

## INTRODUCTORY NOTES

*Marja Keränen*

This book became a crossing point of different cultural positions and textual practices, - a potentially ambivalent and conflictual position. In terms of keywords and labels it is situated in the field of "womens' studies in political science". It is written by Finnish female political scientists doing research on the relationship between women and politics. Political science has had the questionable honour in being the discipline in which the percentage of women, compared to other disciplines, is very small. That is why the volume is not large. You could call this position marginal both in terms of political science and women's studies.

You can also call the position a fruitful crossing point. Instead of sticking to the easy labels above - keywords for checking whether this is your field or not - you may see intersections and fruitful conflicts, ambivalencies that lead to new questions.

The *first* crossing point is at the intersection of institutionalised fields and textual practices thematizing "politics" and "gender", political science and feminist studies.

From the perspective of political science, issues of gender are marginalized. The view of the "normal" political scientist rests on the selfassured position of the scientist who sees himself as the center of knowledge and lacks reflection about the gendered premises of knowledge production. This marginalization of issues of gender is still - after twenty years of women's studies - a firmly established and repeated practice in the institutions of political science. Nowadays the "deviance" of being a woman is tolerated only as far as the "woman question" can be considered a package of its own at conferences, seminars and reading requirements. Or feminist discussions are placed in the last sentences of a call-for-paper, which define the conditions for allowing feminist discussions in workshops. The closure of political science is still strict in relation to questions of gender. We are not making a new point in saying that this closure, this silence, function in favour of the male gender. The puzzling thing would merely seem to be why the discipline studying power chooses to reproduce and strengthen the perspective of the powerful via its premises and perspectives. Women's studies in political science have not so far made any breakthrough in this respect. The question is whether it ever will, if it chooses

to situate itself "inside" the discipline. Will it merely reproduce the marginal position?

On the other hand, women's studies or feminist studies in other fields seem to have undergone interesting and exciting developments. Like feminist researchers generally, we have been very impressed by interdisciplinary perspectives and theoretical discussions in other fields. This led us to reflect upon our role in the discussion. Feminist studies are, by definition, discussing power relations, but often in such a wide meaning that the contact in relation to "power studies" in political science has vanished. All-ranging power relations are, in the end, not located anywhere. To leave the field of "politics" (whatever that is), is to leave it as it is. We started writing this book from the position where we tried to look for such perspectives in research that are located in the field that is ours but not limited to already fixed views and conceptions.

The *second* crossing point is at the intersection of different cultures. Finland belongs to the periphery of Western Europe, or in a wider and at the moment rapidly changing perspective, it is said to be at a point where the East and the West meet, if not in the margin of both. Though the reference point of our articles is Finland, the "Finland" of our texts isn't perhaps only an isolated case, but a crossing point of different cultures with different gender systems.

In fact, the Finnish gender system and women's position in Finland have been evaluated in quite opposite ways. Finland is often seen as a forefront of equality. A polished picture of Finland shows a country where women got the right to vote first in Europe and third in the whole world after New Zealand and Australia. Women's participation in the labour force has been high for a long time. Women's representation in politics has been relatively high compared to other countries. The Finnish welfare state has been and still is relatively strong, which has special implications for women. On the other hand, the feminist movement has not been very strong in Finland compared to other Western countries. The "radical" form of feminism of the 60's and 70's did not become as strong as in the countries that Finland usually is compared to, countries in Western Europe and North-America.

Why is Finland compared with these countries? This actualizes the problems always present in cultural studies: studies on other cultures as well as on one's own. Do our views and conceptions accurately describe the special characteristics of the culture? Is our view biased by cultural imperialism? Studies on gender systems still have to face enormous problems in becoming sensitive enough for differences between cultures and on the other hand, for changes and fluctuations in meaning-giving processes of gender. This raises questions of "other" kinds of gender systems than the western ones.

*Thirdly*, we may be at the crossing point of what actually can be evaluated as "traditional" or "radical". Different criteria of evaluation lead to quite opposite results. Evaluations of women's position come to depend exactly on what you yourself value. The Finland of our texts can be seen as a country with high equality between women and men but also as a backward country of feminism.

But then, what are the criteria of evaluation? Where do they come from? In fact, our texts show that evaluations of radicality and traditionalism change quite rapidly, in a few decades.

The question of evaluations seems, however, to be much more than a question of changing values. It raises questions of conceptions of time and conceptions of modernity, the master narrative.

Instead of perceiving women as "coming into politics", we, as many feminist researchers, actually think that "women have always been there". The articles do not expect women to "come in" and fill the male norm. The point is merely to see what women actually did, though their actions were not codified in political studies.

To evaluate in a new way, to make visible, what women did is usually coded as simplistic heroisation or return to the "traditional". This actually means that one misses the point. The strength of this step is merely on another level.

The point of doing this change of perspective does not mean just falling back into "traditional values" but something else: the change does not happen in the research object "out there" but in the research perspective. The aim is to widen the modernist perspective to see even other things than modernism or its "other". The aim is to see modernity as a changing and conflictual process. This view surely is more requiring, but also much more "radical".

Breaking the linear time view of modernism leads us to changes in perspective. Describing Finnish political culture in a way that takes women in account may lead to other kinds of results. Instead of seeing change as linear progress we seem to get a picture of cycles and contextual changes, ways of constructing ideology and subjectivity which are bound to specific times and places.

Women's movements and women's studies seem to have been characterised by ruptures and the incontinuity of traditions. Seeing also the "other side of modernity" seems merely to give a picture of cyclical changes, not periods of "invisibility". Going beyond the modernist perception of "women as newcomers" in politics actually seems to reveal that ideas of women's specificity were strong in Finland until they were replaced by the equality ideology of the late 60's, which neutralised gender.

This picture actually seems to be the very negative of the picture that was given to our generation of women. As the 60's was offered to us as a period of active women in the view of the "visible" version of the Finnish gender system history, but from the point of view of the strength of women's own voices, it seems like a rock bottom.

The roughness of the changes has made it impossible for different generations of women to see over the "generation gap". This insight makes it necessary to avoid reproducing hegemonistic views on gender upon the next generations; and give birth to a new closure. The question is, however, why there are such rough changes? What are the changes connected to? Are they chapters in the same story of modernity? Is modernity something much more than linear progress and rationalization?

Leaving the evaluations of traditionality and modernity leads to the *fourth* crossing point: how does gender function as a basic metaphor in the modern project as well as in constituting modern science. Science, and perhaps especially political science, constitutes itself via separating science from non-science, rationality from emotionality, public from private. (f.ex. Haavind, Hanne: *Rationaalisuus ja tunteet*, Naistutkimus 1/1989) Maybe here are some basic reasons for why political science came to reproduce the perspective of the powerful.

The book includes articles of five political scientists from different universities in Finland.

*Jaana Kuusipalo*, drawing upon interview data on women ministers of different generations, discusses the possibility of women to act as subjects in politics, with reference to structural changes in society, in political institutions and changes in gender ideology.

The number of female ministers has risen from one to four per cabinet during the century. Jaana Kuusipalo interviewed ministers of different generations and asked about their experiences of acting as women in high level politics. Her article points out that gender had a clear and strong significance in the process of recruiting ministers. In nominating women members of the Finnish government, a "quota" for women has actually been in use - though a small one. The women ministers of the first generation before the 70's seemed clearly to see themselves as representatives of women and women's interests. This perception actually seemed to disappear because of the equality ideology boom that started in the late 60's. The latest generation, again, tends to perceive itself as explicitly woman politicians.

The channels for recruiting the ministers have changed. The earlier generation was backed up by and recruited from the womens' organizations of the parties, which then lost their importance as representatives of "women's voice". Now the female top politicians seem to get picked up by the male leaders of the parties.

Jaana Kuusipalo's study illustrates the "hidden" relevance of gender in politics. The still prevailing liturgy of gender neutrality in politics is broken down by the systematism of the recruitment practices and criteria. Even the conception of "progress for women" in politics seems, in the light of her study, to be very questionable. Though the number of female ministers has risen to some extent, neither the basis of recruitment nor the possibility of the ministers to act "as women" follow the linear model.

State administration, by definition, is supposed to function objectively and equally. *Helena Karento's* study, focusing on administrative work within Finland's state administration and based both on a large survey and on completed interviews with 25 top Finnish women bureaucrats, sought to identify a hidden gender agenda within bureaucracy. Her study shows that, although administrative work has been feminized, gender segregation continues to

predominate and the power structure has not changed. Her study also indicates that the informal organization seems to strengthen gender segregation.

The ideal conception of bureaucracy separates the official bureaucratic position from the person who encumbers it. The "ideal" bureaucrat is expected to live in a vacuum, where one's work does not mix with one's private life. This has been possible for men since women have taken - and continue to take - responsibility for family and children. Helena Karento's interview data from 1985 indicated that this familial obligation causes problems for women in administrative work and that female bureaucrats of the 80's still have had to choose either to live alone, or to alternate their work and their family responsibilities. Their career choices have been effected by family considerations. So, *does* state administration function objectively and equally?

In order to look beyond the view that "we now are equal", we return to the 60ies. According to Jaana Kuusipalo's study, the principle of women ministers explicitly representing women was broken down in the 60's, as the gender ideology changed into the ideology of equality. The former ideology of difference between genders was now considered "reactionary".

The ideological rupture of the 60's changed the way of perceiving gender. Equality as similarity or gender "neutrality" became the ruling code in perceiving gender - which it still largely is in Finland. The legitimacy of speaking about women's interests or women as different from men disappeared. The strongest effect of this may have been the fact that the differences in social positions became hidden. The state became an institutionalized neutralizer of the conflict between genders; the welfare state expanded in response to women's changing role in society.

In her article, *Anne Maria Holli* discusses how the new gender ideology became established. She studies "Association 9", a relatively small movement, which, however, was very strong in establishing the ideology it represented. The context of this movement is a group of modernization movements of the 60's: the change of the strongly agrarian Finland of the 50's into modernity was partly brought about by a group of grass-root movements, which after a few years of existence became integrated in parties and state administration.

Anne Holli places the movement in the context of the modernist discourse on social policy of the time. Her interpretation of the movement ideology is synchronic instead of the linear view often applied to women's movements. She asks why and how the movement became so strongly state-oriented in its policy and what kind of implications this had.

According to Anne Holli's analysis, the ideology of the movement seems tragically to have been the cause of its' own closure; the dilemma of fading out the gender difference, which led to a great belief in the state as a guarantor of gender equality, and in this way hegemonized equality policy into state action and pacified women and their own voices.

*Tuija Parvikko*, starting from the gender ideology of the 50's, discusses changes in conceptualizations of gender in research. Her analysis offers a basis

for self-reflection on the conceptual premises for research. The meaning given to sexual difference has undergone big changes during the time: the conception of difference of the 50's was replaced by the conception of equality as similarity. After that the conception of women as being different did not evolve until the 80's, and the similarity model still structures ways of thinking in research. Equality is still perceived as something that belongs to the areas of wage labour and public politics. This is to say that the "male" spheres are still considered primary or more important. She pleads for the relevance of the notion of sexual difference, which simply can't be reduced into an alternative to "equality". It is necessary to direct continuous attention to what culture has suppressed and suffocated.

According to Tuija Parvikko's article, the concepts of similarity and difference seem to have undergone some kind of cyclical movement from a period to another.

In the last article *Marja Keränen* discusses theory and research in political science in the context of modernist thinking and the critiques of it. Modernist thinking creates "tradition" and "woman" to its "other", and establishes modernity and masculinity as a norm. The effect of this perception is that the other is made inferior or invisible. The "other" of modernity is a projection, but it is, in fact, also produced as a social position.

The article discusses how the ways of thinking in the social sciences often are structured by this binary logic and the consequences that this has on conceptualizing women's position or women as subjects. In political science, the other side is often found totally lacking. As the "division of work" between different scientific disciplines also reflects this binarity of modernist thinking, the question of "integrating" women into political science becomes very problematic.

The conclusion, then, is that the "other" of modernity must be made visible. This breaks the linear time view of modernity and creates another conception of history where the normativeness of the public and the rational as the opposite of emotional have disappeared. Modernity as a historical period could then be seen as something multiple, processual, cyclical, fluctuating and rich. We could see different kinds of subjectivities, not just others as projections of the powerful. There could be a new interpretation of history and society, in which women are included.

Would it, then, be possible to "integrate" women into political science? The job to be done seems to us much more complicated than just "to add women and stir". We feel that it is not done by the a priori conception of equality biasing the lenses of perception, but maybe with a radical notion of difference, the depth of which we may just have started to grasp. But then, "staring at women as different" may have some serious theoretical consequences for political science. Tomorrow we may know something more about it.