The aim of equality between genders is today embedded in the national Danish debate on democracy and welfare. It is even a widespread belief in the general public that equality between genders is almost achieved. This is underpinned by Denmark, along with the other Nordic countries, being among the top 10 countries according to the international gender equality index (World Economic Forum, 2012; OECD, 2012). However, research has pointed to many remaining and even to some new gender inequalities.

Women got the right to vote and stand for national parliament in Denmark through an amendment to the Constitution in 1915, with the first election held 1918. Since then, Danish politics has gradually developed from being totally male-dominated, to the present situation with above 25-39 percent women in elected assemblies at national, regional and local level. Since the millennium change, many Danish political parties have been led by women, and changes in the ‘acceptable minimum’ of women implies a new norm of around 30 percent women in any governments (Fiig 2009; Dahlerup 2013). The universal breadwinner model has become the dominant model: women should be included alongside men as breadwinners and financially independent and men should be included in the domestic work (Fraser, 1997; Sainsbury, 2005; Borchorst XX). The universal breadwinner model was realised during the 1960s and 70s, as the traditional pattern of complementary gender roles with the male breadwinner and the female caretaker and fulltime homemakers, was discarded.

The increased presence of women in politics and the development of public gender equality policies (‘state feminism’), are central aspects of what is here labelled the Danish political gender equality regime. In this project, a political gender equality regime is defined as the institutionalisation and regulation, formal as well as informal, of gender relations and structures. Our point of departure is political science, but with a focus on a broad concept of politics, since this project studies individual actors and processes in both the formal
political institutions and in the collective bargaining system – both in their interaction with civil society, especially with women’s organizations and male gender networks.

The Danish political gender equality regime is embedded in and an integrated part of the general development of Danish society. Firstly, the gradual increase in women’s political representation in a political system, based on proportional representation since 1915 and with a strong party system in close interaction with movements and organisations in civil society. Secondly, the development of what has been labelled a ‘women- and family-friendly’ universal welfare state (Hernes 1987; Esping-Andersen, 2002). The expansion of public childcare provisions and the extension of maternity, later parental leave in the 1960s and 70s as well as generous means-tested social benefits are example of this. Thirdly, the fact that key decisions for changes in gender relations have been regulated through collective bargaining in the labour market, not least (unequal) wages. Fourthly, a growing juridification of decisions and their implementation (Politica, 2004), especially since Denmark joined the EU in 1973. The connections between these elements, seen from a gender perspective, have not been systematically studied in previous research. The focus of this analysis of the Danish political gender equality regime is on the period following World War II. However, on certain topics the analysis will go as far back as 1915, when women first were entitled to vote and stand for national parliament and even to the reforms around the turn of the previous century.

Having previously been among the forerunners on gender equality in a European and global perspective, the present Danish political gender equality regime is characterized by ambiguities and contradictions. Analyzing these ambiguities is at the core of this project. Here are some examples: While gender equality has been an official goal since the 1980s, there is, actually, no general agreement among key actors on what ‘equality’ actually implies? Disagreement exists around equality of opportunity versus equality of results, as well as around gender neutrality versus women as specific policy target. In contrast to the other Nordic countries, there has been some reluctance in Danish politics, when it comes to pro-active measures, affirmative action and especially the use of gender quotas. Furthermore – and this is of course not specific to the Danish case - gender equality has normally not been considered a legitimate rationales for policy initiatives, and has only in extraordinary cases been politicised by
parties in elections (low degree of saliency). Many political decisions, such as childcare and parental leave regulations, have been negotiated without focus on gender equality (Borchorst, 2003). Surprisingly, this even goes for the gender mainstreaming provisions in Danish legislation.

The general narrative of a continuous progress towards full gender equality is today challenged by the recent stagnation in women’s parliamentary representation (38-39 percent in the last four general elections). Previously, Denmark was seen as one of the pioneer countries in women’s political representation, but has now been overtaken by countries, which have chosen a fast track model, not least by implementing gender quota in politics (Freidenvall, Dahlerup & Skjeie, 2006; Dahlerup & Freidenvall, 2005; www.quotaproject.org). In general, the gender equality paradoxes in Danish politics implies an inconsistency between discourse and practise, and between political goals and actual legislations. In a comparative Nordic perspective, attention to gender equality policy is much lower in Danish politics. Furthermore, Denmark has recently fallen in international rankings (World Economic Forum, 2004-2012).

The literature offers different explanations for the specific characteristics of the Danish political gender equality regime since the 1990s. One explanation has been that Danish political equality reforms were particular driven by a widespread political mobilisation of women in the 1970s and, when it died out in the 1990s, the previous momentum for political equality disappeared (Dahlerup, 1998; Christensen & Siim; 2001; Borchorst, 2004). Another explanation has been that (formal) Danish political equality had a weak beginning in the 1970s and this start became critical for later developments. EC directives were crucial in Denmark getting any sort of general equality legislation at all. The dominating principle in this legislation was legal, with a focus on anti-discrimination, and most principles of gender equality provisions were established through EC court rulings. These explanations regarding the recent development have never been the subject of an in-depth analysis.

The aim of the project is to provide a systematic, in-depth characterisation of the Danish political gender equality regime, and to identify key actors, dynamics and discourses that have been critical for the development of women's representation, and for the policy development within three selected key
equality policy areas: equal pay, parental leave, and anti-discrimination legislation. This project represents a new approach by identifying and analysing in depth landmark formative moments in the history. The focus in time is the development since the woman's right to vote, however with special emphasis on the period after World War 2.

The analysis of formative moments and path dependency can be illustrated by the 1970s. Women’s representation dropped slightly in 1973. However, at the same time the late 1970s was a take-off period for the following substantial increase in women’s representation, and in this period parliament implemented the first equality laws (equal pay and equal treatment). The assumption is that significant political changes of the time, for instance the extensive feminist mobilisation, the economic crisis, the landslide victory of right wing populism (The Progress Party) in 1973, and the EC membership created contradictory conditions for gender equality politics, thus contributing to some of the paradoxes mentioned earlier. It is a question to what extend these different tendencies influenced gender equality policies and changed different actors’ understanding of gender relations and gender equality in the following decades.

Theoretical framework and key concepts

Political Gender Equality Regime. The concept 'gender regime' has become central, not least in recent international gender research. It refers to the institutionalisation of gender relations through formal and informal rules, commonly held understandings and established norms (e.g. Connell, 1987; Walby, 2011; Ferree, 2012). The concept of ‘regime’ refers to a systemic approach with a focus on persistence or change of the whole system or central parts of the system. Within this literature different gender regimes are identified such as the market, civil society, the state - and even the street. The focus of this project is the political arena (polity), political decisions (policies), as well as general attitudes towards gender equality among key actors and within the general population. Our field of research is broader than that of the formal political system, as a result of the historical strong interactions between the Danish welfare system and the Danish labour market model, and between civil society and the political system. The project is not dealing with gender equality in society at large, but studies gender equality policies, hence the label the political gender equality regime. The project is not limited to the national framework, since especially the EC/EU and the strong Nordic diffusion of ideas will be a key element.
New institutional approach. This study is based on a historical new-institutionalist approach in a sociological version, which includes not just political institutions, but also the formation of political relevant norms and values. We ask to what extent earlier decisions and discourses establish part-dependencies for subsequent policies. At the same time we look for formative moments, see below. A key question is to what extent the gender equality area in different historical periods has been characterized by disruptions of previous paths or more incremental and gradual institutional changes (Streeck and Thelen, 2005).

Formative moments is defined as specific periods or moments, which lead to lasting disruptions of previous positions, decisions, discourses and understandings of gender equality, for instance in the form of new initiatives or discontinuity of previous continuous progress. This understanding is inspired by Hughes & Paxton's definition of 'formative periods' as periods of change in 'the balance between forces of resistance and forces of change' (2008:251). However, while Hughes & Paxton focus on macro factors, such as democratization or revolution, this project widens the perspective with actor induced changes, among other things by studying how key actors can take advantage of structural changes to create changes in the political equality regime. Formative moments can be triggered by mobilisation (or demobilisation) of actors, the establishment of new alliances, or by national events such as national elections, which significantly change the political landscape, as a consequence of economic crisis or changes in the interaction between the national and supranational level (e.g. EC / EU membership).

Methodological approach, see the description below for each of the three specific parts of the project.

Project organization.

The Danish Political Gender Equality Regime, consists of the following three parts.
Part A. Gender equality policies: Political, industrial and judicial dynamics.
Part B. Formative moments in the development of women’s representation in Danish politics. The dynamics between changes in numerical, substantial and symbolic representation.

Part C. Gender and politics - elections, attitudes and mobilization

**Part B:**

**Formative moments in the development of women’s representation in Danish politics. The dynamics between changes in numerical, substantive and symbolic representation.**

*By Drude Dahlerup, professor at the Department of Political Science, Stockholm University- with assistants.*

*E-mail: drude.dahlerup@statsvet.su.se*

A high representation of women in politics is today regarded a key characteristics and an integrated part of the contemporary Danish political gender regime. Nevertheless, ever since women gained the suffrage, the significance attached to gender in political life has constantly been up for debate, as reflected in the recurrent question of whether 'women can or should make a difference in politics?' Ambiguity seems to be the hallmark of the regime.

During the first decades after the introduction of universal suffrage in 1915 women obtained only 1-3 % of the seats in parliament. It was not until after WW2 that the proportion of women in elected assemblies began to rise, most significantly from the late 1970s, when new standards of a female representation of 25-30% was established. Denmark was among the very first countries in the world to have a woman as cabinet minister (1924), but only after WW2 did any Danish government include at least one woman, later to increase to at least 2-3. Today the ‘acceptable minimum’ is around 30 percent women in every government. The proportional representation electoral system and the strong party system based on principles of social and geographical representation has been considered as an important factor behind the relatively high women’s representation in Denmark and throughout the Nordic countries, along with the changes in women's socio-economic position (Niskanen & Nyberg, 2009; Sainsbury, 2006; Freidenvall, et al. 2006; Dahlerup 2013).

Women’s representation in the Nordic countries has developed according to a gradual, incremental track model (Dahlerup & Freidenvall, 2005). The new
The approach of this project is the thesis that, within this framework of a step-by-step development, one can identify formative events and moments, which have induced new, emerging trends and lasting changes, both in terms of the numerical representation of women and the norms and perceptions about women's position in politics.

The aim of Part B is thus to identify and analyse formative moments in Danish democracy regarding women's political representation, including leadership positions and ministerial portfolios. Based on a sociological and historical new-institutionalist approach, this project will study processes related to discursive changes, changes in formal regulations and informal norms concerning the importance of gender in politics - seen in relation to changes in the actual representation of women in elected assemblies. Norms and attitudes are central to the study of historical, institutionalized inequalities; these are informal and unwritten, and perhaps therefore more resistant to change (Franceschet 2011, 62).

The major actors are, first, the political parties and their perceptions of women and gender in policies as well as their actual recruitment practices. Second, women's organizations in and outside the political parties. The importance of gender in politics is analysed in relation to three dimensions of representation.

Inspired by Hanna Pitkin's classic work (1967), recent research on gender and politics distinguishes between descriptive (numeric), substantive (acting for) and symbolic representation (Wängnerud, 2009; Franceschet, 2012, see also Mansbridge, 2003). As an important aspect, this project adds the relationship between these three dimensions, an aspect that was not included in Pitkin's approach (Dovi, 2006).

Descriptive representation: How have women's under-representation been 'diagnosed' in relation to the change of the actual representation of women, vertically and horizontally? Is the problem primarily seen as women's lack of skills and low political interest, or as political parties not being sufficiently inclusive? Have electoral defeat or success been of particular importance for party strategies? (Wängerud 1998 opposite Lovenduski, 2005).

Substantive representation: With a focus on policy substance, that is the content of policy regulations, the project will study female politicians' contribution in cases such as equal pay and parental leave, and look for the (limited) examples of cross-party cooperation amongst women MPs. What mandate do voters,
political parties and elected women themselves think that women in politics should have: Representatives of women? Which women? Representatives of feminism? No gender-related mandate – or may be just an open mandate?

Symbolic representation: The symbolic representation is a mounting research area (Leyenaar & Dahlerup, 2013). Under the label of symbolic representation of women, changes in the perception of the importance of the inclusion of women for the legitimacy of democracy is analyzed (see e.g. UN Declaration, Platform for Action, Beijing 1995). Another key perspective is the historical changes in the perception of women as political leaders, not least in previously male-dominated portfolios. The importance of the inclusion of different groups of women in relation to class, marital status, age, and ethnicity are part of the discussion of symbolic representation. A recent survey has shown that within the political parties in Europe, the adoption of electoral quotas on account of gender is much more commonly debated than quotas on account of minority status. In general, a clear division between the right and left side of politics is found on the controversial issue of quota adoption (Dahlerup & Freidenvall, 2011).

The relation between these three dimensions of representation gives rise to important research questions, including the widespread, although controversial critical mass theory (dimension 1 and 2, see Dahlerup 2006; Krook 2006) or the importance of the first female leaders for the general perceptions about women's abilities as leaders (dimension 1 and 3, see Alexander 2013). Part C will contribute with new Danish data on voters’ opinions to female and male politicians during the last decades. In part B we will analyse public debates about the first woman on a political post, for instance the first women as members of parliament, the first woman as minister, speaker of the First Chamber, committee chairman, and, most recently, Prime Minister.

Does the last decades’ stagnation in the development of women's representation, and in particular the absence of protests to the contrary, represent a new formative moment in the Danish political gender equality regime? Is political life in fact showing a ‘degendering’, implying that gender and gender equality may have become been less important in discourses and in practice in the Danish context, despite - or maybe because of - the many women currently included in the political institutions? The theory presented by Ulrik Kjær (1999) on 'Saturation without parity' is particularly true for Denmark, but why can the same ‘saturation’ not be identified in for instance Sweden, despite a higher proportion of women (43 per cent in parliament and 43 per cent in the local councils against 39 and 32 per cent in Denmark? Once again, the Nordic perspective becomes important when characterizing the Danish regime.
Data Collection
→ A follow-up survey in 2014 among Danish MPs about gender and gender equality in politics, coordinated with a comparable Swedish survey conducted at the University of Gothenburg.
→ Analysis of parliamentary debates about legal regulations on women's representation (relatively few).
→ Analysis of party manifestoes and electoral platforms, selected internal party magazines, incl. those issued by women committees in the parties about the principles of female representation (first and foremost during formative moments).
→ Analyses of the official electoral statistics, where further analyses are needed, and collection of supplementary data on women in political leadership positions (1915-today).
→ Documents from women's organisations, especially campaign material (first and foremost during formative moments)
→ Public debates, including on the reception of the first woman on a post.