



Gender equality and quality of life –
how gender equality can contribute
to development in Europe.
A study of Poland and Norway



POLISH-NORWEGIAN
RESEARCH
PROGRAMME



UiO : **University of Oslo**



JAGIELLONIAN UNIVERSITY
IN KRAKÓW

ON THE WAY TO GENDER EQUALITY - NEGOTIATING GENDER RELATIONS IN PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SPHERES

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PROJECT INFORMATION

- “Gender equality and quality of life – how gender equality can contribute to development in Europe. A study of Poland and Norway”
- October 2013- March 2016
- Funded by the Polish-Norwegian Research Programme
- Partners: Institute of Sociology at the Jagiellonian University of Krakow, Center for Gender Research (STK) at the University of Oslo, Department of Medical Sociology at Jagiellonian University Medical College and the Institute of Health and Society (Helsam) at the University of Oslo

RESEARCH SAMPLE

- 10 FGLs, each 6-14 participants
- May 2014 to February 2015
- Purposive, theoretical sampling – diversity versus research aims and themes
- Sampling characteristics: gender (mixed/not), age, education, social class, place of living, family situation, activism, not knowing each other/collaborating
- Diversified groups: students, young people from disadvantaged backgrounds, mother and fathers, people on social benefits, people 60+, people from village, female activists, male activists, voluntary firemen brigades, men and women between 30 and 50 years old
- Diversified locations: university/local spots, city/town/rural area, different regions of Poland (Małopolska, Lubuskie, Wielkopolskie, Śląskie)

RESEARCH AIMS

Quantitative (survey) and qualitative (focus groups and media analysis) study on gender equality and quality of life, matched with policy analysis

- mapping gender (in)equalities in diverse areas of life
- highlight the structural, cultural and institutional determinants of gender equality
- identify the conditions that foster positive impact of gender equality on the quality of life and social development
- **explore individual struggle for a satisfactory and healthy life in relation to gender equality, with its benefits and costs**

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

“Empowerment” - *a process that enables women and men to construct their own agendas and form struggles for achieving fundamental and lasting transformation in gender and social power structures*

Three dimensions on which the process may be reflected:

- personal – developing self-esteem and other abilities that help reduce effects of internalized oppression;
- relational – developing ability to negotiate and influence relations;
- collective – cooperation of individuals in order to achieve impact greater than if they acted separately (Rowlands 1997).

Gender equality triggers: moments or conditions that awake the awareness of inequalities and that encourage individuals to introduce change in relation to their position/situation as a woman or a man, or to negotiate gendered relations e.g. in family or at work.

FAMILY

- Gender equality is a **responsibility of an individual** – individualistic framework with little expectations towards the state (besides work-family reconciliation)
- **PROCESS OF CHANGE:** Fight for more equality-based partnership, co-responsibility (in connection to the concept of fairness) through negotiations and conflicts
- **Women** are actors for change (also as intermediaries)
- Change achieved on **the individual level and sometimes on relational level**
- Responsibility of parents raising children – **sphere of values and norms should be free of state interventions** (‘children programming’), but it is not free from social control mitigating the effects and disrupting the process

EXAMPLE

F8: Thinking that women can do everything, already limits you. This thinking exists within women. (...) I tamed [my husband], and I say that at the beginning it wasn't easy of course, because I tried to cook, I tried to do everything as every woman should, because my husband was raised... (...) that he does not have to do anything, so at the beginning it wasn't easy but slowly we pursue. I said that at this moment I can't do certain things and it was setting up slowly, once my husband cooks or make me sandwiches for work. It is wonderful, if necessary he wonderfully takes care of a child; ideal husband, as my friends say. But it required some work, and it required a change in my thinking... (...) and it required cooperation. (FGI with parents in a big city)

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

- Sphere to negotiate gender relations - **an area of alliances and good partnership between men and women, but also** enabling to build alliances and solidarity among women
- Anti-violence organisation participation – empowering at individual, relational and collective level:

F2: But our experiences that we have individually, they later are transforming into projects. When I was a victim, potential victim of rape, so then we did the first project. When there are coming girls with difficult experience of motherhood then we do a project supporting women in postpartum depression. So it is this way that our individual experiences we translate into something (...). So we self-analyse and we analyse our needs and needs of our beneficiaries. This is why we are all the time adjusting. And this is the power of our organisation, that we are flexible and we try to surpass our limitations.

GENDER EQUALITY TRIGGERS

Individual level:

- Experience of discrimination unfair treatment or violence (also of someone close)
- Low quality of life: overburden, no free time, tiredness, social isolation (also of a partner)
- Life events: parenthood, divorce, woman's work

Meso level:

- Collective action, involvement in projects, NGO, community engagement

Institutional level:

- Change in policy e.g. introducing paternity leave

EQUALITY TRIGGERS I - INDIVIDUAL

Importance of a good relationship:

B1: Did you have such a moment [of crisis] that you started to fight for more equality?

R3: Yes, a turning point!

B1: What was it?

*R3: For example, a woman closed at home, [...] I only worked and she was closed in the house, children were sick, and at some point, it cumulated so much that I needed to do something. **There were tensions between us, conflicts even.** [...] If we care for this relationship, more our partnership, family, we needed to do something. [...] and I care.*

Overburden:

R4: [...] Emancipation gave women work, but gave at some point also too much duties, as a women needed to be at work and at home. And I rebelled, I can be just in one place, I cannot do it in two. And then it came my need to train a men to household duties.

B1: From this tiredness?

R4: From tiredness, that I would like to sit after work and read a book.

EQUALITY TRIGGER 2 - MESO

Parenthood

*F7: I am a lawyer. I came to this organisation in a very special situation for me, I was pregnant.(...) (...) After two moths (after giving birth) I came back to the organisation, and it really ... I was a beneficiary in a way. (...) **every being here, talking with girls who each had her own experiences really strengthened me, helped me.** Actually, I experienced motherhood very much, because I felt very limited, because I couldn't do anything without a child, than I also realized why feminists fight for gender equality and that women are labelled. That you gave birth, that you are a mother, you must stay at home with a baby and you can't do nothing more. You can't have other activities than, you can't go for, I don't know, can't have time for yourself, because husband comes and asks "everything's okay?" and goes away. He is not even interested if a child has eaten something or if it is swaddled. So it devastated me a lot that parent for real are not very different beside that that a woman breast-feeds and **I realized why gender equality is so important and why we should talk about it and we should go for it.***

(FGI_6)

EXAMPLE 3

- *We [men] need to switch to different way of thinking! (...) I did not understand it before, but now I understand. Although, it was a long way, my dears, that learning that woman should be in the first place, that you have to appreciate her... (...) Now, just as I began to sober up, I realized that there was a lot of women I hurt. And I admit it, even among us all gathered here. (...) That is why I now have a different approach to women, due to what I've gone through in my life. (FGI_9)*
- *Leading to cooperation with women*

CONCLUSIONS

- Two spheres which the process of empowerment relates to in account of respondents: family and civic sphere
- The effects on collective level are achieved through civic engagement, while the empowerment within family leads to change on the level of relations through individual or couple effort (negotiations and conflict)
- Sphere of participation both as an equality trigger as well as a tool to support process of empowerment
- The process of change may have positive and negative effects on quality of life
- Structural and normative context – „unfinished equality” (Backhans et al. 2009)



Thank you for your attention

See report of the study:
www.geq.socjologia.uj.edu.pl



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