Research Platform - Center for Gender Studies (CGF), Karlstad University

Transformative terrains (2015-)

Background

In the last 30-40 years, the Swedish, Nordic and international gender research, has developed into a new field of knowledge. From its fledgling beginnings in the 1960 - and the 70's gender research currently sets challenging questions that demand urgent responses. The institutionalization and development of research in gender, with its roots in women's studies and the women's movement, has occurred in different waves and differs greatly between universities and countries. In the Swedish and the Nordic region, gender research as a field has largely developed in close relation to the welfare state accompanied with a strong focus on gender equality policies. In other parts of the world political issues regarding sex and sexuality have been clearer in light of greater focus or prominence on ethnicity and religion. In other words, gender research is highly context-bound and situated in time and place.

Gender research has moved from being a largely marginalized field and has assumed a center position in knowledge production for the humanities and social sciences. But its development in other disciplines has not been as consistent. In some disciplines such as law and economics gender research is a minor study which is not the case with others such as sociology and literature. In other areas such as engineering, science and medicine gender research generally remains obscured.

During its establishment, gender studies acquired academic status by challenging sexual and gender conservatism, the same issues that have informed academic knowledge production through decades and centuries. Few other disciplines live and have lived in such intellectual compositions of scientific, ideological, popular and populist views. The discipline has seen various shifts such as that encountered within public discourse from a matter of gender conservatism to feminist research. Gender and sex are deeply related subjects that give rise to a never-ending flow of opinions within the scientific community as well as for the individual. This challenge calls for scientific reflection, self-examination and pedagogical skills to untangle or understand both concepts. It is for this reason that a “skewed” view of the academic world persists. Gender studies is located within traditional disciplines, but it also enjoys independent status as a scientific field. This has had great influence on its development, i.e. the struggle between integrating into university structures, disciplinary organization and parallel development as a discipline. Its autonomy or integration is an ongoing topic of interest. This also characterizes contemporary gender studies, where new questions about knowledge production and the organization of knowledge assume a hybrid form. Lykke (2008:36) speaks of gender research as a post-disciplinary discipline. This means that gender studies is an independent field of knowledge where gender-specific epistemological and methodological issues are generated. But within the research practice gender studies maintain a cross-disciplinary dialogue striving towards a cross-and multidisciplinary transparency.
This also relates to the aim and goal of the Center for Gender Studies at Karlstad University, i.e. the development of gender studies research in dialogue with other disciplines at the university and within our GEXcel International Collegium of Advanced Transdisciplinary Gender Studies, (Gexcel.org), which is a three university cooperation with the Centre for Feminist Social Studies at Örebro University, and the Institute of Thematic Gender Studies at Linköping University.

Finding acknowledgment within the scientific community is important for gender studies ambitions to further develop traditional knowledge and to lead and actively engage in research conversations with other disciplines. This also follows a long feminist and gender studies discussion of knowledge production striving to distinguish the personal, epistemological and methodological starting points from which scientific knowledge is produced. To make visible co-responsibility and participation means that the researcher cannot opt out of the research process and that there is always a subjective dimension of knowledge production. This implies that scientific knowledge is always embodied and produced from a location of starting points which is a basic assumption in gender scientific knowledge production and is an important point of departure for the research at CGF.

Gender research at CGF has been an on-going process since 1990, although under a different theme titled Center for Equality studies. From 2006, the center became known as the Center for Gender Studies (CGF). Generally speaking gender studies have developed under volatile circumstances and the history at CGF illustrates a similar turbulence. From being a small center at the then University of Karlstad, CGF has evolved to become an independent research center at Karlstad University. The mission in 1990 included "(...) within the University and in collaboration with various external stakeholders to initiate, develop and support research and development, education and skills development in the area of gender equality" (Rosenberg 2012:9). The center as it is today profiles highly at the University. In maintaining its tradition, the center successfully merges research with practical change. Researchers at CGF participate continuously in action-or contract research, training or work as experts, assessors and lecturers within and beyond the University’s milieu.

The field’s main research paths can schematically be categorized into critical gender research, feminist research, masculinity research, queer and sexuality research (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender issues). As an overall cross sectional discipline, CGF is in varying degrees engaged in research and education across the gender studies field of knowledge.

What unites these broad scientific fields is the seemingly simple question, what is sex / gender? That is how are we 'shaped' into men, women, how does our sexuality shape our lives and identities, how does society both symbolically and structurally organize according to what are perceived and constructed as male and female chores, jobs and locations. This is not to suggest that biological differences between men and women are overlooked, but it is important to critically examination how men and women live their lives based on the given yet changing societal conditions encountered at different historical moments. On this basis, the researchers at CGF jointly developed a research platform of transformative terrains as profiled by the current skills and previous research. The platform is based on different streams of previous research at CGF namely; Masculinities in Motion (1995-1998), Gender Relations in motion - a research program in the profile area of Gender Studies (2001-
Current research

The research areas are thematically organized and linked in varying degrees to the existing research and profile at Karlstad University and within GEXcel.

At the Centre we organise research in four different thematic research streams:

- Transgender Studies
- Masculinity Studies
- Global Mobilities
- Action for organisational change

These profiles overlap and CGF’s researchers are engaged in several projects in various fields at Karlstad University and not least within GEXcel. GEXcel aims to develop transnational, intersectional and transformative gender research, and to become a meeting place for different generations of excellent gender scholars. Research in GEXcel is organised in ten different research fields, each containing different research strands and concrete projects conducted at each of the universities or in cooperation between the universities. GEXcel houses over seventy researchers, and an international reference group with world leading scholars. GEXcel is also closely connected to the research InterGender: Consortium and Research School in Interdisciplinary Gender Studies (Intergender.net).

The goal for CGF is to conduct research within these four profiles relating and opening them up to the ever changing gender-scientific issues and theories. It is important to emphasize that the research platform is a living document that will be subjected to periodic revisions.

Transgender Studies

CGF – The Centre for Gender Studies at Karlstad University is one of the first European Gender Studies Centres including Transgender Studies as one of its main profile areas. As Transgender Studies presents a rapidly emerging and increasingly influential field in contemporary transdisciplinary and intersectional Feminist and Gender Studies, CGF is aiming to be at the forefront of contemporary knowledge production on non-binary, gender-dissident and non-conforming sexed/gendered subjectivities. With establishing Transgender Studies as one of its four main profile areas CGF buttresses the anchoring of Transgender Studies in the Nordic Gender Studies environment.

As the research at CGF is generally devoted to theorising and practicing possibilities for change, as well as thinking outside of the normative gender-binary paradigm, Transgender Studies poses a key factor defining the research and teaching landscape of CGF. CGF teaches
Transgender Studies in separate modules as well as is it part of introduction courses on Gender and Feminist Studies.

CGF’s research is situated within a Gender Studies network called GEXcel (the International Collegium of Transdisciplinary Gender Studies, www.gexcel.org). Transgender Studies as a profile area is just newly entering GEXcel with an upcoming research field under the same name. GEXcel as a collaboration between 3 Swedish universities is working together with world leading scholars in the diverse field of Gender and Feminist Studies – Transgender Studies will soon be implemented in it.

CGF regularly stages international workshops, research residencies, conferences and seminars, organised on a regular basis by researchers as well as students. Several events per year focus on Transgender Studies that interlink different CGF profile areas and this defines the regular working structure at CGF, for instance the recent symposium on Trans/Masculinity Studies (autumn 2015) that mapped the two fields in the Nordic context and debated its intersections.

CGF houses *Norma: International Journal for Masculinity Studies* (Taylor & Francis) which is one of the leading journals in the research field and a special edition on Trans/Masculinities will come out in Autumn 2016. CGF also publishes the national Swedish Gender Studies journal *Tidskrift för genusvetenskap* that also regularly addresses aspects in and related to the field of Transgender Studies.

The research area of Transgender Studies at CGF links to the following researchers:

- Wibke Straube, PhD
- Signe Bremer, PhD (soon to be affiliated!)

Current Research Projects:

- Signe Bremer, PhD
- Wibke Straube, PhD

Publications linking to Transgender Studies at CGF:

Signe Bremer:

- Other scientific
• Bremer, Signe (2007). “Kan man ta tempen på genus?! Om genusklimat & makt i psykvårdens könsbytesutredningar”. I: Humanistdagboken, Göteborgs universitet

Wibke Straube:

Global Mobilities

Global Mobilities (GM) is a crucial theme for Karlstad Centre for Gender Research (CGF) in recognition of this cutting edge aspect of contemporary research in gender studies. GM is a central feature of modernity. Modernity has produced ever increasing movements of people, knowledge, technology, value systems and cultural and other material objects. This aspect of modernity produces both reveals and produces new tensions in power relations across the global and within national contexts. One example is the influx of migrants to Europe which has an impact on governance and welfare states, as well as social and personal interactions. Karlstad CGF specifically wishes to focus upon this highly complex social phenomenon, to foreground this increasingly important aspect of modern life. The central concern is to attend to GM and social change, to advance gender equality and diversity.
Research at CGF within this theme has typically centred upon topics revolving around knowledge transfer, access to and use of “traditional” and modern communication technologies. The intention of this research has been to reduce inequalities with regard to information and political and social participation. For example on-going research project has been to consider the opportunities that might be offered by internet based technologies to marginalised farmers and women in the informal economy in Uganda, as well as educated middle-class women in Swaziland. Moreover CGF has been involved in the investigation of intersections between ethnicity, education and gender presented by women in computing sciences in Malaysia. Male mechanics in Malaysia have presented a further research direction enabling examination of the relationships between ethnicity, masculinities, and technology. CGF pays particular attention to the cultural embeddedness of technology and power relations in these study sites.

Current research initiatives include a project which makes use of the notion of eduscapes (Forstorp & Mellström, 2013) to explore transnational flows of ideas and people connected through modern communication technologies in the higher education sector, in India, Australia and Russia amongst other sites. In addition CGF contributes critical perspectives to contemporary assumptions regarding technological determinism, thereby problematizing the impact of the explosive growth of mobile technologies in developing regions such as East Africa.

A future aim is to expand the spaces for considering the GM theme by investigating new modes of developing intimate relationships by the growing use of internet dating sites. CGF intends to research the possibilities for innovation in gendered practices and identities arising through technologically dependant channels. In our undergraduate teaching CGF employs the GM theme in discussion of globalisation, welfare and (in)equalities.

Researchers:
Caroline Wamala
Ulf Mellström
Chris Beasley

Current projects:
Ulf Mellström
2012-2015

Transforming the Northern future through student exchange? Building of a research network on internationalization of education, The Norwegian Research Council together with Associate professor Marit Sundet (PI) and seven other Swedish, Norwegian and Russian researcher.

2014-2017

”Beyond the National University. Corporate universities in India, Dubai, and Brazil” together with professor Per-Anders Forstorp at Linköping University. (funded by the Swedish Research Council (Vetenskapsrådet) 2014-2017)
Projects in the Pipeline:
Innovations in intimacy—Internet dating in an international frame: A comparative study of online dating practices in Australia, United Kingdom, Denmark and Uganda.

Previous projects

2012-2014

“Globalized eduscapes: students, learning and mobility in knowledge society” together with professor Per-Anders Forstorp at Linköping University. Funded by the Swedish Research Council (Vetenskapsrådet) 2010-2014.

2013-2014

mEmpowerment - Mobile communication for empowering of women and girls in Uganda. Funded by Åke Wiberg Foundation.

Publications linking to this theme:


Mellström, Ulf (2009) ”The intersection of gender, race, and cultural boundaries or why is computer science in Malaysia dominated by women?” Social Studies of Science 39/6, 885–907.

Masculinity studies

At the Centre for Gender Studies at Karlstad University we have a long tradition of masculinity studies or put differently: gender studies focussing on men and masculinities. In
this research stream we address a collective of (cis) men as well as many diverse forms of culturally constructed masculinities. From our perspective, masculinity is an (onto)epistemological nodal point and a political condition where contemporary questions of power, difference, and agency can be effectively addressed and understood. Our aim is to address these issues in a variety of research fields.

The research at CGF is generally committed to possibilities for change, and thinking beyond and differently with regard to gender binaries. Our research on men and masculinities continuously address these fundamental and vital epistemological and methodological questions of how to achieve sustainable change in terms of gender equality and social justice. Our geographical scope is global and we strongly encourage comparative cross cultural work that perspectivises local gender orders and normativity. We clearly situate our research activities within a global feminist framework.

Over two decades we have conducted studies of men and masculinities in numerous contexts and empirical settings. Much of our work has addressed what we have coined ‘hardcore masculinities’ and is defined as forms of masculinity that have resisted gendered change and reform, and cling onto traditional patriarchal core values in social communities that exclude women and non-hegemonic forms of masculinity (Mellström 2011). We have conducted research of such occupational and social communities in specific topics such as masculinity and technology, crisis management, and ICTs in different parts of the world. Previous projects include action oriented research in relation to the rescue services, factory work, mechanical engineering, computer science, and the gender segregated labour market.

Our research are further situated within GEXcel (the International collegium of transdisciplinary Gender Studies, gexcel.org) where we collaborate with world leading scholars in masculinity studies. We invite scholars in the area to visit our research environment for shorter or longer periods. CGF also houses Norma: International Journal for Masculinity Studies (Taylor & Francis), which is one of the leading journals in the research field. With GEXcel and Norma as our base we organise, on a regular basis, workshops and seminars on masculinity studies with the explicit aim of widening the theoretical and empirical scope of the research field. Recent workshops have for instance focussed masculinity and risk, trans/masculinity studies, and mobilities.

Current research projects include “Exposure and vulnerability in focus. Strategies for increased security in homes and on leisure time” and (Funded by the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency overlapping with the theme of Action for organisational Change) and “New actors on the global market for higher education” (Funded by the Swedish Research Council, and overlapping with theme of global mobilities)

**Teaching:**
Män, manligheter och förändringsprocesser 7,5 credits (Men, masculinities, and processes of change), CGF.

Researchers:

Professor Ulf Mellström
Professor Chris Beasley
Dr. Line Holth
Dr. Magnus Åberg

Selected publications linking to this theme:


Action for organizational change

The Centre for Gender Studies (CGF) at Karlstad University has had a long standing focus upon investigating and practically developing different change processes in organisations of various kinds from a feminist perspective. This focus on “Action for Organisational Change” involves analysing, enabling, and generating social change. The Centre has, for instance, undertaken several substantial research and development projects on gender equality work and on strategies for responding to resistance arising from that gender equality work. The focus of this theme is also thoroughly integrated into the Gender Studies syllabi.

Within this thematic stream the intention is to avoid the common divide between theoretical analysis and empirical application. This stream focusses on theorising organisations and methodologies to achieve change, to offer teaching in the area, as well as advancing its parallel concentration upon practical implementation processes. Research on organisations and change tends to either be very descriptive and instrumental—with limited attention to analysis, socio-political implications, and portability of the research—or it is limited by a managerial organisational orientation. CGF’s research profile challenges these limitations in much existing work in the field. The Centre aims to connect robust and socially located theoretical analysis with reflexive practical implementation in research on organisations and change. In this context, CGF offers a critical approach which raises questions concerning notions of change in organisations, and engages with cutting-edge international debates regarding the meaning of gender equality, and the significance of intersectionality and gender diversity.

CGF is presently a partner in “The Nordic network for comparative studies of the “Nordic gender equality model”. The “The Nordic network for comparative studies of the Nordic gender equality model”, is a collaboration between different universities and researchers in the Nordic countries. Within that network researchers share knowledge around challenges and perspectives in Nordic gender equality policy and practice.

CGF has also played an active part in the project, “Diversity Laboratory”, which concentrated on the regional actors in Värmland and explored inclusive and exclusive practices within organisational innovation and entrepreneurship. One illustrative objective
here was to look for possible avenues for change, both within the established partner organisations and also beyond these organisations, such as developing an alternative space for ideas and people. The project was running during 2014 – 2015 and CGF is involved in exploring possibilities for further work in this area.

The CGF approach is to research possibilities for a feminist approach to social change and then enact implementation strategies to advance those possibilities. By gaining knowledge about how organisations situate themselves, the Centre is also able to contribute new methodologies for change. The theme of ‘Action for organisational change’ is framed by the recognition that feminist research on social life is not merely about understanding and clarifying social processes and power relations but importantly about social innovation to advance social justice.

TEACHING
Perspectives about organisational change are discussed in different courses at CGF:
A-course/Gender Studies 1 - submodule 3: “Organisation, resistance and change”, 7, 5 ECTS.
Gender, gender equality – theory and practice.
Groundlevel, evening course: “Leadership, organisation and gender”. 7,5 ECTS.
Groundlevel, evening course: “Gender and gender equality in theory and practice”, 7,5 ECTS.
(Fall of 2016)

Researchers
Dr. Eva Amundsdotter
Eva Amundsdotter is a senior lecturer at the CGF. Her thesis “To develop and alter the order – action oriented gender research for gender equal organisations” is written in the field of Gender, Organisation and Change. Five network groups of change leaders at different workplaces in Sweden were working with learning, change and to create knowledge about what was going on in their respective organisations.

Dr Line Holth
Dr Line Holths thesis Straight roads and winding roads: on gender, engineers, and technology careers is written in the research field of human work science, gender and technology, where the engineers, the higher education of engineers and technicians' labor market is focused.
She is the director of the CGF-environment.

Dr. Christine Beasley
Dr Chris Beasley is Professor in Politics and from 2009-2013 she was inaugural Co-Director of the Fay Gale Centre for Research on Gender at the University of Adelaide. Professor Beasley is the founder of the Centre.
She is connected to CGF in several ways, as a guest professor and as a part of the Gexcel

Manuel Almberg Missner
Manuel Almberg Missner is active as a teacher at CGF. Besides teaching, Manuel is working with consulting, lecturing and moderating around themes as gender, gender equality, masculinities and norms.

**Current Research Projects:**

“Exposure and vulnerability in focus. Strategies for increased security in homes and on leisure time”.

The project is cooperation between Centre for Gender Studies (CGF) and the Centre for Personal Safety (CFPS) at Karlstad University. The project is funded by the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency (MSB).

**Previous Research Projects:**

**Two major research programmes on gender and the rescue services. (The Gender Coded Rescue Services and Gender, Rescue Services, and Organisation)** The projects were focussing the male dominated rescue services and possibilities for a more gender balanced organisation and how to include more women. (Funded by The Swedish Civil contingencies Agency, MSB, 2010-2014 )

**Approaching resistance towards gender equality work.**

Applied research on gender equality work of relevance to partners involved in the project (November 2013 – September 2015)

CGF was engaged in a project concerned with advancing strategies responding to resistance to gender equality programs in organisations. This applied research project on gender equality work has involved a range of different organisational partners, such as Rescue Services, Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency, MSB and Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions, SKL and is furthering theoretical, methodological and community based scholarship and policy development.

**Project JämVäxt 2.0 [Equal Growth 2.0] and centres on the transition from education to work.**

The project was funded by the Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth (European Regional Development Funds), Region Värmland and Karlstad University. The owner of the project was The Center for Gender Studies (CGF).

**Publications linking to “Organisational Change”:**

Eva Amundsdotter


Learning community in an innovation system. Amundsdotter, E (2010) I Fogelberg Eriksson,
Line Holth


Holth, Line, Jordansson, Birgitta & Gonäs, Lena (2012). Gender and the division of labour in a swedish context. Gender and change : power, politics and everyday practices. S. 75-94


Åberg, Magnus, Strid, Sofia & Holth, Line (red.) (2014). Genusvetenskapliga gr). Gefia & HoTidskrift för genusvetenskap. 2014:1, s. 3-121

Christine Beasley

Books Published


A.Bletsas and C. Beasley eds, Engaging with Carol Bacchi: Strategic Interventions and Exchanges, University of Adelaide Press, 2012


Chapters in Books


**Articles in Refereed Journals accepted for publication**


**Articles in Refereed Journals**

C. Beasley and Benito Cao, ‘Transforming First-Year University Politics Students into Critical Thinkers’, *ERGO*, 2(3), 2012: 41-52

(nonHERDC) C. Beasley and M. Warin, ‘Introduction’, *Health Sociology Review*, Special Issue: Re-imagining Preventive Health—Theoretical Perspectives, Guest Editor, 17 (4), August 2008


C. Bacchi and C. Beasley, ‘The Limits of Trust and Respect: Rethinking Dependency’, *Social Alternatives*, vol. 24, no. 4, 2005

**Manuel Almberg Missner**
