Film
The Author

Anne Gjelsvik is Professor in film studies at the Department of Art and Media Studies at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology. Her work has focused on popular cinema, film violence and ethics, and the representation of gender in the media. Her recent publications include *Hva er film* (2013) and the co-edited anthologies *Eastwood’s Iwo Jima. A Critical Engagement With Flags of Our Fathers & Letters from Iwo Jima* (2013) and *Adaptation Studies: New Challenges, New Directions* (2013).

The glass ceiling within international film production is well documented. Over the last 16 years, the Centre for the Study of Women in Television and Film at San Diego State University has collected employee statistics for the 250 top grossing U.S. films. Last year this report documented that women only accounted for 16 per cent of all directors, executive producers, producers, writers, cinematographers and editors. Female producers ranked the highest at 25 per cent, while composers and sound effect designers were at the bottom of the list at 2 per cent (Lauzen 2014). As if these numbers were not disheartening enough, Martha M. Lauzen’s report also showed that female representation in Hollywood productions is in fact decreasing, and is now lower than in 1998.

The Nordic countries are considered to be at the forefront in gender equality and usually score highly in rankings of gender balance in politics and economics. In Norway, gender quotas have been applied in the public sector since the 1980s, and in 2002 the centre-right wing government initiated a controversial quota law for the private corporate sector. The law, requiring 40 per cent women on corporate boards (in public limited companies), was implemented in 2008 and had an immediate effect on the number of women on corporate boards, and after previous decades of failing mentoring programmes, gender research, and seminars, this measurement accordingly has been deemed a success (Bolso & Sørensen 2014). In six consecutive years, the Global Gender Gap Index has ranked four out of five Nordic countries at the top of their list (Iceland, Finland, Norway and Sweden, with Denmark a little behind). In last year’s report (2013), the Nordic countries had managed to close over 80 per cent of the gender gap, making these countries useful both as role models and benchmarks.

1 The full report can be found here http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GenderGap_Report_2013.pdf
However, when it comes to the film industry, the gap is still considerable and the progress relatively slow, even after a period where these issues have been both well documented and heavily debated. Statistics collected by Nordicom show that 85 per cent of domestic feature films that premiered in the Nordic countries in 2012 were made by male directors. The role of director in particular is highly dominated by men, with a 100 per cent male dominance in Iceland, 93 per cent in Sweden and Norway being the best scorer with 78 per cent men. Another survey on Danish cinematographers covering the 291 movies produced 2000-2013 documented that of the 82 people credited as directors of photography, only three were women – a number that leaves the female representation in the trade at 4 per cent. These statistics demonstrate that progress in this field is slow, despite several initiatives in the public film policy to encourage gender equality on screen and behind the camera.

Based on the report *Tallenes tale* (meaning ‘what the numbers tell us’), in 2006 the Norwegian government set new goals for gender representation in film production in their white paper titled *The Pathfinder* [Veiviseren] (named after the Norwegian success film from 2000). The goal was set to 40 per cent of each gender in key positions, here understood as scriptwriting, direction and production, within a time frame of four years. In order to reach the goals, moderate affirmative action should be implemented in public funding of film. However, the goal was not met within the target time frame.

Accordingly, in 2010 Bransjerådet published the report *Ta alle talentene i bruk!* [Make use of all our talents!], suggesting more and stronger measures to encourage female representation and participation, such as holding back funding if producers did not fill enough positions with female staff and increasing the funding for films with female protagonists. Other measures suggested were mentoring schemes, debutant scholarships and support to develop film projects.

Although the ambitious 40 per cent goal (which originally would in fact mean more or less a doubling of women in key positions within four years) has not yet been reached in 2014, this does not mean that the measures have not worked at all. While women only filled 18 per cent of key positions in the Norwegian film industry 2002-2006, in 2012 the share was 33 per cent. Two areas stand out as more equal than others: the number of female producers in Norwegian film is increasing, and more female directors work within documentary than within fiction film. One relatively pessimistic explanation for the gender equality in documentary film is that there is less money and prestige involved in this part of the industry.

In March 2014, culture minister Thorhild Widvey announced that achieving 40 per cent women in key positions was no longer a goal in Norwegian cultural politics. Consequently, fewer concrete goals and less governmental interference is the likely line of policy for the new rightwing government in the years to come (Bahr 2014). This is in line with the so-called ‘freedom reform’ [frihetsreform] for culture politics in the Norwegian government’s policy platform that first and foremost calls for more private investments and initiatives and less governmental involvement in arts and culture.

The discussions on gender equality in film usually evolve around two different issues: women behind and women in front of the camera. The latter has recently gained substantial critical attention even outside the film production environment, not least because of the popularity of the so-called Bechdel test in the media. In order to pass this test, a film needs to have two named women talk to each other about something other than a man – a simple criterion that an alarming number of Nordic films do not fulfil. The newspaper *Klassekampen* looked at the most popular Norwegian films 2010-2013 and found that six out of ten, *Kon-Tiki* (2012), *Hodejegerne* (Headhunters 2011), *Trolljegeren* [Troll Hunter 2010], *Kongen av Bastøy* [King of Devil’s Island 2010], *Fritt vilt 3* [Cold Prey III, 2010] and *Tomme tønner* [Empty Barrels 2010], did not pass this less than ambitious test (Vollan 2013). The test, originating from a comic strip created by Allison Bechdel, serves as a tool for illuminating female stereotyping and the importance of giving women a voice, yet it was not intended as a research tool or to be used as a certificate of gender equality. Accordingly, more developed statistics, such as the numbers collected by the Nordic Gender & Media Forum

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2 See http://www.nordicom.gu.se/sites/default/files/medieforskningstatis-tik/7099_ngmf_filmseminar_giff20140129.pdf
3 Consisting of Norske Filmregissører, Norske film og tv-producenter forening, Norske Dramatikeres Forbund, Norsk Skuespillerforbund and Norsk Filmforbund.
4 A new film policy white paper from the Solberg government is due in 2015.
initiative, are very welcome. Both the Norwegian and Swedish film institutes have carried out systematic work on gender equality, including compilations of statistics and annual reviews, for quite some time. Using such statistics we are now able to have a clear view of the conditions for women in the film industry, and these facts will enable us to know more about why women are held back and give us some better indications of the measures required to achieve change. From my point of view, without a policy that encourages producers to fight gender bias, less progress is to be expected.

We can usually find a causal relationship between production and representation in terms of gender, as women writers and directors tend to tell more stories about women than men do. In that respect there is a clear connection between production and representation. However, after an all-time low in 2012, when the Amanda Film Award jury did not find more than two actors to nominate for best female performances, the last two years have seen a major change in representation.5 In 2013 the winner of best film, Som du ser meg [I Belong] had a notable cast of female characters, and in 2014 two of the nominees for best film had female protagonists (Blind and Tusen ganger godnatt! [A Thousand Times Good Night]). All of these films were written and directed by men, all of whom were among the most respected contemporary Norwegian directors (Dag Johan Haugerud, Eskil Vogt and Erik Poppe). Also, this year saw women nominees in the Amanda Award categories for scriptwriting, editing, sound design and visual effects (although no woman was nominated in the categories of photography and directing). When it comes to directors, we have seen more female debutants and more women getting international recognition than in a long time (notable names include Anne Sewitsky, Iram Haq and Jannicke Systad Jacobsen).

I have been a proud member of the jury for the Norwegian Edith Carlmar prize (named after the first female director in Norway) awarded to a female film professional who has shown integrity, a brave capacity for innovation and the will to break barriers, and it has now been awarded to one editor (Zaklina Stojcevska), two directors (Margreth Olin and Solveig Melkeraaen) and one producer (Maria Ekerhovd). From my point of view, such recognition and highlighting of female creators is of vital importance; by being foregrounded as role models, they may encourage more women to break visible and invisible barriers in film.

References


Bolsø, Agnes and Siri Øylebe Sørensen (2014). ‘How the quota law came about’ in Made In Norway: How Norwegian have used quota to increase the number of women on company boards, London: Labour Finance and Industry Group (LFIG) & Fabian Women Network.


5 The Amanda Film Award was established to increase the quality of and further the interest for Norwegian films and is organised by The Norwegian International Film Festival Ltd. in co-operation with the Norwegian Film Institute.
The Author
Terese Martinsson has a bachelor’s degree in Cultural Studies from the Department of Cultural Sciences, University of Gothenburg. The statistics in her BA thesis on Nordic domestic feature films that premiered in 2012 were collected on behalf of Nordicom. In 2014 she started a two-year training to become an international Project Manager for the cultural sector at Kulturverkstan, an Advanced Vocational Education in Gothenburg.

Counting heads and keeping an eye on the content

Can the qualitative methods and accomplishments of the studies and analyses within Cultural Studies be combined with the quantitative methods of statistical analysis, often used within the social sciences? As a student of both practices, I wanted to give it a try.

The results of my study of Nordic domestic premiere feature films that premiered 2012 proved gender imbalance both in who made the films and in who were portrayed and in what way. Men held an average of 78 per cent of the key positions and 64 per cent of the lead roles. In general, women were depicted in more passive positions or were active subjects only in relation to men. The imbalance may be connected to the overall dominance of male filmmakers and the normalization of men as both consumers and narrative protagonists.

The aim of revealing habitual practices of gender stereotyping – and other types of power imbalances – can be accomplished, by forcing different research traditions to interact.

Dissemination of knowledge is crucial if we are to overcome imbalanced social structures. By managing, rather than rejecting or disparaging, former studies within the field and using them in a broader context, the aim is for the study to contribute with a widened academic perspective on a complex subject.

The making of the study
The starting point is data on the feature films released in 2012 in the five Nordic countries (Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden), and plot summaries of a total of 98 films. The result is a comparative study of the Nordic countries: On the one hand a quantitative study, looking at the gender balance in key positions (director, producer and scriptwriter), and at the balance among the
To study feature films is a choice made to make the statistics more comparable, between films and countries. Supported by for instance the Swedish Film Institute’s (SFI) reports, *Hur svårt kan det vara?* [How hard can it be?] and *00-talets regidebutanter och jämställdheten* [The debuting directors of the 2000s and gender equality], another reason for the choice is the broader commercial, economic and audience impact of feature films than of short films or documentaries. ‘Counting heads’ in both key positions and lead roles does not capture all complex connections within cinema as a whole. It does shed light, however, on the general structures that the film industry consists of. The statistics thus bind together a geographical region of five countries that are close to one another both geographically and culturally.

The results and analysis in short

Both the quantitative and qualitative material revealed gender imbalance, in terms of both who made the films and who were portrayed. As discussed in reports by SFI and Women In Film and Television (WIFT) Sweden, men’s perception of life is prevailing. What was obvious in the thesis was the way of depicting men as dominant and active in favor of women as the more passive and dependent. The taken-for-granted consumer of films as well as the norm of a human being or narrative protagonist is male. This is one of the most significant conclusions, prevalent in all discourses in one way or another.

**Placing the study in a broader context**

It is a reasonable assumption that role models and depictions are interrelated with gender identification, and thus are of significant importance when it comes to cinema as a medium. An analysis of the cinematic releases, based on the question of who is telling a story about who, is therefore of theoretical relevance. It has a scientific role to play, by bringing quantitative and qualitative empiricism and analysis together. To lean on former studies, follow them up and provide for future studies is a crucial and conscious purpose with the study. Its basis in both political instruments and theory as well as practice within humanities and social science implies many possibilities but also enhances the importance of following up as well as get followed up. To not leave this subject unattended, which might be both sensitive and also crucial due to its thematic of social structures.

Further studies of this type are essential to get a grasp on changes and to make deeper analyses. Both who is visible and what representations are shown on screen are up to those with the responsibility for production.

**References**


Film is a powerful way to portray both the present and the past. In order for Swedish film to be representative, the stories told have to mirror contemporary society. Only by allowing women to have the same chance as men to tell their stories through film will the films produced be able to convey a fair representation of our time.

The importance of regulation
Since 1963 Swedish film production has been subsidised by the Swedish Film Institute, founded through an agreement between the Swedish State and the Swedish film industry. The Film Agreement, which is renewed regularly, defines the remit and the tasks of the Institute and as such sets the agenda for the activities. Not until the Film Agreement for the period 2005-2010 was gender equality emphasised. The signees of the Agreement decided it was time to set a target: support for the production of film was to be divided evenly between women and men. In terms of numbers, both women and men were to be represented at a level of at least 40 per cent for the key roles of screenwriter, director and producer. In the present Agreement, covering 2013-2015, the goal is sharper. The support shall be divided equally between women and men by the end of the period – to us this means 50/50.

A shared responsibility
There are between 40 and 50 Swedish feature-length films released each year, counting both fiction films and documentaries. About 30 of these have support from a film commissioner at the Swedish Film Institute. This means that roughly a third of the released films are produced without our influence. Consequently, it is not only by...
our own activities that the goal of gender equality is met – we share the responsibility with the film industry as a whole.

How to reach set priorities
It is clear to us that we can only reach our goals by letting the gender perspective permeate everything that is done at the Institute, to let it be central to all our activities. In order to achieve this ambition we set out an action plan focusing on five different areas. All these five themes can be viewed as responses to common arguments and explanations met when focusing gender equality in film. The actions include setting up a website, Nordic Women in Film, which, by showing the plethora of successful Nordic women in film, will refute the argument that there are only a few competent women filmmakers.

Furthermore, it is often stated that the reason for the gender bias is that women don’t get to make their second and third films. Another key action is therefore a change programme which, by sharing experiences and best practices between more and less experienced women filmmakers, will empower the participants to overcome structural obstacles when pursuing their careers.

A third common argument is that young women to a lesser extent than young men dream of becoming filmmakers. We are convinced this is wrong: it is a question of different attitudes, and the initiative in this area is aimed at highlighting role models and mentors for young women. In addition we are promoting long-term gender equality initiatives at the entry point to filmmaking, i.e. in film education, film festivals, talent development and film camps.

An often used explanation to the slow change is that the gatekeepers have no desire to see change happen. Again, we believe this not to be true. Instead it is a lack of knowledge of where these structural obstacles arise and how to deal with them. We have therefore initiated a research project in which researchers at the Royal Institute of Technology/Fosfor will shed light on this issue.

Having numbers is key to progress
The fifth action concerns intensifying our monitoring of gender bias in different support schemes and other activities. In contrast to the view of many, we believe that counting does make a difference. This way we can identify patterns and reveal structures, which will help us identify working approaches to create a gender-equal film industry and strengthen our arguments to get them in place.

Production support from the Swedish Film Institute is often essential for the projects to be completed. How the support is distributed between women and men is therefore carefully monitored and reported. We are gradually putting more attention on other functions behind and in front of the camera, as well as on the characters portrayed, apart from the positions already mentioned. The chart above shows the share of feature-length fiction films with funding from a commissioner in 2013 with a woman in one of the above-mentioned key positions, and compared to the average for the three previous three-year periods. The limited number of films supported each year motivates comparisons of averages over longer periods.

We’re on the right track
Many will witness the slow processes involved when changing something which to a large degree is an effect of hidden structures. However, effects of the actions taken since gender equality was put in focus in 2006 are present in the statistics. In addition, women have been the recipients of four of the most prestigious Guldbagge Awards during the last four years – three of them after being part of specific actions towards gender equality. The awards recognize the new perspectives these women have brought to themes already treated by others. Thus, emphasizing a perspective and setting goals in regulating documents and action plans does make a difference.
Marjo Valve is currently working as a Film Commissioner at the Finnish Film Foundation. Before that, she worked for a decade in film and media training. She has been a member of the State Film Council (2007-2009) and also held the chair for a few years (2010-2012), and was at a same time a member of the State Art Council. She has been active in both the film directors’ association and the film workers’ association. She had a career in filmmaking in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

At the Finnish Film Foundation, we have no clear-cut agenda for gender equality in filmmaking. Unlike some other Nordic countries, we don’t have the film agreement system that would be the natural platform for such strategic decisions. In our system, the Ministry supervises, the board controls and the operational management implements all activities of the Foundation. There is a consensus that the Foundation’s strategy should not restrict the commissioner’s freedom to choose which films to support too much. But in a situation where there are no written rules, there still are accustomed ways of thinking. A change in the way things are is only possible after the current state of the matters has been recognised. We cannot change something we don’t see or that somebody denies.

Sex and gender
For me it is easier to grasp the idea of gender equality by dividing the term gender into two, sex and gender, with sex being mainly defined by our physiology and gender being the social role we grow into. Most of us are born with a definable sex (male or female). However, nature also makes some of us undefinable, so even the question of sex is not black and white. The question of gender on the other hand is totally blurry, culturally related, and ever changing. With sex we fall mainly into two categories (male or female), whereas gender is a wide spectrum. We show our gender with our habitus and outlook and it has – among many things – to do with our values and the social roles we adopt. We can also shape our own gender at will. If there is inequality between males and females, it concerns both sex and gender.

It is relatively easy to achieve consensus on the idea that both sexes should have equal opportunities for example in the labour market, before the criminal law, in education and in healthcare. Some say...
that we already have this type of equality and if somebody feels differently it is a personal problem, not related to the person’s sex. Some people think that the possibilities are fairly divided between the sexes the way they are now since there are natural differences between the sexes. It is easier to continue the dialogue with people of this opinion if we agree to divide the idea of gender into sex and gender. It is important to think of gender as something that is culturally related and more importantly unrelated to one’s sex. In this perspective, the alleged natural state of things can be seen as a combination of cultural impact, social patterns and maybe survival skills in a hostile environment.

A renowned scholar, Peter Senge, uses the term mental model when he describes the kind of things we feel are natural and unchangeable. If some people think that women are inferior to men by nature and not as a result of the conscious actions of mankind in the past thousands of years, we are dealing with a mental model, which is a difficult thing to change. The process of changing the mental model is called deep learning and it cannot be achieved by means of a vaccine or an enema. Instead, it requires a willing and conscious mind. Changing one’s mental model is always a turning point in real life and throughout history many of our collective mental models have changed. We no longer for example think that Earth is flat.

Equality and diversity
In trying to find a way to discuss the gender issue with people who don’t see it, it can be fruitful to team equality with diversity, although some problems may arise from that as well. It is difficult for anyone to find any downsides of diversity. Let all the flowers bloom! Diversity is often related to the idea of different minorities getting their voice heard. When seeing equality in a diversity context, we easily hear the rightful reminder that women are not a minority. It is just that with people possibly thinking there is no real inequality between men and women, diversity has proved to be the common ground from where to start the conversation. If we can point out that the female voice is less heard in films than the male, we can demand more room for women in the name of diversity.

Think tank
On April 23, 2014 the Finnish Film Foundation held a convention with close to 100 film professionals gathered to brainstorm around and discuss equality and diversity in Finnish film industry. The objectives of the think tank were:

- To address the gender issue from many different points of view.
- To explore the idea of diversity in the film art and culture.
- To gather work material for the equality working group to be established later.

An advisory group of about ten people chose one core question and then gave eight answers to that question. The core question was: What does equality mean in the film business? The eight answers were: Equality in the film business means...

1. Equal opportunities to get into the business.
2. Equality of the film makers.
3. Diversity of the stories and their accessibility to audiences.
4. Transparency of the processes and the operational culture.
5. Diversity in stories, subject matters, active characters and points of view.
6. Diversity of the genres and ways of expression.
7. The gatekeepers being in a key position in promoting equality.
8. The diversity of quality indicators.

All think tank participants were randomly divided into eight groups led by one member of the advisory group. Each group focused on one of the eight answers. In the working process the answers were again transformed into questions. For example, for the answer ‘Equality in the film business means equal opportunities to get into the business’, the new question was ‘What does the equal opportunity to get into the business mean?’ Each group gave again eight answers to their specific question. So at the end of the day we had eight times eight answers to the core question of equality.

After the working groups had presented their answers to all other participants, the conversation started. Since the topic was already covered from so many angles, the conversation easily focused on conclusions and productive can-do attitude was in the air; that is
Quotas
During the preparation of the think tank we also talked within the advisory group about the quotas. These are some of the comments that came up on these occasions. Some people stated that all quotas are by nature against equality. Some said that since there is a structural inequality between the sexes and genders, the quotas are needed. Others held that there is no real inequality because some people are just more talented and suitable for filmmaking than others and blame on those who try to improve their situation by playing the sexual oppression card. It was also said that only those who fear to lose their position have reason to be against quotas. Some said that the inequality starts when we are born, so if we try to correct things when people are adults it is on the wrong end of the line – thus too late.

The Finnish Film Foundation is undoubtedly a key enabler in relation to who will be a filmmaker or what kinds of stories come to life on screen. But many decisions have already been made, doors opened or closed, before even a screenplay application is sent to us. At film schools, the sexes are more or less equally represented but later in professional life men form the majority of the applicants.

At the Finnish Film Foundation we have no quotas and don’t systematically monitor the applicants and their applications or the approvals in relation to gender. I think the management policy is to rely on the broadmindedness of the commissioners. I personally could live with quotas but it makes me a bit sad to think that we have created a world where they are so easy to justify.

Power of story
Equality is needed at all the levels of filmmaking. Any position in a camera crew should be available to members of both sexes. Stories told by women should find their way to the screen. Companies run by women should have possibilities to grow and flourish. Audiences should have the possibility to see on-screen female characters with the power to reshape the world, yet equally important are the stories that merely show us the way things are. Film art can change the way we see the world, and films seen as pop culture products are possibly even more powerful tools. Many times change starts as a dream and films are collective dreams.

Further reading
The Film Act and Decree: http://ses.fi/fileadmin/dokumentit/Film_promotion_act_and_decree.pdf

The feature drama Tähtitaivas talon yllä [Stars Above] follows the stories of three women from the same family across three different decades – year 1942, 1978 and present day. Each woman is at the age of 30-40 and at a crossroad in their lives and in need of making choices. It was the only Nordic domestic feature film that premiered in 2012 where women were in all key positions. Screenplay & director Saara Cantell, producer Outi Rouus, lead parts by Elin Petersdottir, Meri Nenonen and Irina Björklund. ©Pystymetsä Oy.
Let us move the world forward together!

I believe in counting. Counting tells us something about reality that cannot be hidden. It shows pure facts and gives us the opportunity to decide if we are happy with the current situation or not.

I also strongly believe that talent is equally shared between the sexes.

That is why it was a total shock for me to see the results when we counted male and female leading parts, directors, script writers and producers in the Norwegian film industry. The numbers speak for themselves: In the last 20 years, 20 per cent of all leading parts, directors, scriptwriters and film producers have been women. The rest have been men.

I was the president of the International Federation of Actors (FIA) for four years. FIA is a worldwide federation of over 100 member unions in 77 countries. Gender equality has always been important to FIA and a Gender Charter was adopted in the early days of the federation.

To reflect the fact that women are important and present at all levels of society, FIA encourages all film and theatre producers to use female actors in non-gender-specific parts, such as presidents, carpenters, postal workers, and judges.

In 2008, FIA launched a research project on Gender Portrayal and Employment Opportunities. The project report, titled Changing Gender Portrayal: Promoting Employment Opportunities for Women in the Performing Arts, was presented in the European Parliament at a special event hosted by MEP Proinsias de Rossa in January 2009.

The report was based on an online questionnaire to actors and is a snapshot of career experiences of performers across the EU in relation to their age and gender. The findings were depressing but not surprising:
Female performers have shorter careers than men. There is a greater proportion of women in the lowest income groups and a much smaller proportion in the top bracket. Women performers all across Europe consider their gender a disadvantage across all aspects of their careers and working lives.

This is well known to actors all over the world. We know this from experience. But the report was necessary in order to raise awareness about the problem. And it made clear that we need to change reality! We need to find solutions. And we need to see what good practices we can learn from. Consequently, FIA produced a handbook of good practices. It includes more than 50 good practices on combating gender stereotypes and promoting gender equality in theatre, film and television from twelve European countries: Belgium, Croatia, Denmark, Finland, France, Ireland, Italy, Norway, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom.

The FIA project Engendering Change was structured around a series of five regional seminars and a final conference. The aim of these events was exchange and mutual learning and the identification and sharing of good practices. The focus was on coming up with strategies both at the level of individual performers’ unions and at the level of political advocacy at national and EU level. The handbook FIA Handbook of Good Practices to Combat Gender Stereotypes and Promote Equal Opportunities in Film, Television and Theatre in Europe, published in 2010, is a practical tool, intended to empower and support performers’ unions to undertake action on this issue. Equally it can serve as a blueprint providing examples of possible effective political action that decision-makers can pursue. It also highlights ways in which the industry can work from within to change gender portrayal and do away with stereotyping. The good practices identified in the handbook are:

- Setting qualitative and quantitative targets
- Ensuring gender equality in management and promoting gender sensitive management
- Rethinking professional training for stage and screen
- Challenging gender representation on stage and screen
- Mainstreaming gender equality in film, television and theatre
- Creating networks to provoke a change
- Monitoring gender equality and gender stereotypes
- Raising awareness about gender equality and gender stereotypes

I believe that art can change society. But then the art must be brave and curious. It must not be based on a content that only reflects society as it was 30 years ago or portray stereotypes. To do ‘as one has always done’ has never moved the world forward. But art can – especially if all talents are given the opportunity to portray all the nuances of human life.

Half of the world’s population is female. They all deserve to see a film, a television drama, a play, even a commercial that relates meaningfully to their own lives, their own age, their own experience, their own sex. Acting is portrayal. And the main question is, what kind of lives are we given the opportunity to portray?

So start counting. Start creating awareness in the industry, among the artists, among politicians and within ourselves.

As an artistic director of one of the national theatres of Norway, I always count to make sure that I give both men and woman the possibility to make great theatre productions. I am lucky to be a decision-maker now and a gatekeeper who can put this into practice.

The time when men choose men and women choose men is over. It is time to start moving the world forward and create art that reflects the society we want. And that is a society where talent and not sex decides what stories to tell. But this will not happen until both sexes are given equal opportunities.
For over fifteen years, Doris Film has had the representation of women, both in front of and behind the camera, on the agenda. In 1999, Doris was established in Gothenburg as a network for people in the film industry. In 2003, the world’s first film manifesto written by women was created – the Doris Manifesto.

The purpose of the Doris Manifesto was to explore over a three-year period whether film, TV and media would look different if more women were in charge:

- All scripts should be written by women
- All scripts should have a female leading character
- All primary decision making functions should be held by women.
- All original music should be composed by women

To this end, short film script contests were arranged for three straight years. In total over 700 scripts were submitted by women who wanted to vouch for the Doris Manifesto and Doris Film. All the scripts were judged anonymously by jury groups consisting of professionals from the film industry, all women. From 2005 to 2009 eight short films, 75 minutes in all, were produced: Först vid dig (Attached to you), Grodan (The frog), Mon 3, Fish, Susanne blir singel (Susanne goes single), Skjut mig (Shoot me) and Doris.

The films portray different stages in life and had classical themes like love, sorrow, friendship, sexuality and violence – but always in what could be seen as a ‘female’ perspective.

All the films have been financed individually by regional film pools, Swedish Public Broadcasting Television and the Swedish Film Institute. The films were compiled into a feature film and...
distributed by Folkets Bio. The Doris feature film had its world premiere in 2010 at the World Wide Short Film Festival in Toronto, Canada. The short films have been shown individually and together in over forty-five countries and on practically every continent. The competence of women has been made visible, and nobody can any longer say that women can’t or don’t want to make film.

Regional, national and international work
Over the years, Doris Film has acted at different levels and within different geographical districts. In 2008 Doris developed tutoring material for its films – discussion and analysis guides – for use in schools. The material has been used in schools around Sweden. Today the material has been translated to English, Serbian, Russian and Spanish.

Under the heading ‘Doris in School’, Doris Film has shown the films and held lectures about gender equality in the western region of Sweden. From 2009 to 2010, Doris Film met over 400 teachers who discussed, together with their colleagues, the films and how gender equality and equal treatment are approached in schools. Doris Film has visited international film festivals and cultural exchanges in, for example, India, Turkey, Spain, Australia, Belgium, Lithuania, Rwanda, Norway and Finland. Since 2011, Doris Film has had the support of the Swedish Institute and Creative Force in northwestern Russia and the eastern Balkans in various endeavours. Doris has visited film education institutions, libraries and schools and has held different seminars for students, teachers, media and various NGOs. The purpose of these activities is to strengthen international contacts and inspire to highlight female competence, human rights and equality.

Doris computer game – Alex & the Museum Mysteries
In 2011 Doris Film initiated a new project – the Doris computer game, Alex & the Museum Mysteries. If a gender perspective is applied to the world of computer games, a clear picture emerges: the game market is heavily segregated by gender and the worlds of boys and girls are kept apart. The games aimed at boys usually focus on action while games targeting girls tend to be passive and revolve around beauty and relationships. The boy is the norm for the children and the gender that both boys and girls are encouraged to identify with. In cooperation with the University of Skövde and their newly formed feministic group Donna, Doris Film has begun development of a computer game for all children. The game is currently in production and is estimated to be released in spring 2016.

Effects and reach
Doris has produced evaluations and reports and in 1999 the book Doris’s Days was released to give a voice to several women in the film industry and their experiences of it. At the Gothenburg Book Fair in 2009, the book Doris x 12, consisting of all the winning short film scripts, was released.

In 2014 Doris Film Iceland was founded, and Iceland – the world’s most gender equal country – was the first country to fully adopt the Doris Manifesto. Script competitions have already been held and over 100 scripts have been submitted for the Icelandic short films.

Understanding Doris now and in the future
Equality will never happen on its own. It’s a process of education and enlightenment. Doris Film can be seen in a film political context but also in a feministic and a women’s policy context where action and the organizing are central. We don’t think it’s a coincidence that the Doris Manifesto was created in Sweden. The Swedish model for equality has been and is a strong source of inspiration for many countries wanting to develop democracy and strengthen women’s rights. Through the films and the coming computer game, Doris believes that Sweden will strengthen its position as a forerunner when it comes to gender equality work.
A rating [A-märkt] is a way to raise awareness about female (mis)representation in the film industry. The A-rating was launched in late 2013 by four independent cinemas in Sweden that are all part of the National Association of People’s Parks and Community Centres, and also involved in the Swedish branch of Women in Film and Television (WIFT) and the Equalisters. For a film to be rated A (the ‘A’ stands for Approved), a YES must be given to each of the following three questions:

1. Are there two or more women in it, and do they have names?
2. Do they talk to each other?
3. Do they talk to each other about something besides men?

Alison Bechdel formulated these three simple questions back in 1985 for the so-called Bechdel Test. It is important to stress that the A-rating has nothing to do with the quality of the film; it doesn’t say whether it is good or bad, equal or not. Instead it is a tool that highlights the representation of women in film – and it has been very positively received around the world.

The A-rating was initially used by the four Swedish cinemas that started the project: Bio Rio (Stockholm), Roy (Gothenburg), Spegelin (Malmö) and Röda Kvarn (Helsingborg). But the news spread quickly and in just a few weeks other cinemas and festivals around Sweden and all over the world had followed suit. With more than 80 unique interviews, the campaign got widespread media coverage, for example by The New York Times, BBC, Chinese TV, India Times, The Guardian, El País and ABC.

After learning about the A-rating system, writers, directors, distributors and festivals have publicly stated that they’ve become
Gender inequality is obviously a problem and the film industry indeed holds a responsibility. Film influences people, and therefore a conservative film industry will hamper progress. First step for change is awareness, and then shared responsibility to make film something bigger and better than the story of men by men.


more aware of the norm that dictates how stories are told in films. With this discovery they’ve now taken a more active role to make positive changes.

Before the A-rating was launched, Alison Bechdel gave her blessing to the project:

‘This is an amazing idea, and a great honor! I would absolutely endorse this remarkable scheme. Thank you so much for contacting me, and for being so innovative in your programming approach! Sincerely, Alison’

A-markt.se / #amarkt