

Gender mainstreaming in transport policy in Sweden¹

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Gender mainstreaming has become the strategy of choice for attaining more gender equal societies, internationally, within the United Nations, as well as within the European Union. The transportation sector is no exception to this development. In October of 2001, the Swedish government added gender equality as the sixth goal of transport policy (Prop. 2001/02, 20). In this context, the question regarding the efficacy of gender mainstreaming as an adequate strategy for attaining a more gender equal transportation system arises. The aim of this article is to address this question by evaluating how policy makers have applied gender mainstreaming in Swedish transport policy documents. By tracing the historical application of gender equality in transport policy using documents from both before the sixth goal was implemented and after, from 1997 through 2002, the analysis outlines how policy makers defined their use of gender equality as well as traces the path of

gender mainstreaming in the transportation sector. The article concludes with a discussion of the efficacy of gender mainstreaming as a political strategy for attaining a more gender equal transportation system.

GENDER MAINSTREAMING IN THE TRANSPORTATION SECTOR

Before beginning, it is important to understand the contours of the gender mainstreaming debate. What is the 'gender' that is being mainstreamed into transport policy? Gender refers to socially constructed differences between women and men. In this way, it is a property of individuals, but not only. As Robert Connell notes, "...we can speak of gender as collective and social practices as gender-structured' (Connell 1987, 139). Specific examples are found in traditional stereotypes surrounding definitions of masculinity and femininity as well as in the roles women and men have in the home, in how the media portrays women and men, in who does what jobs, and in who holds power in the private and public sectors. Furthermore, gender does not work alone; it is embedded in and works through many other social categories such as age, education, class, and ethnicity. It is an all encompassing all-encompassing concept that inundates many different social factors and processes such as individual behaviors, structural organizations, and the meanings and symbols manifest in everyday life.

How then can gender be applied in the case of mainstreaming? True and Mintrom (2001) define gender mainstreaming as "efforts to scrutinize and reinvent processes of policy formation and implementation across all issue areas to address and rectify persistent and emerging disparities between men and women" (True and Mintrom 2001, 28). In the Swedish context, gender mainstreaming translates literally as 'gender equality mainstreaming', and occurs within the well-developed political tradition sur-

rounding gender equality. The official goals of gender equality are "a society where women and men have the same opportunities, rights, and responsibilities within all vital areas of life" (Skr. 1999/2000/24, 6). More specifically, gender equality refers to social structures and institutions that enable both women and men the successful attainment of economic independence, individual fulfillment, and security, and where both women and men have freedom from gender-based power structures, sexual violence, and discrimination based on sex. Following from this, mainstreaming gender equality into transport policy should consider if and how transportation affects women and men and their ability to attain such goals. How, for example, do gender and transportation interact with an individual's ability to attain economic independence, to personally fulfill themselves, and feel safe and secure? It is also important to question if and how the structures and institutions that make up the transportation sector support any gender based power hierarchies or discrimination based on sex.

ANALYTICAL APPROACH

A gender analysis of transport policy must encompass the different processes and factors that influence women and men and their positions in society that specifically interact with transportation. To do this, the present study includes three analytical areas: the individual, the structural, and the symbolic. On the individual level, the focus is upon how differences in women and men's behavior, in mobility patterns and in attitudes and values towards transportation technologies, the environment, and safety, are included in the documents. This is an important area of analysis given the differences in travel patterns and attitudes that have been shown in research dealing with travel issues (Polk(Polk 2003, Eriksson and Garvill 2003). What impact do these gender differences have in planning and

policy? On the next level, structural characteristics of organizations such as gender-segregated occupations, and women and men's participation and influence in decision-making, planning, and policy are the focus. Given that the transportation sector is a male dominated realm, it is important to query why this is the case, what influence this has on attaining a more gender equal transportation system, and how this situation can change. The symbolic level overlaps the other two by focusing on the gendered meanings connected to individual behavior, as well as on how gender based power relationships have influenced what is considered appropriate for women and men within the sector. Do meanings and values connected to concepts such as freedom, status, power, and control over technology influence women and men's various roles within the transportation sector? Are transportation technologies gendered male or female? Do the policy documents address such questions?

EARLY MAINSTREAMING EFFORTS

The first use of gender equality in transport policy occurred in the 1997 committee proposal for Swedish national transport policy entitled: *A new course in transport policy* (SOU 1997/35). The goal of integrating gender equality follows the guidelines of the 1996 gender equality legislation as "equal rights, responsibilities, and possibilities within all areas of life" (Skr. 1996/1997/41). The topic that receives the most emphasis in the 1997 document is travel patterns. The report presents the differences in women and men's travel patterns and explains them by stating that differences in travel patterns mirrors women and men's different social roles, and that women work predominantly within certain occupations (care and office related) that demand fewer business trips, earn less money, work shorter hours, and have more responsibility in the home (SOU 1997/35).

The report also states that 'women have greater responsibility for the household, which means that they work closer to home' (SOU 1997/35, 444). However, background factors such as hours worked per week and the presence of children do not explain gender differences in travel patterns, as this report seems to suggest. Such a line of reasoning uses stereotypical gender roles as an explanation for gender inequalities even without empirical support. The second largest section in this report deals with the dominance of men in decision-making and planning processes in the transportation sector. The report notes the representation of women as being low within the entire sector, but especially with regard to leadership roles within public transportation, and traffic planning. There is no explanation given for this male dominance. An increase of women in the transportation sector appears as a way to attain better environmental policy, since women have more environmentally benign travel patterns and are more environmentally concerned. Suggested solutions to attaining a more gender equal transportation system include measures that improve public transportation, bike, and pedestrian traffic, access of handicapped individuals, better planning and more research. Though only cursorily mentioned, the authors also note that women's travel patterns are more favorable for adaptation to a more sustainable transportation system. Overall, the 1997 document is a good first start in integrating gender equality in transport policy. Many important issues are noted, albeit briefly. However, a deeper discussion only occurs in the sections on travel patterns and representation where the emphasis is on quantifiable differences between women and men. The explanations for these differences are either ignored or oversimplified. From the very beginning of this mainstreaming process, a recurring problem is that 'gender equality' often equals 'women' and nothing more.

Following the above backgroundback-

ground, report , in March of 1998 the government proposed in March of the 1998 the establishment of a Gender Equality Council to investigate the connections between gender equality and the communication sector (Prop. 1997/1998/56). The topics to be covered were physical planning, traffic planning, strategies for the environment, safety and the use of transportation technologies as well as competence and recruiting within the sector. The Gender Equality Council's final report, *Gender equality – transportation and IT*, is thus far the most thorough application of gender equality in transport policy (SOU 2001/44). However, this report is not limited to the transportation sector. One third presents an in-depth analysis of gender equality in Swedish society. The other third deals with gender equality and information technologies.

The section dealing with transportation begins by pointing out the connections between gender equality and sustainable development. The report also emphasizes societal planning, where the localization of residential areas, shops, employment opportunities, and services has a great influence on travel needs. Besides the differences in travel patterns, the report brings up three main points regarding women and men's attitudes towards transportation modes. First, women were more positive to public transportation (SOU 2001/44, 47). Second, regarding relations to travel, women's are more environmental (ibid). Third, the car is more connected to masculine identity than it is to a feminine one (ibid). Despite such a beginning, these more evaluative aspects receive minimal attention. While 'women and men's values' is a phrase that is repeated throughout the entire report, it is never defined or elaborated upon.

The Gender Equality Council report brings up many governmental and organizational factors that deal specifically with gender equality on the structural level. The areas that have been most thoroughly cov-

ered deal with decision-making and planning processes within the state, municipalities, counties, and the private sector and with questions regarding recruiting of personnel and partners informing gender relations. Here governmental responsibility for gender equality is seen in how socio-economic modeling, public bidding, and political representation and decision-making in all of the various parts of the transportation sector, including those outside of the political realm, such as business interests, could best implement or even enforce gender equality (SOU 2001/44, 67). Some of the other suggestions in the report include the gender equality labeling of products and services as another tool to promote entrepreneurs to work towards gender equality, and the use of public bidding as an instrument to promote environmental and social goals such as gender equality (SOU 2001/44, 66). The Gender Equality Council report also suggests solutions in a number of measures that aim to increase gender equality in the transportation sector. Besides the addition of gender equality as a sixth policy goal, the report proposes the establishment of a new governmental authority to deal specifically with gender equality (SOU 2001/44, 7). Other suggestions include setting up specific target goals for transport policy in general, for security and safety issues specifically, and mandates whereby concerned authorities would draw up action plans that outline how to integrate gender equality into the urban planning process (ibid, 7).

Overall, the Gender Equality Council report presents a very thorough analysis regarding both individual behavior and decision-making and representation on the structural level. The report defines gender equality in a very encompassing fashion. However, discussions of the reasons that underlie how and why gender has had and still has such an influence in the transportation sector both with regard to behavior and representation is lacking. This may also

explain why the report gives so little attention to the evaluative and symbolic level of gender analysis, to what cars, movement, and mobility mean to women and men and to Swedish society in general, for it is here that such issues arise.

MAINSTREAMING EFFORTS AFTER THE SIXTH GOAL

In the years from 1997 to 2001, gender equality has gone from being absent in transport policy in Sweden to being a prominent goal. This goal is defined as 'a gender equal transportation where both women's and men's travel needs are satisfied; where women and men have similar influence upon the design, formation and administration of the transportation system; and where women's and men's values receive equal consideration' (Reg. prop. 2001/2002/20). Has gender mainstreaming led to the attainment of this goal? Other goals within the transport policy, such as safety and a good environment, may overshadow gender equality. It is therefore important to see what type of practical impact the addition of the sixth goal has had in the subsequent documents. To do this, I will discuss three additional governmental committee reports. The first, completed before the government adopted the sixth goal, is included to provide a base line comparison. It is a preliminary report written by the Stockholm committee, entitled: *The Transportation system in Stockholm and the surrounding area: Problems and goals for future development* (SOU 2001/51). The second is the preliminary report from the public transportation committee, *Public transportation with people in focus* (SOU 2001/106), and the third, *Long-term Development Strategy for the Transportation System in the Stockholm Region* (SOU 2002/11), is another preliminary report from the Stockholm Committee. I turn now to examine how these reports have integrated gender equality.

The first report by the Stockholm committee deals with goals for the transportation system around Stockholm (SOU 2001/51). As is evident in Table 1, a 1994 governmental directive required that all committee reports include a gender analysis in that they must account for how any proposed measures could influence women and men's positions in society. Despite such clarity and the responsibility of the committee for following such requirements, there is little mention of 'gender equality' or 'women' with a few exceptions. The report does mention both terms in the chapter dealing with the problems in and around Stockholm. It mentions 'women' when discussing problems relating to accessibility. There is only one other mention of women and gender equality occurring in the section on goals. The committee that worked on this report was made up of six women and five men.

This report equates gender equality with women; it mentions women, but there is no analysis, or discussion concerning differences between women and men's relations to transportation. I, for example, would be very interested in seeing if the differences in women and men's travel patterns are the same in Stockholm as they are on the national level. Are they more perhaps, or less? For example, are men more positive to subways than they are to other forms of public transportation such as trams, or commuter trains? Given the significant congestion in and around the Stockholm area, do women and men have similar attitudes towards increasing the capacity of the road system? Many questions can be raised that deal specifically with Stockholm and the unique impact gender might have on transportation issues in that area. Such topics were not covered in this report.

In the second example, which was completed in December of 2001, the government specifically requested the Committee on Public Transportation to base their work on the results of the Gender Equality

Table 1: A chronology of the integration of gender equality in transport policy and planning in Sweden.

Year	Steps in applying a gender perspective to transport policy	Government Publications (Swedish titles)
November 1994	All governmental committees must show the consequences of their proposals on gender equality.	Dir. 1994, 124 Direktiv till samtliga kommittéer
March 1997	A chapter on gender equality is included in the background report that deals with the development of transport policy in Sweden.	SOU 1997, 35 Ny kurs i Trafikpolitiken. Slutbetänkande av Kommunikationskommittén.
March 1998	The government proposes a council to investigate the connections between gender equality and transportation (Jämit).	Prop. 1997/98, 56 Transportpolitik för en hållbar utveckling. Regeringens Proposition.
October 1999	The Gender Equality Council on transportation (and IT) is established. Their main tasks are to collect background information, suggest measures that would increase gender equality, and outline possible ways of financing their suggestions.	Dir. 1999, 83 Kommittédirektiv: Rådet för jämställdhetsfrågor som rör transport- och IT-tjänster
May 2001	The government called for a committee to suggest proposals that would improve the transportation system in and around the Stockholm region.	SOU 2001, 51 Transportsystemet i Stockholmsregionen – problemanalys och målbild för den framtida utvecklingen. Delbetänkande av Stockholmsberedningen
June 2001	The council on gender equality, transportation, and IT presents their final report.	SOU 2001, 44 Jämställdhet – transporter och IT. Slutbetänkande från Jämit – Jämställdhetsrådet för transporter och IT.
October 2001	A parliamentary decision adds gender equality as the sixth goal of transport policy.	Prop. 2001/2, 20 Infrastruktur för ett långsiktigt hållbart transportsystem. Regeringens proposition
December 2001	A governmental directive requires that the committee for public transportation work from a perspective of gender equality, following the results of the Jämit report. They present their preliminary report.	SOU 2001, 106 Kollektivtrafik med människan i centrum. Delbetänkande från Kollektivtrafikkommittén
January 2002	The preliminary report for Stockholm region's transport planning is presented following the latest proposition with gender equality as the sixth goal.	SOU 2002, 11 Långsiktiga utvecklingsstrategier för transportsystemet i Stockholm – Mälardalsregionen. Delbetänkande av Stockholmsberedningen

Comment: All of the above texts are available on the web at <http://www.regeringen.se>

Council report. The Public Transportation Report does note that public transportation can play a key role in attaining an equal as well as a gender equal transportation system, (SOU 2001/106, 10). However, it still integrates women rather superficially into its long-term vision for public transportation (*ibid.*).

Women's relations in the transportation sector once again emphasize travel behavior and representation. Moreover, as noted in previous texts, in the above points 'women' is used to represent 'gender equality', and 'gender equality' is equated with public transportation. As is shown above, this report suggests that improving public transportation equals a more gender equal transportation system and society. However, public transportation is often experienced as being inferior to car use because it is more time consuming and inconvenient. Furthermore, and as far as safety and the complexity of trips is concerned, the private car is more flexible and reduces waiting at bus stops after dark and walking home alone through pedestrian tunnels. The car could thus represent a way of increasing women's mobility and feelings of security, instead of public transportation as noted in the point raised above.

Goal formulations are another area where the Public Transportation report notes gender equality. It sees the goal of gender equality as part of a basic societal goal. As a shared good, public transportation should fulfill the needs of as many members of the population as possible (SOU 2001/51, 48). With regard to mobility, public transportation clearly is the key player in attaining such general equality goals. In relation to this, the report also mentions that women are under-represented in the planning and decision-making processes within public transportation. Since women are a majority of users, women need equal representation in order to incorporate 'women's values' into public transportation facilities (*ibid.*, 51). The re-

port's vision for the future notes that more women should work within public transportation, and public transportation should contribute to more growth, equality, gender equality, and justice (SOU 2001/106, 59, 61).

The report on public transportation also notes the number of women in the public transportation sector in Sweden. However, not only is the public transportation sector a gender-segregated work place, there are also few women in leadership positions. Given that occupations within public transportation have been more stereotypically masculine than feminine, this is not surprising. The whole point of adding gender equality as a sixth goal is to identify and question gender segregation in order to better understand why occupations and leadership positions within the public transportation sector include men more readily than women. But this is not enough. Traffic authorities and planners must also analyze the consequences of women's exclusion from decision-making processes. When women are not involved, taking women's experiences, perceptions, and needs into consideration becomes problematic because men are seen as the unquestioned norm. However, 'adding' women is necessary, but not sufficient. Traffic planners and policy-makers need to take into account both the influence of gender from a user perspective, as well as the influence of gender from within the organizational structures in public transportation itself.

The second example of a report after the sixth goal is from the committee working on sustainable development strategies for transportation in the Stockholm and Mälardals regions. It was presented in January of 2002 (SOU 2002/11). I will refer to it here as the Stockholm Committee's report. The main mandate of this report is to increase the capacity and efficiency of rail, road, and air traffic (including public transportation) in the Stockholm region, reduce the negative impacts of car use, and

improve transportation for the establishment of more residential and work areas in the region. The report notes gender equality as a goal of transport planning.

One finds a clear discrepancy between the level of analysis that the Gender Equality report presents and that contained in this report. Even though this committee was admonished to follow the results of the Gender Equality report, this does not happen. 'Gender equality' appears in approximately 4four places in the 76-pages. The report notes the sixth goal in the introduction. It also mentions women as being over-represented as users of public transportation along with children, young people, and the elderly (ibid, 75). In the section dealing with attaining the goals of transport policy, gender equality – with the term 'gender' conspicuously referring to 'women' – receives one sentence. "Public transportation is good from a gender perspective since women use public transportation more than men, and it also increases access and mobility for young people and the elderly who have less access to cars" (SOU 2002/11, 44). Overall, the Stockholm's Committee report refers to gender equality by noting that it increases with better public transportation. This report hasreport has not incorporated the results of the Gender Equality Council's report, even though it was clearly stated as being part of the task at hand in the committee directive (Dir. 2000/96). As can be seen from the examples given here, there is not a large difference in how gender equality is dealt with prior to and after the sixth 6th goal. While there is an increase in the number of times women and gender equality are mentioned in the documents (see SOU 2001/106), there is no increase in the scope or depth of the analysis.

The results above show that gender mainstreaming is thus far not an overly successful political strategy for attaining a more gender equal transportation system in Sweden. This raises a number of interesting

questions. First, why has the integration of gender equality followed the trajectory outlined above instead of a more progressive, efficacious path? One can also wonder why the results of the Gender Equality Council's report have not hadve more of an impact on the following policy work in the sector. Has a lack of interest from policy makers created this failure? Finally, is there any way to attain success? What types of new approaches would result in a more gender equal transportation system?

The answers to these questions lie in a number of factors, both analytical and structural. The first reason for the failure of gender mainstreaming is the inefficient use of gender as an analytical tool. The simplified use of gender equality does not address the issues at hand, and furthermore frames the problem in an inaccurate and misleading way. If gender mainstreaming is not inclusive of a sufficient definition of gender, it cannot result in an efficient strategy for change. Because gender equality is an analytical tool that subsumes a broad theoretical framework, it is a problematic area for policy implementation in and of itself. Policy goals by definition must be measurable and thereby quantifiable. Gender equality does not fit into such confines. As outlined briefly above, gender inundates almost every corner of social life. It is part of the core of how social relations are organized and constructed. Gender is visible, in the inequalities that exist between women and men. It is also invisible because it so inundates the fabric of social relations that it becomes undetectable, making it a challenge to apply to any sector.

A second reason for the failure of gender mainstreaming is structural barriers. Such barriers include seeing men as the norm, as fulfilling the roll of experts and decision makers, and as the primary and/or prototype users. Such structural barriers may explain why the work done by the Gender Equality Council in 2001 had such a limited impact. Given the overrepresentation of

men in the sector and the difficulties surrounding how policy makers apply gender equality, it is understandable that such a complicated issue that demands another type of engagement is ignored or dealt with cursorily. Policy makers are dealing with five other transport policy goals on an already limited time-frame. Within such a context, there is little or no place for reformulations of issues that policy-makers feel they have already solved within other frames of references such as safety, accessibility and cost efficiency. Consequently, there is no consensus regarding what a gender equal transportation system is composed of, and no strategy for attaining such consensus. The few attempts by governmental agencies have thus far proved themselves very inadequate.

To attain success, it is vital that the work done regarding gender equality within the transportation sector embrace a more analytical definition of gender that is used to formulate concrete guidelines and methods for dealing with gender equality. One such guideline must include a clear definition of what a gender equal transportation system entails in practice, and furthermore motivate why this is necessary. Change can only occur by engaging and motivating planners and decision-makers that gender equality is an important issue that warrants attention. More research on topics regarding the travel needs of women and men, the gendered meanings embedded in transportation technologies, experiences and preferences of the road system, and attitudes towards environmental impact can help create a framework for such guidelines and methods. However, research is not enough. There must also be concrete structural changes in the transportation sector that result in both equal representation in decision-making and planning processes, and in concrete ways to ensure the integration of women's values and experiences in all levels of policy, planning and implementation.

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SUMMARY

October 2001 the Swedish Parliament made a politically unprecedented move by making gender equality the 6th goal of its transport policy. The aim of this article is both to evaluate how policy makers have used gender equality in Swedish transport policy documents, and to judge the efficacy of gender mainstreaming for the attainment of a more gender equal transport sector. The results show that the most thorough integration of gender equality appears in a 2001 report by the Gender Equality Council. All other documents chosen for analysis simply equate gender equality with women, and measures for attaining more gender equality with public transportation. The results of this paper suggest that without both conceptual and structural changes, gender mainstreaming is an ineffectual strategy for promoting gender equality. Overall, concrete guidelines and methods are mandatory if gender mainstreaming is to have a significant effect upon the attainment of a more gender equal transportation system in Sweden.

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