Mieke Verloo*

MAINSTREAMING GENDER EQUALITY IN EUROPE. A CRITICAL FRAME ANALYSIS APPROACH

ABSTRACT

This article analyzes implementation problems in gender mainstreaming as accentuated by a multi-level setting and assumes that one of the major factors affecting implementation problems is a discursive one. Against this backdrop a methodological approach is presented to study such divergences in policy frames on gender equality. Based upon recent literature, the article first outlines the necessity for a comparative methodology to analyze (gender equality) policy frames, and identifies some major problems in the construction of such methodology. The article then presents and explains Critical Frame Analysis as a promising methodological approach for studying and comparing the framing of gender inequality as a policy problem across Europe in a systematic way. Critical Frame Analysis builds upon social movement theory, gender theory and policy theory. This article can be considered to be an introduction to the special issue, as all articles refer to Critical Frame Analysis methodology as it has been used in the MAGEEQ research project.

GENDER MAINSTREAMING AND THE POLITICS OF IMPLEMENTATION[1]

Since Beijing 1995, gender mainstreaming has heralded the beginning of a renewed effort to address what is seen as one of the roots of gender

inequality: the genderedness of systems, procedures and organizations. The world-wide adoption of the Gender Mainstreaming strategy can be traced back to the UN-conference in Beijing, and is connected to earlier international agreements, such as CEDAW. Supranational organisations such as the Nordic Council of Ministers, the Council of Europe, the World Bank and the ILO started initiatives directed at their respective constituencies. Since Beijing, the EU has been among the major pioneers in developing Gender Mainstreaming, by starting a process of Gender Mainstreaming within the European Commission itself, by diffusing information to Member States and candidate states at a number of conferences and seminars (in Brussels, Bled, London), and through the reorganisation of EU-policies so that Member States could hardly avoid engaging in Gender Mainstreaming (as in the case of the regulations for the Structural Funds). After Beijing, several national governments announced that Gender Mainstreaming will be adopted as part of their continuous efforts to achieve gender equality. Countries such as Sweden and the Netherlands took the lead in developing specific tools. All of the old member states and many new member states of the European Union have started to implement gender mainstreaming. The 1997 Treaty of Amsterdam places equality between women and men among the explicit tasks of the European Union and obliges the EU to promote gender equality in all its tasks and activities. The Gender Mainstreaming approach that has been legitimated by this Treaty is backed by legislation and by positive action in favour of women (or the «under-represented sex»). Gender equality policies have not only been part and parcel of modernising action in the European Union, but they can be expected to continue to be so (Rossili, 2000). With regard to gender inequality, the EU currently has both a formal EU problem definition, and a formalised set of EU strategies.

While the starting position for gender mainstreaming seems very positive, when it comes to the implementation of gender equality policies problems abound, both at the national and the EU level. To give just one example, it took the Netherlands –usually very supportive of the EU– 14 years to implement article 119 on Equal Pay (Van der Vleuten, 2001). Moreover, it has been documented that overall EU action has run counter to its goal of gender equality. Overall EU action has weakened women's social

rights more seriously than men's (Rossili, 2000). The introduction of Gender Mainstreaming –the incorporation of gender and women's concerns in all regular policymaking– is meant to address precisely this problem of a contradiction between specific gender policies and regular EU policies. Yet, in the case of the Structural Funds, for instance, Gender Mainstreaming has also been used to further reduce existing funds and incentives for gender equality (Rossili, 2000).

In the definition of the Council of Europe, which is the most frequently used definition, *gender mainstreaming is the (re)organisation, improvement, development and evaluation of policy processes, so that a gender equality perspective is incorporated in all policies at all levels and at all stages, by the actors normally involved in policy-making* (Council of Europe, 1998). Gender Mainstreaming is a typical example of a strategy that involves multiple levels in governance, but also multiple shifts in governance. Multiple levels because it involves not only national or regional state bureaucracies, but also supranational and international players. Multiple shifts in governance, because the strategy aims at a reorganisation of policy processes, and at a shift in responsibilities. Gender Mainstreaming involves individual and institutional actors from inside and outside the state bureaucracy, including fields such as science and economy. The strategy of Gender Mainstreaming aims at a multiplication of the actors, policy areas and policy levels that are involved in working towards gender equality (Council of Europe, 1998). The obvious question then is how multi-level governance affects the development and implementation of such a comprehensive and ambitious strategy.

This paper analyzes implementation problems in gender mainstreaming as accentuated by a multi-level setting and assumes that one of the major factors affecting implementation problems is a discursive one. Divergences in policy frames around gender equality are one of the elements connected to implementation problems. Against this backdrop the present paper presents a methodological approach to study such divergences in policy frames on gender equality, which is based on the MAGEEQ research project.

IMPLEMENTING GENDER MAINSTREAMING, FRAMING AND THE MEANING OF GENDER EQUALITY

Gender Mainstreaming is a recent strategy, and the few studies that do exist at the moment stress that it is too early for evaluation (Mazey, 2000). There are only a limited number of more reflective studies, and very little academic research has been done. This section will review the most promising ones,

showing that it is striking that their conclusions all seem to point in similar directions. As Behning and Serrano Pascual (2001) show the understanding and adaptation of the Gender Mainstreaming concept varies widely in the Member States of the EU, ranging from the equation of the concept with equal opportunities and equality to its being understood as affirmative action, equal treatment, equal participation, and reform of government. As a result, there is no common general understanding of the concept across the various Member States, and –even more importantly– most policies implemented in Member States are just a continuation of previous policies. The main problem is a focus on women as the subject of change, and a focus on fitting women into the status quo rather than transforming the status quo. In Spain, for instance, Gender Mainstreaming in practice is just the reinforcing of positive discrimination policies. Behning and Serrano Pascual stress the importance of a clear understanding of Gender Mainstreaming because an adequate implementation requires a gender perspective in all decision-making processes. As they analyse Gender Mainstreaming in the EU as a top-down strategy –which implies an attempt at harmonisation of European gender cultures– they regret the failure of institutional actors to include actors from the women's movements in the development of the strategy. They argue in favour of a stronger participation of citizens and women's movements in order not to lose important expertise and imple- mentation opportunities. Moreover, they conclude that it is particularly important to clarify what the meaning of Gender Mainstreaming is. The work of Behning and Serrano Pascual shows that discussions on gender mainstreaming as a strategy need to involve discussions about its goal. What is conceptualised as a «gender equality perspective» in the definition needs an elaboration in each and every gender mainstreaming initiative. In the differentiated European countries, there seems to be a reality of distinct «gender equality frames», different and sometimes competing ideas about what the problem is, about who is responsible for the problem, about what are the causes and effects, and about what would be a solution.

In Hafner-Burton's and Pollack's (2000) analysis of Gender Main- streaming in the European Union, it is pointed out that until recently, the EU has pursued its ambitious agenda on gender equality mainly along the comparatively narrow neo-liberal front of workplace legislation, but that it has begun to pursue a broader agenda in the 90s, with potentially important consequences for European women and for the EU as a progressive polity. Their analysis shows the dominance of framing as an important aspect of explaining the occurrence and successful starting (or the absence and failure to

start in other parts of the EU) of the implementation of Gender Main-streaming. They use the concept of strategical framing as a dynamic concept that enables to see how different actors adapt existing policy frames to pursue their respective goals. (Strategical framing is defined as attempting to construct a fit between existing frames and the frames of the change agent). Their case studies support two general conclusions: firstly the variability of results, and secondly, the ability of strategic actors to overcome structural obstacles through a skilful process of strategical framing. In their final conclusions, they warn the EU that their Gender Mainstreaming efforts might turn into an integrationist approach – integrating women and gender issues into specific policies rather than rethinking the fundamental aims of the EU from a gender perspective. They see this as the inevitable result of the strategical framing processes who «sell» Gender Mainstreaming as an effective means to the ends pursued by the policy makers, rather than as an overt challenge to those ends. Especially since the EU is one of the most successful implementers so far, they argue that this threatens the transformative potential of Gender Mainstreaming.

Braithwaite (1999) comes to similar conclusions as the research discussed earlier. She states that, since the introduction of a gender mainstreaming approach, many important chances of Structural Funds intervention in terms of gender equality are missed, and that the relevance of gender is sometimes highly contested. She stresses that one of the general risks of the Gender Mainstreaming approach is linked to the absence of precise objectives on reduced gender inequalities. As a result, the treatment of gender can be easily located within, and then be subject to, other policy goals, such as employment creation, economic growth or poverty reduction. So far, she says, the main objective in terms of the Structural Funds and gender equality is to improve female participation in the labour market. Reconciliation of home and professional life is then treated as a means to facilitate women's more active participation in the labour market, rather than as an equality objective in its own right. Contrary to the rhetoric of Gender Mainstreaming, in the practices analysed by Braithwaite, efficiency and effectiveness serve as more convincing arguments for integrating equality concerns into Structural Funds programmes than «equity».

Another review work focuses on specific Gender Mainstreaming tools. The EU's expert group on Gender and Employment EGGE published a report on Gender Impact Assessment (GIA) and the European Employment Strategy (Rubery and Fagan 2000). GIA is one of the most developed instruments for Gender Mainstreaming (Verloo and Roggeband, 1996). A

GIA identifies positive or negative outcomes of proposed policies in terms of gender equality. GIAs are meant to inform decision-making at an early stage so as to be able to reorient or mitigate policies if necessary. As an instrument, GIA is developing at an uneven pace across the Member States, the group concludes, with Sweden and the Netherlands taking the lead. The report stresses that even as more practical elaborations of the GIA methodology are necessary, what is most urgent is a further conceptual elaboration. What the report calls an «upwards» elaboration, means that GIA guidelines need to be located in a broader and more explicit theoretical statement of how gender inequality is reproduced in society. The «downwards», more practical elaboration then follows from this conceptual framing of gender relations and gender inequality. According to the report, a more developed conceptual framework can better inform GIA, and lead to improved GIA methodology, in order to avoid GIAs that merely make gender visible, but fail to be gender sensitive. This is all the more important because they find there is a lack of expertise in policy evaluation in general, and of methods for Gender Mainstreaming evaluation specifically. Another major issue that is brought to the fore by the report is how to combine a focus on gender in GIA and attention to other forms of structural inequality. They point out that this question will gain increasing prominence because the new European Social Policy Agenda sets out a number of proposed actions on discrimination on other grounds than gender. This calls for a sound –but until now absent– understanding of dimensions of gender inequality as related to other structural inequalities, such as ethnicity, age, class, sexual orientation and physical ability. Jill Rubery and Colette Fagan request more attention for the goal of gender mainstreaming. Moreover, they call for more theory on what is the problem of gender equality, and they call for attention to the links between gender inequality and other structural inequalities.

The studies and experiences discussed above show that there is a tendency to downplay the goal, to act «as if we all know» what the goal is, to act «as if we all agree» what the goal is. The studies actually prove that there is no such consensus, that the goal can be gender equality, or equal opportunities, or attention for diversity, or more women in higher positions, and so on. Concerning implementation, they show that disparities and distortions are linked to shifts and differences in gender equality concepts. This can be further accentuated through processes of strategical framing, because this most often leads to processes of goal adaptation. Strategical framing as a concept refers to strategical efforts to link frames of social movements to those of prospective constituents or adversaries (see Snow

and Benford, 2000 for an overview). In gender mainstreaming strategical framing refers to a process of linking a feminist goal (such as gender equality) to some major goal of an organization that should engage, or is engaging in gender mainstreaming, thereby securing the allegiance of these organizations to gender mainstreaming. To give an example: there is strategical framing in presenting gender mainstreaming as an approach that is capable of advancing gender equality while *at the same time* increasing organizational effectiveness (Meyerson and Kolb, 2000). Similarly, it is not uncommon to present gender mainstreaming as an approach that can jointly achieve gender equality and excellence in science (Osborn et al., 2000), or gender equality and more democracy (Council of Europe, 1998), or to say that more gender equality will also mean more economic growth (known as «the business case for gender equality»).

Nonetheless, the major underlying challenge is the character of the gender problematic. As a political problem, the gender problematic has been described as a «messy» one: there is no consensus as to what the problem is, where it is located, who is responsible for it, or what could be a solution to the problem. Should the goal be Equality? Or Difference? Or should it be Autonomy? Or should the goal be framed from the perspective of the ethics of care? In politics, in civil society and among academic experts, many competing visions and analyses on gender equality can be found, even if they have been described mainly for the West (Lorber, 1994; Castells, 1997). There have been ideological cleavages within Europe along the North-South axis (for instance in the parity debate), and there is another one that is becoming more and more visible along the East-West divide. The Enlargement confronts the EU with a new set of countries where gender inequality problems are framed in yet another way (Jalusic, 2001; Havelkova, 1998). Even among those who have viewed employment as the principal path towards gender equality different strategies have prevailed, seen as influenced by differences in national political context (Orloff, 2001). Differences in framing gender inequality (or feminist ideology) are obviously connected to political and cultural contexts, and to political and cultural histories and ideologies.

In theory and practice, there are ongoing fundamental debates on what constitutes feminism, on developing normative feminist concepts, on identifying ideological and strategical traps, and on constructing new strategies. These debates have existed all along the history of feminism, as feminism is a cluster of contesting views on the gender problematic (Arneil, 1999). Academic studies have been focusing on discursive analyses of

various feminisms, but so far these analyses have not been linked to policy making (Kemp and Squires, 1999; Lorber, 1994; Klinger, 2001; Castells, 1997). At this moment, there is no common framework to provide for a productive exchange in these debates, which could lead to a further improvement, development and evaluation of gender equality policies. Such a framework would also be needed for evaluating the design and implementation of policies, an until now often-overlooked yet fundamental part of the evaluation of gender equality policies (Bustelo, 2001).

THE NECESSITY FOR CRITICAL FRAME ANALYSIS

Building upon this, it seems of crucial importance for the study of gender equality policies[2] to grasp and understand this diversity in gender equality frames, in order to recognize the role that this diversity plays in either distortions or success in gender mainstreaming. The presentation of gender equality as a common similar goal and gender mainstreaming as a common similar strategy across Europe needs to be questioned, and studies should focus on describing and understanding the actual variety of understandings of this goal and strategy at the national level. The multitude of meanings of gender equality and gender mainstreaming in practice needs to be deconstructed, and in order to do so concepts need to be developed that enable distinctions between divergent meanings that are now covered under these general terms.

   This paper proposes such a methodology for the comparative analysis of the framing of gender inequality as a policy problem, Critical Frame Analysis, building upon theoretical notions chosen from policy theory, social movement theory and gender theory. Unlike other approaches, frame analysis starts from the assumption of multiple interpretations in policy-making, and addresses problems of dominance and exclusion connected to policymaking. Implementation of policies is seen as a political process, subject to all mechanisms of political processes. Under conditions of multi-level governance, implementation is a complex process of transfer and translation: unitary concepts or frames, as presented in political decisions and policies at (sub) national and supranational levels contrast with a dynamic reality of multiple frames at national levels. This contrast between

---

   2. In this paper, as in the whole MAGEEQ project the term «gender equality» as in gender equality policies is treated as an empty signifier. The term can cover any framing of gender inequality as a policy problem and is not to be seen as having any given or fixed meaning.

an assumed stable unity and a real dynamic diversity is seen as a «black box» of distortions in the implementation of policies. The shifts that occur during implementation often coincide with exclusion processes. Discourse in general is a power mechanism, and frames used in policymaking can be expected to have (positive and negative) impacts in terms of power relations (Foucault, 1971). As the role of policy framing in inconsistencies and exclusion processes has been underexposed so far in academic research more innovative knowledge on the role of policy frames in implementation seems to be needed (Triandafyllidou and Fotiou, 1998).

Critical Frame Analysis should enable the following research questions to be answered: What is similar, what is different, and what are (shifting) patterns in similarities and differences in the way gender inequality is understood to be a problem across Europe? How differentiated are patterns in Western and Eastern Member States? How are patterns at national level connected to existing and developing frames at the European Union level? Which processes of exclusion result from dominant frames? Who and what is excluded? What inconsistencies can be detected, and what are the consequences of these inconsistencies? As a methodology, Critical Frame Analysis has been used in the MAGEEQ-project. MAGEEQ is a three-year multi-disciplinary research project (2003-2005) funded within the European Commission's 5th Framework Programme. Its first part is a comparative study on the framing of gender inequality as a policy problem in Austria, Greece, Hungary, the Netherlands, Slovenia, Spain, and at the level of the European Union. MAGEEQ analyses differences in dynamic configurations of gender inequality frames that can explain differences in the implementation of Gender Mainstreaming in Europe, and aims at constructing a conceptual framework on gender equality, which will assist further steps in the project in constructing tools for the monitoring of inconsistencies in policies and policy frames, and in organising debates on gender equality policies.

POLICY FRAMES AND FRAME ANALYSIS

There are many terms used to refer to interpretative constructs of reality: frame, schema, script, scenario are but a few of the examples given (Goffmann, 1974). These concepts refer to signification as a dimension of social practices that is closely clinked to the dimension of legitimation and domination (Giddens, 1984). A frame is an interpretation scheme that structures the meaning of reality. As a general definition of the concept is missing (Van Gorp, 2001), our concept of a policy frame builds on authors

such as Entman (1993) and Tuchman (1978) to result in the following definition: a policy frame is *an organising principle that transforms fragmentary or incidental information into a structured and meaningful policy problem, in which a solution is implicitly or explicitly enclosed.*

Hence policy frames are not descriptions of reality, but specific constructions that give meaning to reality, and shape the understanding of reality. Research working with these or similar concepts is based on a constructionist approach to reality, where discourse, through its close connection to the construction of truths is seen as having important material and immaterial impacts. In implementation processes policy frames are the medium, transferred and necessarily adapted from one level to another, from one area to another. Frame analysis is concerned *with the (re)construction and negotiation of reality by social/political actors through the use of symbolic tools* (Triandafyllidou and Fotiou, 1998). Framing then can be seen as *the process of constructing, adapting and negotiating frames.* Frame analysis is still in the process of development, and further improvement of frame analysis is needed by studying framing in connection to legitimacy and domination, and by contributing to its further methodological development.

The debates on parity democracy in the period before the Amsterdam Treaty are a good example to highlight the importance of policy frames, because they showed how a seemingly simple policy goal –to strengthen gender equality in political decision-making– could be framed in radically opposing ways (Rossili, 2000). Was it a question of women being a disadvantaged group? Are women to be seen as an interest group? Is citizenship gendered and should sexual identity be introduced into the definition of the legal person (Lovenduski, 2000; Vogel-Polski, 2000)? More examples could be given, such as the differences that occur in the debates around flexibility in the European labour market, where the opposing frames are on favouring part-time work as a type of work more suitable for women, as opposed to a general reduction of working time for everyone. When it comes to issues such as prostitution and domestic violence, national differences in policy frames are so high that they seem almost unbridgeable. The Dutch policy frame on prostitution is to treat it more or less as a regular type of paid labour, whereas the Swedish frame treats it as a crime (Outshoorn, 2001). Most EU countries provide shelter for battered women, whereas Austria expels the (usually male) perpetrator from the home (Logar, 2000). This special issue provides many more examples that resulted from the analysis in the context of the MAGEEQ-project.

METHODOLOGIES FOR COMPARATIVE FRAME ANALYSIS

Discourse analysis in general, as well as frame analysis until now, present problems for comparative analysis: how to develop categories that can analyse discourses at various levels, and that allow for comparison (van Gorp, 2001). Frame mapping offers no viable alternative to this problem. Frame mapping (Riechert, 1996) is based on the mathematical frequency and co-occurrence of key terms in text. This technique has the advantage that it generates data that are suitable for comparative analyses, but it is too simplistic for «messy» problems.

The most successful attempt so far to develop a more complex frame analysis method has been used in the context of a study comparing frames on abortion in Germany and the United States (Marx Ferree et al., 2002). In the context of this study mainly newspaper articles, but also documents from various organisations have been analyzed using a hierarchical coding system that allowed for quantitative analysis. The hierarchy in their codes allows distinctions between the main organizing principles in the various frames, while also specifying more detailed positions (called sub-frames and idea elements respectively) within these main organizing principles.[3] This hierarchy allows for detailed analysis of similarities and differences. While this methodology is excellent, for our purposes, as we wanted to be able to study various issues across a larger set of countries, such an establishing of codes beforehand seemed an impossible enterprise. Establishing a codebook in this way would necessitate a quite extensive preliminary analysis of positions and frames already, and take up all the time that was available for the analysis.

The methodology developed within MAGEEQ attempts to overcome these problems by analysing dimensions of frames rather than constructing a hierarchical set of codes or typologies of frames. These dimensions allow for a comparable description of various positions. Moreover, an approach that is not categorising beforehand can follow a grounded theory approach (Strauss and Corbin, 1990), and has more chances to capture unexpected or distorted elements. Additionally, a methodology based on dimensions of frames allows for the occurrence and systematic description of multiple, and potentially contradictory frames, and hence can detect shifts and distortions at the level of elements of frames too. Parallel to the use of the verb-forms

---

3. See the website for further details at http://www.ssc.wisc.edu/abortionstudy/

like gendering, labelling and coding to emphasise change and the handling of change we look at framing rather than at frames.

As we intend to contribute to the further development of frame analysis by studying framing in connection to legitimacy and domination, and by contributing to its further methodological development, we will try to track the inner (explicit or implicit) logic of processes of policy frames as a crucial element of exclusion and track the discursive histories that are present in the public discourse, within political institutions (like parliamentary debates and documents), civil society (NGOs) and the media. In order to put the accent on power relations involved in policy texts, Critical Frame Analysis therefore will also have to pay specific attention to the role of various actors in framing processes. More specifically, attention for who has voice in defining the problem and who has voice in suggesting suitable courses of action to resolve the problem, is needed, as well as specific focus on the attribution of responsibilities (for causing the problem or for solving the problem).

FRAMING GENDER INEQUALITY AS A POLICY PROBLEM –
FROM LEGAL EQUALITY TO POSITIVE ACTION
TO GENDER MAINSTREAMING

A policy frame has a typical format connected to politics and policy making. We start from the general assumption that a policy (proposal) will always contain an implicit or explicit representation of a diagnosis, connected to an implicit or explicit prognosis and a call for action. In normal words: that there is a problem, that some solution to this is proposed (including ideas on the causes of or responsibilities for the problem, on the ends that can be reached through the use of certain means, and on the desirability of certain outcomes), and that it is made clear who has to do something and what has to be done.[4]

As an illustration of this format, and what it can clarify, this section will use the diagnosis-prognosis format to compare three often distinguished forms of gender equality policies, and show how gender mainstreaming is thought to be different from equal treatment or specific or targeted equality policies, such as positive action. In connection to gender mainstreaming these other two are the ones most commonly distinguished (Rees, 1998;

---

4. These four elements are borrowed from social movement theory, especially the work of Snow et al. (1986).

Nelen and Hondeghem, 2000). *Equal treatment in legislation* is focused on providing equal access, and correcting existing inequalities in legislation, so that individual citizens are formally equal. This strategy is often framed within a liberal discourse, holding individual citizens responsible for using their formal equal rights. The starting point for the strategy of *specific or targeted gender equality policies* is the recognition that all citizens cannot always use equal rights to the same extent, because of persistent gender inequalities that exist at the level of society. This strategy aims at creating conditions that will result in equality in outcome, to counterbalance the unequal starting positions of men and women in most societies. Mostly, specific measures aim at mitigating unequal conditions and facilitate equality for (specific groups of) women. These measures are usually taken by specialised state institutions, mainly by gender equality agencies. Positive action and positive discrimination (as in applying quotas for women), can be part of this last approach.

Gender Mainstreaming as a third type of strategy addresses the problem of gender inequality at a more structural level, identifying gender biases in current policies, and assessing the impact of these gender biases in the reproduction of gender inequality. By reorganising policy processes so that the regular policy makers will be obliged and capable to incorporate a perspective of gender equality in their policies, this strategy aims at a fundamental transformation, by eliminating gender biases, and redirecting policies so that they can contribute towards the goal of gender equality. The difference between the three strategies depicted above are related to major differences in policy frames, that are described in Table 1 as differences in diagnosis, in the attribution of causality, in prognosis and in the resulting call for action.

As has been shown, there are substantial differences in diagnosis and prognosis between Gender Mainstreaming and other strategies of gender equality. Also, as the previous paragraphs have demonstrated, there are wide-ranging differences because all countries involved in developing and implementing Gender Mainstreaming have done so within the boundaries of their own definitions of gender equality (Behning and Serrano Pascual, 2001; Verloo, 1999). Moreover, until now the main focus in Gender Main-streaming often has only been on analytical and educational tools. Tools involving consultation and participation are seldom found, and if they are found, it is mainly in Gender Mainstreaming initiatives at the local or regional level, even in countries that are known for their consociational policy styles, such as the Netherlands (Verloo, 1999 and 2001). This accent

TABLE 1

Different approaches in gender equality policies

Strategy	Diagnosis	Attribution of causality	Prognosis	Call for action
	What is wrong?	Who/what is responsible for the problem?	What should be done?	Who should do something?
Equal treatment	Inequality in law, different laws/ rights for men and women	Individual responsibilities	Change the laws towards formally equal rights for men and women in laws	Legislators
Specific equality policies	Unequal starting position of men and women. Group disadvantage of women. Specific problems of women that are not addressed. Lack of access, skills, or resources of women	Diverse, both at individual level, and at structural level	Design and fund specific projects to address problems of (specific groups of) women	Gender equality agencies, sometimes together with established institutions
Gender main-streaming	Gender bias in regular policies and social institutions resulting in gender inequality	Policy makers (unintentionally)	(Re)organise policy processes to incorporate a gender equality perspective in all policies	Government /all actors routinely involved in policy making

on analytical and educational tools could indicate a technocratic framing of gender inequality as a policy problem, that can be problematic in itself because it denies the (political) character of interpretations of needs (Fraser, 1989), and it runs counter to an active involvement of citizens. Additionally, technocratic framing often involves a depoliticizing of issues, presenting the problems involved as «facts» that are not subject to politically different opinions and standpoints.

Under conditions of gender mainstreaming therefore there are several mechanisms that justify a closer analysis of the meaning of gender equality: one is the tendency to reduce gender mainstreaming to integrative strategies (as in equal treatment), another is the impact of contextual factors, and another one is the tendency to depoliticize.

CRITICAL FRAME ANALYSIS METHODOLOGY:
DIMENSIONS AND SENSITIZING QUESTIONS

To be identified and analysed the framing of gender inequality as a policy problem needs a qualitative approach. During 2003, the MAGEEQ team has developed a conceptual framework that articulated the relevant dimensions for analysing gender equality policy frames, and resulted in a set of Sensitizing Questions for the analysis (see Annex for the resulting template). The Sensitizing Questions have been developed using elements from social movement theory, gender theory, discourse analysis and policy theory.

The overall structure of the Sensitizing Questions has been taken from social movement theory, as it is in this field that frame analysis has been developed most extensively. Based on the work of Snow and Benford, this basic structure consists of the dimensions of *Diagnosis*, Attribution of Responsibility (renamed *Roles in Diagnosis*), *Prognosis* and Call for Action (renamed *Roles in Prognosis*). Two major elements have been added to this basic structure. The first one is the dimension of Voice, added because policy frames differ from social movement frames in that they do not always originate in specific actors, but can commence in institutions such as administrations or cabinets, committees or spokespersons. This allows taking on board theoretical notions from discourse analysis and genealogical analysis, and is meant to facilitate the later analysis in terms of exclusion/ inclusion and power. At a more detailed level, based on discourse analysis, a sub-element on the *Form* (form of argumentation, dichotomies, metaphors) has been created within the dimensions of Diagnosis and Prognosis. Additionally, an element called *Balance* has been added, to be able to distinguish between policy frames that are predominantly Diagnostic and frames that are predominantly Prognostic.

Within the dimensions of Diagnosis and Prognosis, Carol Bacchi's path-breaking critique on policy theory has been utilized, especially her «What's the problem represented to be?» approach (Bacchi, 1999). Gender theory, and especially the work of Walby (1997), Verloo and Roggeband (1996), and Connell (1987) supplied sub-elements on Location and Mechanisms of gender inequality for both Diagnosis and Prognosis. These elements have been elaborated building upon the conceptual framework of the Dutch Gender

Impact Assessment.[5] The dimensions distinguished in this instrument are structures, processes and criteria (Verloo and Roggeband, 1996). Structures refer to the core of gender relations, showing which institutions and organisations are most important. In the Dutch instrument, the division of labour, the organisation of intimacy and the organisation of citizenship are seen as essential. This runs parallel to a large extent to Connell's distinction between labour, cathexis and power. Processes refer to mechanisms that produce and reproduce gender relations. They are based on Giddens' structuration theory (Giddens, 1984). In this respect, the distribution of and access to various resources is emphasised, next to the rules (interpretations and norms) about or connected to gender. As MAGEEQ is concentrating on analysing the framing of gender equality, and not prescribing criteria for gender equality,[6] *Normativity* is highlighted in a separate subsection.

Building upon this «Critical Frame Analysis» can be defined as looking not only at discursive elements but also at attributed roles and voice.

Summarized, Critical Frame Analysis is:

Analyzing and comparing specific positions on the dimensions of:
  • Diagnosis of the policy problem (what's the problem represented to be?)
  • Prognosis of the policy problem (what action is proposed?)
  • Roles attributed to various actors in Diagnosis and Prognosis
  • Voice given to various actors.

In terms of:
  • Gender dimensions (social categories, identity, norms, behaviour, institutions)
  • Gender structures (labour, citizenship, intimate relationships)
  • Gender mechanisms (distribution of resources, norms on gender, legitimization of violence)
  • Intersectionality (race/ ethnicity, class, age, sexuality).

---

5. A gender impact assessment (GIA) is an analysis ex ante of the potential effects of new government policies on gender relations. More formally, the instrument is used «to compare and assess, according to gender relevant criteria, the current situation and trend with the expected development resulting from the introduction of the proposed policy» (EU, 1997: 8).

6. Normative criteria stressed in the Dutch context are Equality in the sense of equality before the law and Equal Treatment in similar circumstances, but also Autonomy, defined as the possibility for women to decide for themselves what is a good life, and Pluriformity a society where differences are not hierarchical (Verloo and Roggeband, 1996; Verloo, 2000).

The Sensitizing Questions have been made into an analytical tool, first by making them into a Template for coding, and subsequently by using them in the analysis. The analysis has used KWALITAN, a Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (Peters, 1998).

CRITICAL FRAME ANALYSIS METHODOLOGY: SUPER-TEXTS AND COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

Concerning comparative frame analysis, the problem at hand is that a middle way between discourse analysis and frame mapping needed to be found in the MAGEEQ project in order to be able to do comparative analyses at a deeper level of understanding than frame mapping would allow for. This methodology is composed of two steps.

In the first step carefully selected policy documents are analyzed using the Sensitizing Questions. Depending on the policy histories and routines in the six very different countries studied and at the level of the European Union, all teams have defined what counts as policy or as a policy proposal in the context of this research, and all teams have made a selection of those texts that includes all major perspectives present in the debates. Important in general for countries are official texts declaring policies on gender equality, next to official and unofficial texts directed at the EU or at international organisations such as the UN, explaining a country's position on gender equality. Potentially some level of implementation is included in case there is reason to believe that texts and measures taken respectively are actually based on or representing different ideas on gender equality. Secondary literature (previous research) can have given evidence for this. Evidence of divergent ideas at the level of implementation can be found by including different governance levels, or by having a small round of interviews. MAGEEQ uses qualitative sampling, adding texts to analyze until saturation of the analysis. Guided by the Sensitizing Questions codes are chosen carefully to characterize the text. Using KWALITAN the codes resulting from this analysis are linked to (segments of) the texts, and organized along the structure of the Sensitizing Questions. The analysis of each document ends with the construction of a Super-text. Within MAGEEQ, the concept of Super-text is chosen in contrast to the well known concept of a subtext. Whereas a subtext is what can be analysed as an implicit, unstated meaning of a text, a Super-text is this hidden significance made explicit. In a Super-text summaries on the main dimensions of the Sensitizing Questions are followed

by the respective codes about these dimensions. In this way, the Super-texts function as a structured and systematic summary.

In general the Super-text contains the codes attached to the document, organised along the main headings, and a short summary that describes the conclusions based on the codes under each heading. A first additional part contains all sorts of general information that is needed for the comparative study: place, time, actors, audience, main issue etc. Under Voice, attention is given to speakers or authors, but also to perspective (one can think of differences between a text that is some kind of presentation of a certain standpoint, as opposed to a text that is very much presenting an objective reality etc.), and to elements that position the text in relation to the context (be it previous documents, other actors), and that give «standing» (Ferree et al., 2002) to other actors or documents. Mostly the Super-text follows the outline of the Sensitising Questions. All things that are considered relevant by the researchers and that do not fit under the main headings can be put under Comments at the end. In the Super-text, absence of anything can be coded explicitly, but does not need to be coded as such necessarily. If a certain dimension does not have any codes, this means there is an absence. This absence is an important fact to be analysed in the comparative analysing of the Super-texts.

The format of the Super-texts means that anyone who is literate in the body of theory, and hence in the concepts used, can read and understand the Super-texts. Within the MAGEEQ team and for the comparative analysis this means that the whole team has access to the whole body of Super-texts that has been constructed. It also means that updating of the database will always be possible after the project, thereby allowing for further use of the database by the team after the end of the project. For the comparative analysis of three issues[7] a total of 366 texts have been analyzed and stored in the MAGEEQ database.

The team has also engaged in a process of revision of codes after a first round of analysis. Individual team members wrote memo's on specific sections of the conceptual framework, and presented their conclusions in terms of lack of clarity, specificity or abstraction to the team. The team

---

7. Based upon an analysis of parliamentary and public debates in all countries and at EU level, three issues have been chosen for the comparative analysis; political participation/ representation, domestic violence and family policy. Additionally, each country has chosen an issue that generated debate. Those were Prostitution for Austria and for Slovenia, Migration for the Netherlands and Greece, Homosexual rights for Spain and Anti-discrimination for Hungary.

discussion of these memo's has lead to a revised coding template and all supertexts were checked again and revised based upon this new template. The element of intersectionality was introduced at this stage of the project as a dimension of Diagnosis and Prognosis. It is a short version of the revised template that is included in the annex of this paper.

The comparative analysis has started with creating preliminary overviews of Diagnostic and Prognostic codes for every country and for the EU level. Then a first description of similarities and differences between EU and national levels has been made. Secondly, these overviews have been refined and adapted looking at the way these frames were gendered and intersectionalised and analysing how they represented location and mechanisms as being relevant. In this step a focus on similarities and differences between countries and the EU level was kept as well. Thirdly, the comparative analysis looked at shifts over time or between groups of countries and analysed inconsistencies found earlier. A next step will be to look at commonalities and specificities across issues.

COMPARATIVE FRAME ANALYSIS:
ANSWERS AND QUESTIONS

The papers in this issue show some very first results of the MAGEEQ methodology, and as such provide a first set of extended examples of what the methodology has to offer, and where it can be revised and developed further. These papers show that there is a wealth of understanding to gain from the systematic analysis of the framing of gender inequality as a policy problem, but they hopefully also make clear that this type of approach is not limited to the field of gender equality policies. They anticipate future research that will take this type of analysis a step further to investigate the impact of various framing on the implementation of policies, or to study the legitimacy of policies for certain constituencies. For policy making the most promising use of this kind of methodology is in its potential contribution to the study of implementation problems or distortions, and in its use as a monitoring and evaluation tool to detect inconsistencies and frictions between policies at various policy levels. That is, for policy making there is some hope that this methodology might give some answers, or at least some guidelines for possible action. For policy studies its potential contribution is linked to its ambition to open new ways for comparative analysis that can generate new questions and that therefore can contribute to new debates and the further development of critical policy analysis.

MAGEEQ Methodology of Critical Frame Analysis
SUPER-TEXT TEMPLATE
Short version

NUMBER/CODE/ TITLE (max 20 signs)
- Full title
- (In English and in original language)
- Country/Place
- Issue
- Date
- Type/status of document
- Actor(s) and gender of actor(s) if applicable
- Audience
- Event/reason/occasion of appearance
- Parts of text eliminated

Voice
SUMMARY
- Voice(s) speaking
- Perspective
- References: words/concepts (and where they come from)
- References: actors
- References: documents

Diagnosis
SUMMARY
- What is represented as the problem?
- Why is it seen as a problem?
- Causality (what is seen as a cause of what?)
- Dimensions of gender (social categories/identity/behaviour/norms and symbols/ institutions)
- Intersectionality
- Mechanisms (resources /norms and interpretations/legitimisation of violence)
- Form (argumentation/style/conviction techniques/dichotomies/metaphors/ contrasts)
- Location (organisation of labour/organisation of intimacy/organisation of citizenship)

Attribution of roles in diagnosis
SUMMARY
- Causality (who is seen to have made the problem?)
- Responsibility (who is seen as responsible for the problem?)

• Problem holders (whose problem is it seen to be?)
• Normativity (what is a norm group if there is a problem group?)
• Active/passive roles (perpetrators/victims etc)
• Legitimisation of non-problem(s)

Prognosis
SUMMARY
• What to do?
• Hierarchy/priority in goals
• How to achieve goals (strategy/means/instruments)?
• Dimensions of gender (social categories/identity/behaviour/norms and symbols/ institutions)
• Intersectionality
• Mechanisms (resources/norms and interpretations/violence)
• Form (argumentation/style /conviction techniques/dichotomies/metaphors)
• Location (organisation of labour/intimacy/citizenship)

Attribution of roles in prognosis
SUMMARY
• Call for action and non-action (who should [not] do what?)
• Who has voice in suggesting suitable course of action?
• Who is acted upon? (target groups)
• Boundaries set to action
• Legitimisation of (non)action

Normativity
SUMMARY
• What is seen as good?
• What is seen as bad?
• Location of norms in the text (diagnosis/prognosis/elsewhere)

Balance
SUMMARY
• Emphasis on different dimensions/elements
• Frictions or contradictions within dimensions/elements

Comments

REFERENCES

Arneil, B., 1999, *Politics and feminism*, Oxford, Blackwell.

Bacchi, C. L., 1999, *Women, policy and politics, The construction of policy problems*, London, Sage.

Behning, Ute and Amparo Serrano Pascual, 2001, «Rethinking the gender contract? Gender mainstreaming in he European employment strategy», in: Emilio Gabaglio and Reiner Hoffmann (eds), *European Trade Union Yearbook 2000*, Brussels, ETUI.

Braithwaite, Mary, 1999, «Mainstreaming equal opportunities into the structural funds: How regions in Germany, France and the United Kingdom are putting into practice the new approach. Final report of the survey of current practice and findings of the seminar at Gelsenkirchen, January 21-22, 1999)», *Report produced for the European Commission, DG XVI* (Regional Policy and Cohesion), April.

Bustelo Ruesta, Maria, 2001, *Gender mainstreaming evaluation: ideas from a meta-evaluation study of eleven evaluation processes of gender equality policies in Spain*, ECPR paper, University of Kent.

Castells, M., 1997, *The information age. Economy, society and culture. Volume II. The power of identity*, Massachusetts, Blackwell.

Connell, R. W., 1987, *Gender and power*, Stanford, Stanford University Press.

Council of Europe, 1998, *Conceptual framework, methodology and presentation of good practices: Final report of activities of the group of specialists on mainstreaming* [EG-S-MS (98) 2], Strasbourg. http://www.dhdirhr.coe.fr/equality/Eng/Final%20Report%20 Mainstreaming.html.

Entman, R. M., 1993, «Framing: Toward clarification of a fractured paradigm», in: *Journal of Communication*, 43, 4, pp. 51-58.

Foucault, M., 1971, *L'ordre du discours*, Paris, Gallimard.

Fraser, Nancy, 1989, *Unruly practices: power, discourse and gender in contemporary social theory*, Polity Press, Cambridge.

Giddens, Anthony, 1984, *The constitution of society*, Cambridge, Polity Press.

Gorp, van, B., 2001, *The implementation of the asylum policy: Which frame dominates the debate*?, Paper for the ECPR Joint Sessions Grenoble 2001.

Goffmann, 1974, *Frame Analysis. An essay on the organization of experience.* Harmondsworth, Peregrine Books.

Hafner-Burton, Emilie and Mark Pollack, 2000, *Mainstreaming gender in global governance.* Paper for the mainstreaming gender in European Public Policy Workshop, University of Wisconsin-Madison, October 14-15.

Hafner-Burton, Emilie and Mark Pollack, 2000, «Mainstreaming gender in the European Union», *Journal of European Public Policy*, 7:3 Special issue, pp. 432-456.

Havelkova, H., 1998, «Discovering women's political interests: From homogeneity myth to collaboration», *Documentation of the conference in Vienna: Losers of the «Wende» – Winners of the EU?* November 1998, pp. 47-51.

Jalusic, Vlasta, 2001, «Freedom versus equality. Some thoughts about attitudes toward gender equality politics in Eastern and Central Europe», Nagel S., S. and Robb, A. (eds), *Handbook of Global Social Policy*, New York, Basel, Marcel Dekker, pp. 233-241.

Kemp, S. and J. Squires, 1997, *Feminisms*, Oxford University Press.

Klinger, Cornelia, 2001, «Gleichheit und Differenz. Von Alten Sackgassen und Neue Wegen», Transit - *Europäische Revue*, 21, pp. 186-208.

Logar, Rosa, 2000, «Feminist governmental strategies against male violence», in: Alice Schwarzer (ed.), *Man wird nicht als Frau geboren. 50 Jahre nach dem «Anderen Geschlecht» ziehen Schriftstellerinnen und Politikerinnen gemeinsam Bilanz: Wo stehen Frauen heute?*, Köln, Kiepenheuer und Witsch.

Lorber, Judith, 1994, *Paradoxes of gender*, New Haven, CT, Yale University Press.

Lovenduski, Joni, 2000, «Change in women's political representation», Mariagrazia Rossili, (ed.), *Gender policies in the European Union*, New York, Peter Lang, pp. 87-107.

Ferree, Myra Marx and Gamson, W., Gerhards, J. and Rucht, D. 2002, *Shaping abortion discourse. Democracy and public sphere in Germany and the United States*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

Mazey, Sonia, 2000, «Introduction: Integrating gender- intellectual and "real world" mainstreaming», *Special Issue Journal of European Public Policy*, 7:3, pp. 333-345.

Meyerson, Debra E. and Kolb, Deborah M., 2000, «Moving out of the armchair: Developing a framework to bridge the gap between feminist theory and practice», *Organization*, 7, pp. 553-571.

Nelen, S. and A. Hondeghem (eds), 2000, *Equality oriented personnel policy in the public sector*, Amsterdam, IOS Press/Ohmsha.

Orloff, Ann Shola, 2001, *Gender equality, women's employment: Cross-national patterns of policy and politics,* Paper prepared for the meeting of International Sociological Association Research Meeting, September 6-9, University of Oviedo, Spain.

Osborn, M., Rees, T., Bosch, M., Hermann, C., Hilden, J., Mason, J., McLaren, A., Palomba, R., Peltonen, L., Vela, C., Weis, D., Wold, A. and Wennerås, C., 2000, *Science policies in the European Union: Promoting excellence through mainstreaming gender equality*, A report from the ETAN Network on Women and Science, Luxembourg, Office for Official Publications of the European Communities.

Outshoorn, Joyce, 2001, «Debating prostitution in parliament», in: *The European Journal of Women's Studies*, vol. 8, nr. 4, pp. 472-491.

Peters, Vincent, 1998, *Kwalitan: computer programme and reference book*, www.kwalitan.net.

Rees, Teresa, 1998, *Mainstreaming equality in the European Union: Education, training, and labor market policies,* New York, Routledge.

Rein, Martin, and Donald Schön, 1993, «Reframing policy discourse», in: Frank Fischer and John Forester (eds), *The argumentative turn in policy analysis and planning*, Durham, Duke University Press, pp. 144-166.

Riechert, B. P., 1996, *Advocacy group and news media framing of public policy issues: Frame mapping the wetlands debates*, Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

Rossili, Mariagrazia (ed.), 2000, *Gender policies in the European Union*, New York, Peter Lang.

Rubery, J. and C. Fagan, 2000, *Gender impact assessment and the european employment strategy*, Manchester, EWERC/UMIST.

Snow, David A., and Robert D. Benford, 1992, «Master Frames and Cycles of Protest», in: Aldon D. Morris and Carol McClurg Mueller (eds), *Frontiers of social movement theory*, New Haven, Yale University Press.

Strauss, A. and J. Corbin (eds), 1997, *Grounded theory in practice.* London, Sage Publications.

Triandafyllidou, A. and A. Fotiou, 1998, «Sustainability and modernity in the European Union: A frame theory approach to policymaking», *Sociological Research Online*, vol. 3, no.1. <http:www.socresonline.org.uk/socresonline/3/1/2.html>

Tuchman, G., 1978, *Making news. A study in the construction of reality*, NY/London, The Free Press.

Verloo, Mieke and Conny Roggeband, 1996, «Gender impact assessment: The development of a new instrument in the Netherlands», *Impact Assessment*, vol 14, nr 1, pp. 3-21.

Verloo, Mieke, 1999, *Gender mainstreaming: Practice and prospects.* Report prepared for the Council of Europe, EG (99) 13, Strasbourg, Council of Europe.

Verloo, Mieke, 2000, «Making women count in the Netherlands», Sue Nott, Fiona Beveridge and Kylie Stephen (eds), *Making women count. Integrating gender into law and policy making,* Aldershot, Ashgate, pp. 49-77.

Verloo, Mieke, 2001, *Another velvet revolution. Gender mainstreaming and the politics of implementation,* Working paper 5/2001, Vienna, IWM.

Vleuten, Anna van der, 2001, *Dure vrouwen, dwarse staten*, Case study on the development of gender equality policies in the EU (1955-1992) and the implementation in four Member States (France, Germany, Great-Britain and the Netherlands), Nijmegen, Nijmegen University Press.

Vogel-Polski, Eliane, 2000, «Parity democracy-law and Europe», Rossili, Mariagrazia (ed.), *Gender policies in the European Union*, New York, Peter Lang, pp. 61-87.

Walby, Sylvia, 1997, *Gender transformations*, London, Routledge.