

## Nordic Gender & Media Forum



The following pages give a summary of the activities within the Nordic Gender and Media Forum project, including a collection of media statistics.

The starting point for the project was a Nordic Baltic Round Table Meeting on Gender & Media arranged in Vilnius in May 2013 by the Nordic Council of Ministers, where Nordicom was consulted as adviser and moderator. The round table discussions spurred the idea of starting the Nordic Gender & Media Forum, which was most timely since in 2015 it will be time to review the progress made since the Beijing Platform for Action was adopted in 1995.

Nordicom initiated the project Nordic Gender & Media Forum as a platform for discussion on gender equality in media. The platform compiles sex-disaggregated statistics for the Nordic media industry (film, journalism, advertising and computer games). These

data serve as a knowledge base for discussion on good gender practices in media in the Nordic countries and elsewhere. The project also serves as a contribution to the ongoing media and information literacy efforts.

During the project it has become evident that sex-disaggregated media statistics are seldom prioritised in the Nordic countries. In order to get an idea of the situation, the project has compiled statistics from many different sources and initiated small pilot studies.

The project has gathered people for four seminars and a conference. Several hundred people have joined the conversation and shared good practices and ideas on how to move forward.

[www.nordicgenderandmediaforum.se](http://www.nordicgenderandmediaforum.se)  
[www.nordicom.gu.se/en/media-trends/nordic-gender-media-forum](http://www.nordicom.gu.se/en/media-trends/nordic-gender-media-forum)

## Seminars



Seminar on gender and the film industry • Göteborg  
International Film Festival, Sweden, January 29 2014

## The Nordic film industry remains male dominated

The Nordic film industry is still far from gender equal. New statistics presented at the Gothenburg Film Festival show that among the 98 Nordic films that premiered in 2012, only one had women in all key positions, behind and in front of the camera.

The figures presented at the seminar *Gender Balance in the Nordic Film Industry* were crystal clear: Men are dominating the Nordic film industry. Although comprehensive statistics are lacking, the available information, presented by the knowledge centre Nordicom at the University of Gothenburg, shows that the three key positions producer, director and scriptwriter are typically held by men. The role of director in particular is highly dominated by men: In Sweden, 93 per cent of the feature films that premiered in 2012 were directed by men. In Norway, the figure was 78 per cent, in Finland 82 (the Finnish statistics also include documentaries) and in Iceland a full 100 per cent.

Moreover, men are in the majority also in front of the camera. In six out of ten feature films that premiered in the Nordic countries in 2012, males played the leading parts.

Terese Martinsson, who in her Bachelor's project in Cultural Studies at the University of Gothenburg has studied the relation between

filmmakers and leading parts, concludes that it really does not matter whether the makers of a film are men or women – the film is still most likely going to focus on a male.

'Maybe that's what surprised me the most, that women are not more eager to tell stories about other women,' she says.

### Blown away

Among the Nordic films that premiered in 2012, Martinsson found only one where all key positions – director, producer, scriptwriter and leading parts – were filled by women: *Stars Above* from Finland.

'This just blew me away,' she says.

But despite the gloomy statistics, the seminar also brought some good news. The Nordic film industry is leading the way in providing gendered statistics, compared with both other countries and other media. This is critical for change to ever be achieved, according to several seminar participants.

Several industry representatives pointed out that there may be change in sight, at least in Sweden. The Swedish Film Institute's clear message in the context of gender equality has trickled down to the grass root level and encouraged young women to make their presence known, said Sofie Björklund from one

of Sweden's strongest local film companies, Film i Väst.

'A lot has happened in the last 10 years. Today, a majority of the applications for the company's support to young film makers are submitted by young women who choose film topics independently and believe in what they do,' says Björklund.

### A work culture incompatible with family life

The question of how the structure of the film industry contributes to exclude women was addressed by Marjo Valve, Film Commissioner at the Finnish Film Foundation, in a follow-up discussion on how the Nordic film institutes are working with the gender equality issue.

'A career in the film industry may periodically require 12-hour workdays and is therefore difficult to combine with normal family life. This pulls many women out of the industry. Instead they might go into teaching.'

The resistance to gender quotas for film production support is, according to Valve, widespread.

'There is no gender equality agenda for the Finnish film industry. If women do well in the statistics, it's either a mere coincidence or something that individual women have accomplished all by themselves.'

At the same time, female cinema-goers are the commercially most important audience for the Finnish film industry.

'Our most frequent Finnish cinema visitor is a middle-aged woman. And the films made by women for women are the ones that have been the most successful at the box office,' said Valve.

Also Hjalmar Palmgren, head of the Swedish Film Institute's film production support, was

self-critical. Although the agreement that went into effect in 2013 lays down that the production support should be split equally between men and women, this does not automatically imply a gender-equal film industry.

'You always hear that quality, and not gender, should be what matters. But this requires an objective quality measure. We used to have a system where men were given easy entry into the industry because of their gender, and not based on quality. There is no reason to believe that women make worse films and attract smaller audiences. The whole discussion is just silly – it's a non-issue!'

Palmgren also expressed strong support for the Bechdel test (that two named women in a film talk to each other about something other than a man), which sparked intense discussion in Sweden last year. Palmgren said that U.S. figures show that the films that passed the test also did better at the box office.

'I think the test is great! I don't understand the strong reactions. It shows how our culture is shaped, how we talk to each other in society, not just what the film industry looks like.'

BY: FRIDA LUNDBERG

**Footnote:** This article is based on two seminars that were organized during the The Göteborg International Film festival 2014. The first seminar was organized by Nordicom and the second one by the Swedish Film Institute. This text was first published on [www.nikk.no](http://www.nikk.no).

**Speakers at the seminar:** Ulrika Facht, Analyst, Nordicom, University of Gothenburg, Annika Hellström, Dorisfilm, Francine Raveney, Director, European Women's Audiovisual Network (EWA) Network, Terese Martinsson, Bachelor student, Cultural Studies, University of Gothenburg, Moderator: Maria Edström, Nordicom.



Seminar on journalism and gender • The Swedish Exhibition & Congress Centre, Gothenburg, Sweden, 6 March 2014

## The gap – on gender equality in journalism

An increasing number of women work in the media industry, in news production, advertising and entertainment. Does this lead to more gender equal media? This question was discussed during a seminar organised by Nordicom at Göteborg Media Days in March 2014.

At the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995 a platform for action was established. The aim was to increase women's access to and participation in mass media. What has happened since then? The Nordic information centre on media and mass communication research, *Nordicom*, has collected statistics to answer this question. This was also the subject of a seminar during Göteborg Media Days. The seminar was chaired by Maria Edström, gender and media researcher at Nordicom. Edström presented a world map of freedom of the press. - Interestingly, the countries with the greatest freedom of the press are the very same as those where the female participation in the media is the greatest, she explained.

### More female leaders in the media

Women's entry into the media business is accompanied by their entry into politics.

Gradually, an increasing number of women take leading positions in for instance at daily newspapers. - The share of female news editors in Sweden is currently around 40 per cent. When it comes to CEOs, the share is around 15 per cent, says Ulrika Facht, media analyst at Nordicom.

What about the content? - Making news is mainly a matter of making choices, says Ylva M. Anderson, head of programme at SVT. - 'And it is probably becoming more and more gender equal, but we can still do a lot more to let more voices be heard.'

### Denmark – not as gender equal as the media companies believe

Denmark stands out from the rest of Scandinavia. While the country's media companies seem to see themselves as sufficiently gender equal, their numbers show that they are in fact worse off than their Nordic neighbours. - Although half of the ministers and leaders of political parties in Denmark are women, female politicians get only 25 per cent of the political media exposure, says Linda Lapina, PhD student at Roskilde University. - Women are overrepresented in TV programmes



Linda Lapina, Roskilde University; Ulrika Facht, Nordicom; Ylva M Andersson, SVT and Maria Edström, Nordicom from the seminar about the gender gap in journalism.

Photo: Johan Wingborg

on health, beauty, relations and travel, but underrepresented in news, debates and sport. One could go as far as to say that the more powerful and competent a Danish woman is, the smaller her chances are of appearing on TV.

Swedish public service television has a responsibility to let everyone speak, regardless of gender, age or cultural identity. We still need to make a bigger effort, Ylva M. Andersson claimed. It is ultimately a question of quality. Our viewers have the right to see programmes that are relevant and representative for them. Numbers are vital, for instance

on the SVT Debate programme, we apply a 50 per cent women rule.

BY: EVA LUNDGREN

**Footnote:** A longer version of this text was first published in Swedish on the university of Gothenburg website [www.gu.se](http://www.gu.se).

**Panel:** Linda Lapina, PhD student, Roskilde University, Ulrika Facht, Analyst, Nordicom, Ylva M Andersson, Head of Programme, Swedish Television Gothenburg. Moderator: Maria Edström, Nordicom

**Facts:** The Göteborg Media Days is a Nordic meeting point where both established media industry representatives and the general audience meet. See more at: [www.meg.se/en](http://www.meg.se/en)



Seminar on Women and Computer Games • Hanasaari/Hanaholmen, Swedish-Finnish Cultural Centre, Finland, 2 April 2014

## Where are the females in the gaming industry?

The April 2014 seminar *Where are the Females in the Gaming Industry?* successfully screened the gender situation in the field of gaming in the Nordic countries. The event, co-arranged by Nordicom and the Swedish-Finnish culture centre Hanasaari, focused on the possibilities for women to make their living in the mostly male-dominated business environment of the gaming industry.

Although there are few structural obstacles, the discussions revealed that it calls for mental strength and a strong belief in your capabilities to be able to shape a game developer's career with gender not being an issue.

One of the topics that sparked lively debate was the fact that it seems easier for individual

women to achieve management positions than it is to become a game developers.

Other themes covered were how to create empowered teams and how to avoid gender stereotypes when creating characters and content. The seminar also revealed that there is a lack of gender-based data on the gaming industry. The seminar gathered about 60 participants.

**Speakers:** Íris Andrésdóttir, Executive Producer at the success story company STARDOLL, Arja Martikainen, Senior Consultant, Games Recruitment, Barona IT, KooPee Hiltunen, CEO of the Finnish gaming industry hub Neogames, Maria Edström, Nordicom researcher, Annakaisa Kultima, Assistant Professor, University of Tampere, Lisa Lindén, Dramaturge & Member of Dorisfilm, Sweden, Jenny Bruska, Director, Computer Game Development Design Program, University of Skövde, Coordinator of the Donna initiative, Isabella Billgren and Mathilda Bjarnehed, students in the Computer Game Development Design Program, University of Skövde.  
Host: Henrik Huldén, Hanaholmen

**About Hanasaari/Hanaholmen:** The Hanasaari Swedish-Finnish Cultural Centre promotes and develops interaction between Finland and Sweden. The ongoing Hanasaari programme Speaking Is Silver focuses on the different aspects of freedom of expression. [www.hanaholmen.fi](http://www.hanaholmen.fi)



Arja Martikainen, Senior Consultant, Games Recruitment, Barona IT, was one of the speakers at the Computer games seminar.

Photo: Hanasaari/Hanaholmen



Advertising Seminar • The Royal Library, Copenhagen, Denmark, 4 April 2014

## Stereotypical images in the urban space

‘As I’m getting older, the thought of having an old body is weighing more and more heavily. I don’t know why. Even important, successful women are criticised when they don’t appear magically young. Powerful men with wrinkles look wise; powerful women with wrinkles check into Nygart.’

These are the words written by 17-year-old college student Anna Viemose in the Danish newspaper *Politiken* published 2 November 2013. Baffling as the ‘Nygart’ reference may be to many non-Copenhageners, the majority of those who live in Denmark’s capital know exactly what she is referring to.

Since 2007, the Danish company Nygart, which sells plastic surgery procedures, has been running an advertising campaign where bare breasts are displayed across the sides of city buses. Concurrent with these bus adverts, the company has also been running a campaign of adverts in the city’s metro stations depicting a naked woman lying face down. Both campaigns have given rise to much heated debate.

‘We’re constantly being served images of breasts in public spaces – only yesterday I saw the Nygart advertisement on a number 6A bus. But as soon as breasts are paraded in a non-sexual context, people are up in arms about it,’

explained Editor Sarah Hornum, talking in connection with the publication of the book *Kvinde Kend Din Krop*.

She was referring to the 2013 ruling from the Danish Board of Equal Treatment – *Ligebehandlingsnævnet*. Here, the board ruled that the act of expelling a breast-feeding mother from a department-store restaurant is *not* in breach of Danish equality laws.

The board’s ruling led to a sit-in demonstration of breast-feeding mothers on 17 July 2013 in front of Copenhagen City Hall. The mothers were protesting about the fact that breasts signalling sex are accepted in public places, but breasts being used for their actual function are not.

This whole debate hangs as an impressive backdrop to the discussion of gender and advertising in Denmark, with the topic being catapulted back onto the agenda by the Nygart advertisements in particular.

It came as little surprise that the Nygart advertisements were a major talking point when on 24 April the issue was brought into focus at KVINFO’s *Stereotypical Images of Women in the Urban Space – Gender and Advertising* debate, which was part of Nordicom’s Nordic programme of events on gender and media.

Forward-looking and solution-oriented dialogue was the order of the day when KVIN-FO invited panellists to take part in the event. And building on previous experience from discussions on gender and advertising held in the 1990s, advertisers, legal experts in the field and those on the receiving end of the advertising were this time invited to participate.

On the panel, 17-year-old college student Anna Viemose represented the perspective of those whom the advertising targets. Representing those behind the advertising was lifestyle expert Anne Glad, who is the strategic manager of ad agency Envision and a Danish lifestyle TV personality, and who also represents the Danish trade organisation Kreativitet & Kommunikation<sup>1</sup>. The legal field was represented by two professors of law: Caroline Heide-Jørgensen and Eva-Maria Svensson from the University of Copenhagen and the University of Gothenburg, respectively.

All of the panellists agreed with Anna Viemose that the gender-stereotyped advertising images in the public space do exert an

influence – and everybody wanted to disassociate themselves from these. ‘Brain-dead adverts’ are irritating to everyone, not least those in the industry. According to Anne Glad, one reason is that many of these types of adverts are produced for and by large foreign corporations who do not share the value set of the Nordic trade organisations when it comes to gender and diversity.

Eva-Maria Svensson pointed out that stereotypical images of women must be seen in relation to stereotypical images of men. At the same time, she also brought up the subject of whether or not the area requires legal regulation, or whether self-regulation is sufficient. She personally leans towards more legal regulation – an opinion shared by the Swedish women’s lobby organisation Sveriges Kvinnolobby. They, together with the Swedish media watch group Allt är Möjligt, are behind the *Reklamera* campaign, which discusses, reacts to and takes action against gender-discriminatory advertising. In contrast to Sweden, the general clause in the Law on marketing in Denmark includes authority to take action against discriminatory advertising. In addition there are guidelines developed by the Consumer Ombudsman.

Caroline Heide-Jørgensen is sceptical of such interventions against the freedom of speech of commercial businesses. Consequently, she believes that the battle against gender stereotypes must be fought at other levels of society. This is a viewpoint shared by Anne Glad, who in her work at the trade organisation Kreativitet & Kommunikation is pushing for greater diversity in the advertising industry.

During the event, it became apparent that humour is another dividing factor that

PHOTO: KVINFO



*Some of the panellists at the seminar Stereotypical images in the urban space: Anna Viemose, upper secondary student; Caroline Heide-Jørgensen, Professor of Law and Anne Glad, lifestyle expert.*

manifests itself as a cultural difference between Sweden and Denmark, also in the discussion of what humour means. British researcher Sarah Ahmed’s theories about being a killjoy also came to light during the event, with the Danes standing firm in their belief that humour should be a central element, whereas the Swedes were more restrained and preferred to focus more on how humour is used in communicating different messages.

Those attending the event – primarily young Danish women – proved themselves very active in the debate. Something noteworthy, and particularly new from a Danish perspective, was the fact that like Anna Viemose they acknowledged just how much advertising in the public space greatly influences how they view their own and other women’s bodies, and how advertising dictates the boundaries of their own lives.

This viewpoint corresponds completely with the 2011 American film *Miss Representation* by Jennifer Siebel Newsom. This film points out that the only attributes of women emphasised by mainstream media are youth, appearance and as sex objects. And this has dire consequences: very young women are left with little

self-esteem, and their male peers are served a distorted image of women. Famous women added their voices to the cause, pointing out how gender-stereotyped images also limit women’s opportunities of being taken seriously. And because advertising’s stereotypical images seep down into social culture, they become a sub-text in people’s general perceptions of gender. And in this way, advertising is contributing to creating barriers for women’s access to leading positions – or being taken seriously in other media.

It is precisely because of this that initiatives taken by Nordic trade organisations (including Kultur & Kreativitet and the Swedish Association of Communication Agencies – KOMM) aimed at working with the advertising industry’s approach to gender are so very important. And such initiatives are greatly welcomed – not least by all those who participated in KVIN-FO’s gender and advertising event.

BY: ANITA FRANK GOTH

## References

Anna Viemose: ‘17-årig gymnasieelev: Jeg har for mange rynker’ [17-year-old college student: I’ve got too many wrinkles], *Politiken*, 2 November 2013.

Read the entire Danish Board of Equal Treatment ruling at [www.ligebehandlingsnaevnet.dk/naevnsdatabase/afgoerelse.aspx?aid=1182&type=Afgoerelse](http://www.ligebehandlingsnaevnet.dk/naevnsdatabase/afgoerelse.aspx?aid=1182&type=Afgoerelse)

**Host:** The seminar was hosted by KVINFO, the Danish Centre for Information on Gender, Equality and Diversity.

**Speakers:** Anne Glad, Lifestyle Expert; Caroline Heide-Jørgensen, Professor of Law, Centre for European Studies in Economic Law, University of Copenhagen; Eva-Maria Svensson, Professor of Law, School of Business, Economics and Law, University of Gothenburg; Anna Viemose, upper secondary student, Maria Edström, Nordicom.

Moderator: Anita Frank Goth, KVINFO

<sup>1</sup> It is important to point out that in connection with the Nygart campaigns, Movia (the company responsible for public transport in Copenhagen) stated: ‘It is not the issue of breasts that is the main thing for us here. We’re not intent on practising some form of neo-Puritanism. It’s the link between the breasts and the message about considering whether or not you are good enough. It is this self-esteem issue that we on the board of Movia feel is worth debating.’ These were the words of board chairman and social-democratic mayor of Herlev municipality Thomas Gyldal Petersen when speaking to *Politiken* on 11 April 2014. Rather than limiting the debate to just this specific case, the aim of the event was to discuss the broader issue of gender and advertising, hence the invitation of Anne Glad.



The Bergen conference: Time to step up • The house of literature, Bergen, Norway, May 7, 2014

## Time to step up

After four successful seminars – one for each media branch: film, advertising, computer games and journalism, the Nordic gender and media project arranged a larger conference to sum up the discussions. The conference, which was held in Bergen, Norway, was about sharing good gender equality practices within the Nordic media. Practitioners, researchers, activists and stakeholder came together for a full day at sharing thoughts, experiences and ideas. The Bergen Literature House hosted around 75 participants from the Nordic countries and Europe, in plenary sessions and working groups.

The discussions dealt with gender equality as a matter of democracy, and some of the key issues were leadership, storytelling, activism and research. Important questions were: ‘How can we improve gender equality in the media? What can the media leaders do – and what is being done at the organizational level? How can equal representation in the stories told by the media be obtained? What else is being done to draw the public attention toward the gender equality issue?’ Camilla Landini, from the Equality Division at the Council of Europe, also brought perspectives from a European outlook. The conference was a pre-conference to the Nordic Media Festival - the largest and most prominent media conference in the Nordic region - and some of the discussions were followed up at a festival session the following day.

### Speakers/panels:

Camilla Landini, Equality Division, Council of Europe; Ulrika Facht, Nordicom; Elisabeth Eide, Oslo and Akershus University College; Sara Eriksson ASTRA; Anita Frank Goth, KVINFO, Johan Fröberg, Swedish Film Institute; Ragnheiður H. Magnúsdóttir, Hugsmiðjan; Aurora Percovich Gutierrez, Rättviseförmedlingen/Equalisters; Josefine Alvunger, NIKK; Kerstin Brunnberg, Swedish Arts Council; Anna-Klara Bratt, Feminist Perspective; Andrea Reuter; Suzanne Moll, IMS; Kari Øritsland, Brandity; Johanna Koljonen; Jacob Schulze, Face Europe; Kristin Helle-Valle, House of Literature in Bergen; Cecilia Zadig; Joanna Rubin Dranger, Konstfack; Ole Bredesen Nordfjell, Reform, Resource centre for men; Malin Kulseth, Balansekunst/Kompetanseformidlingen/Natt&Dag; Gerd von der Lippe, Telemark university college; Sara Lindquist, Queering Sápmi; Terese Martinsson, Department of Cultural Sciences, University of Gothenburg; Agnethe Haaland, Den Nationale Scene, president of Fédération Internationale des Acteurs; Dögg Mósesdóttir, Dorisfilm/Wift; Lotta Strömmland, Go´kväll SVT; Turid Øvrebø, Volda University College; Anna-Klara Bratt, Feministiskt perspektiv; Berit von der Lippe, Norwegian Business School; Maria Dyrhol Sandvik, Bergens Tidende; Tomas Gunnarsson, Gender Photographer; Maria Jacobson, Allt är Möjligt/Everything is possible; Christina Gillberg, KOMM, Swedish Association of Communication Agencies; Jenny Brusik, Computer Game Development Design Program, University of Skövde.

Host: Kari Birkeland

[www.nordicgenderandmediaforum.se](http://www.nordicgenderandmediaforum.se)