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**HANKEN**

# **Memories and Reflections from the Gender Research Group**

**21 Years of Collaborative Action**

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AND MARGAUX VIALLO**

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vuoksi ja tästä syystä ryhmän taipaleen äärelle pysähdytään nyt vuotta myöhemmin. Toivottavasti vuosien jatkaessa vierimistään ryhmän olemassaolo jatkuu. Kiitän ja onnittelen 21-vuotiasta!

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### **3.17 Anne Kovalainen**

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### **Intersectionality, gender, social class and the neoliberal self-governance of institutions and individuals**

#### Prologue

The Swedish School of Economics in Helsinki, where I was nominated for a fixed-term gender professorship in 1997 probably differs in many aspects from today's Hanken School of Economics. Equally though, I assume some things have not changed. The size of Hanken has not

dramatically changed. It was smallest of the 19 universities at that time, with c. 150 research personnel - a size of a small faculty. Despite the size, it is still governed as any university by a board consisting of impressive external members and a highly prominent chairperson, alongside the academic leadership.

Hanken maintained its independence in the university merger wave of the early years of the 21st century. Looking back, what has endured in the university turmoil is that Hanken of the 21st century has been able to withhold its independence, and strengthen the image and position of being the strong defender of Finnish-Swedish business elite and its values.

Along with the value preservation, I believe there are also other things that have not changed over time: it would be difficult to imagine that the elite identity-building, social class and the ethos of 'us' vs. 'them' as inescapable institution-strengthening discourses would have evaporated or disappeared over time. How did the intersectionalities of social class, gender, silence, otherness and neoliberal university assemblage at Hanken c. 20 years ago?

#### Narrative

In the mid-1990s, the Ministry of Education allocated funding for fixed-term gender professorships to seven universities. Unfortunately, there is no space to describe the important work of gender researchers' national collective and TANE. The funding for fixed-term professorships granted by the Ministry came with the 'wish' – no sanctions followed - that professorships were to be made permanent after five years. In the 1990s universities were part of the civil servant machinery of the state in their planning and rule-following. Universities were supposed to obey with Ministry. Five of seven obeyed with Ministry's wishes in this matter.

I accepted the nomination to Swedish School of Economics' fixed-term gender professorship in the Autumn 1997, moving from Åbo Akademi University fixed-term post of an acting professor in sociology. Prior to that, I was visiting research fellow at the Gender Institute at London School of Economics and Political Science, and research fellow at Academy of Finland project, analysing gender, NPM and privatisation of the welfare society. I had finalized my PhD in economic sociology during a short stay at Bradford University, UK, invited by the late professor Sheila Allen, due to our interests in gender and entrepreneurship. By the time I moved to Hanken, I had had my share of academic nomadism. Upon arrival to Hanken I opened up negotiations with Rector of the possibility to fund a visiting fellow, a prominent colleague who was working short-term at Åbo Akademi University. I was successful in securing visiting fellow funding for Jeff Hearn for 2 years, and able to welcome him to visiting position, after his fellowship at ÅAU came to end.

By 2000 I had been successful in receiving Academy of Finland large multidisciplinary project on 'Knowledge Creation', analysing gender, economy and epistemic questions, and was part of an international project on 'Disability and Labour Markets'. I was also one of the authors of Academy of Finland's Liike-programme, and at Hanken, I designed with colleagues the Gender research programme, conducting research and planning future activities for and within gender studies. At the time when 4 years' worth of the funding had been consumed, I assumed I had earned the permanency 'credentials' by bringing in 'highly valued' external funding very early on of my fixed-term period. These, along with other activities and invitations, should surely be enough to initiate discussions with leadership, following Ministry's wishes and prior the end of the funding.

## Epilogue

At hindsight, my rather naïve assumption was that the clearly articulated - but non-sanctioned - wish by Ministry of Education to make the professorships permanent would materialize by itself at Hanken when the output would be sufficient. That materialization did not happen. Following a move abroad and resignation of one professor, the leadership prioritized to open that vacated post at the department, decision which left gender professorship undecided. Being token – and alone with my request – materialized to me rather quickly.

It is here where the assemblage of social class, gender, silence, otherness and neoliberal university can be scrutinised and dissected. Intersectionality as a concept has become to mean in feminist studies the ability to search for the complexities of lived experiences embedded in systems of power and privilege (e.g. Carbado et al. 2013). Indeed, intersectionality enables us to understand how an array of socially constructed dimensions of differences such as social class, power, gender and neoliberalism intersect to shape experiences and actions. It is crucial though, as in this case, to understand intersectionality as a work-in-progress. As e.g. Misra et al. (2021) and Tomlinson (2018) remark, it makes little sense to frame intersectionality as a single ‘contained entity’ but rather consisting of processual elements on the move. This understanding enables capturing the dynamics of power beyond the narrow terrain of articulating identities.

How do social class and gender assemblage with minority elite culture and neoliberalism? Thinking intersectionality as a method, as a heuristic and an analytic tool, the analysis – here with only few sentences available of the 1,000 word limitation – looks as following. For the first-generation working-class academic such as me, stepping into the first post, the background gives no a priori knowledge of how to navigate within the

privileged culture and self-interest preserving institution. This, combined with the otherness produced by not having ties to the Finnish-Swedish business elite culture of Hanken, were the key processual elements on the move, that intersected with the neoliberalist competition that seeps into researchers' ways of being in academia, strengthened by "us and them" –thinking.

Looking back, the decisions made by the leadership were decisions of a rational economic (man) agency: why pay for two when you get one into the professorship that can service both jobs.

The assumption that institutions such as universities where we work, are moral agents to the extent that their actions and decisions would be decisions of 'a humane man' against 'a commercial man' (Nussbaum, 2017) is beautiful but naïve. The privilege and power of institutions such as universities is governed not by 'a humane man' but by leaders entangled in their reference groups, connections, competitions, hierarchies and knowledge limitations, in Nussbaum's terms, by 'a commercial man'.

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