

Gender, Power and Citizenship in Circumpolar North – Gender and Sexual Harassment in University Revisited

Mervi Heikkinen
 Research Assistant
 Women's and Gender Studies / Faculty of Education
 University of Oulu

Introduction

In the Arctic circumpolar North, discussion about citizenship has emerged during the past decades. This coincides with the development of transnational, supranational, and global formations such as the European Union, Circumpolar North, Barents region, Nordic collaboration or The Arch of Bothnia. These economic and political formations go beyond the nation state. What happens to citizenship and democracy in connection with decision-making that takes place within these new formations? What kind of access do women have to decision making processes and do they participate in the production of knowledge within these new formations? How are equal opportunities and gender equality intertwined into processes of decision making and development in the 21st century globalised North?

In my paper, I will use empiric research material to reflect everyday life in an engineering department of a University. Prevailing is the ambivalence that the female engineering researcher faces in her job. Due to her intellectuality she has been treated respectfully and offered a possibility to carry out her studies in the University. However, she faces gender and sexual harassment and gendered expectations. This coincides with the general concern of the paper, of whether forms and procedures developed within transnational, supranational and global formations of organizations are appropriate for the promotion of democracy and gender equality.

The study opens a view to the complex intertwined processes of gender, power and citizenship in a university of circumpolar North. The study challenges deeper intersectional analysis of democratic development in an era of transnational, supranational and global forms of citizenship. Societally sustainable development in circumpolar North requires a gender sensitive perspective on active citizenship, including the possibility of partic-

ipating in decision making and knowledge production on the local and global perspective. This paper aims to review challenges for gender equality policy development within complex multilevel governance of transnational, supranational and global organizations of which circumpolar Universities are currently a part.

Global Form of Citizenship Challenges to New Forms and Procedures of Political Accountability

Development in the 21st century globalised North creates new challenges through multicultural issues, welfare, employment, education, equal opportunities and gender equality. In the Arctic circumpolar North discussion on citizenship has emerged during the past decades. This coincides with the development of transnational, supranational and global formations such as the European Union, Circumpolar North, Barents region, Nordic collaboration or The Arch of Bothnia. These economic and political formations take decision-making beyond the nation state driven citizenship. What happens to citizenship and democracy during these transformations? What kind of citizenship would be needed to take care of equal rights? How is gender equality going to be promoted within these new transnational, supranational and global formations? What kind of access do women have to decision making or expertise - participation in the knowledge production? How are equal opportunities and gender equality intertwined into processes of decision making and development in the 21st century globalised North?

The circumpolar North has become an arena for launching cooperative activities featuring innovative transnational initiatives on the part of subnational units of government and a variety of non-state actors (Young and Einarsson, 2004). These formations of agency are ques-

tioning the nation driven understanding of the citizenship rights and obligations. What seem to be the same women still do find themselves excluded from public office and power. Women's participation in decision-making and women's political participation are still central feminist concerns, and as important as women's access to education and participation in research and knowledge production. Issues that are important for women in contemporary society are equal human rights, equal pay, equal opportunities and equality in career development, participation in various localities in the North and human security still remain a question.

Pnina Werbner and Nira Yuval-Davis (1999) are elaborating the processes that have led to the gendering of citizenship and the counter-movements towards equality that exclusionary forces have produced. The UN's attempt through CEDAW convention and surveillance has produced instruments for developing equality between women and men in various countries. The Beijing platform for action defined issues for girls' and women's human rights. These international conventions are important steps forward but the following ones are needed.

Werbner and Yuval (ibid.) describe citizenship as defining the limits of state power and where a civil society or the private sphere of free individuals begins. They present these opposed impulses as part of what makes a citizenship, for subjects themselves, such a complex, ambiguous imagery (ibid.). According to them citizenship can be understood as a dialogue, a total relationship, multilayered or holistic. They also present that ... "it is clear that political subjects are often involved in more than one political community, the boundaries of which can be local, ethnic, national or global, and may extend within, across, or beyond state lines. Moreover, membership in one collectivity can have crucial effects on citizenship in others" (Werbner and Yuval-Davis, 1999). They see that despite its gendered history, it is possible to recast citizenship in a feminist and plural perspective as an important political tool. Also, the language of citizenship provides women with a valuable weapon in the fight for human, democratic, civil and social rights. Without **new forms and procedures of political accountability** we cannot contemplate transnational, supranational or global forms of citizenship.

They see a challenge in creating movements that are genuinely international at the grassroots level (Yuval-Davis & Werbner 1999). Yuval-Davis & Werbner challenge us to ponder what our next step will be and how we can contribute to an even stronger cooperation and networking among those who devote themselves on different levels and in various ways governmentally,

institutionally, communally or individually.

Thorgerdur Einarsdóttir (2003) asks why we do not see more progress in gender equality with all the knowledge we already have. The gender equality development has taken three identifiable steps. 1) Equal rights – corollary liberal feminist ideology which had its greatest impact in the 19th century women's movement. 2) Affirmative action – which aims to accommodate women to the existing system and is influenced by radical feminism in that it recognizes women's disadvantages in a world made by men. 3) Mainstreaming – which corresponds to the most recent emphasis in academic feminism, recognizing the notion of diversity and multiculturalism, by addressing the different and often intersectional types of oppression, that women (and in fact men) may experience. So, why don't we see more progress in gender equality with all the institutionalized, governmental, national and international gender equality machinery we have to pursue our goals? She identifies the configuration of the three pillar model whose parts are: 1) The institutionalized gender equality policy machinery, 2) Women's studies and gender research in Academia and 3) The women's movement. The concept of the velvet triangle refers to this collaboration that brings together civil servants, researchers and grass root women's organizations. The function and aim of this triangle is to make visible channels for communication and societal impact. "This kind of organization, to bring together scientists, policymakers and functionaries and, when possible, representatives for social movements, reflects very well the Nordic spirit – or for that matter, the European spirit of administration. Within the area of gender equality this concept becomes more and more usual, and it indicates a serious belief in some kind of cooperation between different fields. It has been used with great success in the EU for promoting gender issues within the area of women and science. And the ultimate idea behind this concept is the modernist project of the making of the society and for the future (Einarsdóttir, 2003)." Einarsdóttir contributes importantly in identifying concrete political practices which I see as producing **new forms and procedures of political accountability** with the aim of ensuring gender equality on the Yuval and Werbner terms.

Anna van der Vleuten (2005) elaborates on the implementation of gender equality legislation in EU countries. Her study shows facilitating and hindering factors of implementation as economic and ideological costs of policy change and the amount of pressure exercised by societal actors. In her analysis the importance of collaboration among the different sectors of society are crucial. Her analysis provides important critical insights to **forms and procedures of political accountability**.

Erik O. Eriksen and John Fossum (2007) ask whether there can be democracy without nation and state. Europe is under constant reconstruction, is democracy possible under conditions of pluralism, diversity and complex multilevel governance (Eriksen and Fossum 2007). They elaborate in their paper three different models for how democracy can be reconstituted within a multilevel European context. From the gender equality perspective it seems to be important to pose a question of whether democracy could be *re-constituted* if it is not constituted yet? Circumpolar North opposes these same challenges of democracy in pluralist, diverse and complex multilevel governance, and furthermore gender equality in knowledge production and decision-making in issues that influence the direction of development in this area (Jenssen Williamson et. al. 2004).

Gendered Violence Hinders Women's Citizenship Globally

Gendered Violence in its various forms has been named as one specific issue hindering women's full citizenship globally. While first wave feminism's agenda was suffrage and second wave feminism's political - third wave feminism has been to target violence against women (Saarinen, 2004). Various feminist researchers consider sexual harassment one form of gendered and sexualised violence (Sunnari et. al. 2003, 2005, 2007; Thomas and Kitzinger, 1997). Several feminist researchers since Liz Kelly (1987) have considered sexual harassment as one of the most common forms in the continuum of sexual violence (Sunnari et al., 2007). According to Wise and Stanley (1989), it is important to notice that most sexual harassment cases are what we call small, mundane, accumulating and common, but it is important to name them sexual harassment since it is a limiting, oppressing and ethically wrong behavior in an attempt to disempower. Sexual harassment can be seen as one mechanism through which men exert power over women and through which heteropatriarchal power is sustained and reinforced (Thomas and Kitzinger, 1997). The European Commission divides sexual harassment into three categories: **verbal** remarks about figure/look, sexual jokes, verbal sexual advances, **non-verbal** - "staring and whistling" and **physical** - unsolicited physical contact (Sexual harassment in the workplace in the European Union, 1998). Another way to categorize sexual harassment is '**quid pro quo**' -harassment, which refers to sexual demands or blackmailing a person and **environmental harassment** which can target a person or a group (Thomas and Kitzinger, 1997). The term, sexual harassment, refers only to cases where sexuality is used as a tool in harassment. Gender harassment is larger, consisting of harassment based on one's gender.

Both sexual harassment and gender harassment have been interpreted as forms of discrimination (Sunnari et al., 2003.).

Combating Gender and Sexual Harassment in Universities Considers Gender Sensitive Approach to Power

Power perspective produces important insights into gender and sexual harassment. The power position plays different roles in various studies conducted on sexual harassment. Power may be discursive but it is also political and it has consequences, as Joanna Brewis (2001) states, reflecting on power theories from the Foucauldian perspective "discourse as use of power". Fiona Wilson and Paul Thompson (2001) examine sexual harassment as a use of power from Luke's three dimensional model of power. Wendy Hollway and Tony Jefferson (1996) approach sexual harassment cases through alternative analysis in terms of multiple, non-unitary gendered subjectivities and a question of ambivalence. The context of their analysis is the 'political correctness' in connection with sexual harassment policies on U.K. and U.S. university campuses. Linda Eyre (2000) focuses on discursive strategies for dealing with sexual harassment in university communities and points out how 'academic freedom', freedom of speech and juridical discourses may serve contradicting purposes in the aim to combat sexual harassment. Afshan Jafar's (2003) study about U.S. policy development on sexual relationships between college faculty and student's questions attempts to ban consensual relations between college faculty and students as paternalistic over-caring of feminists. In contrast to the Jafar study, Linda Kaloff (2000) calls for vulnerability factors that lie outside of the personality and attitudes of the victims of themselves. In her quantitative research on a U.S. college campus, there were no clear features at the individual level that would have predicted sexual assault. Deborah Lee (1998) in her research on sexual harassment in PhD supervision points out how women were denied their position as fellow intellectuals and instead, inappropriately gendered and unwelcome in sexual ways. She further suggests that harassment in PhD supervision is worthy of further investigation because of contradictory notions of PhD supervisors as highly professional and well-intentioned individuals.

In my paper I will carry out the notion of diverse discussion of gendered and sexual harassment in universities. There are obvious contradictions that appear at the individual level as organizational policies limiting personal freedom, at the organizational level as discursive

practices of gender discrimination and at the societal level as stiff gender segregation. EU and Nordic policies and political attempts to intervene in the domain of engineering have not been grasping deep enough in attempting to receive sustainable results. Gender equality may seem to serve neoliberalism – in the most superficial cases women have been persuaded toward engineering, aiming to fill the gap of competent scientists for corporations and further to receive fast economic advantages from produced innovations.

Henwood (1998) states that explanations for the poor representation of women in areas of science and engineering tend to emphasize either individual or structural factors, neither of which allow women's agency to be fully understood. Agency is a remarkable concept in feminist research in challenging the inequalities which continue to persist within organizations. Additionally, it is an interesting concept since it contradicts the relativist post-structuralist's practices and as a consequence challenges the view of power as just discursive practice (Francis, 2001). Post-structural deconstruction of our own moral arguments and assumptions about right and wrong, justice and injustice cause political paralysis and a narcissistic turn. Identity, which is entirely deconstructed by poststructuralists, leaves us with hollow subjects. This challenges us to seek new ways of theorizing on social relations. There must be some coherence in people's selfhood, allowing agency and strategy. Therefore, Becky Francis (Francis, 2001) identifies identity, which incorporates both contradiction and consistency.

"Discourse is the vehicle through which social relations are conducted, rather than being all powerful in itself", states Becky Francis (2001). Francis (ibid.) suggests continuing analysis of the various gender discourses in order to provide greater understanding of the ways in which we use them, their impacts on our lives, and potentially of how we might resist or reconfigure them. According to her, we also need to explore and develop our understanding of consistency and agency in human subjects as well as diversity in subject positioning and presentation.

Gender equality discourse is a special interest in this article. Eva Magnusson's research about women's strategies of selves in negotiations opens an interesting view of women's political agency (Magnusson, 2000) and her research about political rhetorical strategies of gender equality in the Nordic context (1999), challenges us to be aware of the meaning-range of the gender equality concept.

Gendering engineering through intellectual and embodied agencies

The purpose of my paper is to draw attention to agency and strategy in academia. How the female engineer is constructing and enacting her agency in engineering and how gender is reproduced in these formation processes of one's agency. I will use intellectuality and embodiment as special analytical dimensions in my review of academic agency in engineering. I will focus on a discursive construction of intellectuality, because it is typical or self evident in academic circumstances and embodiment because it has not been regarded as important, meaningful or at least not the most central in academic activities. Special focus is on gender and sexual harassment experiences. The research data is from a biographical narrative of the female engineering researcher. Following inserts are from an interview that was conducted in 2006 at the University of Oulu.

When doing research about agency in an academic and engineering setting, it is reasonable to focus on professionalization (Dryburgh, 1999) or occupational identity (Nicolson, 1997) and intellectuality (Salminen-Karlsson, 1997), which may be entirely gendered. Sunnari et al. (2007) state that within the university setting, embodiment has been used as a means of marginalization. This marginalisation takes its form in gender and sexual harassment. In this article, the aim is to get new insights into constructions of agency and strategy and to focus on possibilities of resistance. Inspired by discourse research (Magnusson, 1999, 2000; Francis, 2001), agency is also analyzed as an emancipatory endeavour referring to our ability to make decisions and to take action in order to change the world. Construction of one's agency has a certain consistency which includes a subjective scope of rights and obligations. Understanding of one's agency and self-definition is in constant transformation during one's studies in a university, influencing future decisions.

"It is my duty since I am born with these brains – it is my duty to serve the society. What I want is to make a difference"

After finishing her PhD, she has been receiving more responsibilities, her intellectuality is respected and she is using it for the scientific community. *"It is obvious that I have to take more responsibilities and I am not so protected anymore. Now all of the sudden, I am developing courses or course materials or writing applications and developing research ideas."* The interviewee mentions a female mentor who has been an important person in giving her

challenges, through being involved with various tasks at the university. It would be interesting to further examine how this wider scope of tasks and various challenges has influenced her agency. During this process she became part of the research community and also took on leadership responsibilities. While in this position she became aware of a form of gender discrimination "...I was a project manager and after a project meeting a male researcher honestly told me that it has been a little bit difficult for him to take orders from a woman." Her leadership, expertise and professionalism were questioned openly. Does this incident reflect on a larger scale current developments in gender equality? Being a woman with the position of project leadership may fall within a grey area of the contemporary gender contract in engineering that is currently in the process of be shifted (Salminen-Karlsson, 1997). Women in engineering do face various contradicting expectations that are intertwined with their gender, appearance, outlook and behavior, also within the university. These expectations produce an extra burden that she has to deal with when organizing and planning work in her project. She may be challenged to do daily gender equality promotion work within her organization in addition to her work in the disciplinary field.

Gender stereotypes are not always a question but rather spitefulness that may appear in the work place in a harmful way. *"Extremely competent women have been belittled or bashed behind their back."* In addition to their high competence, women in engineering face expectations to be nice and comfortable. *"If a female applicant's competence is undeniable, she can still be dismissed for being a 'difficult person'... this type of labeling exists, that women are difficult to get along with"*. Salminen-Karlsson (1997) also reports on expectations 'to be good with people' which may also mean they are not expected to apply for jobs and positions higher within organizational hierarchy. These types of expectations cause pressure as to what others really think about you. *"I am a little bit afraid that there is a picture of me that is different than what I really am (...) and I heard that I was called a "militant feminist". I do not believe that it is true. I am a much more affectionate person than what they think."* The concept of ambivalence (Holloway and Jeffersson, 1996) may be useful to describe this situation and personal process of agency and strategy. Hidden gendered perceptions do exist in the male dominated work life and may come up in an ambivalent way. *"(...) We had a project and it just happened that all the researchers were women. A male supervisor gave us a backhand compliment: it went really good, even-though all the researchers were women."* The result of the work has been judged as work done by the embodied competences. Women made it!

Embodiment and intellectuality go in hand in hand in the following quote *"When I was young, I thought that the body was more of a disadvantage than an advantage (...) some men thought that I was attractive so it was more like a disadvantage. (...) it was absolutely an obstacle that they were not able to think that a young woman with that outlook could be an engineer."* A certain outlook might be judged differently than another. If you are perceived as young and attractive you may face challenges in gaining credibility within the field of engineering. But the situation seems to be similar on the flip side. There are multiple expectations that women face in the engineering in connection to their outlook, social behavior, areas of interest, career aspirations, and they are constantly working more space for other women to enter to field. *"I think it is degrading that, if you are a woman, competence is not enough."*

"(...) What I have learned is that you do not have to accept it. If you get these types of comments you should educate them that it is discrimination..."

On the micro level power is a very personal question and challenging to tackle. It requires awareness and open confrontation. On the societal level the question of power is also a question of democracy. How do the structures support the active participation of all groups?

It is obvious that prejudices and discrimination based on gender exists in Universities and also on the larger scale of the organizations. Sexist culture is socially constructed and can be socially transformed. Everybody within the organization is responsible for his or her own behavior, but also responsible for interfering if someone else is harassed. Managers and directors have a special kind of responsibility while making an effort to change an organization towards a non-sexist, socially sustainable work place culture. Legislation and international agreements provide support for attempts to transform the organizational culture to a more equal one for women and men. Traces of gender equality policy development are visible also in the narrative. Trans-national influences are prevailing in sexual harassment policy development which has been traced cross-Atlantic (e.g. Sagay, 2003; Zippel, 2006). Personal definitions of gender and sexual harassment may vary in translating incidences as hindering one's work or disturbance depending on a power position which is intermeshed (Francis, 2001) with gender, race and social class influenced by citizenship rights (Welsh, et al., 2006). Intersectionality seems to provide fruitful frames for research when this type of diversity within one's power position has been examined (e.g. Skachkova, 2007) making the current notions of legislative and policy driven citizenship rights and obligations very limitedly white women's privilege.

A female engineering student experienced gender and sexual harassment in various ways including insults concerning her intellectuality and embodiment. Intellectuality forms consistency for the engineering student's development of agency whereas sexual and gender harassment experiences create inconsistencies for intellectual aspiration. The female body remains a place for a special kind of embodied vulnerability. Because of the female body, her and her female colleague's work has been questioned. The evaluation factor is not the research, but the body. This study opens up some view points of how it is to study in the field of engineering. This study is not to be generalized, but it may challenge us to further consider women's various accounts in engineering. Like Francis (2001) points out, various structural factors such as wealth, social class, gender and ethnicity are likely to impact groups of people in particular ways - either limiting or aiding access to power and financial security. Power relations are exceedingly complex at a micro level. As Wise and Stanley (1989) put it - it is important to notice the common and accumulating behavior which is limiting and oppressing attempting to disempower and that the resistance will be constructed on that level too.

Gender equality is a critical indicator for democratic development in circumpolar North

My aim in this paper is to draw attention to gender equality in the university in the context of democratic development in circumpolar North. Universities are central for knowledge production also in circumpolar North. In some of the Nordic countries, universities are seen as motors for regional development and are expressions for regional development policy. Access to education can be seen as a key indicator of human development in the Arctic. Equally important is the content of the education, including how well it fulfils local needs (Johansson, Paci and Stenersen Hovdenak, 2004). Additionally it is important to mention the theory of education or the pedagogy and what kind of development of agencies or citizenship it supports. Most people in the Arctic live in rather large urban areas, which are centers for advanced public services, commerce, and scientific research, but most inhabited places in the Arctic are rather small. Increasing connections to the global economy processes seem to be the key role that local governments play in finding modern ways to cope (Aarsæther, Riabova and Bærenholdt, 2004). In the very sparsely populated areas information and communication technology has provided opportunities for connections. ICT has been utilized effectively in education through distance learning, but it has been

developed to increase participation in decision-making on the various levels: local, regional, national and supranational. The latest technology has been used when addressing community health concerns and delivering health services throughout the circumpolar North as is known through telemedicine with additional mobile units (Hild & Stordahl, 2004).

The under representation of women in the fields of science, technology and industry has been seen as a problem for equality in the European Union. According to statistics, the biggest gap between men and women by subject area is engineering (Rees, 1998). Teresa Rees has examined the wider socioeconomic context of change within EU labor markets and the relative position of women within them. She finds a link between differing patterns of participation in post-compulsory education and training for women and men. Horizontal and vertical segregation by gender can be seen as an indicator of inequality. An essential component of current EU training and labor market strategy is to develop women's skills in technosciences (Rees 1998.). The gender mainstreaming approach to gender equality entails cultural transformation from the 'androcentricity' or male-as-a-norm model. The aim in this type of approach is to create conditions for women to participate in science, engineering and technology or 'technoscience' on equal terms. This means challenging the gendered nature of power relations (Rees, 1998).

In the Nordic context, desegregation in the labor market and response to the anticipated shortage of labor in the technology sector has appeared as objectives for gender equality work during the past 30 years (Brunila et al., 2005). Brunila, Heikkinen and Hynninen's (2005) survey on equality projects, conducted during the past three decades in Finland, show that there have been attempts to directly influence the choice of the subjects and further education of girls, including pedagogical experiments with the special aim of influencing girls' perceptions of themselves as learners. Various projects have developed training towards better consideration for the growing number of female students. Attention has been paid to methods, policies and contents, creating professional identities and networks of integration that support studies through work in pairs and small groups and mentoring (Brunila et al., 2005) An obstacle to progress towards equality in the field of education and training that still remains practically unaddressed is sexual harassment (Brunila et al., 2005) and especially in the fields of science, technology and engineering. Sexual harassment is prevalent in European Union member states and it functions as a serious barrier to the integration of women in the labour market (Timmerman & Bajema, 1997).

Feminist organizational research focuses on gendered structures, processes and resources in organizations which are specific locations for the production of gender order (e.g. Acker, 1997, 2006). Research on diverse gendered practices in technical settings are conducted including feminist research attempts to change the curricula and methods of teaching in schools and universities which exclude women from technology (Berner, 1997). Boel Berner and Ulf Mellström (1997) took this challenge and focused on gendered forms of practice and experience in which they refer to institutionalized forms of initiation into male engineering roles and the personal and interactive symbolic forms used by men and women engineers to understand their world. The latter refers to everyday interaction and sense-making – genderization of engineering. They argue that the ideal of ‘marketplace manhood’ in which masculinity, hierarchy and technology are linked still is the dominant one for engineering, despite change in gender recruitment and careers (ibid. 1997, 41). Relations between technology, masculinity and femininity are anchored in social practices, which have some continuity, but which are also open to change. These gendered social practices are expressed in four ways 1) in the gendered use of metaphors, 2) in ideals of mastery of machines, 3) in gendered socialization experiences and 4) in the gendered personal ordering of time and space. They also present gender of the ‘significant others’ – the early role models – and conception of time as highly genderized ones (Berner and Mellström, 1997). They do not explicitly point out sexual and gender harassment as being one of the features, but they do mention “...homosocial environment with forms of sociability, talk and behavior which primarily unite men and keep women outside. This is particularly important for everyday informal interaction, in engineering schools and work” (ibid. 1997, 64). Authors also state that “Women are still ‘guests’ who have to accommodate to a dominating cultural form, stressing mastery over machines, accommodation to organizational hierarchies and their career demands, and to homosocial forms of interaction, talk and competition” (ibid, 65). Minna Salminen-Karlsson (1997) states, applying Yvonne Hirdman’s theorization, that a technical university can be regarded as an institution with an institutional gender contract, which means in practice, separation of the sexes with the norm as male. According to her, female faculty does not fall into this since they are often not regarded as ‘real women’, either by the male faculty or by themselves. Females have shown themselves to be quite as capable as their male counterparts and, even if there are some teachers who do not believe in the intellectual ability of female students, the prevailing opinion is that it is sufficient to pass their exams (Salminen-Karlsson, 1997). Females are expected to be good with people and to have an

alternative way of looking at technology – two characteristics that the male faculty say they lack themselves (Salminen-Karlsson, 1997). However, the gendered practices may be challenged in various ways including engineering education reform (Salminen-Karlsson, 1997). The light shift in the focus of the most recent research is visible and discussions of how to tackle with science, engineering and technology from the empowering gender equality perspective have entered the field. For instance, feminist researchers have been calling for the creation of spaces to rewrite the masculine scientific canon and the masculine nature of scientific and engineering institutions, as well as challenging science and engineering subjects (Maynard, 1997). Celia Ng Choon Sim and Robini Hensman (1997) point out that science and technology can contribute very positively to women’s lives in several ways, starting from the very principle of providing clean drinking water for all. In the Northernmost Universities successful research projects and processes in waste management research have been carried out by Eva Pongrácz (2002, 2004, 2005). Also Sveldbard’s ice core drillings and Teija Kekonen’s (2006) study as a part of the research project has provided information on the development of emissions during the past 800 years. These female researchers, among others, have been pointing to already existing environmental issues and are using their intellectuality to find solutions, with the aim of building a viable future in the Circumpolar North. Joanna Kafarowski (2004) emphasizes the importance of ensuring women’s access to and involvement in decision-making processes in the contaminant and natural resources arena. According to her gender is highlighted in the contemporary discourse on environmental contaminants, but it should be identified as a critical variable in decision and policy making processes. She also calls for gender-based analyses of environmental management issues. In the context of the Circumpolar North gender equality is a crucial part of environmentally, economically and societally sustainable development. There is a clear need to constantly develop further gender equality policies within universities and also to ensure the development of gender equality policies within transnational, supranational, and global formations.

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