied the definitions of feminist leadership flawlessly. In fact, it was claimed that Frederiksen personified all seven skills and three attributes listed in the first part of the theoretical framework and that she performed and constructed the self-representation of her leadership following all elements of feminist leadership. On the other hand, Stefan Löfven failed to manifest any of the aforementioned skills and attributes. At this stage of the essay, his constructed leadership was not coherent with the definitions proposed.

However, a new perspective dawned at the second stage of analysis. When accounting for intertextuality and national circumstances, both of the studied Prime Ministers could reasonably be referred to as having a feminist leadership style, including Stefan Löfven, who constructed a contrary performance in the preceding section of analysis. The initial difference in visual performances was explained by drawing on the learning that Nordic countries differ in approaches to international branding concerning the theme of equality. Additionally, the essay concluded that this strategic performance of feminist leadership increased the Prime Ministers' political, cultural, and social capital in the EU and referred to this performance as a modern way of nation branding in a developing and transforming international community.

Further, this essay intended to cognitively make sense of how this might affect politics with parts of the world that are not accounted for in our definition of the Western World and, as such, emanate from contesting or, at the very least, alternative narratives in section 8.3. The conclusion reached was that the

opportunities for fruitful cooperation increased with countries that possess similar cultural repertoires and, in turn, narratives. At the same time, this political storytelling might affect the opportunities for such affiliations with countries that do not share this repertoire and inherit nonconforming values, such as the ethos of masculinism, as exemplified by Russia, for the worse.

In conclusion, this essay claims that the questions presented in section 1.2 have been answered. First and foremost, the initial question focused on how the leaders performed their leadership, which actualises the arguments and interpretations in sections 8.1 through 8.2.3. This essay claims that both Prime Ministers construct a performance of feminist leadership. However, due to Frederiksen's visual persuasion in her political storytelling, it can be argued that she succeeds in doing so to a higher degree than her counterpart when looking at the images as a stand-alone product. Secondly, the following question was concerned with those performances' social, cultural, and political consequences. Section 8.2.3 concluded that through the contextualised construction of political storytelling and narrative performances, the Prime Ministers of Sweden and Denmark most likely achieve an increased social, cultural, and political connection with international actors in the Western world as a consequence of them alluding to a collective identity. On the contrary, section 8.3 argues that while these performances consequently increase the social, cultural, and political capital with the Western world, it decreases that capital with other parts of the world with competing values and thus worsens the international relation between those actors and the two studied countries.

10. Bibliography

- Aggestam, K. & True, K. (2021) “Political leadership and gendered multilevel games in foreign policy“, *International Affairs MECW: The Middle East in the Contemporary World*, 97(2), pp. 385–404. doi:10.1093/ia/iiaa222.
- Batliwala, S. (2011) “Feminist Leadership for Social Transformation: Clearing the Conceptual Cloud”, *Creating Resources for Empowerment in Action (CREA)*. Available at: <https://www.uc.edu/content/dam/uc/ucwc/docs/CREA.pdf> (Accessed: 12 November 2022).
- Batliwala, S. (2008) “The Power of Movements: Clarifying Our Concepts”, in *Changing Their World: Concepts and Practices of Women’s Movements*, AWID, pp. 1-24.
- Beinhart, P. (2019) “The new authoritarians are waging war on women”, *The Atlantic*. Available at: <https://medium.com/the-atlantic/the-new-authoritarians-are-waging-war-on-women-c8252b8194f7> (Accessed: 12 December 2020).
- Bergström, G. & Boréus, K. (2018) *Textens mening och makt: metodbok i samhällsvetenskaplig text- och diskursanalys*. Fourth edition. Student lit..
- Besson, S. & Martí, J. (2018) “Legitimate actors of international law-making: towards a theory of international democratic representation”, *Jurisprudence: An International Journal of Legal and Political Thought*, 9(3), pp. 504–540. doi:10.1080/20403313.2018.1442256.
- Boin, A., Hart, P., McConnell, A. & Preston, A. (2010) ”Leadership Style, Crisis Response and Blame Management: The Case of Hurricane Katrina”, *Public Administration*, 88(3), pp. 706-723. doi:10.1111/j.1467-9299.2010.01836.x.
- Brighenti, A. (2007) ‘Visibility: A category for the social sciences’, *Current Sociology*, 55(3), pp. 323-342. doi:10.1177/0011392107076079.

- Danielson, A. & Hedling, E. (2022) ‘Visual diplomacy in virtual summitry: Status signalling during the coronavirus crisis’, *Review of International Studies*, 48(2), pp. 243–261. doi:10.1017/S0260210521000607.
- Dinnie, K. (2016) *Nation branding: concepts, issues, practice*. Second edition. Routledge.
- Domhoff, W. (2001) *Who Rules America? Power and Politics*. Fourth edition. McGraw-Hill Education.
- Edwards, K (2022) “Everything you Need to Know About Political PR”, *Mediatoolkit*. Available at: <https://www.mediatoolkit.com/blog/political-pr/> (Accessed: 3 December 2022).
- EIGE - European Institute Of Gender Equality (2021) “Gender Development Index”, *Human Development Reports*. Available at: <https://hdr.undp.org/gender-development-index#/indicies/GDI> (Accessed: 10 November 2022).
- EIGE - European Institute Of Gender Equality (2021) “Gender Development Index: Denmark in 2021 edition”, *Human Development Reports*. Available at: <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-equality-index/2021/country/DK> (Accessed: 16 November 2022).
- Eisenberg, A. & Vaziri, H. (2001) ‘Leading to Choices: A Leadership Training Handbook for Women’, *Women’s Learning Partnership for Rights, Development and Peace (WLP)*, Bethesda MD. Available at: <https://search-ebshost-com.ludwig.lub.lu.se/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip.uid&db=edo&AN=22694973&site=eds-live&scope=site> (Accessed: 20 November 2022).
- Esaiasson, P., M. Gilljam, H. Oscarsson, A. Towns & L. Wängnerud (2017) *Metodpraktikan: konsten att studera samhälle, individ och marknad*. Fifth edition. Wolters Kluwer.
- Evans, E. & Chamberlain, P. (2015) “Critical Waves: Exploring Feminist Identity, Discourse and Praxis in Western Feminism”, *Social Movement Studies*, 14(4), pp. 396-409. doi:10.1080/14742837.2014.964199.

- Folketinget (2022) “Results of the Danish general election”, *The Danish Parliament*. Available at: <https://www.thedanishparliament.dk/en/news/2022/election-result-2022> (Accessed: 3 December 2022).
- Freistein, K. & Gadinger, F. (2022) ‘Performing leadership: international politics through the lens of visual narrative analysis’, *Political Research Exchange*, 4(1). doi:10.1080/2474736X.2022.2124922.
- Freistein, K. & Gadinger, F. (2020) ‘Populist stories of honest men and proud mothers: A visual narrative analysis’, *Review of International Studies*, 46(2). doi:10.1017/S0260210519000421.
- Gad, V. (2014) “Feminism Comes to the Forefront of Swedish Politics”, *Time*. Available at: <https://time.com/3319652/feminism-comes-to-the-forefront-of-swedish-politics/> (Accessed: 2 December 2022).
- Geddes, B. (1990) “How the cases you choose affect the answers you get: selection bias in comparative politics”, *Political Analysis*, 2(11), pp. 31–150. Available at: <https://search-ebshost-com.ludwig.lub.lu.se/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip.uid&db=edssch&AN=edssch.oai%3aescholarship.org%2fark%3a%2f13030%2fqt9r45g86c&site=eds-live&scope=site> (Accessed: 16 November 2022).
- Glynos, J. & Howarth, D. (2007) *Logics of critical explanation in social and political theory*. London: Routledge.
- Harding, S. & Norberg, K. (2005) “New Feminist Approaches to Social Science Methodologies: An Introduction”, *Signs*, 30(4), pp. 2009–2015. doi:10.1086/428420.
- Heck, A. & Schlag, G. (2013) ‘Securitizing images: The female body and the war in Afghanistan’, *European Journal of International Relations*, 19(4), pp. 891–913. doi:10.1177/1354066111433896.
- Hedling, E., Edenborg, E. & Strand, S. (2022) ‘Embodying Military Muscles and a Remasculinized West: Influencer Marketing, Fantasy and “the Face of NATO”’, *Global Studies Quarterly*, 2(1). doi:10.1093/isagsq/ksac010.
- Hudson, V.M. (2012) *Sex and world peace*. Columbia University Press.

- Hülse, R. (2006) 'Imagine the EU: The metaphorical construction of a supra-nationalist identity', *Journal of International Relations and Development*, 9(4), pp. 396–421. doi:10.1057/palgrave.jird.1800105.
- Koschorke, A. (2018) *Fact and Fiction: Elements of a General Theory of Narrative*. Berlin: De Gruyter.
- Larsen, E., Moss, S.M. & Skjelsbæk, I. (2021) *Gender Equality and Nation Branding in the Nordic Region*, Routledge. Taylor & Francis.
- Lukes, S. (2004) *Power: a radical view*. Second edition. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Madestam, J. & Falkman, L.L. (2017) 'Rhetorical construction of political leadership in social media', *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, 30(3), pp. 299–311. doi:10.1108/JOCM-10-2016-0204.
- Nicholas, L. & Agius, C. (2018) *The Persistence of Global Masculinism: Discourse, Gender and Neo-Colonial Re-Articulations of Violence*. Basingstoke: Palgrave.
- Ohnesorge, H.W. (2020) *Soft Power. The Forces of Attraction in International Relations*. First edition. Springer International Publishing (Global Power Shift).
- Pierre, J. (2001) "Decentralisering, governance och institutionell förändring", in Rothstein, B. (ed.), *Politik som organisation*. Fourth edition, pp. 245-270. Stockholm: SNS Förlag.
- Regeringen (2014) "Statement of Government Policy 3 October 2014", *Prime Minister's Office*. Available at: <https://www.government.se/speeches/2014/10/statement-of-government-policy-3-october-2014/> (Accessed: 12 December 2022).
- Rettman, A. (2014) "Russia repeats criticism of EU attitude on gay rights", *EUobserver*. Available at: <https://euobserver.com/rule-of-law/122861> (Accessed: 4 December 2022).
- Rose, G. (2016) *Visual Methodologies: An Introduction to Researching with Visual Materials*, London: Sage Publishers.
- Smith, K. (2020) "Missing in Analysis: Women in Foreign Policy-Making", *Foreign Policy Analysis*, 16(1), pp. 130-141. doi:10.1093/fpa/orz019.
- Socialdemokraterna (2020) "Feminism och jämställdhet: Ett jämställt samhälle är ett tryggare Sverige", *Vår Politik*. Available at:

https://www.socialdemokraterna.se/var-politik/a-till-o/feminism?TSPD_101_R0=088d4528d9ab2000fd2d9528e10137d6ce53101af3e7b7a950455ce3ed0af278d06dd7a166e27952080c39123b1430004b965be217ffb2c2fb00815da86255c59525fcb14e4309483abf5ea0696e467136031a3a046706d467fa300fd4034cc1

(Accessed: 2 December 2022).

Sullivan, W (1990) “Professional Ethics, Ethos, and the Integrity of the Professions”, *The Centennial Review*, (34)2, pp. 187-206. Available at:

<https://www.jstor.org/stable/23738593> (Accessed: 1 December 2022).

Teorell, J. & Svensson, T. (2007) *Att fråga och att svara: samhällsvetenskaplig metod*. First edition. Liber.

Thomas, B. (2016) *Narrative: the basics*. Routledge (The basics).

Valet, V. (2019) “The World’s Most Reputable Countries 2019”, *Forbes*. Available at:

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/vickyvalet/2019/10/15/the-worlds-most-reputable-countries-2019/?sh=3ac7bdb44cb8> (Accessed: 2 December 2022).

WHO (2020) “WHO Director-General's opening remarks at the media briefing on COVID-19 - 11 March 2020”, *World Health Organisation*. Available at:

<https://www.who.int/director-general/speeches/detail/who-director-general-s-opening-remarks-at-the-media-briefing-on-covid-19---11-march-2020> (Accessed: 25

November 2022).

11. Appendix

(1) Feminist leadership: Definition 1.

“[G]ood leadership – leadership that serves both women and men, poor and rich, and the powerless and powerful – is inclusive, participatory and horizontal... leadership should be about capitalizing on the ideas and skills of as many individuals as possible... A good leader is also conscious that the processes – the means by which she carries out her objectives – are just as important as the objectives themselves.” - Mahnaz Afkhami, Ann Eisenberg & Haleh Vaziri

(2) Feminist Leadership: Definition 2.

“In modern leadership theory, the leader plays [a] star role (takes the lead, becomes the head), all others become bit players, supporting characters, and extras in the play, the theatrics of leadership. Modern leadership is by definition hierarchical, male and phallic spectacle. Feminist leadership is more circular, bottom up and less male.” - David M. Boje

(3) Image posted on Instagram by @stefanlofven; April 8, 2020.



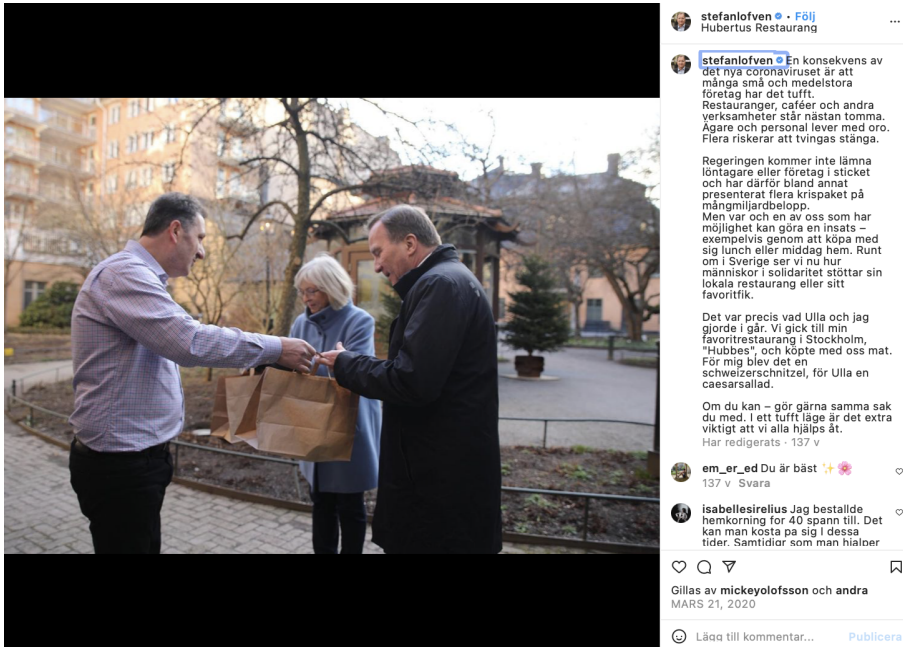
(4) Image posted on Instagram by @stefanlofven; March 14, 2020.



(5) Image posted on Instagram by @stefanlofven; March 13, 2020.



(6) Image posted on Instagram by @stefanlofven; March 21, 2020.



(7) Image posted on Instagram by @stefanlofven; April 3, 2020.



(8) Image posted on Instagram by @mette; March 14, 2020.



(9) Image posted on Instagram by @mette; April 11, 2020.



mette • Följ

mette • Närpolitiet möder os normalt på gaden. Heldigvis oplever de, at de fleste følger anvisningerne. Tak til Henrik for at dele sin historie om, hvordan det er at være politibevjænt under corona-krisen. "Siden COVID-19 kom til Danmark, har vores opgaver som politifolk ændret sig, selvom formålet stadig er det samme: Nemlig at skabe sikkerhed og tryghed i samfundet. I Politiet møder vi nu på vagt i blokke, så vi kun er sammen med de samme få kollegaer på hver vagt. Bliver vi syge, står en ny blok klar til at overtage med det samme, så ingen danskere skal føle sig utrygge i derne tid. Vi går ALDRIG hjem, kan jeg love jer. For mig har det at være politimand altid handlet om at passe på de svage og udsatte i vores samfund. I nærpolitiet har vi en bred vifte af både præventive og tryghedsskabende opgaver, og vi er fast bindeled mellem de udsatte og samfundet. Vi er normalt en fast og værdsat gæst på både skoler og ungdomsklubber til at guide og tale med de unge, samt en hjælpende hånd til de lokale butikker i byen, når de står med forskellige udfordringer. Nu er skoler og butikker midlertidigt lukket ned, og borgerne opfordres til at holde sig hjemme – og til at holde god afstand til hinanden i denne svære tid. Det er heldigvis min oplevelse, at størstedelen har taget myndighedernes anvisninger meget alvorligt. De grønne områder, som normalt er velbesøgte, ligger nu ad hæn og vidner om et Danmark, som holder sammen om at stoppe smittekæden én gang for alle. Det skal I have et kæmpe stort tak for. Jeg håber, I vil fortsætte den solidariske og ansvarlige opførsel lige meget, hvor fristende det flotte vejr må blive. Ude godt men hjemme bedst. Jeg har også en familie, der bekymrer sig om mig og gerne vil have, jeg forbliver rask. Derfor er min bøn til jer, som har mulighed for det: Jeg går på arbejde for din skyld. Så bliv hjemme for min skyld. Pas på hinanden og bliv ved med at holde sammen – hver for sig

Gillas av daxrawa519 och andra
APRIL 11, 2020

Lägg till kommentar... Publicera

(10) Image posted on Instagram by @mette; April 5, 2020.



mette • Följ

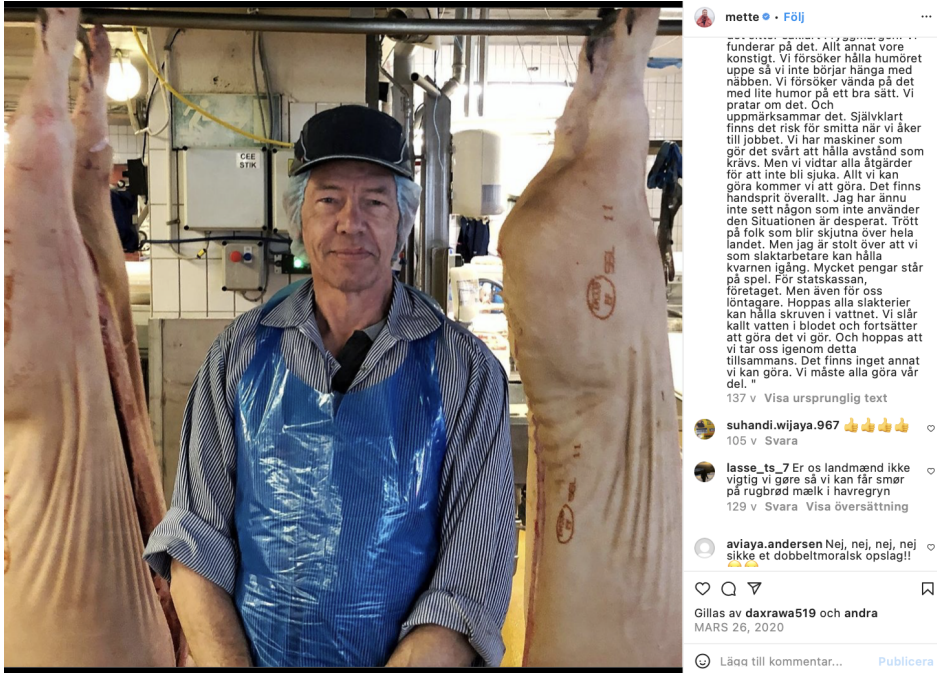
mette • Även om Danmark står stilla är det fortfarande många som håller oss igång. Danskt näringsliv jobbar övertid i dagarna. Jag är imponerad av hur nya saker tänkas, om och om igen. Jag vet att det är svåra tider. En av dem som fortsätter jobba hårt är Ernst. Han håller sig själv och humöret uppe i en svår tid. Tack för det. "Att gå till jobbet är väldigt annorlunda nuförtiden. Vi träffas på förhand och i små grupper, så vi riskerar inte att smitta varandra. Vi måste komma ihåg att hålla avstånd och sprita hela tiden. Vi sitter inte tillsammans på lunch heller, och vi är vana vid att sitta i en stor kantine med mycket folk. Man kanske känner sig lite socialt isolerad nuförtiden. Corona tar upp mycket när vi pratar. För även om vi fortfarande har en produktion på gång så vet vi inte hur läget ser ut om några veckor eller månader. Det kan leda till osäkerhet och spekulationer. Men vi är optimistiska. För gör vi cement, som man inte klarar sig utan när man bygger, så kanske vår tillverkning fortsätter att köra. Detta funderar vi på, och vi jobbar verkligen för att hjulen ska rulla här. Inte roligt att se så många företag och anställda drabbas. Om vi kan bidra lite till att det fortfarande råder aktivitet i Danmark, när andra branscher dräbbats så hårt, kan vi vara lite stolta. Vi ser till att hålla humöret uppe. Vi skojar och skojar och sjunger hemmagjord coronalåt. Allt kan inte bli för allvarligt. Det går inte att utgård. Det är god stämning på fabriken. Det är viktigt när vardagen är annorlunda och vi inte kan vara tillsammans som vi brukade. Kan vi behålla ett gott humör så kommer allt att ordna sig. Vi gör verkligen vår del."

136 v Visa ursprunglig text

Gillas av daxrawa519 och andra
APRIL 5, 2020

Lägg till kommentar... Publicera

(11) Image posted on Instagram by @mette; March 26, 2020.



(12) Image posted on Instagram by @mette; April 4, 2020.



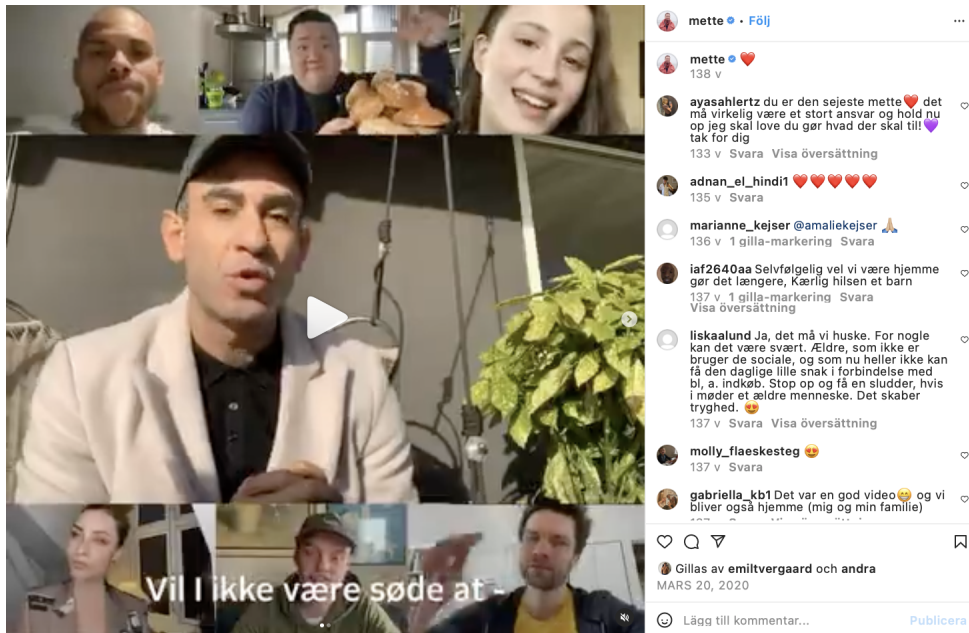
(13) Image posted on Instagram by @mette; March 27, 2020.



(14) Image posted on Instagram by @mette; March 26, 2020.



(15) Video posted on Instagram by @mette; March 20, 2020.



Video description: Video in which various individuals speak of Covid-19 concerns and the need to stay at home.