



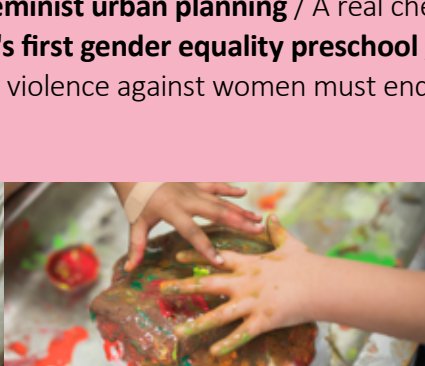
Thirty years
of gender equality work
in Umeå Municipality

Gender, power & politics!

1989–2019



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Thirty years of gender equality work in
Umeå Municipality

Nobody puts Baby in a corner

**Gender, power
& politics!**

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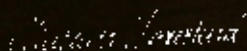
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“Umeå has good opportunities to be a gender equal municipality.”

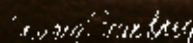
Umeå Municipality has for a long time worked with gender equality issues in a strategic and pioneering way. The work has been carried out both through gender mainstreaming and with specific initiatives to make visible and scrutinise, rephrase problem definitions, and broaden the analysis. A starting point for the work was when Umeå, as one of three municipalities, was selected in 1989 to participate in a government initiative on local gender equality work. When the five-year pilot project ended, gender equality work became a permanent and integrated part of the municipality's organisation, and the position of gender equality officer was created. In 2019, a milestone of 30 years of work for a gender equal Umeå was celebrated. This publication is part of the commemoration of this anniversary. This has been published to highlight and draw attention to 30 years of work for a gender equal Umeå. The various texts alternate between historical flashbacks and tangible examples from activities.

Umeå has good opportunities to be a gender equal municipality. There is a strong commitment and willingness to challenge and break power structures. Of course, we could have written a book about the failures. About trainings that went nowhere, about people who were made invisible when they tried to do gender equality work, about projects that were good but that nobody remembers, about attempts after attempts. But this is not that book, although self-criticism is also what makes the work great. Because gender equality is an active choice, something that is done. We hope that this story will also inspire further work towards a society free of stereotypes, sexism and homophobia. We want to inspire new and important political decisions to continue building a gender equal society.

This publication was commissioned by the Commission on Gender Equality of Umeå Municipality.



Charlotta Westerlund (S)
Chair of the Commission on Gender Equality
Umeå Municipality



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It is no coincidence

that Umeå is only one of Sweden's 290 municipalities that can boast an anniversary in 2019 that marks 30 years of continuous, systematic and strategic gender equality work, even if it has not always been successful or easy.

The commemoration of the anniversary year began in January with a panel discussion at The Museum of Women's History entitled 30 years of feminist organization in Umeå, where four feminist activists from different generations met to talk about what feminist activism and organisation has looked like in Umeå, what the driving forces have been, what goals and expectations there have been and what significance the location of Umeå has had for the organisation.

"We wanted to take our cue from the feminist organisation that has existed for a long time in Umeå, because without the strong feminist movement it is difficult to imagine that Umeå would have developed into the pioneer in gender equality work among Sweden's municipalities that we are," says the municipality's Gender Equality Strategist Linda Gustafsson.

Thirty years ago, Umeå Municipality was one of three municipalities in Sweden selected to participate in a government initiative to investigate and remove barriers to gender equality. But there was already a vibrant political feminist movement in the city.

"Så blev Umeå framgångsrikt feministfäste" (How Umeå Became a Successful Feminist Stronghold) headlined a full-page spread in DN in May 2004. The report highlights the success of the women's football team UIK, and the author then flashes back to the inauguration of the university in 1965. Umeå University was founded at a time of radicalism and innovation and was long popularly known as the "red university". In a new university that was not influenced by the historical traditions

and conservative intellectual heritage of the old universities, there were greater opportunities to establish new knowledge areas, such as women's studies, without much resistance.

The first course in women's studies was called *"Könsrollsfrågor"* (Gender Role Issues) and was established in 1976. As early as 1979, the first dissertation focusing on women's studies was presented. In June 1982, the first major scientific conference on women's research in Sweden was initiated - *"Kvinnouniversitetet"* (Women's University) at Umeå University. Less than two decades later, in 1997, Sweden got its first Professor of Gender Studies, Britt-Marie Thurén, at Umeå University.

In 1981, Swedish Radio in Umeå started the radio programme *Radio Ellen*, named after the feminist pioneer Ellen Key. The programme was broadcast until 1995 and was replaced by the feministic *Freja*, which was broadcast until 2003. The editorial team was the first of its kind: the profile was explicitly feminist, the editorial team was composed entirely of women, and the content was often controversial. Reporters visited waitresses' workplaces, threatened industries and women's conferences. The editor of both programmes was Isa Edholm.

In 1983, a three-month occupation of a house in the city centre called *Gula villan* (Yellow Villa) was carried out to create a women's house, which was also the result, although not in *Gula villan*. The texts from the exhibition *Berättelser i en stad* (Stories in a City) at the Women's History Museum in 2016-2017 state that:



"Feminist movements are strong in Umeå, which tends to have a snowball effect."

"The main issue - men's violence against women and a women's house - was raised in a completely new way in the public discourse. The occupation and the work of the Women's Shelter put men's violence against women on the political agenda and contributed to a change in social attitudes."

During the 1990s and the first decade of the 21st century, more or less formally organised networks and action groups flourished. The feminist network Aniara was one of the more influential. Two of the biggest Swedish feminist fanzines of the late 1990s were produced in Umeå - *Amazon*, which was launched in 1997, and the first issue of *Radarka* was published the following year. *Kravallkören* (The Riot Choir) performed at festivals and demonstrations, and the music association *She's got the beat*, founded in 1999, has since organised gigs, music festivals and pop music camps with the aim of creating a space that promotes young girls and transgender people to create music and

to work for a gender equal and norm-critical music scene. The association is now part of the national pop music camp movement.

"Few Swedish cities have as many more or less loosely knit women's organisations as Umeå, most of them with active support from the municipality," DN wrote in its 2004 article.

Since the early 2000s and until 2014, annual feminist festivals were organised by the feminist network *Aniara* with lectures, workshops and concerts in the municipality's premises in the *Hamnmagasinet*.

The feminist women's movement, the university and the public sector have interacted strongly with each other over the years, and collaboration has always been central to feminist work in the city. As the 2004 government report *Nya former för kvinnors organisering* (New Ways of Women's Organisation) states:

"Feminist movements are strong in Umeå, which tends to have a snowball effect."

Power and politics

– *feminism in the rooms
of power?*

Local pioneers of gender equality policy

At the beginning of the last century, Umeå wrote itself into the history books. On 30 March 1910, by-elections were held to fill three seats on the Umeå City Council. A constitutional amendment that came into force in 1909 meant that women were now electable in municipal elections, and both married and unmarried women had the right to vote locally. Both the Conservatives and the Liberals had a woman on the ballot. The Conservative candidate was Helena Ljungberg and the liberal candidate was Anna Grönfeldt. In the by-election of March 1910, Helena Ljungberg was elected to the city council. She then became the first woman ever to sit on the city council in not only Umeå but in a Swedish province.

In December of the same year, when the ordinary elections of 15 members took place,

both Helena Ljungberg and Anna Grönfeldt were elected to the Umeå City Council. After one term, Helena Ljungberg declined re-election for health reasons, but Anna Grönfeldt served on the Umeå City Council in several rounds until 1940 and was one of its most frequent to bring forward motions. Among other things, she proposed the establishment of a dental clinic for schoolchildren and, in connection with the revision of the town plan in 1914, she pushed the issue of earmarking land for an airport.

It was not until the late 1970s that what was to become the local gender equality policy began to take shape in Umeå Municipality. In 1977, the Social Democratic group of councillors put forward a motion to the Municipal Council "*on the establishment of a committee on gender equality in Umeå Municipality*". The

Committee was proposed as an instrument to facilitate coordination and monitoring of gender equality issues and to report directly to the Municipal Executive Board. At the end of 1978, the Municipal Council unanimously decided to approve the motion with the following wording: "Establish a municipal committee on gender equality consisting of 7 members and 7 deputies, appointed by the Municipal Council for the same period as the members of the Municipal Council, directly subordinate to the Municipal Executive Board and with the task of working out suitable forms for firmly anchoring gender equality work within the municipal administration". Kerstin Nilsson, a member of the Centre Party, was appointed chairperson.

One of the first tasks of the Committee on Gender Equality was to develop guidelines and a work plan for its activities. It was based on a concept of gender equality, which was about equal opportunities for men and women to work and advancement and care for their families. Achieving this requires changes and the removal of barriers in many different areas - in the labour market, in housing, in education and in the family.

In its first activity plan from 1980, the primary objective for the Committee on Gender Equality was that it should act as a consultative body when plans and programmes are drawn up and be given the opportunity to participate in the preparation of common planning conditions and be given the opportunity to comment and suggest on other issues of

importance to gender equality work. However, it was not until 1992 that the committee formally requested the Municipal Executive Board to become a mandatory referral body for all matters sent out for referral with the aim of highlighting the issues from a gender equality perspective.

Umeå as a pilot municipality for gender equality

What is now seen as the starting point for the systematic gender equality work that celebrates a milestone of 30 years in 2019 was when Umeå municipality in 1989 was selected as one of three pilot municipalities to participate in a five-year government initiative. The aim was to achieve equal conditions for women and men by coordinating efforts in all policy areas. Gender equality policy was also given significant resources by assigning a responsible official.

A strong contributing factor to Umeå being one of the municipalities selected was probably that there was already a political infrastructure in place for gender equality issues. The political infrastructure is still unique today:

"To our knowledge, Umeå is the only municipality in Sweden that has a commission on gender equality. In a few other municipalities, such as Eskilstuna and Stockholm, there are commissions or boards with a similar mission, but no municipality has as long a tradition as Umeå when it comes to its own political infrastructure for gender equality." (Rönblom,

"To our knowledge, Umeå is the only municipality in Sweden that has a commission on gender equality"

Malin and Sandberg, Linda, 2017: *Görandet av den jämställda staden* (The Making of the Gender Equal City) in *Statsvetenskaplig tidskrift* Vol. 119-2017/3, p 419).

The place of gender equality issues in both the political and service organisation changed during the five-year project. The pilot project itself was initially located in the Human Resources Office but was then linked to the Committee on Gender Equality. At the end of the project, the Municipal Council decided that the Committee on Gender Equality should be replaced by a Commission on Gender Equality directly under the Municipal Council. The members of the commission, seven full members and seven substitutes, are all also members of the Municipal Council. On 15 December 1994, Marie-Louise Rönnmark, the chair of the new commission, welcomed everyone to the "historic" first meeting of the Commission on Gender Equality.

One of the project's most central impacts was the creation of a full-time position in Umeå Municipality to continue the work that had begun. Project Manager Margareta Berggren writes in 1993 in the final report of the project:

"Gender equality has come to Umeå Municipality to stay. Thanks to the pilot municipality project, the municipality has been able to monitor and work with the issues in a different way than before. Now it is up to our political leaders to decide what the future investments will look like."

In the thirty years since Umeå became a pilot municipality for gender equality work, the political focus has shifted, but certain issues have been on the agenda since the beginning. In 1980, the first activity plan proposed that "the gender equality concept" should be given the opportunity to shape the municipality's services to its citizens (in particular childcare and public transport), housing planning, work and employment, and

the municipality's personnel policy. These are issues that are still central to local gender equality policy today.

When the Committee on Gender Equality was established in Umeå Municipality, gender equality issues at the national level were organisationally placed within the Ministry of Labour, and it was gender equality issues related to working life that dominated policy efforts, both nationally and locally.

"Women's work has always consisted of housework, childcare and social care. When the woman entered the labour market, this merely meant an extension of her previous domestic duties, which provided low status and pay."

This is the introduction from the activity plan of the Committee on Gender Equality in 1980. The description of the problem refers both to the gender-segregated labour market, where society has been shaped according to male conditions, and to the fact that the view of women as wives and mothers is a barrier to working in certain sectors. Women accounted for four-fifths of the low-wage sector, while women occupied 83.5% of the part-time work. To this end, the Committee argued, among other things, that young women should be encouraged to choose an education in male-dominated professions and that designated internships should be tried.

In politics, a similar division can be seen. Women have been responsible for organising coffee, and it has been taken for granted that women should work on soft issues such as children and elderly care.

"When nominating for new assignments and committees, men recommend other men, rarely thinking that women could do it just as well," says former member Marianne Löfstedt (M).

The right to full-time work is a political issue that has been pursued for several decades. Sweden still has a highly gender-segregated labour market where, in addition, many female-

dominated jobs, especially in the public sector, are organised on a part-time basis. In 1980, the Committee on Gender Equality highlighted in its activity plan that women make up the majority of part-time workers. The Committee argued that this was due to the contradiction between work in the home and paid work, which also leads to women working double. But also, that society's traditional view of women makes it more difficult to enter the labour market.

When the Municipal Council adopted its first gender equality plan in 1992, the objectives included reducing the number of part-time positions in favour of full-time positions. Two years later, the Commission on Gender Equality sent out a survey to 500 randomly selected part-time employees in the municipality to investigate why they worked part-time. Some were on part-time sick leave and others were

critical of the municipality's personnel policy. For example, a healthcare assistant responded that *"In the female-dominated healthcare sector, not enough full-time positions are offered."*

To create a more secure employment and enable self-sufficiency, Umeå Municipality decided 23 years later, in 2015, to introduce the right to full-time employment in municipal

From left: Eric Bergner (C), Christina Bernhardsson (S), Eva Arvidsson (V) (former vice-chair and chair of the Commission on Gender Equality, respectively), Professor of Political Science Malin Rönnblom, and the municipality's first Gender Equality Officer Margareta Berggren talk about room for action and local gender equality policy during a panel discussion at Kvinnohistoriskt museum (Women's History Museum) in spring 2019.

Photo: Umeå Municipality



**"Gender equality has
come to Umeå
Municipality to stay"**

healthcare and social care.

“For what reason should the public sector, where many women work, not have full-time as the norm? In the industry, it goes without saying. It is not even a discussion there because most of the workers are men,” says Marie-Louise Rönmark (S), first chair of the Commission on Gender Equality.

Today, the municipality's norm is full-time and permanent employment, and by May 2021, all employees in the municipality will have been offered full-time employment.

Local gender equality policies, knowledge and power

Since the 1970s, the feminist movement has actively fought to reduce men's violence against women, using slogans such as *“the personal is political”*. In Umeå, there has histo-

rically been a strong women's movement that has pursued these issues in conjunction with Umeå University. Many activists have taken courses in *Makt och Kön* (Power and Gender) and worked voluntarily at the women's shelter. However, it was only around the late 1990s that men's violence against women began to be seen more clearly as an issue for local gender equality policy.

“You knew it was there, but you did not go there. Nobody dared to push for it to get out in the open,” says former member Marianne Löfstedt (M).

In 2001, the study *Slagen dam* (Captured Queen) was published, which highlighted the consequences of power and gender to an extent that had not previously been done in Sweden. The former chair of the Commission on Gender Equality, Eva Arvidsson (S), says that they used the report a lot because knowledge of statistics was important since gender

Term of office	Chair	Vice chair
Committee on Gender Equality		
1978–1979	Kerstin Nilsson (C)	Sonja Persson (S)
1980–1982	Arne Lindh (S)	Marie Sandström-Öhberg (C)
1983–1985	Arne Lindh (S)	Marie Sandström-Öhberg (C)
1986–1988	Lorens Renström (S)	Karin Åhberg (Fp)
1989–1991	Lorens Renström (S) Lena Boström (S)	Sigbrit Normark (Fp) Britt-Mari Löfgren-Olovsson (Fp)
1992–1994	Gudrun Wallman (Fp)	Susanne Olofsson (V)
Committee on Gender Equality		
1995–1998	Marie-Louise Rönmark (S) Margareta Rönngren (S)	Camilla Sandström (Fp)
1999–2002	Eva Arvidsson (V)	Inger Nilsson (C) Lisbeth Etting (C)
2003–2006	Ibrahim Baylan (S) Christina Bernhardsson (S)	Helen Edlund (Kd)
2007–2010	Christina Bernhardsson (S)	Björn Kjellsson (Fp)
2011–2014	Tamara Spiric (V)	Eric Bergner (Fp)
2015–2018	Emma Vigren (S)	Tina Myhrberg (M)
2019–2022	Charlotta Westerlund (S)	Solveig Granberg (C)

equality policy was often questioned.

Researcher Eva Lundgren defined the experience of violence from a broader perspective in the report *Slagen dam (Captured Queen)*, and during the Metoo movement in 2017, the experiences were confirmed by women testifying about different types of violence in all parts of society.

"More women dare to tell what is happening, not just behind the confined of their own home. The Metoo movement empowered this to a fantastic degree," says Marianne Löfstedt (M).

Another area that has been constantly present in local gender equality policy is urban planning. *"Housing planning must be based on the assumption that adult individuals are gainfully employed. Gender equality requires the co-planning of workplaces housing-services"* wrote the Committee on Gender Equality in its first activity plan in 1980, and urban planning has been a central tool in the work for gender equality for decades in Umeå.

The nature of the work has varied over the years, but it is important to constantly question power structures and who is allowed to be the norm during urban planning.



Photo: Ann Widmark

In order to drive forward the work on gender equality, policy has been linked to current research. The 1992 gender equality plan stated that one of the objectives was that all administrations should produce gender segregated statistics for number of employees, salaries, working hours, parental leave and job title. The statistics would then be used as a basis for the design of both activity plans and local gender equality plans. Gender segregated statistics were and are an important way of highlighting inequality. The gender equality strategy adopted by the Municipal Council in 2011 and updated in 2017 states, among other things, that *"Women's and men's living conditions can be made visible through gender-divided statistics. This involves highlighting the conditions women and men have in Umeå Municipality."*

The statistics make it possible to make issues visible and scrutinise them, to rephrase problem descriptions and to broaden the analysis. It concerns paying attention to who gets what and on what terms within the municipality, which is achieved by analysing existing statistics from a gender equality perspective and using the results to change conditions of inequality. Ultimately, it concerns power and resistance, and perseverance:

"Democracy takes time. If you want change, do not give up after a year. Have a long-term strategy and stick to it," says Marie-Louise Rönmark (S), first chair of the Commission on Gender Equality.

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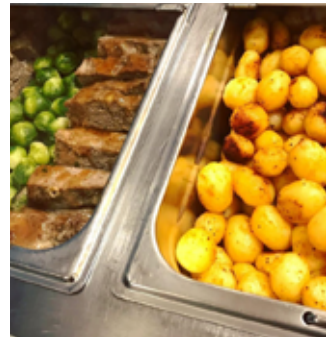
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"We still have a lot of work to do, we must never sit back and think that it is enough. It is a work in progress that must continue at all times."

Ulla Dellkrans



■ The Meal Service has an Instagram account where they share photos from their kitchens and meals, spiced up with inspiration for a healthy, sustainable and enjoyable meal. Follow meal service at @maltidsserviceumea

A real chef?

Is it possible to attract more men to a female-dominated workplace like food services and at the same time reduce sick leaves and part-time jobs?

In Umeå, the public food sector generates many jobs. Around 320 employees work in a total of 131 kitchens. Every day, the meal service will serve around 25,000 meals to preschools, schools and assisted living facilities in the municipality. Meal service has always been a female-dominated workplace, but in 2005 a project was launched to create a better working environment, raise the status of the profession and recruit more men. In the project, led by Helene Brewer, one aim was to highlight the skills needed to work in a kitchen. It is an advanced profession where a large amount of food has to be served at the same time. Staff therefore must have good planning skills, but also be aware of legislations and safety issues. An important part of the work is to create an enjoyable experience for the customers, whether they are 4 or 94 years old, where the food is of high quality and contains the right nutrition.

Research shows that gender equal workplaces are more profitable and that gender segregated workplaces have more sick leave. Gender equality work as a method has therefore permeated the entire project.

“All employees and managers in the meal

service received gender equality training. We wanted to make structures visible and show the benefits of a gender equal organisation,” says Helene Brewer. There were discussions about the consequences of working part-time and using a gender analysis to understand why fewer men apply for meal service jobs, she continues.

The aim was to raise the status of the profession by promoting employee development and enhancing their skills. As there was a lot of sick leave, one of the objectives was to create a healthier workplace. One way of doing this was through job rotation, which would also create more full-time positions.

To counteract gender segregation, 16 men were recruited, who qualified for training in school cafeteria management. Some had worked in kitchens before and some had no experience of the profession, so there were big differences in their prior knowledge. The training consisted of three areas, gender equality, meal service and then an internship in the units. Employees from the organisation told their future colleagues about their work in meal service, a way of making the skills of the existing team more visible.

The fact that employees were such a big part of the project created a sense of community. A key objective was to increase wages and it hoped that this would happen if more men joined the business. At the same time, it created some was irritation:

“Do we really need to get guys into the organisation to get our salaries up?” one of the employees asked.

In general, employees thought of the project as a positive change, but many were critical of the introduction of job rotation. The idea was that it would contribute to a more attractive and healthier workplace. Staff rotate within the kitchen to learn more tasks but may also work in more than one kitchen. It gives them a broader range of skills and therefore reduces the vulnerability in the event of sick leave.

Of the 16 men, 14 completed the full training and most were employed in the meal service or private sector. One benefit of bringing more men into the business is to break gender norms and children's expectations of meal service staff. One child happily said *“Oh, a real chef!”* when one of the men was serving during his internship.

The new male colleague is thus perceived as possessing competence because of his gender and acquires status just by existing. No organisation is free from power structures, but here it became particularly visible when the organisation was undergoing change. Questions asked during the project were what does this do to the person standing next to him, a woman who has worked much longer and has never been called a chef? Gender equality training could prepare staff for these situations to avoid divisions within the team, by highlighting the structures, rather than focusing on individuals.

In order to raise the status and demonstrate competence, titles such as operational chef, chef, meal attendant and restaurant manager were introduced. Everyone was given chef's outfits and name badges and the food was

presented on menus.

Although the project *“Attractive workplace on equal terms”* ended in 2007, the activities have continued to develop. When the project started, seven percent of the employees were men, and by 2018 the percentage had increased to 21 percent.

Sick leave has steadily decreased but it is still something the organisation is working on improving. The meal service has created an Instagram account to showcase what's happening in the kitchens and share ideas for a healthy and sustainable meal. It creates co-operation between kitchens and diners know what food is being served.

Today, more and more people are moving from the restaurant industry to meal service. Men with young children at home no longer want to work in restaurants in the evening if there are alternative daytime jobs, such as meal service.

Another development is that meal assistants now have the opportunity to validate themselves as chefs. It makes use of the skills already available in the organisation, as operational chefs and chefs are validators. In this way, the employee's skills are recognised, and their professional expertise is utilised.

By May 2021, all employees in the municipality will have received an offer of full-time employment and then the organisation will face new challenges. The organisation continues to live in the spirit created by the project, taking a few steps at a time.

“We still have a lot to do. It is ongoing work that must continue,” says Ulla Dellkrans, Head of Meals at Umeå Municipality's Meal Service.



Photo: Robert Rösth

From “big shot” courses to process managers

At Umeå Municipality, managers are expected to understand the need to work with gender equality.

Thirty years ago, when Umeå Municipality employed its first Gender Equality Officer, much of the work involved training municipal staff, especially managers. The aim was to create eye opening experiences and show the management the importance of working with gender equality.

The courses were popularly called “big shot” courses.

“They wanted the male managers to enter a personal journey. That they would arrive at a place where they themselves start driving the issues,” says Linda Gustafsson, who has been the municipality’s Gender Equality Strategist since 2011. I think there was a strong belief - perhaps wistful thinking - that if you had an eye-opening moment, you would also start working in a different way. The heads of administration had to attend a university course of

7.5 credits. The course was called “*Makt och kön*” (Power and Gender). With a somewhat reduced content, the course was then nicknamed the “big shot” course.

That attracted attention. In 1994, the municipality's first Gender Equality Officer, Margareta Berggren, recounted in Dagens Nyheter about the reactions:

“They sat like lighted candles and learned a lot about the development of society from a gender theoretical perspective from the researchers who lectured. 39 hours, literature studies and homework. One task was to carry out a time study of the housework. Then there was a discussion. And relatives called and wondered what the real purpose was.”

The university has been there throughout all the years. But in different ways.

“The Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SALAR) has highlighted this as a success factor for us, that we have always had academy involved,” says current Gender Equality Strategist Linda Gustafsson.

“We use the university to educate employees, managers and other things, such as arranging workshops with politicians. They help to scrutinise problems with an ambition to provide a theoretical understanding of power and gender.”

Another thing that distinguishes Umeå is the recruitment of staff with gender expertise to work on gender equality issues.

“The hope is that we are good at maintaining the critical eye that our education has provided us with. In other municipalities, strategists have often worked with human resources issues before, it varies a lot.”

Courses continue to be held, always including gender equality as part of the introductory training for new managers, and targeted training initiatives are carried out in various activities. But the municipality has also introduced training for process leaders as a way of developing more kinds of long-term and sustainable work with gender mainstreaming.

The first process manager training was held in 2019, where managers from different departments within the community planning administration were trained to identify barriers and solutions for gender equality in their operations. The process leaders then support their managers in the work of gender equality integration within their relevant operations. Those who have undergone the process training may also participate in network meetings on gender equality issues within the municipality twice a year.

“Nowadays, it is assumed that people who are hired have that understanding - and regardless of what you think, you are paid to work with it as long as it's a political assignment,” says Linda Gustafsson. *“It is simply not acceptable not to accept gender equality work.”*

One of the success factors is exactly that it is part of the regular activity, which after 30 years is perhaps the only reasonable way. Gender equality work is not a project, but something that Umeå municipality continuously works on, which means that it does not constantly go in and out of focus.

“You need to have a memory in the organisation, we cannot follow a new approach all the time, although we do need to continuously replenish knowledge, and just because the organisation has been working with it for a long time, it does not mean that there will not be resistance or that we are talking about some kind of straight line, which it is really not.”

Umeå Municipality has always talked about power when talking about gender equality. A social welfare officer may feel powerless in relation to the Social Services Act, while at the same time having extreme power over clients. With the discussion of power, intersections also play a role. Intersectionality is about recognising different power structures, whether they are based on class, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender expression or

"There is a lot that was done in the 1990s that would be impossible to do today"

degree of disability.

At the same time, it is important to know that gender research and gender equality work are not the same thing. However, the gender perspective has entered more and more parts of academia and therefore there is now research that deals with many of the different activities that exist within a municipality.

Linda Gustafsson believes it is important to have the activity as a starting point, regardless of activity, and linking it to relevant research and knowledge about power structures.

"If you work with home healthcare, you may not be looking for specific research on home healthcare, but perhaps research on the power relationship between caregivers and users," says Linda Gustafsson. *"Of course, organisations involved in case management have a mutual exchange, even if the cases are different, and the same applies to managers or employees who have a lot of dialogue and meetings with inhabitants."*

One of the researchers the municipality has worked closely with is Malin Rönblom. She is Professor of Political Science, and Senior Lecturer at the Umeå Centre for Gender Studies.

Throughout the years, Umeå Municipality has interacted with the university instead of consultants.

"It means they have chosen us which is more inconvenient. But we speak the same language, understanding the resistance has been the focus. I also always do what I can for the municipality - and also the County Administrative Board - and we often invite the gender equality strategists to give lectures at our university courses."

Malin Rönblom explains in a straightforward manner why it is good for gender equality strategists to have knowledge

of gender theory.

"Those who do not have the knowledge of the power structure can be taken by surprise when resistance strikes. If you have the knowledge, you can prepare more."

As far as Malin Rönblom knows, no other municipality has a commission on gender equality directly below council level.

"It is unique and has had a major impact on how gender equality issues have been institutionalised in Umeå."

Malin Rönblom explains that the person responsible for gender equality is usually in the human resources department. This often means that gender equality is seen as a work environment issue rather than a strategic issue.

"It becomes a reactive working method concerning predominantly discrimination of individuals, not about structures."

Resistance to gender equality work in society varies. There has been a clear development during the 30 years that Umeå has had a public servant responsible for gender equality that resistance has weakened, and it has become easier to pursue gender equality issues. Within Umeå Municipality, it is no longer controversial to any great extent. But at the same time, resistance in society at large has strengthened over the past 10 years.

Malin Rönblom talks about how the work at the municipality has developed in many ways and that gender equality is self-evident. At the same time, external resistance has intensified.

"Hate, primarily through social media, has reduced the scope for action for all those working on gender equality."

There is a lot that was done in the 1990s that would be impossible to do today."

Training hours

Gender equal training hours created a world-class football team?

Nowadays, training hours are fairly distributed, but it hasn't always been that way. Until the end of the 1990s, Umeå's female players had worse training hours than the men, because the men always had first choice.

“We were able to practice, and with better hours we also had time to rest. For us it made a very, very big difference.”



IN 1999, the Umeå **LEISURE COUNCIL DECIDED** that all training hours at the municipality's sports facilities in the higher levels should be allocated according to series affiliation.

"It was a brave decision at the time, and I think that is the reason for a lot of our success," says Hanna Ljungberg, who was one of the world's best football players when she played for UIK in the early 2000s.

At the end of the 1990s, the leisure committee received gender equality training and at the same time began to examine how municipal resources were allocated. The politicians asked for gender segregated statistics to examine who was using the training facilities. Before, many had claimed that it was already gender equal, but the statistics showed otherwise. A system had been created where men could use the facilities much more and were also allocated the financial resources. Christer Lindvall (S), who was then chairman of the leisure committee, describes that in principle all surveys showed 70/30 in favour of men.

"In Umeå, half of the electorate are women - should they only get 30% of the resources?" says Christer Lindvall.

The Left Party pushed the issue of allocating training hours according to series affiliation and was supported by the Social Democrats.

"When reality speaks for itself, it is difficult to stop it," says Ulrika Edman (V), who was on the leisure committee at the time.

Susanne Granberg, who was marketing manager at Umeå IK from 1995 to 2009, had worked with the club for several years to try to achieve a gender-neutral distribution of training hours. One of the counterarguments was that there were so few girls playing football, but when girls and boys did not play on equal terms, it is no wonder that the sport became male-dominated.

"It was a battle for gender equality around the clock those years," says Susanne Granberg.

Since the women's team Umeå IK was in a better position in its series than the corresponding men's team, Umeå FC, the decision meant that it was the women's team that could choose their training hours first. After the decision was made by the leisure committee, it took only a few years before there were almost as many girls as boys playing football. The decision was simply crucial to be able to participate in the sport on equal terms. More could feel the joy of dribbling past their opponents and feel the excitement after a match.

Umeå Municipality was the first in the country to introduce rules for gender equal time allocation and not everyone appreciated the change. Men were used to being given first choice and some thought that was the way it should stay. People expressed their dissatisfaction through letters to the editor and articles in local newspapers, letters were mailed, and phone calls were made. The football clubs' facilities association wanted to overturn the decision and the men's team, Umeå FC, felt neglected as they were no longer allowed to choose training hours first. Even in politics, many did not appreciate the decision. However, many also saw it as a major step towards gender equality in sport. Christer Lindvall describes how the female Left party representatives on the committee who voted for the proposal were attacked more harshly than he was as chair.

"I received massive criticism, both internally and externally," says Ulrika Edman (V).

The decision affected all sports activities taking place in the municipality's training facilities, but it was football that received the most media attention.

"Football was like a holy grail dedicated to men ... and at that time it was a very conservative association," says Susanne Granberg.

For the female players at the elite level, it was crucial to have the same conditions to

develop on equal terms. The decision allowed them to train in a different way during the long winter season in Umeå.

Training hours *“For us it was a competitive advantage over many other women’s teams. We were able to practice, and with better hours we also had time to rest. For us it made a very, very big difference,”* says Hanna Ljungberg, the player who has scored the most goals in Umeå IK. In 2003 she was voted the world’s third best player. In the 1990s, few women in Sweden and Europe were able to make a living from their football careers. Susanne Granberg says that there were many prejudices against women’s football when she started looking for sponsors for UIK in 1995.

“I was completely shocked, I was not prepared. CEOs and marketing managers bluntly stated that chicks should not play football because what if the ball lands on their breasts? Or they said only lesbians play football.”

The tactic was to constantly question and demand in-person meetings. This way, the

team gained many good relationships with companies. In the years 2000-2009, UIK was one of the world’s best football teams, filling stadium after stadium, and the football players were able to make a living from their sport. Football became part of Umeå’s identity, as the team dominated nationally and internationally for several years.

“Once we had reached that status, it was no longer politically correct to question women’s football,” says Susanne Granberg.

During these years, expectations boiled over in the city. Before the matches, people flocked to Gamliavallen to fill the stands and cheer on their idols.

When the national team won silver at the 2003 World Championships, six of the players on the team came from Umeå. Brazilian football player Marta Vieira da Silva, voted the world’s best female football player six times, began her career in Sweden in Umeå. Other big names were Malin Moström and Hanna Ljungberg.

Photo: Hanna Ryström



In the years 2000-2009, UIK played five finals in the UEFA Women's Champions League and won two. They reached the final of the Swedish league nine times and became Swedish champions seven times in total. These are incredible achievements that show what equal preconditions can achieve.

But this has also been about highlighting women's achievements.

"In Umeå, the media and the municipality were early to promote women's football," says Hanna Ljungberg.

In 2019, a gender-neutral time allocation is not questioned in Umeå, but surprisingly, this is not yet obvious in all municipalities in Sweden.

Facts

According to the current policy on the allocation of training hours, the first objective is that: **Women and men must have equal opportunities for training, competition and exercise.**

Allocation criteria:

The following order of priority is the basis for the distribution of times in premises and facilities:

1. Competition activities
2. Training activities
3. Exercise and other activities

For competition and training activities within a particular activity, times are allocated on the basis of:

1. Series affiliation/level of competition activity sanctioned by the relevant specialised federation/specialised district federation
2. Scope of youth activities



Photo: Hanna Rydström



A gender equal sports policy

IN FEBRUARY 2019, the leisure committee allocated funds to carry out a review of both the leisure administration's work with gender equality and the municipality's work with gender equal sponsorship. During the year, the leisure administration collaborated with the Fair Pay Foundation and conducted a workshop with the municipality's business department and municipal companies to educate and discuss gender equal sponsorship. The review also looked at, among other things, the process of how training hours are allocated and how activity support and other contributions are allocated and monitored.

"It has been great to do this review and have a dialogue with Fair Pay on these issues. For example, it is a challenge when it comes to the distribution of training hours to evaluate how to handle individual and team sports, distributions between different sports and series and so on," says Peter Hörnemalm, Head of Department for the association office in Umeå municipality.

At the beginning of 2019, the Municipal Council also approved a motion to establish an incentive grant to associations working for gender equality in sport. At the Umeå Sports Gala, a gender equality prize has been awarded annually, sponsored by the owners of Norra Skog in collaboration with the Fair Pay Foundation. Therefore, the municipality joined the existing prize and doubled the prize money, to SEK 20,000. At the 2020 Sports Gala, it was Umeå Orienteering Club that was awarded the prize.

In June 2019, Umeå Municipality was named Sweden's second-best gender equality municipality in the field of sports by the magazine *Sport & affärer*.

The network for gender equal sport **TOOK OFF IN UMEÅ** when Sävar IK was awarded the gender equality prize at the Umeå Sports Gala in early 2018. With that nudge in the right direction, and in the aftermath of the #metoo movement, the association's chair, Staffan Norin, was inspired to start a local network for gender equal sport. Sävar IK joined forces with the owner of Norra Skog and the Västerbotten Sports Association and together they issued an invitation to sports clubs, companies and public organisations. The aim of the network is to work on gender equality in sport, both in practice and in sponsorship.

"We work with gender equality both to develop sport and for sport to develop society," says Staffan Norin.



15-20 partnering sports clubs, companies and public organisations, including Umeå Municipality, meet for breakfast on a Friday morning every six weeks. The meeting is alternately held at a company and at an association, and the host of the meeting is also responsible for the content.

"For example, we had a breakfast meeting with an advertising agency that described a concept on how to work with gender equal sponsorship and partnerships for gender equality," says Staffan Norin. The future vision of the network is to involve more partners and to jointly take more real action in the world of sport to promote gender equality issues.

"Associations have a great opportunity to influence the society we live in, but this requires the leaders and section chairs get to the bottom of the issue themselves."

Examples from the municipal organization

Letter campaigns

You've got mail!

One of the tasks of the Commission on Gender Equality is to make the importance of a gender equality perspective visible. This has been done through education, campaigns and dialogue with residents in various ways. Sometimes letters have also been sent home to residents.

Christmas Campaign 2001

How do we turn girls into women and boys into men? That was the message on buses, bus shelters and also on Umeå Municipality's official Christmas card in 2001.

In 1999, the Municipal Council of the International Union of Local Authorities (IULA) adopted the Declaration on Women in Local Government. Among other things, municipalities must avoid reproducing stereotypical notions of gender, women have the right to move freely in public without fear and must be free from all forms of violence. Using the Declaration as a starting point, the Commission on Gender Equality began to reflect on what the Declaration means in practice and what role the commission should play. Eva Arvidsson (S), who chaired the commission at the time, says that they decided to work to form an opinion and to change social norms. Therefore, the former commission chose to work more outwardly than before.



“Why not make a campaign that encourages those who give Christmas presents to children to make the presents something that suits the children as individuals and not something that is given because they have a particular gender?” says Eva Arvidsson.

The campaign was a reminder that the Christmas gift you buy is part of a pattern of how children are shaped into women and men. It signals that it is with small means that we contribute to a structure and if we want to have an equal society, we must start with the children today as they are the future tomorrow.

“The aim was to create a public debate and to scrutinise which toys are bought for children according to gender. The campaign was a success because it highlighted these issues,” says Eva Arvidsson.

The campaign attracted a lot of attention and local newspapers published articles, columns and letters to the editors on the issue. The discussion forum on the municipality's website broke records with 28 posts in less than a month, more than double the number of the other “hot” issues traffic and construction. The comments were overwhelmingly positive and in Västerbottens Folkblad, Gender Equality Developer Aurora Moberg told us:

“It is great fun. I have also received a good number of emails, many in the same positive spirit as on the web and some that think this is silly and that we should have more important things to do.”

A survey carried out in January 2002 during *Öppet Stads-hus* (Open Town Hall) showed that of the 73% who noticed the Christmas campaign, 78% said they were positively affected and only 5% negatively.

Letter campaign to men about violence 2002

In 2002, the Commission on Gender Equality decided to send out a letter to all men in Umeå between the ages of 18 and 55. The campaign aimed to draw attention to men's violence against women and the extent of this violence. The statistics in the report *Slagen Dam* (Captured Queen) which was just published showed that 46 percent of Swedish women had been subjected to violence by a man after their 15th birthday.

Letter campaigns

The commission chose to spend its entire budget on the campaign to create opinion and show that violence is unacceptable. The letter stated in very precise terms that domestic violence is a major social problem. The home should be one's safest place, but for many women that is where they are subjected to violence by a close relation. There are no safe havens, women are subjected to violence at home, at work and in public spaces.

"It means a lot for people to live with violence or the threat of violence. It makes us sick, reduces our quality of life, prevents us from developing as human beings and makes us prisoners in our own lives. It is an extremely important democratic issue not to be subjected to violence or the threat of violence," says Eva Arvidsson.

The letter pointed out that all men have a responsibility never to accept any form of violence and for change to happen, they have to be part of it. Finally, the men were invited to a thematic evening on men's violence against women in the hope that the discussions would help prevent violence. Eva Arvidsson says that the commission spent a lot of time formulating its message so that everyone, regardless of party affiliation, felt they could get behind it to create a united front. They anticipated that there would be reactions to the letter.

Reactions were mixed, with many critical of the mass mailing as they felt they were being innocently accused. Others, however, thought it was positive that the issue was taken seriously. The reactions were published in the media - but only few people turned up to the evening to discuss women's peace.

Eva Arvidsson likes to look for creative working methods, and perhaps that is exactly what is required of people who work with questioning power structures. At the same time, she points out that you have to relate to your time.

"If you have a tailwind, you have to run, because there will always be times when there is more resistance, and you have to take a step back."

Celebration of the 100th anniversary of women's right to vote!

On 24 May 1919, the National Parliament passed the first two constitutional amendments required to give



women the right to vote. To celebrate the 100th anniversary, Umeå Municipality arranged a celebration held at Kafé Station, two days before the date the decision was passed a hundred years before.

The celebration was open to all, but female first-time voters along with the women in the municipality born around the introduction of women's right to vote were guests of honour and had received a special invitation in the post. Before the celebration, a focus group of 18-year-old girls was organised and they were asked how they wanted the evening to turn out. The girls could also choose the snacks, which were popcorn, mazarin buns, non-alcoholic bubbly and coffee.

"The 18-year-olds were super excited to meet the 100-year-olds. They said God how exciting that we get to talk to them!" says Annika Dalén, Development Strategist for Gender Equality.

Karin Holmgren from the Popular Movement Archives in Västerbotten talked about the historical background of the struggle for the right to vote. In Umeå, the women who fought for their democratic right to vote included Ingeborg Öqvist, Anna Grönfeldt and Helena Ljungberg. Clara Gustavsson from the Swedish Film Institute showed films from political activism in Sweden and highlighted feminist pioneers.

In the local newspaper Västerbottens-Kuriren, you could read about the conversation between Elsa Dalén, 99, and 18-year-olds Rebecka Vesterlund and Linda Odsander about how much work went into their democratic rights. Linda said she was looking forward to voting in the European elections, which were taking place the same week as the celebrations. In 2019, more than 400 female first-time voters and 60 women born between 1919 and 1921 lived in the municipality.

"The 100-year-olds are the first generation to be born as equal citizens, with the same formal democratic rights as men," says Annika Dalén.

With this event, the Commission on Gender Equality wanted to highlight the voting rights reform as a milestone in the history of Swedish democracy and an important victory for women's struggle for independence, liberation and the same civil rights as men.



Fatherhood cards

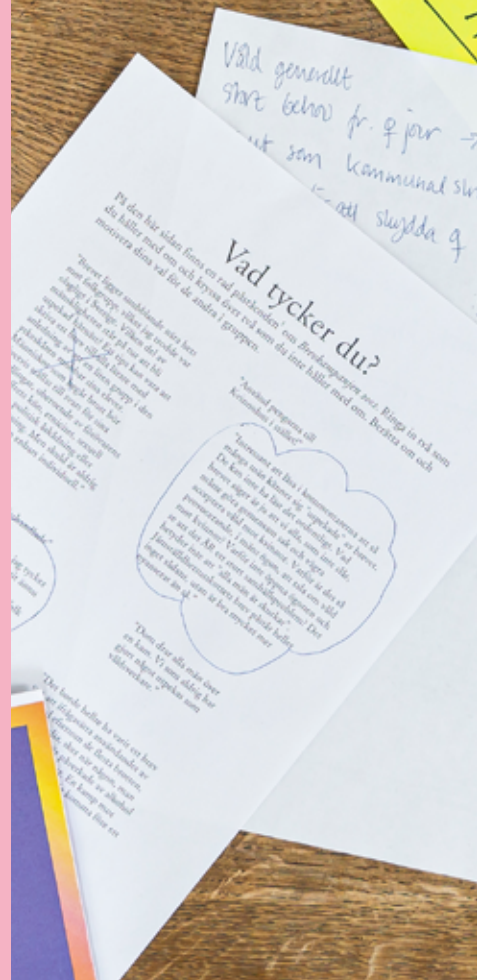
With this card Umeå Municipality would like to congratulate you on the addition to your family and wish you all the best. Becoming a parent is an overwhelming thing!

This is the start text on the municipality's fatherhood card, which between 2013 and 2016 arrived in the mailboxes of all men who were employed by the municipality when they became fathers.

Although more and more fathers are on parental leave with their children, they still do not do it to the same extent as the mothers. In Umeå, fathers take about 28 percent of parental days. After parental leave, it is also common for women to work part-time.

The Commission on Gender Equality therefore took an initiative to encourage men to take parental leave. The fatherhood card was issued to male employees of the municipality when they took their first 10 parental days in connection with the birth of their child. The campaign had a dual purpose. Umeå Municipality wants to be a role model and encourage fathers to take their parental leave, but they also saw it as an opportunity to talk about gender equality work. As fewer men than women took parental leave, the municipality as an employer wanted to show that it is possible for all employees to combine parenthood with working life.

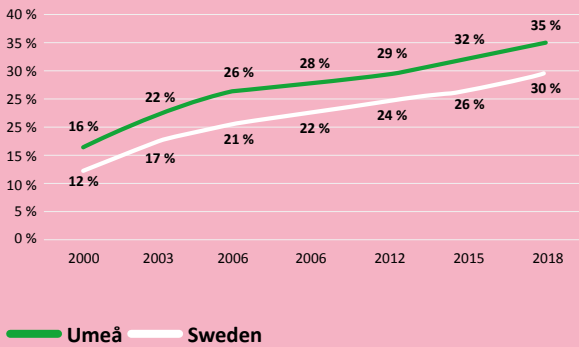
In 2015, a survey was carried out and most people interviewed had found the cards to be positive but said that it had not affected their use of parental leave.



Facts about parental benefit

Parental insurance was introduced in 1974. For the first time, both parents were entitled to financial compensation for staying at home with their children. Men took an average of 0.5% of parental benefit in the first year. Throughout the 2000s, where figures are available at municipal level, Umeå Municipality has had a more gender equal distribution of parental leave days than the national average.

Men's share of parental leave days in the 2000s



— Umeå — Sweden



Improving quality through active gender equality work

People with special needs can apply to have their home adapted so that they can stay at home and live as independently as possible. For example, a home adaptation could be having a door opener fitted or having your kitchen adapted for seated work.

In Umeå, it is the Housing Adaptation Department within the Community Planning Administration that handles the housing adaptation grant. Housing adaptation belongs to the activities of the Planning Council, a council that has broken down the municipality's overall goal of gender equality into its own goals for its activities. In 2011, the department launched an active gender equality project with a focus on ensuring the quality of processing.

The caseworkers began by considering whether cases are processed differently depending on the gender of the applicant. Could it be that the average cost of measures differs depending on whether applicants declare that they are male or female? To test this, in 2012, they started to anonymise the applications and now all applicants are referred to as 'they'.

Two thirds of the applicants are women and one third men. Most men who apply for grants are between 65 and 79 years old, while women are usually over 80 when they apply.

Moreover, the women are often living alone and are used to fending for themselves.

Applications were anonymised so that staff did not know the applicant's gender, age or address. This was to counteract assumptions made by caseworkers about what was needed and influenced by learned expectations about gender and age.

Staff received training on gender issues and the head of department received training on 'gender budgeting'. The latter is a method that teaches the importance of visualising how public resources are used and distributed between women and men. The aim of the training was to gain knowledge on how to work with a gender equality perspective in the budget process, in planning activities and in the follow-up of those.

Britta Nordbrandt Nilsson is the head of the housing adaptation caseworkers.

"Of course, you have to have committed employees, but if you have a management that

does not raise these issues and does not want it to be put into action, then not much will happen. You have to get it on the agenda and show that it is important,” says Britta Nordbrandt Nilsson.

In order to measure the distribution of resources and the experience of the measures, the project has used gender segregated statistics.

First, a review of resource allocation was initiated. Britta Nordbrandt Nilsson says that the group was surprised that there was such a big difference in what women and men seek adaptation for.

Men most often apply for lifts and ramps and for home adaptations in the garage. Women most often request automatic doors and adaptations in the kitchen. A stove guard is a common safety measure as it monitors the kitchen stove to stop a fire breaking out.

The social structure of gender and the domestic chores we have been brought up to perform is thus clearly evident in the applications. In addition, more men are applying for wheelchair storage, and this raises questions about other agencies: have more men been able to borrow a powered wheelchair through the county council? Applications for lifts and ramps indicate that men are more likely to apply for assistance to get out of their homes, while women apply to be able to manage at

home on their own.

“Being able to get out and not be isolated in your home should be important for everyone,” says Britta Nordbrandt Nilsson.

The statistics show clear gender patterns. But it can be difficult to know exactly where it is coming from. One can imagine that women living in heterosexual relationships apply for subsidies to adapt the kitchen even though the man is healthy and could actually cook. Men who live with a woman are less likely to seek adjustment in the kitchen, and one can imagine his partner cooking. Over the last eight years, the men's category has had a higher average cost in six of those years. Women apply for less costly measures such as kitchen stove guards, while men are more likely to apply for more expensive conversions.

From a socio-economic perspective, it is much less costly for a municipality to invest in housing adaptation compared to a retirement home. According to the 2018 follow-up of the activities, 82% felt that the adaptation had made their daily lives significantly easier. It is important to feel independent and home adaptation provides those conditions.

“These contributions are fantastic for the individual. It enables a person to stay and live as independently as possible in their home,” says Britta Nordbrandt Nilsson.

But it is still important to try to find needs

“Men most often apply for lifts and ramps and for home adaptations in the garage. Women most often request automatic doors and adaptations in the kitchen”

that the applicants themselves may not have been able to express. Or they do not know what they can get help with.

Although the housing adaptation case-workers only encounter anonymised cases, there are people who have met with the applicant before the application is made. For example, occupational therapists. It is therefore important that all those who meet the applicants have knowledge of power structures to reduce the risk of offering stereotypical solutions.

Britta Nordbrandt Nilsson says that they have succeeded in incorporating this working method into their case processing, but she still feels that there is more to do.

Photos from the municipal organization

In 2019, the project has been working to include a third gender in its surveys so as not to discriminate against people who do not identify with the categories of male and female. Today, gender equality is a permanent item on the agenda during workplace meetings to ensure that the issue is always present, as we have to work with these issues all the time.

“This cannot be based on the passion of individuals. Because when that person disappears, does this fall apart? It must be permeated in the organization,” says Britta Nordbrandt Nilsson.



Examples from the municipal organization

■ *Examples of housing adaptation measures. Applications for lifts and ramps indicate that men are more likely to apply for assistance to get out of their homes, while women apply to be able to manage at home on their own.*

Worth knowing

A commitment to gender equality at local and regional level

In 2008, Umeå Municipality ENDORSED the Council of European Municipalities and Regions' (CEMR) Charter on Equality between Women and Men in Local Life. By ratifying the charter, the municipality is taking an active stand for gender equality and has thereby committed itself to working towards a gender equal society.

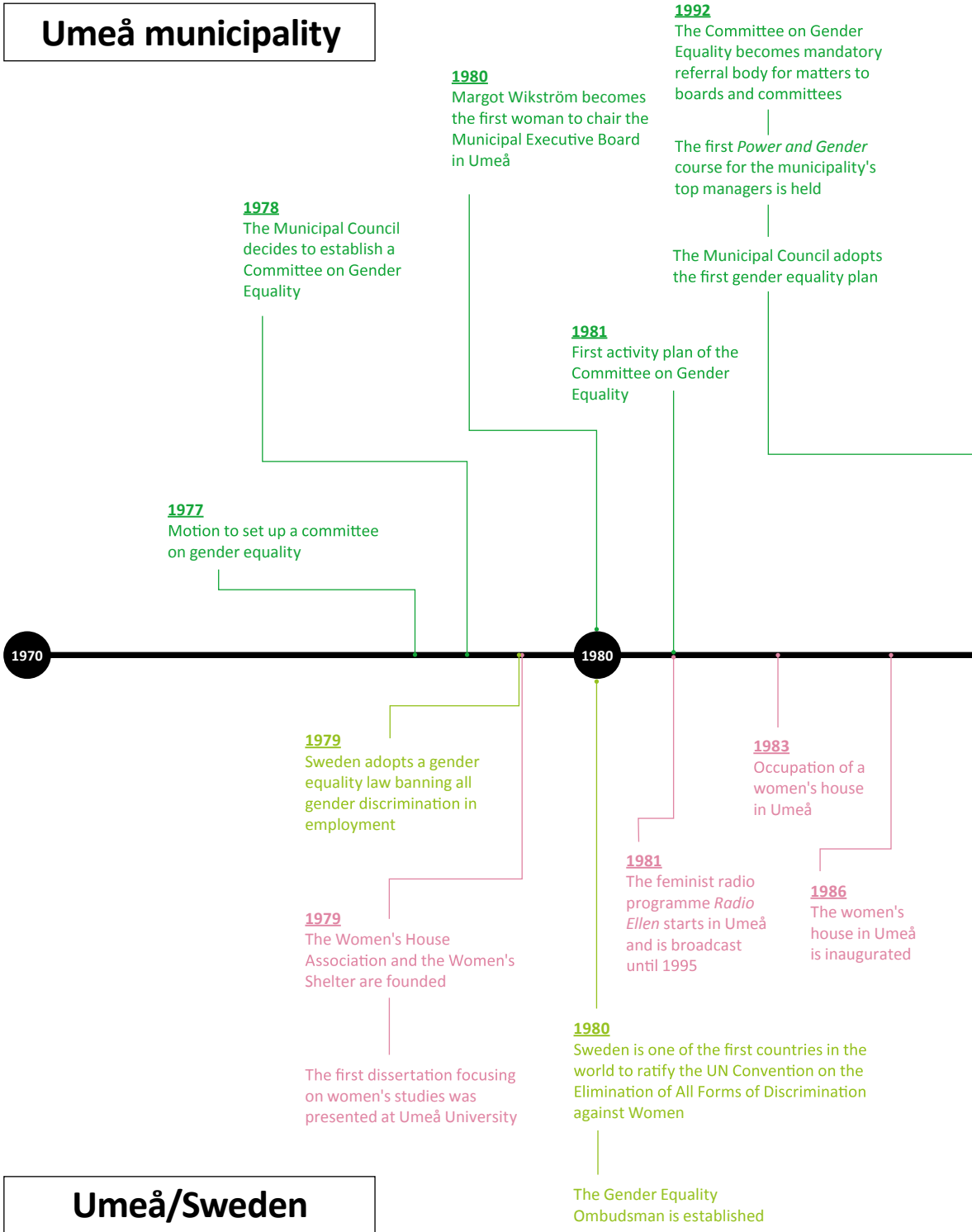
The CEMR charter is a tool for integrating gender equality in decision-making and in practical activities. The signatory must create and adopt an action plan on how to achieve gender equality and then implement it. Gender equality work must cover all aspects of the organisation, externally towards inhabitants, internally towards employees and also in political work. 108 of Sweden's 290 municipalities have ratified the declaration. In 2011, Umeå Municipality decided on a strategy for gender equality work, which was updated in 2017. The strategy is based on the CEMR charter and constitutes Umeå Municipality's action plan.

The declaration is available at:
<https://charter-equality.eu/>

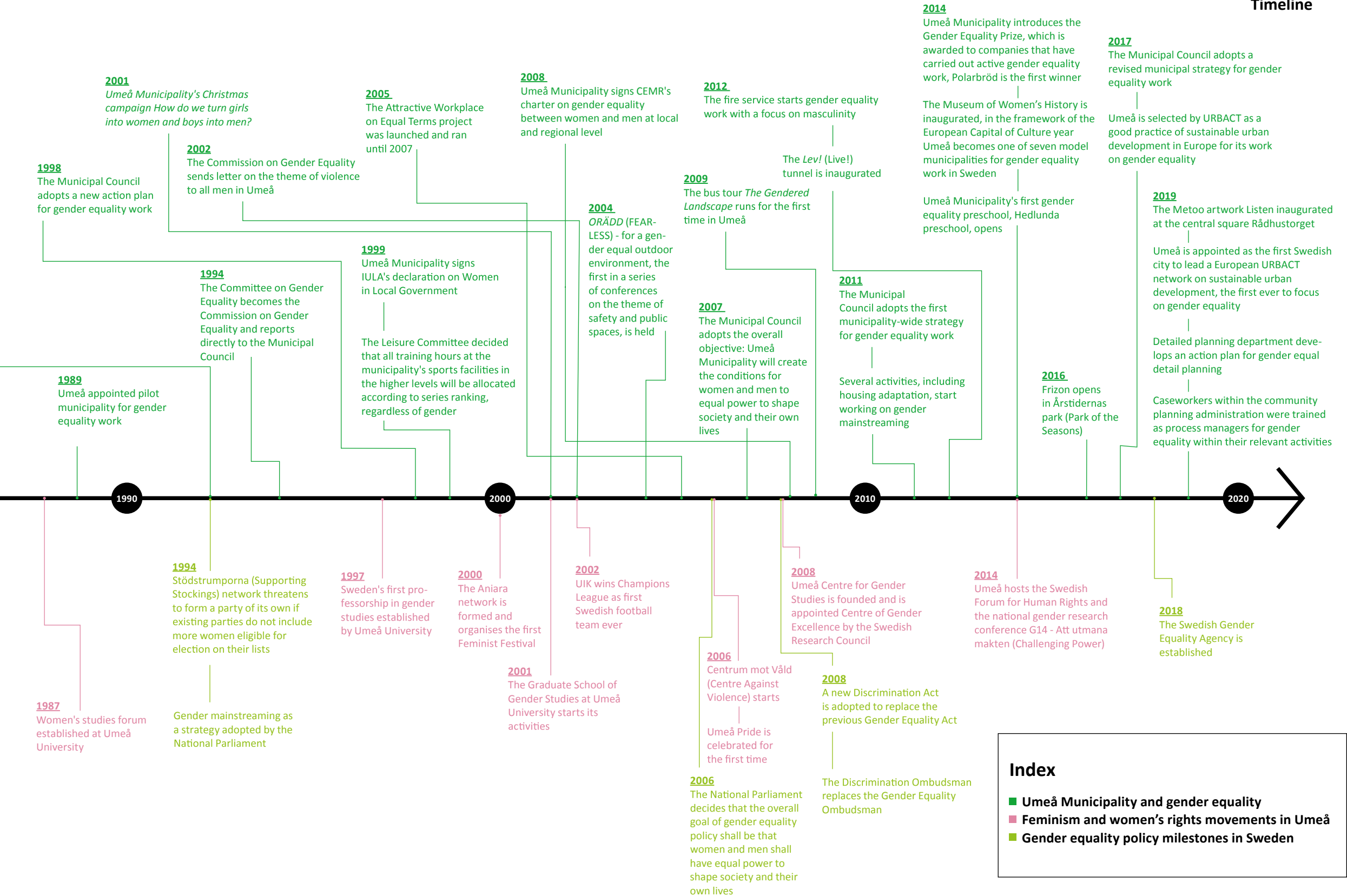


Timeline

Umeå municipality



Timeline



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- Umeå Municipality and gender equality
- Feminism and women's rights movements in Umeå
- Gender equality policy milestones in Sweden

Public space

From more lighting to feminist urban planning

Umeå Municipality has been actively working with gender equality in urban planning for over 25 years. Much of what was new then is now required by the *Boverket* (the Swedish National Board of Housing, Building and Planning). At the same time, gender equality in Umeå's urban planning has gone from being about representation, lighting and fewer bushes, to now being primarily about trying to plan and build a city that equalises power relations.

More than 20 years ago, in 1998, the municipality decided that all activities should be gender mainstreamed - and this also applied to the comprehensive plan. The Urban Planning Office therefore launched an ambitious training programme, hiring a consultant to manage the work for seven months and inviting researchers to give lectures. The comprehensive plan that had just been adopted had to be analysed from a gender equality perspective. How the work was done is described in a research report by Tora Friberg and Anita Larsson. It describes how the discussions were long and that it was finally concluded that it was not possible to define what a gender equal plan is. But it was realised that no effort had been made to ensure that men and women had an equal say in the design of the plan. Everything pointed in the direction that men were much more likely than women to participate in planning and in meetings to discuss them.

But even though the focus was on representation, issues such as pedestrian tunnels, parking spaces, parks and public transport also came up during the discussions. Many identified clearly gender equality aspects in relation to these.

Along the pedestrian streets of Västra Kyrkogatan and Nygatan you can see overcrowded bicycle parkings today. But it is also home to the city's largest car park - called "*Nanna*" - to where cars should drive as slowly as possible. In the late 1990s, too few people chose to park their cars here in the city centre. A survey showed that the indoor car park was perceived as dark and unsafe, with poor lighting and hidden dark staircases.



In 1999 the renovation of *Nanna* began. The building was repainted, more comprehensible signs were put up, the lighting was adapted to pedestrians instead of cars, stairwells and entrances were brightened and steel doors were replaced by transparent doors. The stairwells, which previously had no windows, are now all glass so you can look out on your way up or down the stairs, but also so that you are visible to people on the street outside.

The project was a success. The car park was perceived as safer after the refurbishment and the investment paid off quickly as women, but also more men, started to park in *Nanna* car park.

Work on gender equality in the public space has continued. The question that has been asked is how do we feel about moving around the city? Over the years, many people have taken so-called safety walks together and expressed how they experience different parts of the city, when and where they feel worried and unsafe.

During the 2000s, much focus was placed on raising awareness of gender equality and unsafe spaces. In 2004, "ORÄDD (FEARLESS) - for a gender equal outdoor environment" was organised. One lecturer described how grids, which are there for safety, can also signal unsafety. Mesh enclosures for every car or bicycle reduce the number of thefts. And bars in front of windows reduce the risk of burglary. But both give a sense of danger. This was one of many insights into how women can experience places where statistically very little crime occurs.

The need to discuss these issues grew over the years. A series of unsolved rapes increased the feeling of unsafety and Umeå as a city was affected by this.

The media reported extensively on the assaults and the massive coverage created notions of a threatening masculinity. A serial rapist changes the image of a city, for residents

and visitors alike. It also led to a problematic division between so-called good and evil men, as the men who accompanied women home were seen as heroes.

In 2006, another safety seminar was held, this time in conjunction with the annual *Autumn Festival of Lights*. The seminar had a clear gender equality perspective, and the fear and unsafety were addressed with a starting point in gendered power structures.

Umeå is a young city and for a long time had a sparse centre, with small city parks but lots of greenery. There were many obscured places and corners that create unsafety. The forest is always close by and can be intimidating. When the crime statistics for the years 2003-2006 were mapped, it was found that crimes take place in the bus node Vasaplan, the central square Rådhusorget and outside pubs - but these areas were not the ones perceived as unsafe.

Helena Österlind was the municipality's Gender Equality Developer between 2005 and 2008 and subsequently became Gender Equality Director at the County Administrative Board. Since 2012 she has been working as a consultant focusing on sustainability and gender equality. She says there were 100 participants at the safety seminar "*Stad i ljus – kvinnor och män i belysning*" (City in the Light - Shedding Light on Women and Men). They were architects, urban planners and politicians:

"There was a big focus on safety issues during those years. We showed that women and men used and moved in different ways in public space. More parameters influence when, if and how people move in the public space, but we only focused on gender (in)equality and the effect on mobility patterns."

In order to achieve a safer city, Umeå Municipality wanted to create accessible outdoor environments for its residents.

"It was important for us to bring together civil servants who worked with for example



streets and parks with people who worked with gender equality issues so that their skills could be combined in a planning process. A good example of the combination of knowledge is the Train Station Tunnel. The passageway feels safe and accessible even though it is long,” says Helena Österlind

“We did not just want to talk about lights and bushes. Safety is more than that. It concerns power structures and the right to one’s own body,” says Helena Österlind

Traces of the “City in the Light” exhibition are still visible in Umeå. At Vasakyrkan there is a neon sign that says, “Nobody puts baby in a corner”. The artistic duo *Sisters of Jam* have taken the phrase from the film *Dirty Dancing* and given it a different context. The sign is visible from the Vasaplan bus node, and the idea is to encourage citizens not to restrict their freedom of movement in public space.

“What we did during those years has had an impact. There was a broad desire to reclaim the public space after the serial rapist,” says Helena Österlind. “It was therefore easy to connect with all the different departments, we did not have to justify our work and we had the support and commitment

of the managers.”

She says that after a few years, interest in conferences declined.

“Nowadays, most people are interested in their own role and their possibility of contributing to a gender equal society. That is why you would rather have a process manager working with many employees than sending a few of them to a conference.”

The desire to make the city feel safer has had a major impact on its appearance since the 1990s.

Björn Johansson is one of those who are proud of how Umeå has developed into a denser and more vibrant city. He was head of Land and Development at the municipality until 2010 when he transferred to a real estate company that worked on making central Umeå denser.

Björn Johansson says that it has meant a lot to him that the municipality placed the gender equality strategist in the comprehensive planning unit together with the city’s top management. There were also staff working on diversity and accessibility.

“Their presence in the corridors spurred on

the perspective," says Björn Johansson.

"The municipality is a huge organisation, and one person can easily disappear, but that was not the case here."

Björn Johansson says he is still carrying it with him.

"We, the engineers and planners, gained new insights; for example, that safety in the city is not always about what is actually dangerous. Umeå's strategy to make the centre denser with many more housing units will contribute to the city being perceived as safer."

A lot has happened in Umeå, but even though it has been an active time, some things have taken longer. Although work on gender equality in comprehensive plans began in the late 1990s, it was only in 2014-2015 that a first mapping of the detail planning process was carried out, looking at all participants - internal and external - broken down by gender and what role they had played in the process. Over the years,

various methods have been used to integrate gender equality perspectives into detail plans, including checklists to ensure gender equality analyses. In 2017, an action plan was developed and presented to the Planning Board committee in the spring of 2019.

The checklist is divided into three parts: the planning and decision-making process, the planning documentation and the design of the plan. This is to clarify the way in which gender equality can be considered when working on a plan. It has since been implemented in a project in Stöcke, a village 10 km south of the central town.

Literature:

"Steg framåt. Strategier och villkor för att förverkliga genusperspektivet i översiktlig planering" by Tora Friberg and Anita Larsson Institute of Cultural and Economic Geography Lund University Rapporter och Notiser (2002)



Photo: Fredrik Larsson

Separatism as a method

Working with gender equality methods can sometimes mean focusing only on a specific group, as in Årstidernas park (Park of the Seasons)



WHEN THE CITY BETWEEN the bridges by the Ume River was planned more than 10 years ago, the municipality invited, among others, youth associations for discussion. The result was the construction of the Sparken skate park. Although there was cooperation with, among others, the association You Skate Girl, it is a fact that mainly boys use the skate park, and that young girls are also generally an underrepresented group around spontaneous sports and activity areas.

A few years later, when it was time to tackle another area along the river walk, a specific group was targeted - inclusion through exclusion. Young girls are also under-represented when it comes to being involved in a dialogue around urban development projects in public spaces. That is why the municipality in this project, with special support from Boverket (the Swedish National Board of Housing, Building and Planning), worked with different groups of girls aged 15-20. They talked about how they experience public space, about expectations, entitlement, safety and about claiming and giving space. During the project, workshops were held focusing on dance, photography and other artistic expressions. It turned out that the girls experience a lot of double expectations. That they should work out but still be thin and that they should have boyfriends but be available to family and friends.

“My so-called favourite is that they are always expected to have an opinion, but never to be troublesome. Based on what the girls told us, we then started thin-

king about what kind of space they wanted,” says Frida Hammar, who was Project Assistant during the work. The young girls wanted a space where they did not have to be active or do things.

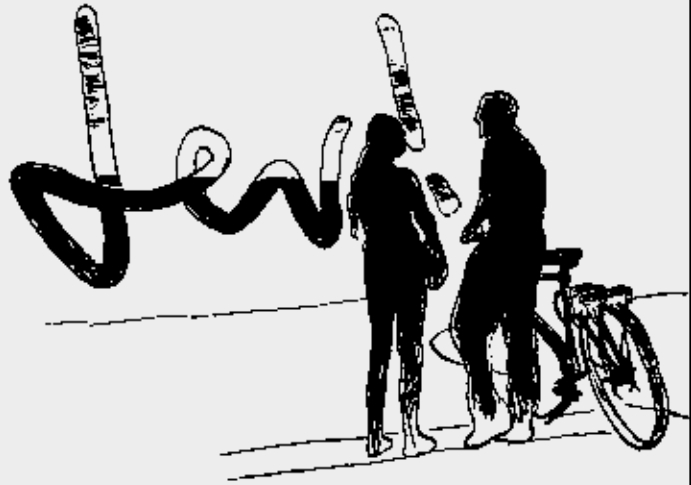
“They wanted a space where they could hang out, with friends or alone. A place where there were no expectations of them.”

The results of this work were then used as a basis for the design of the meeting place in the park. The aim was to create a space free of expectations, fears and unsafety where everyone could feel welcome. Work has been done on visibility, lighting and proximity to other people.

In the autumn of 2016 Frizon was inaugurated and is intended to be a meeting place for socialising, with seating and hanging out areas, electrical outlets, WiFi and the possibility of listening to music on speakers. A pattern of symbols made by the participants has been placed under the steel roof as a floating edge. The symbols represent the girls' own imprint on the physical space. The roof has coloured plexiglass built in to let in light. Frizon is a place for everyone but designed for a specific group.

“Whose body should be the norm in public space? The backrests in the large swings in Frizon are adapted for a person who is 1.65 metres tall - the average height for women in Sweden,” says Anna Flatholm, Project Manager with Streets and Parks at Umeå Municipality.

Lev!



The long passage under the railway is an example of how Umeå combines gender equality work with urban planning. The passage is a place where architecture, art and a safe environment can be experienced.

WHEN THE PASSAGE, which connects the city centre with the Haga neighbourhood, was planned, the ambition was to create an accessible place that would be perceived as safe by all residents, at all times of the day. The new pedestrian and bicycle tunnel is therefore wide and bright, with a large amount of light flooding the entrances and the middle. Rounded corners make it easier to scan the tunnel - the feeling is that no unknown persons should be able to hide in the tunnel. Being able to exit in the middle is another example of how they have worked to increase safety in an environment that can often feel unsafe. Visibility and light have been guiding principles in the work.

But the passage is also a work of art that people visit to experience. The artistic design of the 170-metre-long pedestrian and bicycle tunnel was created by the artist duo FA+. The work inaugurated in 2012 is called "Lev!" (Live) and is a tribute to the Västerbotten author Sara Lidman. On one wall there are 186 double panes of glass with a long row of blurred birch trees against a background alternating between green and light blue, giving the effect of looking out through the train window into a bright, beautiful forest. At the ascent to Haga, "Lev!" is constantly displayed in a font resembling handwriting on the far wall, three letters and an exclamation mark, in sharp contrast to the white tile. At night, the word glows blue, like a neon sign. The statement Live! is taken from Sara Lidman, who often added it when signing her books, as an

encouragement to everyone to live, not to waste their life. Heating elements in the ground keep the artwork heated in winter and also create conditions for safe walking and cycling, even in winter. Throughout the passage, there are also quotes by Sara Lidman that the people of Umeå themselves have been asked to suggest, a suggestion from the Sara Lidman Society. The glass wall is illuminated from behind and sounded in 16 channels, four of which are "interactive" - pressing a specific point on the wall triggers a sound: Sara Lidman reads a poem, Sara Lidman talks about Vietnam, South Africa and so on - while other channels convey the sound of birdsong.

"We are social creatures, and in general the presence of other people makes us feel safe. Not always and not all people, but generally. That is why our strategy for safety is to get people out into the public space," says City Architect Tomas Strömberg.

"For women, the presence of other women is particularly reassuring, and to have the company of a woman throughout the tunnel, even if she is not there in person, the presence of Sara is tangible, we think it really increases the feeling of security," he continues.

The tunnel is now popularly known as "Sara's Train of Thought". Only one picture is of the author herself, which shows only the upper half of her face with the characteristic, punky shock of white hairstyle standing straight up.

Listen

AS THE FIRST, and perhaps the only, city in the world, Umeå Municipality erected an artwork in the autumn of 2019 to mark the Metoo uprising as a continuing reminder of the need for an active struggle for gender equality and against oppression and violations.

Artist Camilla Akra was commissioned to design the Metoo monument at the central square Rådhusorget, a work of art called *"Listen"*, which shows a puma sitting on a stand three metres above the ground. The artist has based her work on the voice as a sustaining force and the significance it can have. The tubes of the stand can easily be associated with bars from a cage. Symbolically, the puma is outside its cage, no longer confined.

"In our Cultural Committee, we have long worked to create conditions for the arts to form, grow and develop," says the Chair of the Cultural Committee, Helena Smith (S). *"At the same time, we try to be*

very aware that the structures we see in society in general, we also see in culture. Where does the money go? Who is visible in the public space? What stories are we highlighting? Which works will be the face of the city to citizens and visitors?"

The monument, which is placed in the town central square Rådhusorget is a manifestation dedicated to those who together broke the silence.

The red roaring puma symbolises both a forward thrust, but also an outcry to encourage to listen, act and change, in the same way as the collective testimonies of the Metoo revolution, as a constant reminder of those stories and that the struggle for a gender equal society must never end.





Gendered landscape

A tour of Umeå's gendered landscape

What do gendered power structures mean in a city? How does inequality manifest itself in the buildings and people there? And is it possible to see the effects of active gender equality work from a bus window?

“Welcome to the guided tour The Gendered Landscape. *By visiting and talking about different places in the city, we want to highlight both successful gender equality work and at the same time address the issues where it is important to do more work,*” says gender equality strategist Linda Gustafsson in her microphone at the front of the bus.

The participants on this day are a group of American and British journalists who are in Umeå together with Visit Sweden and a gendered landscape tour is on the packed agenda.

In 2009, the first bus tour took off through Umeå's gendered landscape. The tour was developed and led by Helene Brewer, a Gender Equality Strategist from 2008-2011, based on a report of the same name, and in conjunction with a conference which focused on 20 years of strategic gender equality work.

“The aim was to visualise statistics about women and men in Umeå and how a place, a city, is a stage for gendered power structures that are created



and cemented in place,” says Helene Brewer. “I am proud that the work that began in 2009 has continued and that the method of talking about a city’s gendered landscape has become Umeå’s hallmark,” she continues.

The bus tour has run over 100 times since 2009. The tour, which often starts at Umeå City Hall, then lasts about two hours with the ambition to show the city from a different perspective. Good examples are highlighted, but also how different conditions in terms of economy, responsibility for unpaid domestic work, collective experiences of violence and other gendered experiences affect our movements and not only how we use places but also how we feel about them. Travelling around the city is also a way to show the importance of gender equality work that touches all parts of a place, that it needs to be included in all issues and is a crucial part of sustainable development.

The tour shows how gender plays a role in the political and social landscape that constitutes Umeå Municipality, that it is a gendered landscape. It is about addressing and making visible who gets what and under which conditions. It is essential to know what the living conditions of women and men are in the municipality, in order to create the right conditions for all residents to develop according to their own aspirations, and not be ruled by stereotypical notions of gender.

By making visible the gendered landscape of the city, there is also a desire to show what an ungendered landscape could look like, to visualise something beyond a city characterised by gendered power relations.

“To ask questions about what Umeå would look like if it were a gender equal place? What would Umeå look like if it were a girl’s room? Working from both what we know from

surveys and registry data and then also asking the question what if it were different, what would Umeå be like if all the gendered power structures suddenly disappeared? What would that mean? Most people understand that holistic work is needed, that it means working with many different issues at the same time, and it also creates an understanding that it is not easy to work with one issue that permeates everything,” says Linda Gustafsson, the municipality's Gender Equality Strategist.

It is about creating awareness that gender matters in the city, and that gender inequality has consequences for all parts of society. The aim is both to emphasise the importance of highlighting gendered power structures in society and to show the results of long-term work on gender equality issues in Umeå Municipality.

Throughout the year, the bus route has changed, and more places have been added. The tour has also been digitised and you can see and read about the sites at gendered-landscape.umea.se.

However, the focus has always been on trying to exemplify successful changes and landmarks in the city, but at the same time highlighting the challenges that exist. It is therefore a question of showcasing examples of successful gender equality work but also, just as importantly, of showing places that are gender unequal and the issues surrounding them.

When the bus carrying the international journalists today arrives at the *Lev!* tunnel, which connects the city centre with the Haga neighbourhood, the participants will be able to go outside and walk through the tunnel, to get a feel for what is being told - about visibility and exposure, transparency and light penetration. They get to try pressing buttons to listen as Sara Lidman speaks. This gives them a chance to experience the tunnel first hand - does its design increase their sense of safety? Then, when they get back on the bus

“What would Umeå be like if all the gendered power structures suddenly disappeared?”

on the other side, they are reminded of the risks of characterising a certain type of place as “safe”. It is not possible to build in a way that guarantees safety but working with gender equality in the design of a place provides the opportunity to create debate and raise awareness around issues of power in public space, men's violence against women and how the city is perceived as a result of that violence, perceived fear and accessibility.

The bus tour is used to create a realization of the importance of a holistic understanding of power structures, based on the lives of the residents and the conditions of the place. The tour will highlight gender-segregated choices in secondary education and the links to gender-segregated labour markets, income and working hours. Linked to this is knowledge about mobility, how women and men travel and how leisure time is spent. The tour also shows initiatives and projects with a focus on gender equality in urban planning and public spaces, as well as how activities within Umeå Municipality work with gender equality issues,



for example in meal services, preschool, fire services and culture. Examples from some of these activities are included in this publication.

The aim of the tour is to highlight and scrutinise gendered power structures in Umeå, based on the Swedish gender equality policy goals with a focus on power, economy, education, health, unpaid domestic and household work, and that men's violence against women must end.

“The method is based on moving through the place you are in, to contextualise the gender equality work,” says gender equality strategist Linda Gustafsson. *“No other method I have worked with has worked so well to create an understanding of what gender means and therefore what could be done differently.”*

“We have had gender-divided statistics in Sweden for a long time, we know that women annually earn on average less than men, we know that men commute more and that women cycle and take the bus, we know that women work part-time to a greater extent, and we know that we have very gendered choices

for secondary schools, but what does it mean? How does it manifest itself and is it a problem? Does it matter? Does it affect women's and men's power over their own lives and society? If the answer to that question is yes, then that is something we should seek to change.”

When the bus with the journalists stops outside Berghem preschool, the children playing in the yard wave happily. Berghem preschool is Umeå's first public kindergarten, which opened in 1966 so it has been in existence for over 50 years. This stop is about how crucial a well-developed, high-quality and low-cost public childcare system has been for women's entry to the labour market, which in turn has given women completely different opportunities for self-sufficiency and thus also independence. This is particularly evident in an international context, but even on tours with Swedish participants it is important to remind them that the childcare we take for granted today was far from a given in the past but is something that an active women's movement fought long and hard for.



The **bus tour visualises Umeå** as a place and not only Umeå Municipality as an organisation, for example by highlighting other public activities as well as non-profit organisations, art in public spaces, initiatives from the business community and places that have historically been important for the women's movement and LGBT issues.

"When we try to visualise what Umeå looks like today, we also bring in historical perspectives from the city, not only to make visible who is actually in the historical records, but also because it is important to remember that women have not had the same formal rights as men for very long, and that if we really want to challenge and change the fact that men have more power than women, we need to talk about how this is expressed and what consequences it has," says Linda Gustafsson.

In 2017, The Gendered Landscape tour was highlighted as one of 91 good practices of sustainable urban development by the European Commission. The tour is the only one of the 91 examples that highlights gender equality as a

The illustration above was created by illustrator Jessica Arevärn (Persikamy) to reflect Umeå's gendered landscape. In the centre of the illustration are two legs. A symbol of all the people moving around a city. The image also shows landmarks in the city and stops on the bus route.

The illustration is printed on the municipality's coffee mugs. A mug that invites exciting and important conversations in the next coffee break.

central part of sustainable urban development and has received considerable attention, both in Sweden and internationally.

Umeå's first gender equality preschool

Hedlunda preschool was opened in 2014 with the vision of being a role model for the gender equality work among the municipality's preschools. Five years, and a bumpy ride later, the preschool has begun to find its way forward.

It is an evening in October 2019 and the cafeteria at Hedlunda preschool is full. Teachers from three different preschools have gathered to listen to Karla Larsson, Jessica Allansson, Erika Nyman and Amanda Sparv from Hedlunda preschool's gender group.

"At Hedlunda preschool, we want to help raise children who not only tolerate, but question and reason. We want to convey that structures can be changed," Karla Larsson begins the lecture.

She then goes through the organisation, educational approach and how they work with the children before the visiting teachers are given a tour of Hedlunda's preschool environments.

It has taken time to get here. The project was launched at the beginning of 2007 when the working commission of the Pre-school and Primary school Committee decided to commission the administration to investigate proposals for a new gender preschool. Gender equality was already a priority in preschools, but now one preschool was to take the lead by specialising on gender equality. This school would develop the methods and then share the knowledge with other preschools.

The choice fell on the preschool to be built on the Hedlunda site.





The discussions about how the mission should actually be interpreted were many and long. In a clarifying document from 2010, it is made clear that although all preschools should work with all objectives of the curriculum, what should distinguish the gender equality work at this preschool is an emphasis on research-based activities. This close link to research would also be an important part of the staff's continuing skills development.

Two years before the preschool opened, Maria Viksten was hired as a part-time Preschool Director. At the same time, she was the Director of another municipal preschool but devoted her part-time to planning, reflection and skills development. Among other things, she took the course *Gender, Power and Society* (7.5 p) at Umeå University together with the then Head of Education. In the spring of 2013, a connection between researcher Anna Olausson and the preschool was established through the Learning and Research Centre project.

The Learning and Research Centre was a joint initiative between Umeå Municipality and Umeå University that aimed to strengthen the links between practice, experience and research.

In August 2014, Hedlunda preschool finally opened its doors. Enthusiasm was high from the get-go - as many as 88 preschool teachers and 134 nursery school teachers applied for the advertised positions - more than ever before.

There was a strong interest many reports were published about the new gender equal preschool, expectations were high. In an article in the magazine *Kommunalarbetaren* from October 2014, nursery school teacher Jenny Lindström, who has 20 years' experience of working in preschools, stated:

"It is the best job I have ever had. It's exciting to be involved from the start and build something new."

Hedlunda preschool was also built as

northern Sweden's first public passive house, which means that the building is very energy efficient, a building that would be sustainable from the inside out with a focus on both environmental and social sustainability.

The architecture of the building is *Reggio Emilia*-inspired and is based on the children's perspective and opportunity for creativity. Child-height windows with large window seats, indoor plazas where children can meet across departmental boundaries and work on projects, and several large studios. The idea is to give the children as much space as possible and to make it easy to see what is happening outside and between the different rooms inside the preschool. Creativity is a way of expressing oneself, but also a tool to make visible and challenge norms.

A year after opening, the project ran out of steam. Financial support for the research service was cut from 40% to 10%. As a result, researcher Anna Olausson resigned and the then preschool director, Maria Viksten, expressed her disappointment in a news report:

"It is a real shame when you have spent so much time and money. Research support is even more important now that we have established the preschool. This is where we could really use the link to current research."

In the years that followed, staff turnover was high, and Maria Viksten also left. Helena Oscarsson took over in autumn 2017. She now holds the title of Principal.

Some teachers have been around since the beginning and their experiences were a support for the whole staff group when Hedlunda preschool made a restart in the gender mission. The gender perspective should now be included in everything: what books are read, what songs are sung and what traditions are celebrated. Staff should work actively with democracy and participation regardless of gender in all activities with children.

In autumn 2018, the entire staff group participated in a study group with the aim of giving



Photo: Fredrik Larsson



Photo: Fredrik Larsson

Examples from the municipal organisation

them a common knowledge base to build on and the opportunity for in-depth discussions about gender, norm criticism and documenting working methods. The preschool has also created a gender group that has a specific mission to monitor the issue and document working methods, such as checklists for new employees, norm-critical discussion items for staff reflection time or review of material purchases.

So, five years after its opening, Hedlunda preschool is ready for its political mission - to act as a role model for all preschools in the municipality.

Two hours of lectures on organisation, teaching methods and how to work with the children, as well as a study visit to Hedlunda preschool environments are offered to other municipal preschools.

“The interest has been huge, and we have already booked several lectures for the spring semester as well,” says Helena Oscarsson, Principal. *“Now we are almost where we want to be, and we are extremely proud to be able to showcase our work.”*

“We are extremely proud to be able to showcase our work”



Photo: Andreas Nilsson



Photo: Fredrik Larsson

Gender equality work in the municipality's preschools

It took a long time from the first ideas around working on gender equality in preschools to make them a reality. But now it is a mandatory part of the activities.

As early as 1980, in the guidelines and working plan that was drafted for the newly formed gender equality committee in Umeå Municipality, there are statements about gender equality work in preschool:

“Gender role patterns are established early on and already at pre-school age there are clear differences in behaviour and interests between girls and boys. It is likely that the current gender imbalance in preschool,

primary and secondary school staff contributes to gender stereotyping. It is therefore important that young children have better contact with men who are involved with children and children's problems and that discussions about male and female roles are addressed early on.”

However, it took almost two more decades before gender equality work in preschool became more systematic:

“Over the years, we have had principals and teachers who have worked very actively

with gender education and gender equality in preschools, but the more systematic work has been a challenge,” says Åsa Karlsson Perez, former Development Manager at the Education Office.

In 1998, the first preschool curriculum, LpfÖ 98, was introduced, stating that *“preschools shall counteract traditional gender patterns and gender roles”*. And in 2004-2006, Umeå Municipality participated in the *JämFÖR* project, which was aimed at preschool staff.

In 2005, a strategy for gender equality work with children and youth in pre-school and primary education was adopted. All school areas appointed gender equality delegates to drive gender equality initiatives. But as time went on, gender equality work was incorporated into the overall equality work and therefore the organisation with gender equality delegates was soon phased out.

Nowadays, gender equality work in Umeå's preschools is permanent, permeates education and is part of the core activities. Gender equality work is part of the systematic quality work at preschools. The quality work includes self-assessment, where each teacher, team and principal evaluate their own and the preschool's gender equality work based on curriculum criteria and takes action based on the results of the self-assessment. The latest self-assessment in 2018 showed that about a quarter of the municipality's preschools have active gender equality work, half had started work and a quarter had not yet started.

At the end of 2018, a working group was set up with Hedlunda's preschool director, a preschool strategist, a gender equality strategist and a development manager from educational and cultural educational development centre, Idéan for preschools and primary schools. The purpose of the work in the group was to define what a working method for all preschools in Umeå municipality could look like. The group produced a support and inspirational material for work with gender equality

in preschools, which is now available for all the municipality's preschools, the idea being to ensure that work with gender equality in preschools will be equal in all preschools in the municipality. The new curriculum Lpfö18 sharpened the articles on gender equality even further. Therefore, in 2019, all preschools had to undergo mandatory work on gender equality based on the new curriculum. The teachers filmed each other in everyday situations in order to visualize the approach and attitude towards girls and boys. The films were then discussed and analysed in the teaching groups from a gender perspective.

All preschools are also offered lectures on gender equality and those who want to learn more about the subject have the opportunity to borrow books purchased by the Commission on Gender Equality to conduct study group among the staff, based on the book *Att arbeta med jämställdhet i förskolan* (Working with Gender Equality in Preschool). By the end of 2019, nine preschools had completed or started study groups based on the book.



Photo: Fredrik Larsson

Men's violence against women must end

The women's shelter in Umeå was one of the first in the country when it started. The women who then joined were followed by other activists who had fought against men's violence against women and children. A milestone in the municipality's work was the opening of the Barnahus in 2006 and the subsequent Centre Against Violence.

The women's shelter in Umeå was one of the first in the country when it started. The women who then joined were followed by other activists who had fought against men's violence against women and children. A milestone in the municipality's work was the opening of the *Barnahus* in 2006 and the subsequent Centre Against Violence.

Umeå Women's Shelter started in 1979 and struggled to get financial support and premises from the municipality. It was a lot of work. The Women's House Association was founded in Umeå in 1980 to push for a house for both the women's refuge and other women's political activities. After several lectures, public debates and petitions, an occupation of a centrally located villa owned by the municipality took place in 1983.

This women's house occupation lasted for three months and attracted a lot of attention, especially locally but also nationally. The house was demolished in the end, but the

occupation eventually led to the women's shelter moving into another yellow villa that became a women's house.

As a lawyer and feminist, Gudrun Nordborg has been one of the leading figures in the fight against men's violence against women and children since the 1970s. She is now a member of the Municipal Council for the Left Party and a member of the Commission on Gender Equality.

"We petitioned and petitioned and petitioned to get our women's house. It was not only occupation, but also other demonstrations and long debates," says Gudrun Nordborg.

She says it was tough at first, there was a strong resistance. Some claimed that this violence did not exist in Sweden, but that they were deceived by the feminists in the United States, then that it might occur in Stockholm but not in Umeå. Many could also be provoked by the fact that they were "only women" and that they did not allow men into their organisations. But it was also a process that raised

““Basically, it is always about power, gender and sexuality, but violence can be perpetrated in different ways, with different pretexts, and then different types of intervention may be needed”

the issue of men's violence against women, and Umeå Municipality gradually became more involved.

The aim was to offer support and help to women who are victims of violence as well as to receive men who are inclined to use violence for counselling. In the same year, Umeå University began offering a course on men's domestic violence against women and children. The Centre Against Violence also provides support to those who have experienced prostitution as well as to those who buy sexual services.

The Centre Against Violence and the Women's Shelter now work in parallel. There is a cooperation agreement between the municipality and the shelter, which runs for a period of three years at a time. Gender Equality Strategist Linda Gustafsson says the activities complement each other:

“Those who do not feel safe to seek public resources, who may not want or dare to have contact with a public authority, turn to the shelter instead. The Women's Shelter also provides sheltered accommodation.”

In 2019, the Women's and Girls' Shelter in Umeå had contact with 340 women and 90 children seeking support. During the same period, the counselling for women at the Centre Against Violence received 152 adults who were victims of violence, and 63 children were seen at the Children's Shelter. The Centre Against Violence also met with 60 perpetrators of violence.

The Centre Against Violence, which the municipality runs in collaboration with Region Västerbotten, the Police Authority, the Prosecutor's Office and the National Board of Forensic Medicine, also functions as a knowledge centre on gender-based violence with the task of educating and informing other organisations on the issue.

“One example is the social services case-workers who have been trained to have specific expertise in this area. For someone seeking income support after being subjected to violence, this can be crucial,” says Linda Gustafsson.

The Centre Against Violence has also developed a special expertise on honour-based violence in order to act as a sounding

board for other bodies, such as schools, health-care and social services. Linda Gustafsson stresses the importance of finding the right balance between what distinguishes honour-based violence and the similarities that exist between all forms of gender-based violence.

"Basically, it is always about power, gender and sexuality, but violence can be perpetrated in different ways, with different pretexts, and then different types of intervention may be needed," says Linda Gustafsson.

Gudrun Nordborg agrees:

"Those of us who have worked with the problems of violence for a long time see that honour-based violence is a variant of the same power structure. Then power and control take partially different forms," she says.

Looking back then? Since the fight for the Women's Shelter, when Gudrun Nordborg stood on the barricades, how have the municipality's efforts on domestic violence developed? Gudrun Nordborg describes it with the words "cautious improvement":

"An important positive example is the citizens' pledges formulated by the municipality and the police. Two out of three are about violence against women. One promise is to take action against domestic violence and the other is to combat prostitution and human trafficking," says Gudrun Nordborg.

She is also pleased that Umeå is one of the municipalities that have decided that victims of violence should not have to support themselves on the damages they are awarded in court. *"By not treating damages as income, the risk of falling into poverty after being a victim of crime is reduced,"* she explains. She is proud that the social services in Umeå were the first in the country to urge the police in Umeå to seriously consider reporting child abuse when the arrested buyer of sexual services is a parent.

The list of training activities, conferences, campaigns and other actions over the years is long. In 2005, a decision was made to intro-

duce in feminist self-defence in schools in Umeå. In 2006, a major seminar on security was organised in the wake of the violent assaults on women that terrified Umeå between 1998 and 2006, before the so-called "Haga Man", a serial rapist, was arrested. A year later, in 2007, Umeå was one of the municipalities that participated in a campaign against human trafficking around the Baltic Sea.

Several conferences, lectures and seminars have been held in cooperation with the Crime Victim Authority, which is based in Umeå. In 2014, a municipality-wide survey was conducted on knowledge and experience of work with domestic violence, based on interviews with staff in student healthcare and surveys with managers in preschool, school, health-care, care and community development. Based on this, the municipality presented a guide to give employees tools to act when residents are at risk of being exposed or are already exposed to gender-based violence.

"Compared to many other municipalities, I think Umeå is doing well on these issues, but it is not enough. It is not good enough anyway," says Gudrun Nordborg.

As is often the case, there is sometimes a discrepancy between ambition and action. Placing the issue of men's violence against women on the agenda is not always easy.

"The policy area of gender-based violence is constantly being discussed, if not questioned," says Linda Gustafsson. How it has been reformulated over the past 30 years also illustrates the major changes the issue has undergone.

"It has been called domestic disturbance, abuse against women and domestic violence. What we can be sure of is that the gender equality goal of ending men's violence against women has not been achieved," says Linda Gustafsson.

Take action – violence always starts with control



Photo: Umeå kommun

Domestic violence always starts with control. By learning to recognise the signs, those of you in the vicinity can make a difference before it is too late. This is the message of the Bry dig (Take action) campaign, which was first launched at the turn of 2015.

THE CAMPAIGN IS A JOINT effort between Umeå Municipality, Västerbotten County Administrative Board, Region Västerbotten and Skellefteå Municipality and has been updated a number of times since its first version and developed with several campaign videos. The campaign, which at times can be seen in cinemas and at hockey matches in Umeå and Skellefteå, as well as on Facebook, Instagram and posters throughout Västerbotten, aims to highlight the problem of men's violence against women and get the surroundings to react to warning signs

The aim of Bry dig is to recognise early signs of exposure to and perpetration of violence and is aimed at those in the vicinity of victims and perpetrators of violence. Recognising early signs of control in relationships can help prevent it escalating into more serious threats and physical violence. This could be about questioning when a person requires someone to be constantly accessible on the phone or reacting to sexist comments and jokes.

“We know that an extremely small proportion of the violations and violence against women are actually reported. Historically,

men's violence against women has been seen as a women's issue, but the campaign wants to focus on men's responsibility and opportunities to act and make a difference,” says Sara Moberg, Gender Equality Officer at Västerbotten County Administrative Board.

Since 2015, the campaign has been updated almost every year and has evolved with several campaign videos. The first film shows how it all begins, with constant texting, where are you? when are you coming home? The man may start always dropping off and picking up the woman to know her whereabouts. Those in the vicinity may think it is excessive caring, that turns into excessive suspicion and ultimately total control.

For the 2019 campaign, the MMA profile Tor Troéng has been used, who is a well-known sports profile in Umeå and a role model for many, not least younger men.

The idea of making Tor the focus of the campaign became a way to reach out to otherwise hard-to-reach audiences.

The films and more information are available at www.brydig.nu

The Women's History Museum

The Women's History Museum wants to give new perspectives

The Women's History Museum was opened in November 2014 as part of the Culture House Väven, which was built for the 2014 European Capital of Culture year. From the start there was a lot of interest. "There was a queue that went on and on, you could not see the end of it!" says Maria Perstedt, Director of the Women's History Museum about the opening day.

— Maria Perstedt, Director of the Women's History Museum, and Britt-Inger Keisu, Principal of the Umeå Centre for Gender Studies, when the joint collaboration plan was communicated in 2018.





In early 2010, Tamara Spiric from the Left Party, who later became Chair of the Commission on Gender Equality, put forward a motion for Umeå to establish Sweden's first Women's History Museum. The motion was approved by the Municipal Council in November of the same year and a steering committee was set up to draft a project plan for the implementation of the decision and a letter of intent for the proposed museum.

The letter of intent for the Women's History Museum states that *"The museum's exhibitions and other activities will highlight historical and contemporary issues from a gender power perspective and will present the situation of women around the world. The museum will portray historical changes, both locally and*

the various arenas of society. It will also serve as a place for contemporary debate. A place that makes the visitor react and act, and that looks to the future."

With a Women's History Museum, the question was asked: *"Who has the power to write history and what does it do to our society?"* The past is one thing and history writing is another.

"History is created by people, it is someone's choice. It is always a very, very narrow selection of something. That is history and there is no neutral truth in it," says Maria Perstedt

The museum should also have a link to current research and therefore collaborates with Umeå Centre for Gender Studies. It is also a meeting place for discussions, seminars and contemporary debates.

"What do we make visible and what do we attribute value to? What is overlooked and what is forgotten? It is very important to have a museum that highlights these issues. The role of the Women's History Museum is also to be a voice in the debate today, reflecting both the past and the present," says Helena Smith (S), Chair of the Culture Committee.

■ *Politician and author Veronica Palm in conversation with Museum Educator Klara Lundholm about the book *Systerskap (Sisterhood)* in September 2018.*

The museum welcomes visitors from secondary schools, adult education, SFI (Swedish for Immigrants), colleges and universities for guided tours and discussions based on the exhibitions. Through the interaction, all parties progress as they jointly question the traditional writing of history as presented in many history books.

“It is problematic for the development of society if we have a view of history that is deeply gender unequal, as it affects gender equality work,” says Maria Perstedt.

The museum as an institution was founded in Europe in the 19th century, which is also a time period characterised by a fixation on gender differences. White bourgeois men had access to the public sphere while women were not seen as equal citizens. Women were not

“The role of women's history is also to be a voice in the debate today, reflecting both the past and the

allowed to decide for themselves, could not own real estate, and upon marriage, the husband inherited formal power over the woman. In such a social structure and social climate, the idea of the museum was born, the idea of uniting people with a story.

The legacy of this social institution lives on today. Ideals have influenced what has been considered important to collect, and many are working to break free from tradition and highlight other perspectives. The Commission on Gender Equality considered that a separate women's history museum was desirable instead of integrating gender equality into an existing activity based on the legacy of the male norm.

Despite the strong support for the establishment of the museum, its existence has been debated since its opening. The political opposition has been led mainly by the Sweden Democrats, the Moderates and the Christian Democrats, who have put forward motions that the museum should be closed.

There has also been criticism from other sides about the content and target groups of the exhibitions, including from gender studies scholars and women's historians.

But the vision for the Women's History Museum is that it should be a force for gender equal power distribution and contribute to breaking norms that limit women and men to participate in society on equal terms. Helena Smith, Chair of the Culture Committee, believes that through culture we can gain a better understanding of each other and points out that the Women's History Museum contributes to a better understanding of how power and gender are created.

“Cultural expressions in general allow us to face complex issues in a different way. Through culture, you can pick up points of view and gain an understanding of how other people think and experience things.”

The museum focuses on intangible cultural heritage by highlighting and collecting experiences, stories and memories rather than collecting objects. Since its inception until 2019, the museum has hosted 17 exhibitions.

Photo: Malin Grönberg



■ **The Rötter (Roots) exhibition** was designed to be heard and experienced. *Rötter* was the museum's main exhibition from its opening but was taken down in February 2019. The visitor was treated to a story set in a forest where the creatures of the forest talk to each other, but also to the visitor. The aim of the exhibition was to highlight ancient structures and the roots of how gender has shaped and influenced us as human beings.

Photo: Maria Hedberg



■ **Schyssta killar (Nice guys)** - 229 men and non-binary responded to the question *"What do you lose by being a man/being raised to be a man?"* and from the answers Linea Matei created the exhibition *Schyssta killar*. The artworks are presented as textile quotes and sounds. For example, one of the answers was *"That I am not expected to be in touch with my feelings"*.



Photo: Fredrik Larsson

■ **En ropande tystnad (A Deafening Silence)** was an exhibition about older women and their absence from history. With silence as its starting point, the exhibition questions the one-sided portrayal in the media that obscures women's own voices. The exhibition has been transformed twice to highlight ageing in relation to trans issues and the experiences of lesbian women. The new perspectives show how multiple power structures interact and that the further from the norm one is, the greater the silence.

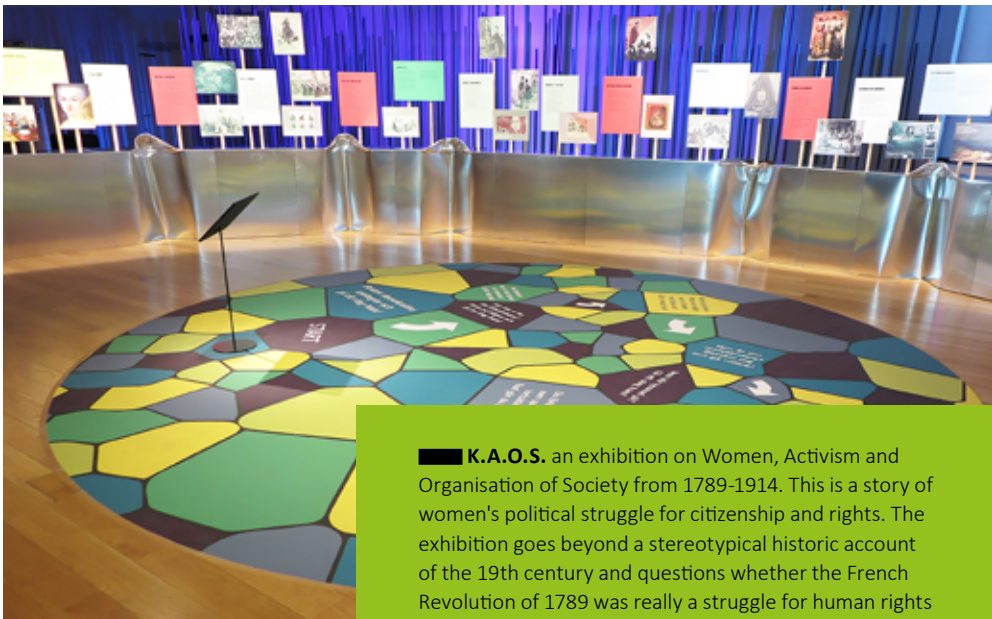


Photo: Maria Hedberg

■ **K.A.O.S.** an exhibition on Women, Activism and Organisation of Society from 1789-1914. This is a story of women's political struggle for citizenship and rights. The exhibition goes beyond a stereotypical historic account of the 19th century and questions whether the French Revolution of 1789 was really a struggle for human rights as it only included men. The aim is to make visitors think about what happens when not everyone is part of the political conversation on equal terms.

Resistance shows the way

Even with my critical research perspective, which mercilessly scrutinises Swedish gender equality work in search of its (lack of) potential for change, Umeå mostly turns out well. Sure, it could be because I was born and raised in Umeå. Local patriotism pure and simple. But even after clearing some of these filters, I still stand by my conclusion.

UMEÅ HAS TO A HIGH DEGREE succeeded in making gender equality an issue of power and gender, where many others have failed or perhaps not even tried. Just the title of this publication - Gender, Power and Politics - has a very Umeå-like feel.

The text also contains a number of examples of action. Gender equality in Umeå has mostly meant doing different things. You might object, what else would it mean? My answer, to plan for action, but that the very planning becomes the doing, becomes the action itself. Often, gender equality work stops at plans, policies, surveys and evaluations. Do not get me wrong, such documents can of course be important too. Writing a document is also a kind of action. But there is a challenge in both formulating plans that are feasible, and not least in actually seeing them through. It is also easy to get caught up in being asked time and again to map whether we, in this particular place, really have any problems in terms of gender equality. Or to start a project that will solve all the problems in two years. Umeå has to a large extent avoided these traps. The question, however, is what happens next? To what extent will Umeå be able to fly the flag and stand firm on the fact that gender equality work is about challenging gendered power structures?

I think of the letter that the Commission on Gender Equality sent in 2002 to all men between 18 and 55 years in Umeå Municipality. About men's violence against women being a social problem for which all men must take responsibility. Frankly, I have a hard time seeing this happening today. The social media shitstorm that would face the Commission

on Gender Equality, however, is not hard to imagine. But it is not just social media's entry into our daily lives that is different from 2002. Something has also happened to the general possibilities of doing politics. In the age of marketing, where Umeå Municipality must also protect its competitive advantages, it is not certain that the previous gender equality work fits in. Nothing negative should tarnish the municipality's brand. All actions must be good for everyone - at least that's how it must look. No one should be given more responsibility, or - even worse - blame, than anyone else. There is an imminent risk that Umeå will also be caught in the net of good examples and role models. Perhaps this text can also be considered a good example. To demonstrate the excellence of Umeå. Despite the texts on power and gender, it is increasingly difficult to talk about power in politics. No municipality wants to boast about injustice, here it is great for everyone to live. The space to politicise issues, the space to highlight contradictions, not only in terms of gender but more generally, is constantly shrinking. And then an issue like gender equality, which has already been a challenge to politicise, becomes even more difficult to talk about in this way.

Umeå, it is not time to settle down. Perhaps the biggest challenges still lie ahead. Dare to highlight failures, problems and resistance. Do not forget that it is resistance that points the way to real change.

Malin Rönnblom

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Thirty years of gender equality
work in Umeå Municipality

Gender, power & politics!

1989–2019

Thirty years of gender equality work

Umeå Municipality has for a long time worked with gender equality issues in a strategic and pioneering way. A starting point for the work was when Umeå, as one of three municipalities, was selected in 1989 to participate in a government initiative on local gender equality work.

In 2019, a milestone of 30 years of work for a gender equal Umeå was celebrated. This publication is part of the commemoration of this anniversary. This has been published to highlight and draw attention to 30 years of work for a gender equal Umeå. The various texts alternate between historical flashbacks and concrete examples from activities.